

**Final Decision Record
for
Hoag Pass Commercial Density Management Thinning,
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement,
And Roadside Hardwood Removal for Road Maintenance Projects**

Environmental Assessment Number OR-086-06-05

USDI - Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office, Salem District
Tillamook Resource Area
Tillamook County, Oregon

BACKGROUND

The Hoag Pass Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) covers the BLM's (Bureau of Land Management) Hoag Pass Environmental Assessment (EA) which proposes to conduct three different projects in the Late-Successional Reserve, Adaptive Management Area and Riparian Reserve land use allocations. The first project is a commercial density management thinning of approximately 862 acres. The second project is a fish and wildlife habitat enhancement treatment on approximately 911 acres. The third project will remove hardwoods along approximately 9 miles of road. These actions will occur on federal land in portions of T.3S., R.7W., sections 13, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35, and 36; T.3S., R.6W., sections 19, 30, and 31; Willamette Meridian. In response to this action an environmental analysis was conducted and documented in EA number OR-086-06-05, dated April 17, 2006. Addendum 1 contains the public comments received to EA OR-086-06-05 and the BLM responses.

The projects presented in The Hoag Pass Projects EA are the products of the Tillamook Resource Area's integrated planning processes which were conducted at three scales and utilized an interdisciplinary planning approach. The largest scale of planning considered all BLM lands within the Tillamook Resources Area and applied eleven rating criteria which reflected various management directions, concerns or objectives (e.g. Key Watershed status, Clean Water Act, Land Use Allocations, Silvicultural Needs Assessment, and Transportation - including both access issues and restoration needs). This Analysis resulted in the identification of the Nestucca Watershed as a high priority for management. The second scale of planning looked at eight Activity Planning Units (APUs) roughly correlated to 6th field watersheds within the Nestucca Watershed. Nine different, Nestucca-specific rating criteria were applied to the APUs (e.g. Key Watershed status, forest restoration potential and transportation system concerns) to help prioritize planning efforts within the watershed. This analysis resulted in the Hoag Pass APU being identified as one of the top three planning priorities within the watershed. The final scale of planning considered all lands within the Hoag Pass APU, and in light of APU-specific Planning Issues compared current resource conditions to the management objectives and Desired Future Conditions of the area. The projects included in this Environmental Assessment were identified during this Activity Planning Process.

EA AVAILABILITY

A copy of the Hoag Pass EA can be obtained from the Tillamook Field Office, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook, Oregon 97141. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., closed on holidays. A copy of the Hoag Pass EA can also be obtained at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/salem/plans/salem.htm>.

CONFORMANCE WITH LAND USE PLANS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The proposed actions are in conformance with the *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*, May 1995 (ROD/RMP) and tiers to the *Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement*, September 1994 (FEIS). I have reviewed this ROD/RMP and determined that the Hoag Pass projects conform to the land use plan terms and conditions (e.g. comply with management goals, objectives, direction, standards and guidelines) as required by 43 CFR 1610.5 (BLM Handbook H1790-1, Illustration 3). The Hoag Pass projects have been designed to implement the ROD/RMP direction.

The proposed actions are also in conformance with the *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*, April 1994 (“Northwest Forest Plan”); *Nestucca Watershed Analysis*, October 1994; *Northern Coast Range Adaptive Management Area Guide*, January 1997; *Late-Successional Reserve Assessment for Oregon’s Northern Coast Range Adaptive Management Area*, January 1998 (LSRA); *Record of Decision and Standard and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, January, 2001; *Record of Decision Amending Resource Management Plans for Seven Bureau of Land Management Districts and Land and Resource Management Plans for Nineteen National Forests Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl - Decision to Clarify Provisions Relating to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy*, March 2004; the *Coastal Zone Management Act of 1974*, as amended and *Endangered Species Act of 1972*, as amended (ESA).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Project 1 – Density Management

Pursuant to Section 102(2) (E) of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act 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 concerning

alternative uses of available resources (section 102(2) (E) of NEPA) were identified. Two action alternatives (in addition to the proposed action and the no action) were identified for Project 1, which meet the purpose and need of the project, but may have meaningful differences in environmental effects.

Alternative 1 - Proposed Action - The Proposed Action includes (re)placing the three culverts on Road 3-7-36.6 and leaving them in place for future use. Upon completion of the project drivable waterbars will be installed. A heavy gate will be installed to limit access and allow for maintenance.

Alternative 2 – The No Action Alternative.

Alternative 3 – All project design features are identical to Alternative 1 except this alternative includes (re)placing the three culverts on BLM road 3-7-36.6, utilizing the road for the thinning operation and then removing the culverts after the timber sale has been completed.

