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Decision Notice & Finding of No Significant Impact

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ENCHANTED VALLEY STREAM RESTORATION
AND MEADOW MANAGEMENT PROJECT
Lane County, Oregon

USDA Forest Service
Siuslaw National Forest
Mapleton Ranger District

I. Introduction

Enchanted Valley is a special place. The Forest Service is privileged that the valley is in public ownership, with management responsibilities vested with us. The valley has a long history as a homestead farm operation, only recently returning to public ownership at a time when federal land management policies were undergoing radical change. Things are not as they were - not even as recently as 1990, certainly not 1950, 1900, or 1850. The Forest Service has proposed to make changes to Enchanted Valley in the belief that conditions there can and must be improved. We have strived to consider this proposal in the spirit of democratic process, and I now share our decision.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Enchanted Valley Stream Restoration and Meadow Management Project has been prepared and is available for public review in Siuslaw National Forest offices in Corvallis and Florence, Oregon. The project area is located within the Mercer Lake watershed in an area known as Enchanted Valley, T. 17 S., R. 11 W., Sections 19 & 30.

II. Decision

I have reviewed the Enchanted Valley Stream Restoration and Meadow Management Project EA, and it is my decision to select Alternative E - No Grazing Alternative for implementation.

Alternative E will use two different stream restoration techniques to improve coho salmon habitat. The upper 1.0 miles of stream channel adjacent to the meadow will be encouraged to return to natural conditions over time by removing 1/2 mile of 2 to 3 foot high dikes, adding large woody debris structures to the stream channel, and

planting riparian vegetation. A 400 foot section of severely eroding streambank near the upper end of the meadow will also be sloped back to improve bank stability.

The lower 0.5 miles of stream will be rechannneled to directly restore stream conditions and improve wetland habitat. Bailey Creek will be rerouted into about 4,200 feet of new channel created through the meadow with appropriate meanders and stable channel characteristics. To reduce the potential for sedimentation, the newly excavated stream channel will be left to vegetate for a year before water is diverted into it. The excavated channel will also end in a willow thicket 300 feet above the lake so that water will filter through dense vegetation before it reaches Mercer Lake. Woody debris structures will be placed throughout the channel. Alder, willow, cedar, and spruce seedlings will be planted along the new channel to provide future shade, bank stability, and sources of large woody debris. A footbridge will be constructed across the new channel to maintain recreation access. The existing Bailey Creek channel and the small drainage to the west will be blocked to form a series of off channel ponds.

Alternative E will also manage approximately 47 acres of the highest quality existing meadow areas to maintain healthy grass/forb vegetation to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. Treatment methods will be limited to manual or mechanical methods such as mowing and/or burning. Disking or harrowing may be used occasionally in selected areas to reclaim meadow patches in the event noxious weeds become severe. Three acres of upper meadow will be planted to create wildlife screens and increase habitat diversity.

Activities prescribed under Alternative E are designed to be consistent with the Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (USDA, USDI, 1994). Additional documents which provide guidance include the Mercer/Berry Watershed Analysis (Andrus et al., 1996) and the Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Assessment for the Southern Coast Range Province (USDA Forest Service et al., 1997).

III. Reasons for the Decision

I am selecting Alternative E because it restores degraded habitat conditions in Bailey Creek along the full length of the meadow while maintaining quality grass/forb vegetation in a substantial portion of the existing meadow. This best meets objectives identified as the purpose and need for the project.

This alternative uses two different approaches to stream restoration. The upper two-thirds of the channel will be encouraged to reestablish a more natural channel over time by removing dikes, adding large woody debris structures, and planting riparian vegetation. Improvements will be focused within the existing channel. This is a typical approach to stream restoration which has been used in the Northwest for many years. These techniques will improve fisheries habitat, but it is uncertain whether restoration efforts in the upper reach will be sufficient to fully restore a functional stream channel or how long the process is likely to take.

The lower one-third of Bailey Creek will be restored directly by excavating a new stream channel with natural meanders and stable

hydrologic characteristics. I have personally seen this technique used successfully in Colorado and I'm aware of numerous other sites where it has been used. I am convinced it is the quickest, most reliable, and least impactful method to restore functional stream habitat at this site. Fisheries biologists and hydrologists on my staff support this conclusion.

Because stream channel reconstruction has not yet been used in western Oregon, the technique entails some risk in terms of short-term sedimentation and elevated water temperatures in the new channel. Alternative E recognizes and minimizes these risks by a number of design features. I am also limiting the amount of new channel excavation which will be completed at this time in recognition of these risks. Using two different approaches to stream restoration in the upper and lower stream reaches will allow us to approach this project conservatively and deliberately, monitor the results, and adjust the methods if necessary to achieve the desired outcome. Using two different approaches will also allow the project to serve as a valuable demonstration project for other possible stream restoration projects where similar conditions exist.

Alternative E offers the most feasible location for the new stream channel. Extending the channel above the crossroad takes better advantage of topography by utilizing the area that already floods during extreme high water periods. Moving the stream crossing into the center of the valley and away from the beginning of the new channel provides a more stable crossing for a low water ford. The channel location in Alternative E also minimizes additional channel excavation which would be needed if the upper portion of stream were to be rechanneled at some point in the future.

Restoring Bailey Creek will be costly. Channel excavation, bank pullback, large woody debris structures, and riparian planting will cost about $160,000 over a several year period. The project intends to produce between 100 - 500 additional adult coho salmon per year which will more than double the potential production of coho from the Bailey Creek system. Because of the severely depressed condition of coho salmon along the Oregon Coast, the watershed's function as a refuge for relatively healthy populations, and the great potential to improve coho habitat within the lower 1.5 miles, I place a high value on restoring anadromous fish habitat in Bailey Creek.

