Marys Peak Meadow Restoration
Environmental Assessment and
Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Assessment Number DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2010-0002-EA

March 9, 2010

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: Trish Wilson, Field Manager
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Abstract: This environmental assessment (EA) discloses the predicted effects of one project occurring in Township 12 South, Range 7 West, Section 28, Willamette Meridian. This project is located on a ridge and is included in both the Upper Alsea River and the Marys River 5th-field Watersheds.

This meadow restoration project is located near the summit of Marys Peak on BLM managed lands. This project would fall all conifer trees less than 12 inches diameter breast height outside bark (DBHOB) which have been encroaching into meadow habitat. The severed trees would be slashed and scattered under the older conifer forest habitat and/or piled and burned or transported to the existing right-of-way and chipped and hauled off-site.

The project would occur in Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Land Use Allocation (LUA).

As the Nation’s principal conservation agency, the Department of Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering economic use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis (Environmental Assessment Number DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2010-0002-EA) for a proposal to implement one project in Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Land Use Allocation (LUA) as follows:

This project is a meadow restoration project and proposes to remove all conifer trees less than 12 inches diameter breast height outside bark (DBHOB) which have encroached on known meadow habitat.

It occurs on BLM managed lands in Township 12 South, Range 7 West, Section 28, Willamette Meridian and is located on a ridge dividing the Upper Alsea River 5th-field Watershed and the Marys River 5th-field Watershed. (See EA project map, p.10)

Implementation of the proposed action would conform to management actions and direction contained in the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration Environmental Assessment (Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA). The Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA is attached to and incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) determination.

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 Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project has been designed to conform to the Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, May 1995 (RMP) and related documents which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM-managed lands within the Marys Peak Resource Area (EA p. 4).

The EA and FONSI will be made available for public review at the Salem District office and on the internet at Salem BLM’s website, http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/salem/index.htm (under Plans and Project) from March 12, 2010 to April 12, 2010. The notice for public comment will be published in a legal notice by the Gazette-Times newspaper. Comments received by the Marys Peak Resource Area of the Salem District Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306, on or before April 12, 2010 will be considered in making the decision for this project.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon review of the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA and supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. 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:

Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA
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Context: Potential effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed action have been analyzed within the context of Upper Alsea River 5th-field Watershed and the Marys River 5th-field Watersheds and the project area boundaries. The proposed action would occur on approximately six acres of LSR LUA land which is mapped as non-forest meadow and encompassing less than 0.01 percent of the lands within the affected watershed [40 CFR 1508.27(a)].

Intensity:

1. The resources potentially affected by this project are: air quality, fire hazard/risk, invasive, non-native plant species, migratory birds, other special status species / habitat – wildlife, recreation, soils, threatened or endangered species – northern spotted owl, visual resources, and wildlife habitat components. The effects of the meadow restoration are unlikely to have significant adverse impacts on these resources [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)] for the following reasons:

- **Project design features** described in (EA section 2.2.2): would reduce the risk of effects to affected resources to be within RMP standards and guidelines and to be within the effects described in the RMP/EIS.

- **Vegetation and Forest Stand Characteristics (EA section 3.2.1):** The removal of the conifer overstory on six acres is minimal when compared to the vast coniferous forest of the northwestern Oregon. Although young conifer trees would be removed in the areas to allow for meadow restoration, other perennial native vegetation would continue to dominate the landscape within the project areas. All effects to vegetation would be localized within the project area.

- **Noxious Weeds:** The amount of mineral soil exposed for this project would be minimal and caused by human traffic or located within burn pile area and not by any machinery. Although we expect common non-native species already established in the general area to increase in paths or in burn piles, we do not expect the establishment of any noxious weeds in the project area. However, because the amount of soil disturbance would be small, if any noxious weeds were to be identified within the project area they would likely be treated by physical means (pulled) on the day they were identified.

- **Soils (EA section 3.2.4):** There would only be hand felling and hand moving of the small trees to be cut at the meadow restoration site and minimal soil disturbance is expected.

- **Special Status Species: (EA section 3.2.1):** There are no known bureau special status species present within the project areas.

- **Wildlife (EA section 3.2.5):** Due to the small size, natural history, and location of the project, impacts to forest-dependent species would be insignificant. The project
would have a positive impact on several migratory bird species and other wildlife species which nest or forage in, or adjacent to, meadows and non-forested shrub openings within the forest environment.

- **Air Quality and Fire Hazard/Risk (EA section 3.2.6):** Impacts to air quality would be minimal due to the small amounts of debris to be burned.

- **Recreation/Visual (EA section 3.2.2):** Restoring meadow habitat would enhance visitor recreation experience of the scenic and natural resources of the Mary's Peak Recreation Area by restoring additional areas for scenic viewing, photography and nature study and the view of the landscape below.

A recreational forest setting would convert to a historical open meadow setting allowing more light to reach the forest floor helping with the conversion to meadow habitat. Evidence of the cutting and clean up operations would not be observable within three years after the completion of the project as the meadow habitat and vegetation returns to a more natural appearance.

- **Public health or safety [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)]:** The project’s effects to public health and safety would not be significant. Public safety would be minimally affected because the projects location is behind a locked gate and there are other public routes that would access the summit of Marys Peak. (EA section 2.2.2).

  a. The proposed project activities would not affect:

   1. Unique characteristics of the geographic area [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 area (EA Section 3.1);
   2. Districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would the proposed actions cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)] (EA Section 3.1).

  b. *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)].

  c. *The Project does* not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor do they 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.

  d. *The Project is* not expected to adversely affect threatened or endangered species, or their habitat, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)].
**ESA Wildlife** – The proposed action would have no effect on northern spotted owl or its critical habitat and would have no effect on marbled murrelet or its critical habitat. No known sites or existing nesting habitat would be impacted. The project area is very small and adjacent to a well travelled road. In addition, the project area has a long history of moderate-heavy recreational use, which minimizes the nesting and foraging suitability of this site. Based on the 'no effect' determination consultation on ESA listed species and critical habitat is not required for this project.

**ESA/EFH Fish** – A determination has been made that this proposed project would have ‘no effect’ on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed Upper Willamette River (UWR) steelhead trout, UWR Chinook salmon, Oregon chub, and Oregon Coast coho salmon. Generally, the ‘no effect’ determination is based on the distance of the proposed project to ESA listed fish habitat. The distance from ESA listed fish or critical habitat is over two miles to project activities and proposed actions do not impact any riparian systems. Based on the 'no effect' determination consultation on ESA listed species and critical habitat is not required for this project. 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 Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project does not include any riparian systems and is not anticipated to adversely affect EFH. Consultation on EFH is not required for this project.

e. **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)].

1. 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 scope (effects are likely to be too small to be detectable) and scale (project area of approximately six acres, encompassing less than 0.005 percent of the forest cover within the Upper Alsea River Watershed and Marys River 5th-field Watersheds. (EA Section 3.2).

