

Decision Notice, Forest Plan Amendment, and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) McCache Vegetation Management Project

**USDA Forest Service
Deschutes National Forest
Sisters Ranger District
Deschutes County, OR**

Location

The McCache Vegetation Management project is located on the Sisters Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest. The project area is within Deschutes County, in townships 14 and 15 south, and ranges 8 and 9 east. The east boundary of the project area is approximately 5 miles west of Sisters, Oregon.

The project area includes 15,350 acres of National Forest system lands.

Decision

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement Alternative 4, with minor modifications, and the associated mitigation measures. When compared to the other alternatives considered, the actions under modified Alternative 4 would provide the greatest reduction of risk to late-successional habitat, and improve habitat conditions on the greatest number of acres. This would be accomplished with a combination of vegetation and fuel management on approximately 5,000 acres (about 33% of the project area). All practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm have been adopted (see the EA, pgs. II-12 through II-18). Monitoring implementation of the project will follow direction in the EA (pgs. II-12 through II-18, and Appendix C), and in the Forest Service Handbook Deschutes National Forest Supplement 1900-94-1.

Specifically, the following decisions are made with this notice:

- The timber harvest and fuels reduction actions that are determined to be appropriate and effective ways to reduce risk and move the vegetation in the McCache Project Area towards a more resilient future vegetative condition, consistent with guidance in the Cache Late-Successional Reserve Assessment.
- A road network that will serve resource needs and human uses.
- Adopt the Riparian Reserve widths recommended in the Metolius and Why-chus Watershed Assessments.
- Amend visual quality standards and guidelines in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as they apply to the project area.

Modifications to Alternative 4. The modifications to Alternative 4 have resulted from further review of the analysis, as well as consideration of public comment. There are 3 actions that have been changed from the Alternative 4, as described in the EA that was reviewed by the public on March 7, 2000.

1. Removal of 4 isolated harvest units. Based on concerns expressed during the public comment period, we took a closer look at perceived potential impacts on areas without roads in the project area. This analysis identified several proposed actions that were each somewhat isolated from other actions, and determined not to be highly effective in contributing to the landscape-wide risk reduction strategy. These actions were removed from the selected Alternative.

Table DN-1. Actions Removed from Alternative 4, as Modified

Vegetation Management Actions Removed from Alternative 4	Location	Stand Exam No, (estimated acres)
Firewood/Post/Poles	North of the Belknap lava flow, off Forest Road 1030-200	59611087 (17 acres)
Ponderosa Pine Restoration	Off the end of Forest Road 1030-353	59611060 (13 acres)
Thinning	Off the northwest end of the loop road 1030-350	59611509 (12 acres)
Group Selection	South of Cache Creek along Forest Road 1028-590	59610292 (12 acres)

2. Road Closures. We have decided to maintain our original proposals for road closures,

except we will not decommission the upper portion of the loop road 1030-350 (approximately 2.2 miles), which travels past Dugout Lake. It was determined that this road was a popular loop road for accessing hunting, hiking and scenic views of Mt. Washington.

3. Aspen Restoration. In those stands identified for aspen restoration, we will not remove any aspen at this time. This action was not exempted under the Cache Late-Successional Reserve Assessment, and will require further review by the Regional Ecosystem Office. However, we will thin conifers within these areas, as discussed in the EA (pg. II-2), to reduce the competition to aspen in these stands.

There are also several minor corrections to information in the EA which do not change the issues or effects analysis. A list of corrections to the EA is found in the [Errata Sheet](#).

