

***Supplemental Environmental
Assessment for the
Cow Catcher Timber Sale***

EA #OR-105-04-10
(Supplement to EA # OR-105-98-05)

South River Field Office, Roseburg District

Prepared: August 2, 2004

Decision Document

Decision:

The Supplemental EA for the Cow Catcher Timber Sale amended the existing analysis of the Cow Catcher Timber Sale EA in order to provide an analysis of the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the timber harvest on red tree voles, and provide additional documentation of the consistency of the action with management direction governing regeneration timber harvest within the Connectivity/Diversity Block land use allocation contained in the Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP June, 1995).

It is my decision that no modifications to the original Cow Catcher Timber Sale Decision are necessary.

Rationale:

A. *Effects to red tree voles*

As described in the supplemental EA (p. 4), the direct effect of harvest of the Cow Catcher timber sale is the removal of 146 acres of primary red tree vole habitat, with the expected resultant loss of any red tree vole nests and any red tree voles that may be present. The habitat removed represents slightly more than one-half of one percent of the 26,951 acres of primary red tree vole habitat provided by federal lands in the Lower Cow Creek watershed. The remainder of these acres will continue to provide suitable primary habitat in the near term.

Based on analysis in the supplemental EA (p. 6 and Appendix B), over the next 100 years, it is projected that there will be sufficient habitat in the Lower Cow Creek watershed to support stable populations of red tree voles. Over this period of time, available primary habitat is projected to increase from the 26,805 acres that will be available following harvest of the Cow Catcher timber sale, to 36,641 acres, or 92 percent of the 39,945 acres of BLM-administered lands in the watershed. Under current management direction ninety percent, or 32,963 acres, would remain reserved and withdrawn from timber harvest. The 100-year analytical timeframe was selected for consistency with the assumptions utilized in the PRMP/EIS analysis, which projected the effects of seven management alternatives on seral stage distribution over a period of 100 years.

Considering long-term availability of primary habitat and that the Cow Catcher timber sale affects only about one-half of one percent of the currently available primary habitat, the effect on red tree vole populations in the watershed would be inconsequential. This is consistent with the findings contained in the 2004 *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines* (pp. 207-208) which concluded that federal lands would provide sufficient habitat to provide for stable and well-distributed populations of the species, except possibly in the northern Coast Range of Oregon and foothills of the Willamette Valley where there is little federally-managed land.

B. Consistency with management direction for regeneration harvest in the Connectivity/Diversity Block land use allocation

As discussed in the supplemental EA (pp. 7-8), management direction requires that:

- Twenty-five to thirty percent of each individual Connectivity/Diversity Block will be maintained as late-successional forest at any point in time.
- Available forest lands within Connectivity/Diversity Blocks will be managed on a 150-year rotation
- Regeneration harvest will only be programmed in late-successional stands at the rate of 1/15 of available acres in the entire land use allocation per decade.

As addressed in the supplemental EA (pp. 8-9), the Cow Catcher timber sale is consistent with management direction for the following reasons:

- In Section 9, there are 556 acres of late-successional forest representing approximately 88 percent of the 628 acres in the section. In Section 17, there are 225 acres of late-successional forest, or 39 percent of the 649 acres. Following harvest, late-successional forest in Section 9 will be reduced to 502 acres or 80 percent of the Block. In Section 17, late-successional forest will be reduced to 198 acres or 30.5 percent of the Block.
- Forest Operational Inventory and data from other internal BLM inventories establish the age of the stands being harvested as approximately 225 years.
- On a decadal basis, approximately 1,790 acres of Connectivity/Diversity Block lands within the Roseburg District are available for regeneration harvest, based upon the entire Roseburg District's Connectivity/Diversity Block land use allocation of 26,900 acres, and an allowable regeneration harvest of 1/15 of the entire land use allocation on a decadal basis.

The ROD/RMP was implemented in 1995. Between FY 1995 and FY 2003, 490 acres of regeneration harvest have been authorized in the entire Connectivity/Diversity Block land use allocation. No sales are planned or scheduled to be offered in FY 2004 which contain lands allocated to Connectivity/Diversity Blocks. In FY 2005, the Swiftwater and South River Field Offices of the Roseburg District collectively plan on offering an estimated

421 acres of regeneration harvest in the Connectivity/Diversity Block land use allocation. Combined, authorized and planned regeneration harvest for the entire land use allocation totals 911 acres or 50.8 percent of the decadal allowance authorized by the ROD/RMP.

Comments on the supplemental EA were received from four organizations and one individual. Those comments and questions which were specific to the supplemental EA were considered and found to be adequately addressed by the analysis.

Many of the comments received were of a plan-level or regional nature and are outside the scope of the supplemental EA. This scope was clearly defined by order of Judge Michael Hogan in the United States District Court for the District of Oregon (Case No. 03-3124-CO), where he stated (pp. 20-21) that the Cow Catcher timber sale was enjoined “. . . until final resolution of plaintiff’s claims in this court, or until BLM completes a sufficient supplemental NEPA analysis that analyzes effects and cumulative effects of the project on red tree voles, and discloses the basis for the BLM conclusion that the project complies with management directives for connectivity/diversity blocks.”

Comments dealing with the original Cow Catcher Timber Sale EA (OR-105-98-05) were not considered as the period for public comment was previously provided from June 17, 2003 through July 17, 2003.

Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with provisions contained in Appendix I (Resource Management Plan Monitoring) of the ROD/RMP (p. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199). Monitoring efforts would include the following resources: Riparian Reserves; Matrix; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice. Publication of such notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon, constitutes the decision date from which such protests may be filed. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: “Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision.” This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

The original Cow Catcher Timber Sale Decision and Timber Sale Notice were released on August 26, 2003, followed by a 15-day period during which protests of the decision could be filed. The principle of administrative finality precludes any further protest of the original Cow Catcher Timber Sale decision and the findings contained therein. Consequently, any further protest is specifically limited to the issues addressed in the Supplemental Decision for the Cow Catcher Timber Sale.

William Haigh
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date