Approved by: ____________________________   _______________
Trish Wilson, Field Manager                  Date
Marys Peak Resource Area
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<th><strong>Glossary: Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Terms</strong></th>
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Covered in this EA

One project will be analyzed in this EA (Environmental Assessment):

Marys Peak Meadow Restoration is a proposal to remove all conifers less than 12 inches DBHOB (Diameter Breast Height Outside Bark) which have become established in areas known to provide habitat for meadow species. These areas would be maintained as meadow habitat and all saplings would be removed in subsequent years after treatment. This project would restore meadow habitat on approximately six acres.

Implementation is scheduled to commence in 2010 with the completion of the project in 2011 and maintenance occurring annually in subsequent years post treatment to remove seedlings.

1.2 Background

The USFS, Suislaw National Forest (SNF) manages the majority of the forested and meadow complexes located on the summit of Marys Peak. The MPRA manages 40 acres near the summit of Marys Peak with approximately nine acres identified as meadow habitat on early (approximately 1960) planning documents. Over the past decade the USFS has identified the need to remove conifers (mostly noble fir) which are encroaching into the meadow habitat. They are currently working on a plan to allow them to remove conifers in areas which were considered meadow habitat as far back as 1940. In their planning stages they have identified an area on BLM managed land as a key piece in restoring the major meadow complexes. BLM has worked with the USFS in developing this proposal.

In this area conifers have encroached into the once narrow meadow and have effectively turned one large meadow into two separate meadows. The removal of the conifers which have become established on BLM managed lands in these areas would restore the two meadows into one large continuous meadow. The BLM proposes to remove conifers 12 inches DBHOB and less. This action would maintain the meadows at the approximate conditions they were in during the 1960’s. The USFS planning document is currently scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2010.

1.3 Purpose of and Need for Action

Purpose

One purpose of this project is to restore and maintain special habitats as directed by the Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP, P. 33).

The Marys Peak Area of Critical and Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management Plan (August, 1997) allows for manipulation to protect and restore the values in which the ACEC was designated. Specific management objectives are to “maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important values of the area.” and “manage to prevent loss of the outstanding values” and “to coordinate activities directed toward mutual management objectives of the Scenic Botanic Area Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA

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of the U.S. Forest Service” (Management Plans for Marys Peak ACEC, 1997 p.28). The Marys Peak ACEC was designated due to the high elevation noble fir plant association and grass bald complex and associated meadow species. Without the implementation of this project, it is estimated (by the resource area botanist) that within 20 years, the BLM managed land on Marys Peak would be dominated by noble fir habitat and would no longer support meadow habitat.

This project would restore meadow habitat perimeter, structure, and species composition to conditions believed to have existed during a regime of frequent, low-intensity fire. Specific objectives would restore approximate extent of meadow perimeter to the former extent evident from geomorphologic characteristics, forest stand structure and ground vegetation, by removing conifers that have encroached into the meadows on Marys Peak over the past 30 to 50 years and to increase the diversity, abundance and distribution of native meadow species on BLM managed lands.

An additional purpose of the project as directed by the RMP (pp. 36 and 41) is to emphasize management of scenic resources in selected high-use areas to retain or preserve scenic quality; and manage scenic, natural, and cultural resources to enhance visitor recreation experiences and satisfy public land users.

**Need for Action**

Meadow habitat is on the decline in the Oregon Coast Range, including on the summit of Marys Peak. The U. S. Forest Service (USFS) manages the majority of the meadow occupied lands on the summit of Marys Peak and is currently working on plans to restore the meadow habitat on their managed lands by removing the encroaching conifers. They have identified the Marys Peak BLM managed lands as a ‘key’ component because the encroaching conifers on BLM managed lands currently separate two large meadow complexes which occur mostly on USFS lands.

There is a need to remove conifers which have encroached into the meadow habitat on BLM managed lands within the past 50 years. Removing the conifers would allow for the two larger meadow complexes to once again become one large continuous meadow (which they historically were). Without any management or continual passive management of conifer encroachment, the meadow habitat and species which depend on the meadows would slowly decline.

Without meadow restoration, the quality of visitor recreation experiences would decline due to the decreased opportunities for photography and nature study provided by the unique meadow habitat. In addition, without meadow restoration there would be a decline in the view provided near the top of the highest peak in the Oregon Coast Range Mountains.

**1.4 Project area Location**

The project is located approximately 9 miles southwest of Philomath, Oregon, in Benton County on land managed by the Marys Peak Resource Area (MPRA), Salem District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The project occurs in Township 12 South, Range 7 West Section 28, Willamette Meridian and occurs in both the Upper Alsea River and Marys River 5th-field Watersheds (See Map 1).
Map 1: Location Map
1.5 Conformance with Land Use Plans, Policies, and Programs

The Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project has been designed to conform to the following documents, which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM-managed lands within the Salem District:

- **Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP), May 1995:** The RMP has been reviewed and it has been determined that the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions (i.e., complies with management goals, objectives, direction, standards and guidelines) as required by 43 CFR 1610.5 (BLM Handbook H1790-1).

- **Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (the Northwest Forest Plan, or NWFP), April 1994.**

- **Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M ROD), January 2001.**

The analysis in the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA is site-specific and supplements analyses found in the Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/FEIS), September 1994. The RMP/FEIS includes the analysis from the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NWFP/FSEIS), February 1994. In addition, the EA is tiered to the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement For Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M FSEIS, November 2000).

The proposed action is located within the coastal zone as defined by the Oregon Coastal Management Program. This proposal is consistent with the objectives of the program, and the State planning goals which form the foundation for compliance with the requirements of the Coastal Zone Act. Management actions/directions found in the RMP were determined to be consistent with the Oregon Coastal Management Program.

These documents are available for review in the Salem District Office. Additional information about the proposed action is available in the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA Analysis File (NEPA file), also available at the Salem District Office.

**Survey and Manage Review**

The Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project 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 Resource Management Plan.
On December 17, 2009, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington issued an order in *Conservation Northwest, et al. v. Rey, et al.*, No. 08-1067 (W.D. Wash.) (Coughenour, J.), granting Plaintiffs’ motion for partial summary judgment and finding a variety of NEPA violations in the BLM and USFS 2007 Record of Decision eliminating the Survey and Manage mitigation measure.

Judge Coughenour deferred issuing a remedy in his December 17, 2009 order until further proceedings, and did not enjoin the BLM from proceeding with projects (including timber sales).