Finally, I am selecting Alternative E because it provides an optimal balance between potential fish opportunities and existing wildlife opportunities. This alternative maintains a substantial portion of the highest quality grass/forb vegetation within the existing meadow areas for elk forage, among other uses. The majority of the existing meadow areas which would be ``lost'' due to stream restoration activities are low quality areas currently dominated by reed-canary grass. Some additional meadow areas will gradually be lost as riparian vegetation grows up.

Limiting vegetation management within meadow areas to manual and mechanical methods such as mowing and burning will be more expensive than if controlled livestock grazing were allowed, but it will make continued vegetation management more socially acceptable. Eliminating grazing as a management tool also removes the additional risks and uncertainties which may be associated with grazing. Given that Enchanted Valley is in a Riparian Reserve within a

Key Watershed where the priority is for aquatic restoration, the additional risks are inappropriate when other means of managing vegetation are available.

During the EA comment period, several groups suggested creating additional meadows within Enchanted Valley to replace elk forage lost due to stream restoration activities. Some potential areas may be available, but options for creating new meadows within the watershed are severely limited by Riparian Reserve and Late-Successional Reserve land use designations. One possible site northwest of the meadow would likely require a small timber sale to remove alder and is outside the scope of this EA and decision. The amount of meadow vegetation which will eventually be lost due to stream restoration activities, the length of time it will take, and future use of riparian areas by elk are all highly speculative. I am deferring any action to create additional meadows in and near Enchanted Valley at this time. If declines in the elk population make additional meadow habitat advisable, that determination will occur in the future.

Enchanted Valley offers unique recreational opportunities, and Alternative E will maintain and improve existing opportunities by retaining a large portion of the existing meadow, improving wetland habitat in the lower portion of the valley, adding habitat diversity in the upper meadow, and creating a functional riparian area along Bailey Creek. Placing a footbridge over the new stream channel will maintain pedestrian, bicycle, and horse access into the upper meadow areas.

I am keenly aware of the controversy which has surrounded the proposed project for the past several years. Many of the disagreements involve two major issues which deserve more discussion.

The first issue is the perception of how well the existing stream channel is currently functioning as fish habitat. In my view, the entire lower 1.5 miles of Bailey Creek adjacent to the meadow is heavily degraded and is functioning far below it's potential for fish habitat. Historical aerial photographs provide incontrovertible evidence that the original stream channel has been diverted and channelized. Professional hydrologists and fisheries biologists who are familiar with the site agree with this conclusion.

The historical photographs and similar, less disturbed streams such as Lietel Creek indicate what Bailey Creek looked like under more natural conditions. Much of the complex, marshy, low gradient habitat (critical to high quality rearing habitat for young coho salmon) was lost when the stream channel was diverted. Draining wet areas and creating dry workable pasture was the primary objective for the diversions, as is evident on many low elevation farmlands near the coast.

The existing Bailey Creek channel is much straighter than it was historically and is narrower and deeper. High water velocities during storms and lack of cover offer little refuge for fish. The shifting sand bottom caused by excessive bank erosion limits the number of food insects available. The most serious problem is that the existing channel is now entrenched 5 to 6 feet below the old meadow floodplain. The stream rarely flows out onto its floodplain. Without a functioning floodplain the stream is now disconnected from an

essential component of a healthy system and operates more like a culvert than a natural stream. It is unrealistic to expect Bailey Creek to rebuild the complex habitat and marshy backwater sloughs that are indicative of high quality coho rearing habitat if the stream cannot flow up and out of the existing channel.

Although the stream channel may, at first glance, appear to be relatively stable, close inspections over the last several years have documented extensive cracking and sloughing of streambanks throughout most of the project area and rapid loss of streambanks at specific sites. Again, each of the hydrologists and fisheries biologists I have consulted are convinced that, without intervention, the excessive streambank erosion will continue for decades until the stream has recreated a more natural meander pattern and floodplain. High winter flows have great power and are unrelenting in their efforts to change the configuration of the ditch that Bailey Creek has been confined in.

I recognize that predation by largemouth bass and other warmwater fish in Mercer Lake may reduce the number of coho produced by stream restoration activities. This is not a large concern because, in spite of the presence of bass in Mercer Lake, survival of juvenile coho appears to be higher than in most other stream systems. In recent years, adult coho escapements in Bailey Creek have been at least ten times greater than in adjacent river systems without lakes, such as the Siuslaw River.

Stream restoration activities in Bailey Creek are also designed to reduce predation of juvenile coho. By creating additional high quality summer rearing habitat above the lake, more fry will be able to remain in the stream, out of reach of the bass when bass are most active. Juvenile coho will likely migrate down into the lake to overwinter, but cooler water temperatures make bass more sluggish and less effective predators during this period. Many juvenile coho will migrate to the ocean in early spring, before bass again become fully active.

The second issue which merits further discussion is the conflict between past agreements and current management direction and priorities. In 1991, when Enchanted Valley was acquired by the Forest Service with the help of ODFW, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Siuslaw Rod and Gun Club, the intent was to manage the land to meet a variety of fish, wildlife, and recreation needs with an emphasis on elk. I am aware that many individuals would like to see Enchanted Valley continue to provide for an abundant elk herd as it has for the past seven years, but circumstances have changed.

Recent developments such as the Northwest Forest Plan, the proposal to list the coho under the Endangered Species Act, and the Governor's Salmon and Watershed Restoration Initiative force me to reexamine our priorities. We intend to continue to manage Enchanted Valley for its variety of outstanding fish, wildlife, and recreation values, but our broad Forest Plan direction, our obligations under ESA, and our participation in the Oregon Plan require us to place restoration of coho habitat above other values at this time. The priority on elk will be reduced, but not eliminated.

