

**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**

**Decision Document**

**Decision:**

It is my decision to approve a request by Christian Futures, Inc. and authorize maintenance on 6,880 feet of BLM Road 31-5-35.1, removal of hazard trees along the road, and construction of a 360-foot extension of the road from its present terminus through a 20-year old plantation to access private timberlands in Section 35, T. 31 S., R. 5 W., Willamette Meridian.

Road maintenance and construction will be restricted to the dry season, typically mid-May through mid-October. The road will be full bench construction with a 14-foot running native surface and two-foot ditch line. Waste material will be end-hauled for use in landing construction on the private property. Approximately one-half acre will be cleared in Late-Successional Management Areas for the total right-of-way.

The road will cross a small intermittent stream less than one-foot wide with steep gradients above and below. An 18-inch culvert will be installed, sufficient to handle expected stream flows. Engineered fill (stacked ecology blocks, gabion baskets, etc.) will be employed to minimize the length of the culvert needed and the amount of excavation on approaches to the crossing.

Best Management Practices from the 2008 ROD/RMP (Appendix C), described in the environmental assessment (EA, pp4 and 5) will be applied in construction of the road extension and in maintenance to BLM Road No. 31-5-35.1. Prior to mobilization, all construction equipment will be steam-cleaned or pressure-washed to remove soil and materials that could transport weed seed or root fragments.

The road extension will be needed for an estimated three to four years to allow logging and replanting of the private forest land. At the end of each operating season the road extension will be seeded and mulched to control erosion, and blocked to vehicular access. When use of the road segment is complete and it is no longer needed, it will be decommissioned in the following manner. The single intermittent stream crossing will be removed, and all fill material will be pulled back and disposed of in a stable location where it will not erode into the stream. Waterbars will be constructed, and the road bed will be subsoiled and replanted if practical, otherwise it will be seeded, mulched, covered with slash, and blocked.

**Rationale for the Decision:**

The Christian Futures Unilateral Right-of-Way and Road Construction Authorization EA analyzed two alternatives. The alternatives consisted of Alternative One – No Action (EA, p. 4), and Alternative Two – The Proposed Action (EA, pp. 4 and 5) which would authorize road maintenance and road construction for the purpose of providing access to private land allowing timber harvest by conventional means and reforestation subsequent to harvest.

It is my decision to adopt Alternative Two and issue a permit for road maintenance and construction as described in the EA for the following reasons. The project area is in an area of intermingled or checker boarded ownership typical of most of the Roseburg District. Management direction from the 2008 ROD/RMP (p. 45) directs us to provide needed rights-of-way, permits, leases and easements over BLM-administered lands in a manner that is consistent with federal and state laws. Alternative Two meets this need, whereas Alternative One does not.

As described in the EA (p. 9), there is one **northern spotted owl** nest site (IDNO 2292D) that has the potential to be affected by the project as the nest site is centered approximately 0.45 miles from the site of the new road construction, and between 0.3 and 0.45 miles from the area in which road maintenance will occur.

As described in the EA (p. 5), road construction will be seasonally restricted from March 1<sup>st</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup> unless current calendar year surveys indicate: 1) northern spotted owls are not present, 2) northern spotted owls are present but not attempting to nest, or 3) northern spotted owls are present but nesting attempts have failed. Surveys in 2011 determined that the pair of northern spotted owls were still occupying site IDNO 2292D but did not nest this year, so the risk of disruption/disturbance is considered unlikely. In a letter of concurrence (TAILS#13420-2011-I-0180, p. 9), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) concurred with this finding.

As discussed in the EA (p. 5), hazard tree removal and road maintenance will not be seasonally restricted for the northern spotted owl because 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 within applicable disruption threshold distances will likely be acclimated to noise disturbance. The Service concurred with this finding (TAILS#13420-2011-I-0180, p. 3).

The removal, for safety reasons, of an estimated two to four hazard trees and snags along BLM Road No. 31-5-35.1 will 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 will 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 will be decommissioned and allowed to revert to forest habitat that will be capable of developing into suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl approximately 80-years in the future.

The Service concluded (TAILS#13420-2011-I-0180, p. 8) that the entire critical habitat unit (OR-14) will not change measurably from implementation of the proposed action and that the critical habitat unit will play the same role post-project implementation as it currently does.

In summary, the project is not likely to adversely affect the northern spotted owl or its critical habitat (TAILS#13420-2011-I-0180, p. 10)

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

The Federally-threatened **Oregon Coast coho salmon** is present in the Headwaters Canyon Creek drainage but will not be directly 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 timber hauling could include reduced spawning success and egg and alevin survival where fine sediments reach streams and accumulate in gravels. Application of Best Management Practices described in the EA (pp. 3 and 4), and dry season restrictions on timber hauling will prevent any stream sedimentation.

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

#### **Public Involvement & Response to Comment:**

An interdisciplinary team began analysis of the proposed action in October of 2009, and the public was notified of initiation of the environmental assessment in the Winter 2009 Roseburg District Quarterly Planning Update.

A thirty-day period for public review and comment was provided upon completion of the environmental assessment (May 17, 2011 through June 16, 2011), consistent with BLM policy/practice to provide the public a review opportunity prior to issuance of any decision(s). Notification was made to state and Federal resource management and regulatory agencies. Local tribal and county government, trade groups and other interested parties were also notified. No timely comments on the environmental assessment were received.

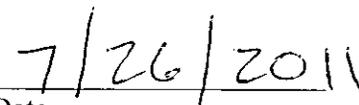
#### **Monitoring:**

Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with requirements set for in Appendix B of the 2008 ROD/RMP, focused on the following program elements: Late-Successional Management Area (p. B-7) and Wildlife (p. B-15).

#### **Administrative Remedies:**

As noted above, no timely comments were received on the environmental assessment during the 30-day period for public comment provided between May 17, 2011 and June 16, 2011. Consequently, no parties have established standing to appeal through participation under the National Environmental Policy Act. It is my decision to give full force and effect to the action described in this document and proceed with its implementation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven Lydick  
Field Manager  
South River Field Office

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date