The project may proceed even if the District Court sets aside or otherwise enjoins use of the 2007 Survey and Manage Record of Decision. This is because the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration Project meets the provisions of the last valid Record of Decision, specifically 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 (not including subsequent Annual Species Reviews). Details of the project surveys are described below:

There are no known sites of any Survey and Manage species within the project area. On-site plant and animal habitat evaluations (including some Survey and Manage botany protocol surveys) have determined that suitable habitat for these species is not present due to the severity of high elevation sites (shallow, rocky soils; hot, dry summers; and cold, deep snowpack winters), its natural history as meadow habitat, and the young age and small size of the encroaching conifers.

### 1.6 Decision Criteria/Project Objectives for the Project

The MPRA Field Manager will use the following criteria/objectives in selecting the alternative to be implemented. The field manager would select the alternative that would best meet these criteria. The selected action would:

- Meet the purpose and need of the project (EA section 1.2)
- Comply with the *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*, May 1995 (RMP) and related documents which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM-managed lands within the Salem District (EA section 1.3)
- Would not have significant impact on the affected elements of the environment beyond those already anticipated and addressed in the RMP EIS.

### 1.7 Results of Scoping

A scoping letter, dated January 28, 2010 was sent to 20 potentially affected or interested individuals, groups, and agencies. Four responses were received during the scoping period.

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2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Alternative Development

Pursuant to Section 102 (2) (E) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, federal agencies shall “Study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.” No unresolved conflicts were identified. Therefore, this EA will analyze the effects of Proposed action and No Action Alternatives.

2.2 Alternative 1 (No Action)

The BLM would not implement the project at this time. This alternative serves to set the environmental baseline for comparing effects to the proposed actions. The meadows at the top of Marys Peak would continue to decline in size due to encroaching conifers. The meadows would remain separated by a narrow conifer stand which would continue to grow in size and width, further separating the two existing meadows.

2.3 Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

The Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project proposes to cut and remove all conifers over 12 inches DBHOB within the project area which have become established into the meadow habitat for the past 40 years and would allow for the restoration of the meadow habitat by removing the conifers and allowing for the meadow species to once again become established in the non-forested habitat. This area would be maintained as meadow habitat for the future and all conifer seedlings would be removed.

All conifer trees less than 12 inches DBHOB identified as encroaching into the approximately six acre meadow habitat would be severed with power equipment and left on site to decay; and/or hand piled and burned; and/or transported to the existing right-of-way by hand so they can be chipped and removed from the site. Most of the material identified to remain on site to decay would be lopped and scattered in existing older forested conifer habitat.

2.3.1 Proposed Action Design Features

The following design features are those specific means, measures, or practices that make up the proposed action, and those that are incorporated into the proposed action to reduce or eliminate risk to the affected elements of the environment described in EA Section 3.2.
Project Design Features by RMP Objectives

To protect soil productivity loss from soil compaction, loss of slope stability or loss of soil duff layer:
- All activities would utilize the Best Management Practices (BMPs) required by the Federal Clean Water Act (as amended by the Water Quality Act of 1987) (2008, FEIS, Appendix I). The BMP’s listed below would be applied to this project.
- Chipping equipment would operate on existing roadways.

To contain and/or reduce noxious weed infestations on BLM managed lands using an integrated pest management approach:
- All areas of exposed mineral soil would be grass sown with Oregon Certified (blue tagged) red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) as a rate equal to 40 pounds per acre or sown/planted with other native species as approved by the resource area botanist.
- All noxious weeds identified within the project area would be removed as soon as possible.

To Protect Special Status (SS) Species:
- The resource area biologist or botanist would be notified if any T&E or SS animal or plant species are found occupying habitats proposed for treatment during project activities. If the species is a federal listed ESA species then all habitats necessary for the conservation of the species would be withdrawn from the activity and a new analysis of impacts would be completed. If the species is other than a federal listed ESA species, then appropriate mitigation action would be taken after additional analysis.
- Management of Survey and Manage Species found as a result of inventories would be accomplished in accordance with the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M ROD, January 2001).

To protect existing recreation resources:
- All vehicles would remain on existing roadways.
- All travel routes would be restored to prior condition after completion of the project.

To Protect Visual Resources:
- Cut stumps low (less than 6 inches from the ground) and angle cut away from view of any road and trail.
- To the extent practical, all severed conifer trees and slash would be scattered out of view in the existing adjacent older coniferous forest habitat.
- Transport debris to the existing right-of-way to chip and remove from the site.

To reduce fire hazard risk and protect air quality:
- At least 95 percent of the slash and 100 percent of the boles cut in the meadow treatment area would be hand piled and burned, and/or chipped and removed from site.
• Piles would generally be kept at least 10 feet away from reserve trees and snags and at least 25 feet from project area boundaries. Piles would not be located on top of logs or large stumps.

• The maximum width of piles would not be more than one and one half times the height. Minimum pile height is 3 feet. Prior to covering, all slash protruding beyond the average contours of the pile that may interfere with proper placement of the plastic covering, would be cut off or repositioned to allow for efficient placement of the plastic covering.

• In mid to late summer before the onset of fall rains, 4 mil thickness or heavier black polyethylene plastic would be placed over the piles. The plastic would be sufficiently sized and placed to provide coverage of 80 percent of the pile. The plastic must be secured in such a way that it would not lift up or come off during windy conditions.

• In the fall, after sufficient wetting rainfall has occurred, and risk of strong East winds is low, the piles would be burned under favorable “good mixing” weather conditions in coordination and compliance with the Oregon Smoke Management Plan. If practical, the plastic covering would be removed prior to burning and re-used or disposed of in accordance with Oregon DEQ regulations.

To Protect Cultural Resources:

• The project area occurs in the Oregon Coast Range. Survey techniques are based on those described in Appendix D of the Protocol for Managing Cultural Resource on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon. Post-project survey would be conducted according to standards based on slope defined in the Protocol appendix. Ground disturbing work would be suspended if cultural material is discovered during project work until an archaeologist can assess the significance of the discovery.
Photo of Grass Mountain Meadow
(Similar habitat as Marys Peak Meadow)
2.4 Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

An alternative to remove larger diameter trees was considered but eliminated due to the following:

The USFS is preparing NEPA documentation which may allow the BLM to cut larger diameter trees in the future if needed to maintain or expand the meadow restoration project. The BLM at this time proposes only remove the smaller diameter trees which are encroaching into meadow habitat and evaluate the effectiveness of the treatments and meadow reestablishment, before deciding to remove larger conifers. The BLM has concerns about the ability of reestablishing meadow habitat into areas where thick (two inches and greater) layers of conifer duff have accumulated. These areas are generally located where dense conifers larger than 12 inches DBH occur and have had established conifers on the site for longer periods of time in comparison to the areas of the proposed alternative. We do not include prescribed fire in our proposal because the existing duff layer is considered light and we feel native meadow vegetation can be re-established without disturbances caused by burning.