Specific elements of the modified Alternative 4 include:

- No trees over 21" diameter would be removed, except to reduce hazards to the public (along roads and trails) and forest workers.
- There would be no vegetation or fuel treatments in spotted owl nesting, roosting, or foraging habitat (as mapped during the environmental analysis).
- Approximately 29 million board feet could be harvested - about 15 million board feet of saw timber and 14 million board feet of pulpwood.
- Restoration (including harvest and fuel treatments) would be accomplished through a variety of methods, including timber sales, stewardship contracts, force account and partnerships with alternative labor forces (e.g. Department of Corrections crews).
- Proposed actions (primarily aspen restoration) would occur in approximately 81 acres of riparian reserves. The objective would be to restore vegetative diversity, reduce stand densities, and remove public hazards ("hazard tree" removal) in riparian areas. Sensitive soils and riparian areas would be protected by emphasizing use of cutting, removing trees and piling debris by hand (not driving vehicles in these areas). The Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives will be met under the selected Alternative.
- Approximately 27.5 miles of roads would be closed (decommissioned or inactivated) (see EA, page II-27). In addition, approximately 1 mile of road will be converted to trail along the Santiam Wagon Road. An estimated 3 miles of temporary vehicle access would be constructed to aid tree removal. These temporary access routes would be decommissioned after the project is completed, so there would no future use by vehicles in these areas. There would be no long-term increase in road miles in the areas where temporary access routes are determined necessary.

Approximate Acres Affected

Vegetation Treatments:

- 700 acres of existing plantations would be mowed and under burned. (Affects about 5% of the project area.)
- 1,410 acres of reforestation -- re-planting trees where needed to meet objectives. (Affects about 9% of the project area.)
- 1,865 acres of ponderosa pine restoration - primarily removal of dead trees and white fir trees to reduce fuel loads and tree densities in order to maintain larger ponderosa pine or to reduce competition so that future ponderosa pine trees (and other long-lived species) could better develop. Where there is high mortality, the remaining stand may appear quite open, though a minimum of 30 square feet of basal area would be left in stands where it currently exists. Open stands without sufficient natural reproduction of ponderosa pine would be re-planted in stands with high levels of ponderosa pine mistletoe, other tree species suited to the site (e.g. Douglas fir) may be re-planted. (Affects about 12% of the project area.)
- 681 acres thinning trees 8" to 21" diameter - thin trees from below to a density that would increase growth and delay mortality in the remaining tree stand. (Affects about 4% of the project area.)
- 186 acres of aspen restoration - primarily removing conifers from native aspen stands to reduce competition for sunlight, nutrients and water. (Affects about 1% of the project area.) 139 acres of firewood, posts, or poles - typically would occur in areas with high or increasing mortality in the tree stands. (Affects less than 1% of the project area.)
- 192 acres of hazard tree removal - primarily along Highway 242, to improve public safety. (Affects about 1% of the project area.)
- 1,496 acres of thinning trees < 8" diameter - primarily small trees from high density stands where these trees contribute to heavy fuel loads and increase the risk of fires reaching the crowns of the larger trees, and where competition from the numerous young trees is predicted to result in a decline in the health of the large trees. (Affects about 10% of the project area.)
- 36 acres of under burning - a method for removing smaller trees (this method also reduces heavy fuel loads, as mentioned under fuel treatments below). (Affects less than 1% of the project area.)

Fuel Treatments - methods for reducing the buildup of fuel, either as a result of existing mortality or from removing vegetation through methods described above:

- 705 acres of hand piling.
- 472 acres of jackpot burning - only high concentrations of fuels would be burned, so typically less than 25% of the stand is affected.
- 484 acres of Leave Tops Attached - removing the tops of the trees along with the lower trunk, as opposed to cutting off the tops and disposing of the fuel at a later time.
- 3,196 acres of under burning as a fuel treatment - may include removing small trees, usually 5" diameter or less before burning occurs.
- 198 acres of machine piling in areas where it is determined it is most important to retain as much of the down logs, forest litter (needles, small branches) and duff as possible for species associated with these habitats. Areas which are machine piled would be subsoiled (the soil would be tilled) so that possible soil infiltration would be partially restored.

See [figure 1](#) for locations of proposed actions, and the attached [Table DN-2](#), for a list of vegetation and fuel treatments by forest stands.