Alternative 4 – All project design features are identical to Alternative 1 except this alternative does not include (re)placing the three culverts on BLM road 3-7-36.6 and opening the road but yarding the cut trees from all the stands along that road with a helicopter. Approximately 45 acres are yarded with a helicopter under this alternative which under the other action alternatives are yarded with more conventional logging systems.

Project 2 – Fish and Wildlife Enhancement

Because the scoping effort that is described later in this Decision Record did not result in the identification of any major issues, there was no procedural requirement to develop additional action alternatives. As such, the alternatives approved by the responsible official include the “proposed action” alternative (Alternative 1) and the required “no-action” alternative (Alternative 2).

Project 3 – Roadside Hardwood Removal for Road Maintenance

Because the scoping effort that is described later in this Decision Record did not result in the identification of any major issues, there was no procedural requirement to develop additional action alternatives. As such, the alternatives approved by the responsible official include the “proposed action” alternative (Alternative 1) and the required “no-action” alternative (Alternative 2).

DECISION TO BE MADE

The decision to be made by the Tillamook Field Manager is

- Whether to approve the Commercial Density Management Thinning, the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement, and the Roadside Hardwood Removal for Road Maintenance projects as proposed, not at all, or to some other extent.
- Whether site specific impacts would require supplemental/additional information to the analysis done in the RMP/FEIS through a new EIS.

Based upon review of the Hoag Pass EA and supporting project record, I have determined that there are no site specific impacts that would require supplemental/additional information to the analysis done in the RMP/FEIS through a new EIS. This conclusion is based on the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (Hoag Pass EA pp. i-iv).

DECISION

Project 1 – Density Management

I have decided to implement the Commercial Density Management project described as Alternative 1 in EA OR-086-06-05.

In order to meet the Purpose and Need, the BLM proposes to perform density management thinning, using the commercial harvest of timber on approximately 862 acres, located in eleven different sections within the Nestucca watershed. The proposed action is anticipated to be implemented (sold) in 2007 and 2008 as three timber sale projects. A combination of ground-based, cable and helicopter yarding systems will be used. Approximately 22% of the area will be harvested using a ground system, 55% will be harvested with a cable system, and 23% will be harvested by helicopter.

Treatment Area

The proposed action will treat approximately 862 acres of mixed Douglas-fir and western hemlock stands; approximately 537 acres are 30 to 80 years-old and 384 acres are between 80 and 97 years-old. The stands are proposed to be thinned in a variable-spaced manner that generally removes the smaller trees from the stand. Depending on stand age and condition this may result in removing 15 to 60% (average 38%) of the basal area, which translates to approximately 15-80% (average 53%) of the trees per acre.

In general, the larger-diameter conifers with relatively high live crown ratios and healthy appearing crowns will be retained, regardless of spacing. As identified in the LSRA, trees greater than or equal to the diameter cutting limits shall be reserved from harvest; any of these larger trees incidentally felled to facilitate harvest will be left on site as coarse woody debris. Existing western hemlock and western redcedar in the understory will be retained where possible.

Riparian Reserves

Approximately 26% of the proposed density management (about 226 acres) will occur within the Riparian Reserve land use allocation. These Riparian Reserve treatments will occur outside “no-harvest” buffers that will be placed along streams; in general there will be a 50’ no-harvest buffer along non-fish-bearing streams and 100’ no-harvest buffers along fish-bearing streams. Restrictions will apply on ground-based logging equipment within Riparian Reserves which will effectively result in some of the no-harvest buffers adjacent to ground-based yarding units being increased in width to up to approximately 150 feet.

The Riparian Reserves encompass one site potential tree on most streams and two site potential trees on the Nestucca River. The site potential tree heights range from 180 feet to 240 feet in the project area, with an average of 212 feet. No treatment will occur within the Riparian Reserve for the Nestucca River (two site potential trees) in general, the proposed treatments will be similar in both the Riparian Reserve and in the upland areas; exceptions include the design features that no gaps will be created within Riparian Reserves, and specific treatments resulting in higher tree retention levels specifically designed for a portion of the Riparian Reserves will be implemented on approximately 21 acres within four units.

Design Features

The following is a summary of the design features that reduce the risk of effects to the affected elements of the environment. The proposed action(s) will be implemented consistent with the Best Management Practices (BMPs) contained in Appendix C of the RMP.

