

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ROSEBURG DISTRICT
SOUTH RIVER FIELD OFFICE

DECISION RECORD

Based upon the attached Categorical Exclusion (DOI-BLM-OR-R050-2012-0002-CX), I have determined that the proposed action salvaging blown down timber in conjunction with commercial thinning of 16 acres of timber, approximately 70-years of age involves no significant impacts to the human environment and no further environmental analysis is required. This sale will generate an estimated 449 thousand board feet of timber.

It is my decision to implement the Holy Water Commercial Thinning and Salvage project subject to the following conditions:

- Road construction necessary for landing access will be temporary and unsurfaced. Post-operations, the road bed will be water-barred, slash-mulched, and blocked to vehicular traffic.
- Prior to mobilization into the contract area, road construction and logging equipment will be steam cleaned or pressure washed to remove soil and other materials that could transport weed seed, root fragments, or other propagative materials. If equipment is removed from the contract area during the life of the contract, it must be re-cleaned and re-inspected prior to re-entry into the project area.
- Harvest and hauling operations will be subject to dry-season restrictions, May 15 to October 15, because of the temporary nature of the road.
- Harvest operations will also be restricted through July 15 for the bark slip period.
- No blown down timber would be salvaged from within the Riparian Management Areas so that the material would be available for instream recruitment.
- Because the unit is located adjacent to unsurveyed suitable nesting habitat for the marbled murrelet and in close proximity to a known marbled murrelet site, harvest operations will be seasonally restricted from April 1 through August 5, and northern portions of the units within 100 yards of unsurveyed suitable nesting habitat will be subject to daily operating restrictions August 6 through September 15 to remove the potential for disturbance of marbled murrelets that might be nesting in the vicinity.
- The unit is overlapped by an estimated northern spotted owl home range, but the project will not remove any suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl. No concerns for disruption/disturbance to nesting northern spotted owls would exist because operational restrictions for dry season timber hauling, bark slip period, and seasonal restrictions to prevent disturbance to marbled murrelets that could be nesting in unsurveyed habitat will move operations outside of the critical nesting season for the northern spotted owl.



Steven Lydick
Field Manager
South River Field Office



Date

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ROSEBURG DISTRICT

NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW

A. Background:

BLM Office: Roseburg District, South River Field Office
777 NW Garden Valley Blvd
Roseburg, Oregon, 97471
Phone: 541-464-4930

NEPA Document No. DOI-BLM-OR-R050-2012-0002-CX

Proposed Action Title: Holy Water Commercial Thinning and Salvage

Location of Proposed Action: NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 2, T. 30 S., R. 9 W., Willamette Meridian.
The land is allocated as General Forest Management Area and Riparian Reserve.

B. Description of Proposed Action: The South River Field Office, Bureau of Land Management proposes to apply commercial thinning and density management to approximately 16 acres, and to salvage timber within the stand that was blown down in a windstorm in March of 2011. The stand is allocated to the General Forest Management Area and associated Riparian Reserves.

The stand is approximately 70 years of age and is dominated by Douglas-fir with a large grand fir component. Other conifer species include western hemlock, western redcedar and Port-Orford-cedar. Bigleaf maple is the principal deciduous tree species, but red alder is also present.

Thinning objectives include:

- Providing sustainable timber production,
- Improving stand health by reducing stand density, maintaining species diversity, and reducing the component of grand fir which is less resistant to insects and diseases, more susceptible to fire damage and mortality, and present in numbers far in excess of historic levels found in older stands in the watershed,
- Promoting species diversity by maintaining a component of hardwoods and minor conifer species for wildlife, and
- Maintaining and improving structural diversity for the marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl.

The unit would be cable yarded using skyline systems capable of maintaining one-end log suspension, and having a minimum of 100-feet of lateral yarding capacity. Operations would be limited to the dry season and subject to bark slip restrictions through July 15.

Access would be provided by renovation of a private road that terminates at approximately the western edge of the stand and construction of a temporary spur road, approximately 235 feet in length to reach a suitable landing site. The road extension would be water-barred, slash-mulched and blocked after operations are completed.

The stand in which the private road is located is considered dispersal habitat for the northern spotted owl. Renovation of this road would involve cutting and decking of approximately 70 wind-thrown trees that are across the road. All but one of the trees is 16 inches or less diameter breast height. Two standing trees, 30 to 36 inches diameter breast height, may pose a safety hazard and could be removed. Although these trees are larger and older they are not considered suitable for nesting by marbled murrelets or northern spotted owls because they lack nesting structure.