Rationale for Decision

Tradeoffs Between Costs and Benefits

The analysis in the EA clearly demonstrates that there are predicted costs and benefits under each alternative. Comments received from the public also indicate there are strong values attached to the predicted outcomes, from a "hands-off" approach (Alternative 1) on one end of the options considered, to taking a landscape-scale approach for reducing the risk of severe wildfire, insects or disease with active management of vegetation and fuels (Alternative 4). Under Alternative 4, some people were very supportive of reducing the high risk of wildfire in their local forest and close to their communities. However, others were concerned about the possible short- and long-term impacts on wildlife habitat and areas without roads.

I do not feel we can afford to let the forest heal at its own pace. Without some kind of management, the potential for extensive loss from wildfire, insects or disease will remain very high, and pose a serious risk to late-successional habitat remaining in the project area. It is expected trees, including the large ponderosa pines, will continue to die from bark beetles and root disease (which occurs more commonly in stressed forest stands). The McCache project area does not have the typical characteristics of a Late-Successional Reserve under the Northwest Forest Plan. Most Late-Successional Reserves occur on the west side of the Cascades where conditions are generally wetter and fire plays a less-important role in maintaining the health of the ecosystem. Late-successional conditions in the project area developed over long periods when fire was a frequent disturbance. It is now necessary for us to move conditions toward those where we can again allow low-intensity fires to burn through the Late-Successional Reserve. However, this means we need to reduce fuel loads now.

I would like to address a few issues that the public raised during review of the EA that help describe the rationale for my decision.

Update on Predicted Wildlife Effects. During the public comment period, there were concerns expressed about potential impacts on the spotted owl and the Canada lynx. Since the time the analysis for the EA was completed, there have been two important updates. The first relates to the initial findings of effects on spotted owls. Due to a misunderstanding of how to analyze actions within dispersal habitat, the EA had incorrectly described the potential effects of the proposed actions as "may effect, likely to adversely affect" the owl and its habitat. However, since no actions would occur in spotted owl nesting habitat, and there would be no occurrence of "take", the initial findings have been corrected to "may effect, not likely to adversely affect" spotted owls and habitat,

under all alternatives. The US Fish and Wildlife Service have concurred with this finding.

The second update is that, due to a recent change in direction in Canada Lynx management (May 29, 2001 letter from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to the Deschutes National Forest), there are no designated Lynx Analysis Units within the McCache project area. However, the EA had fully analyzed the predicted effects on lynx habitat, and the area previously designated as a Lynx Habitat Unit. The determination from the previous analysis, and the determination from the current information is that there would not likely be an adverse affect on lynx or their habitat.

Areas Without Roads. Also during the comment period, there were concerns expressed about the potential impacts from this project on the character of areas without roads. There is currently roaded access to each location within the project area where management actions are proposed (except for where jackpot burning would occur, which does not require roaded access), and no construction of permanent roads is proposed. Approximately 54 acres of treatments that are adjacent to areas without roads have been removed from the selected Alternative because they were determined not to be highly effective in contributing to the landscape-wide risk reduction strategy.

Actions that will remain in areas adjacent to wilderness or the Inventoried Roadless Area are felt to be important links of the immediate risk-reduction strategy. There will be no construction of permanent roads in these areas, though temporary vehicle access may be needed. This access would be created to the minimum level necessary. These access routes will be rehabilitated and decommissioned when project implementation is complete. The primary actions that would occur in these areas are thinning and burning. I feel that these actions, and the creation of temporary access, would not foreclose future options for these areas.

Timber Harvest in a Late-Successional Reserve. There was also some concern about timber harvest in a Late Successional Reserve. The Northwest Forest Plan provides clear standards and guidelines (ROD, C-11 through C-18) for using silvicultural practices to meet Late-Successional Reserve objectives. I feel that removing trees, through silvicultural methods, is an effective means to achieving project objectives. In addition, this material can provide benefits to the public in the form of wood products. It is also important to understand that this material would not be removed all at one time, but would likely be removed over the next 5 or more years.

