

# **DECISION NOTICE AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT For The METOLIUS HERITAGE DEMONSTRATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**Sisters Ranger District, Deschutes National Forest  
Deschutes County, Oregon**

## **Location**

The project is located in the Metolius Basin of the Sisters Ranger District (Figure 1). Demonstration plots are located on both sides of Forest Road 1420. Legal description is Township 13 South, Range 9 East, Section 3, 4, 9, and 10, Willamette Meridian.

## **Decision**

Following review of the alternatives and effects disclosed in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and careful consideration of public comment, I have decided to authorize implementation of Alternative 4 which treats eight small plots varying in size from 5 to 11 acres, using different silviculture treatments, small tree thinning, prescribed fire, and mowing of brush.

## **Reasons For the Decision**

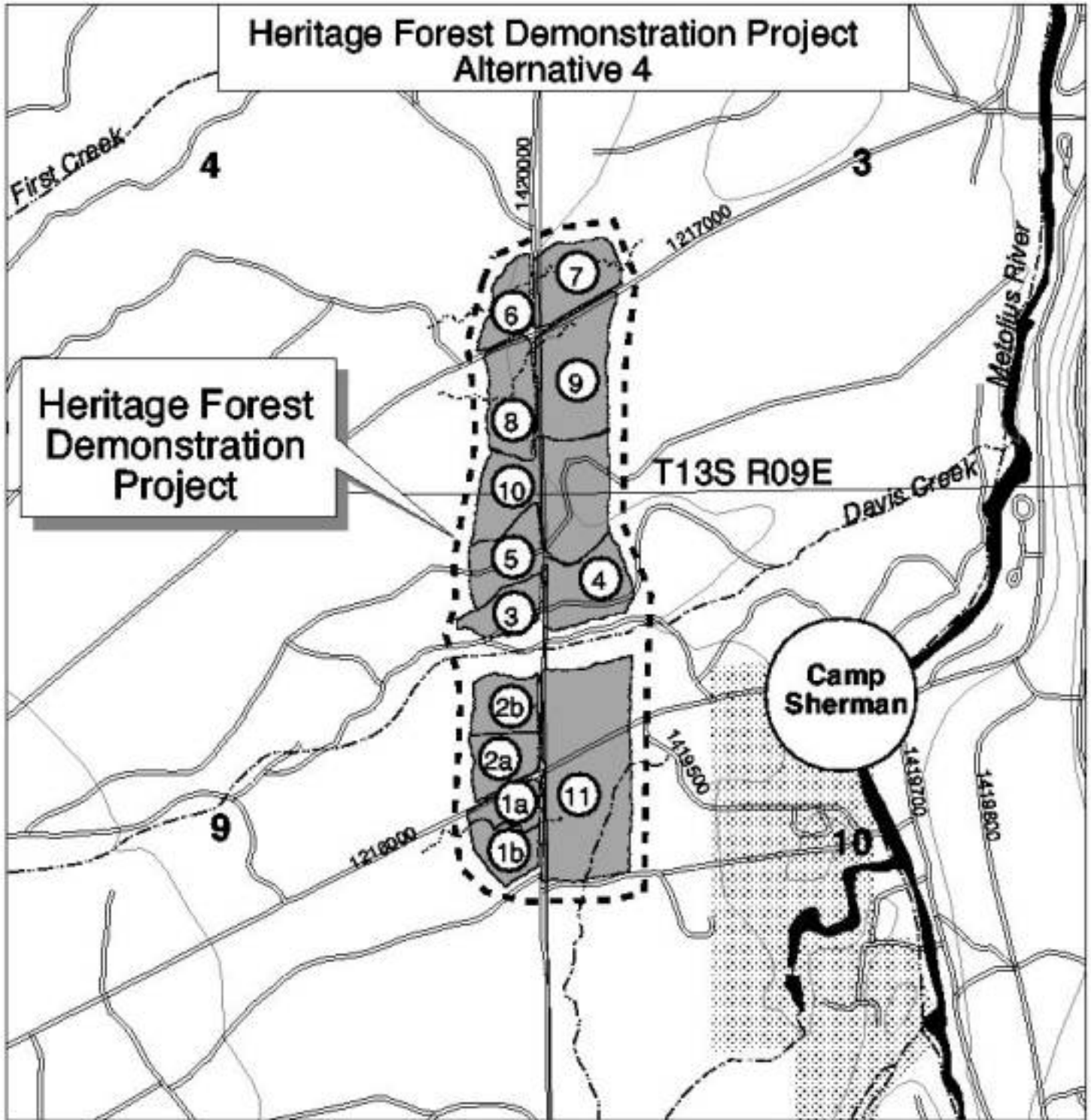
This alternative meets the Forest Management Goals as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) of the Deschutes National Forest. This project was first proposed by a private organization, Friends of the Metolius, to assist in the education of residents and visitors to the Metolius Basin about the need for differing methods used to manage ponderosa pine forests. The principle value in this project is education. The long-term goal is maintaining the future sustainability of the old-growth ponderosa pine forest, and decreasing the risk of landscape-scale disturbances in the Metolius Heritage Area, such as insects, disease or wildfire. This forest demonstration project will be used to reach the Forest's long-term goals.