Leaving things as they are or trying to restore Bailey Creek with minor changes to existing practices will simply not be sufficient to

recover anadromous fish stocks. Restoration opportunities of this consequence and magnitude are rare. We must utilize them where they exist.

Although the Enchanted Valley project has been an issue often framed as ``coho vs. elk, win/lose'', I believe this is a false and misleading perspective. Enchanted Valley has the potential to provide quality habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife, including elk. Although the number of elk using the valley may diminish over time, I am firmly convinced that large numbers of elk will continue to use the valley. Restoring a natural stream channel, improving wetland habitat, and managing the remaining meadows to maintain high quality grass/forb vegetation will benefit fish and wildlife in a balanced way.

IV. Alternatives Considered but Not Selected

The Environmental Assessment for this project considered nine key issues which were raised by individuals, groups, and organizations during public meetings and scoping. Major issues revolved around the appropriate level and method of stream improvement, potential reductions in elk forage, water quality concerns in Mercer Lake, cost effectiveness, and impacts on existing recreational use in the valley.

Alternatives to the original proposed action were developed to address the key issues in different ways. The Environmental Assessment contains a detailed discussion of the effects of each alternative on the key issues.

Before selecting Alternative E, I considered 13 other alternatives.

Seven alternatives were considered but dropped from detailed analysis because they were not consistent with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, were not feasible, were not within the management authority of the USDA Forest Service, or were not necessary at this time. These alternatives included

· Maintain Current Meadow and Stream Conditions
· Plug the Existing Channel near the Upper End of the Meadow
· Restore the Upper Stream Only
· Change Land Allocation from LSR to a special Enchanted Valley Management Area
· Create Additional Meadows In The Future
· Plant Entire Meadow Back to Conifer
· Remove Largemouth Bass From Mercer and Sutton Lakes

Six other alternatives were considered in detail. These included

Alternative A - No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, no stream restoration or vegetation management activities would occur in the Enchanted Valley area. Bailey Creek would be left to reestablish a functioning stream channel and quality fish habitat naturally over time. The existing meadows would be allowed to follow natural vegetative succession.

Alternative A was not selected because it would not our meet management direction under the Northwest Forest Plan to restore degraded aquatic habitats. The No Action Alternative would also forego the best single opportunity on the Forest to assist in recovery of the Oregon Coast Coho.

Adopting Alternative A would also preclude opportunities to maintain the existing Enchanted Valley meadows. The substantial wildlife and

recreation benefits which the valley currently provides would be lost.

Alternative B - Original Proposed Action

Under the Original Proposed Action, stream restoration activities would be identical to Alternative E except the new excavated stream channel would begin lower in the valley, below the valley cross road, and would be somewhat shorter. Approximately 3,600 feet of new stream channel would be excavated.

Because the channel reconstruction would begin lower in the valley, more dikes would be removed along the upper two thirds of the meadow to allow flood waters to flow out onto the floodplain. Approximately 2,100 feet of 2 to 3 foot high dike would be removed.

Slightly less of the existing meadow area would be planted with a combination of alder, willow, cedar, and spruce seedlings to provide shade, improve bank stability, and provide future sources of large woody debris. Up to 25 acres would be planted.

Meadow management activities would be similar to Alternative E except vegetation would be actively managed through a combination of controlled grazing, mowing, and burning. The managed meadow area would also be slightly larger.

Approximately 27 acres within the existing fence lines in the central and upper portion of the meadow would be grazed by livestock to maintain short grass/forb vegetation and reduce encroachment by noxious weeds. Up to 50 head of livestock would be used between the months of May and September.

Approximately 24 acres of existing meadow habitat outside of the existing fence lines would be mowed and/or burned once or twice per year to maintain grass/forb vegetation and limit encroachment by noxious weeds.

Alternative B (original Proposed Action) was not selected because Alternative E offers a more feasible location for the new stream channel. Extending the channel above the cross road under Alternative E takes better advantage of topography by utilizing the area that already floods during extreme high water periods. Moving the stream crossing into the center of the valley and away from the beginning of the new channel provides a more stable crossing for the low water ford. The channel location in Alternative E also minimizes additional channel excavation which would be needed if the upper portion of stream was rechanneled at some point in the future.

Although the analysis in the EA suggests that controlled livestock grazing as a management tool would have little or no adverse impact on aquatic habitat or water quality in Bailey Creek, the practice would create additional risks and uncertainties. Given that the meadow is in a Riparian Reserve within a Key Watershed where the priority is for aquatic restoration, the additional risks are inappropriate when other means of managing vegetation are available.

Numerous public comments also indicate that grazing cattle within Enchanted Valley is socially unacceptable, regardless of the impacts. Fences and cattle in the valley promote a sense of private ownership and agricultural use which are inappropriate on public land prized for its recreation, fish, and wildlife values.

Alternative C - Light Touch

Under the Light Touch Alternative, the entire 1.5 miles of stream channel adjacent to the meadow would be encouraged to return to natural conditions over time by removing dikes, adding large woody debris structures, and planting riparian vegetation. Restoration activities would focus on improving habitat conditions within the existing channel. No new stream channels would be excavated.

Dikes along Bailey Creek would be removed along the full length of the meadow to allow flood waters to flow out onto the floodplain. Approximately 5,400 feet of dike would be removed.

Riparian vegetation would be planted along the full length of Bailey Creek, but plantings would focus on upper Bailey Creek above the old homestead. The minimal distance between the stream and the access road in the lower valley would preclude effective riparian planting in this area. Only 16 acres would be planted.

