

Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project

Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Siuslaw National Forest
South Zone District
Lincoln and Lane Counties, Oregon

February 2005

Lead Agency:	USDA Forest Service
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Project Background, Area, and Needs

The Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project (the Project) includes actions designed to accelerate the development of late-successional forest habitat and enhance water quality and stream function on National Forest System (NFS) lands.

The project area includes about 28,000 acres of the Yachats 5th-field watershed near Yachats, Oregon. The project area is located in portions of Township 14 South, Range 10 and 11 West; and Township 15 South, Range 10 and 11 West; Lincoln and Lane Counties, Oregon and is about 45 air miles southwest of Corvallis, Oregon.

The needs requiring actions in the Project area were identified in chapter 1 of the Project environmental assessment (EA):

- The need to speed the development of late-successional habitat in late-successional and riparian reserves.
- The need to improve watershed function.
- The need to use timber-sale revenue to repair and maintain key forest roads to standards that allow commercial and noncommercial use.

The decision to be made is whether to implement actions designed to meet the Project needs by selecting one of the action alternatives (Alternative 2a, 2b, 3, 4, or 5), or to postpone these actions by selecting Alternative 1 (no action).

My Decision

I have decided to implement all the actions described under Alternative 5 (maintain and repair key forest roads) of the Project EA. In making this decision, I have reviewed the Project EA, its appendices, and other project-file documents, including the associated biological opinions and the comments received during the 30-day public comment period.

The following activities under Alternative 5 will be done to speed the development of late-successional habitat in late-successional and riparian reserves and improve watershed function:

- *Commercial and non-commercial thinning and associated activities*
- Commercially thin about 2,039 acres of plantations, including about 1,921 acres by skyline logging and 118 acres by helicopter. All acres are in late-successional reserve, with about 1,611 acres also in riparian reserve (EA, map 6 and appendix B-3);
- Temporarily reopen about 8.8 miles of unclassified roads (built during initial harvest) by removing vegetation and minor slides from road surfaces. All miles are in late-successional reserve, with about 5.5 miles also in riparian reserve (EA, map 6 and appendix B-3);
- Build about 1.8 miles of temporary road on stable ridges. All miles are in late-successional reserve, with about 0.6 miles also in riparian reserve (EA, map 6 and appendix B-3);
- Remove 4 failed culverts from streams in plantations 007, 037, 064, and 179, and about 1,000 cubic yards of unstable sidecast material from 4 road locations in plantations 007, 038, 041, and 154;

- Create about 249 snags (28 to 36 inches in diameter) in natural stands adjacent to commercially thinned plantations, as habitat replacement for snags that were cut inside plantation boundaries during initial harvest;
- Develop future snags in thinning portions of plantations by topping about 3,898 trees or inoculating them with native fungi; 20 percent of the future snags will serve to mitigate snags that would have likely developed in the previous natural stand through natural disturbances (EA, appendix B-2);
- Increase the coarse wood component in commercially thinned plantations by leaving about 6,410 trees on the ground, to mitigate loss associated with past harvest practices (EA, appendix B-2);
- Non-commercially thin about 97 acres of plantations 25+ years old. All acres are in late-successional reserve, with about 69 acres also in riparian reserve (EA, map 6);
- Non-commercially thin about 2,284 acres of plantations 5 to 25 years old. All acres are in late-successional reserve, with about 1,827 acres also in riparian reserve (EA, map 6);
- Maintain about 29 acres of early-seral habitat to provide minimum diversity of seral conditions in late-successional reserve (EA, map 6);
- Plant a mixture of shade-tolerant conifers and hardwoods in about 1,032 acres of existing plantations (EA, map 6);
- Decommission about 6.1 miles of non-key (system) roads. All miles are in late-successional reserve, with about 4 miles also in riparian reserve (EA, map 6);
- Repair and maintain the upper portion of road 5491 (EA, map 6);
- Repair and maintain key forest roads 5300, 5360, 5400, 5500, 5590, and 5800, totaling about 38.4 miles; (EA, map 6);
- Maintain the existing recreational opportunities at the Keller Creek dispersed site by not reducing the capacity of the parking area; and
- Use thinning and salvage operations to manage roadside vegetation adjacent to key forest roads 5300, 5360, 5400, 5500, 5590, and 5800, affecting about 313 acres.

