

## Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI)

### **Mud Den Commercial Thinning**

Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District  
NEPA #: DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2010-003-EA

July 23, 2010

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Swiftwater Field Office proposes to commercially thin approximately 831 acres of mid-seral forest stands, 34-54 years old, in the Mud Den Commercial Thinning Environmental Assessment (EA). In addition, up to approximately five acres per timber sale will be cleared or brushed for spur right-of-ways to access the harvest areas.

Mud Den is located in the Upper Umpqua River, Deer Creek-South Umpqua River, and South Fork Coos River watersheds within the General Forest Management Area (GFMA), Connectivity/Diversity Block (C/D), Late-Successional Reserve (LSR), and Riparian Reserve land use allocations. It is anticipated that the proposed timber sale will yield approximately 15 to 16 million board feet (15 to 16 MMBF) of timber in support of local and regional manufacturers and economies. The units are located in Sections 17, 21, 29, 31, 32, and 33; T. 26 S.; R. 07 W.; Willamette Meridian (W.M.).

#### **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 will be consistent with the range and scope of those effects analyzed and described in the 1994 *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. seven to eight tons per acre) will not dramatically increase the fire risk to the area. The primary carrier of fires is the fine fuels of less than three inches in diameter. These fine fuels generated in the harvest process will mostly degrade within two years after harvest. Therefore, there will be an increase in fire risk in the area for approximately two years before these additional fine fuels degrade (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pgs. 32-33).

Treatment of logging slash by prescribed fire has the potential to affect air quality locally. Burning will be accomplished under guidelines established by the Oregon Smoke Management Plan (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pg. 9). Any impacts to local air quality will be localized and of short duration, consistent with the range and scope of those effects analyzed and described in the 1994 PRMP/EIS (pgs. 4-9 to 4-12).

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 will not be affected.

4. Has highly controversial effects on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR §1508.27(b) (4))?

Yes  No

**Remarks:** The BLM conducts commercial 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 will not be highly controversial. The public was afforded several opportunities to comment on 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 will not be highly uncertain. The risks to the human environment are known and not unique. The public was afforded several opportunities to comment on 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 will 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 impacts to forest vegetation (pgs. 18-20), wildlife (pgs. 21-32), fire and fuels management (pgs. 32-33), soils (pgs. 33-39), hydrology (pgs. 39-44), aquatic habitat and fisheries (pgs. 44-47), botany (pgs. 47-49), recreation (pgs. 49-51), and carbon storage (pgs. 51-56) were analyzed in the *Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA* and were found to not be significant.

Greenhouse gas emissions from the proposed action will be negligible. The EA concluded that the proposed action will result in greenhouse gas emissions that will constitute 0.00005 percent of current global emissions (3,438 tonnes out of 6.8 billion tonnes) and 0.0002 percent of current U.S. emissions (3,438 tonnes out of 1.7 billion tonnes) (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pgs. 54-55). This emission will be so small that its incremental contribution to global and national emissions will not be measurable at the level of precision of the global and national emissions.

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 Section 106 responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act, in accordance with the 1998 Oregon State Historic Preservation Office protocols (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pg. 58). Inventories for cultural resources were completed (June 23, 2010) and no cultural resources were discovered. Therefore, there will be no effect to historic properties as a result of the action (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pgs. 17, 58).

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	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Fish Species	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Wildlife Species	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

**Remarks:** Surveys did not identify the presence of any federally threatened or endangered botanical species; therefore the action will have no effect on listed botanical species (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pg. 47).

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 will be non-existent or immeasurable above background levels. Aquatic habitat in Hubbard Creek, Camp Creek, and their tributaries will 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 “no-harvest” buffers, and lack of fish-bearing streams adjacent to harvest units fish species and populations in Hubbard Creek, Camp Creek, and downstream will be unaffected (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pgs. 44-47, 57-58). Therefore, the proposed project will not have an effect on Oregon Coast coho salmon or its habitat and further consultation with the NOAA Fisheries Service is not required (*Mud Den Commercial Thinning EA*, pg. 57-58).

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed for the Calahan Mudaxle and Devil’s Den timbersales for the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and their respective designated Critical Habitat.

(1) A Letter of Concurrence was received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Tails#: 13420-2009-I-0109; pgs. 34-35) dated June 9, 2009, which concurred with the District’s conclusion in the Biological Assessment for Commercial Thinning and Programmatic Actions Proposed by the Roseburg District BLM in Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010 (pgs. 71-73) that the commercial thinning activities described for the Calahan Mudaxle timbersale may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, or their respective designated Critical Habitat.

(2) A Biological Opinion was received from the USFWS (Roseburg District BLM Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Program of Activities [Tails#: 13420-2009-F-0125]) dated July 31, 2009. The biological opinion stated (pgs. 64-65) that thinning of dispersal habitat as described for the Devil’s Den timbersale is likely to adversely affect spotted owls

by negatively affecting forage species (e.g. flying squirrels) that the owls may feed upon. However, the USFWS concluded in their biological opinion (pg. 75, Ref. No. 13420-2009-F-0125) that the Roseburg District's program of commercial thinning (which included the Devil's Den project) are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the spotted owl because thinning is not likely to completely eliminate mammalian prey species and the network of reserved land use allocations will maintain a sufficient amount of dispersal habitat.

Consultation for the Mud Slinger proposed sale has not been completed, but is expected to be completed by September 2010. The Project Design Features described in the EA (pgs. 6-15) are consistent with those found in the current 2009-2010 Consultation. Project Design Features developed for this project through the consultation process are not anticipated to change from those in the 2009-2010 Consultation. In addition, the District will adhere to the *Terms and Conditions* stipulated in the consultation package for the Mud Slinger project. When consultation for the Mud Slinger proposed sale has been completed, the results will be disclosed in the decision document (EA, pg. 57).

Mudslinger will not significantly impact northern spotted owls in the original Melrose (IDNO 2150O) activity center. Even though treatment of dispersal habitat within this core area is expected to cause adverse affects to the spotted owl by temporarily reducing foraging and roosting opportunities for the spotted owl; these opportunities are expected to improve as canopy layers, vegetative diversity, and canopy cover increases (EA, pg. 23). In addition, Mudslinger will not significantly impact northern spotted owls in the alternate Melrose (IDNO 2150A) activity center because there has been no documented nesting activity since 2001 and the lack of occupancy at this alternate activity center means the thinning will not affect its use (EA, pgs. 23-24).

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 Mud Den Commercial Thinning will be consistent with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws. The impacts of the silvicultural treatment on the human environment will not exceed those anticipated by the 1994 PRMP/EIS.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that Mud Den Commercial Thinning will 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 will not be required. I have determined that the effects of the silvicultural treatment will be within those anticipated and already analyzed in the 1994 *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (1994 PRMP/EIS) and will be in conformance with 1995 *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (1995 ROD/RMP) for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

  
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Max Yager, Field Manager  
Swiftwater Field Office

7-23-10  
Date