Meadow management would be identical to Alternative E except the total size of managed meadow areas would be somewhat larger, approximately 60 acres.

Alternative C was not selected because the relatively minor corrective actions in this alternative would be unlikely to create significant improvements in fish habitat conditions within the foreseeable future. In spite of dike removal and placement of instream structures, the straightened, deeply incised channel would continue to confine the stream channel. The streambanks would continue to erode. Fish habitat and food production would continue to be limited by the shifting sand bottom. Substantial improvements in stream function and fish habitat would not occur until the channel erodes enough to recreate a natural meander pattern and floodplain. This process would take decades or centuries.

Because Alternative C would do little to reduce the amount of soil which would be eroded or the ability of the channel to transport the material, over the long-term this alternative would deposit far more sediment in Mercer Lake than any other alternative except No Action.

Alternative D - Replacement Meadows

This alternative would be identical to the Original Proposed Action (Alternative B) except 30 acres of matrix land in the adjacent Berry Creek watershed would be converted to new meadows to replace existing meadow which would be lost through stream restoration activities in Enchanted Valley.

Alternative D was not selected because the areas identified for replacement meadows would be too far away to provide much, if any, benefit to elk currently using Enchanted Valley. The new replacement meadows would be 2 to 4 miles from the valley. During the comment period, several experts stated that the new meadows might benefit big game as a whole, but they would be too far away to be used extensively by the Enchanted Valley herds.

Because the areas identified for the new meadows are on matrix lands, no changes in management direction are necessary to implement this portion of the project. It would be relatively easy to revisit the idea and create the additional meadows in the future if the need arises.

The stream channel location in Alternative D would have the same drawbacks as described under Alternative B (Original Proposed Action).

Alternative F - Restore Lower Stream Only

This alternative would rechannel the lower one-third of Bailey Creek as described in the Original Proposed Action (Alternative B). Stream restoration activities in the upper valley above the cross road would be limited to planting occasional willows along Bailey Creek to promote bank stability. No dike removal, instream structure placements, or stream rechanneling would occur in the upper section at this time.

Meadow management activities would be identical to the original Proposed Action (Alternative B) except the total managed area would be 12 acres larger.

Alternative F was not selected because it would prioritize maintenance of meadow habitat in the upper valley above the need for healthy aquatic habitat. This is simply inappropriate in a Riparian Reserve within a Key Watershed. Foregoing stream restoration in the upper two-thirds of the project area when we have the opportunity to do so would fall far short of our direction under the Northwest Forest Plan.

Continuing extensive streambank erosion from the untreated upper two-thirds of the channel would deposit large amounts of sediment in the reconstructed stream section in the lower one-third of the meadow. This would likely reduce benefits of stream improvements in the lower portion.

The stream restoration activities in the lower one-third of the meadow would have the same drawbacks as described under Alternative B (Original Proposed Action).

Alternative G - Full Stream Restoration

Under the Full Stream Restoration Alternative, Bailey Creek would be rechanneled from near the top of the meadow all the way to mouth to reestablish natural meander patterns, habitat characteristics, and floodplain interaction. The new stream channel would be more than twice as long as under Alternative E, approximately 8,900 feet.

Up to 33 acres of meadow along the newly constructed channel would be planted with riparian vegetation.

Meadow management would be similar to Alternative E except the managed area would be smaller and would have more irregular shapes. Approximately 36 acres of existing meadow habitat which is outside of riparian buffer areas would be mowed once or twice per year to maintain healthy grass/forb vegetation and control noxious weeds.

Up to 60 acres of matrix land in the adjacent Berry Creek watershed would be converted into new meadows to replace lost forage areas in Enchanted Valley.

Alternative G was not selected because the high cost, the potential short-term impacts due to increased sedimentation and elevated stream temperatures, and the somewhat experimental nature of channel reconstruction at this site present significant obstacles and risks. It is more prudent to approach this project deliberately, to try

different restoration techniques, monitor the results, and be able to adjust the methods to achieve the desired outcome.

V. Scoping and Public Involvement

An initial public meeting was held in December 1996 to discuss potential stream restoration projects in Enchanted Valley and gather comments.

During July/August 1997, a public working group was established to further discuss management issues in Enchanted Valley and to find consensus points. Five public meetings were held with an average attendance of 30 people. These meetings resulted in consensus from the working group on eleven basic ideas for improving the condition of Bailey Creek.

The working group was not able to reach consensus on management of the upper meadow area; the group was split between those who wanted to actively manage for grass/forb vegetation and those who wanted the meadow left to develop naturally. Cattle grazing as a management tool was also an issue of disagreement among the group.

Scoping letters describing a Proposed Action were sent to 102 individuals and groups on January 12, 1998. Legal Notices were published in both the Florence Siuslaw News and Corvallis Gazette Times on January 7, and January 9, 1998, respectively. Fourteen written comments were received.

On March 25, 1998 Legal Notices were published in the Corvallis Gazette Times and the Florence Siuslaw News initiating a 30 day public comment period on the EA. A public meeting was held in Florence on March 26, 1998. It was attended by approximately 85 people. An article in the Siuslaw News on April 1, 1998 reported on the public meeting and described the proposed project.

Eight written comments and a petition with 390 signatures were received during the comment period. The petition encouraged the Forest Service to continue to manage Enchanted Valley primarily for elk and to avoid pitting elk against coho. Responses to the written comments are included as an Appendix of the Environmental Assessment.

VI. Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

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

A. Context

This action is very small in terms of society as a whole. Project activities have been viewed and approved in a Regional context through the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest related species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. This action affects only a small portion of the Forest which, in turn, is a very small portion of the Region.

