

South Umpqua Fish Habitat Enhancement Decision Document

South River Programmatic Restoration Environmental Assessment (EA # OR 105-04-03)

South River Field Office, Roseburg District

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize implementation of the South Umpqua Fish Habitat Enhancement project. The project will treat two reaches of Days Creek in Sections 13 and 23, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. Willamette Meridian (W.M.), and two reaches of St. John Creek in Sections 15 and 27, T. 30 S., R. 3 W., W.M. On Days Creek, instream structures will be created by the pulling or felling of 20 to 25 trees into the stream channel from adjacent Riparian Reserves, supplemented with cull logs purchased from private sources that will be winched into place or positioned with an excavator. The material for instream habitat enhancement on St. John Creek will be provided entirely by cull logs purchased from private sources.

Field Office hydrology and fishery personnel have identified a deficiency of large woody debris resulting in: a reduction in pool complexity and volume, a lack of retention of gravel substrate, and reduced availability of spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous and resident salmonids. Placement of logs and trees instream will create and enhance habitat structure and complexity.

The following project design features will be implemented:

- All equipment will be pressure-washed or steam-cleaned prior to mobilization into the project area to minimize the risk of introducing soil from outside the project area that may be contaminated with noxious weed seed or other propagative materials. Any equipment removed during the life of the contract must be re-cleaned before being returned to the project area.
- In-stream work will be restricted to the period between July 1 and September 15, during low summer flows.

Rationale for the Decision:

Projects of this nature were analyzed under Alternative Two, the Proposed Action, described in the South River Programmatic Watershed Restoration EA (pp. 6-7). Implementation will aid in meeting the objectives of restoring normal stream function by aggrading stream, providing for longer retention of suitably-sized spawning substrates, and creating complex pool habitat for rearing and sheltering of anadromous and resident salmonids. Alternative One, the “No Action” alternative, would not meet these objectives.

Placement of the instream structures in Days Creek and St. John Creek will not result in any undue environmental degradation. The project is consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives contained in the 1995 ROD/RMP (pp. 20-21), in that it will help: maintain and restore in-stream flows, maintain and restore the natural sediment regime, and maintain and restore aquatic habitat. The project also implements management direction to restore stream channel complexity (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 20).

Surveys for Bureau Sensitive Oregon shoulderband snail and Chace sideband snail are not required because rock-on-rock habitat, a critical habitat component, is generally absent from both project areas. Potential effects to other habitat components, such as accumulations of large woody debris, would be minimal because the movement of logs and placement of the logs into the stream channels would disturb less than five percent of the project area. This constitutes a low level of disturbance unlikely to reduce habitat quality, cause a decrease in the number of individuals in a population, alter their distribution, or negatively affect the persistence of these species (*Protocol for S&M Terrestrial Mollusk Species v3.0*; Feb. 2003).

Surveys for the Bureau Sensitive Crater Lake tightcoil snail are not required because the project areas are all below 2000-feet in elevation, a habitat threshold identified in the literature (*Field Guide to Survey and Manage Terrestrial Mollusk Species from the Northwest Forest Plan Bureau of Land Management Oregon State Office June 1999*; *Survey Protocol for S&M Terrestrial Mollusk Species v3.0*, Feb. 2003).

Forest stands adjoining the Days Creek project area function principally as dispersal habitat for northern spotted owls. An exception is a reach of stream located in the NE¹/₄, Section 13, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. where the adjoining stands are older forest that provides nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat.

Scattered removal of trees in the SW¹/₄, Section 13 and Section 23, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. up to 180 feet from the stream channel will not affect the function of the forest as dispersal habitat. The portion of the project area in the SW¹/₄, Section 13, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. is 140 meters from a spotted owl nest patch, well beyond the 65-yard disruption threshold, indicating an extremely low probability that tree cutting or pulling in the vicinity would disturb northern spotted owls.

