United States Department of Agriculture | **Forest Service** | **Umpqua National Forest** | **Supervisor's Office**
2900 NW Stewart Parkway
Roseburg, OR 97471
(541) 672-6601
FAX (541) 957-3495

File Code: 1950

Date: September 3, 2008

Dear Interested Citizen:

Enclosed is the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Curtis Timber Sale Project, and Appendix A, response to public comments. The EA documents a No Action alternative and three action alternatives. I have decided to implement Alternative 4 as described in the EA. Alternative 4 authorizes completing commercial thinning of about 1,500 acres of timber stands generating about 12.7 million board feet of timber. In addition, associated fuels treatments, temporary road construction (0.6 miles), road reconstruction, road maintenance, and other connected actions would also occur. The planning area includes all or portions of T29S, R1W and 1E; T30S, R1W and 1E, Willamette Meridian, Douglas County, Oregon. The EA is available on the Forest's website at www.fs.fed.us/r6/umpqua or by calling the Tiller Ranger District Office at (541)-825-3100.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations 36 CFR 215.11(a). The appeal must meet the requirements specified by 36 CFR 215.14. The Appeal Deciding Officer is the Forest Supervisor, Umpqua National Forest. The appeal should be addressed to the Appeal Deciding Officer as follows: Forest Supervisor, Umpqua National Forest, Attn. 1570 Appeals, 2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, OR 97471. The fax number is 541-957-3495. Appeals that are hand delivered may be delivered from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. Appeals may be e-mailed to appeals-pacificnorthwest-umpqua@fs.fed.us. The Appeal, including attachments, must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of decision is published in the Roseburg News Review, which is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal [36 CFR 215.15(a)]; those wishing to appeal should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure their appeals are received in a timely manner. For electronically mailed appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of the appeal, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. The legal notice is anticipated to be published on September 9, 2008. Implementation may occur on, but not before the 15th business day following the date of appeal disposition. In the event of multiple appeals, the implementation date will be established following the last appeal deposition [36 CFR 215.9(b)]. If no appeal is filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 5th business day following the close of the appeal filing period [36 CFR 215.9(a)].

Additional information on the proposal or the appeal regulations can be obtained from Debbie Anderson, Forest Environmental Coordinator, at the Supervisor's Office, 2900 NW Stewart Parkway, Roseburg, OR 97471; (541)-957-3466 or via email at danderson01@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in the Curtis Timber Sale Project.

Sincerely,

/s/ Roshanna Stone

Roshanna Stone
Tiller District Ranger
Umpqua National Forest

Enclosure

DECISION NOTICE
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for the
Curtis Timber Sale Project
Environmental Assessment

USDA Forest Service-Umpqua National Forest

Tiller Ranger District

Douglas County, Oregon

Decision

The Curtis Timber Sale Project Environmental Assessment (EA) documents a no-action alternative and three action alternatives that would accomplish commercial timber harvest, activity fuel treatments, tree planting, noxious weed treatments, erosion control by native grass seeding, snag creation, soil rehabilitation, sump maintenance, culvert installation, various forms of road work, and other connected actions in the Middle South Umpqua, Upper South Umpqua, and Jackson Creek Watersheds within the Curtis Planning Area on the Tiller Ranger District, Umpqua National Forest.

The Curtis Planning Area is located approximately 5-20 air miles north and east of the city of Tiller, on the Tiller Ranger District, Umpqua National Forest (UNF), and is part of the Middle South Umpqua, Upper South Umpqua, and Jackson Creek 5th field watersheds. The planning area includes all or portions of T29S, R1W and 1E; T30S, R1W and 1E, Willamette Meridian, in Douglas County Oregon.

I have decided to implement Alternative 4 as described in the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA (pages 25-29).

The Umpqua National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), as amended, is the principle policy under which this action was developed. An analysis of the proposal was conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementing regulations of 40 CFR 1508. The purpose and need for the proposed action is described in detail in Chapter 1 (EA pages 5-7).

My decision to implement Alternative 4 is based on information contained in the administrative record, including the EA, Appendix A (response to public comments), the scoping summary, the mitigation measures and management requirements described in Chapter 2 of the EA, and the effects analysis described in Chapter 3 of the EA (pages 49-180). This decision also includes the implementation of best management practices, mitigation measures, and project design features (EA pages 31-45).

Details of Alternative 4

- Commercial thinning of about 1,508 acres of managed and natural stands (second growth) using ground-based or skyline logging systems in the Matrix land allocation generating approximately 12.7 million board feet of timber. Thinned acres will include about 825 acres of off-site ponderosa pine harvesting or girdling to remove non-localized conifers and to restore to native plant communities.

