

**South River Commercial Thinning 2000
Environmental Assessment**

South River Field Office, Roseburg District
EA# OR-105-00-08

Date Prepared: July 18, 2001

Finding of No Significant Impact

The South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the South River Commercial Thinning 2000 Project. Two alternatives were analyzed consisting of no action, identified as Alternative 1, and a proposed action identified as Alternative 2 (EA, Chapter 2, pp. 3-7).

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment would not be affected by the proposed South River Commercial Thinning 2000 Project: Non-Native, Invasive Species; Wastes, Hazardous or Solid.

The proposed South River Commercial Thinning 2000 Project is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low-income populations. There would be no impacts to low-income or minority populations that have been identified by the BLM internally or through the public involvement process. Correspondence with local Native American tribal governments has not identified any known unique or special resources in the project areas which provide religious, employment, subsistence or recreation opportunities. Employment associated with the project would involve local contractors who engage in similar types of work throughout Douglas County.

No Native American religious concerns or values were identified in association with the project areas, so there would be no effect on potential Native American Religious Concerns (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(8)).

The proposed South River Commercial Thinning 2000 Project would not occur in/on wetlands, park lands, prime farmlands, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. There are no designated wilderness areas on the Roseburg District. No unique characteristics would be impacted (CEQ Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(3)).

Surveys for cultural resources have been conducted. Section 106 responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act have been completed by the BLM in accordance with the 1998 Oregon State Historic Preservation Office protocols (EA, Chapter 3, p. 22). There would be no impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (CEQ Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(8)).

No adverse impacts to special status wildlife, fish or plant species were identified as a consequence of implementing the South River Commercial Thinning 2000 Project (EA, Chapter 4, pp. 33-34, 35-36, & 37). As a consequence, there would be no significant adverse impacts to any special status species (CEQ Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(9)), and any impacts would be within the range and scope of those analyzed in the Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/EIS).

One proposed thinning unit is located in designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl. Thinning of this unit would have no near term effect on the critical habitat unit, because the area would remain functional as dispersal habitat. Over the long term, the stand would develop additional structure and diversity, providing improved foraging and dispersal conditions. As a consequence, thinning in this area would constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination on designated critical habitat.

The project areas do not provide suitable nesting and roosting habitat for spotted owls and primarily serve as dispersal habitat. It was determined that the proposed action would constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination for the owl, because modification of existing dispersal habitat would only affect its utility in the short term and would have a negligible likelihood of affecting owls in the project vicinity. Over the long term, the stands would develop greater suitability for foraging and dispersal.

Several proposed units are in proximity to owl activity centers. If surveys document nesting activity within these areas, seasonal restrictions would be applied. As a consequence, if owls are nesting in these areas, thinning of these units would constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination for disturbance.

Protocol surveys of suitable marbled murrelet habitat were conducted by Coos Bay and Roseburg District BLM within a ¼-mile of proposed thinning units located in Section 19, T. 28 S., R. 8 W., W.M.. No murrelet use or occupancy of stands in the project area was detected. As a consequence, thinning operations would constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination for the marbled murrelet for noise disturbance because there would be a negligible likelihood of disturbing individual birds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred with the BLM findings of “not likely to adversely affect” for the northern spotted owl and designated critical habitat, and the marbled murrelet, in a letter dated May 31, 2001. Concurrence is based on the fact that no constituent elements of habitat would be removed, and that habitat would continue to serve its present function.

No listed fish species reside in the immediate vicinity of any of the proposed thinning units. Portions of the project located in the Middle Fork and East Fork of the Coquille River are 12-15 miles above natural barriers to anadromy. For that portion of the project area in the South Umpqua River watershed, there would be no density management within any Riparian Reserves.

The proposed thinning would maintain current watershed conditions and would have no likelihood of affecting fish populations or critical habitat downstream. As a consequence, a “no affect” determination was made for the Oregon Coast coho salmon, Oregon Coast steelhead trout, and designated critical habitat for the coho.

No Kincaid’s lupine or other Special Status plants were identified in surveys of the proposed thinning units. The proposed thinning would constitute “no affect” on Kincaid’s lupine.

Port-Orford-cedar is present in a portion of the proposed thinning area. Management activities would conform to the Port-Orford Cedar Management Guidelines. Field surveys for Survey and Manage plant and wildlife species have been completed. At the time of any project implementation, documented sites will be protected in accordance with the current management recommendations. This mitigation insures that the action is consistent with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (CEQ Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(10)). The impacts of the proposed action on the human environment do not exceed those anticipated in the PRMP/EIS.

As a result of the analysis of the twelve points listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b), the following were considered and were found not to apply to the proposed action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and no precedents for future actions with significant effects.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and that an environmental impact statement is not required. I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP)* for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

E. Dwight Fielder
Field Manager
South River Field Office

Date