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DECISION NOTICE

AND

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Tumalo Creek Bridge to Bridge Restoration Environmental Assessment

Walter C. Schloer, Jr., District Ranger

Bend/Fort Rock Ranger District
Deschutes National Forest
Deschutes County, Oregon

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Forest

Deschutes National Forest

1001 SW Emkay Drive
Bend, OR 97702

(541) 383-5300

Ochoco National Forest

3160 N.E. 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

(541) 416-6500

**Crooked River National
Grassland**

813 S.W. Hwy. 97
Madras, OR 97741

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The Tumalo Creek Bridge to Bridge Restoration Environmental Assessment (EA) may be reviewed in the District Office located at the Bend/Fort Rock District Ranger's Office located at 1230 N.E. Third Street, Suite A-262, Bend, Oregon. This environmental assessment describes a range of alternatives that include rehabilitation activities to improve stream channel stability in and adjacent to approximately 2.8 miles of Tumalo Creek.

The project area planning area is located approximately 10 miles west of Bend, between Skyliner Lodge and Tumalo Falls and within the Bridge Creek Fire (1979) area. The Forest Plan allocates one (1) management area, Scenic Views (MA-9) within the project area: The legal description is Township 18 South, Range 10 East, Sections 8, 9, and 10; Willamette Meridian, Deschutes County, Oregon. There are no inventoried (RARE II) roadless areas or known Threatened or Endangered species. The project area is within Riparian Reserves of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP).

Decision

I have decided to authorize implementation of **Alternative 2 (Modified Proposed Action)**, identified as the preferred alternative in the 30-day public review and comment period notice and published August 6, 2004 in *The Bulletin*. This alternative is particularly responsive to the issues of: 1) reducing the substantial loss of soil, vegetation, and fish habitat; 2) maintaining or improving wetlands and wildlife habitat; and 3) enhancing downstream channel stability, including private land with residences near the stream. A variety of standard mitigation measures have been included in order to ensure consistency with the Forest Plan (EA pages 17 and 18 and Appendix A of the Project Record, District Files). This project will promote community awareness of watershed management and restoration through outreach to recreational users and established partnerships with the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, Cascade Science School, and Summit High School.

Alternative 2 will restore the hydrologic function and channel stability of Tumalo Creek. This alternative will use heavy equipment to shape the new channel with meanders and create and enhance pools. In areas of instability, the channel will be shaped to attain the desired physical characteristics such as sinuosity, slope, width, and depth. Unstable stream banks will be sloped away from the stream to improve stability. Structures incorporating large woody material and boulders will be strategically placed to maintain pool scouring during high stream flow events, provide channel and stream bank stability, and provide fish habitat. Approximately 300 pieces of large woody material per mile (from off-site sources) would be added to the stream, including pieces added to the floodplain to dissipate energy during flood events. Re-planting will occur near the stream upon completion of stream rehabilitation work, on approximately 12 acres. Nearly 40,000 native riparian shrub and tree species will be planted and seeding with native grass species will also occur. The revegetation effort will involve volunteer labor from the community. Newberry's Gentian will be planted to re-introduce this sensitive plant species to historical habitat. The project will be implemented in three (3) on-the-ground phases, beginning Fall 2004 with expected

completion in 2006. Each phase will rehabilitate approximately one-third (1/3) of the 2.8 mile project. Work will begin within the most upstream portion of the project area and proceed downstream.

Decision Rationale

Alternative 2 provides the best combination of resource benefits and protection. Implementing this alternative will allow movement toward the desired stream condition by reversing the current downward trend of Tumalo Creek, which is functioning in an at risk condition, by:

- Improving stream stability through stream bank tree placement, redistribution of bed materials, revegetation of stream banks, and stream realignment. Stream bank erosion and sedimentation will be reduced, Tumalo Creek will reconnect with the floodplain, and riparian vegetation will be restored. The imminent joining together of Tumalo Creek and South Fork of Tumalo Creek will be eliminated. The stream channel will adjust more naturally across the floodplain and maintain a stable pattern (channel length and curvature), profile (channel slope), and dimension (channel width and depth).
- Improving fish habitat by improving in-stream conditions to provide pool habitat, shade, and hiding cover for fish, and habitat for invertebrates. The loss of wetlands will be reduced, and water quality and habitat will be improved.

Other Alternatives Considered in Detail

In addition to Alternative 2, a no action alternative was developed and analyzed but not selected.