Most activities would be completed in 10 years, with commercial timber-sale contracts awarded in 5 to 6 years, beginning as early as FY 2005.

Project design criteria, including mitigation and monitoring requirements (EA, appendix A), will be incorporated to ensure protection of natural resources.

Reasons for the Decision

My decision was based on several factors. Alternative 5 was selected because it best meets the late-successional habitat need, it meets most of the objectives for needing to restore watershed health, and it meets the need to repair and maintain six key forest roads—these needs are described in chapter 1 of the Project EA. Alternative 5 was developed primarily in response to additional information collected for six key forest roads. These roads are in need of repair to make them suitable for commercial and noncommercial use.

Project actions under Alternative 5 are designed to protect affected resources in the short term and maintain or enhance the quality and productivity of these resources in the long term.

The Project needs:

- To speed the development of late-successional habitat in late-successional and riparian reserves:

The Northwest Forest Plan allocated most of the Siuslaw National Forest to late-successional and riparian reserves. Forests on the coast have very high growth rates. The Siuslaw has great potential for successfully creating late-successional habitat, with old-growth characteristics, at a landscape level. Most of the Siuslaw has been heavily harvested in the past and plantations are densely stocked with Douglas fir. Research has clearly shown that the current landscape of densely stocked, uniform plantations of Douglas fir is much different than the complex and diverse old-growth forests. Based on past and ongoing studies, thinning similarly aged plantations speeds the growth of the remaining trees and allows them to develop both horizontally and vertically. Variable thinning (thinning at different levels in different areas) and underplanting after thinning with other tree species also increases stand diversity and complexity. Leaving some trees on the ground adds to the richness on the forest floor, creating habitat as well as supplying critical nutrients. Creating snags provides a multitude of forage, nesting, and roosting opportunities. I believe these actions, as described in Alternative 5, are necessary to accelerate the development of healthy late-successional habitat.

- To improve watershed function:

The Project planning area has several miles of perennial and intermittent streams—some provide important fish habitat, some supply water to a municipal watershed, and some streams do both. Water quality and quantity are directly tied to watershed health. All of the actions in Alternative 5 are designed to restore or improve the watershed by reconnecting or removing barriers to natural processes, by maintaining stream shade, and by ameliorating unnatural conditions.

Valley-bottom roads keep some streams from flowing naturally. In other areas, roads block fish passage between tributaries and mainstems, and interfere with natural landslides that move upslope trees and debris into streams. Alternative 5 will improve fish habitat and water quality by decommissioning some roads, particularly valley-bottom and mid-slope roads. These actions will restore natural hydrologic processes and reduce the risk of human-caused landslides.

Maintaining the upper portion of road 5491, Alternative 5 will reduce the road's failure potential (via culvert inlet obstruction) by replacing some existing culverts with larger ones. These larger culverts will be less prone to obstructing natural debris flows that occur upstream. Natural debris flows contain sediment and woody debris that benefit fish habitat. These culverts will also eliminate the existing fish-migration barriers. My decision to not decommission the upper portion of road 5491 responds to the lack of a suitable alternative route that allows access to Bonneville Power Administration transmission towers and private land.

- To use timber-sale revenue to repair and maintain key forest roads to standards that allow commercial and noncommercial use:

Six key forest roads in or near the project planning area have not been maintained to standards for several years because funds for road maintenance on the Forest have been lacking. To keep these roads suitable for commercial and noncommercial use, reduce potential adverse effects on soil and water resources, and to protect the capitol investment in these roads, timber-sale revenue would be needed to make the repairs on these roads. Alternative 5 was developed to meet this need. I recognize repairing and maintaining these roads may reduce the ability to fund all non-essential Knutson-Vandenberg (KV) projects, such as creating snags and down wood in plantations. However, there are many variables that influence the value of timber at the time of sale, including market conditions, competition during bids for timber sales, the type of timber-sale contract used (e.g., stewardship contract), and flexibility in the season of operations that could result in little to no effect on the ability to fund all non-essential KV projects. Also, appropriated funds, grants, or other funding sources may be available to help accomplish all these KV projects, which is my goal.