The following design features pertain to the Commercial Density Management project:

Desirable Stand Features, Diversity, and Protection

- Remove Douglas-fir trees in a variable-spaced manner using a diameter cut limit, with the following exceptions: retain trees that have significant defect, cavities, or dead or broken tops. Retain full-crowned smaller Douglas-fir, Plus trees (trees selected for genetic traits) and their reference trees, and bearing trees. Retain Douglas-fir trees greater than or equal to the diameter cutting limits, hardwoods, western hemlock, noble fir, and western redcedar with the following exceptions: Remove red alder and unstable trees within the road prism (from the top of the cut bank to the lower shoulder) of traveled roads.
- Create patch cuts from 0.5 to 1.0 acre in size, totaling approximately 18 acres, in 11 units. Create unthinned leave islands from .5 to 1.0 acre in size, totaling approximately 14 acres in 8 units (that also contain patch cuts). Within patch cuts, trees greater than the LSRA upper diameter cut limit may be cut and left as down wood, but 8-12 of the largest trees per acre will be left uncut. Standing red alder may be cut in these areas if beneficial to meeting conifer regeneration needs and to help protect planted seedlings from deer and elk browse. Leave islands will be located to protect concentrations of snags and logs, to increase coarse

woody debris recruitment needs along stream influence zones, and where features or stand structure will benefit from higher tree density (e.g. slopes over 70%).

- Where cable yarding corridors converge near the landings, open areas within a 100-foot radius downhill of the landings will be planted with shade-tolerant conifer seedlings such as western redcedar or western hemlock.
- Log lengths will be limited to 40 feet plus trim to reduce the potential for excessive residual stand damage. If determined necessary, log lengths will be reduced on specific corridors to achieve full-suspension over water courses.

Seasonal Restrictions

- Felling and yarding operations will be restricted during the peak bark-slip period (generally May 1 to July 15) if excessive leave tree damage occurs. Western hemlock and true firs are particularly prone to damage. This restriction is less likely to be necessary in helicopter yarding areas.

Coarse Woody Debris (Snags and Down Wood)

- Retain green trees that have significant defect such as cavities, or dead, forked or broken tops.
- Conifers greater than the diameter cutting limits will possibly be cut to create skyline corridors, skid roads, landing areas, or haul roads. In general, trees cut that are greater than or equal to 16" DBH in stands less than age 40, and 20" DBH in stands over age 40, will remain on site for coarse wood enhancement; it is anticipated that a small portion of these felled trees will be removed in order to avoid the creation of operational problems and/or safety hazards.
- If reserve trees must be topped for operational purposes (e.g. lift or tail trees) they will be maintained on site to augment snag and downed woody debris habitat if possible.
- CWD creation will primarily be focused on stands that are currently considered to be suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl; these stands are greater than 80-years-old or have a quadratic mean DBH greater than 18 inches. Depending upon the stand's age, condition and location as well and the condition and amount of existing CWD relative to target levels, up to approximately 8 Douglas firs per acre will be converted to a snag or snag-topped tree or felled to enhance CWD.
- Where applicable, created snags or felled trees will generally not be located within approximately 150 feet of a drivable road, a property line boundary where BLM land abuts non-federal ownership, any designated OHV trail and/or the Jane Creek hiking trail. This feature is designed to help reduce the potential for the creation of a safety hazard and/or the likelihood that the material will be stolen or sold as firewood.
- Existing coarse woody debris will be retained to the extent possible, and snags that are cut or knocked over during logging will remain on site.
- Existing snags (greater than 18" dbh and 20' in height, or snags being actively used by wildlife) will be surrounded with two or more leave trees to protect them from logging damage.
- CWD will result from trees broken during timber falling, from windthrow after harvest, and from density mortality continuing in clumps of relatively dense

conifers remaining after variable density thinning. In addition, the following is prescribed to meet target CWD levels:

Strategy #1 (high level): In stands that meet 'suitable' northern spotted owl habitat (>80 years or >18" quadratic mean diameter), at least one snag per acre will be created to increase the level of standing 'hard' (less decayed) CWD. To meet the high target level, the necessary quantity of average or larger-sized leave trees (generally from the 20-28" diameter classes) will be girdled, cut, or topped, up to a limit of about 8 trees per acre, to reduce the risk of Douglas-fir bark beetle outbreak.

Strategy #2 (moderate level): In mid-seral stands, to meet the moderate target level, the necessary quantity of average or larger-sized leave trees (generally from the 16-28" diameter classes) will be girdled, cut, or topped, up to a limit of about 8 trees per acre, to reduce the risk of Douglas-fir bark beetle outbreak.

Strategy #3 (minimum level): In early-seral stands, no CWD will be created by girdling, topping or cutting trees in this entry, because tree diameters are generally small. Additional coarse wood (primarily snags) could be added at future stand entries. Waiting for the trees to grow to larger size in response to the density management thinning will result in substantially larger, higher quality, longer lasting snags.

