



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

PEAVINE PROJECT DECISION RECORD / RATIONALE / FONSI (EA # OR110-01-22)

I. BACKGROUND

Planning for the Peavine Project was initially begun in 1997. It's initial focus was to address the conditions of the offsite pine plantations within the project area. The scope of the project was broadened to be a comprehensive evaluation of conditions on BLM lands in the project area, to address the full range of conditions and opportunities that were found, and to design a multi-faceted project that is needed to address the range of resources within the context of the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP). The result is a project that includes road work, stream work, habitat improvement, fuel hazard reduction, young stand management and the acceleration of late-successional forest conditions appropriate to the site conditions.

The BLM's interdisciplinary planning team has designed the Peavine Project based on the current resource conditions in the project area and in a manner that implements the resource management mandates that are set forth in the pertinent laws and resource plans. The proposed action reflects what the planning team believes to be the best balance of these factors.

II. DECISION

The decision is to implement Alternative 2, the proposed action, for the Peavine Project as presented in the Peavine Project Environmental Assessment (EA #OR110-01-22, May 2001) *except* as follows:

- The riparian reserve width on Class III streams (non-fish bearing perennial stream) will be one site potential tree (170') on either side of the stream, **not** 340' as indicated in Table 3 (p. 15). This follows the *NFP* standards.

- The seasonal operating restriction around spotted owl nest sites is changed from March 1 through June 15 (p. 15) to March 1 through June 30.

- Spur Road 27G (Map 3 and Table 2) will not be closed and decommissioned at the conclusion of the Peavine Project. The mining claimant has indicated that this road has a continued need for access to a valid mining claim.

- The unimproved / skid road in Section 34, SW1/4SE1/4, (See Map 3) proposed for decommissioning will be kept open. The landowner that uses the road for access to his property has applied for a right-of-way permit. The terms of the permit shall require the landowner to repair and maintain the road in order to reduce runoff and sedimentation. The BLM will install a gate at the start of the road in an effort to reduce ORV caused road damage.

- Implement all of the proposed fuel treatments as described and as identified in Table 1 with the following *qualifier*: All units that receive any type of vegetation treatment (e.g., precommercial thinning, brushing, commercial thinning, harvesting, slashing, etc.) will be evaluated using the BLM's Fuel Hazard/Risk Assessment and Treatment Recommendations analysis process after treatment and prior to implementing fuel reduction treatments. This review is to insure that the appropriate fuel reduction treatments are applied to meet the fuel loadings and fire hazard reduction goals and other resource and safety goals. Based on this review and analysis, the proposed fuel reduction treatments may be modified, adjusted or dropped so as to better accomplish silvicultural and resource protection objectives within the implementation considerations and opportunities. Substantial changes to the proposed treatments are not anticipated. Those that are made will be consistent with the descriptions, overall extent and impacts addressed in the EA and its range of fuel treatments alternatives. In some instances, for example, hand piling of slash and pile burning will be utilized when prescribed under burning is not feasible or where high surface fuel loadings exist and/or it is operationally impractical to implement because of significant risk to ecological processes, resource values, and private property and rural residences. Any changes that do occur will be within the scope of overall effects anticipated in the EA's analysis and it is not anticipated that any additional NEPA analysis / documentation will be necessary or undertaken as a part of these changes.

The project design features described in the EA are an integral part of the proposed action and are to be implemented, *except*: where the species and protection measures for special status and S&M plant and animal species outlined in the EA are different from the species and protection measures set forth in the January 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, the latter document shall in all cases take precedence. For example, *Ulota megalospora* is no longer a Protection and Buffer species and will not receive a protective buffer as indicated in the EA.

III. DECISION RATIONALE

Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, is rejected because it does not meet the objectives identified in the Medford District Resource Management Plan. It would not address or alter many of the existing resource conditions and trends that are of major concern relative to healthy forest conditions, the development of late-successional forest conditions in the LSR and resource protection. The No Action alternative would perpetuate or promote undesirable resource conditions. With the No Action, these conditions would not be improved or mitigated; certain undesirable ecological trends would continue

unchanged and, in some cases, would be exacerbated with the passage of time. For example, high fire hazard conditions would continue, stand vigor and forest health would continue to decline, and existing erosion problems would continue uncorrected.

Alternative 2 is selected because it implements the Medford District RMP and the Northwest Forest Plan. It will also meet the purpose of and needs for action as outlined in the EA.

The Decision will also implement a range of activities that are consistent with and which promote a number of the BLM's FY2000 to FY2005 Strategic Plan goals:

- Goal 1.2: Provide opportunities for environmentally responsible commercial activities;

- 1.2.3: By FY2005, consistent with established health standards, annually offer for sale, on a decadal average, 211 million board feet of timber in western Oregon (Oregon and California Grant Lands).