- Creation of wildlife gaps within units 14, 15, 17, 22, 26, 41, and 46. Specifically, gap creation would include two 2-acre gaps in unit 14, one 1-acre and three 2-acre gaps in unit 15, one 1-acre and one 2-acre gaps in unit 17, one 1-acre gap in unit 22, two 1-acre and three 2-acre gaps in unit 26, one 1-acre gap in unit 41, and one 1-acre gap in unit 46. Wildlife gaps would total 25 acres. Gaps would be located away from roads and riparian areas. Gap size would be restricted to 1-acre on slopes greater than 10%. Larger, 2-acre gaps would be created only on slopes less than or equal to 10%.
- About 165 acres of managed stands in Riparian Reserve land allocations outside of the no cut shade zone would be thinned to reduce stand density. This represents 51 percent of the total Riparian Reserve acres within the managed stands.
- Treating activity created fuels on about 878 acres by underburning, grapple or excavator piling (with machines remaining on pre-designated skid trails), lopping and scattering, chipping, jackpot burning, or handpiling and burning.
- Re-using 2.5 miles of existing temporary spur roads (unclassified roads) to access thinning areas, then subsoiling after use.
- Constructing 0.6 mile of new temporary spur roads to access thinning areas, then subsoiling after use.
- Re-opening and maintaining 1.2 miles of closed system roads to access thinning areas, then closing them after use.
- Reconstructing portions of 10 sections of existing system roads (work would occur along 0.7 mile of road) including the placement or replacement of surface rock, the replacement of undersized or deteriorated stream crossings, the addition or replacement of ditch relief culverts, armoring culvert outlets, stabilizing road fills and road shoulders, reshaping road beds, and the reconstruction of ditches as needed.
- Maintaining about 65 miles of existing roads (includes Level 1 and 2 roads and paved roads) including the grading and shaping of existing road surfaces, dust abatement, constructing water bars, ditch maintenance as needed, opening and re-closing existing closed roads; and the cutting of intruding vegetation along roadsides.
- Hauling timber during the wet season on about 29 miles of gravel roads and 18 miles of paved roads.
- Utilizing the following existing rock pits, along with several rock disposal sites as the rock source for the road work: Surveyor – Road 2929-500 in NE ¼ S17, T30S, R1W; East Collins – Road 2929-500 in NE ¼ S17, T30S, R1W; Big Stump – Road 29 in NW ¼ S3, T30S, R1E; and Grassy Ridge – Road 2980-100 in NE ¼ S33, T29S, R1E..

The connected actions are disclosed in Chapter 2 and are summarized here (EA pages 19):

<u>Connected Actions</u>

- Planting sugar pine in selected units; noxious weed treatment (includes post-treatment weed control within 5 years of thinning and post-treatment competitive planting with native grass seed); erosion control by native grass seeding of landings and unclassified roads; snag creation; sump maintenance (includes vegetation clearing and rock placement for driving surface); subsoiling (includes

purchaser subsoiling utilized skid trails, unclassified roads, and temp roads; also includes post-harvest subsoiling unused skid trails in unit 2); and culvert installation.

Monitoring

This decision also includes implementation of Best Management Practices as required by the Clean Water Act and as disclosed in Chapter 2 (EA pages 31-45). The monitoring items that will be implemented include:

- As part of the Umpqua NF Water Quality Monitoring Program, water temperature would continue to be monitored as funding allows at the mouth of Jackson Creek (approximately 1.5 miles downstream from the Curtis Planning Area). Stream temperature also will be monitored at additional short-term sites in conjunction with the Curtis Actions. Thermographs will be placed at the mouths of Zinc Creek, Deep Cut Creek, and Ralph Creek in 2008 and will be monitored for 2 years after Curtis treatments.
- A Soil Scientist will review all temporary roads prior to treatment to initiate and finalize the treatment prescription, the effectiveness of the temporary road restoration prescription in preventing erosion and providing suitable habitat monitoring.
- Smoke monitoring may be conducted by the Douglas Forest Protective Association utilizing air craft. This reveals smoke column height and direction.
- Fuels monitoring will be conducted after fuel treatments to determine effectiveness of slash and fuel reduction models.
- The District Wildlife Biologist will meet with contractors to ensure that mitigation measures are applied during thinning activities, will work with fire crews during activity fuels reduction, will assess snag and down wood after project implementation to determine the need for snag creation, and will assess forage within winter range following treatment.
- The Silviculturist will review marking guides with the presale crew prior to marking and will monitor quality both during and after the unit is completely marked, on a sample of each type of prescription, as funding and staffing allows. If the number of leave trees per acre exceeds plus or minus 10 percent of the target, remarking or amending the silvicultural prescription will be necessary.
- Logging operations will be monitored by the sale administrator and may be monitored by a Soil Scientist and Silviculturist. If Standards and Guidelines, best management practices, mitigating measures or the silvicultural prescription are not being met, additional measures will be prescribed to insure compliance. If a leave tree must be harvested for safety reasons, the sale administrator may mark another tree for leave to replace it. The Sale Administrator will inform the appropriate staff member if logging feasibility issues may make it impossible to meet the desired conditions outlined in the environmental document.
- After harvest, KV funding will be used to monitor and subsequently treat remaining or new infestations of noxious weeds for up to three years following sale closure.

Decision Rationale

I have decided to implement Alternative 4 because it fully addresses the purpose and need and responds to two of the issues raised concerning economic viability and wildlife in the planning area. Alternative 4 creates more foraging habitat for big game and more enhanced habitat for songbirds and landbirds by creating 105 acres of canopy gaps, including ¼-, ½-, 1-, and 2-acre gaps (creating 25 more acres of gaps than Alternative 2), thus meeting the objective for providing increased forage in Management Area 11 (forage has been declining in this management area across the forest) and responding to both Issue 2 and 3 that were raised in scoping. Although Alternative 4 is the same as Alternative 2 in terms of total acres commercially thinned, it fully responds to two of the issues raised, helping to balance the effects with the benefits that will result from implementing this project. Alternative 4 conducts restorative thinning on more acres, including wildlife gaps, and is more economically efficient than Alternative 3, yet still responds to two of the issues raised.

Alternative 4 removes 12.7 million board feet of volume (0.2 million board feet more than Alternative 2), increasing the economic viability of the project. The last two timber sales that have sold on the Umpqua National Forest have sold for advertised rates or just barely above the advertised rate. I am concerned that Alternatives 2 and 3 do not allow for enough harvest to make the project economically viable. Page 57 of the EA shows that Alternative 4 is the closest alternative to having a benefit/cost ratio of 1.00, and it has the highest return to the treasury. If the timber sales that are offered as a result of this project do not sell, the purpose and need of the project will not be met and I do not believe that would be in the best interest of the Forest.

Other Alternatives Considered

Chapter 2 of the EA includes a description of the other alternatives considered in detail. The following briefly summarizes those alternatives. The reason I did not select those alternatives are described below.

