

## **Decision Memo**

### **Sugar Pine Seed Orchard Fence Project**

#### **Deschutes National Forest**

##### **Bend/Fort Rock Ranger District**

T.19S, R.12E, S 33; WM., Deschutes County, Oregon

### **Background**

Sugar pine and other 5 needle pine populations on the Deschutes, Winema, and Fremont National Forests have been severely impacted from white pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*), a non-native rust pathogen. Efforts are being made in part by the Region 6 Dorena Genetics Resources Center in screening and testing trees for natural levels of resistance and tolerance to the introduced disease. The Hazy seed orchard has been established with disease resistant sugar pine seedlings resulting from this testing. When mature, this orchard will help provide rust resistant seed to be used in reforestation and restoring sugar pine populations on the Deschutes, Winema, and Fremont National Forests.

This 4 acre seed orchard was established in a portion of LTM Hazy unit #35 located at the base of Klawhop Butte off the 9710 road and planted to native conifer species under the Fuzzy Environmental Analysis Decision Notice dated July 13, 2000. This area is located within General Forest (MA 8).

### **Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to construct an animal exclusion fence around the perimeter of the seed orchard to protect orchard trees from big game browse. The proposed fence will total 4.3 acres. The fence is expected to remain in place for 20 years or until the trees become well established. The fence will be constructed of no-climb wire fencing supported by steel "T" post and wooden posts. The fence will be approximately 8 feet in height. Soil disturbance will be limited to drilling or digging post holes for corner wooden posts and stretch panels. The "T" posts will be pounded into the ground. No leveling or blading of the fence line will be needed by heavy equipment. Some manzanita shrubs will be cleared or trimmed along the fence line.

Current levels of existing leave trees along the perimeter of the orchard would be maintained, and no trees will be removed.

## **Reasons for Categorical Exclusion**

I find the proposed action can be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement because there were no extraordinary circumstances identified by the interdisciplinary team (IDT) of professional resource specialists that analyzed this proposal (Project Files A to C) and it meets category 31.2 #5 (July 23, 2003), described in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15.

Category 31.2 #5 is for the regeneration of areas back to native trees. This category was established after extensive review of similar projects by the Forest Service which determined these types of projects do not have significant environmental effects when there are no extraordinary circumstances (Federal Register Volume 68, Number 145, pages 44,598-44,599).

- The project would have no impact on any proposed, endangered, threatened or sensitive (PETS) plant species because no PETS plants or their habitat were found within the project area (Project File A, Biological Evaluations). The project lies within a large zone uninhabited by sensitive plants.
- The project would not negatively affect any proposed, endangered, threatened or sensitive animal species. The project meets and is consistent with all applicable project design criteria listed in the 2003 to 2006 Joint Aquatic and Terrestrial Programmatic Biological Assessment for Federal Lands within the Deschutes Basin; therefore informal consultation is complete and no further consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is necessary (Project File A, Biological Evaluations).
- There is no designated or proposed critical habitat within the project area (Project Files A, B, C) and the proposed action would have no negative effects on any Species of Concern, Management Indicator Species or Landbirds (Project File A). There is no habitat for any NWFP Survey and Manage species such as mollusks within the project area. The bryophytes, lichens, and fungi added to the Forest's sensitive plant list in July 2004 do not have potential habitat within the project area.
- There are no congressional designated areas such as wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, national recreation areas, inventoried road less areas, areas with road less characteristics or research natural areas within or adjacent to the project area.
- There would be no effect on cultural sites, archaeological sites, historic properties or heritage resources. (Project File A).
- The project was assessed a low risk of noxious weed introductions or spread.
- There are no sensitive or steep soils greater than 30 percent within the project area.

## **Public Involvement and Scoping**

This project was included in the Central Oregon Schedule of Proposed Actions Fall 2005 publication. This quarterly publication is eagerly read by approximately 3,200 interested individuals and groups. No responses were received. This project was reviewed by an

interdisciplinary team (IDT) of professional resource specialists that analyzed this proposal (Project Files A to C).

### **Findings of Consistency**

I have determined that the proposed action is consistent with the standards and guidelines of the Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan and as provided by the provisions of 36 CFR 219.35(f) (2005), which address Management Indicator Species.

### **Decision and Rationale**

It is my decision to proceed with this project because it will result in a future supply of rust resistant sugar pine seed to be used for restoring sugar pine populations on the Deschutes, Winema and Fremont National Forests. Reforestation activities using trees screened for natural resistance to non native pathogens will help restore healthy sugar pine populations and contribute to forest health improvement.

### **Appeal Rights**

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.4.

### **Implementation**

Implementation of this decision may occur immediately.

### **Contact Person**

For further information contact Rob Evans. Address: 1230 NE 3 rd, Suite A-262, Phone: (541) 383-4745, Email: reevans@fs.fed.us

---

Phil Cruz  
District Ranger

---

Date