Prior to mobilization into the contract area, road construction and logging equipment will be steam cleaned or pressure washed to remove soil and other materials that could transport weed seed, root fragments, or other propagative materials. If equipment is removed from the contract area during the life of the contract, it must be re-cleaned and re-inspected prior to re-entry into the project area.

Based on a site-potential tree height of 180 feet, a Riparian Reserve of 180 feet in width would be established on either side of an intermittent stream that extends into the unit, and on Mystic Creek to the north of the unit. A 360-foot wide Riparian Reserve would be established on the Middle Fork Coquille River which is located east of the unit. "No-treatment" areas would be established immediately adjacent to the streams and river. On the intermittent stream the "no-treatment" area would be a minimum of 35 feet in width, on either side of the stream. On Mystic Creek, a "no treatment" area well in excess of 90 feet was established to exclude suitable marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl nesting structures from the unit. On the Middle Fork Coquille River the "no-treatment" areas would be a minimum of 60 feet in width where it borders the unit.

The marking objective for the upland portion of the unit is primary timber production, with thinning from below to improve the health and vigor of the residual trees. The project will capture imminent tree mortality while improving the quality of wood upon final harvest. Marking guidelines include maintaining the healthiest and best-formed Douglas-fir, as well as retaining a hardwood component and minor conifer species.

Thinning in the upland portion of the stand would be on a generally even spacing, retaining on average approximately 70 trees per acre and 140 ft² of basal area. Trees selected for retention would have at least 30 percent live crown to help assure favorable response to thinning. Conifer trees forked below breast height would either both be reserved or both taken. Hardwood clumps in which at least one stem is 12 inches diameter breast height would be marked for retention, as would all cedars and Pacific yew six inches diameter breast height and larger. All trees greater than 26 inches diameter breast height would be reserved

Because of the high percentage of grand fir, Douglas-fir would be favored for retention even where a larger grand fir exists, through application of the 25 percent rule. In essence, a Douglas-fir tree up to 25 percent smaller in diameter breast height than a larger grand fir would be favored for retention. No grand fir 10 inches diameter breast height or smaller would be selected for retention.

Objectives for the Riparian Reserves are to maintain species diversity, maintain effective stream shading, and speed growth and development of large trees to provide future sources of large woody debris for instream recruitment. No blown down timber would be salvaged within one-half site-potential tree height (90 feet) of waterbodies within or adjacent to the stand so that such material would be available for instream recruitment. Variable density thinning will be used in Riparian Reserves to promote structural and species diversity. This will include small canopy gaps up to ¼-acre in size with similar size skips. Tree density would be reduced to an average of approximately 55 trees per acre and 110 ft² of basal area. All trees greater than 22 inches diameter breast height would be reserved.

Hardwood clumps with at least one stem is 10 inches diameter breast height would be marked for retention, as would all cedars and Pacific yew six inches diameter breast height and larger. Tree selection may include up to two trees per acre with broken or deformed tops for structural and habitat diversity. The 25 percent rule would also apply with respect to favoring Douglas-fir for retention over grand fir.

The project area is located in the Seasonal Restriction Corridor of Marbled Murrelet Management Zone 2. Suitable but unsurveyed **marbled murrelet** nesting habitat is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the unit. Approximately one-eighth of a mile to the east of the unit is the boundary of known marbled murrelet site R3020.

To avoid the potential for disrupting/disturbing (e.g. flushing) nesting marbled murrelets operations would be seasonally restricted from April 1 through August 5, and subject to daily operating restrictions August 6 through September 15. Daily operating restrictions prohibit commencement of operations until two hours after sunrise and require cessation of operations two hours before sunset.

The unit is overlapped by an estimated **northern spotted owl** home range (IDNO EST 28) and suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl is adjacent to the northern boundary of the unit. Previous surveys in 2007 and 2008 did not detect any northern spotted owl activity, but more recent survey data is unavailable. The project would not remove any suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl, but would modify dispersal habitat. No concerns would exist for disruption/disturbance to nesting northern spotted owls that could be present in the area because operational restrictions for dry season timber hauling, bark slip period, and seasonal restrictions to prevent disturbance to marbled murrelets that could be nesting in unsurveyed habitat would move the thinning operations outside of the critical nesting season.

