

Decision Memo

Clark Fire Roadside Salvage

USDA Forest Service
Willamette National Forest
Middle Fork Ranger District
Lane County, Oregon
T. 18S, R. 2E & R. 3E

Decision

It is my decision to salvage downed logs, and certain trees identified as potential hazard trees, along the Fall Creek road (18), road 1817, road 1830, road 1828, road 1821 and spurs within the perimeter of the Clark Fire. These trees were felled during fire suppression activities or will be felled after the fire to provide for public safety. It is anticipated that work will begin on this project in the Winter of 2003.

It is estimated that there are approximately 30 acres to be treated adjacent to the roads in the Clark Fire area. ***Only the material that can be reached with equipment from the road surface without the use of cables will be removed.***



The above picture illustrates material to be salvaged and material to remain on site. The log parallel to the road will be included as salvage, but the log further off the road in the background will not be taken.

This salvage activity will include two components: trees adjacent to the road which were felled as a part of the fire suppression and burned trees which have been identified as hazardous.

During the suppression of the Clark Fire, many burning trees were felled around the perimeter of the fire to prevent further fire spread. Later, as part of the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation, hazard trees were identified along road 18 and other roads within the fire perimeter. Several teams of specialists including engineers, forest safety officers and

representatives from OSHA identified trees, which represented a hazard. Trees weakened by the fire, smaller trees likely to deteriorate and lose their tops, those with lean toward the roads or with root damage were included. The survey teams used the OSHA guide to identifying hazard trees to make their determinations. Both downed trees and standing hazard trees will be salvaged.

The total area from which hazard trees will be removed is approximately 30 acres. No equipment will be allowed off the road surface. No temporary or permanent roads will be constructed. The elevation of the project area is approximately 1000 feet.

There are several downed trees and hazard trees in Bedrock campground that will be dealt with in a separate project and are not to be included in this salvage.

Rationale For Decision

My rationale for this decision is:

- **Public Safety** – In many places, the logs and debris adjacent to the road area a hazard to the public. The Federal Highways Safety Act requires federally maintained roads to have an area cleared of obstacles along the roadsides. In addition, many trees have been identified as hazards to the public and to forest workers. These trees need to be felled to make the roads safe. Since most of the hazard trees are leaning toward the roads, a significant amount of material will end up in the roadway and will need to be removed.
- **Fuel Loading** – The fuel loading in many areas around the perimeter of the Clark fire is significantly above the levels suggested in the forest standards and guidelines. By removing some of the downed trees, the fuel loading, while still above levels allowed in the Forest Plan, will be reduced thereby minimizing future fire hazard.

Scoping and Public Involvement:

Beginning in early September, 2003, the Middle Fork District Ranger began contacting those who have shown interest in these type of projects or in this particular area in the past. These contacts included several trips to the fire area and the sites to be salvaged. In addition, recommendations were formulated and reports written by a team of district of specialists including: the soils scientist, hydrologist, botanist, fish biologist, wildlife biologist, archaeologist, and recreation forester. This interdisciplinary team compiled reports, which are included in the project file.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Action:

Based on a review of the expected effects of these activity, it has been determined that this action falls under the categorical exclusion found in the Forest Service Handbook, 1909.15 – Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook, Washington Office Amendment 1909.15-92-1, Chapter 30, Section 31.2, Category #13 “Salvage of Dead and Dying Trees”.



Fire damaged tree next to Fall Creek Road 18

The interdisciplinary review has determined the following regarding extraordinary circumstances.

1. **Steep slopes or highly erosive soils.** Though steep slopes and erosive soils exist within the project area, the proposal is only to salvage the material within reach of the road surface. Therefore, little or no soil disturbance will take place.
2. Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat. While the project area is either within or adjacent to suitable habitat for many TES, the disturbance associated with the salvage activities will be minimal in comparison to the disturbance of the recent

fire. In addition, implementation will occur outside of the Spotted Owl critical nesting period of March 1-July 15.

3. **Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.** All of the rehabilitation activities will occur within the Fall Creek watershed and some within wetland or riparian areas. It is the opinion of the district fish biologist that the impact to the aquatic habitat occurred at the time of the fire. The proposed salvage activities are not expected to further impact these areas.
4. **Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas.** None present and therefore no adverse impact. The closest Wilderness Area is 20 miles east of the project area.
5. **Inventoried Roadless areas.** None of salvage activities will take place within roadless areas or impact adjacent roadless areas.
6. **Research Natural Areas.** The closest RNA is over 50 miles away and this project will not have any impact on it.
7. **Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.** While there are documented cultural sites in the area of the planned salvage, none of the sites will be impacted. Due to the presence of valuable cultural resources in the Bedrock campground area, the logs in this area will be left on site until further documentation, survey and review can be completed.

While there is the presence of extraordinary circumstances, it is found that there will be no adverse impacts to the resources or habitat, which would create extraordinary circumstances. It is clear that this project is intended to reverse or minimize future impacts to an environment, which has already been impacted by a catastrophic wildfire. Based on the above information, this action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

Findings Required by Other Laws:

The project will meet the direction and intent of the Willamette National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (WNF Plan), 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 (Northwest Forest Plan).

Implementation Date:

The project is projected to begin after November 15, 2003.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities:

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a), section 4. This part states that “*decisions for actions that have been categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement in FSH 1909.15, Section 31.1 and 31.2, except as noted in Sec. 215.7(b)*” are not subject to appeal.



Downed trees next to 1821 road

Contact Person:

For more information contact Rick Scott, District Ranger, Middle Fork Ranger District, 46375 Hwy 58, Westfir, Oregon 97492. The telephone number is (541) 782-2283.

Deciding Officer:

/s/ Rick Scott _____ 12/12/2003

Rick Scott – District Ranger Date
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