Alternative 1: Under this no-action alternative, no actions would be taken to thin dense managed plantations, treat activity fuels, construct or reconstruct roads, or accomplish connected actions such as tree planting, precommercial thinning, or subsoiling.

This alternative was not selected because it would not meet the purpose and need for action.

Alternative 2: This alternative is the proposed action that was designed to meet the purpose and need of reducing tree density and improving diversity in unnaturally dense, managed plantations and fire-regenerated second-growth, while providing wood products to the local community. The proposed action is thoroughly described on pages 14-19 of the EA. It includes: commercial thinning using ground-based and skyline logging systems on 1,508 acres (including 825 acres of off-site pine and 165 acres of managed stands in Riparian Reserve land allocations outside the no cut shade zone), generating about 12.5 million board feet of timber; treating activity created fuels on 878 acres by various methods; reusing 2.5 miles of existing temporary spur roads to access thinning areas, then subsoiling after use; constructing 0.6 mile of new temporary spur roads to access thinning areas, then subsoiling after use; reopening and maintaining 1.2 miles of closed system roads to access thinning areas, then closing them after use; reconstructing portions of 10 sections of existing system roads (road work would occur along 0.7 mile of road); maintaining 65 miles of existing roads; hauling timber during the wet season on about 34 miles of gravel roads and 18 miles of paved roads; and utilizing

the following existing rock pits, along with several rock disposal sites, as the rock source for the road work: Surveyor, East Collins, Big Stump, and Grassy Ridge.

The connected and similar actions for Alternative 2 are described on page 19 of the EA; they are the same as those for Alternative 4.

I did not select Alternative 2 primarily because it did not resolve the issues of economics or wildlife habitat raised by the public. Alternative 2 would remove 12.5 million board feet of timber and result in a Cost Benefit Ratio of 0.98. In addition, Alternative 2 only creates 80 total acres of canopy gaps (¼- and ½-acre gaps), and does not help create more forage in Management Area 11.

Alternative 3: Alternative 3 was developed to meet the purpose and need and to respond to the issues of the impacts of new roads. Alternative 3 is thoroughly described on pages 20-24 of the EA. It includes: commercial thinning using ground-based and skyline logging systems on 1,253 acres (including 718 acres of off-site ponderosa pine harvesting or girdling and 144 acres of managed stands in Riparian Reserve land allocations outside the no cut shade zone), generating about 10.3 million board feet of timber; treating activity created fuels on 757 acres by various methods; reusing 2.2 miles of existing temporary spur roads to access thinning areas, then subsoiling after use; re-opening and maintaining 1.2 miles of closed system roads to access thinning areas, then closing them after use; reconstructing portions of 10 sections of existing system roads (road work would occur along 0.6 mile of road); maintaining 65 miles of existing roads; hauling timber during the wet season on about 29 miles of gravel roads and 18 miles of paved roads; and utilizing the following existing rock pits, along with several rock disposal sites, as the rock source for the road work: Surveyor, East Collins, Big Stump, and Grassy Ridge.

The connected and similar actions for Alternative 3 are described on page 19 of the EA; they are the same as those for Alternative 4, but differ in the amount of acres or sites that would be treated.

I did not select Alternative 3 primarily because it did not resolve the issues of economics or wildlife habitat raised by the public. Alternative 3 would remove 10.3 million board feet of timber and result in a Cost Benefit Ratio of 0.96, the lowest of all alternatives. While all available alternatives would result in a deficit harvest, Alternative 3 has the lowest present net value of all alternatives (-$150,443). Alternative 3 creates 77 total acres of canopy gaps (¼- and ½-acre gaps), the fewest of all action alternatives.

Alternatives Considered, but Eliminated from Detailed Study

During scoping, an alternative that would thin primarily with helicopters to avoid ground disturbance was suggested. In order to accomplish a substantial amount of restorative thinning, without any road construction, a prohibitive amount of helicopter logging would have been necessary. This would have resulted in a non-viable alternative based on economics. The economic analysis done for this alternative showed that the benefit/cost ratio would be well below 1.00. This means that the combination of logging costs and other expenses such as costly road reconstruction plus the connected restorative treatments associated with the project would collectively cost more than the value of the timber. Since the proponents of this alternative support restorative thinning, leaving substantial areas unthinned where helicopter logging is cost-prohibitive was not desired nor would it meet the need for action. This alternative that would build no new temporary roads was eliminated from detailed study.

During scoping, an alternative that would have dropped three low-volume skyline units to improve economic viability was suggested. This alternative was eliminated from detailed study because it would result in a negative economic analysis that would have little or no likelihood of being sold and would thus not meet the purpose and need.

During scoping, an alternative that would have girdled or inoculated trees to create snags, then followed up with a prescribed burn was suggested. This alternative would not have removed a commercial product, thus not meeting all elements of the purpose and need. In addition, the two other needs of reducing stand density and reducing the risk of stand replacement fire would not have been met; stand density would not have been reduced through removal of trees (trees would remain until they died and fell to the forest floor), and fuels would not have been reduced, as snags and the subsequent down woody debris would have remained and contributed to existing and future fuel loads. Since this alternative would not have met the purpose and need, it was eliminated from detailed study.

Public Participation and Scoping

Scoping was conducted as part of the analysis process. The scoping process for the Curtis Timber Sale Project is described on page 8 of the EA. The Forest Service listened to all input and addressed as many concerns as possible during development of the proposed action. Formal scoping (a process used to surface issues) began after the proposed action was developed when the project was first listed in the October 2007 Umpqua National Forest Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). A scoping notice was sent to the public in October of 2007 with the intent of introducing the proposed action and soliciting issues. The Curtis project record contains a scoping summary that details the scoping comments received for the project. Scoping generated three significant issues (EA page 9) that resulted in the development of two alternatives to the proposed action; two issues were resolved through the development of mitigation measures; one issue was resolved through clarifying the silvicultural prescription; and two issues were tracked for full disclosure. In addition, one issue was considered to be non-significant. The no action alternative (EA pages 13-14) was also analyzed.