Water, Fisheries and Soil Resources

- Timber harvest and associated road actions will utilize the BMPs required by the Federal Clean Water Act (as amended by the Water Quality Act of 1987).
- A minimum "no-harvest" buffer will be placed along both sides of streams and small wetlands less than one acre in size; the minimum size of this buffer will be 50 feet for non-fish bearing streams and 100 feet for fish bearing streams or to the outer edges of any unstable areas.
- To protect water quality, trees will be felled away from all no-harvest buffers within the harvest area. If a cut tree falls into a "no-harvest" buffer, the portion of the tree within the buffer will remain in place.
- Trees will be retained at higher density in the lower 100' of Riparian Reserve (above the 50' no-cut stream buffer) to aid in long-term downed woody debris recruitment in selected units.
- A sediment control plan will be created and implemented for the Davidson rock pit helicopter landing, so that sediment from that site does not enter the Nestucca River. (Sediment Control Plan, BLM, 2006)

Seasonal Restrictions (See Table 3 for a summary of seasonal restrictions)

- Ground Based Equipment: The use of ground-based equipment will be restricted to periods of low soil moisture; generally June 15 through October 15. This season could be adjusted if unseasonable conditions occur (e.g., an extended dry or wet season). Operations will be suspended during periods of heavy precipitation if resource damage will occur.
- Cable Yarding: In general, the season of operation for cable yarding will be dependant upon the haul routes. It may be extended beyond the dry season in

those areas where yarding will take place directly to a road identified for extended season of haul.

- Helicopter Yarding: In general, the season of operation for helicopter logging will be extended beyond the dry season, depending on haul routes.
- Road Work: All road decommissioning, construction and reconstruction will occur during the dry season (generally June 1 through October 15). All work required in live streams (culvert replacement) will be limited to the ODFW instream work window (July 1 to September 15).
- Haul: There are several haul routes utilized by the Density Management Project. Most of them will only be used for dry season hauling. Specified road systems may be available for extended season hauling. Depending on weather and road conditions hauling on these road systems will be allowed for most of the calendar year, excluding the wettest months (generally Dec 1 – Feb 15).
- All hauling and road maintenance work done during the “wet season” (generally outside of the period between June 1 and October 15) will be subject to the following stipulations to minimize negative impacts to water quality and fish habitat:

Hauling and maintenance activities will be suspended when conditions exist that may cause the generation of excessive sediment, such as intense or prolonged rainfall; or when the road surface is deteriorating due to freeze-thaw cycles or from excessive use.

Spot rocking and/or sediment traps will be employed as needed to reduce the potential sediment inputs to area streams and to protect the road surface. Sediment traps will be inspected weekly during the wet season and trapped sediments will be removed once the trap has filled to $\frac{3}{4}$ capacity.

To the extent feasible, road maintenance activities that could result in sediment leaving the roadway will be scheduled during periods of dry weather (as early as May 1 through approximately October 15).

Yarding

- Ground: Designated skid trails will be used in order to limit the extent of skid trails and landings to less than 10% of the unit. Skid trail and landing cutting limits will be kept to the narrowest width and size necessary to reasonably harvest the unit (for analysis purposes, assume a 12-foot-wide impact area for skid trails and a 50-foot-diameter impact area for landings). Use existing skid trails and landings to the extent possible.
- The purchaser may elect to use mechanized, cut-to-length systems provided that the following measures are met:
 - Harvesters, feller-bunchers, and or log processors must be boom mounted with a minimum operating radius of 20 feet. The equipment must have a ground pressure rating of 8 psi (pounds per square inch) or less. Log harvesting equipment trails will be spaced 40 to 50 feet apart and be no more than 15 feet in width. No more than two passes over the same ground will be permitted.
 - Forwarding or skidding equipment will be restricted to designated trails approved by the Authorized Officer prior to felling and yarding operations.

Trails will average 12 feet or less in width and will be located, on average, 100 feet apart.

The harvester will be required to place slash in front of the machine tracks or tires in order to reduce compaction. The forwarder or skidder will operate on a nearly continuous layer of slash, minimum of 6 inches thick.

- Cable: At least one-end suspension on all logs is required in cable logging areas, and where feasible in ground-based logging areas.
- On areas that will be cable yarded during extended season or wet season with slopes greater than 65 percent, cable yarding will be full suspension or one-end suspension using a standing skyline with lateral yarding capacity.
- Skyline corridors on spans that are less than 1200 feet will generally be 12 feet in width and located 150 feet apart at one end. Skyline corridors on spans that are greater than 1200 feet will generally be 20 feet in width and located 150 feet apart at one end.
- Riparian Reserves: Riparian “no-harvest” buffers may have yarding corridors cut through them if necessary; however any trees cut in the “no-harvest” buffers will be left on site to augment CWD.
- During the dry season (generally June 1 - October 15), logs yarded over streams will be fully suspended within 25 feet of designated stream channels; if yarding occurs outside of the dry season, logs will be fully suspended within 50 feet of designated stream channels.
- Ground-based equipment will not be permitted to enter Riparian Reserves except where they are able to operate from existing roads.
- Yarding will be restricted in Riparian Reserves to corridors that are perpendicular to streams (or as close as possible to 90 degrees).

