

Upper Siletz River Watershed Enhancement

Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Assessment Number DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2009-0002

March 14, 2012

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office
Salem District
Marys Peak Resource Area

Responsible Agency: USDI – Bureau of Land Management

Responsible Official: Rich Hatfield
Field Manager
Marys Peak Resource Area
1717 Fabry Road SE
Salem, OR 97306
(503) 315-5968

For further information, contact: Stefanie Larew, Project Lead
Marys Peak Resource Area
1717 Fabry Road SE
Salem, OR 97306
(503) 375-5601

BLM
Salem District



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental assessment (EA) (Environmental Assessment Number DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2009-0002) for a proposal to implement one project as follows:

- Perform density management thinning for mid-seral habitat enhancement (by accelerating the development of late-seral/old-growth habitat components) on approximately 654 acres of 40 to 78 year-old stands within LSR (Late- Successional Reserve), AMA (Adaptive Management Area), and RR (Riparian Reserve) LUAs (land use allocations).

The action areas are on BLM-managed lands in Township 7 South, Range 8 West, Sections 14 and 15 and Township 8 South, Range 8 West, Sections 15, 23 and 25.

The analysis in this EA is site-specific and supplements analyses found in the *Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement*, September 1994 (RMP/FEIS). The proposed thinning activities have been designed to conform to the *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*, May 1995 (RMP) as amended and related documents which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM lands within the Salem District (*EA Section 1.4*). Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service is described in Section 7.0 of the EA.

The EA and FONSI were made available for public review August 9, 2010 to September 7, 2010. The notice for public comment was published in a legal notice by the *Polk County Itemizer Observer* newspaper. Substantive comments received by the Marys Peak Resource Area will be addressed individually or within the Decision Records from this EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon review of the Upper Siletz River Watershed Enhancement EA and supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general areas. No site-specific environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, supplemental or additional information to the analysis done in the RMP/FEIS through a new environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following information:

Context: Potential effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed action has been analyzed within the context of the Upper Siletz River 5th-field Watershed and the action areas' boundaries. The proposed action would occur on approximately 654 acres of BLM-managed LSR, AMA and RR LUA land, encompassing less than 1.5 percent of the forest cover within the Upper Siletz River Watershed [40 CFR 1508.27(a)].

Intensity:

1. The resources potentially affected by the proposed thinning activities are: air quality, fire hazard/risk, fish species/habitat (except ESA listed species/habitat), invasive, non-native plant species, migratory birds, other special status species / habitat – wildlife, soils, water quality, and wildlife habitat components. The effects of mid-seral enhancement is unlikely to have significant adverse impacts on these resources [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)] for the following reasons:

The effects of density management by thinning for mid-seral enhancement are unlikely to have significant adverse impacts on these resources [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)] for the following reasons:

- Vegetation and Forest Stand Characteristics (*EA section 3.1.1*): 1/ No special status vascular plant, lichens, bryophytes or fungi species would be affected. Noxious Weeds - While the number of plants may increase in the short term, any increase that does occur should be short lived because all large areas with ground disturbing activities would be grass seeded with Oregon Certified (blue tagged) red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) at a rate equal to 40 pounds per acre or sown/planted with other native species as approved by the resource area botanist. Sowing disturbed soil areas allows the sown seed to become established and dominant in areas that may otherwise be suitable for noxious weeds to become established thus reducing the physical space of the potential habitat for noxious weeds to become established.

Implementation of the Marys Peak integrated non-native plant management plan (EA # OR080-06-09) allows for early detection of non-native plant species which allows for rapid control. Generally these species often persist for several years after timber harvest but soon decline as native vegetation increases within the project areas. In addition, all road construction and road maintenance areas would be monitored for Scot's broom infestations and eradicated under this proposal and as part of MP's non-native plant management plan. Other species would be eradicated as funding allows. No significant increase in populations of the noxious weed (invasive/non-native) species identified during the field surveys is expected to occur because this project would disrupt very few acres of exposed mineral soil which could provide habitat for noxious weed species. All of the proposed timber removal activities are planned and laid out to remain below the cumulative level of 10 percent aerial extent of soil disturbance from the RMP Timber harvest BMP's, 2008, FEIS, Appendix I. Stands proposed for harvest activities are not presently functioning as late-successional old growth habitat.