I have carefully considered the costs and benefits of the selected Alternative, and have weighed them against the long-term goals for the Late-Successional Reserve. I feel that Alternative 4, as modified, is the best set of actions for reducing the risk of losing late-successional habitat and for beginning the restoration of remaining late-successional habitat. A combination of removing dead trees, thinning dense stands of green trees, mowing and prescribed burning can increase ecosystem health and lower the risk

of catastrophic wildfire, insect and disease. I also feel that this Alternative best meets other important project objectives of reducing fuels in order to lower the risk to people (local residents, visitors, and fire-fighters) from severe wildfire.

I agree with a recent statement by Dale Bosworth, Chief of the Forest Service: "... we can best accomplish our stewardship objectives by looking at what we leave on the land rather than what we take off." I feel that what we will leave on the land in the McCache project area is an ecosystem that is more resilient to disturbances, and which can better provide important habitat for late-successional species.

Public Involvement

Public involvement for the environmental analysis is summarized in the EA, pgs. I-4 through I-5. In addition to the contacts listed in the EA, there were numerous one-on-one contacts with individuals and organizations throughout the planning process. Also, the McCache project was listed quarterly in the *Schedule of Projects for the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests and the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management*.

Despite the wide scope of contacts and numerous communications with individuals and organizations who have asked to be on the Sisters Ranger District mailing list, there were not many comments received during the analysis process. The first scoping letter and response form resulted in 46 comments. These comments were generally in support of the types of actions that would be analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA). The most disagreement was on thinning of trees larger than 8" diameter, though still almost half of the respondents supported this action. A few intermittent comments were received in response to various updates from the district or from newspaper articles, again generally in favor of the proposed action.

Twenty comments were received during the review period for the EA. Details of the comments received and specific responses to the comments are found in the EA, [Appendix D](#).

Issues

Based on input from the public, other local and state agencies and Forest Service specialists, five key issues were identified. These broad issues were used in developing alternatives and discussing the existing conditions and predicted environmental effects.

1. Effects on Late-Successional Habitat and Species - How can adequate mature and old-growth habitat for spotted owls and other species associated with late-successional conditions be maintained while reducing the risk of habitat loss due to large-scale disturbances (e.g. wildfire, insect and disease)?
2. Fire/Fuels Management (Risk Reduction) - How will different fuel management strategies,

including no action, affect long- and short-term late-successional habitat?

3. Soil Productivity - How can soil productivity be maintained during proposed harvest and post-harvest activities?
4. Scenic Quality - How would proposed actions affect scenic quality in the project area?
5. Economics - Is commercial harvest (timber sales) an appropriate tool for achieving forest restoration and late-successional habitat goals? Will commercial harvest be economically viable, given the high amount of dead trees in the project area?

Alternatives Considered

What options were considered?

Four options for managing the McCache project area were analyzed. They ranged from taking no action (let the area heal at its own pace) to a broad-scale strategy of reducing fuels, removing dead trees, and thinning dense stands (Alternative 4). The alternatives considered in detail are:

Alternative 1 (No Action). The objective of this Alternative is to allow the processes and habitat cycles to continue largely without intervention. Management actions that would continue include traditional fire suppression and maintenance of system roads and trails. There would be no steps taken that would actively change vegetation (other than standard maintenance of existing tree plantations or removal of hazard trees along roads and at recreation sites) or fuel levels.

Alternative 2. This alternative would emphasize maintaining multistory, dense forest habitat (e.g. for spotted owl and other interior forest species) in the short-term. There would be less emphasis on long-term protection or reduction of risk from catastrophic disturbances (wildfire, insect and disease), or of improving long-term late-successional habitat in fire-climax stands (e.g. for white-headed woodpecker).

Alternative 3. This alternative would balance maintenance of key dense interior forest habitats with a more landscape-scale strategy of reducing risk.

Alternative 4. This alternative would favor late-successional species that depend on open forests and regular, low-intensity fires. There would be an emphasis on developing fire-climax late-successional habitats in ponderosa pine and mixed conifer dry plant associations, and a landscape-scale strategy of long-term protection and reduction of risk from catastrophic disturbances. There would be less emphasis on multistory, dense forest stands, though key habitats would be protected.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 were not selected because they did not reduce risk to late-successional habitat

and to people as well as Alternative 4.

