

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

A. Background

BLM Office: Marys Peak Resource Area

Lease/Serial/Case File No: N/A

Categorical Exclusion Number: DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2014-0003-CX **Date:** 7/15/2014

Proposed Action Title/Type: Marys Peak Resource Area 2010 to 2014 Young Stand
Silvicultural Activities (2014 Add Acres)

Location of Proposed Action: Multiple locations within the Marys Peak Resource Area¹. Includes BLM-managed lands in Benton County.

Land Use Allocation(s): Late-Successional Reserve (LSR), General Forest Management Area (GFMA), and Riparian Reserves (RR).

Description of Proposed Action: This project consists of management of young (less than 35 years old) forest stands in the Marys Peak Resource area over the period of 2010-2014. Young stand management includes manual maintenance, pre-commercial thinning (PCT), and pruning. No trees of merchantable or commercial size will be harvested. All cut material will remain on-site and either be piled, burned, or left in place to serve as coarse woody debris.

Over the five year period, approximately 4,534 acres are planned for treatment allocated as follows:

- Manual Maintenance of 182 acres;
- Manual Release of 2,494 acres;
- Density Management/PCT of 1,405 acres; and
- 453 acres of pruning.

Approximately 558 acres are planned for treatment in 2014 as described below:

The ***Manual Maintenance and Release*** portions of this project consist of cutting competing vegetation for conifer stocking maintenance and survival of conifer species in young stands (typically ages 11 to 15 years). The primary purpose is to increase growing space and provide sufficient light for survival of conifers. In 2014, 191 acres (seven units) are proposed for manual maintenance treatment in the GFMA land use allocation (LUA) and 50 acres (three units) are proposed for manual maintenance and release treatment in the LSR LUA.

The ***Pruning*** portion of this project consists of using hand tools to remove lower branches from conifers up to twenty feet on the bole. In 2014, 233 acres (seven units) in the GFMA LUA are proposed for pruning lower branches to improve the wood quality of future lumber products and reduce impacts of disease and animal damage.

¹ Maps and a list of site descriptions for projects are filed in the Marys Peak Resource Area and are available upon request.

The *Young Stand Elk Habitat* portion of this project consists of thinning conifer and hardwood species in two plantations. Treatments within each unit will include thinning to approximately 100 trees per acre (21 foot by 21 foot spacing), with small openings of heavy thinning to about 20 trees per acre (47 foot by 47 foot spacing), and will include skips with no treatment. Slash will be piled in the heavy thinning patches and piles along roads will be burned to reduce fuels and encourage early-seral vegetation recovery. The intent of this treatment type is to create localized early-seral habitat conditions that benefit numerous wildlife species, including elk, and to develop open-grown conifer stand conditions that will benefit late-seral habitat conditions in the future. In 2014, 84 acres (two units) are proposed for thinning treatment in the LSR LUA.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (1995 RMP)* **Date Approved** March 1995 **Date Amended:** The 1995 RMP was amended in January 2001 as documented in the *Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, dated January 2001 (SM/ROD).

The proposed action is in conformance with the land use plan, because it is specifically provided for in the following decisions:

- Control stocking, reestablish and manage stands, and acquire desired vegetation characteristics (RMP p. 11).
- Plan and implement silvicultural practices inside Late-Successional Reserves that are beneficial to the creation of late-successional habitat (RMP p. 16).
- Conduct... silvicultural activities in ...suitable forest lands, according to management actions/direction (RMP p. 21).

The proposed action is consistent with the 2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, as incorporated into the Salem District RMP. The proposed action is consistent with the watershed analyses in fourteen of sixteen watersheds that have been completed from 1995 to 1999. The recommended actions within the watershed analyses support the proposed action.

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 which allows for “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. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM2 (see Table 1, below) apply.

Table 1

Categorical Exclusions: Extraordinary Circumstances Review

<i>Will the Proposed Action documented in this Categorical Exclusion</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<p>1) <i>Have significant impacts on public health or safety?</i></p> <p>Rationale: Silvicultural treatments will have no impacts on public health or safety. Temporary signage will be properly placed to warn residents and visitors of silvicultural activities.</p>		No
<p>2) <i>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, floodplains, national monuments, migratory birds, other ecologically significant or critical areas?</i></p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p>No unique geographical characteristics are within the project area or affected by this project. Geographic locations of the project area will have little to no impact to recreational use. Visual resources of all treatments areas are VRM class 4 (major modification allowed). There are no known historic or cultural resources identified within the project areas and therefore will have no impacts.</p>		No
<p>3) <i>Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2) (E)]?</i></p> <p>Rationale: The effects of these silvicultural treatments are not controversial and there are no unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.</p>		No
<p>4) <i>Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?</i></p> <p>Rationale: Silvicultural treatments are not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without highly controversial, highly uncertain, or unique or unknown risks.</p>		No
<p>5) <i>Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?</i></p> <p>Rationale: The project activities are authorized under the existing ROD/RMP, and as such, this project will represent implementation of that land use plan decision, not a decision in principle on future actions.</p>		No
<p>6) <i>Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?</i></p>		No