- Soils, Hydrology, and Fisheries (*EA sections 3.1.3 to 3.1.5*): The estimated distance of new road construction is 3.5 miles and the majority of new road construction (except 0.6 miles) would be located outside Riparian Reserves and generally be located on ridge top locations. Gentle to moderate slope gradients in project areas provide little opportunity for surface water to flow. The stream protection zones [SPZs (minimum 55 feet on perennial and intermittent streams)] would prevent any overland flow and sediment generated by logging from reaching streams. The SPZs would maintain the current vegetation in the primary shade zone and treatments would retain most of the

current levels of shading in the secondary shade zone. Soil compaction is limited to no more than 10 percent of each unit's acreage. Road work (including culvert installations) would take place during the dry season.

- Wildlife (*EA section 3.1.2*): 1/ Existing snags and coarse woody debris (CWD) would be retained. The few large (greater than 20 inches diameter and greater than 15 feet tall) snags that could be felled for safety or knocked over by falling and yarding operations would be retained as CWD. 2/ No suitable habitat for any BLM special status species known to be present would be lost or downgraded. Therefore, the project would not contribute to the need to list any BLM special status species. 3/ Thinning would not significantly change species diversity (a combination of species richness and relative abundance) of the migratory and resident bird community. No species would be become extirpated in the watershed as a result of thinning, though some species would be likely to leave or enter thinned stands as a short-term response to reduced canopy closure and tree density.
- Air Quality and Fire Hazard/Risk (*EA section 3.1.6*): The thinning would create an increased fire hazard risk from the slash but this would be mitigated by treating slash along open roads where the opportunities for ignition are greatest. After 3 to 5 years, the fine fuels would be decayed in most of the units and the risk of surface fire would decrease to near current levels. The thinning would decrease the risk of a canopy fire. Piling and burning slash at landings and in some fuel treatment areas would have a very short duration impact on air quality; but strict adherence to smoke management regulations would result in little or no impact to the public.
- Carbon Sequestration (Storage) and Climate Change (*EA section 3.1.7*): The Upper Siletz River Restoration Project EA (DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2009-0002) is tiered to the PRMP FEIS (1994) which concluded that all alternatives analyzed in the FEIS, in their entirety including all timber harvest, would have only slight (context indicates that the effect would be too small to calculate) effect on carbon dioxide levels.

The following show quantities of carbon in forest ecosystem vegetation¹ in the Coast Range, and in the Upper Siletz project area.

- Total carbon, forest ecosystem vegetation, Pacific northwest, Coast Range 1.8-2 Giga-tonnes (Gt) (Hudiburg, et al. 2009).
- Total carbon, forest ecosystem vegetation, Upper Siletz River Project stands = 104,000 tonnes or 0.0001676 Gt. This represents .001 percent of the Coast Range total.
- The annual carbon accumulation from forest management in the United States is 191 million tonnes. Current management on BLM-managed lands in western Oregon would result in an average annual accumulation of 1.69 million tonnes over the next 100 years, or 0.9 percent of the current U.S. accumulation. (WOPR, p. 4-537).

¹ Carbon contained in both above ground and below ground parts of trees and forest vegetation, and downed wood, litter and duff. It does not include mineral carbon in soil, nor fossil fuels.

Carbon emissions resulting from the proposed action would total 5,800 tonnes. Current global emissions of carbon dioxide total 25 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (IPCC 2007, p. 513), and current U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide total 6 billion tonnes (EPA 2007, p 2-3). Therefore, the emissions from the proposed action would constitute .0000002 percent of current global emissions and .000009 percent of current U.S. emissions.

Tree growth following harvest would offset greenhouse gases and result in net storage of 21,000 tonnes of carbon. The WOPR EIS (p. 4-538), which is incorporated here by reference, states that by 2106, the No Action Alternative (management under the 1995 RMP) would result in a total carbon storage of approximately 628 million tonnes, 9 percent higher than average historic conditions (576 million tonnes, WOPR, 3-224, as reanalyzed in November 6, 2009 memo, on file, Marys Peak Resource Area). The incremental effect of the proposed action, over time, would be net storage of carbon.

With the implementation of the project design features described in EA section 2.5.1, potential effects to the affected elements of the environment are anticipated to be site-specific and/or not measurable (i.e. undetectable over the watershed, downstream, and/or outside of the project areas). The project is designed to meet RMP standard and guidelines, modified by subsequent direction (EA section 1.3); and the effects of these project would not exceed those effects described in the RMP/FEIS [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1), EA sections 3.1].

2. *The Project would not affect:*
 - ü Public health or safety [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)];
 - ü Unique characteristics of the geographic areas [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)] because there are no historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, or ecologically critical areas located within the project areas (EA section 3.1);
 - ü Districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would the proposed action cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)] (EA section 3.1).
3. The *Project* is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without highly controversial [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)], highly uncertain, or unique or unknown risks [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)].
4. The *Project* does not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)]. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without setting a precedent for future actions.
5. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the *Project* in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)]. Potential cumulative effects are described in the attached EA. These effects are not likely to be significant because

of the project's scope (effects are likely to be too small to be measurable), scale (action areas of 654 acres, encompassing 1.5 percent of the forest cover within the Upper Siletz River Watershed and duration [direct effects would occur over a maximum period of four to six years (EA section 3.1)].