Alternative 5 also best meets my expectations for holistic and integrated restoration. No unacceptable cumulative effects to any resource are expected. Many beneficial effects will accrue from implementing the Project, and the risk associated with any potential negative effects, discussed in chapter 3 of the Project EA, is low.

In my review of the Project EA, its appendices, and other project-file documents, I believe the information provided to me is adequate for a reasoned choice of action. I am fully aware that the selected alternative will have some unavoidable adverse environmental effects such as disturbance to wildlife (EA, page 92), irreversible resource commitments such as continued use of existing roads (EA, page 92), and irretrievable commitment of resources such as loss of vehicular access through the Forest as roads are closed or decommissioned (EA, page 92). I have determined, however, that these risks will be outweighed by the likely benefits.

In making this selection, I have also reviewed information in the administrative record, including but not limited to the Siuslaw Forest Plan (1990), as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (1994); the Yachats-Blodgett Watershed Analysis (1998); the Late-Successional Reserve Assessment, Oregon Coast Province Southern Portion (1997); consultation files and records involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries); public and other agency comments; and applicable laws and regulations.

Reasons for Not Selecting the Other Alternatives

Alternative 1, the no-action alternative, does not create obvious negative effects, but it also does not meet any of the Project needs. And, without some restorative actions, some watershed conditions—including water quality and fish habitat—would continue to degrade (EA, pages 2 to 5).

Alternative 2a, the project initially proposed by me, is similar to Alternative 2b and 5 except that it would decommission the upper portion of road 5491. Since it is my intention not to build a new road that is not connected to this project, the upper portion of road 5491 will not be decommissioned. In addition, public comments were received that did not support decommissioning the upper portion of road 5491 (EA, appendix D, page 4). This alternative also does not repair and maintain six key forest roads. Because of the lack of road maintenance funds during the past several years, these roads are in need of surface repair and some culvert replacement to make them suitable for commercial and noncommercial use. Therefore, I decided not to select Alternative 2a.

Although Alternative 2b would not decommission the upper portion of road 5491, it also does not repair and maintain six key forest roads. Therefore, I did not select Alternative 2b.

Alternative 3, no temporary roads, would lessen the impacts temporary roadwork and use would have in the watershed. However, because these roads are generally on ridges, are distant from streams, and are in stable locations, their effects under Alternatives 2a, 2b, and 5 would generally be limited to localized soil compaction and displacement. No increase in soil compaction of existing temporary roads is expected. Past and project-related soil compaction and displacement is expected to be under the Siuslaw Forest Plan threshold of 15% in one plantation and under 10% in all other affected plantations (EA, page 68). In addition, the lesser total sale value shown for Alternative 3 (EA, page 48) reflects a greater dependency on helicopter logging because of reduced road access. Alternative 3 also does not repair and maintain six key forest roads. Therefore, Alternative 3 was not selected.

Alternative 4, limit access to key forest roads, would have the least impact in the watershed from roadwork and use. However, use of temporary roads and non-key forest roads would have very limited effect in the watershed because they are generally located on ridges, are distant from streams, and are in stable locations. Because of limited road access, this alternative requires greater dependency on helicopter, resulting in the lowest total sale value (EA, page 48) compared to the other action alternatives. Alternative 4 also does not repair and maintain key forest roads. Therefore, I did not select Alternative 4.

Alternatives Considered

Before selecting Alternative 5, I considered Alternative 1 (no action), Alternatives 2a, 2b, 3, and 4, and other alternatives that were eliminated from detailed study in the Project EA.

Alternative 1, no action—Alternative 1 is fully described in chapter 2 of the Project EA, page 11. The analysis of the effects of Alternative 1 is disclosed in chapter 3 of the Project EA. The no-action alternative forms the basis for a comparison between meeting the project needs and *not* meeting the project needs. This alternative provides baseline information for understanding changes associated with Alternatives 2a, 2b, 3, 4, and 5 and expected environmental responses as a result of past management actions.

Alternative 2a, proposed action—Alternative 2a represents the proposed action that was presented to the public during scoping. It is fully described in chapter 2 of the Project EA, pages 12 and 14. The analysis of the effects of Alternative 2a is disclosed in chapter 3 of the Project

EA. This alternative is similar to Alternative 2b and 5, except that the upper portion of road 5491 would be decommissioned.