Selection of trees in the NE¹/₄, Section 13, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. for pulling or felling into the stream will avoid trees with platforms or cavities that may provide nesting opportunities for northern spotted owls. Modification of current habitat conditions would be negligible and the forest stands would continue to provide habitat consistent with what presently exists.

No tree cutting is anticipated on the St. John Creek project area. Cull logs for instream placement will be purchased from outside sources and delivered to the project site. The entire project area is considered dispersal habitat for the northern spotted owl and is more than one mile from any known northern spotted owl nest site.

Since no tree removal is expected and the St. John Creek project reaches are beyond the 65- yard disruption threshold, noise associated with tree cutting, pulling, or equipment use will not disturb or disrupt any nesting spotted owls, and seasonal restrictions on project implementation are not required.

The Days Creek and St. John Creek projects are not located in critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. The nearest Critical Habitat Unit is more than five miles away, and the in-stream projects would have no effect on its intended function.

Days Creek and St. John Creek are both designated as critical habitat and Essential Fish Habitat for Oregon Coast coho salmon. Potential effects from placement of logs for instream habitat are primarily associated with sediment generated by stream bank and stream channel disturbance. Actions of this nature are judged by the National Marine Fisheries Service to constitute an adverse effect to coho critical habitat and Essential Fish Habitat.

Actions of this nature were programmatically consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service and are addressed and authorized in *Endangered Species Act – Section 7 Programmatic Consultation Biological and Conference Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Fish Habitat Restoration Activities in Oregon and Washington*, dated April 28, 2007.

Public Involvement & Response to Comment:

No issues were identified by any local or tribal governments, State agencies, or other Federal agencies. The EA and Finding of No Significant Impact were made available for public review from May 5, 2004, through June 4, 2004. Comments were received from two organizations.

These comments did not constitute new information or identify any issues not already considered and addressed in the South River Programmatic Restoration EA, the 1995 ROD/RMP, or Roseburg District *Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*.

Conformance:

The South Umpqua Fish Habitat Enhancement project is in compliance with management direction of the 1995 Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) and conforms to the Roseburg District 2008 ROD/RMP. The analysis supporting this decision tiers to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revision of the Resource Management Plan of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management (2008 FEIS).

Revision of a resource management plan necessarily involves a transition from application of the old resource management plan to application of the new resource management plan. A transition from old to new resource management plans avoids disruption of the management of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands and allows the BLM to utilize work already begun on the planning and analysis of projects.

The 2008 ROD/RMP allows for projects to be implemented consistent with the management direction of either the 1995 ROD/RMP, as amended, or the 2008 ROD/RMP at the discretion of the decisionmaker (pp. 5-6). This project meets the requirements for such transition projects because:

- A decision was not signed prior to December 30, 2008, the effective date of the 2008 ROD/RMP.
- Initiation for the South River Programmatic Restoration EA occurred on November 3, 2003 and notice was published in the Winter 2004 Roseburg District Planning Update. The EA was completed in May of 2004, preceding the effective date of the 2008 ROD/RMP.
- The South Umpqua Fish Habitat Enhancement project decision is being issued within two years of the effective date of the 2008 ROD/RMP.
- The project will not result in destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat designated for species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

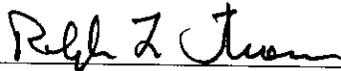
There are no project design features that are inconsistent with Best Management Practices or project design features described in the 2008 ROD/RMP.

Monitoring:

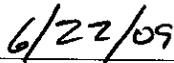
Monitoring will be done in accordance with the 1995 ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, & 195-198), with emphasis on assessing the effects of the restoration activities on the following resources: Water and Soils; and Fish Habitat.

Administrative Remedies:

This decision is appealable under regulations contained in 43 CFR § 4.410. Any appeals of the decision must be filed with the authorized officer within thirty (30) days of publication of this notice, on June 23, 2009.



Ralph L. Thomas
Field Manager
South River Field Office



Date