

Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI)

Northeast Elk Creek Density Management

Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District
EA# OR-104-08-05

The FONSI issued previously for Northeast Elk Creek Density Management on August 4, 2009, was not fully updated to reflect the U.S. Department of the Interior's July 16, 2009 withdrawal of the Records of Decision and Resource Management Plans (2008 ROD/RMP) for the Western Oregon Plan Revision.

The Northeast Elk Creek Density Management FONSI issued August 4, 2009 incorrectly tiered to the 2008 *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revision of the Resource Management Plan of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management* (2008 Final EIS); but should have tiered to the 1994 *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement* (1994 PRMP/EIS) as corrected below.

However, the Bear Bones and General Lee Density Management Decision Documents, also issued August 4, 2009; did correctly tier to the 1994 PRMP/EIS and the assumptions and conclusions underlying those decisions remain unchanged in light of this error. Project planning and preparation of National Environmental Policy Act documentation for this project began June 20, 2008 (prior to the effective date of the 2008 ROD) and the EA was released for public comment December 2, 2008. Therefore, the Northeast Elk Creek Density Management project was designed to comply with the land use allocations, management direction, and objectives of the 1995 Resource Management Plan (1995 RMP).

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Swiftwater Field Office will perform density management on approximately 1,459 acres of mid-seral forest stands, 40-77 years old, in five separate proposed timbersales: Bear Bones (215 acres), Bucko (266 acres), Cox Pit (247 acres), General Lee (296 acres), and Mr. Bennet (435 acres). Within the 1,459 acres, approximately 32 acres will be cleared or brushed for spur right-of-ways or roads to access the harvest areas.

These sales are located in the Elk Creek/Umpqua River Fifth-field Watershed within the Connectivity/Diversity Block and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations and will yield approximately 15.2 million board feet (15.2 MMBF) of timber in support of local and regional manufacturers and economies. The units are located in Sections 27 and 35; T21S R04W; Willamette Meridian (W.M.) Sections 9, 15, 20, 21, 23, and 27; T22S R04W; W.M.; and Section 3; T23S R04W; 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).

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 to eight tons per acre) will not dramatically increase the fire risk to the area. The primary carrier of fires is the fine fuels less than three inches in diameter. These fine fuels generated in the harvest

process will mostly degrade within two years after harvest. The homes in the area are not adjacent to the projects and therefore will not have increased fire risk (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pg. 25).

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 and Visibility Protection Plan to avoid adverse effects. 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 density management regularly across western Oregon. There is also a wide body of literature describing the environmental effects of such forest management activity. No effects are 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: The risks to the human environment from the project were analyzed in the *Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA* and found not to be highly uncertain or unique.

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. 15-17), wildlife (pgs. 17-24), fire and fuels management (pgs. 24-25), soils (pgs. 25-30), hydrology (pgs. 30-35), fish populations and habitat (pgs. 35-40) were analyzed in the *Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA* and found not to be significant.

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 (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pg. 43). No cultural resources were discovered (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pg. 13). It has been determined that there will be no effect to cultural or historical resources (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pg. 43).

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 action will have no effect on listed botanical species (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pg. 40).

Northeast Elk Creek Density Management will have no effect on the Oregon Coast coho or its critical habitat. The closest Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Coho or Chinook salmon is approximately 0.1 miles downstream from the project and will not be adversely affected by the project (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pgs. 37-39).

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been completed for the federally threatened northern spotted owl and its critical habitat. A biological opinion was received from the USFWS (*Roseburg District BLM Fiscal Year 2009-2010 Program of Activities* [FWS Ref. No. 13420-2009-F-0125]) dated July 31, 2009. The biological opinion stated (pgs. 64-65) that thinning of dispersal habitat (such as that in Northeast Elk Density Management) 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 five Northeast Elk Creek Density Management projects) *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 would maintain a sufficient amount of dispersal habitat.

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 Northeast Elk Creek Density Management 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.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider the effects of this decision on the President's National Energy Policy. A high-voltage transmission line and a natural gas pipeline are adjacent to or within the Northeast Elk Creek project area but there are no known energy resources with commercial

potential within the project area. Trees will be felled away from the transmission lines, and ground-based equipment would not be allowed to operate within the transmission line and pipeline corridor, except on designated skid trails and roads (*Northeast Elk Creek Density Management EA*, pg. 13). There will be no known adverse effect on National Energy Policy.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that Northeast Elk Creek Density Management 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 is not 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 the 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.

Max Yager, Acting-Field Manager
Swiftwater Field Office

Date