Alternative 1 (No Action): I did not select this alternative because it does not address the need to reverse Tumalo Creek that is presently functioning in an at risk condition from a downward trend to an upward trend of stream channel stability. Stream enhancement activities that would improve the physical integrity of the aquatic system would not occur. The impending merger of Tumalo Creek with South Fork of Tumalo Creek would result in extensive erosion and loss of wetlands, floodplains, fish habitat, and riparian vegetation. The loss of several small springs and associated wetlands would likely occur. Wetlands and wildlife habitat would continue to be threatened. Water quality would not be improved. The substantial loss of soil, vegetation, and fish habitat would continue. Increased sediment input would continue to compromise sediment transport. Increased fine sediments would continue to be detrimental to fish and aquatic invertebrates. The improvements that would benefit fish and wildlife species, including the redband trout (Forest Service Region 6 Sensitive Species) and the Cascades frog (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species of Concern) would not occur.

As experienced in other planning areas and adjacent non- Forest Service lands, there has been an increase in off road OHV use and an anticipated continuation of this trend. Associated with the off road

use of OHVs is the disturbance of other resources, including, but not limited to, the disturbance and harassment of mule deer in critical winter deer habitat. There is a need to enhance winter deer habitat by reducing the risk of disturbance and harassment of mule deer.

Excessive bedload from this disturbed portion of watershed could compromise channel stability in areas downstream, including private land with residences near the stream. The promotion of community awareness of watershed restoration and management through outreach programs with established partnerships would not occur.

Consultation With Others

The Tumalo Creek Bridge to Bridge Restoration project was initially listed in the 2004 spring edition of the Central Oregon Schedule of Projects. The Schedule of Projects, which includes the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest, is sent quarterly to approximately 3,200 individuals, organizations, and public agencies. It includes the status of and descriptions of new, continuing, and completed projects.

Scoping letters with proposed actions were sent in January 2004 to approximately 55 interested members of the public to solicit input into project area design and analysis. Seven (7) letters, e-mails, or phone comments were received. The following is a brief summary of the input received. One (1) comment was received in opposition to the proposed project. One (1) comment was received that expressed concerns with the project. Four (5) responses recognize the need for and support the proposed action (EA page 11).

A field trip was held on June 7, 2004 to provide an on-the-ground discussion and viewing of the project area. Nine (9) members of the public attended.

The 30-day notice and opportunity for comment for the Tumalo Creek Bridge to Bridge Restoration EA was published in *The Bulletin* on August 6, 2004. The EA was also placed on the Deschutes National Forest Website. The EA, identifying Alternative 2 (Modified Proposed Action) as the preferred alternative, was summarized and sent to approximately 60 interested members of the public to solicit comments regarding the proposed alternatives (EA pages 13 through 16). A complete EA was sent to those of the public that expressed an interest in receiving one. One (1) individual submitted a letter of support regarding the proposed stream restoration activities. No other responses were received.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Sufficient information has been disclosed in the analysis to make a reasoned choice between alternatives and no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment have been identified. Information available from past actions of similar context and intensity in this area also indicates that no significant impacts would be anticipated.

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the environmental assessment, I have determined that this is not a

major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. An analysis of the cumulative effects of the planned resource activities indicated that the combined effects are environmentally acceptable for soil, water, and all renewable forest resources. Based on the analysis, I expect only short duration adverse impacts from implementation of this alternative. All impacts are limited in scope and intensity and can be considered minor. This determination is based on the mitigation measures and best management practices (EA pages 17 and 18) designed into the selected alternative and the following factors:

(1) Beneficial and adverse direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the Environmental Assessment have been disclosed within the appropriate context and intensity. No significant effects on the human environment have been identified. There will be no significant direct, indirect or cumulative effects to soil, water, fish, wildlife resources, inventoried roadless areas, old growth stands or other components of the environment (EA pages 18-36).

(2) No significant adverse effects to public health or safety have been identified (EA page 34).

(3) There will be no significant adverse impacts to wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, prime farmlands, old growth forests, range, and forestland. No significant effects are anticipated to any other ecologically sensitive or critical areas (EA pages 18-36).

(4) The effects of implementation of this decision are not highly controversial (EA pages 18-36).

(5) Based on previous similar actions in the area the probable effects of this decision on the human environment, as described in the environmental assessment, are well known and do not involve unique or unknown risks (EA pages 18-36).

(6) This action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (EA page 35).

(7) This decision is 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 find there to be no such cumulative significance (EA pages 18-36).