Alternative 2b, (maintain 5491)—Alternative 2b is fully described in chapter 2 of the Project EA, pages 12, 13, and 14. The analysis of the effects of Alternative 2b is disclosed in chapter 3 of the Project EA. This alternative is similar to Alternative 2a, except that the upper portion of road 5491 would not be decommissioned.

Alternative 3, no temporary roads—Alternative 3 is fully described in chapter 2 of the Project EA, pages 15 and 16. The analysis of the effects of Alternative 3 is disclosed in chapter 3 of the Project EA. This alternative is similar to Alternative 2b, except that the upper portion of road 5491 would be decommissioned. Alternative 3 was developed in response to public comments on environmental assessments of past similar projects such as the Lower Siuslaw Landscape Management Project. One commenter preferred that we fully evaluate another action alternative that would not build new temporary roads or reopen existing closed roads.

Alternative 4, limit access to key forest roads—Alternative 4 is fully described in chapter 2 of the Project EA, pages 17 and 18. The analysis of the effects of Alternative 4 is disclosed in chapter 3 of the Project EA. Alternative 4 was developed in response to public comments and internal comments from agency employees on previous projects. They preferred that the Forest evaluate an alternative that limits commercial thinning to those stands that are adjacent to key forest roads (roads maintained open for public and management access), including no new temporary roads and no reopening of existing roads.

Alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study

I considered several alternatives, based largely on public scoping comments. The following alternatives represent those that I considered, but for various reasons, were eliminated from detailed study.

Single-entry treatment of all managed stands—Considerable thought was given to determine whether a one-time only thinning entry is desirable for all 25 to 50 year-old stands. The planning team and I felt strongly that this alternative provided too much risk to stands. With this alternative, managed stands across the landscape would be thinned to about 30 to 50 trees per acre and associated activities such as stand underplanting would be implemented. Stands would then be allowed to develop old-growth conditions on their own. A landscape populated by stands with minimum numbers of trees leaves little room for mortality from natural events such as strong winds or insect infestation. In addition, the variability between stands would be limited. Tappeiner et al. (1997) and Oliver and Larson (1996) advocate the use of several prescriptive residual overstory levels across a landscape. Carey et al. (1999) says that diversity in treatment is critical to meeting existing and future needs of wildlife. Variability and diversity are the keys to recapturing many of the forest functions. Also, the Northwest Forest Plan standards and guidelines incorporate the concept of adaptive management (ROD, page E-12). Applying the single-story treatment on all plantations limits the agency's ability to monitor, evaluate, and adapt treatments to these plantations in response to new information. Thus, under this alternative, the Forest Service would not be able to apply the concept of adaptive management in the Yachats 5th-field watershed.

Because of the current level of uncertainty with single-entry treatment, I decided it was better to take a more conservative approach to stand management and development at this time by implementing single-entry prescriptions for only a few stands under this project. As information is obtained about single-entry treatments through studies such as the Five Rivers Landscape Management Project Final EIS management study (USDA 2002a), it may become a more widespread silvicultural tool in the future.

Maintain road 5491 (Keller Creek road)—A few responses to the proposed action included requests to maintain road 5491 as an open road, including reopening the lower portion that is currently decommissioned to provide a tie to road 58 for emergency access purposes. However, reopening the lower portion road 5491 is beyond the scope of this project. This project is limited to evaluating alternative actions regarding decommissioning or maintaining the upper portion of road 5491. Currently, road 54 maintains the tie between the Yachats River Road and road 58.

Help from the Public and Other Agencies

After considering the identified problem to be addressed with this project and developing a proposal to correct the problem, letters describing the actions considered in the proposed Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project were mailed to about 200 individuals, agencies, and organizations identified as potentially interested in the proposed project and analysis. Public comment on the proposed project was solicited through the Siuslaw National Forest's quarterly "Project Update" publications, the Corvallis Gazette-Times in Corvallis, Oregon, and the Newport News-Times in Newport, Oregon. Scoping letters were mailed on October 2, 2002. A news release was published in the Gazette-Times on October 4, 2002 and in the News-Times on October 9, 2002. Comments were requested by October 31, 2002. Twelve (12) letters were received in response to these scoping efforts.