2.5 Comparison Of Alternatives With Regard To Purpose And Need

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<th>Purpose and Need (EA Section 1.6)</th>
<th>No Action (Alternative 1)</th>
<th>Proposed Action (Alternative 2)</th>
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<td>There is a need to restore meadow habitat which is in decline in the forested regions in northwestern Oregon.</td>
<td>Without meadow restoration treatments, the meadow habitat near the summit of Marys Peak would remain in decline and conifer habitat would continue to increase and encroach into the existing meadow habitats.</td>
<td>This project would restore meadow habitat perimeter, structure, and species composition to conditions believed to have existed during a regime of frequent, low-intensity fire.</td>
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<td>Emphasize management of scenic resources in selected high-use areas to retain or preserve scenic quality. Manage scenic, natural, and cultural resources to enhance visitor recreation experiences and satisfy public land users.</td>
<td>Without meadow restoration treatments visitor recreation experiences would be limited to a forest setting. Opportunities for scenic viewing, photography and nature study and their view of the valley below would not occur.</td>
<td>Restoring meadow habitat would enhance visitor recreation experience of the scenic and natural resources of the Mary's Peak Recreation Area by restoring additional areas for scenic viewing, photography and nature study and their view of the valley below.</td>
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### 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

**Review of Elements of the Environment Based On Authorities and Management Direction**

Table 2: Elements of the Environment Review based on Authorities and Management Direction

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<th>Element of the Environment /Authority</th>
<th>Remarks/Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aquatic Conservation Strategy</td>
<td>In compliance with PCFFA IV (Civ. No. 04-1299RSM), this project complies with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy described in the Northwest Forest Plan and RMP because the project would have no effect on this element. There are no streams within or in close proximity to the project area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Quality (Clean Air Act as amended (42 USC 7401 et seq.)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because air quality impacts would be of short duration (one burn period during implementation of pile burning). Addressed in Text (EA Section 3.1.5).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources (National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 USC 470) [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)], [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)]</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction and the project would have no effect on this element because Cultural resource sites in the Oregon Coast Range, both historic and prehistoric, occur rarely. The probability of site occurrence is low because the majority of BLM managed Oregon Coast Range land is located on steep upland mountainous terrain that lack concentrated resources humans would use. Post-disturbance inventory would be conducted according to Appendix D of the Protocol for Managing Cultural Resources on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon. Inventoried areas would be based on percent slope and topographic features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecologically critical areas [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)]</td>
<td>This project would have no effect on this element because there are no ecologically critical areas present within the project area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Policy (Executive Order 13212)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because this project would not interfere with the Energy Policy (Executive Order 13212).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Justice (E.O. 12898, &quot;Environmental Justice&quot; February 11, 1994)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because project would have no effect on low income populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Habitat, Essential (Magnuson-Stevens Act Provision: Essential Fish Habitat (EFH): Final Rule (50 CFR Part 600; 67 FR 2376, January 17, 2002)</td>
<td>This project would have no effect on this element because there is no EFH within or in close proximity to the project area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Lands, Prime [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)]</td>
<td>The project would have no effect on this element because no prime farm lands are present on BLM land within the Marys Peak RA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floodplains (E.O. 11988, as amended, Floodplain Management, 5/24/77)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because there is no EFH within or in close proximity to the project area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous or Solid Wastes (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (43 USC 6901 et seq.) Comprehensive Environmental Repose Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, as amended (43 USC 9615)</td>
<td>This project would have no effect on this element because no Hazardous or Solid Waste would be stored or disposed of on BLM lands as a result of this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element of the Environment /Authority</td>
<td>Remarks/Effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Forests Restoration Act (Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148))</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because treatments would help restore forests to historic meadow habitat (EA Section 3.1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migratory Birds (Migratory Bird Act of 1918, as amended (16 USC 703 et seq))</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because treatments would restore natural resources that could degrade habitat for migratory birds. Addressed in text (EA Section 3.1.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Religious Concerns (American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (42 USC 1996))</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because no Native American religious concerns were identified during the scoping period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noxious weed or non-Invasive, Species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because Project Design Features would prevent establishment of new populations of invasive plant species and because vegetation development would result in decline in both number and vigor of invasive plant populations in the project area. Addressed in text (EA Section 3.1.1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park lands [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)]</td>
<td>The project would have no effect on this element because there are no parks within or adjacent to the project area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health and Safety [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)]</td>
<td>The project would have no effect on this element because the public would be restricted from the project area during operations and the project would not create hazards lasting beyond project operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatened or Endangered Species (Endangered Species Act of 1983, as amended (16 USC 1531))</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because there would be no adverse effects on Threatened or Endangered Species (EA Section 3.1.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Quality –Drinking, Ground (Safe Drinking Water Act, as amended (43 USC 300f et seq.) Clean Water Act of 1977 (33 USC 1251 et seq.)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because there are no streams in the project area. The removal of small, understory size trees that have moved into the meadow would not change the canopy coverage and no impact on water yield would occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands (E.O. 11990 Protection of Wetlands 5/24/77) [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)]</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because no wetlands are within the project area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild and Scenic Rivers (Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as amended (16 USC 1271) [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)])</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because there are no Wild and Scenic Rivers within or adjacent to the project area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilderness (Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 USC 1701 et seq.); Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 USC 1131 et seq.)</td>
<td>This project is in compliance with this direction because there are no Wilderness Areas or areas being considered for Wilderness Area status in or adjacent to the project area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.1 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects

Those elements of the human environment that were determined to be affected are vegetation, recreation/visual, wildlife, soils, and, fuels/air quality. This section describes the current condition of those affected elements, and the environmental effects of the alternatives on those elements.
3.1.1 Vegetation

Affected Environment

Present Site Conditions and History
The project area occurs just below the 4,000 foot summit on Mary’s Peak and within the noble fir (Abies procera) plant association (Pacific Silver fir, Abies amabilis). It is approximately six acres in size and is a mosaic of meadow habitat mixed with a young (seedling and up to 40 years-old) noble fir (Abies procera) conifer (less than 12 inches DBHOB) stand which is becoming established on the margins of the meadow habitat. The project area occurs in a transition zone immediately adjacent to the open grass meadow habitat and mature (approximately 130 years old) conifer habitat.

There are no known sites of any Survey and Manage species within the project area. On-site plant and animal habitat evaluations (including some Survey and Manage botany protocol surveys) have determined that suitable habitat for these species is not present due to the severity of high elevation sites (shallow, rocky soils; hot, dry summers; and cold, deep snowpack winters), its natural history as meadow habitat, and the young age and small size of the encroaching conifers.

There are no known sites of any bureau SS or bureau survey and manage botanical or fungal species within the project area nor were any found during surveys.

Invasive (Noxious Weeds, Invasive Non-native Species)
The following noxious weeds occur in small infestations along the Marys Peak Road and outside of the project area: Armenian blackberry (Rubus armeniacus), bull and Canadian thistles (Cirsium vulgare and C. arvense), false brome (Brachypodium sylvaticum), Meadow knapweed (Centaurea x moncktonii), Peavine (Lathyrus latifolius), Scot’s broom (Cytisus scoparius), St. John’s wort (Hypericum perforatum), and Tansy ragwort (Senecio jacobaea).

