<u>Draft Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI)</u>

Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment

Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District
NEPA #: DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2010-011-EA

November 8, 2013

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Swiftwater Field Office, proposes thinning of approximately 1,583 acres of forest stands 49 to 95 years old in the Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA). Within this EA, there are three proposed timber sales: Big Thunder (668 acres), Thundering Herd (430), and Rolling Thunder (485 acres) (EA, pg. 7). Approximately 18 acres would be cleared or brushed for spur right-of-ways or roads to access the harvest units (EA, pg. 15). In addition, the BLM proposes a hazardous fuels project to coincide with the thinning project which would include 10 acres of roadside brushing and approximately 92 acres of shrub/understory treatment in a shaded fuel break outside of proposed thinning units (EA, pg. 7).

The Roseburg District initiated planning and design for this project on April 1, 2010 to conform and be consistent with the Roseburg District's 1995 Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan (1995 ROD/RMP). Analysis of the effects of the proposed actions tiers to the analytical assumptions and conclusions of the 1994 *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* ((PRMP/EIS) USDI/BLM 1994). Analysis of effects and information from the 2008 *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revision of the Resource Management Plans of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management* is incorporated by reference.

Thunderbolt includes lands within the Adaptive Management Area (AMA), General Forest Management Area (GFMA), Connectivity/Diversity Blocks (C/D) and Riparian Reserve land use allocations. The Riparian Reserve width for perennial, fish-bearing streams would be 360 feet (two site potential tree heights on both sides of the stream) for the Little River and Middle North Umpqua Watersheds. The Riparian Reserve width for perennial, non-fish bearing streams and intermittent streams would be 180 feet (one site potential tree height on both sides of the stream) in these watersheds.

The proposed units are located on Revested Oregon and California Railroad Lands (O&C Lands). It is anticipated that the proposed timber sales would yield approximately 16 million board feet (16 MMBF) of timber in support of local and regional manufacturers and economies (EA, pg. 7).

Test for Significant Impacts.

1. Has significant impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (1))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No
   Remarks: Any impacts would be consistent with the range and scope of effects analyzed and described in the1994 *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (1994 PRMP/EIS), which analyzed the timber management program for the Roseburg District.

2. Has significant adverse impacts on public health or safety (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (2))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No

   Remarks: Measures have been taken to minimize the potential for land slides or slope failures associated with timber harvest (EA pgs. 79-80). Water quality will not be affected by the thinning treatment (EA pgs. 86-90).

   The thinning treatment would reduce the risk of intense fires because it would create a discontinuous horizontal and vertical fuel arrangement that would slow rates of spread should an ignition occur. Logging slash would be piled and burned to reduce fuel concentrations (EA, pg. 19). The treatment of hazardous fuels in the shaded fuel break would remove additional horizontal and vertical fuels providing a continuous break in fuels along the ridgeline between the North Umpqua River and Little River drainages. These treatments would reduce the fuel loading and potential for extreme fire behavior in the event of a wildfire. Treatment of road side vegetation would reduce the risk of roadside ignition due to human activity and provide for safe ingress and egress in the area (EA, pg. 44-46).

   Treatment of logging slash and hazardous fuels by prescribed fire has the potential to affect air quality locally. Burning of piles would be accomplished under guidelines established by the Oregon Smoke Management Plan and in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Clean Air Act (EA, pg. 19).

3. Adversely effects such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation, or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains or ecologically significant or critical areas including those listed on the Department's National Register of Natural Landmarks (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (3))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No

   Remarks: As described in the EA (pg. 96), cultural resource clearances have been completed. Cultural resources were discovered in proposed units, within proposed spur road routes, and along proposed haul roads included in the Thunderbolt project. The units and roads would be modified to exclude sites or sites would be mitigated in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (EA, pg. 98). There would be no effect to eligible cultural resources or National Register properties in the project area.

   Also as described in the EA (pg. 97), 168 acres were removed from the original thinning proposal because of their location within the North Umpqua Wild and Scenic River Corridor and to protect the unique values of the North Umpqua River. One proposed unit (21F) would be modified to protect the North Umpqua Trail which is designated as a national Recreation Trail.

   Other unique geographic characteristics listed above are absent from the project area and would not be affected EA, pg. 96).