Eliminated Alternatives

Several alternatives were considered, but eliminated from further analysis: 1) removal of the majority of moderate to very high mortality, 2) emphasize removal of wood products with the highest market value, 3) removal of trees 21" diameter or greater. These alternatives did not meet the purpose and need for the action (see an explanation in the EA, pg. II-12).

Finding of No Significant Impact

I have determined that implementing Alternative 4 as modified is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This determination is based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment and supporting documents (e.g. the biological evaluation, biological assessment and concurrence with the USFWS), which describe direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of this decision. This determination is also made with consideration of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on National Forest land and other ownerships within potentially affected areas, which could have a cumulatively significant effect on the quality of the human environment.

I have found the context of the environmental impacts of this decision is limited to the local area and is not significant. I have also determined the severity of these impacts is not significant, considering the following factors of intensity:

1. Impacts from this site-specific project are both beneficial and adverse. The adverse effects are short-term in nature and will not impair land productivity. The long-term effects are considered to be beneficial, especially for forest health, development of future late-successional habitat, and reduction of risk of loss from fire, insect and disease (EA, Chpt 4, Environmental Effects).
2. There is only minor potential for adverse impacts to public safety. Prescribed burning will affect air quality for short periods in the immediate vicinity of the activity (EA, pgs. IV-45 through IV-50). Timber haul will be regulated and conform to Deschutes Road Use rules, and haul routes will be posted (EA, pg. II-17). Overall, there is a predicted increase in public safety due to the reduced risk of impacts from severe wildfire (EA, pgs. IV-42 through IV-50) and reduction of hazard trees along public roads and in recreation sites (EA, pg. IV-69).
3. No unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as cultural resources (EA, pgs. IV-71, 72) or wetlands (EA, pg. IV-74), will be adversely affected. Long-term effects to the Late-Successional Reserve are expected to be beneficial. Proposed actions are intended to have a neutral or beneficial effect on the riparian/aquatic system. Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives will be met under the selected Alternative (EA, pgs. 65-66).
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

While some people disagree with the proposed actions, no one has provided evidence that the environmental effects of the project have been wrongly predicted; therefore, the effects are not likely to be controversial (EA, Chpt 4, Environmental Effects).

5. The environmental effects are predicted to be typical for this type of vegetation management project. The adverse effects will be short-term and are not highly uncertain, nor are there unique or unknown risks involved (EA, Chpt 4, Environmental Effects; and App. D, Response NEPA/NFMA-5).
6. The decision to implement vegetation management actions in the project area does not establish any future precedent for other actions that may have a significant effect. Future actions will be evaluated through the NEPA process and will stand on their own as to environmental effects and project feasibility.
7. Cumulative effects for wildlife, plants, water/riparian resources, soils and late-successional habitat were considered in the EA (Chpt 4, Environmental Effects). These actions are not related to other actions that, when combined, will have significant impacts.
8. The field surveys for sites, objects, etc., listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places have been completed. All known sites have been mitigated by avoidance and no activity will take place which will contribute to the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. Any sites found during operation of the timber sales and related activities will be protected. The Forest Archeologist determined there would be no adverse effect (EA, pgs. IV-71 through IV-73), and found the proposed actions in compliance with the 1995 Programmatic Agreement between the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer and the Forest Service .
9. As described in the Environmental Assessment (pgs. IV-8 through IV-42), Biological Evaluation, Biological Assessments, and letter of concurrence from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, activities are not likely to adversely impact threatened or endangered plants or animals. Required surveys for sensitive animals and plants that are thought to occur in the project area have been conducted for units included in this decision. Timber harvest and other ground disturbing activities have been designed to avoid adverse impacts to known species (EA, II-13 through II-17).
10. This proposal is in compliance with all federal, state, or local law requirements. Relevant federal, state and local governments were included in the extensive public participation efforts.