Environmental Effects

3.1.1.1 Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)
The meadow located near the summit of Marys Peak would continue to decrease in size due to the encroachment of conifers into the existing meadow habitat. The two large meadows would continue to be separated by a larger distance as conifer seedlings continue to become established. As time elapses, the areas in which existing trees have become established into meadow habitat would be more difficult to restore to meadow habitat due to heavy accumulations of conifer duff.

Bureau SS Botanical and Fungal Species:
There are no known bureau T&E or SS botanical or fungal species known from the area, therefore they would not be affected.
Invasive (Noxious Weeds, Invasive Non-native Species)
Without the implementation of this project and without any new ground disturbances, the existing extent of known noxious weeds in the project area would remain relatively unchanged.

3.1.1.2 Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Conifers, (mostly noble fir trees) less than 12 inches DBHOB would be severed on approximately six acres identified on 1960 aerial photos as non-forest or meadow habitat. The felled conifers would then be hand transported to the existing roadway and chipped and removed from site; or lopped and scattered under the reserved larger conifer forest; or piled and burned. The area where conifers are removed would be managed and maintained as meadow habitat in the future as conifer seedlings would be removed.

The removal of the conifers would provide the initial step in restoring this area back into meadow habitat and allow for the re-introduction of many of the native forb and grasses which currently dominate the meadows on Marys Peak. Some of these species only occur in these open habitats and are considered uncommon within the vast forests of the Pacific Northwest. Implementation of this project would provide additional habitat for these species.

Meadow restoration is ecologically important as existing meadows which occur in the Oregon Coast Range Mountains continue to shrink annually due to conifer encroachment and restoration of these sites provide a refuge for many of these meadow dependent species. The restoration of this particular area would allow for the two larger existing meadows on Marys Peak to once again become one continuous meadow and reduce the isolation of the meadows from past conifer encroachment.

During implementation of this project some human paths would be worn into the existing vegetation, but should be short-lived and recover the following growing season. The vegetation where piles would be burned, would be killed, but it is anticipated they would become established with species which already occur within the adjacent meadow habitats. The majority of the reestablishment of natives would be through natural seed dispersal processes, but may be aided by sowing of natives collected elsewhere within the meadows.

Bureau SS Botanical and Fungal Species:
Since there are no known bureau T&E or SS botanical or fungal species known from the area, they would not be affected.

Invasive (Noxious Weeds, Invasive Non-native Species)
The amount of exposed mineral soil for this project is expected to be restricted to burn piles and is anticipated to be a fraction of an acre. Although it is anticipated that some non-native plant species which are already widespread throughout the meadows would become established in the project area, it is not anticipated any noxious weeds would become established within this project area, because the USFS has restored adjacent meadow habitat on numerous sites using similar techniques described here and has not had any noxious weeds become established.
In addition, the area would be monitored at a minimum annually and if any established noxious weeds are identified they would be removed at that time. Subsequently, the risk rating for any adverse impacts due to the establishment of noxious weeds is very low to unlikely.

3.1.2 Recreation/Visual Resources

Affected Environment

Recreation
The project setting is characterized by a recreational forest and meadow setting. Project area lands (limited to existing roads and trails) are open for OHV use, however public access is limited to foot traffic (access is limited by a locked gate located on USFS managed lands) on existing trails, which includes the road to the summit. There is vehicular administrative access past the project area by the gravel road leading to the communication towers on the summit. Recreational activities that occur within the project area include biking, hiking, scenic viewing, photography and nature study.

Evidence of human-made modifications (roads, trails, timber harvest, and buildings) is common on both private and public lands in the surrounding areas which a person can view from the summit of Mary's Peak. The USFS manages Mary's Peak for recreation (Mary's Peak Recreation Area), providing an extensive trail system and a campground (mile west from the project area). There is no camping allowed on the summit of Mary's Peak, (per USFS). Public access is limited to day-use activities within the Mary's Peak Recreation Area, except at the campground located a mile west from the project area.

In the surrounding vicinity of the Marys Peak Recreation Area, OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) riding, biking, hunting, target shooting, driving for pleasure, and special forest product harvest activities occur.

Visual Resources
The intermixed land ownership pattern between public and private forest land in the vicinity of the proposed project greatly limits the BLM’s ability to manage this area as a contiguous viewshed. However, the USFS maintains a scenic botanical area and recreation management area which allows more continuity of scenic resources on Mary's Peak. Timber harvest activities on private land at lower elevations on Mary's Peak are observable from the summit and within the recreation management area.

The project occurs in VRM class 1. Visual Resource Management class I objectives are to preserve the existing character of the landscape. Some very limited management activities may occur in these areas. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and would not attract attention (RMP p. 37). Timber harvesting and most other activities are not allowed. Landscape alterations are permitted only for public safety or enhancement of scenic values.
Environmental Effects

3.1.2.1 Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)

Recreation
With the exception of unexpected changes (i.e. wildfire or disease), the project area would continue to provide a forest setting for recreation activities. Slow modifications to the landscape character of the project area would be expected to occur over the next 20 years as conifers encroach the meadow. Recreational use (i.e. photography, nature study, scenic viewing) would be limited as meadow habitat would continue to shrink in size.

Visual Resources
Modifications to the landscape character in the area around the project would still be expected, as a result of USFS activities.

3.1.2.2 Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Recreation
Restoring meadow habitat would enhance visitor recreation experience of the scenic and natural resources of the Mary's Peak Recreation Area by restoring additional areas for scenic viewing, photography and nature study and the view of the landscape below.

Current recreation access and use of the project area would be restricted during cutting operations. Recreational users using the recreation area and trail system would hear the noises of the cutting and clean up operations. Users may be restricted (could be for hours or days during a 24 month time period) from using the project area while operations are occurring. Use of the project area is expected to increase as additional recreational opportunities would be provided.

Access to the top of Marys Peak would continue to be provided by unrestricted trails and nearby USFS lands would remain available for recreational opportunities.

Visual Resources
A recreational forest setting would convert to a historical open meadow setting allowing more light to reach the forest floor helping with the conversion to meadow habitat. Evidence of the cutting and clean up operations would not be observable within three years after the completion of the project as the meadow habitat and vegetation returns to a more natural appearance.

Visual disturbance of the project area would be associated with removal of 12 inch DBHOB and smaller trees, vegetation being crushed by falling trees, and cutting and clean up operations. Clean up operations could include pile burning, lopping and scattering the material within the older forest area adjacent to the meadow restoration or chipping and hauling off-site. The visual disturbance would last during operations and for approximately one year after the end of cleanup operations as ground cover vegetation grows over disturbed areas.
Chipping debris and hauling off-site would contribute to a visually pleasing recreation area setting as the removal of the chipped material would help grasses return to the project area, thus providing a visually pleasing meadow habitat and natural landscape.

