

**U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Roseburg BLM District, Oregon**

**Saddle Up To Paradise
Commercial Thinning & Density Management Reoffer
Decision Document
(EA # OR-104-07-03)**

SECTION 1 – THE DECISION

Background

Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management was analyzed in an Environmental Analysis (EA #OR-104-07-03) that was released for public comment from July 3, 2007 through August 2, 2007. The EA is available online at:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/sddlupea.pdf>.

The timber sale notice and notice of decision was published on August 21, 2007 and the timber sale was originally sold at auction on September 18, 2007.

Citing an economic recession in the timber market, the Office of the Secretary of the Interior issued an Instructional Memorandum (No. 2010-003) authorizing the BLM to enter into a process of mutual cancellation of existing contracts sold on or before September 15, 2009 that were not yet terminated.

On December 14, 2009, the BLM was informed by the purchaser of the desire to enter into mutual cancellation of the Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management contract. Cancellation was completed on October 8, 2010 with contract termination completed on January 21, 2011.

Decision

It is my decision to reoffer the Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management project and complete implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative described in Chapter 2 (pgs. 6-9) of the Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management EA. This will include implementation of Project Design Features (EA, pgs. 9-15) that are a part of the Action Alternative. These Project Design Features have been incorporated into contract stipulations and will be implemented as part of the timber sale contract; all Project Design Features which were incorporated into the contract stipulations for the original decision will remain in effect.

The commercial thinning and density management project consists of two units of second-growth forest approximately 38 to 69 year-old and 200 acres in area. The project area is located in the Elk Creek/Umpqua River Fifth-Field Watershed in Section 27; T. 21 S, R. 7 W.; Willamette

Meridian. Within the 200 acres, approximately 10 acres have been removed for spur road rights-of-way as provided for in the original decision issued August 21, 2007.

A re-cruise of the 190 acres to be thinned yielded an estimated volume of 3.282 million board feet (3.282 MMBF) of timber that will help support local and regional manufacturers and economies. The increase in volume from the initial offering is the result of ingrowth of the stands, not from any changes in unit boundaries or marking prescription.

Conformance

The Roseburg District initiated planning and design for this project to conform and be consistent with the Roseburg District's 1995 RMP. Following the March 31, 2011 decision by the United States District Court for the District of Columbia in Douglas Timber Operators et al. v. Salazar, which vacated and remanded the administrative withdrawal of the Roseburg District's 2008 ROD/RMP, we evaluated this project for consistency with both the 1995 RMP and the 2008 ROD/RMP. Based upon this review, the selected alternative contains some design features not mentioned specifically in the 2008 ROD/RMP. The 2008 ROD/RMP did not preclude use of these design features, and the use of these design features is clearly consistent with the goals and objectives in the 2008 ROD/RMP. Accordingly, this project is consistent with the Roseburg District's 1995 RMP and the 2008 ROD/RMP.

Compliance and Monitoring

Compliance with this decision will be ensured by frequent on-the-ground inspections by the Contracting Officer's Representative. Monitoring will be conducted as indicated in the EA (pg. 15).

SECTION 2 – THE DECISION RATIONALE

Chapter 2 of the EA described two alternatives: a "No Action" alternative and a "Proposed Action" alternative. The No Action alternative was not selected because it does not meet the objectives described in the EA (pgs. 3-4) of complying with Section I of the O&C Act, providing a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities, contributing to the Roseburg District's annual declared Allowable Sale Quantity of 45 MMBF, managing forest land to assure a high level of sustained timber productivity, or performing density management to help forest stands develop late-successional characteristics and attain forest conditions that contribute to achievement of Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.

Project Design Features described in the EA (pgs. 9-15) and incorporated into the timber sale contract stipulations will minimize soil compaction, limit erosion, protect slope stability, protect wildlife, protect air and water quality, and protect fish habitat, as well as protect other identified resource values. Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the EA, it was determined in the Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) that the Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management project 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 (FONSI, pg. 5).

