

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

**2015-2017 SOUTH RIVER PRE-COMMERCIAL THINNING DECISION RECORD**

Based upon the attached Categorical Exclusion (DOI-BLM-OR-R050-2015-0009-CX), I have determined that the proposed action, pre-commercial thinning 2,470 acres of young forest, involves no significant impacts to the human environment and no further environmental analysis is required.

It is my decision to implement pre-commercial thinning using chain saws. Work will be conducted between October and January beginning in 2015 and extending into 2017.

Pre-commercial thinning will not affect nesting opportunities for marbled murrelets or affect nesting, roosting and foraging opportunities for northern spotted owls as the young stands to be thinned are presently unsuitable habitat and the trees to be thinned are under 8 inches diameter breast height. Thinning will occur between October and January which is outside of the nesting season for both species so that potential disruption is avoided.

Pre-commercial thinning will not have any adverse effect on Kincaid's lupine as the activity would occur during the time of year when the plants are dormant, and the activity will not result in any level of site disturbance sufficient to harm plants that may be present in stands to be thinned. If plants are present, they should benefit from an increase in light reaching the forest floor.

Pre-commercial thinning is an activity that does not result in substantial surface disturbance, is not considered likely to pose a risk to any undiscovered cultural or historical resources that might be present, and is exempt from normal inventory requirements, as specified in protocols issued by the Oregon Historical Preservation Office in 1998. The BLM has met its Section 106 requirements as guided by the protocols and 2012 National Programmatic Agreement.

**Protest Procedures**

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. A 15-day formal protest period will begin September 16, 2015. To protest a forest management decision, a person must submit a written and signed protest to the South River Field Manager, 777 NW Garden Valley Boulevard, Roseburg, OR 97471 by close of business (4:30 p.m.) by September 30, 2015. The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and why it is believed to be in error, as well as cite applicable regulations. Faxed or emailed protests will not be considered.

For further information, contact Steven Lydick, Field Manager, South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, 777 NW Garden Valley Blvd. Roseburg, OR 97471, (541) 440-4930.

  
Steven Lydick  
Field Manager  
South River Field Office

9/15/15  
Date

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

**NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW**

**BLM Office:** Roseburg District, South River Field Office  
777 NW Garden Valley Blvd  
Roseburg, Oregon, 97470  
Phone: 541-464-4930

**Proposed Action Title: 2015-2017 Pre-commercial Thinning**

**CX#: DOI-BLM-OR-R050-2015-0009-CX**

**Location of Proposed Action:** Various locations throughout the South River Resource Area (see attached map)

**A. Description of Proposed Action**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to cut competing vegetation greater than 1 foot tall and less than 8 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) in stands less than 40 years old to provide more growing space for selected leave trees in young stands. Pre-commercial thinning would be applied to approximately 2,470 acres: 1,247 acres in the General Forest Management Area (GFMA), 502 acres in Connectivity/Diversity Blocks (C/D Blocks), and 714 acres in Late Successional Reserves (LSR) and associated Riparian Reserves. The project would be implemented using chain saws, beginning in October and ending in January in 2015 through 2017.

Pre-commercial thinning would be beneficial to stand growth in the long-term however there would be an increase in potential fire hazard for approximately 5-10 years post-treatment. Fire hazard is described as a fuel complex, defined by volume, type, condition, and arrangement that determines the degree of ease of ignition and the resistance to control. Fire hazard expresses the potential fire behavior for a fuel type, regardless of the fuel type's weather-influenced fuel moisture content (Hardy, 2005). The amount of slash, and therefore resulting hazard, varies greatly depending on specific site conditions.

The BLM would evaluate pre-commercially thinned units to determine if fire hazard reduction would be necessary. Evaluation criteria would include estimating the post-treatment stand conditions by considering attributes such as aspect and slope; tree density; slash depth and continuity; and whether or not the unit is in the Wildland Urban Interface. Slash treatment to mitigate fire hazard would be accomplished by further treatment such as bucking, chipping, pulling cut vegetation away from roadways, and/or piling material in select units. Any slash treatments would follow seasonal restrictions as described for the pre-commercial thinning.

General specifications for the pre-commercial thinning include:

- Reserving all conifer and hardwood trees 8 inches diameter breast height or larger.
- Reserving all Pacific yew trees. These would not be considered leave trees for the purpose of spacing.
- Cutting all competing vegetation within 10 feet of leave trees with the exception of retained hardwoods in C/D Blocks and LSR.
- Thinning stands adjacent to intermittent non-fish bearing streams and wetlands less than one acre in size down to the ordinary high water mark.

- Buffering ten (10) feet off of the normal high-water mark adjacent to perennial and fish bearing streams and wetlands greater than one acre in size in compliance with the Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan approved June 1995, as amended (ROD/RMP, pp. 19-20).
- Pulling thinning slash a minimum of 10 feet away from the edge of all roads bordering or passing through treated areas.

Specific to the General Forest Management Area:

- Thinning to a 13-foot by 13-foot spacing, leaving approximately 250 conifers per acre.
- Selecting the best formed conifers for retention while maintaining species diversity, consistent with stand composition objectives described in the ROD/RMP (pp. 151-152).