6. The *Project* is not expected to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or habitat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)].

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

To address concerns for potential effects to listed wildlife species and potential modification of critical habitats, the proposed action was consulted upon with the USFWS, as required under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Consultation for this proposed action was facilitated by its inclusion within a programmatic Biological Assessment (BA) that analyzed all projects that may modify the habitat of listed wildlife species on federal lands within the Northern Oregon Coast Range during fiscal years 2009 and 2010. The proposed action has been designed to incorporate all appropriate design standards set forth in the BA. This action would be considered a "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" northern spotted owl dispersal habitat and northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet critical habitats. In the resulting Letter of Concurrence (FWS Reference Number 13420-2008-I-0125), after reviewing the effects of the proposed action on the spotted owl and its critical habitat, and the marbled murrelet and its critical habitat, the USFWS concurred with BLM that the activities, as proposed, are not likely to adversely affect spotted owls or marbled murrelets and are not likely to adversely affect critical habitat for either species.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

Consultation with NMFS is required for all actions which 'may affect' ESA listed fish species and critical habitat.

Oregon Coast (OC) Coho Salmon are listed as threatened under the ESA, as amended, and are known to occur in the Siletz River system. Upper Willamette River (UWR) Winter Steelhead and UWR Spring Chinook are listed as threatened under the ESA, as amended, and are known to occur within the Luckiamute River and South Yamhill River systems.

Based on project location and project activities the proposed Potter Elk, Fanno Lookout, and Upper Warnicke timber sales are considered 'no effect' to OC coho salmon. This determination is primarily due to distance of project activities (more than 9.5 miles) from listed fish habitat. Consultation with NMFS is not required for OC coho salmon for this project.

The proposed actions would have 'no effect' to UWR Spring Chinook salmon and Oregon chub. Generally, the 'no effect' determination is based on the distance upstream of project activities (approximately 25 miles) from ESA listed Chinook salmon critical habitat and historic habitat for Oregon chub. Consultation with NMFS is not required for UWR Spring Chinook salmon, or with USFWS for Oregon chub for this project.

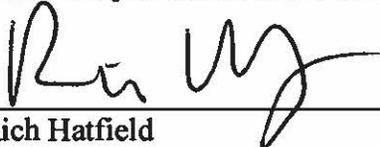
Based on project location and project activities, the proposed Potter Elk and Fanno Lookout Timber sales are considered 'no effect' to UWR winter steelhead. The proposed activities (except hauling), occur within the Siletz watershed and are unconnected to UWR winter steelhead habitat. Proposed hauling occurs within the Luckiamute River watershed where listed steelhead reside. The no effect determination is primarily due to distance of project activities from listed fish habitat (at least 1/3 mile overland and 1 and 1/2 miles from the nearest stream crossing) and proposed design features (for example, dry season use of Blackrock Mainline Road) which would prevent impacts to listed fish from occurring. Consultation with NMFS is not required for UWR winter steelhead for these timber sales.

A determination has been made that the proposed Upper Warnicke Timber sale 'may affect' Upper UWR winter steelhead. The 'may affect' determination is primarily due to the proximity of listed fish and critical habitat adjacent to proposed haul routes in the Agency Creek-South Yamhill River watershed. Due to the Proposed Actions' 'may affect' determination consultation with NMFS was required on ESA listed UWR winter steelhead. A letter received on February 28th, 2012 from NOAA/NMFS concurred with the finding that the proposed actions would Not Likely Adversely Affect UWR winter steelhead or its habitat.

Actions which 'may affect' listed species and are not addressed under existing consultations, including *Aquatic Restoration Biological Opinion (ESA Section 7 Formal Programmatic Consultation and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act-Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Fish Habitat Restoration Activities in Oregon and Washington, CY2007-2012)* would require additional ESA consultation coverage.

Protection of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as described by the Magnuson/Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act and consultation with NMFS is required for all projects which may adversely affect EFH of Chinook and coho salmon. The proposed Upper Siletz River Watershed Enhancement EA Projects are not expected to adversely affect EFH due to distance of all activities associated with the project from occupied habitat. Consultation with NMFS on EFH is not required for this project.

7. *The Project* does not violate any known federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)].

Approved by: 
Rich Hatfield
Marys Peak Field Manager

3-8-2012
Date