During the 30-day comment period, two timely written comments were received. One comment letter was not timely; however, I read and considered all comments that were submitted to me prior to making my decision and I have responded to the timely comments in detail (Appendix A). Some comments received were positive and supportive of this project. The primary concern raised during the comment period was over inclusion of Units 35 and 36 in the project. I responded specifically to those comments regarding those units and I believe that including those units in the project helps further meet the purpose and need. The EA has fully disclosed the impacts on resources and after reviewing the public comments, I am certain that we considered and used the best available science in our analysis and that both the public and I are informed of the effects of the proposal and the benefits and consequences of my decision.

Finding of Forest Plan Consistency

Standards and Guidelines

This decision tiers to the 1990 Umpqua National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (Forest Plan), as amended. I have ensured that the decision is consistent with the Forest Plan goals, objectives, and

standards. All applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines are listed and discussed throughout Chapter 3 of the EA (transportation, page 54; coarse woody debris, pages 74-75; soils, pages 88-89; management indicator species, pages 114-115; primary cavity excavators, page 115; noxious weeds, pages 123-124; water quality, pages 131-132; stream flows, page 137; riparian reserves, page 141; stream channels, pages 148-149; recreation, page 168; and visual quality, page 170). Alternative 4 is fully consistent with all applicable standards and guidelines.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS)

Based on the project level evaluation of the environmental effects documented in the EA, I find that the project is consistent with and does not prevent attainment of the nine objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) as described in the 1994 Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. The activities within the Riparian Reserve land allocation comply with Riparian Reserve Standards and Guidelines as discussed on EA page 141. All nine objectives have been discussed throughout the EA (pages 10, 61-62, 73, 119-121, 129-130, 133, 136, 139-141, 146, 148-149, 154-155, and 176). Moreover, Alternative 4 was designed to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of natural riparian habitat conditions and processes based on watershed analysis recommendations, as detailed throughout Chapter 3 of the EA.

Watershed Analysis and Roads Analysis

I have considered the Jackson Creek and Buckeye/Zinc Watershed Analyses and the Umpqua National Forest Forest-Scale Roads Analysis. These intermediate analyses (intermediate between the Forest Plan and the site-specific EA) provided a foundation for the development of the proposed action and Alternative 4. Alternative 4 implements numerous recommendations from the watershed analyses. Relevant recommendations from the watershed analyses are listed throughout Chapter 3 (EA pages 49-180).

Consistency with National Forest Management Act [16 USC 1604(g)(3)]

I find this decision to be consistent with the 2005 and 2008 National Forest Management Act implementing regulations at 219.12(b)(2), specifically:

> A) This project complies with and considers the economic and environmental aspects of resource management (EA Chapter 3 pages 49-180);
>
> B) This project implements the 1990 Umpqua LRMP, as amended and as such, provides for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the land allocation;
>
> C) This project contains monitoring (as described previously) to ensure that management activities will not produce substantial and permanent impairment of the productivity of the land;
>
> D) The 1,508 acres of thinning authorized by this decision produces approximately 12.7 million board feet of timber, and contributes to the Umpqua National Forest's timber program of about 45 million board feet; this level of timber harvest is less than what was estimated in the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan. As such, this project complies with this subsection by not exceeding the current level of timber offered for sale on the Umpqua.

E) This project only harvests timber from National Forest System lands on lands that: (i) will not be irreversibly damaged; (ii) can be adequately restocked; (iii) protect streams and water bodies from damage and adverse impacts; and (iv) the harvest systems selected were not selected primarily because they give the greatest return or output of timber.

F) The openings that create gaps within the stands are used only where objectives for stand diversity are being met and where the natural disturbance process is being approximated; impacts have been assessed and appropriate protection measures prescribed; they will blend with the natural terrain; are prescribed for the appropriate forest type; and the clearings do not exceed 2 acres in size, which is well below the maximum limit for areas to be cut in one harvest operation.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Based on the documentation in the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA and Analysis File, I have determined the following with regard to the context of this project:

The Curtis Timber Sale Project EA project implements direction set forth in the Umpqua National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended. The Umpqua National Forest is comprised of about 1 million acres. The Tiller Ranger District encompasses about 325,909 acres of the Forest and is located on the Middle South Umpqua (23,329 acres), Upper South Umpqua (11,826 acres), and Jackson Creek (14,447 acres) 5th Level Watersheds. The 1,508 acres of Alternative 4 authorized with this decision will implement thinning, burning, and other connected activities on about 3.0% of the Middle South Umpqua, Upper South Umpqua, and Jackson Creek watersheds, less than five-tenths of 1% of the Tiller Ranger District, and less than two-tenths of 1% of the Forest. Given the area affected by the project at both the watershed, District, and Forest scale, I find that the effects of the project are not significant as disclosed throughout Chapter 3 of the EA (pages 49-180), and will have a negligible effect at the watershed, District, and Forest scale.

Based on the documentation in the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA and the Analysis File, I have determined the following with regards to the intensity of this project:

1. The Environmental Assessment provides sufficient information to determine that this project will not have a significant impact (either adverse or beneficial) on the land and its natural resources (EA pages 49-180), including air quality (EA pages 171-174), or water quality (EA pages 132-140).

2. Considering the remoteness of the project in relation to local and regional population centers and the measures taken to ensure compliance with the Clean Air Act (EA pages 171-174, 179), the Clean Water Act as discussed on EA pages 131-157 and the use of BMP checklists during implementation (EA pages 31-45 and BMP checklists in the Project Record), the likelihood of the project affecting the public's health and safety is low.