C. Land Use Plan Conformance:

Land Use Plan Name: 1995 Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP), approved June 2, 1995, because it is specifically provided for in the following management objectives and direction:

- In the General Forest Management Area, commercial thinning would be programmed in stands under 80 years of age and would be designed to assure high levels of timber volume productivity (p. 151);

- Apply commercial thinning in the matrix where practical and where research indicates increased gains in timber production are likely (p. 62);
- In Riparian Reserves, density management is to be applied to control stocking levels, establish and manage non-conifer vegetation, and acquire vegetation characteristics consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives (pp. 153-154), and
- Provide for salvage harvest of timber killed or damaged by events such as wildfire, windstorms, insects, or disease, consistent with management objectives for other resources (p. 60).

In ruling on Conservation Northwest et al. v. Mark E. Rey et al. on December 12, 2009, Judge Coughenour in the U.S. District Court for Western Washington set aside the 2007 Record of Decision eliminating the Survey and Manage mitigation measures but deferred issuing a remedy until further proceedings. The judge did not set aside the Pechman exemptions, or enjoin the BLM from proceeding with projects.

Thinning in stands under 80-years of age is exempt from the Survey and Manage standards and guidelines under Judge Pechman's order. The stand to be thinned is approximately 70 years-old. All road construction is sited within the boundaries of the unit. Consequently, the Holy Water Commercial Thinning and Density Management project fits within the Pechman exemption "a."

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment as documented in the following table. The proposed action has been reviewed as described in the following table, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

D. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with **516 DM 11.9, C. Forestry, (7)** – Harvesting live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 mile of temporary road construction. Such activities:

- a. Shall not include even-aged regeneration harvests or vegetation type conversions.
- b. May include incidental removal of trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.
- c. May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and
- d. Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment by artificial or natural means, or vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.

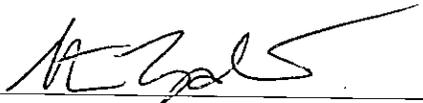
The proposed salvage of blown down timber within the commercial thinning unit is categorically excluded from further documentation under NEPA in accordance with **516 DM 11.9 (C) (8)**, which authorizes salvaging of dead or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 miles of temporary road construction.

E. Categorical Exclusions - Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation:

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
Rationale: All proposed activities will abide by established Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules concerning health and safety. The proposed project area is in a forested location, dominated by federal and industrial lands, away from population centers and with limited access so that user conflicts and risks to the public are remote.		
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
Rationale: The project area is not located in any park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, or national natural landmarks. Floodplains would not be impacted. There are no prime farmlands, wetlands, national monuments, or other ecologically significant or critical areas present in the project area. Commercial thinning may alter but would not eliminate the ability of the stand to provide habitat for migratory birds, nor appreciably alter the function or abundance of mid-seral forest habitat provided by BLM-administered lands. Activities will occur after nesting and fledging are largely completed, so the risk of harm to bird species that may be nesting in the stand is very slight.		
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X
Rationale: Past experience has shown that the environmental effects of commercial thinning in young forest stands are not highly controversial. The ROD/RMP established the land use allocation and goals for the affected lands, and subsequently no unresolved conflict regarding other uses of these resources exists.		
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
Rationale: Commercial thinning and density management of young forest stands is a long-standing practice, backed by research and a large body of published scientific findings. It has not been demonstrated to have highly uncertain or potentially significant effects, or involve unique or unknown risks.		
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
Rationale: Commercial thinning and density management are addressed and authorized under the existing ROD/RMP, and as such, this project would represent implementation of that land use plan decision, not a decision in principle on future actions. Commercial thinning is a silvicultural practice, the application of which is based on forest stand conditions. It has been widely used on federally managed lands throughout Oregon and has not been shown to have potentially significant impacts.		
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
<p>Rationale: This proposed project has no direct relationship to other current or planned projects in the watershed.</p> <p>Commercial thinning and density management of the unit would not alter the forest age class distribution of BLM lands in the Upper Middle Fork Coquille watershed, and would not create canopy gaps across an area sufficient to alter the timing or magnitude of peak and base flows.</p> <p>“No-treatment” areas on intermittent and/or perennial and fish-bearing streams would preserve streamside shading to maintain stream temperatures, provide fully vegetated strips to filter any sediment-laden overland flow, and maintain a source of small functional wood for instream recruitment.</p> <p>Timber hauling would be restricted to the dry season to eliminate the potential for sediment delivery from roads that might otherwise result in sediment generation that could impact water quality through increased turbidity.</p>		
2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X