Forest Plan Amendment: Visual Quality Standards and Guidelines

This Decision Notice will also amend the visual quality standards and guidelines in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), to allow impacts from timber harvest and prescribed burning to be visible to the "casual observer" for slightly longer periods, and openings (due to the removal of dead trees) to occur on slightly more acres than under the existing Standards and Guidelines. Though the current Visual Quality Standards and Guidelines would not be met in the short-term, the proposed actions are expected to better meet visual quality objectives over the long-term (over five to ten years). Following is a description of changes to the existing standards and guidelines for

Scenic Views - MA 9.

The goal for scenic views is to provide forest visitors with high-quality scenery that represents the natural character of Central Oregon. The objectives call for enhancing landscapes by opening views to distant peaks. Visual diversity is to be maintained through variations in stand densities and size classes, with large ponderosa pine highlighted. The scenic views allocation is located along Highway 242, a short section of the Metolius-Windigo Trail, Graham Butte and the east slope of Cache Mountain. Although proposed activities are intended to meet this goal and the Standards and Guidelines over the long term, short-term visual impacts are expected from removing vegetation (slash, stumps, stacked logs, skid roads), reducing fuels (blackened, scorched vegetation and tree trunks), and creating openings. As such, it is recommended that the following Standards and Guidelines be amended:

M9-4 and M9-20: Ponderosa Pine and Mixed Conifer Foreground - Desired Visual Condition

Because of the current conditions, it will not be possible to achieve the specific characteristics (e.g. small, natural-appearing openings) in both ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forests, and it will not be possible to stay within the amount of change called for in the Retention and Partial Retention Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs). It is proposed that this Standard and Guideline be amended to accept that the casual forest visitor may notice changes in these allocations. These objectives will be met over the long term through re-establishment of open, park-like stands of ponderosa pine and enhancement of existing large pine trees.

M9-8, M9-27, and M9-44: Timing of Cleanup Activities in Ponderosa Pine Foregrounds, Mixed Conifer Foregrounds, Middlegrounds and Backgrounds.

These three Standards and Guidelines establish that slash, logging residue, or other results of management activities will not be obvious to the casual forest visitor one year following the activity in Retention areas, and two years following the activities in Partial Retention areas. Although the Forest intends to clean up the slash as soon as possible, especially within scenic corridors, this project will employ prescribed burning to reduce natural fuels and fuels created by timber harvest activities. Prescribed burning is considered an important management tool in this fire-adapted ecosystem, but effects from burning (blackened, scorched vegetation and tree trunks) may be visible for approximately 5 years. This exceeds the standard for the amount of time management actions can be visible, within both retention and partial retention allocations. It is recommended that these Standards and Guidelines be amended to allow visible effects of harvest cleanup and fuels reduction for approximately 5 years.

M9-10, M-29: Openings in Ponderosa Pine Foreground and Mixed-Conifer Foreground

The intent of management actions in this area is to remove dead trees to reduce fuels, restore large ponderosa pine to the landscape, and, where possible, to mimic the shape of natural-occurring openings on the landscape. However, levels of existing mortality may result in openings that exceed 5 acres, the maximum standard for this allocation. It is recommended that these two Standards and Guidelines be amended to allow openings to remove dead trees, up to a maximum of 40 acres, within the retention allocation to remove dead and dying trees, and to allow for openings may not necessarily be "naturally appearing" (See footnote 1).

M9-34: Timber - Mixed Conifer Middleground and Background

The objective of this Standard and Guideline is for openings from timber management to appear generally natural, and for vegetation to provide visual diversity. It is recommended that this Standard and Guideline be amended to accept that not all openings may appear natural (though the objective would be to follow the irregular edges of mortality patches, when possible), and that visual diversity may be reduced when concentrated patches of dead trees are removed and only small groups and individual green trees remain in these patches. Openings will be reforested, as needed, if insufficient natural reproduction exists. It is recommended that this Standard and Guideline be amended to allow openings to be visible for approximately 7 to 10 years, the estimated time it would take for seedlings in these openings would reach 4 1/2 feet (See footnote 2), depending on the site conditions.