Road, Skid Trail and Landing Construction, Reconstruction and Decommissioning

- New roads and skid trails: New road and skid trails will be located outside of Riparian Reserves.
- Except for small areas of spot-rocking, rock or wood chips will not be placed on about 75% of new temporary roads.
- Landings: The number of landings and their size will be kept to the minimum required to reasonably harvest the units. Each helicopter landing will be approximately ¼ to ½ acre in size and at least a part of it will be rocked if logging operations occur during wet weather. Landings will be located by the purchaser and approved by the BLM.
- Renovated Roads: Replace the three culverts on Road 3-7-36.6 and leave them in place, installing a gate across the road.
- Decommissioned roads: Approximately 92% of newly constructed road and some renovated and/or reconstructed roads will be decommissioned. Decommissioning will consist of decompacting, water barring, seeding or planting with native species, and restricting OHV use. Restricting OHV use may include the strategic placement of boulders or root wads, or other types of earthen barriers.
- Primary skid trails: As determined necessary by the silviculturist and soil scientist, some of the primary skid trails will be decompacted by subsoiling.
- Regeneration: Subsoiled roads and landings will be planted with red alder

- seedlings (1-0 bare root or one-year-old containerized planting stock) to supplement natural alder regeneration. Helicopter landings will be planted after use with red alder and conifer seedlings, particularly within the Nestucca corridor.
- If the Davidson rock pit, located along the Nestucca Access Road is requested and approved for use as a helicopter landing, the waste asphalt material currently located within and/or near the Davidson rock pit will be disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Special Status Species

- No potentially suitable marbled murrelet or northern spotted owl nest trees will be felled and where possible, no openings will be created within one tree length surrounding a potential murrelet nest tree.
- Any newly discovered marbled murrelet sites (as per the Pacific Seabird Group Marbled Murrelet Technical Committee protocol) will be protected by a 0.5 mile radius buffer on all contiguous existing and recruitment federal habitat.

Invasive / Non-Native Plants

- Prior to entering the sale area each work season, or before returning to the watershed after leaving it, any heavy machinery (with the exception of log trucks and pick-up trucks used for daily personnel travel) will have all dirt and adhering vegetation removed by power-washing.

Cultural Resources

- Survey techniques for cultural resources are based on those described in the Protocol for Managing Cultural Resource on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon. A post-project survey will be conducted according to standards based on slope defined in the Protocol appendix. Ground disturbing work will be suspended if cultural material is discovered during project work until an archaeologist can assess the significance of the discovery.
- The historic homestead sites in the area will be posted outside of the unit boundaries with a minimum of 50 foot buffers.

Recreation and Access

- Portions of the proposed action areas are contained within the area of the Upper Nestucca OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Trail System. Approximately ten OHV trail segments are located within proposed density management treatment units. All trails will be cleared of logging debris post-harvest. These trail segments as well as additional road segments will be temporarily closed to OHV use as the project is implemented (also see design features to reduce Fire Risk).
- The Jane Creek hiking trail passes through a portion of the density management treatment units; design features to protect the integrity of this trail include a buffer around the trail (buffer width will vary as needed), not allowing yarding across the trail, and clearing all logging debris from the trail during post-harvest operations.
- No timber harvest will be conducted within the Riparian Reserves of the mainstem Nestucca River based on the river's eligibility for inclusion in the

National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

- Yarding: As per OSHA regulations, traffic will be controlled where helicopters transport logs over roadways or cable skylines cross roads– possibly the Nestucca Access Road or Bald Mountain Road. This could result in traffic delays of up to two hours.
- A Traffic Safety Plan will be developed to assure public safety on roads impacted by implementation of the timber harvest operations.
- The Fan Creek campground may be temporarily closed for up to approximately two weeks if the purchaser requests approval of a helicopter flight plan that includes flights over the campground.
- The Elk Flat stockpile site receives use as an OHV staging area; if requested as a helicopter landing site it may be closed to public use during logging operations.
- Where possible the trees next to the Davidson rock pit helicopter landing will be pruned or topped instead of felled to maintain a visual buffer.
- If needed large planting stock will be planted in or near the rock pit helicopter landing after use.
- A Rehabilitation Plan for the Davidson rock pit helicopter landing will be created and a copy will be sent to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for comments.

