

# Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

## Icy/Toast Environmental Assessment

USDA Forest Service  
Deschutes National Forest  
Crescent Ranger District  
Klamath County, OR

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### Location

The Icy/Toast project area is located approximately 40 miles south of Bend, Oregon and east of the town of Crescent, Oregon. It is located east of Highway 97, south of Highway 31, north and west of the boundary with the Winema National Forest, and west of the boundary with the Fremont National Forest. The area is located in T.23S. R.11E., T.24S. R.11E., T.25S. R.9E., T.26S., R.9E; Willamette Meridian.

### Decision

Based on the analysis documented in the environmental assessment (EA), I have decided to implement the Proposed Action, with one modification. The modification involves the addition of 6 acres of aspen enhancement in analysis unit 648. The purpose of this modification is to increase the amount of aspen enhancement from approximately 5 acres represented in units 69a and 648b to a total of 11 acres. These additional vegetation treatments would remove small-diameter lodgepole and ponderosa pine (less than 7 inches diameter at breast height) within a tree-height length of five small groups of aspen. Felled trees would then be used in the construction of an enclosure fence around three of the aspen groups. This enhancement will improve vegetation condition for aspen in two ways: first, thinning conifers would reduce competition for site resources; and second, building the enclosure fences will reduce browsing of aspen suckers by big game.

With the modification, the Proposed Action would prescribed underburn 533 acres, salvage 407 acres of dead and down lodgepole pine, commercial thin 41 acres of ponderosa and lodgepole pine, precommercial thin 308 acres, tractor mow 36 acres, close 11 miles of roads, and seed tree cut/enhance about 10 acres of aspen. The Proposed Action includes the development of a long term monitoring plan for prescribed underburning and tractor mowing treatments within pumice grape fern (*Botrychium pumicola*) study plots. It also includes monitoring of aspen rejuvenation projects.

## **Rationale**

The Proposed Action was selected because it best addresses the purpose and need. Prescribed underburning, salvage of dead lodgepole, and tractor mowing will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on 976 acres. The prescribed underburning, commercial timber harvest, and commercial and precommercial thinning treatments will decrease the risk of habitat loss caused by insect and disease, as well as promote late and old structure stand characteristics. In addition, the commercial thinning treatment along highway 31 will enhance scenic views of 41 acres of old growth ponderosa pine in the scenic corridor along Highway 31. The Proposed Action will implement ecosystem restoration projects including enhancement of approximately 10 acres of aspen and the closure of approximately 11 miles of road. Enhancement of aspen stands will contribute to ecosystem diversity and closure of roads will reduce the vulnerability and harassment of wildlife. The Proposed Action also provides the opportunity to increase the scientific knowledge of the effects of prescribed burning and mechanical fuels treatments on pumice grape fern.

## **Alternatives Considered**

In addition to the Proposed Action, the No Action alternative was analyzed. The No Action alternative does not propose any new management activities. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need objectives of reducing the risk of insects, disease, or catastrophic fire. Densely stocked stands and those with high loadings of natural fuels would not be treated and these areas would continue to be at risk to insects, disease, and fire. Scenic views of yellow barked, old growth ponderosa pine trees along highway 31 would continue to be obscured by lodgepole pine regeneration. The no action alternative would not provide the opportunity to implement ecosystem restoration projects such as reducing open road densities, increasing the survival and vigor of aspen stands, or gaining scientific knowledge on the Forest Service Sensitive plant pumice grape fern (*Botrychium pumicola*).

## **Public Involvement**

Public involvement for this Environmental Assessment originally began with Public Scoping in May of 1997. Copies of the Proposed Action and maps were sent on May 13, 1997 to groups or individuals who have expressed an interest in forest management activities. A public notice was published in the *Bend Bulletin* and the *Lapine Current* on May 21, 1997. The Proposed Action was also listed in the *Schedule of Projects for the Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests and the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management*. Four comments were received as a result of public scoping. No alternative driving issues were identified as a result of these comments.

Following the completion of the Environmental Assessment, a notice for public comment was mailed to potentially interested parties and published in the *Bend Bulletin* on February 4, 1998 for a 30 day comment period. During this period no comments were received. A second public comment period of 30 days was initiated after it was realized that the completed EA had not been mailed to those who had requested a copy of the completed EA during public scoping. The second comment period allowed interested publics the opportunity to review and comment on the completed EA. The second 30 day public comment period began April 29, 1998 and ended May 29, 1998.

During the second comment period two comment letters were received. One of the comments identified a concern with the way the Forest Service timber sale program evaluated economic costs and benefits. As a result of this comment letter, the team recognized the need to complete an economic analysis for this project. However, this financial analysis conforms to Forest Service policy, and so did not follow the recommendations made in the comment letter.

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have determined that this decision does not constitute a major Federal action, individually or cumulatively, that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment in either context or intensity; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary. These effects include direct, indirect and cumulative effects described in the environmental assessment and supporting documents.

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. The analysis considered both beneficial and adverse effects. Based on this analysis, I expect only slightly adverse, short duration impacts from implementation of this alternative.
2. There are no known adverse impacts to public safety. Prescribed burning will affect air quality for a short period in the immediate vicinity of the activity. Timber haul will be regulated and conform to Deschutes Road Use rules.
3. No unique characteristics of the geographic area such as cultural resources and wetlands will be adversely affected.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.
5. The degree of possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain, nor does implementation involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The actions should not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor do these actions represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. 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 Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer has concurred with our finding of no effect.
9. This action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, nor does it represent a decision principle about a future consideration.
10. As described in the Environmental Assessment and Biological Evaluation, activities will not adversely impact Threatened or Endangered species of plants or animals.
11. None of the proposed actions implemented by this decision threatens a violation of the Federal, State, or local law, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

## **Other Findings**

Actions in the Icy/Toast Vegetation Management Project are consistent with the management direction,

standards, and guidelines in the Deschutes Forest Plan (1990) as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (1994) and as amended by the Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment No. 2 and the Inland Native Fish Strategy (1995). This project complies with the consistency standards of 36 CFR 219.10(e). No timber will be harvested from lands not suited for timber production as defined in 36 CFR 219.14. All manipulation of vegetation will comply with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27 (b).

The harvest and post-harvest treatments are consistent with the strategy of prevention in accordance with the Pacific Northwest Region's Vegetation Management EIS (1988) and the mediated agreement. The vegetation management treatments will be consistent with direction found in the ROD/FEIS for managing Pacific yew.

## **Implementation Date**

The project is scheduled for implementation beginning in the Fall of 1998.

## **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 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:

Robert W. Williams  
Regional Forester/USDA Forest Service  
Box 3623  
Portland OR 97208  
Attention: 1570 Appeals

For further information contact Phil Cruz (District Ranger) or Kevin Keown (IDT Leader) at the Crescent Ranger District, P.O. Box 208, Crescent, Oregon, 97701, phone (541) 433-2234.

/s/ Phil Cruz

PHIL CRUZ

District Ranger

Crescent Ranger District

July 6, 1998

Date

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### [Deschutes and Ochoco National Forests Website](http://www.fs.fed.us/centraloregon/manageinfo/nepa/documents/crescent/icytoast/icytoast.html)

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Last Update: 3/23/00

R.A. Jensen