SECTION 3 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping comments for the Saddle Up To Paradise EA were solicited from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners and affected State and local government agencies from March through May of 2007. No comments were received by the BLM.

The general public was notified via the *Roseburg District Planning Update* (Spring 2007) which was sent to approximately 150 addressees. These addressees consist of members of the public that have expressed interest in Roseburg District BLM projects. Comments were received from one local organization requesting additional information about the project.

During the thirty day public review period for the Saddle Up To Paradise EA, ending on August 2, 2007, the BLM received comments from four organizations. The BLM addressed these comments in the original Saddle Up To Paradise decision issued August 21, 2007, which may be found at:

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/saddledr.pdf>:

SECTION 4 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the original decision was issued in 2007, climate change and greenhouse gas emissions have been identified as an emerging resource concern by the Secretary of the Interior (Secretarial Order No. 3226; January 16, 2009), the OR/WA BLM State Director (Instruction Memorandum OR-2010-012, January 13, 2010), and by the general public through comments on recent project analyses.

The U.S. Geological Survey, in a May 14, 2008 memorandum to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, summarized the latest science on greenhouse gas emissions and concluded that it is currently beyond the scope of existing science to identify a specific source of greenhouse gas emissions or sequestration and designate it as the cause of specific climate impacts at a specific location. Given this uncertainty, analyses have focused on calculating greenhouse gas emissions and storage, in the context of carbon release and sequestration.

This office has completed several analyses of carbon storage and release for commercial thinning and density management EAs^a. These analyses were based on proposed thinning and density management prescriptions comparable to that applied in Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management.

Averaged over acres proposed for treatment, tonnes of carbon released ranged from 4.13 to 4.92 tonnes per acre varying with thinning intensity, timber volume removed, fuel consumption for yarding, hauling distance to the mill, and amount of post-harvest fuels treatment. If these numbers are applied to this project, carbon release would be on the magnitude of approximately 785 to 935 tonnes. This would equate to between 2,865 and 3,413 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂)

^a Third Elk Commercial Thinning (NEPA # DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2009-0021EA) at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/ThirdElkEA.pdf>., Mud Den Commercial Thinning (NEPA # DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2010-0003-EA) at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/MudDenCTEA.pdf>., and Clever Beaver Density Management (NEPA # DOI-BLM-OR-R040-2010-0002-EA) at http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/roseburg/plans/files/CleverBeaver_EA.pdf..

released. These emissions are inconsequential against estimated annual global CO₂ emissions of 25 billion tonnes and U.S. emissions of 6.9 billion tonnes.

In the analyses conducted, it would take approximately two to three years for the residual stands to recover or sequester carbon (at an average rate of 2.87 tonnes per year per acre) equivalent to that released directly by the proposed action. After two to three years, the stands analyzed would begin to have a net increase in carbon sequestration since the average rate at which logging slash and wood products would emit carbon (i.e. an average rate of 0.23 tonnes per year per acre) would be less than the average rate at which the residual stands sequester carbon (i.e. 2.87 tonnes per year per acre). Levels of carbon release and time to re-sequestration for Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management would be comparable to what has been modeled in previous EAs^a.

SECTION 5 – ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

The Roseburg District published the original Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management decision in a timber sale notice on August 21, 2007, in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon, followed by a 15-day protest period as required by 43 CFR § 5003.3. The Roseburg District did not receive any protests.

There have been no changes to the Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management project being reoffered. As described on page one of this decision document, all Project Design Features which were incorporated into the contract stipulations for the original decision will remain in effect. The principle of administrative finality precludes protest of any issues on this Saddle Up To Paradise Commercial Thinning and Density Management Reoffer that could have been raised at the time of the original offering. Consequently, there is no new protest opportunity, and this decision is effective immediately.



Max Yager
Field Manager
Swiftwater Field Office

4-21-11

Date