Fire Risk

- Lopping and scattering of fuels may be incorporated in areas where fuel loading is relatively heavy but not heavy enough to warrant hand piling or burning.
- Pullback of fuels may be incorporated in areas where fuel loading is relatively light (especially along roads) and not heavy enough to warrant hand piling or burning. All slash will be pulled back at least 10 feet from designated OHV trails and from the Jane Creek hiking trail.
- Burning will be conducted under good atmospheric mixing conditions to lessen the impact on air quality in designated areas.
- Landing piles should be located as far as possible from green trees to minimize damage.
- Hand piles should be located at least 10 feet from green trees, where possible, to minimize damage.
- Hand piles and landing piles will be covered to facilitate the consumption of fuels during the high moisture fall/winter burning periods.
- To further mitigate fire risk, specified logging roads and OHV trails in the project area will be posted ‘closed’ to all vehicle use when an Industrial Fire Precaution Level of II or greater is reached during the first year following harvest activities, while fuels are in the “red needle” stage. These designated areas should be monitored for the need of additional closures during subsequent years during periods of high fire danger.

Project 2 – Fish and Wildlife Enhancement

I have decided to implement the Fish and Wildlife Enhancement project described as Alternative 1 in EA OR-086-06-05.

In order to help meet the purpose and need, the BLM proposes habitat enhancement that will benefit both wildlife and fish species in approximately 911 acres of upland or riparian forest including within and along approximately 1.9 miles of stream. Although trees up to 36 inches DBH may be treated, it is expected that this project will primarily treat trees up to approximately 30 inches DBH.

Treatment Area

This project includes felling of green trees, girdling green trees at the base as well as within the live crown, topping green trees and/or potentially inoculating trees with a heart rot fungus to enhance wildlife and/or fish habitat. Along the seven selected stream segments, trees will be felled into the floodplain and/or the active channel to enhance instream and adjacent riparian habitats. Other potential design features include using CWD creation in such a way as to mimic bark beetle pockets and maximize the potential benefits through also releasing individual understory and/or overstory trees; some of the treated trees will be located in small clumps of up to about five trees. Some clumps of treated trees could be positioned in association with existing hemlock understory so as to potentially promote understory development, or be used to surround individual selected overstory trees with a ring of created snags thereby promoting the growth of individual large trees.

The proposed treatments will vary by treating up to eight trees per acre; in general these trees will be scattered throughout the treatment units. Where opportunities are available, trees will occasionally be felled from the edges of the mature stands identified for habitat enhancement into adjacent younger plantations. It is anticipated that the project will be implemented over the next 10 to 15 years as funding and work force allow.

Riparian Reserves

Approximately 50% of the habitat enhancement project areas are located within Riparian Reserves. Treatments applied in the Riparian Reserves will extend down to the stream channel; trees in this area will be selected so that stream shading will not be appreciably affected.

Design Features

The following is a summary of the design features that reduce the risk of effects to the affected elements of the environment. The proposed action(s) will be implemented consistent with the Best Management Practices (BMPs) contained in Appendix C of the RMP.

The following design features pertain to the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement project:

Snag and Down Wood Creation

- Only healthy appearing Douglas fir will be treated.
- *Wildlife Special Status Species*: No tree which is potentially suitable as a nest tree for the spotted owl or marbled murrelet, or contains a suspected nest of any other bird or mammal will be treated. In addition, no tree adjacent to a potentially suitable spotted owl or marbled murrelet nest tree or any tree containing a suspected nest of a bird or mammal will be treated.
- Trees selected for treatment will generally not include the largest, dominant trees within a given area, or trees with the fullest crowns and/or largest branches.
- Felling of trees will be conducted in such a way as to assure no damage to potentially suitable spotted owl or marbled murrelet nest trees, or any tree containing a suspected nest of a bird or mammal.
- *Recreation*: Created snags or felled trees will generally not be located within approximately 150 feet of a drivable road, a property line boundary where BLM land abuts non-federal ownership, any designated OHV trail or the Jane Creek hiking trail. This will reduce the potential for the creation of a safety hazard and/or the likelihood that the material will be stolen or sold as firewood.
- *Botanical Special Status Species*: Approximately five Douglas fir trees within the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Enhancement unit within T3S, R7W, sections 26 & 36 have been identified as harboring *Hypogymnia duplicata*, an uncommon lichen within this portion of the coast range; it is currently identified as a Bureau Tracking species under the BLM 6840 Special Status Species Policy and also as a Survey and Manage Category C lichen. No trees harboring *Hypogymnia duplicata* will be felled or girdled. A 100 ft buffer around existing populations will protect the host trees, surrounding habitat and microclimate. Felling of trees outside of this buffer will be directed away from populations in such a way as to assure no damage to identified host trees.
- All felled trees will be selected and felled in such a way as to minimize impacts to existing decay class 3, 4, and 5 down woody debris which is greater than 15 inches in diameter.