The site-specific activities that are authorized and guided by this

decision are limited in scope. Some minor adverse impacts are expected. Those impacts are expected to be short-term. No significant adverse long-term effects are expected.

B. Intensity

1. This project will have both beneficial and adverse effects. Reductions in elk forage and short-term increases in sediment production and water temperatures may be considered adverse affects. However, I have considered the benefits that the system will receive from restoration of stream and wetland conditions and find that the overall beneficial effects to the ecosystem far outweigh any adverse effects. Further, I find that when considered alone, the adverse effects of the project are not significant.

2. No significant adverse effect to public health or safety have been identified.

3. The characteristics of the geographic area do not make it uniquely sensitive to the effects of project activities. Past actions of similar intensity in other areas have not indicated any significant adverse impacts.

4. There are no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, fish, or wildlife resources or other components of the human environment anticipated from implementing project activities. The analysis of cumulative effects considered past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions on National Forest Lands as well as for other ownerships within the affected watershed.

Restoration of historic stream channel and wetlands condition and function will benefit water, fish and wildlife resources. Creation of a stable stream channel will result in large decreases in overall long-term bank erosion and sediment production from the Bailey Creek system. Moving the system back towards natural conditions may reduce elk forage within Enchanted Valley, but reductions would be insignificant at a regional scale.

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5. Two recent cultural sites exist within in the area. Based on two field investigations and a record search of the project area, neither of these sites would be impacted by the proposed project. There are no known native sites within the project area.

If an archaeological site is discovered during implementation of the project, work will be stopped until the site is evaluated or the project has been altered to avoid the site.

6. Based on the Biological Evaluation for Terrestrial Species and the Biological Evaluation for Aquatic Species, the following effects on proposed, threatened, and endangered species are not found to be significant:

No Effect: Due to lack of habitat or species in the project area - California brown pelican, Aleutian Canada goose, western snowy plover, Oregon silverspot butterfly, western lily, Nelson's checkermallow, Umpqua cutthroat trout.

May Effect, but Not Likely to Adversely Affect: Due to disturbance - northern spotted owl, northern bald eagle, and marbled murrelet. Due to habitat modification - designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl, and reduced hunting habitat for the peregrine falcon.

May Affect and Likely to Adversely Affect: Due to habitat modification - northern spotted owl.

7. The project is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The project will meet or exceed State water quality standards and is consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Act.

8. This project is somewhat controversial because it pits new forest management direction and priorities against prior agreements, expectations, and the desire to maintain the status quo. Active participation at public meetings, numerous letters to the editor in the Siuslaw News, and the petition opposing the stream restoration are all evidence of strong public interest in this project.

Opposition to the proposed project is predominately from the local area and mostly from individuals who were actively involved in helping the Forest Service acquire the Enchanted Valley parcel in 1991. Many of these individuals are strongly invested in maintaining Enchanted Valley as an elk forage area and feel betrayed by recent changes in management direction which now place the emphasis on restoring anadromous fish habitat. A few vocal opponents have been successful at generating interest by framing the project in terms of elk or fish. This is a misrepresentation because the selected alternative provides for both fish and elk as well as other wildlife.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are individuals and groups that would like the Forest Service to be more aggressive in restoring stream conditions in Bailey Creek. Some of the conflicts are simply differences in objectives and priorities. Because recreating a stream channel is a relatively new and unfamiliar technique to most people in the area, there is a certain amount of suspicion and distrust.

9. The environmental effects of project activities are not uncertain or unknown. Planned activities are similar to those which have already occurred in Colorado, California, and eastern Oregon. Planned activities are expected to provide long-term benefits to aquatic resources, early-seral wildlife species, and recreation resources within the Bailey Creek watershed.

10. This action does not set a precedent for future actions. The project simply responds to direction within the Northwest Forest Plan to maintain and improve riparian areas and aquatic conditions. Restoring stream conditions by removing dikes, adding structure, excavating new channels and planting riparian vegetation will move the area toward the desired condition more rapidly.

VII. Other Disclosures

There will be no expected irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

Sufficient information has been disclosed in the EA to make a reasoned choice among alternatives.

The proposed action complies with the Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation (December, 1988) and the subsequent Mediated Agreement of May, 1989.

There will be no significant adverse impacts to wetlands, floodplains, prime farm land, range land, or forest land; minority groups, civil rights, women or consumers. The project will improve and expand

existing wetlands and floodplains.

VIII. Findings Required By Other Laws

This decision is consistent with requirements of the National Forest Management Act found in 36 CFR 219.27.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the effects determinations to Federally listed species as part of interagency streamlined Level I Team Section 7 consultation (April 22, 1998).

The proposed action is consistent with the National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion and Conference Opinion on Implementation of Land and Resource Management Plans (USFS) and Resource Management Plans (BLM) (March, 1997). The Oregon Salmon and Watershed Restoration Plan is in effect on the project area. Final decision on listing for the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon and Oregon Coast Steelhead have been deferred until the year 2000. Because there are no listed fish species within the project area at this time, further consultation is not required.

Based on analysis in the EA, I find this project to be consistent with the Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA, 1990) as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (1994). The project is also consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives as set forth in the Northwest Forest Plan.

IX. Implementation Date

Implementation of this project will occur following the close of the 45 day appeal period.

X. Administrative Review

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Written appeals must be sent to: Robert W. Williams, Regional Forester, ATTN: 1570 APPEALS, PO Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208-3623. Any written appeal must be postmarked or received by the Regional Forester within 45 days of the date of publication of the notice of this decision in the Corvallis Gazette-Times. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

XI. Contact Person

For further information regarding this project, contact Bob Metzger at the Siuslaw National Forest Supervisor's Office, PO Box 1148, Corvallis, OR 97339 or by phone at (541) 750-7055.