Specific to the Connectivity/Diversity Blocks and Riparian Reserves:

- Thinning to a 13-foot by 13-foot spacing, leaving approximately 250 conifers per acre.
- Selecting the best formed conifers for retention while maintaining species diversity, consistent with stand composition objectives described in the ROD/RMP (pp. 151-152).
- Retaining hardwood clumps on an average 50-foot by 50-foot spacing regardless of distance from a leave tree.

Specific to the Late Successional Reserves

- Thinning to a 16-foot by 16 foot spacing, leaving approximately 170 conifer per acre.
- Selecting the healthiest best formed conifers for retention while maintaining species diversity including hardwoods.
- Retaining hardwood clumps on an average 50-foot by 50-foot spacing regardless of distance from a leave tree.

## **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

**Land Use Plan:** Roseburg District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP) as amended. Date Approved: June 1995

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable ROD/RMP because it is specifically provided for in the following ROD/RMP decision:

Pre-commercial thinning and release treatments would be designed to control stand density, influence species dominance, maintain stand vigor, and place stands on developmental paths so the desired stand characteristics result in the future. Thinning and release may occur simultaneously or separately (ROD/RMP, p. 148).

## **C. 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)(4): “*Pre-commercial thinning and brush control using small mechanical devices.*”

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 in the following table, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

## D. Categorical Exclusions - Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WOULD:	YES	NO
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Pre-commercial thinning, evaluation of post-treatment conditions and slash treatment would occur in rural forested areas away from communities and is not expected to have any effect on public safety.</p>		
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
<p><b>Rationale:</b> There are no unique geographic characteristics, historical or cultural resources, parks, recreation or refuge lands, etc. that would be affected. Thinning would be conducted outside of the nesting season for migratory and land birds, so no direct effects to nesting adult birds, nests and eggs, or fledgling birds would be expected.</p>		
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Past experience has shown that the environmental effects of pre-commercial thinning in young forest stands are not highly controversial. The ROD/RMP authorized this silvicultural activity, and as such, there is no unresolved conflict regarding other uses of these resources.</p>		
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Pre-commercial thinning of young forest stands is a long-standing practice that has not been demonstrated to have highly uncertain or potentially significant effects, or involve unique or unknown risks.</p>		
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Pre-commercial thinning is addressed in and authorized by the ROD/RMP. As such, this project represents implementation of that land use plan decision, not a decision in principle on future actions. Pre-commercial thinning is a silvicultural practice, the application of which is based on forest stand conditions. It has been widely practiced on BLM and Forest Service lands throughout western Oregon and has not been shown to have potentially significant impacts.</p>		
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
<p><b>Rationale:</b> Pre-commercial thinning would be practiced for the purpose of reducing stand densities, improving tree health and vigor. The project is not related, in any way, to other projects with the potential for cumulative effects.</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><b>Rationale:</b> Pre-commercial thinning is an activity that does not result in substantial surface disturbance, is not considered likely to pose a risk to any undiscovered cultural or historical resources that might be present, and is exempt from normal inventory requirements, as specified in Appendix E of the Oregon BLM-SHPO 1998 Protocol.</p>		

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WOULD:	YES	NO
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><b>Rationale:</b> Pre-commercial thinning would not affect nesting opportunities for marbled murrelets or affect nesting, roosting, and foraging opportunities for northern spotted owls as the stands to be thinned are presently unsuitable habitat and thinned trees would be less than 8 inches DBH and less than 40 years old. Thinning would occur October through January which is outside of the nesting season for both species so that potential disruption is avoided.</p> <p>Pre-commercial thinning would maintain stream bank stability, and prevent degradation and erosion of stream banks so that there is negligible likelihood of sedimentation occurring. The project would be implemented using chain saws and was designed with 10 foot no-cut riparian buffers along perennial and fish bearing streams. Primary streamside shading would be maintained so that no changes in stream temperatures would occur. No effects to coho salmon, critical habitat for coho salmon, or Essential Fish Habitat for coho and chinook salmon are expected.</p> <p>Thinning would occur at a time of year (October through January) when Kincaid's lupine is dormant and would be unaffected by thinning activities. There would be no off-road operation of any heavy equipment that would result in ground disturbance.</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><b>Rationale:</b> The proposed pre-commercial thinning 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, such as 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><b>Rationale:</b> No potential impacts have been identified by the Roseburg District BLM, either internally or through public involvement, indicating that pre-commercial thinning 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><b>Rationale:</b> No Indian sites of sacred, religious or ceremonial value have been identified in the project 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><b>Rationale:</b> There would be no off-road operation of any heavy equipment that would result in soil disturbance or displacement, thereby creating circumstances favorable to establishment of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species. Foot traffic associated with forest work crews is not expected to create such conditions.</p>		

**E. Signature**

  
 Steve Lydick  
 Field Manager  
 South River Field Office  
 2015-2017 South River Pre-Commercial Thinning