<i>Will the Proposed Action documented in this Categorical Exclusion</i>	Yes	No
<p>Rationale: Based on review of the project areas, the lack of other projects on BLM lands in the vicinity, no resources concerns have been identified.</p>		
<p>7) <i>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?</i></p> <p>Rationale: No NRHP eligible or listed properties are within the project areas.</p>	No	
<p>8) <i>Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?</i></p> <p>Rationale:</p> <p>Fisheries: Based on review of 2014 projects, no effects to listed fish are anticipated. No consultation is warranted.</p> <p>Wildlife: Potential for short-term noise disturbance is not likely to adversely affect breeding spotted owls and marbled murrelets. This action will include all applicable design standards as required by the Letter of Concurrence (#01EOFW00-2013-I-0190) which completed consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act and covers potential disturbance activities in the Northern Oregon Coast Range for FY 2014-2017 projects. No constituent elements of critical habitat will be affected.</p> <p>Botanical and Fungal Species: These project areas are generally considered too young to support botanical or fungal threatened and endangered species. There are no known locations of any T&E botanical or fungal species within the proposed project areas.</p>	No	
<p>9) <i>Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?</i></p> <p>Rationale: Silvicultural treatments follow all known Federal, State, or local or tribal laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.</p>	No	
<p>10) <i>Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?</i></p> <p>Rationale: The projects are not anticipated to have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations.</p>	No	
<p>11) <i>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)?</i></p> <p>Rationale: Past silvicultural treatments within this area have not resulted in tribal identification of concerns.</p>	No	

Will the Proposed Action documented in this Categorical Exclusion	Yes	No
<p>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)?</p> <p>Rationale: Minimal amounts of mineral soil will be disturbed within the contract areas. Subsequently, the risk rating for the long-term establishment or expansion of noxious weed species is low.</p>		No

Project Design Features

- To retain species diversity, only western hemlock, Douglas-fir, noble fir, Sitka spruce, cherry, red alder, and bigleaf maple that compete with the reserved conifer trees will be cut. All other tree species will be reserved. Species priority for selected leave trees will be noble fir, western hemlock, Sitka Spruce, Douglas-fir, bigleaf maple, cherry, and red alder, in that order.
- Red alder and bigleaf maple will be left if not competing with selected leave trees for survival. Hardwoods over 8 inches diameter breast height (DBH) will be girdled if competing with selected leave trees. Surplus hardwoods less than 8 inches DBH will be cut in a manner to minimize damage to the selected leave trees. Only brush which competes with the selected leave trees will be cut.
- Slash will be pulled back 10-20 feet from edges of roads and trails in units and to the top of cut banks, or a 10-20 feet uncut buffer will be left where specified to mitigate fire hazard and scenic value concerns. In some units, slash will be pulled back 20 feet from the edge of the existing landings and to the top of cut banks. Additionally, where cutting occurs in south or west facing units, above roads and trails, an uncut buffer or pullback of slash will be a minimum of 20 feet.
- To reduce the risk of a fire start (especially on south and west aspects) during severe fire closure periods (Level 4), roads and trails through recently cut areas may be temporarily closed to vehicle traffic.
- For all units containing noble fir, the BLM will supply contractors a picture and description of the noble fir polypore (*Bridgeoporus nobilissimus*). If *Bridgeoporus nobilissimus* is located within a unit, operations will be suspended on that unit. The Marys Peak Resource Area botanist shall be notified and additional mitigation measures will be incorporated for protection of the known site(s).
- Appropriate measures will be developed to ensure protection of aquatic and riparian habitats during project design.

- A 20-foot untreated or modified treatment area will be maintained along intermittent and perennial streams and wetland areas to prevent any potential adverse effects to the stream channel and water quality conditions.
- Power equipment will be refueled, or absorbent pads will be used for immobile equipment, at least 100 feet from water bodies or as far as possible from water bodies where local site conditions do not allow a 100-foot setback.
- Wildlife corridors may be identified for additional cutting or clearing along heavily used big game trails.
- If any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) is discovered during project activities, all operations in the immediate area of such discovery shall be suspended until an evaluation of the discovery can be made by a professional archaeologist to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values.
- To reduce potential for disturbance to spotted owls and marbled murrelets, project activities occurring between April 1 and September 15 shall not begin until two (2) hours after sunrise and shall end two (2) hours before sunset. In 2014, all units are scheduled to begin after August 5.
- The Resource Area Biologist will be notified if any federally listed wildlife species are found occupying stands within 0.25 miles of the proposed units.

D. Interdisciplinary Team Review and Signature

Name	Specialty
Debra Drake	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Ron Exeter	Botanist
Scott Hopkins	Wildlife Biologist
Stefanie Larew	NEPA Coordinator
Kent Mortensen	Fuels Specialist
Scott Snedaker	Fisheries Biologist
Arlene Roux	Forester – Silviculture
Heather Ulrich	Archaeologist
Steve Wegner	Hydrologist and Soil Scientist

Authorized Official: /s/ Rich Hatfield **Date:** 7/15/14

Name: Rich Hatfield

Title: Marys Peak Field Manager

Contact Person: For additional information concerning this CX, contact Arlene Roux, Forester, Salem District Office, 1717 Fabry Rd. SE Salem, Oregon, or at (503) 315-5955.