The Peavine Project's thinning to create more healthy stand conditions will also result in an estimated 1.2 MMBF of harvested timber.

- Goal 1.4: Reduce threats to public health, safety and property.

All of the areas to be thinned include a fuel treatment to reduce the fuel hazard levels and in turn provide better protection of public property / resources.

- 1.4.2: assess the condition of BLM-maintained roads to identify public and administrative access needs, maintenance requirements to resolve public safety and environmental concerns, and prospective road closures.

The purpose of the Peavine project includes road assessments of all of the roads in the project area and will repair and close roads as identified. Road side brushing and pruning will be done to enhance public safety. Approximately 3.4 miles of existing spur roads and skid trails will be decommissioned after use by the Peavine Project.

- Goal 2.2: Restore at-risk resources and maintain functioning systems

- 2.2.2: Achieve proper functioning condition or an upward trend on BLM-administered land.

The Peavine Project will result in the restoration of species and plant series that are more suitable to the site than the dominant off-site low vigor pine. It will increase stand vigor to accelerate the stand development along a trajectory towards late-successional forest habitat conditions. The project also addresses current conditions that are hindering attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives (e.g., eliminating creek diversions, road decommissioning and repair).

IV. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Pursuant with the Endangered Species Act, consultation was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The USFWS's October 12, 2001 Biological Opinion (log # 1-7-01-F-032) addresses timber sale projects for FY02-03 and therefore includes the Peavine Thin timber sale. It is the opinion of the Service that the proposed action would not jeopardize the continued existence of ESA listed species. The present decision regarding the Peavine Thin project's timber sale is consistent with all of the mandatory terms and conditions identified in this biological opinion. It also incorporates and meets all of the identified recommended conservation measures.

The Peavine Project has been determined to be a "no affect" project with regard to its' potential to impact ESA listed anadromous fisheries. This determination has been discussed with the Level I team and the team has concurred with it. Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service is not, therefore, necessary.

The project will not adversely impact any sites of cultural or historical significance. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was been informed of the BLM's finding in accordance with 36 CFR 800.5(b).

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and of the Grande Ronde and of the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua were notified of this project during the scoping and / or the EA's public comment period. Josephine County Commissioners and the Josephine County forestry departments were also contacted. No responses were received.

V. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public notification and involvement for the Peavine Project was initiated in 1997 with the mailing of a scoping notice to individuals and organizations which had previously requested to be notified of such projects, Josephine County officials, native American Tribes, and landowners of record (county tax rolls) for private land adjacent to the project area. The EA summarizes the comments and issues raised as a result of this scoping.

A 30 day formal EA public review and comment period was provided in May-June 2001. Two individuals and one organization commented. All three letters voiced support of the project. The single concern raised was with regard to the proposed decommissioning of a road (Spur road 27G) accessing a valid mining claim. As noted above under the Decision, this road will not be closed and decommissioned.

VI. CONCLUSION AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Based on the information in the Peavine Project EA and in the record, I conclude that the decisions in this Decision Record are consistent with the Medford District Resource Management Plan, the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and, the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manager, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001). They are also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations.

On the basis of the information contained in the environmental assessment and the record for the Peavine Project, it is my determination that the decision stated above will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment beyond the range of impacts and effects considered in the RMP and NFP EIS documents and that were accepted in their respective Records of Decision and to which the Peavine Project EA is tied. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This decision will not have any adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

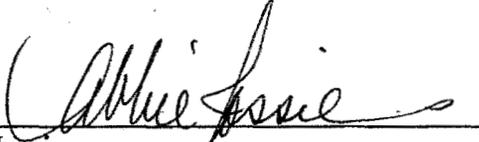
VII. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe that they will be adversely affected by this Decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulations and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies.

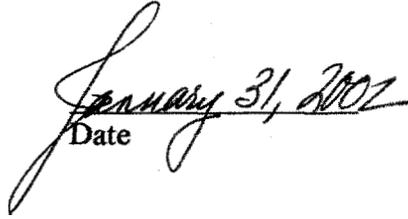
In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations 43 CFR 5003.2(a&b), the effective date of the decision, as it relates to an advertised timber sale(s), will be when the first Notice of Sale for such a sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located. This newspaper is the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of the first notice of sale establishes the effective date of the decision for those portions of this decision record included in the timber sale and timber sale prospectus. The effective date of this decision establishes the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 (a&c), the effective date of this decision, as it pertains to actions which are not part of an advertised timber sale, will be the date of publication of a Notice of Decision and FONSI in The Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of this notice establishes the date initiating the protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.3. While similar notices may be published in other newspapers, the date of publication in the Grants Pass Daily Courier will prevail as the effective date of this decision.

Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations



Abbie Jossie
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Medford District, Bureau of Land Management



Date