There may be a few days where there is a decline in visual quality within the larger landscape viewshed as a result of the smoke created during the burning of piles. Any burning would be done in compliance with OSMP (Oregon Smoke Management Plan), reducing the smoke layer presence in the viewshed. An additional two or more years would be needed for vegetative recovery of burn scars (depending on fire severity and nutrient loss in the soil).

3.1.3 Wildlife

Affected Environment

Habitat in the project area is part of a large, high-elevation, meadow-noble fir forest association. Meadow habitat in the forest ecosystems of the Oregon Coast Range is considered a special habitat type for wildlife due to its rarity, and should be protected and enhanced in an effort to maintain diversity (Salem RMP, Marys Peak ACEC Management Plan). The treatment area is immediately adjacent to a late-seral noble fir stand which has been encroaching into the meadow habitat. Approximately six acres of meadow would be restored by removing the young noble fir.

Since the project area is in LSR, it is designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. However, as meadow habitat above 3,900 feet in elevation, it does not currently provide any primary constituent elements of critical habitat for owls or murrelets. It is highly unlikely that this site would ever provide critical habitat needs due to its elevation, soil type and plant association. There are no known owl or murrelet sites in or adjacent to the action area.

Migratory birds associated with Oregon Coast Range meadow habitat and meadow-forest ecotones can be found in the project area.

The project area is less suitable, in general, as wildlife habitat because of its location close to the summit of Marys Peak and immediately adjacent to a service road for communication towers/facilities, and a trail system which has a history of year-round heavy recreational use.

Environmental Effects

3.1.3.1 Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative)

Meadows are a special habitat type in the forest-dominated Oregon Coast Range ecosystem. The continual and gradual loss of meadow habitat would have a negative impact on diversity and those wildlife species that nest or forage in and adjacent to meadows.
3.1.3.2 Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Restoring this meadow habitat by removing encroaching trees would have a positive impact on all wildlife species using these high-elevation mountain meadows. The loss of six acres of early/mid-seral noble fir trees is expected to have no measurable impact on species dependent upon these forest habitats. Impacts to the adjacent late-seral noble fir stand would be insignificant due to the small size (6 acres) of the action; no late-seral trees would be cut; and noise levels would not be above ambient levels since there is a long-term history of road noise, recreational use, and communication facilities maintenance work associated with the action area.

3.1.4 Soils

Affected Environment

Soils in the project area are defined as Klickitat Gravely Clay Loams with 30 to 75 percent slopes, and are composed of colluvium and residuum derived from igneous and sedimentary rocks in the foothills and in the Oregon Coast Range. Depth to bedrock in the project area is approximately 3 to 5 feet. Soil permeability is moderately rapid, runoff is very rapid, and hazard of erosion is high. The rooting depth is approximately 50 inches.

Environmental Effects

3.1.4.1 Alternative 1 (No Action)

This alternative would result in no change to the affected environment. Short-term impacts to soils would be avoided.

3.1.4.2 Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Compaction and disturbance/displacement of soil

All vehicles would stay on existing roadways and this project would be completed by hand so no soil disturbance is expected. Impacts from material to be chipped and hauled off site would be minimal since the material would be chipped and removed on existing roadways.

Site Productivity

All work at the meadow site would be completed by hand so no effect to soil productivity is expected.

Based on prior fuels projects, the proposed burning of piles would not adversely impact long-term soil productivity and the pile areas would be required to be revegetated after the piles were burned.
3.1.5 Fuels/Air Quality

Affected Environment

Fuels

There is a layer of duff in the older, more dense stands of conifers, but very little duff is present in the grass areas with scattered trees. There is a very light accumulation of small diameter dead woody material on the ground in the denser conifer stand. Snags are mostly absent on the site. Dead fuel loading is very light – less than 3 tons per acre cured grass and tree litter.

The proposed treatment unit has a general easterly aspect. The proposed treatment area has slopes generally ranging from 15 percent to 35 percent.

Air Quality

Air quality in the vicinity of this proposed project is generally very high due to the location of the project area in the Oregon Coast Range. Transport winds affecting the area generally come in off the ocean and keep the air shed scoured out preventing a build up of particulate matter. Occasional stagnant air conditions do develop during the burning season and may result in accumulation of particulate matter but generally these are short lived lasting less than 1 week.

Environmental Effects

3.1.5.1 Alternative 1 (No Action)

No action would result in the stand continuing to grow. The dead fuel loading would increase over time as the stand develops. Average size of the dead fuels would increase slowly over time as the forest grows.

3.1.5.2 Alternative 2 (Proposed Action)

Fuels

Pile Burning
Fuel loading, risk of a fire start and the resistance to control a fire, would all increase temporarily at the site during tree removal. Following fuels treatment as proposed, these three factors would be mitigated to a point that the overall levels would be lower than prior to implementation. The estimated fuel loading would increase by 10 to 20 tons per acre, resulting in a total fuel loading on the site ranging in the 20 to 40 tons per acre following cutting and removal. The amount of fuel proposed to be piled, covered and burned would be 40 to 110 total tons.

Depending on the final number and size of down logs left on site for coarse wood, the residual dead fuel load would range from 5 to 25 tons per acre.

Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2009-0002-EA
**Chipping**

Fuel loading, risk of a fire start and the resistance to control a fire, would all decrease in the project area as a result of the proposed action. The majority of the slash created from timber cutting would be chipped and removed from the site. Due to the minimal amount of slash left on site the proposed action is expected to pose little fire risk. Any fire that might occur would spread very slowly with minimal flame length and be easily controlled. The slash left on site is expected to break down and be incorporated in the surface soils within a decade.

**Air Quality**

The total amount of slash debris expected to be piled for burning is estimated to be approximately 60 to 120 tons from the piled slash in the project area. Burning this amount of dry, cured, piled fuels under favorable atmospheric conditions in the Oregon Coast Range under the guidance of the OSMP (Oregon Smoke Management Plan) administered by the local ODF (Oregon Department of Forestry) offices is not expected to result in any long term negative effects to air quality in the air shed. Locally within ¼ to ½ mile of the piles there may be some very short term smoke impacts after piles are ignited resulting from drift smoke.

Depending on size, arrangement, type and moisture content of the remaining fuel, the smoke would diminish over several hours or days as the piles cool and burn out (sooner if rain develops). Generally this later smoke only affects the immediate area (¼ to ½ mile or less) around the pile. If a temperature inversion develops over the area during the night time hours, smoke may be trapped under the inversion and accumulate, resulting in a short term impact to the local air quality (generally the area within 1 mile or less from the burn area). The accumulated smoke generally clears out by mid-morning as the inversion lifts. Burning of slash would always be coordinated with ODF and conducted in accordance with the OSMP. This serves to coordinate all forest burning activities on a regional scale to prevent negative impacts to local and regional air sheds. Guidance under the OSMP would always prevent or severely limit burning anytime the weather forecasts indicate there is a likelihood of a stagnant air or persistent inversion situation developing.