<p>Rationale: Inventory within the proposed unit (CRS No. SR1107) was completed on July 26, 2011, and resulted in negative finding of cultural resources. The project will not affect any known sacred, religious, ceremonial or culturally significant Indian sites or National Register properties. The BLM has completed its Section 106 responsibilities under the 1997 National Programmatic Agreement and the 1998 Oregon Protocol.</p>		
2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, as an Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
<p>Rationale: No suitable marbled murrelet nesting habitat would be removed by the proposed commercial thinning and salvage, and operations would be subject to seasonal restrictions and daily operating restrictions, as stated in the project description, to eliminate the prospect of disturbing nesting marbled murrelets that may be nesting in suitable habitat to the north of the unit or in the marbled murrelet reserve located to the east of the unit, as discussed in the project description. Consequently, the project would not adversely affect the marbled murrelet.</p> <p>The project would not remove suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl. There is suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat to the north of the unit, and the unit is overlapped by the home range of an estimated northern spotted owl site in which surveys in 2007 and 2008 failed to document any occupancy, but more recent survey data is unavailable. Because of the application of dry-season harvest restriction, bark slip restrictions and seasonal restrictions for the marbled murrelet, thinning operations would not occur until after August 5, outside the critical breeding season during which concerns for disturbance might exist. Thinning would modify stand conditions, but would not preclude function as dispersal habitat because the average canopy closure would remain above 40 percent. Consequently, the project would not adversely affect the northern spotted owl.</p> <p>In consultation with the Roseburg District, BLM the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the determination that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet (Final_RoseburgBLM_LOC_J-Cleghorn_H-Water 1-11-2012.doc; Tails# 01E0FW00-2012-I-0041).</p> <p>The proposed unit is located almost 4 miles upstream from the natural limits of Oregon Coast coho salmon distribution, of Oregon Coast coho salmon Critical Habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat for Oregon Coast coho salmon and Chinook salmon in the Middle Fork Coquille River. With established "no-treatment" areas along streams and designated dry season timber hauling there are no discernible means by which sediment from this project area would reach streams occupied by Oregon Coast coho salmon.</p> <p>The proposed unit was surveyed for Special Status botanical species in the summer of 2011. No Federally-threatened Kincaid's lupine or any Bureau-Sensitive vascular plants, lichens, or bryophytes were located, consequently no effects are expected.</p>		
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed action conforms to direction from the Roseburg District ROD/RMP for management of public lands on the Roseburg District. The ROD/RMP complies with all applicable laws, including the Federal Land Policy Management Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and others.</p>		
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 2898).		X
<p>Rationale: No potential impacts have been identified by the Roseburg District BLM, either internally or through public involvement, indicating that projects of this nature would have a disproportionate impact on low-income or minority populations in Douglas County, Oregon.</p>		
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X
<p>Rationale: No Indian sites of sacred, religious or ceremonial value have been identified in the resource area.</p>		
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X
<p>Rationale: Pressure washing or steam cleaning of logging equipment would be required prior to move-in to remove any soil or other materials that may be contaminated with seed or other propagative material as a means of reducing the risk of introducing any spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species in to the project area.</p>		

F. Signature:



Steven Lydick
Field Manager
South River Field Office

2/15/2012
Date

G. Contact Person & Reviewers:

For additional information concerning this Categorical Review, contact:

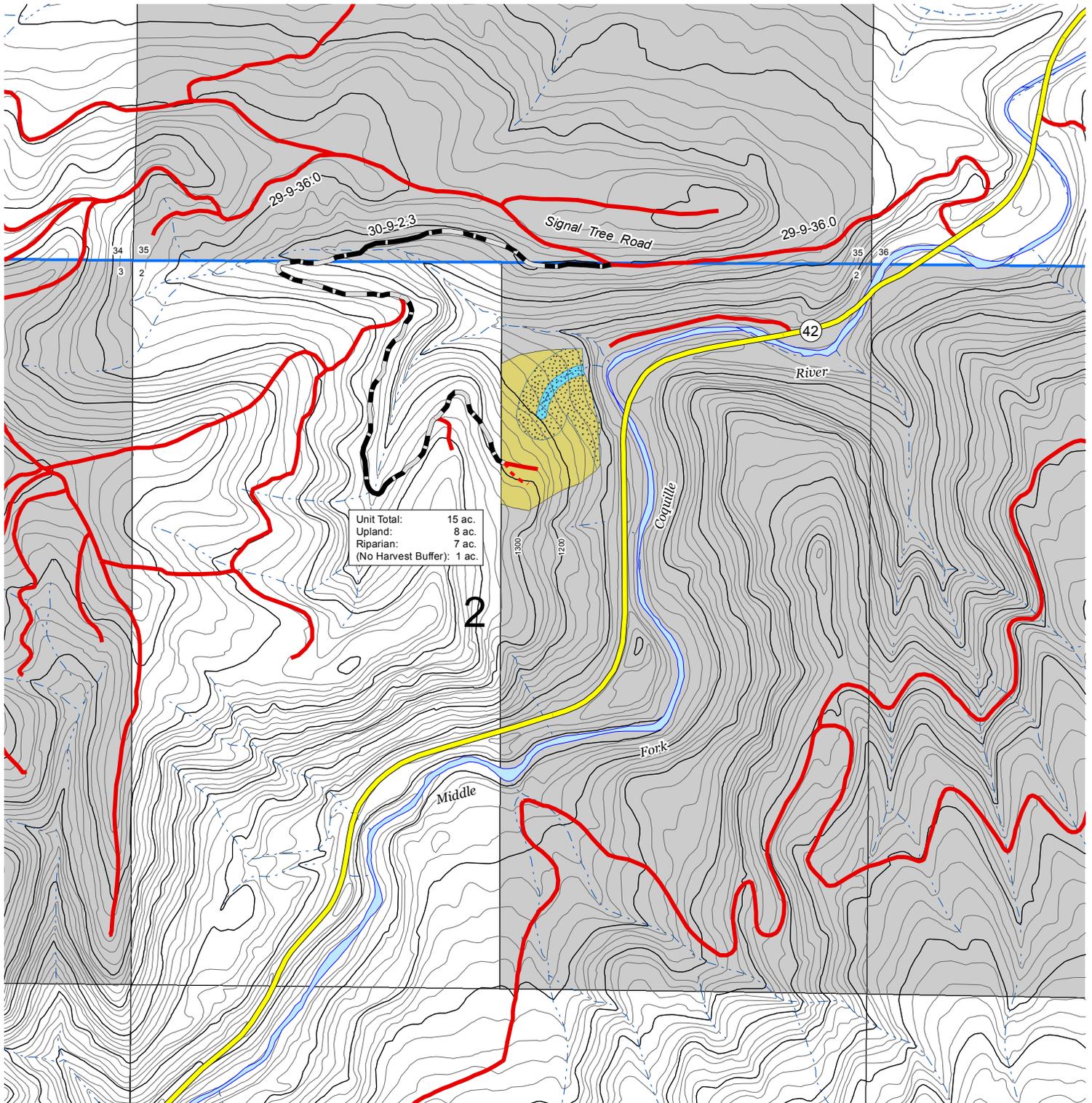
Macrina Lesniak - Forester
777 NW Garden Valley Blvd.
Roseburg, OR 97471
(541) 464-3312

Reviewers	Resource Expertise	Initials	Date
Paul Ausbeck	Environmental Coordinator - Planner	PA	2/15/12
Gary Basham	Botanist	GB	2-14-12
Roli Espinosa	Wildlife Biologist	RE	2-15-12
Jonas Parker	Hydrologist	JNP	2-14-12
Cory Sipher	Fisheries Biologist	CS	2-15-12
Molly Casperson	Archaeologist	MC	2/14/12

HOLY WATER

Commercial Thinning / Salvage

Tree Reservation Marking Map



T30S, R9W

Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.



- Existing Road
- Renovate, Native
- Construct, Native
- Stream
- 20' Contour
- 100' Contour

- Thinning Area (Upland, 8 Acres)
- Thinning Area (Rip. Buffers, 7 Acres)
- 35 Ft. No Harvest Riparian Area (1 Acre)
- BLM (O&C) Land
- Non-BLM Land