Felling Trees into Streams

- The in-stream work period (July 1 – September 15) will be adhered to when a portion of felled trees will be felled into anadromous fish-bearing stream reaches; it will not be adhered to when falling trees into non-fish or non-anadromous bearing streams. Trees felled into stream channels outside the instream work window will need approval by ODFW.
- Felled trees will generally not be moved or manipulated after falling; an exception is those trees felled into the active channel of Fan Creek or the Nestucca River where the position of felled trees may be adjusted with the aid of hand-powered or hand-held tools.
- No trees potentially suitable as bald eagle, spotted owl, or marbled murrelet nest trees will be removed; preference will be given to falling trees with smaller crowns.
- No trees harboring *Hypogymnia duplicata* will be felled or girdled. A 100 ft buffer around existing populations will protect the host trees, surrounding habitat and

microclimate. Falling of trees outside of this buffer will be directed away from populations in such a way as to assure no damage to identified host trees.

- No trees greater than 36 inches dbh will be felled; to fall trees greater than 32 inches dbh, specific approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) prior to implementation will need to be obtained. (*The expectation is that most felled trees will be considerably smaller than 32 inches dbh.*)
- Single trees or small groups of trees (2-4 trees) must be spaced at least one site potential tree height apart – approximately 220 feet. These spacing requirements apply to each side of the bank independently.
- Single trees or small groups of trees (2-4 trees) must be spaced one crown width from any trees with potential nesting structure for any listed species.
- Only Douglas-fir trees will be felled.
- Trees to be felled will only be selected from those portions of the riparian stands that are fully-stocked with conifers.
- Single trees selected for falling will likely only be felled from the first two lines of trees set back from the river. *Note: it is possible that this selection criterion could be altered in order to allow for the selection of trees located further from the river; alteration of this criterion will require obtaining approval from the USFWS prior to implementation.*
- Develop and implement an approved spill containment plan that includes having a spill containment kit on site, located at previously identified containment locations. Refuel equipment (including chainsaws and other hand power tools) at least 150 feet from water bodies to prevent direct delivery of contaminants into a water body or as far as possible from the water body where local site conditions do not allow a 150 foot setback.

Project 3 – Roadside Hardwood Removal for Road Maintenance

I have decided to implement the Roadside Hardwood Removal for Road Maintenance project described as Alternative 1 in EA OR-086-06-05.

In order to achieve the Purpose and Need, the BLM proposes to cut leaning trees which are located inside and just outside of the road prism, but lean over the road and cause extra maintenance costs. Most of the trees that will be treated will be hardwoods, primarily red alder and bigleaf maple, although an occasional conifer may be cut.

Treatment Area

Tree removal is not expected to occur more than 25 feet from the road edge. This project will treat approximately 9 miles of road. The roads proposed for treatment are Hoag Pass, Dover Tie, Dover Peak, and Fan Creek. The treatment will only occur along portions of these roads that are located on BLM land.

The diameter of the hardwoods removed will generally be 4-12 inches with a few trees of merchantable saw timber size, perhaps up to 20 inches. These trees may be removed commercially as saw logs, firewood or woodchips, offered to the public as personal-use firewood, and/or left on site as chipped material or Coarse Woody Debris.

Design Features

The following is a summary of the design features that reduce the risk of effects to the affected elements of the environment. The proposed action(s) will be implemented consistent with the Best Management Practices (BMPs) contained in Appendix C of the RMP.

The following design features pertain to the Roadside Hardwood Removal project:

Seasonal Restrictions

- Any commercial hauling of hardwoods, either as saw logs, firewood or woodchips, shall occur during the dry season of operation depending on soil moisture. Other hardwoods disposal shall occur year round depending on weather, soil moisture, work-force availability and/or fire danger (i.e. personal-use firewood cutting, dispersed chip blowing, CWD enhancement).

Special Status Species

- Felling of trees will be conducted in such a way as to assure no damage to potentially suitable spotted owl or marbled murrelet nest tree, or any tree containing a suspected nest of a bird or mammal.

Safety

- Hardwoods which are located slightly outside of the road prism but lean in such a way that a large portion of the tree is above the road will be cut.
- All slash that impedes sight distance will be moved so that it doesn't impede line of sight.