3. The supporting documentation located in the EA and in the Analysis File for the Curtis Timber Sale Project provides sufficient information to determine that this project will not negatively affect any known unique characteristics of the geographic area such as park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, inventoried roadless areas, or ecologically critical areas (EA pages 119-121,176-178).

4. The degree of controversy with regard to effects on the quality of the human environment are limited and considered not significant. Two comment letters were received during the 30-day comment period (one letter also was received after the 30-day comment period). Based on my review and consideration of these comments, documentation of our answers in Appendix A, and personal discussions I have had with members of the public, I find that there is no scientific controversy with the project. Many of the comments received consisted of opinions or were related to economic viability, wildlife habitat, and road use. Comments jointly submitted by Umpqua Watersheds, Cascadia Wildlands Project, and Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center expressed concern about the age of units 35 and 36. I fully addressed their concerns in Appendix A and do not feel that there is scientific controversy that would warrant the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

5. Similar types of harvest, fuel treatments, tree planting, road work and other connected actions have occurred previously on the Umpqua and on other National Forests. No impacts to the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks have been identified in Chapter 3 (EA pages 49-180) of the analysis.

6. The proposed commercial thinning, burning, and associated activities are well established practices on the Umpqua National Forest and on the Tiller Ranger District and do not establish a precedent for future actions (past, present and foreseeable actions as documented in the EA pages 49-52).

7. I have reviewed the impacts of those past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions described in the Environmental Effects Section of the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA (EA pages 49-52) and find that this action will not have a significant cumulative impact on the environment (EA pages 49-180).

8. The Cultural Resources Report and the associated disclosure in the EA (page 175) reveal that no prehistoric sites will be impacted. A mitigation measure is included (EA page 45) under Alternative 4, that will protect any prehistoric cultural sites that may be found during implementation. No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to cultural resources are expected to occur.

9. Based on the information disclosed in the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA (pages 49-180), the wildlife and botanical biological evaluations, and the fisheries disclosure, the concurrence letter issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (April 29, 2008) and the concurrence letter issued by NOAA Fisheries (August 21, 2008), I have determined that this action will not jeopardize any species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

10. Laws imposed for the protection of the environment provided the framework for the 1990 Umpqua National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), as amended. From the documentation provided in Chapter 3 (EA pages 49-180) of the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA, I find that the project activities do not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law imposed for the protection of the environment (EA page 179).

From the preceding, I find that the Curtis Timber Sale Project does not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Implementation

I have reviewed the Curtis Timber Sale Project and its associated analysis file. I feel there is adequate information within these documents to provide a reasoned choice of action. I am fully aware of the short-term adverse environmental effects that are disclosed in Chapter 3 (pages 49-180) of the EA. I have determined that these short-term impacts will be outweighed by the long-term benefits of implementing the restorative thinning of 1,508 acres under Alternative 4. Implementing this project will cause no unacceptable cumulative impact to any resource. There will be no impact to cultural resources, consumers, civil rights, minority groups, environmental justice, or women. There are no unusual energy requirements for implementing Alternative 3 (EA page 178).

Implementation may occur on, but not before the 15th business day following the date of appeal disposition. In the event of multiple appeals, the implementation date will be established following the last appeal deposition (36 CFR 215.9(b)). If no appeal is filed, implementation may begin on, but not before, the 5th business day following the close of the appeal filing period (36 CFR 215.9(a)).

Procedure for Changes during Implementation

Minor changes may be needed during implementation to better meet on-site resource management and protection objectives. In determining whether and what kind of further NEPA action is required based on any such changes, I will consider the criteria for whether to supplement an existing Environmental Assessment in 40 CFR 1502.9(c) and FSH 1909.15, sec. 18, and in particular, whether the proposed change is a substantial change to the intent of the selected alternative as planned and already approved, and whether the change is relevant to environmental concerns. Connected or interrelated proposed changes regarding particular areas or specific activities will be considered together in making this determination. The cumulative impacts of these changes will also be considered. For example, thinning unit boundaries may be modified if site conditions dictate and if other resource objectives can be met. Minor adjustments to unit boundaries may be needed during final layout for resource protection, to improve logging system efficiency, and to better meet the intent of my decision. Temporary road locations were estimated during field reconnaissance; minor adjustments to those locations may be necessary. Many of these minor changes will not present sufficient potential impacts to require any specific documentation or action to comply with applicable laws.

Administrative Review

My decision is subject to administrative appeal (CFR 215.11). Organizations or members of the general public may appeal my decision according to 36 CFR Part 215. The 45-day appeal period begins the day following publication of this decision in the Roseburg News Review, the newspaper of record. The Notice of Appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer:

Forest Supervisor, Umpqua National Forest
Attn. 1570 Appeals
2900 NW Stewart Parkway Roseburg, OR 97471
Business Hours: 8:00 am-4:30 pm
Fax: 541-957-3495, Email: appeals-pacificnorthwest-umpqua@fs.fed.us

It is the responsibility of those who appeal a decision to provide the Forest Supervisor sufficient written evidence and rationale to show why my decision should be changed or reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, an appeal must include the following (36 CFR 215.14):

1. Appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
4. The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
5. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
6. Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
7. Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the comments and;
8. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning the specific activities authorized with my decision, you may contact:

Debbie Anderson
Forest Environmental Coordinator
Umpqua National Forest
2900 NW Stewart Parkway
Roseburg, OR. 97471
541-957-3466, Business Hours: 8:00 am-4:30 pm
Fax: 541-957-3495
Email: danderson01@fs.fed.us

/s/ Roshanna Stone **09/03/08**

Roshanna Stone **Date Signed**
District Ranger, Tiller Ranger District

09/09/08

Date Published

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

This appendix documents the public involvement process that occurred during the Curtis Timber Sale Project, and includes some of the information found in Chapter 4 of the EA. The 30-day public comment process is also described, along with the comments received on the EA and the Forest Service's response to those comments.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Public involvement for the Curtis Timber Sale Project began when the project was first listed in the October 2007 Umpqua National Forest Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). A scoping notice introducing the project was sent to the public in October of 2007. Four emailed scoping comments and one telephone call response were received.