APPROVED BY:

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_____
JAMES R. FURNISH
Forest Supervisor

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Photo Point 1

September 15, 1999

Photo point 1

The upper end of the new channel. The straightened location of Bailey Creek is in the background against the trees. The new channel ends approximately 100 feet from the edge of the old channel. After the new channel has vegetation established on the banks, the two channels will be connected, and the old channel will be plugged.

May 12, 2000

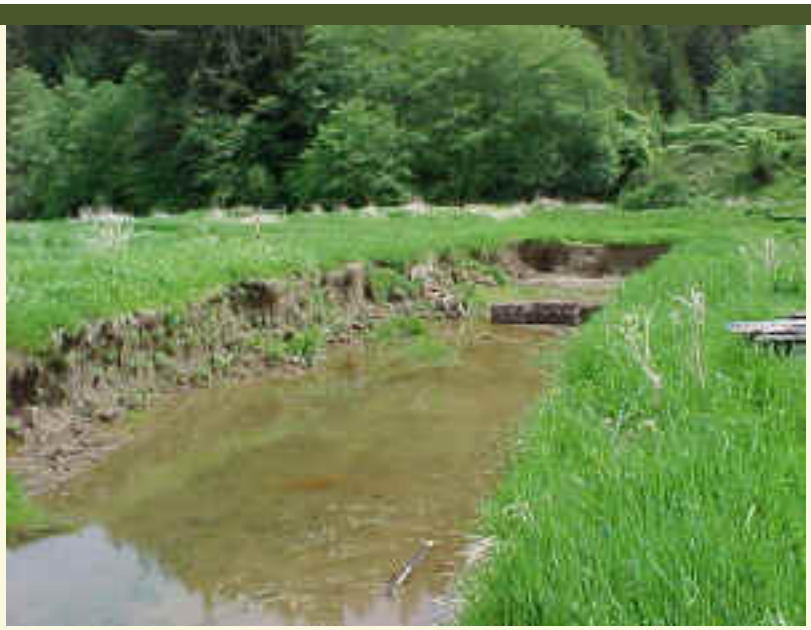

Photo Point 1

Looking at the upstream end of the new channel. The old, straightened channel is in the background against the trees. Note that the straw bale check dam failed. Some bank collapse took place upstream and to the left of the straw bale check dam. The bank collapse was caused by overland flow across the valley from the winter flows that overtopped the old channel. New willow cuttings are leafing out on the left bank downstream of the checkdam.

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USDA Forest Service, Siuslaw National Forest
Last modified Friday, September 05 2003

Siuslaw National Forest
4077 S.W. Research Way
P.O. Box 1148
Corvallis, Oregon 97339

(541) 750-7000
Fax: (541) 750-7234

TTY for hearing & speech impaired:
(Oregon Relay)

Photo Point 2

September 15, 1999

Photo point 2

Digging the new channel. The bucket on the excavator is 5 feet wide. The new channel is 20 feet wide, 5 feet deep in the pools at the outside of the meander bends, and 2 feet deep in the straight part of the channel between bends.

September 15, 1999

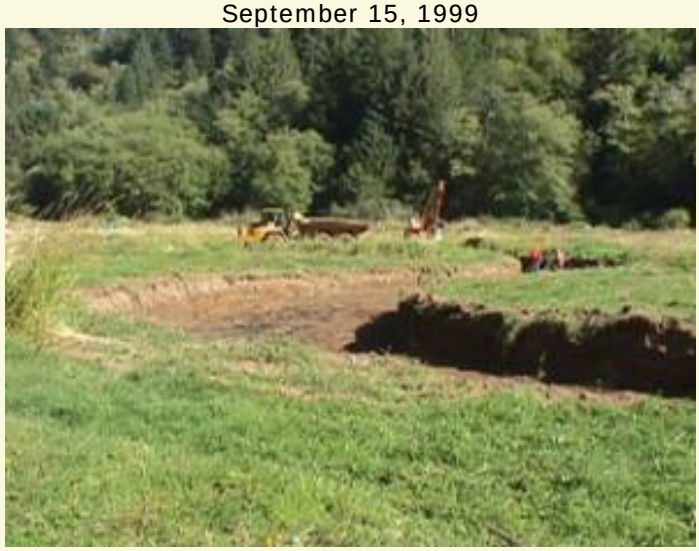

Photo point 2

Same area as the previous photo after more of the channel has been dug. Two meander bends have been completed.

May 12, 2000

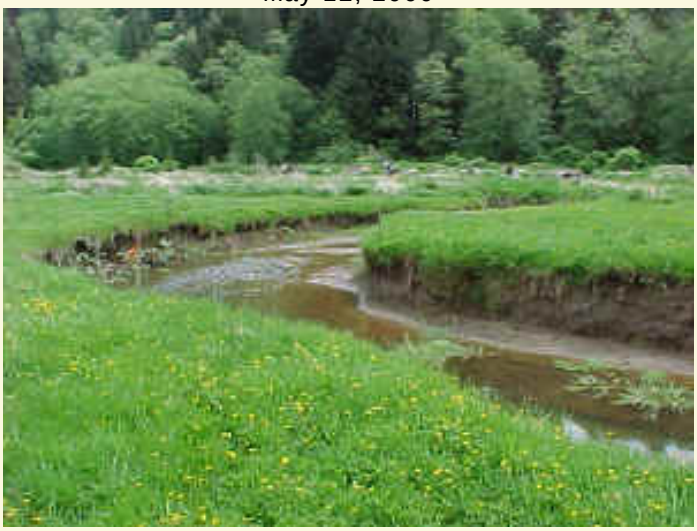

Photo point 2.