Public comments contained a wide variety of suggestions to consider. Comments not outside the scope of the project and not covered by previous environmental review or existing regulations were reviewed for substantive content related to the project. Based largely on public comment, some alternatives were considered, but eliminated from detailed study, while others were considered in detail. The alternatives are discussed in chapter 2. Comments, relevant to clarifying how the project will be implemented or disclosing the effects of implementing the project, are addressed in chapters 2, 3, or 4; the project design criteria (appendix A); or the project file

Upon completion of the initial Project EA, a legal notice was published in the Corvallis Gazette-Times (paper of record) on August 22, 2003, informing the public that the Project EA was available for a 30-day review and comment period. Copies of the Project EA were made available at the Siuslaw National Forest Headquarters in Corvallis, the Waldport Ranger District Office in Waldport, and the Mapleton Ranger District Office in Florence. Copies of the Project EA, appendices A and B, and a cover letter announcing the 30-day review and comment period were mailed on August 20, 2003 to those who commented on the proposed project during the scoping phase and to others who had requested a copy of the Project EA.

The legal notice and letters identified Alternative 2b as the preferred alternative and indicated the beginning and end of the comment period. The comment process was described and a Forest Service contact person was identified. The 30-day comment period terminated close-of-business on September 22, 2003. Comments on the Project EA were received from 13 persons, including one petition letter containing 108 signatures, and are summarized in the project file. These comments were considered in the development of the preliminary analysis.

The preliminary analysis was also developed to address the need to use timber-sale revenue to repair and maintain six key forest roads in the project area. This need was identified after public comment on the initial EA. Alternative 5 was created to address this need.

The notice of availability for Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project Preliminary Analysis was published in the Eugene Register-Guard on September 18, 2004, informing the public that the preliminary analysis is available for a 30-day review and comment period. Copies of the preliminary analysis, along with cover letters announcing that the preliminary analysis is available for a 30-day public comment period, were mailed to those who commented on the proposed project or who requested a copy of the document. The legal notice and letters indicated the beginning and end of the comment period, described the comment process, and identified a Forest Service contact person. Copies of the preliminary analysis were also made available at the Siuslaw National Forest Headquarters in Corvallis, and the District offices in Waldport and Florence. The comment period ended at the close-of-business on October 18, 2004. Two persons responded to this request. Comments are summarized with Forest Service responses in appendix D of the Project EA.

While coho salmon were listed as an ESA Threatened species, consultation was initiated with NOAA Fisheries with the submittal of a biological assessment on February 25, 2003. NOAA Fisheries concluded consultation with the issuance of a letter of concurrence on April 18, 2003 (reference 2003/00223). This letter of concurrence agreed with the Forest Service determination that this project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect coho salmon, due to the project's design criteria (appendix A), especially those associated with commercial thinning and road decommissioning. Since the initial consultation, the ESA status of the coho listing has changed and coho salmon are currently proposed as a threatened species, with a final rule on their status expected in June 2005.

The April 18, 2003 letter of concurrence from NOAA Fisheries also agreed with the Forest Service determination that project activities will not adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat, as designated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

NOAA Fisheries, on December 14, 2004, proposed the designation of critical habitat for Pacific salmon and steelhead in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. This proposed rule designated some of the streams within the project area as critical habitat for Oregon Coast coho salmon. Effects to the streams proposed for designation as critical habitat were addressed in detail with the Forest Service February 25, 2003 biological assessment. Consultation with NOAA Fisheries will occur if streams within the project area are formally designated as critical habitat in the final rule, expected to be issued in June 2005.

In their biological opinions of the following Siuslaw National Forest programmatic biological assessments, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has concurred with our findings that the project will not jeopardize the existence of bald eagles, northern spotted owls, and marbled murrelets:

- Programmatic Biological Assessment of Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Activities in the North Coast Province Which Might Disturb Bald Eagles, Northern Spotted Owls, or Marbled Murrelets. (FWS biological opinion reference #: 1-7-04-F-1113).
- Biological Assessment of Habitat-Modification Projects Proposed During Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006 in the North Coast Province, Oregon that Would Affect Bald Eagles, Northern Spotted Owls, or Marbled Murrelets, or Would Modify the Critical Habitats of the Northern Spotted Owl or the Marbled Murrelet. (FWS biological opinion reference #: 1-7-05-F-0005).