Concerns from the public ranged from creating adequate wildlife habitat, road building, economic viability, winter season harvest, fuels treatments, thinning in riparian reserves, water quality, fish and wildlife, off-site pine plantations, clearing around pines, natural regeneration stands, restoration thinning and burning, canopy gaps, silvicultural prescriptions, logging systems, unroaded areas, and timber volume. The Forest Service listened to all input and addressed as many concerns as possible during development of the proposed action and subsequent alternatives.

AGENCY CONSULTATION

The regulatory agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service, charged with overseeing the Endangered Species Act, was consulted extensively throughout the planning process. Consultation with this agency was finalized before the Decision Notice was signed.

TRIBES THAT WERE CONSULTED FOR THE EA

Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians

Confederated Tribe of Grand Ronde of Indians

Confederated Tribe of Siletz Indians

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

The 30-day Public Comment period for the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA opened on June 6, 2008 and closed on July 7, 2008. The public was asked to give comment on Alternative 4 of the EA. Two timely comment letters (electronic) were received.

Comments were received from the following:

1. Francis Eatherington, Umpqua Watersheds; Josh Laughlin, Cascadia Wildlands Project; and George Sexton, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
2. Jacob Groves, American Forest Resource Council

An additional comment was sent via e-mail by Doug Heiken (Oregon Wild) on July 9, 2008 following the close of the comment period.

All comments submitted must be considered and addressed. Examples of comments which are most helpful are those which:

- provide new information pertaining to the preferred alternative or an alternative in the analysis;
- identify a new issue or expand upon an existing issue;
- identify a different (alternative) way to meet the purpose and need of the project;
- provide an opinion regarding one or more alternatives, including the basis or rationale for that opinion;
- point out a specific flaw in the analysis, or;
- identify a different source of credible research, which if used in the analysis could result in different effects.

It should be noted that all comments received are valuable. Alternative preferences, values, and feelings also contribute to increased understanding and were carefully read and considered. The following narrative contains the comments, grouped by subject matter and paraphrased where appropriate, followed by the Forest Service's response.

Table A-1. Comments received on the EA, by subject of concern, and the Forest Service's Response.

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
1	General Support for Project	Umpqua Watersheds, the Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Project, and the Cascadia Wildlands Project support Alternative 3 but we do not support the inclusion of Unit 35. In general, we support thinning projects in managed plantations, as proposed in the Curtis Project. We especially support targeting off-site pine planted in these plantations, given the potential for dissemination of off-site pine seed and contamination of native pine seed sources across the landscape.	Thank you for your comment.
1	Units 35 and 36	The final decision should exclude units 35 and 36 because they are 120 year old native stands, not a priority for thinning. Thinning these stands also degrades them, moving them from owl nesting habitat down to dispersal habitat.	To clarify, Units 35 and 36 range from 70-120 years old and are thinned using the prescription of thinning from below (leaving largest trees). Page 63 of the EA documents that research states that fast-growing young trees that eventually become the dominant trees in the OG study stands developed at stand densities of about 40-50 TPA and sustained high growth rates during their first 50-100 years (Poage & Tappeiner 2002), further validating the need to include Units 35 and 36. Page 109 of the EA states that Units 35 and 36 would modify NRF for about 1 decade, and would have a 'barely measurable direct impact' on NRF.
1	Units 35 and 36	Our scoping comments noted that units 36 and 35 were natural regeneration after a fire event, so they did not fit the purpose and need of the scoping proposal, which was to "enhance development … in managed plantations". Our scoping comments said that fire regenerated forests should be a low priority for 'restoration' as these forests already have natural diversity and are on their way to structural diversity. Thinning in natural stands could simplify them, degrade ground vegetation, and compact soils. We were disappointed to see this issue did not make a mention in the EA. It did not even make the rank of "insignificant issue". We disagree. Unit 35 and 36 should not be included in the final decision. Unit 36 is already not in Alternative 3. However, unit 35 is still included in Alternative 3, and both 35 and 36 are still in the alternatives 2 and 4.	The scoping summary (Project Record) notes the scoping comments received and states that the purpose and need was clarified to address thinning in dense second growth regardless of their origin (EA page 5). In addition, Alternative 3 was developed to meet the purpose and need and to respond to the issues of the impacts of new temporary roads. Alternative 3 differs from Alternative 2 by dropping six units that would have utilized temporary roads. Unit 36 was one of these six dropped units, responding to this scoping comment.

