

# **Late-Successional Reserve 261 Density Management ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

South River Field Office

EA# OR-105-05-08

Date Prepared: August 17, 2006

## **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 Late-Successional Reserve 261 Density Management project. Two alternatives are analyzed in detail, consisting of Alternative One, No Action, and Alternative Two, the Proposed Action. One additional alternative was considered but not analyzed in detail (EA, pp. 15-17).

Units proposed for treatment were identified through operational inventories, stand examinations, and field verification by silviculture and wildlife staff. The proposed units are located in: Section 17, T. 28 S., R. 8 W.; Sections 3, 15, 23 and 27, T. 29 S., R. 9 W.; and Sections 1 and 2, T. 30 S., R. 9 W., W.M. A description of the "Proposed Action" is located in Chapter 2 of the EA (pp. 5-18).

### *Unaffected Resources*

As addressed in the EA (p. 17), the following Critical Elements of the Human Environment will not be affected because they are absent from the proposed project area: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; wilderness; waste, solid or hazardous; and Wild and Scenic Rivers. No unique characteristics will be impacted (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 508.27(b) (3)).

### *Environmental Justice*

The Late-Successional Reserve 261 Density Management proposal is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low-income populations. As discussed in the EA (p. 17), no potential impacts to low-income or minority populations have been identified by the BLM internally or through the public involvement process. Employment associated with the project would be performed by local contractors engaged in similar types of work throughout Douglas County. Correspondence with local tribal governments did not identify any unique or special resources in the project area that provide religious, employment, subsistence, or recreation opportunities.

### *Cultural and Historical Resources*

As described in the EA (p. 41), pedestrian transects were conducted, but did not identify any cultural, prehistoric, or historic sites within any of the proposed units. A cabin was noted on General Land Office cruise plats dating from 1918 in the vicinity of Bogey Gap unit H. The cabin site was protected by excluding it from the unit. Consequently, there will be no anticipated

effects on cultural/historical resources and no adverse impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR § 1508.27(b) (8)).

### *Wildlife*

The EA (p. 24) incorrectly stated none of the proposed units are located within critical habitat units designated for the survival and recovery of the **northern spotted owl** (*Strix occidentalis caurina*). The EA should have identified Section 17, T. 28 S., R. 8 W as being in Critical Habitat Unit (CHU) OR-61. Although dispersal habitat will be modified, a minimum average canopy closure of 40-60 percent will be maintained in addition to the structural elements needed to support spotted owl dispersal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that density management activities are not likely to adversely affect spotted owl critical habitat (File No. 1-15-05-I-0511, p. 28) or preclude the intended function of Critical Habitat because the primary constituent elements will persist post-treatment, canopy cover will not fall below 40 percent, and there will be adequate dispersal habitat available in the project area pre-harvest and post-harvest.

As noted in the EA (p. 25), the proposed units are overlapped by five northern spotted owl home ranges. Density management will downgrade the function of the forest stands in Camas Heights units B, C, D, and F and Bogey Gap unit H (Table 10) from suitable habitat to dispersal-only habitat by reducing horizontal and vertical cover, removing potential hunting perches, and disturbing coarse woody debris that provides habitat for prey species. Although density management (in the short term) will change the physical attributes of these stands, individual trees considered suitable for nesting will remain and contribute to the long-term development of nesting, roosting, and foraging (NRF) habitat for the spotted owl. The Bogey Gap units will modify the most dispersal habitat within spotted owl home ranges because they are within three spotted owl territories.

No effect to spotted owls from noise disruption is expected because the density management and commercial thinning will occur more than 0.5 miles from known spotted owl activity centers, outside of the disruption threshold distance of 65 yards (File No. 1-15-05-0511, Table 3 on p. 8) for known spotted owl nest sites and unsurveyed suitable spotted owl habitat, or be seasonally restricted from March 1 to June 30. Seasonal restrictions could be waived if surveys indicate that spotted owls are not present, not nesting, or failed in nesting. These project design features (PDF) will ensure that noise disruption will not cause spotted owls to abandon nests or fledge prematurely.

As stated in the EA (p. 26), all of the proposed units, except the Camas Heights units, are located within critical habitat units designated for the survival and recovery of the **marbled murrelet** (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*). Camas Heights units B, C, D, F, H, and a portion of unit A are included as part of a designated occupied marbled murrelet site.

As noted in the EA (p. 54), density management in Bogey Gap (except unit H), Power Wagon, and Sherlock's Denn units will not affect marbled murrelets because the units do not contain suitable habitat. In the Camas Heights units and Bogey Gap unit H, no effect to murrelets is anticipated because the trees considered suitable murrelet habitat will be left in unthinned areas and density management operations will occur outside of the disruption threshold distance of

100 yards (File No. 1-15-05-0511, Table 3 on p. 8) for unsurveyed murrelet habitat, follow seasonal restrictions from April 1 to August 5, follow DORs from August 6 to September 15, and areas (Camas Heights units B, C, D, and F) where murrelets were observed flying through the stand or showing interest will not be treated.