The FWS terms and conditions are included in the project design criteria.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the activities described do not constitute a major Federal action and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination was made in light of the following factors:

Context

This action is very small in terms of society as a whole. Project activities have been viewed and approved in a Regional context through the Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1990) as amended by 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 (USDA, USDI 1994). This action only affects a small portion of the Forest, which in turn, is a very small portion of the Region.

The site-specific activities that are authorized and guided by this decision are limited in scope and duration. Some minor adverse effects are expected. However, given the renewable nature of the resources and the high growth rates of coastal vegetation, these effects are expected to be short-term. No long-term adverse effects are expected.

Intensity

1. Project actions will have both beneficial and adverse effects. Decommissioning roads or commercial thinning may be considered adverse effects. However, I have considered the benefits that the ecosystem will receive from implementing the Project actions and find that the overall beneficial effects to the ecosystem outweigh any

short-term adverse effects. Further, I find that when considered alone, the adverse effects of this project are not significant (EA, chapter 3).

2. No significant adverse effects to public health or safety have been identified (EA, page 93).
3. The characteristics of the geographic area do not make it uniquely sensitive to the effects of project actions. Past actions of similar intensity in similar areas have not indicated any significant adverse effects (EA, chapter 3).
4. The Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project Environmental Assessment has disclosed direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soil, water, aquatic and terrestrial species, and other components of the human environment. There are no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effects anticipated from implementing project actions. Project actions will speed the development of late-successional habitat in late-successional and riparian reserves and improve watershed function. The analysis of cumulative effects considered past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on National Forest lands as well as for other ownerships in the affected watershed (EA, chapter 3).
5. Based on the pre-project survey and record search of the Project area, actions associated with the Project will have “no effect” (as defined in 36 CFR 800.5 [b]) on any listed or eligible heritage (cultural) resources. If a heritage site is discovered during project implementation, work will be stopped until the site is evaluated or the project has been altered to avoid the site (EA, pages 77 and 78; EA, appendix A, pages 5 and 6).
6. Based on the fisheries biological assessment and wildlife biological evaluation prepared for the Project, the effects on Federally listed terrestrial and aquatic species are not found to be significant (Biological Assessment, Yachats Watershed Terrestrial Restoration Project (fisheries), February 25, 2003; Wildlife Specialist Report for the Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project, July 15, 2003—updated December 8, 2004; EA, chapter 3; EA, appendix A, pages 1 through 5).
7. The Project is in compliance with relevant Federal, State and local laws, regulations and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The Project will meet or exceed State water and air quality standards and is consistent with the Oregon Coastal Management Program as required by the Coastal Zone Management Act (EA, page 93; EA, appendix A, page 5).
8. The effects from the Project on the quality of the human environment are not found to be highly controversial (EA, pages 1 through 6).
9. The Project’s environmental effects are not uncertain or unknown. Planned actions are similar to those already accomplished on similar lands on the Forest and several scientific studies have been conducted that support the Project’s treatment strategies for plantations (EA, pages 3, 4, and 5; EA, chapter 3).

10. Actions that will be implemented by the Project do not set a precedent for future actions, because similar actions have been implemented in the past (EA, page 9; chapter 3, including page 93).

Other Disclosures

All measures contained in the Project EA and appendices A and B will be incorporated to comply with the Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation published December 1988 and the subsequent Mediated Agreement of May 1989.

The Project will have no significant adverse effects on wetlands, floodplains, farm land, range land, park land, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or inventoried roadless areas; minority groups, civil rights, women, or consumers; Indian social, economic, subsistence rights, and sacred sites; and heritage resources (EA, pages 77, 78, and 93).

Actions will be consistent with the scenic quality objectives for the planning area (EA, pages 79 and 80). Actions will be designed to prevent the spread of invasive plants, including noxious and undesirable weeds (EA, pages 61 and 62). Cleaning of off-road equipment pursuant to Executive Order 13112, dated February 3, 1999, will be required. (EA, appendix A, pages 16 and 17).