## **Alternatives Considered**

Three other alternatives were considered in detail: Alternatives 1, 2, and 3. These alternatives were not selected for the following reasons:

**Alternative 1 (No Action)** - On this site and at this time the "No Action" alternative does not offer the public educational opportunity provided by the demonstration of potential future actions in the Metolius Basin area.

**Alternatives 2 (Proposed Action) and 3** - Both of these alternatives proposed similar types of actions as Alternative 4, except neither provided the extent of different treatments for the public to observe. Therefore these alternatives were not selected.





**Figure 1**

### **Public Involvement**

A scoping letter inviting comments was mailed August 20, 1999 to a combination of 322 individuals, organizations, and agencies. Seventeen comments were received either in writing (letter, e-mail) or by phone. Responses were summarized in the EA and reflected in the development and ultimately the selection of Alternative 4. Updates on the progress of the analysis were presented by members of Friends of the Metolius at their Board meetings, and information about the project was included in the Friends newsletter. A notice that the EA was available for review and comment was mailed to those individuals who commented to the initial scoping letter, as well as others. This notice was also published in *The Nugget* newspaper on Wednesday, July 4th, 2001. Comments from 3 individuals were received during the comment period, all in support of the selected alternative. No modifications were made to the EA based on these comments. A summary of the comments and a response can be found in Appendix B of the EA.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

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 the locality, affected interests, affected region, or society as a whole; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be completed. Based on the site-specific analysis documented in [the EA](#), I expect only slight adverse, short-duration impacts resulting from implementation of this alternative.

All impacts are limited in scope and intensity and can be considered minor. This determination is based on the following factors.

1. Beneficial and adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed within the appropriate context and intensity (EA, pages 22-45). Any adverse effects are anticipated as being short-term. Long-term effects would benefit forest health and public awareness of forest health issues and management techniques (EA, pages 40-46).
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. Overall, there is a predicted increase in public safety due to the reduced risk of impacts from severe wildfire within the project area, which is adjacent to the community of Camp Sherman (EA, pages 39-42).
3. There will be no significant adverse impacts to unique characteristics of the geographic area such as cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or any other

- ecologically critical or sensitive areas (EA, pages 36-39, 41, 46 and 47).
4. The selected alternative only affects approximately 61 acres of forest land, and therefore the implementation of this decision and the resulting effects to the human environment are not expected to be highly controversial (EA, page 35).
  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, pages 35-46).
  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 (EA pages 13-21).
  7. This decision is made with consideration of past, present, and reasonable 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 (EA, pages 35-46).
  8. An intensive search for districts, sites, structures, objects, or other items listed or eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places in the potential area of effects has been completed. No listed or eligible resources were located. Consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office on these findings has been concluded with agreement of no National Register eligible resources being present (EA, page 29).
  9. The Biological Evaluation 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 (EA, pages 40-46).
  10. This decision complies with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment (EA, pages 35-46).

### **Other Findings**

**National Forest Management Act** - Alternative 4 is consistent with the goals, objectives, and direction contained in the Record Of Decision for the Deschutes LRMP, including guidelines for riparian management and recreation management, and accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement dated August 27, 1990 as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan. The selected alternative is also consistent with recommendations in the Metolius Late-Successional Reserve Assessment and Metolius Watershed Assessment.

All manipulations 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 preventing unwanted vegetation, in accordance with the Pacific Northwest Region's Vegetation Management EIS (1988) and the mediated agreement (1989).

### **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 Nugget*. 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 preparations may proceed (e.g. marking, layout, or contract preparation).

The Forest Service proposes to implement this project in October 2001.

### **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 Nugget* (Sisters, Oregon). The notice must be filed with:

Forest Supervisor  
Attn: 1570 Appeals  
USDA Forest Service  
Deschutes National Forest  
1645 Hwy 20 East  
Bend, OR 97701

For further information, contact Terry Craigg in the Sisters Ranger District, P.O. Box 249, Sisters, Oregon, 97759, tcraigg@fs.fed.us, (541) 549-7720.

*Kris Martinson*

*8-17-01*

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for  
WILLIAM ANTHONY  
District Ranger

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Date

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

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Last Update: 8/17/01

R.A. Jensen