M9-90: Fire Management

This Standard and Guideline restricts the size of prescribed fire to 5-acre patches in foreground areas. Prescribed burning is considered an important management tool in this fire-adapted ecosystem, and it is proposed that burning occur at a landscape-scale to most effectively reduce surface fuels and promote fire-climax conditions. However, effects from burning (blackened, scorched vegetation and tree trunks) may be visible in the short-term. It is recommended that this Standard and Guideline be amended to allow prescribed burning on larger than 5-acre patches.

I find that the revised Visual Quality standards and guidelines will not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Deschutes National Forest LRMP Environmental Impact Statement (36 CFR 219.10(f)), based on the following factors:

Timing: The effects of the revised Visual Quality standards and guidelines for implementing the McCache Vegetation Management project are predicted to occur in the short-term (approximately 5 years) for prescribed burning and post-harvest activities. Created openings from removing dead and dying trees would be visible for longer periods (10 to 15 years) but are expected to appear forested more quickly than if they were not treated (where needed, openings would be reforested).

Location and Size: The proposed revised Visual Quality standards and guidelines would only affect approximately 115 acres within the McCache project area.

Goals, Objectives and Outputs: The proposed revised Visual Quality standards and guidelines would not alter the long-term relationship between levels of goods and services projected by the LRMP. There would not be any significant change in timber outputs over what might be available if the project was designed without the proposed amendment.

Management Prescriptions: The proposed revised Visual Quality standards and guidelines would not change the desired future condition for land and resources from that contemplated by the existing management direction in the LRMP in the short-term. It would not affect the whole LRMP planning area, but only approximately 115 acres within the McCache project area. The proposed amendment would not change the LRMP allocations or management areas.

Other Findings

Actions in the selected alternative are consistent with the management direction, standards, and guidelines in the Deschutes LRMP as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan, and as amended with this decision regarding Visual Quality Standards and Guidelines within this project area. The selected Alternative is also consistent with recommendations in the Cache Late Successional Reserve Assessment, and Metolius and Why-chus Watershed Analyses.

All manipulation of vegetation will comply with the requirements of 36 CFR 219.27 (b). The harvest and post-harvest vegetation management activities are consistent with the strategy of prevention in accordance with the Pacific Northwest Region's Vegetation Management EIS (1988) and the mediated agreement (1989) (EA, pg. II-16). Where applicable, the vegetation management treatments will be consistent with direction found in the ROD/FEIS for managing Pacific yew.

This project is also consistent with Executive Order 13186 (responsibilities of federal agencies to protect migratory birds).

Implementation Date

This project will not be implemented sooner than 5 business days following the close of the appeal filing period established in the notice of decision in The Bulletin. If an appeal is filed, implementation will not begin sooner than 15 calendar days following a final decision on the appeal. Implementation means

actually doing the ground-disturbing actions described in this notice. Field preparation work may proceed (e.g. marking, layout, or contract preparation).

Administrative Review

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14 and must include the reasons for the appeal. A written notice of appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in The Bulletin (Bend, Oregon). File notice of appeal with:

Regional Forester/USDA Forest Service
PO Box 3623
Portland OR 97208
Attention: 1570 Appeals

For information contact: Kris Martinson, Sisters Ranger District, P.O. Box 249, Sisters, OR 97759, (541) 549-7730, kmartinson@fs.fed.us.

Responsible Official: Rebecca Heath, for 10/18/01
Leslie Weldon Date
Forest Supervisor
US Department of Agriculture
Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests
P.O. Box 6010
Bend, OR 97708-6010

Footnotes

1. It is assumed that current openings created in higher mortality stands are already visible to the "casual observer".
 2. 4 1/2 feet is the tree height at which "openings" are considered returned to a forested condition, Regional Guide, Pacific Northwest Region, 1984.
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[Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests Website](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/manageinfo/nepa/documents/sisters/mccache/mccachedn.html)

<http://www.fs.fed.us/centraloregon/manageinfo/nepa/documents/sisters/mccache/mccachedn.html>

Last Update: 10/25/01

R.A. Jensen