Willow cuttings are sprouting on the outside end.

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Photo Point 3

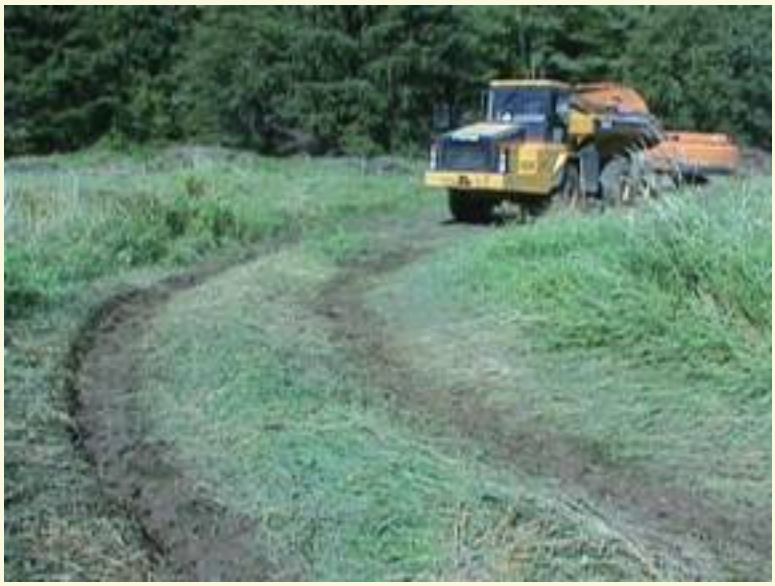

Photo point 3

As much as possible, the trucks used the future location of the new channel as a travel route to minimize disturbance to the vegetation on the valley floor.

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Photo Point 4

September 15, 1999

Photo point 4

The lower part of the channel downstream from this point is approximately half the size of the new channel upstream from here. The excavated dirt was spread across the valley floor. Minimal excavation was done in the lower part of the valley to eliminate the need for trucks. The lower end of the valley has wetter, softer ground for a longer part of the year.

September 15, 1999

Photo point 4

Another view of the new lower channel.

April 28, 2000

Photo point 4

Looking downstream at the transition from the 20-foot wide channel to the narrow channel through the lower valley.

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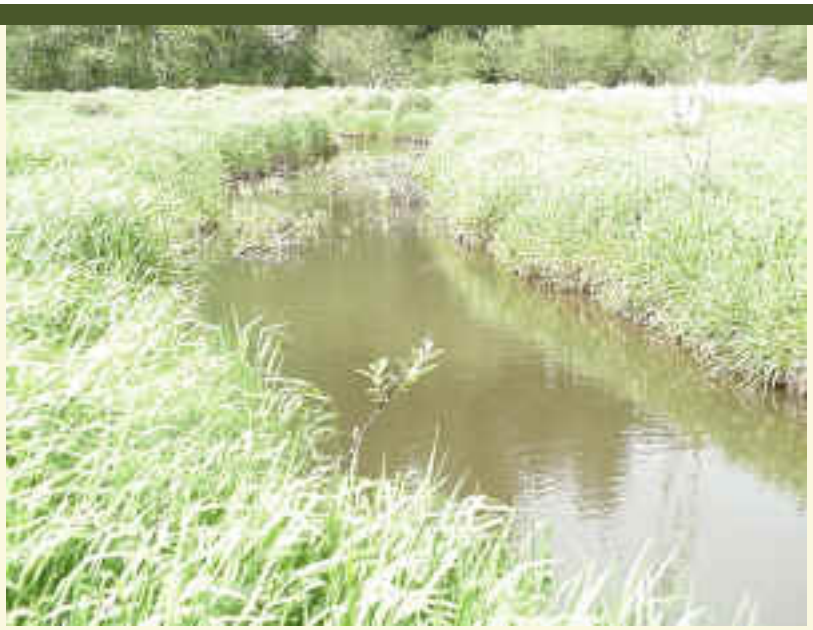
Photo Point 5

September 15, 1999

Photo point 5

The new channel ends at a large patch of willows. The willows will help to filter the water before it reaches Mercer Lake.

April 28, 2000



Lower end of valley just above the willow patch. Willow branches that floated down the channel are taking root in the channel. The banks are well vegetated with reed canary grass.

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Photo Point 6

Home : Projects & Plans : NEPA Projects Documentation : Enchanted Valley Stream Restoration Project : Photo Point 6

April 28, 2000

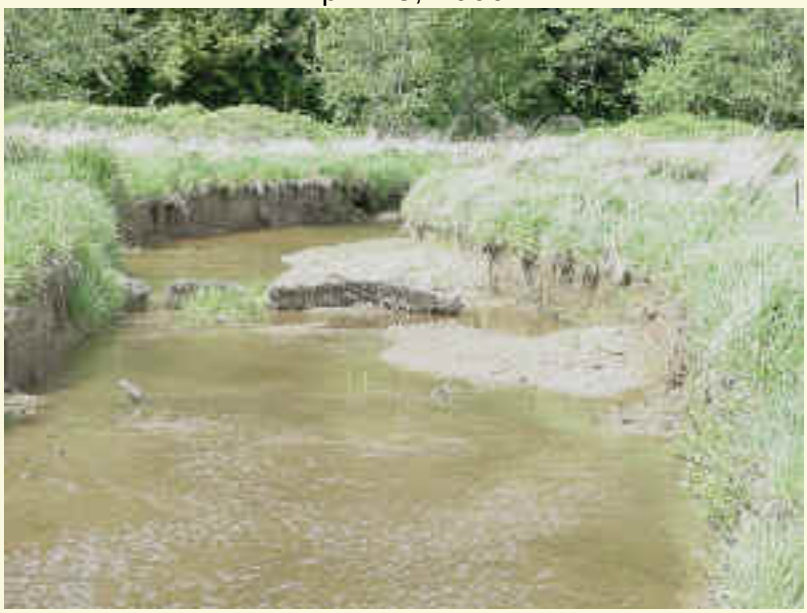

Photo point 6

A straw bale check dam that failed on either end has influenced sediment deposition in the channel. Looking downstream.