**4.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

**4.1 Vegetation**

The USFS at this time proposes to remove approximately 20 acres of conifers at the summit of Marys Peak. Conifer removal would consist of removing approximately 3.9 acres in 'tree islands', 2.4 acres in areas blocking panoramic views and approximately 14 acres in connectivity areas located between two or more open meadow habitat. The City of Corvallis is also considering removing one acre of tree islands and one acre of connectivity areas on the summit of Marys Peak.

Effects of the proposed action and those listed above on native vegetation are expected to be localized within the project area. This restoration project would restore meadow habitat which has been decreasing in size over the past 50 years. Implementation would increase the number of acres of meadow habitat existing within the Coast Range Physiographic Province.
Examples of activities and natural events within the Oregon Coast Range physiographic province that would create soil disturbance, increase available light, and increase soil temperatures, all of which would influence the spread of non-native plants (NNP) are:

- commercial and pre-commercial timber density management projects;
- young stand maintenance;
- road construction, maintenance, renovation, decommissioning and culvert replacements;
- landslide, high flow sedimentation deposits; and off highway vehicle (OHV) activities;

Activities that do not necessarily create disturbance but influence the spread of weed seeds are recreational hiking, biking, horseback riding, fishing and hunting.

The implementation of this project would likely increase the number of common and widespread non-native plant species only in areas that have disturbed mineral soil. The amount of disrupted mineral soil for this project is estimated to be less than one acre and restricted mainly to paths and trails used to dispose of slash. Because the size of the entire project is small and the areas impacted are expected to be minimal, the risk rating for any adverse cumulative effects from the establishment of non-native plants within the Oregon Coast Range physiographical province through the implementation of this project would remain low.

4.2 Recreation/Visual

Current recreation access and use of the project area would have intermittent daily or hourly restrictions for a few days within a two year time period. Recreational users in the vicinity would hear the noises of the cutting and cleanup operations for minutes to hours. Usage is expected to increase following completion of project activities. Other BLM and USFS managed lands nearby would remain available for recreational opportunities while this project is occurring. This project would have minimal to no impact on recreational uses due to the fact there are other opportunities available within the Mary's Peak Recreation Area.

The purpose of the project (restoration of meadow habitat) would allow for greater visibility looking out from the project area. Mitigation measures would minimize impacts so localized visual disturbance would not be a major factor and as individuals are further away from Mary's Peak, the disturbance would blend into the landscape.

The USFS is planning a similar project on their lands to open up historical meadow habitat within the next two years.

4.3 Wildlife

There are no significant cumulative effects at the landscape or stand levels due to the small size and location of the project. The project would have a small permanent effect, since its post-treatment condition would be maintained. Therefore, it would have long-term positive cumulative effects on all wildlife that depend upon non-forested openings for nesting or foraging.
Because there are no active spotted owl sites within 1.5 miles, no occupied murrelet sites within the project area, and no modification to critical habitat of either species, there would be no cumulative loss of suitable habitat that would directly affect any federally listed wildlife species.

4.4 Soils
Because of the small area being proposed for this project and minimal disturbance at the meadow restoration site, the level of ground disturbance would remain below the RMP standards. It is expected that there would be no measurable impact to the soils resource in the terms of soil compaction, displacement, and productivity within the project area.

4.5 Fuels/Air Quality
There would be few cumulative effects to the resources, as the effects from the project would be local and/or short lived, and there would be no other uses affecting this resource. Burning of slash would be guided by the OSMP which serves to coordinate all forest burning activities on a regional scale to protect local and regional air sheds. Based on past experience with pile burning in this and other similar areas there are no expected cumulative effects on air quality from the planned fuels treatment under this proposal.

The estimated 120 tons of fuel planned for disposal under this planned action would be burned in the fall burning season when weather conditions are favorable. Under OSMP guidance, generally units would be in the 500 to 750 ton range or less on most burn days and have a 5 to 10 mile spacing between units. This guidance allows for enough volume in the air shed for the smoke to dissipate without accumulating to densities that would produce noticeable negative impacts to visibility or health and safety. The OSMP guidance takes into account other sources of air particulates along with forest smoke in order to keep the combined total of air particulates within acceptable standards. Forest fuel burning at a given site is an infrequent one time event that is spaced and timed to allow for components of the smoke to be washed out of the atmosphere, be chemically broken down or be absorbed by plants.

5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation/Botany/Special Status Plant Species</td>
<td>Ron Exeter</td>
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<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>Dave Calver</td>
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<td>Fuels/Air Quality</td>
<td>Tom Tomezyk</td>
<td>TST</td>
<td>11/02/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soils</td>
<td>Steve Wegner</td>
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<td>NEPA</td>
<td>Gary Humbard</td>
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<td>Carbon Sequestration and Climate Change</td>
<td>Hugh Snook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife/ Special Status Animal Species</td>
<td>Gary Licata</td>
<td>GAL</td>
<td>12/22/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation/Visual</td>
<td>Traci Meredith</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
6.0 CONTACTS AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Agencies, Organizations, and Persons Consulted (ESA Section 7 Consultation)

*U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

The proposed action would have no effect on northern spotted owl or its critical habitat and would have no effect on marbled murrelet or its critical habitat. No known sites or existing nesting habitat would be impacted. The project area is very small and adjacent to a well travelled road. In addition, the project areas has a long history of moderate-heavy recreational use, which minimizes the nesting and foraging suitability of this site. Based on the 'no effect' determination consultation on ESA listed species and critical habitat is not required for this project.

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

A determination has been made that this proposed project would have ‘No Effect’ on Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed Upper Willamette River (UWR) steelhead trout, UWR Chinook salmon, Oregon chub, and Oregon Coast coho salmon. Generally, the ‘No Effect’ determination is based on the distance of the proposed project to ESA listed fish habitat. The distance from ESA listed fish or critical habitat is over two miles to project activities and proposed actions do not impact any riparian systems. Based on the 'No Effect' determination consultation on ESA listed species and critical habitat is not required for this project. 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 Marys Peak Meadow Restoration project does not include any riparian systems and is not anticipated to adversely affect EFH. Consultation on EFH is not required for this project.

6.2 Cultural Resources - Section 106 Consultation and Consultation with State Historical Preservation Office

The project area occurs in the Oregon Coast Range. Survey techniques are based on those described in Appendix D of the *Protocol for Managing Cultural Resource on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon*. Post-project survey would be conducted according to standards based on slope defined in the Protocol appendix. Ground disturbing work would be suspended if cultural material is discovered during project work until an archaeologist can assess the significance of the discovery.