(8) Based on the pre-disturbance survey and record search of the project area, the project proposal will have "no adverse effect" (as defined in 36 CFR 800.4 (b)(1)) on any listed or eligible cultural resources (EA page 30).

(9) The biological evaluation and assessment for the area indicates that the proposed project will have no significant adverse impacts on any proposed, endangered, sensitive or threatened plant or animal species. Should any endangered or threatened species be found during project activities, the environmental analysis will be reviewed and revised if necessary. The Tumalo Creek Bridge to Bridge Restoration contract will contain provisions that will permit appropriate protection of any threatened and endangered species identified (Appendix A, Fisheries Biological Evaluation, EA page 38;

Appendix B, Wildlife Biological Evaluation, EA page 43; and Appendix C, Botany Biological Evaluation, EA page 48).

(10) This decision is in compliance with relevant federal, state and local laws, regulations and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. Effects from this action meet or exceed state water and air quality standards (EA page 35).

Other Findings

The alternatives are consistent with the goals, objectives and direction contained in the Deschutes National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision dated August 27, 1990 as amended by the Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (6/95) and Inland Native Fish Strategy (7/95), the Northwest Forest Plan, 1994, the Bend Watershed Analysis, 1998, and the Deschutes National Forest Noxious Weed Control EA, 1998. Neither alternative establishes a precedent for future actions or a decision in principle about a future consideration.

No significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources would occur under a Alternative s 2 (Modified Proposed Action) -6. There would be some negligible irretrievable losses of fugitive dust caused by mechanical operations. There would be an irretrievable loss of sediment over the long term under Alternative 1 (No Action), as existing, unstable stream banks would continue to erode. Fish habitat would likely continue to be degraded with the continuation of headcuts, stream widening, loss of large woody instream cover, and the loss of associated invertebrate forage.

Proposed stream restoration management activities are consistent with the Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation and the subsequent Mediated Agreement of 1989 (Refer to Appendix D of the project files at the Bend-Fort Rock Ranger District office for further information and a discussion of other National Forest Management Act findings).

Alternative 2 (Modified Proposed Action) is consistent with the goals, objectives and direction of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy and Riparian Reserve Standards and Guides contained in The Northwest Forest Plan (1994).

The Tumalo Creek Bridge to Bridge Restoration Project meets all applicable Project Design Criteria as described in the 2003-2006 Joint Aquatic and Terrestrial Programmatic Biological Assessment. A biological assessment (BA) and/or Level I review are not required.

Compliance with National Forest Management Act (NFMA) Requirements: Alternative 2 is consistent with Forest-wide standards and guidelines, Management Area prescriptions and general management requirements. Forest-wide, habitat improvement work will be pursued based on the contribution of the work to fishery objectives and targets. Improvement work would adopt measures to protect other resources as needed (Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan August 1990 FI-4). Within Scenic View Management Areas the results of project activity would not be evident or would be visually subordinate to the natural landscape.

(Deschutes Land and Resource Management Plan August 1990 M7-3).

There is no habitat within the planning area classified as "Essential" under the Magnuson-Stevens Act for anadromous fisheries.

The analysis of effects on species viability found the following: This project is expected to have beneficial effects to *Gentiana newberryi* (Newberry gentia) and redband trout.

This document supports practices that are consistent with direction from the February 3, 1999 Executive Order on Invasive Species (Executive Order #13112). This order requires federal agencies to use relevant programs and authorities to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

This decision is in compliance with Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations". No minority or low-income populations would be disproportionately affected under any alternatives (EA page 35).

Limited duration activities are allowed to exceed the turbidity standard, with provisions, if a Section 401 or 404 permit has been granted. The following permits have been received for this project and are filed in the Official Record.

- Oregon Department of State Lands: General Authorization for Fish Habitat and Wetlands Restoration and Enhancement.
- Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers: Stream and Wetland Restoration.

A 30-day notice and opportunity for comment was published in *The Bulletin* on August 6, 2004. The EA was also placed on the Deschutes National Forest Website. The preferred alternative was identified. One (1) letter was received that expressed support for the project. No other letters or comments in favor of or opposed to the proposed action were received during the comment period (CFR 215.6). Therefore, this decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to CFR 215.8(a)(3). For further information, contact Tom Walker, Bend/Fort Rock Ranger District, 1230 NE Third, Bend, Oregon, 97701, (phone 541-383-4787, email tawalker@fs.fed.us).

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