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
1	Units 35 and 36	The EA added "fire regenerated stands" to the purpose and need, in addition to the "managed plantations" that was in the scoping announcement, but the EA failed to explain why the purpose and need was changed, or why natural fire regenerated stands are a priority to thin over other managed plantations that are not included in this project.	One purpose of scoping is to help clarify the purpose and need (Scoping, 1900-01, Forest Plan Implementation). Units 35 and 36 were included in part because they meet the purpose and need of moving second growth stands to a more complex and diverse forest habitat condition.
1	Units 35 and 36	The EA also failed to give the age of units 35 and 36 (or of any units) under "existing conditions". It would seem this information was important to inform the public and decision maker that the project was focusing on young forest and avoiding older forests. I called the district to find out the ages and was told that units 35 and 36 are about 120 years old, while the rest of the units are 40 to 60 years old. Why would the district prioritize thinning in mature, native forests, more than twice as old as the managed plantations? While we agree the managed plantations need thinning, we do not agree older, native forests need thinning.	Page 3 of the silviculture prescription (Project File) documents that Units 35 and 36 range between 70 and 120 years of age. These units were included as they help meet the purpose and need of the project.
1	Units 35 and 36	The district must do Red Tree Vole surveys for units 35 and 36. The EA failed to describe if the surveys were done, and if so, what were the results.	The red tree vole is listed on the Regional Forester's Sensitive species list (updated January 2008) only in the northern portion of the Oregon Coast Range north of Highway 20. In areas where this species is of concern, pre-disturbance surveys are required when the proposed action has the potential to cause a "significant negative effect on vole habitat or persistence at the site". Review indicates that pre-disturbance surveys are not warranted in the Curtis planning area because the project area is located outside the area of concern specified in the 2008 Regional Forester's Sensitive species list, because no project units (except Unit 36) constitute suitable vole habitat, and because the silvicultural prescription of thinning from below to 70-100 tpa does not have the potential to cause "significant negative effect or is not sufficient to cause a loss of persistence".

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
1	Units 35 and 36	Thinning units 35 and 36 actually degrades spotted owl nesting habitat by moving it backwards to dispersal habitat. It makes no sense to degrade the stand type you are trying to achieve. Units 35 and 36 should just be dropped from all alternatives.	Page 109 of the EA states that thinning Units 35 and 36 would modify NRF for about 1 decade, and would have a 'barely measurable direct impact' on NRF. In addition, page 70 of the EA states that, at the landscape scale, treatments would accelerate the development of late-successional structures in areas where they would more likely persist. The proposed treatments would also shift the vegetation pattern toward larger, late-successional patches, as recommended in the 1995 Jackson Creek WA and the 1996 Buckeye/Zinc WA. Western Oregon studies support the practice of thinning young stands to mimic natural disturbance processes or to accelerate the development of old forest structures (Tappeiner et al. 1997; Poage and Tappeiner 2002; Muir et al. 2002; Garman et al. 2003; Lindh and Muir 2004; Andrews et al. 2005).
1	Units 35 and 36	One of the reasons for thinning in the EA is the study by Poage and Tappenier, described on page 63. The study found old growth developed at stand densities of 40 to 50 trees per acre during their first 50 years of growth. You have already missed this boat with units 35 and 36. In fact, there are no studies showing you can successfully release a mature, native forest through thinning. Even the watershed analysis did not recommend thinning in units like 35 and 36. It says: "Restore species composition and structure more typical of native forest" and "Concentrate activities in areas that have been heavily impacted by harvesting…". There is no authority, no justification, and no analysis in the EA that allows harvesting in units 35 and 36.	Poage and Tappeiner (2002) found that the fast-growing young trees that eventually became the dominant trees in old-growth study stands developed at stand densities of about 40 -50 trees per acre and sustained high growth rates during their first 50 - 100 years. This age range of 50 to 100 years spans the 70-120 year age range of Units 35 and 36.
1	Units 35 and 36	The EA describes the difference between the existing conditions and the desired conditions by describing Element 1: Stand Density. It says: "Currently, the majority of the 40-50 year old stands….." There is no description here either of 120-year-old forests and why they need to be logged.	As stated previously, the range of ages in Units 35 and 36 is between 70 and 120 years old, not just 120 years old. These two units meet the purpose and need by accelerating stand trajectories, increasing species diversity, and improving fire resiliency, as these stands are both in FRCC 3.
1	Units 35 and 36	The EA failed to address the site-specific existing conditions of units 35 and 36 or any benefits from thinning in 120-year-old forests. Therefore, **the final decision should drop these two units**. The analysis does not support retaining	Units 35 and 36 are discussed in the Silviculture Prescription, the fuels section (pages 82 and 83), in the Wildlife section of the EA (pages 109-110), and the weed analysis (page 123).

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
		units 35 and 36 in the final decision.	
1	Off-site pine	The EA implied that the only off-site pines in the project area were ponderosa pines. However, are not some of the sugar pines also off-site? If so, the EA should treat all off-site pines the same way because of the same problem of contamination of native seed source. We found a number of recent dead sugar pines in unit 1, so they appeared to be as off-site as the Ponderosa pines. Besides contaminating the native sugar pine seed source, it would be unwise to clear 20 feet from around the drip line of a tree that is likely to die.	There is no off-site sugar pine in the project area, only off-site ponderosa pine. White pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*) is found throughout the project area and has affected many of the sugar pine.
1	Off-site pine	Clearing 20 feet around sugar pines is too dogmatic. For instance, if there is a native tree that is larger or older than the pine, but within 20', it should be retained with the pine. If the pine has a growing companion within a couple of feet that shares a crown-space and root system, both trees should be retained. A shorter cut distance could be implemented on the north side of trees. A one-size fits all clearing around the drip-line of all sugar pines could simplify these stands, not diversify them. Valuable native trees could be cut.	Thank you for your comment. The prescription to clear around 20 feet of healthy sugar pine will be followed to help implement DxD specifications. As discussed in the Silviculture Prescription, only dominant healthy sugar pine not exhibiting signs of blister rust will be treated.
1	Off-site pine	This is especially important in units 35 and 36, the 120-year-old native forest units. It would be incredibly important to not de-diversity these native forests in any way. These native forests are in a sea of off-site pine plantations. Their native diversity should be fully protected. In fact, these two units should just be dropped from the project, especially since the EA never considered the impacts of this silviculture prescription to this unique native forest.	These two units are not included in the off-site pine prescription. The silviculture prescription for these two units (page 5) calls for "clumped" retentions to be achieved by retaining all conifers of equal size that are within 2 feet of each other when encountered as a reserve tree for the DxD.
1	Off-site pine	The EA should have described how off-site plantations affect the projected growth rates calculated for sustained yield, and determine if the LRMP made accurate assumptions about plantation re-growth. If the LRMP made incorrect assumptions, the decision makers should consider this information.	Off-site pine plantations were not included in growth and yield predictions for the 1990 Forest Plan.