9/15/15  
 Date

## F. Contact Person & Reviewers

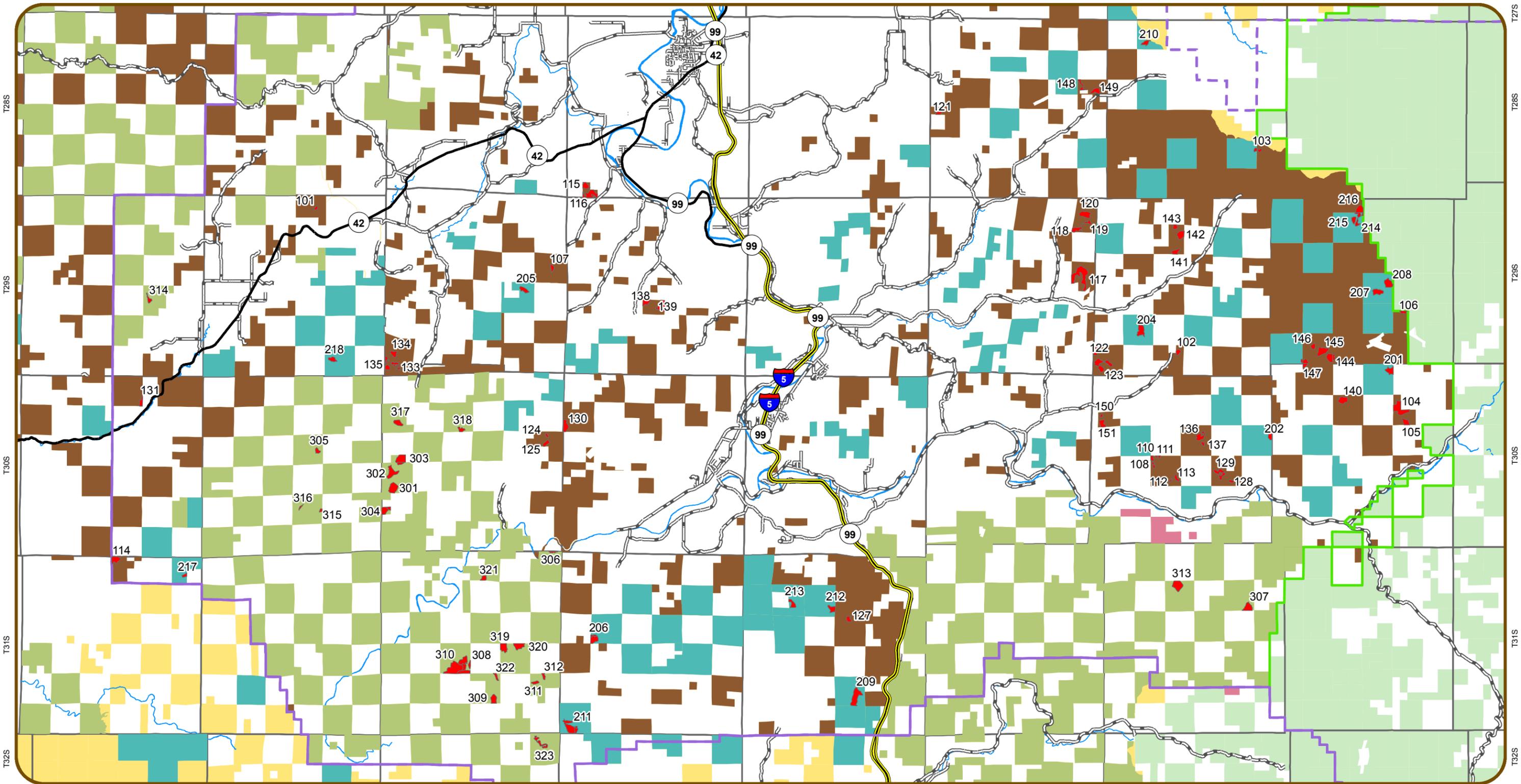
For additional information concerning this Categorical Review, contact:

Ryan Johnson (South River Forester)  
777 NW Garden Valley Blvd.  
Roseburg, OR 97471  
(541) 464-3330

Name	Specialty	Initials	Date
Molly Casperson	Archeologist	MC	8/13/15
Aaron Roe	Botanist	AR	8/17/15
Krisann Kosel	Fire Ecologist	KK	9/8/15
Steve Clark	Fisheries Biologist	SC	8/14/15
Sidney Post	Hydrology	SP	8/14/15
Ward Fong	Soil Scientist	WF	8/17/15
Summer Cross	Wildlife Biologist	SC	8/12/15
Michelle Roberts	Environmental Coordinator	MR	8/18/15



# 2015-2017 South River Pre-Commercial Thinning



### Legend

- |                              |                                |                           |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pre-Commercial Thinning Unit | <b>Land Use Allocations</b>    | <b>Land Ownership</b>     |
| District Area Boundary       | Connectivity                   | Bureau of Land Management |
| Interstate Highway           | District Defined Reserve       | U.S. Forest Service       |
| US Highway                   | General Forest Management Area |                           |
| State Highway                | Late Successional Reserve      |                           |



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.



Date: 9/14/2015