6.3 Public Scoping and Notification-Tribal Governments, Adjacent Landowners, General Public, and State County and local government offices

A scoping letter, dated January 28, 2010, was sent to 20 potentially affected or interested individuals, groups, and agencies. – Four responses were received during the scoping period.
6.3.1 **EA public comment period**

The Marys Peak Stewardship Group, USFS and BLM organized a public open house/picnic on August 20, 2009 at the summit of Marys Peak. Presentations were made concerning the need to preserve meadow habitat in the Oregon Coastal Mountains and aerial photos displayed showing how much meadow habitat has been lost since the mid-1900’s. Approximately 80 members of the public participated with most everyone in favor of the meadow restoration project after they became familiar with the restoration proposals.

The EA and FONSI will be made available for public review March 12, 2010 to April 12, 2010. The notice for public comment will be published in a legal notice by the *Gazette-Times* newspaper. Comments received by the MPRA of the Salem District Office, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306, on or before April 12, 2010 will be considered in making the final decision for this project.

### 7.0 MAJOR SOURCES

7.1 Major Sources

7.1.1 **Interdisciplinary Team Reports**


7.1.2 **Additional References**


USDA Forest Service, USDI. Bureau of Land Management. 1994. Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Portland, OR.
USDI Bureau of Land Management. 2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines

USDI Bureau of Land Management. 2000 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement For Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines


8.0 RESPONSE TO SCOPING COMMENTS
A scoping letter, dated January 28, 2010, was sent to 20 potentially affected and/or interested individuals, groups, and agencies. Four responses were received during the scoping period.

8.1 Summary of comments and BLM responses

The following addresses comments raised in four letters from the public received as a result of scoping (40 CFR Part 1501.7). Additional supporting information can be found in Specialists’ Reports in the NEPA file. The comments, (in italics type), may have been paraphrased for clarity or conciseness, but the complete text of the comment was available to the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) making the response. The full text of the comment letters are available in the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration NEPA/ EA file.

Chris Bently, (Benton County Community Development Department)
Received February 11, 2010

I wish to express support regarding the Marys Peak Meadow Restoration Project. The plant communities existing in these areas represent unique recreational and educational opportunities, and will continue to exist only if encroachment is prevented through management. Although plant succession is a natural process, establishment of this area as a Scenic Botanical Area dictates continued management by the agencies entrusted with its care.

Marys Peak Meadow Restoration EA DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2009-0002-EA
As stated in the purpose and need (EA Section 1.2) One purpose of this project is to restore and maintain special habitats as directed by the Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP, P. 33).

The Marys Peak Area of Critical and Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management Plan (August, 1997) allows for manipulation to protect and restore the values in which the ACEC was designated. Specific management objectives are to “maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important values of the area.” and “manage to prevent loss of the outstanding values” and “to coordinate activities directed toward mutual management objectives of the Scenic Botanic Area of the U.S. Forest Service” (Management Plans for Marys Peak ACEC, 1997 p.28).

These objectives are the reason the BLM is proposing the project.

Greg Verrel, (Benton County Community Development Department)
Received February 10, 2010

I strongly support the project objectives of restoring and maintaining the rare meadow habitat found at and near the summit of Marys Peak. It is a priority of Benton County to preserve and enhance rare habitats and the species they support, and I am encouraged to hear about this effort by the BLM.

See response to Chris Bently above.

Oregon Wild, Doug Heiken
Received February 11, 2010

1. We hoped the BLM would coordinate with the Forest Service in their restoration efforts on Marys Peak.

   The BLM was approached by the Forest Service in early planning stages for this project and the two agencies are working together to accomplish the same goal of restoring the meadow habitat on Marys Peak.

2. We understand from the Forest Service that evidence is lacking for fire as a mechanism for maintaining these historic meadows, which raises the possibility that the meadows are a remnant of another climatic period. If so, maybe this restoration effort is unwise because it interferes with the ecosystem's natural adaptation to the new climate. Are we trying to paddle a boat upstream against a strong climatic current?

   Succession is a natural event and through passive management of Marys Peak meadow habitat continues to be lost each year to encroaching conifers. There is a need to maintain, at a minimum the amount of existing meadow habitat that was present in the latter part of 1900's by removing conifers less than 12 inches in diameter. This objective can be accomplished through this action on BLM lands.
because BLM manages approximately 9 acres of meadow habitat on the top of Marys Peak.

3. Maps provided in the scoping packet don’t line up with some of those found on the internet. We hope you aren’t treating areas with mature conifers?

*Our proposal would remove conifers less than 12 inches in diameter only in locations where meadow habitat can be restored.*

4. Please do not build any roads, and provide for full suspension or consider the use of horses to transport trees.

*Our proposal would be completed by utilizing a hand crew. The only mechanical equipment, other than chain saws would be a chipper truck. The chipper would remain on existing roadways at all times. All material transported would be carried out by the crew. We do anticipate some vegetation trampling by use of common trails to remove severed trees and suspect a team of horses would cause more damage than the use of a crew.*

5. Burning concentrated or piled fuels on the sensitive soils of Mary's Peak might not be a good idea. The deep organic layers might be significantly depleted and degraded.

*If we decide to burn slash, the pile areas would be minimized in size. Any effects would be small and localized. Initially the severed material would be removed for chipping, but some would also be lopped and scattered under the larger reserved conifers. During this process we would evaluate the amount of slash remaining and determine if there is a need to reduce some of the slash through burning. If needed, only some of the material would be piled and burned.*

6. Please leave at least a few natural-appearing wood piles for wildlife. In fact, maybe a large portion of the wood can be retained on site to provide soil cover and habitat structure under the canopy of the mature trees.

*Since this material would be transported by using hand crews we anticipate leaving many of the boles of the 10 to 12 inch diameter material on site to decay. As mentioned above, it would be scattered under the reserved conifers.*

7. Instead of flush cutting all the stumps, consider leaving a few patches of high-cut stumps of various heights as a kind of snag patch which will more closely mimic a natural disturbance.

*We will consider girding some trees to provide habitat for cavity nesting birds, although the size of the material would be small. For safety reasons we cannot leave ‘high-cut’ stumps.*
Cutting trees creates an imbalance in the natural transition.

Allowing natural succession to occur on Marys Peak which further reduces known meadow habitat that occurs in the Oregon Coastal Mountains is an option. However, both the United States Forest Service and BLM lands on Marys Peak have been designated for recreation based on the presence of meadow habitat on the summit of Marys Peak. In addition, meadow habitat in the vast coniferous forests of the Oregon Coast Range Mountains is minimal and the BLM prefers a proactive approach to maintain and restore the meadow habitat on Marys Peak.