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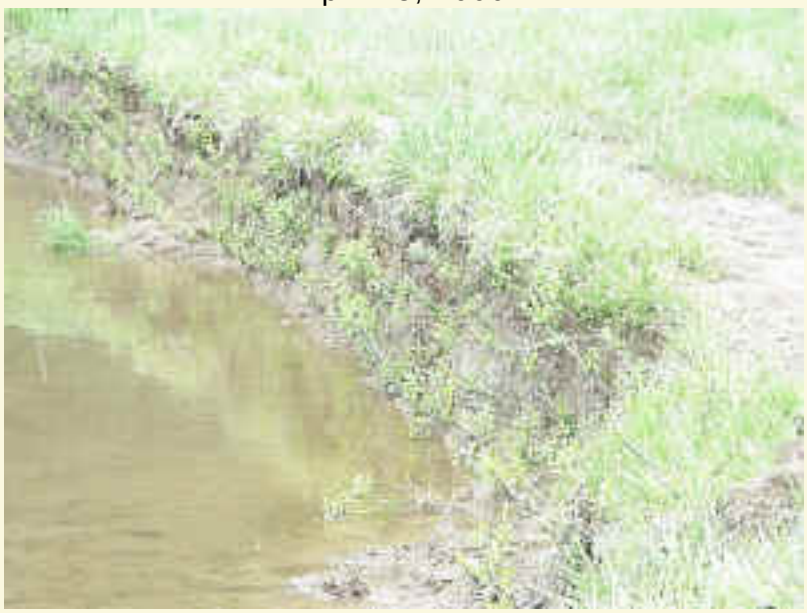
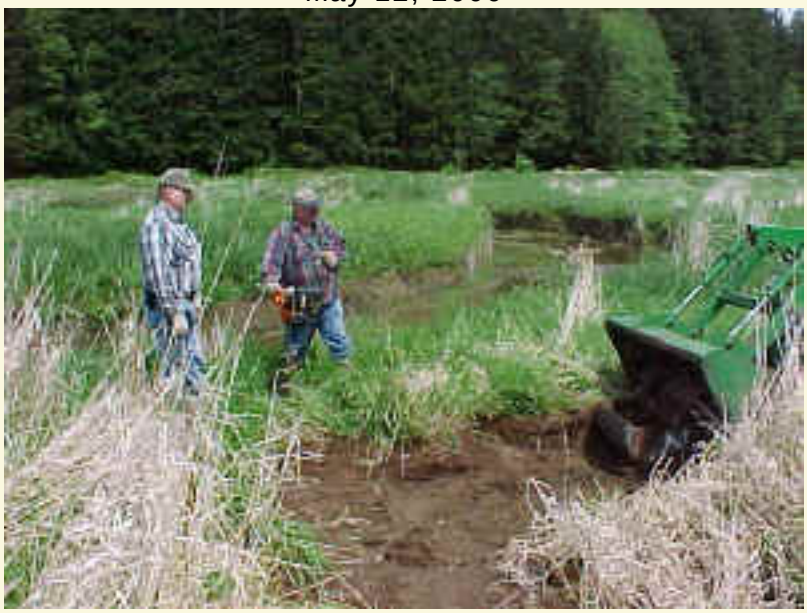
Planting Photos

April 28, 2000



Willow cuttings planted in early spring, 2000 are sprouting.

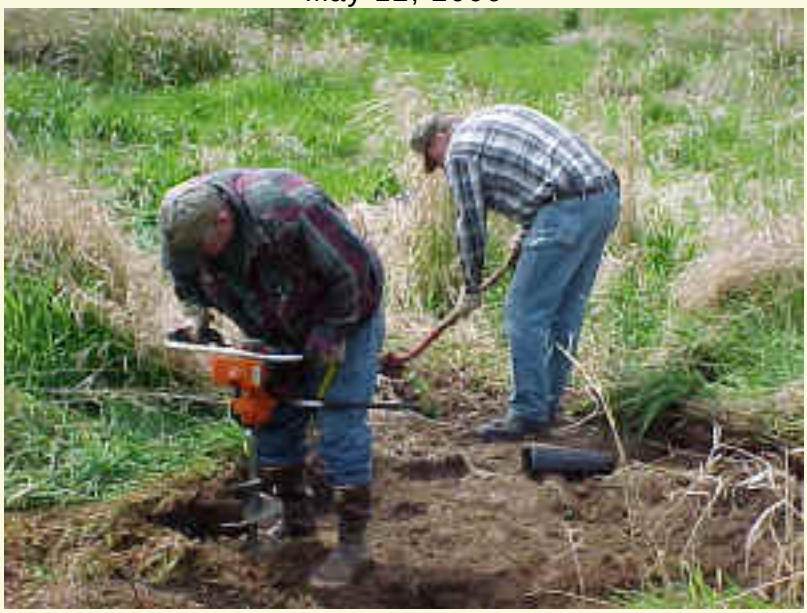
May 12, 2000



Using a small tractor with an attachment on the bucket to clear the

reed canary grass sod from a planting site, closer view. Note the new channel in the background.

May 12, 2000



Using a gas-powered auger to drill holes for planting. The holes were approximately 18" deep and 6" in diameter.

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