4. Has highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (4))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No
   Remarks: The BLM conducts thinning regularly across western Oregon. There is also a wide body of literature describing the environmental effects of such forest management activity. As such, the BLM has concluded that effects would not be highly controversial. The public has been afforded several opportunities to comment on projects of a nature similar to the current proposal, and none of the comments received indicated controversy over the nature of the effects on the human environment.

5. Has highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks to the human environment (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (5))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No
   Remarks: Commercial thinning is a common forest management tool regularly conducted by the BLM across western Oregon. There is also a wide body of literature describing the environmental effects of such forest management activity. As such, the BLM has concluded that effects would not be highly uncertain. The risks to the human environment are known and not unique. The public has been afforded several opportunities to comment on projects of a nature similar to the current proposal, and none of the comments received indicated unique or unknown risks to the human environment.

6. Establishes a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (6))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No
   Remarks: The advertisement, auction, and award of a timber sale contract allowing the harvest of trees is a well-established practice and would not establish a precedent for future actions.

7. Is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (7))?
   ( ) Yes (√) No
   Remarks: The cumulative impacts to forest vegetation (pgs. 36-42), wildlife (pgs. 58-75), soils (pgs. 77-81), hydrology, aquatic habitat and fisheries (pgs. 86-90), and botany (pgs. 91-92) were analyzed in the Thunderbolt EA and were found to not be significant.

   Greenhouse gas emissions from the proposed action would be negligible. The EA concluded (pg. 95) that greenhouse gas emissions from the proposed action would be so small that its incremental contribution to global and national emissions would not be discernible from the degree of precision at the global and national emission levels.

8. Has adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (8))?

( ) Yes (√) No

Remarks: The BLM has completed its responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act, in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act under the guidance of the 1997 National Programmatic Agreement and the 1998 Oregon Protocol (EA, pg. 98). Inventories for cultural resources were completed, identified sites evaluated, and eligible sites have been excluded from proposed harvest units. Therefore, there would be no effect to historic properties as a result of the action (EA, pg. 96).

9. 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))?

Botanical Species	( ) Yes	(√) No
Fish Species	( ) Yes	(√) No
Wildlife Species	( ) Yes	(√) No

Remarks: Surveys did not identify the presence of any federally threatened or endangered botanical species; therefore the proposed thinning would have no effect on listed botanical species (EA, pgs. 91).

The Swiftwater fisheries staff has determined that any impacts to water temperature, substrate/sediment quality, large wood, pool quality, or habitat access within the project area would be non-existent or immeasurable above background levels. Aquatic habitat in the Thunderbolt project area would be unaffected, except for short-term reductions in the amount of large and small functional wood available to the stream. Further, there are no Oregon Coast coho populations present within the Thunderbolt project area. The nearest coho presence is 0.5 miles downstream in the North Umpqua River. Therefore, the proposed project ***would not have an effect*** on Oregon Coast coho salmon or its habitat and further consultation with the NOAA Fisheries Service is not required (EA, pg. 98).

Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the Thunderbolt Thinning project (including the individual sales Big Thunder, Rolling Thunder and Thundering Herd) has been completed. The *Biological Opinion on the Roseburg District of the Bureau of Land Management's Fiscal Years 2014-2015 Program of Activities, which may affect spotted owls, marbled murrelets and spotted owl and marbled murrelet critical habitat* (FWS 01EOFW00-2013-F-0200) was received from the USFWS, dated September 30, 2013. The Biological Opinion (BO) concluded that this project:

- is ***not likely to adversely affect*** the ability of designated critical habitat units to provide for reproducing northern spotted owls (BO, pg. 118);
- ***may affect, likely to adversely affect*** spotted owls due to modification of dispersal and NRF habitat in habitat-limited owl activity centers (BO, pg. 149-153).

10. Threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (10))?
    ( ) Yes (√) No
    Remarks: The measures described above ensure that the Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment project would comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (EA, pg.10). The impacts of the silvicultural and fuels treatments on the human environment would not exceed those anticipated by the 1994 PRMP/EIS.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I would determine that Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment would not have a significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and that an environmental impact statement would not be required. I would determine that the effects of the silvicultural and hazardous fuels treatments would be within those anticipated and already analyzed in either the 1994 PRMP/EIS or the 2008 Final EIS. Therefore, the Thunderbolt Thinning and Hazardous Fuels Treatment project is in conformance with management direction from the 1995 ROD/RMP approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

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Max Yager, Field Manager Date
Swiftwater Field Office