

**Christian Futures Unilateral Right-of-Way and  
Road Construction Authorization  
Environmental Assessment**

DOI-BLM-OR-R050-2010-0002-EA  
South River Field Office, Roseburg District

**“Draft” Finding of No Significant Impact**

*Overview*

The analysis area encompasses lands managed by the South River Field Office of the Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Headwaters Canyon Creek 7<sup>th</sup>-field HUC (drainage) of the South Umpqua River 5<sup>th</sup>-field HUC (watershed).

The proposed project area is located in Section 26, T. 31 S., R. 5 W., Willamette Meridian.

The Christian Futures Unilateral Right-of-Way and Road Construction Authorization Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzed two alternatives consisting of Alternative One - No Action (EA, p. 5) and Alternative Two – The Proposed Action (EA, pp. 13).

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Both context and intensity must be considered in determining significance of the environmental effects of agency action (40 CFR 1508.27):

*Context*

The project watershed drains an area of approximately 141,450 acres. The project involves maintenance and hazard tree removal on 6,880 feet of road and construction of approximately 360 feet of temporary road that would remove approximately one-half acre of early-seral forest.

As this project would remove vegetation from less than 0.0004 percent of the watershed area it does not bear any regional, statewide, national or international importance.

*Intensity*

The Council on Environmental Quality includes the following ten considerations for evaluating intensity.

*1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)*

The proposed action would have neither beneficial or adverse impacts as it would be limited to maintenance of an existing road, and construction of a 360-foot extension to that road allowing Christian Futures, Inc. to access company forest lands for the purpose of timber management. The road extension would remove no more than one-half acre from the forested land base for a period of three to four years.

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (2)

The proposed project is road maintenance and construction that would not affect public health or safety because it would occur in a remote forest location in a landscape dominated by Federal and industrial forest land.

3. *Unique characteristics such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (3)

As addressed in the EA (p. 6), there are no Areas of Environmental Concern; prime farmlands; wetlands; wilderness; or wild and scenic rivers in proximity to the commercial thinning and density management units.

Cultural clearances have been previously conducted in this area in association with a prior timber sale. These surveys did not identify any cultural or historical resources deemed to have significant value.

4. *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (4)

The BLM regularly authorizes road construction by private entities under terms of reciprocal agreements and unilateral permits across western Oregon. Effects of road maintenance and modern construction practices are well understood and are not a subject of high scientific controversy.

5. *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (5)

This project is not unique as the BLM regularly authorizes road construction by private entities under terms of reciprocal agreements and unilateral permits across western Oregon. There is a substantial body of literature on road design and construction, with little uncertainty regarding environmental effects of the alternatives, which were analyzed in Chapter Three of the EA (pp. 7-20).

6. *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (6)

The authorization of road construction over BLM-administered lands is a long-standing practice. It does not set a precedent for any future actions, nor represent any decision in principle about future considerations, as any new unilateral right-of-way and construction requests would be subject to site-specific evaluation and analysis prior to any potential authorization.

7. *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant impacts but cumulatively significant impacts.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (7)

The interdisciplinary team considered the project in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. No cumulatively significant effects to resources are predicted, as discussed in Chapter Three of the EA (pp. 7-20).

8. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Historic Register or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (8)

As discussed above, at 3, cultural clearances for this area have been completed and have not identified any cultural or historical resources deemed to have significant value.

9. *The degree to which an action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.* - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (9)

Hazard tree removal and road maintenance projects typically last less than a week and typically less than a day on any quarter-mile section of road. These areas receive baseline noise levels because they are spatially limited to the vicinity of the roads. Any northern spotted owls that may reside within applicable disruption threshold distances would likely be acclimated to noise and not be disturbed by the activities (EA, p. 5).

No effect to northern spotted owls from noise disruption associated with road construction would be expected it would be seasonally restricted from March 1<sup>st</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup>. This seasonal restriction may be waived until March 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year if current calendar year surveys indicate: 1) northern spotted owls are not detected, 2) northern spotted owls are present but are not attempting to nest, or 3) northern spotted owls are present but nesting attempts have failed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has defined noise disturbance occurring after the critical northern spotted owl nesting period as discountable and unlikely to cause nest abandonment or failure of a breeding northern spotted owl pair (EA, p. 13).

The removal, for safety reasons, of an estimated two to four hazard trees and snags along BLM Road No. 31-5-35.1 would have no appreciable or discernible effect on the function of the stands as suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl, or on the function of OMOCA 28 and OR-CHU-14 in providing for the survival and recovery of the northern spotted owl, because none of the trees and snags possess cavities or platforms that would provide nesting structure.

Removal of approximately one-half acre of early-seral forest/shrub habitat for construction of 360 feet of new road would not alter the function of OMOCA 28 and OR-CHU-14. Upon completion of timber management activities on the adjoining private land, estimated at approximately three to four years, the road would be decommissioned and allowed to revert to forest habitat that would be capable of developing into suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl approximately 80-years in the future.

Surveys did not locate **Kincaid's lupine** or any other special status botanical species that would be impacted by the proposed road maintenance and road construction (EA, p. 6).

The Federally-threatened **Oregon Coast coho salmon** is present in the Headwaters Canyon Creek drainage but would not be affected because the nearest occupied coho salmon habitat is 2.5 miles downstream (EA, p. 17) and there is no hydrologic connection of the road maintenance and construction to the stream network by which this habitat could be affected.

Indirect effects from road construction and renovation, timber hauling and road decommissioning could include reduced spawning success and egg and alevin survival where fine sediments reach streams and accumulate in gravels. Application of project design features and Best Management Practices described in the EA, combined with the spatial separation of the activity areas from stream habitat would arrest any mechanism for sediment transport.

For reasons discussed in the EA (p. 17), the project would not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat for coho or Chinook salmon.

*10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. . - 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (10)*

The project was designed in conformance with management direction from the 2008 ROD/RMP, which is in conformance with applicable laws and regulations such as the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Special Status Species Management, Federal Land Management Policy Act, O&C Act, and others.

With respect to environmental justice, the project is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice (EA, p. 6). No potential impacts to low-income or minority populations have been identified by the BLM internally or through public involvement. Employment associated with the sales would involve local contractors who engage in similar types of work throughout Douglas County.

Correspondence with local Native American tribal governments has not identified any known unique or special resources in the project areas which provide religious, employment, subsistence or recreation opportunities (EA, p. 6).

As discussed in the EA (p. 6), implementation of the Roseburg District *Integrated Weed Management Program*, in association with project design and contract provisions would minimize risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds in association with road construction and timber harvest. Prevention measures would include mulching disturbed areas and seeding with native grasses to discourage establishment of new weed populations and pressure washing or steam cleaning logging and road construction equipment prior to move-in to avoid introducing weeds from outside the project area. These actions are consistent with the requirements of the Lacey Act; the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended; and Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, I have determined that the project would not have any significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and an environmental impact statement is not required.

I have further determined that the project conforms to management direction from the 2008 ROD/RMP for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on December 30, 2008.

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Steven Lydick  
Field Manager  
South River Field Office

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Date