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

Elk Wings Commercial Thinning and Density Management

Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District
NEPA #: DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2011-009-EA

June 19, 2013

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Swiftwater Field Office proposes thinning/density management on approximately 582 acres of forest stands 37-64 years old in the Elk Wings Commercial Thinning and Density Management Environmental Assessment (EA). Within this EA, there are three proposed timber sales: Admiral Halsey (134 acres), Lost Cub (241 acres), and Uncle Albert (207 acres) (EA, pg.1). Approximately 8 acres would be cleared or brushed for spur right-of-ways to access the harvest areas (EA, pg. 7).

The Roseburg District initiated planning and design for this project on November 8, 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 action 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.

Elk Wings includes lands within the General Forest Management Area (GFMA), Connectivity/Diversity Block (C/D), Riparian Reserve (RR), and Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) land use allocations. The Riparian Reserve width for perennial and fish-bearing streams would be 400 feet (two site potential tree heights on both sides of the stream) in the Elk Creek-Umpqua River Watershed and 360 feet (two site potential tree heights on both sides of the stream) in the Upper Umpqua River Watershed. The Riparian Reserve width for intermittent, non-fish bearing streams would be 200 feet (one site potential tree height on both sides of the stream) in the Elk Creek-Umpqua River Watershed and 180 feet (one site potential tree height on both sides of the stream) in the Upper Umpqua River Watershed.

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 11-12 million board feet (11-12 MMBF) of timber in support of local and regional manufacturers and economies (EA, pg. 1).

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: The additional amount of down woody debris (i.e. four tons per acre) generated through the Elk Wings project would not dramatically increase the fire risk to the area. The primary carrier of fire is the fine fuels less than one inch in diameter. These fine fuels generated in the harvest process would mostly degrade within two years after harvest. Therefore, there would be an increase in fire risk in the area for approximately two years before these additional fine fuels degrade (EA, pg. 70). 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.

   Treatment of logging slash by prescribed fire has the potential to affect air quality locally. Burning 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. 17).

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: Unique geographic characteristics (such as those listed above) are absent from the project area and would not be affected EA, pg. 63).

   As described in the EA (pg. 71), cultural resource clearances have been completed and no resources of significant cultural or historical value were identified. Consequently, no effects to cultural resources are anticipated.

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. 20-25), wildlife (pgs. 26-42,and 63-66), soils (pgs. 43-48), hydrology, aquatic habitat and fisheries (pgs. 49-58), botany (pgs. 66-69), and carbon storage (pgs. 59-62) were analyzed in the Elk Wings EA and were found to not be significant.

   Greenhouse gas emissions from the proposed action would be negligible. The EA concluded that the proposed action would result in direct greenhouse gas emissions that would constitute 0.00004 percent of current global emissions (2,823 tonnes out of 6.8 billion tonnes) and 0.0002 percent of current U.S. emissions (2,823 tonnes out of 1.7 billion tonnes) (EA, pg. 62). These emissions 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. 71). Inventories for cultural resources were completed (September 20, 2011) and no cultural resources were discovered. Therefore, there would be no effect to historic properties as a result of the action (EA, pg. 71).

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. 66-67).

   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 Andrews Creek, Green Ridge Creek, and their tributaries would be unaffected, except for short-term reductions in the amount of large and small functional wood available to the stream. Due to the high volume of wood already in the streams and the high density of

trees in the no-harvest buffers, fish species and populations in the streams in the project area would be unaffected. 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, pgs. 72-73).

Consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the Elk Wings Commercial Thinning and Density Management project (including the individual sales Admiral Halsey, Lost Cub, and Uncle Albert) has been completed (EA, pg. 72). The *Biological Opinion regarding the effects of the Roseburg District Bureau of Land Management's proposed fiscal year 2011-2013 timber sale program and associated activities on the Northern Spotted Owl, the Marbled Murrelet and their designated critical habitats* (FWS Ref. No. 13420-2011-F-0012) was received from the USFWS dated December 28, 2010. The Biological Opinion (BO) concluded (pg. 82) that the District's 2011-2013 timber sale program and associated activities are ***not likely to jeopardize the continued existence*** of the northern spotted owl or the marbled murrelet. This conclusion was warranted because the proposed action:

- is not likely to adversely affect the ability of designated critical habitat units to provide for viable clusters of reproducing northern spotted owls or nesting areas for marbled murrelets;
- is likely to maintain a sufficient amount and distribution of dispersal habitat to facilitate natal and northern spotted owl dispersal; and
- is not likely to completely eliminate mammalian and other prey species within the project area (BO, pgs. 82-83).

The USFWS also concluded that although designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet would be subjected to impacts that these effects would not be considered likely to affect the ability of said habitat to continue to fulfill its role at the stand scale in the survival and recovery of either the northern spotted owl or the marbled murrelet. No destruction or adverse modification of currently designated critical habitats would occur (BO, pg. 83).

Consultation with the USFWS was reinitiated when the 2012 Final Rule for Revised Critical Habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl was published on December 4, 2012. A Letter of Concurrence (LOC) was received on January 3, 2013 (FWS reference #: 01EOFW00-2013-IC-0026). The USFWS concurred with the District's determination (LOC, pg. 16) that implementation of the Elk Wings project will not significantly affect Primary Constituent Elements and therefore *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* (NLAA) 2012 Revised Spotted Owl Critical Habitat and the ability to fulfill its role at the stand scale in the survival and recovery of the northern spotted owl.

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 Elk Wings Commercial Thinning and Density Management project would comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (EA, pg.4). The impacts of the silvicultural treatment 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 Elk Wings Commercial Thinning and Density Management 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 treatment would be within those anticipated and already analyzed in either the 1994 PRMP/EIS or the 2008 Final EIS. Therefore, Elk Wings Commercial Thinning and Density Management project is in conformance with the management direction from the 1995 ROD/RMP approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

Max Yager, Field Manager
Swiftwater Field Office

June 19th, 2013
Date