Fire

- All slash less than 6 inches diameter will be pulled back at least 25 horizontal feet from the edge of the road bed.
- All slash greater than 6 inches diameter will be removed from the road prism.
- The resulting depth of slash will not exceed 3 feet. To achieve this scattering and/or bucking of cut material may be required.

Nestucca River State Scenic Waterway

- In order to protect State Scenic Waterway values, that portion of the project area along the lower segment of Hoag Pass Road, flanking the bridge over the Nestucca, will be given special attention. For approximately 50 feet on either side of the bridge (that area containing trees visible from the river) a few trees may be removed if necessary however selective limbing or pruning will be strongly considered instead of total removal. An effective visual buffer of vegetation, including hardwoods will be retained within this area.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Considering public comment, the content of the EA and supporting project record, the management recommendations contained in the WA, LSRA, RPA Guide and AMA Guide, and the management direction contained in the RMP, I have decided to implement the selected alternative as described above. My rationale for this decision follows:

1. The selected alternative addresses the identified purpose and need for action in that it will accelerate the development of some late-successional forest structural features and enhance the overall level of diversity in the area (EA, Chapter 3 and Appendix 2). The project is in a key watershed and will rehabilitate and protect at-risk fish stocks and their habitat (RMP p. 27: WA p. 6-1). The “no action” alternative was not selected because it does not meet the purpose and need, nor does it fulfill any of the project objectives. Implementing the “no action” alternative will not help accelerate late-successional forest characteristics, help protect and rehabilitate at-risk fish stocks, or contribute economic benefits to local communities.
2. The selected alternative is consistent with applicable land use plans, policies, and programs (EA, pp. 3).
3. The selected alternative is consistent with the ACS (Aquatic Conservation Strategy) objectives. (EA, Appendix 2).
4. Public comment to the EA and FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) did not identify any concerns with the implementation of the wildlife habitat enhancement project or the fish habitat enhancement project.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In compliance with NEPA, the selected alternative was listed in the March 2004 through June 2006 editions of the *Salem District Project Update* which were mailed to over 1,000 addresses. On April 29 2005, a Scoping Letter along with a copy of the Hoag Pass Scoping Report sent to 49 individuals, organizations and agencies (Project Record Document 17). As a result of this scoping effort, three letters providing comments were received (Project Record Documents 22, 23, 32) and there was one request for a site visit to the project area. As a result of this site visit request, Tony Stein, Coastal Land Use Coordinator with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department visited with Tillamook RA staff in the project area on July 7, 2005. The IDT reviewed, clarified, and assessed the public comments.

On April 17, 2006, a copy of the EA and appendixes and FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact), were sent to 15 individuals, groups and agencies (Project Record Documents 55) that had expressed an interest in the project. Also, a legal notice requesting public comment to the EA and FONSI appeared in the *Headlight Herald*

Newspaper of Tillamook. The EA and FONSI were released for public comment from April 17, 2006 to May 8, 2006. As a result of this scoping, two letters were received. The BLM's response to these letters is contained in Addendum 1.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR 5003, protests of this decision may be made within 15 days of the publication of a notice of decision in a newspaper of general circulation. This notice of decision will be published in the *Headline Herald* newspaper on August 16, 2006. To protest this decision a person must submit a written protest to William B. Keller, Tillamook Field Manager, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook, Oregon 97141 by the close of business (4:00 p.m.) on August 31, 2006. The protest must clearly and concisely state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

- Fish and Wildlife Enhancement and Roadside Hardwood Projects: Any objection to the fish and wildlife habitat enhancement and roadside hardwood removal projects' design or my decision to go forward with these projects must be filed at this time in accordance with the protest process outlined above.
- Density Management Project: Any objection to the density management project design or my decision to go forward with this project must be filed at this time in accordance with the protest process outlined above.

At the time of advertisement (notice of sale) what constitutes a protestable decision is limited to 1) whether there has been new BLM direction requiring a change from that in the Hoag Pass Projects EA and/or 2) changes between the timber sale design as described in the Hoag Pass Projects EA and that in the final timber sale contract.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no protest is received by the close of business (4:00 P.M.) on August 31, 2006, this decision will become final and will be implemented as soon as project funding becomes available. If a timely protest is received, this decision will be reconsidered in light of the statements of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available and a final decision will be issued which will be implemented in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4.

CONTACT PERSON

For additional information concerning this decision or the BLM administrative review process, contact Steve Bahe, Tillamook Field Office, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook Oregon 97141; telephone (503) 815-1123.

Approved By: 
William B. Keller
Tillamook Field Manager

Aug 11, 06
Date

NEPA compliance: _____
Bob McDonald
NEPA coordinator

8/11/06
Date