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
1	Cumulative impacts	The EA failed to consider cumulative impacts in the watersheds containing the Curtis project. For instance, the District is considering the Tallow Salvage Sale. Another cumulative impact could be chemicals used in dust abatements on the logging roads, especially if the Tallow Salvage and Curtis Thinning will be hauled in the same season.	The Tallow Salvage Sale is specifically listed in Table 8, page 52 of the EA as a reasonably foreseeable future activity.
1	General Support for Project	Except for the items discussed above, the Curtis timber sale appears to be a well documented project, with a clear need to thin in these managed plantations, and using reasonable silviculture prescriptions.	Thank you for your comment.
2	Economics	AFRC would like to see all timber sales be economically viable. In the Curtis Timber Sale Project EA, we appreciate that economics was identified as a significant issue and that activities proposed were assessed with economics in mind. We feel the Umpqua National Forest has done a good job at prescribing the appropriate harvesting systems on this project and thus should maximize the revenue returned to the government.	Thank you for your comment.
2	Economic viability	AFRC would like to see all timber sales be economically viable. Appropriate harvesting systems should be used on all units to achieve an economically viable sale and increase the revenues to the government. For this reason, AFRC supports alternative four as it is appears to be the most economically viable alternative while using appropriate harvesting systems.	Thank you for your comment.
2	Road construction	AFRC supports road construction that will help the Forest Service offer economically viable timber sales, give them greater access to the area for future fuel reduction treatments, and improve the agencies ability to respond to wildfires. These reasons are why we cannot support alternative three, which reduces road construction by 0.6 miles and defers density management treatments on 256 acres. Constructed roads can always be removed, or made inaccessible to vehicles after logging operations are completed.	Thank you for your comment.

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
2	Permanent roads	For the same reason that AFRC supports the construction of roads to improve access for fuels reduction treatments and early initial response to wildfires, we do not support the decommissioning of any permanent roads. Getting into the habit of decommissioning permanent roads on a landscape that is prone to catastrophic wildfires is careless and not beneficial to the continued health of the forest.	Thank you for your comment. Only temporary roads are being decommissioned with this project.
2	Thinning intensity	AFRC is concerned that commercially viable units within the Curtis Timber Sale Project are not harvesting adequate volumes. Light thinning of 4 -8 mbf /acre makes units difficult to economically log. The Curtis Timber Sale Project averages 8.4 mbf/acre harvested over the entire project area. Purchasers need more trees to cut per acre, including some of the larger distressed dominants and co-dominants. The cutting costs for these types of units are more expensive adding to the high cost of logging.	Thank you for your comment. The light thinning prescription was applied in riparian buffer areas to meet shade requirements, maintain canopy closure, and reduce sedimentation. This light thinning prescription will treat a total of 165 riparian acres, representing <9% of the total sale area.
2	Winter haul	Seasonal and wildlife restrictions often make timber sales extremely difficult to complete within the contract timelines. Fire season restrictions on top of seasonal and wildlife restrictions can often limit workdays to 4-5 hours. All these restrictions have a cost to the purchaser and results in a lower bid for the stumpage. AFRC would also like to continue to encourage the Tiller Ranger District to offer sales that will allow winter harvesting and haul. It appears the majority of the haul routes for the Curtis Timber Sale Project are on rocked surfaces, AFRC is pleased that the Forest Service will allow winter harvesting on some of these improved roads. The loggers need winter work and the mills generally need winter wood, this is a big bidding issue for a purchaser.	Thank you for your comment. The seasonal restrictions proposed are for spotted owls, bark slippage, and pile burning. The bark slippage restriction falls within the spotted owl restriction, thus there would be no additional restrictions added to this project. The burning restriction applies only to pile burning.
2	Foraging habitat	Many of our members' employees are avid big game hunters and it is important to them that federal lands provide adequate habitat for those species. AFRC would like to voice support for management activities you have prescribed in alternative 4 that enhance big game foraging habitat. We are pleased that some multiple small patch cut sizes (up to 2 acres in size) will be created to provide early	Thank you for your comment.

Letter Number	Subject of Concern	Comment	Forest Service Response
		successional habitat for species such as Columbian black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*) and Roosevelt Elk. Early successional habitat is not provided by typical thinning treatments. Thinning treatments do not provide the quantity or quality of forage that would be sufficient to sustain wild ungulate populations. The Northwest Forest Plan states that early successional habitat will be provided for these species on federal lands. It is important that the Umpqua National Forest continue to improve big game winter range habitat.	
2	Fuels treatment	AFRC would still like to see the Forest Service incorporate more flexibility for fuels treatments in the Curtis Density Management Project. Rather than specifying a specific method of accomplishing your resource objectives, you should instead identify the objectives you are trying to accomplish and any limitations to resource disturbance you require. The purchaser could then identify the method they would like to implement to meet the resource objectives given their particular employee/equipment mix. By doing this, the purchasers' can maximize their efficiencies' which will translate into higher bid rates and higher returns to the government. In the case of hand piling, the resource objective might be to reduce the amount of 1-20 hour fuels to XX tons per acre while not increasing soil compaction on more than XX percent of the unit by more than XX and not damaging more than XX% of the leave trees. The purchaser could then determine the most cost effective method to accomplish the resource objectives thereby maximizing the retained receipts that could be used for other restoration activities.	Thank you for your comment. The site-specificity required under NEPA for fuels reduction prescriptions makes it difficult to incorporate this request.
2	General Support for Project	AFRC is happy to be involved in the planning, environmental assessment (EA), and decision making process for the Curtis Density Management Project.	Thank you for your comment.