Findings Required By Other Laws

Based on the analysis in the Yachats Terrestrial Restoration Project Environmental Assessment, I find the selected alternative to be consistent with the Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1990), as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (USDA, USDI 1994) and is designed to meet or exceed the objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy as set forth in the Northwest Forest Plan (EA, page 91).

The selected alternative is consistent with the National Forest Management Act implementing regulations, including the seven management requirements listed in 36 CFR 219.27, a through g:

- a. *Resource protection*—The Project EA includes criteria designed to protect resources and will apply practices as described in General Water Quality Best Management Practices (BMPs), Pacific Northwest Region, November 1988 (EA, appendix A);
- b. *Vegetation manipulation of tree cover*—Plantations will be thinned to speed the development of late-successional habitat. (EA, pages 1 through 5, 19, 20, and 36 through 47);
- c. *Silvicultural practices that apply to timber harvest and cultural treatments*—Most older (25 to 50 years old) plantations will be commercially thinned. (EA, pages 1 through 5, 19, 20, and 36 through 44);
- d. *Even-aged management in the forest*—No even-aged management is proposed. (EA, pages 1 through 5, 19, 20, and 36 through 47);
- e. *Riparian area protection*—Special attention has been given to riparian areas by maintaining existing shade and decommissioning roads. These actions are expected to enhance water quality and improve fish habitat in the long term. (EA, pages 1 through 6, 19, 20, and 63 through 76; EA, appendix A);
- f. *Conservation of soil and water resources*—The Project is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives and includes best management practices (BMPs) and other measures designed to protect, enhance, or minimize effects to soil and water

resources. Actions are expected to enhance water quality in the long term. (EA, pages 1 through 6, 19, 20, 63 through 76, and 91; EA, appendix A); and

- g. *Preserve and enhance the diversity of plant and animal communities*—The project is expected to improve habitat conditions for several plant and animal species. Thinning plantations, creating snags and down wood, and planting trees and shrubs in upland areas will increase diversity of plant and animal communities. (EA, pages 1 through 5, 19, 20, and 36 through 62; EA, appendix A).

Implementation Date

Implementation of this project may not proceed until five (5) working days after the close of the 45-day appeal filing period. Activities, including service contract preparation and solicitation of bids, may proceed immediately.

Administrative Review and Appeal

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Written notice of appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Official, USDA Forest Service, PO Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623 within 45 days of the date of publication of the notice for this decision in the Eugene Register-Guard (Eugene, Oregon). Individuals or organizations, who have submitted substantive written or oral comments during the 30-day comment period of the initial EA and the preliminary analysis, may file an appeal. The appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14:

- The appeal must state that the document is an appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215;
- The name, address, and telephone number (if applicable) of the appellant must be included, and must identify the decision by title, subject, date of decision, and name and title of the Responsible Official;
- The appeal narrative must be sufficient to identify the specific change(s) to the decision sought by the appellant or portions of the decision to which the appellant objects, and must state how the Responsible Official's decision fails to consider comments previously provided; and
- If applicable, the appeal should state how the appellant believes this decision violates law, regulation, or policy.

Appeals (including attachments) may be filed by regular mail, fax, e-mail, hand delivery, express delivery, or messenger service. The publication date of the notice for this decision in the newspaper of record is the sole means of calculating the appeal-filing deadline, and those wishing to appeal should not rely on dates or timelines from any other source. E-mail appeals must be submitted to: appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us, and must be in one of the following three formats: Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf) or Adobe Portable Document Format (pdf). FAX appeals must be submitted to: 503-808-2255. Appeals may be hand-delivered to the Resource Planning and Monitoring Office, 333 SW First Ave., Portland, between 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM Monday-Friday.

Contact Person

For further information regarding this project, contact Paul Thomas or Bruce Buckley, South Zone District, Waldport Office, 1049 SW Pacific Coast Hwy, Waldport, OR 97394, or phone at (541) 563-3211.

Responsible Official:

W.M. HELPHINSTINE

District Ranger
South Zone District
4480 Hwy. 101, Bldg. G
Florence, OR 97439

Date