The proposed density management and commercial thinning will modify the forest stands by reducing canopy cover but is not expected to directly affect **northern goshawks** (*Accipiter gentilis*) because suitable nest sites will not be removed. Density management and commercial thinning will accelerate the development of late-successional forest conditions in the proposed units. Implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan is expected to stabilize northern goshawk populations in a well-distributed pattern across federal land (FSEIS 3&4-179) and will be consistent with BLM Special Status Species Program objectives. Consequently, the proposed action is not expected to contribute to the need to list the goshawk as a threatened or endangered species.

Density management and commercial thinning will modify the forest stands but are not expected to directly affect **purple martins** (*Progne subis*) because suitable purple martin nesting habitat (tall snags or trees) will not be removed and will be protected by being included in unthinned areas (EA, p. 56). Consequently, the proposed action is not expected to contribute to a need to list the purple martin under the Endangered Species Act.

**Townsend's big-eared bats** (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), **Pacific pallid bats** (*Antrozous pallidus pacificus*), and **fringed myotis bats** (*Myotis thysanodes*) might also be expected in the project area where they would use trees in the forests stands for roosting. As discussed in the EA (p. 56), while some limited amount of nesting or roosting habitat for these species could be modified during density management and commercial thinning operations, the proposed action will indirectly benefit them by accelerating the development of late-successional forest conditions providing suitable habitat. Consequently, the proposed action is not expected to contribute toward a need to list any of these species under the Endangered Species Act.

As described in the EA (p. 29), suitable habitat for the **Oregon shoulderband snail** (*Helminthoglypta hertleini*), a Bureau Sensitive species, is present throughout the project area. As discussed in the EA (p. 56), surveys were conducted where suitable habitat exists, and no snails were found. Consequently, the proposed action is not expected to contribute toward a future need to list the species under the Endangered Species Act.

As addressed in the EA (p. 31), two wildlife species designated for protection under the Survey and Manage standards and guidelines might be expected in the project area. One is the Siskiyou or Chace sideband snail (*Monadenia chaceana*), which is also a Bureau Sensitive species, and the other is the great gray owl (*Strix nebulosa*).

As described in the EA (p. 29), suitable habitat for the **Chace sideband snail** is present throughout the project area. As discussed in the EA (p. 56), surveys were conducted where suitable habitat exists, and no snails were found. Consequently, the proposed action is not expected to contribute toward a future need to list the species under the Endangered Species Act.

Suitable habitat for **great gray owls** is characterized by: (1) large diameter nest trees, (2) forest canopy providing roosting cover, and (3) proximity [within 200m] to openings ten acres or larger in size that could be used as foraging areas. As documented in the EA (p. 31), there are no natural meadows or openings more than 10 acres within 200 meters of the proposed units so no effect on great gray owls is expected.

### *Fisheries*

There are no listed fish species in the project area or on the entire Roseburg District. As described in the EA (p. 37), Essential Fish Habitat is more than 1.4 miles downstream from all proposed units. Sediment was identified as having a potential effect, but with implementation of the project design features and best management practices described in the EA (pp. 67-69) the risk for sediment and adverse effects to Essential Fish Habitat will be negligible.

### *Botany*

As described in the EA (p. 39), the proposed units were surveyed for Special Status Species and Survey and Manage Species that might be expected in the project area (see EA, Appendix D). One Bureau assessment species, *Carex gynodynamis* was found. The site will be protected by inclusion in an unthinned area.

In the case of fungi, known sites of Bureau Sensitive species will not be affected by the proposed density management and commercial thinning because of the spatial distances documented in the EA (p. 39). While it is acknowledged that density management and commercial thinning could result in the loss of unknown sites, it will not lead to a need to list any of these under the Endangered Species Act because, as discussed in the EA (p. 71), suitable fungi habitat will remain abundant and well-distributed throughout the Middle Fork Coquille River, East Fork Coquille River, and Olalla Creek-Lookingglass Creek fifth-field watersheds.

For the reasons described above, there will be no significant adverse impacts to any special status species (40 CFR § 1508.27 (b) (9)). The anticipated impacts will be within the range and scope of those analyzed in the *Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS).

### *Port-Orford-Cedar*

Port-Orford-cedar is present in portions of the proposed density management and commercial thinning areas and along portions of the anticipated haul routes. With the project design features and controls described, and in light of the scattered occurrence of Port-Orford-cedar within the project areas, little or no increase in the rate of spread of the root disease would be anticipated, and the project design features specified might reduce the rate of disease spread in the project area (EA, p. 51).

The project is consistent with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (40 CFR § 1508.27(b) (10)).

Implementation of the District *Integrated Weed Management Program*, in association with project design and contract provisions will minimize risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds in association with road construction and timber harvest. Measures will be implemented to eradicate existing weed infestations. Weed establishment will be discouraged by mulching disturbed areas, seeding with native grasses, or revegetating with indigenous plants. Pressure washing or steam cleaning logging and road construction equipment prior to move-in will remove soil and other substances that could be contaminated with weed seed or other propagative materials to reduce the risk of introducing weeds from outside the project area (EA, pp. 40-41). These actions are consistent with the requirements of the Lacey Act; the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended; and Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species.

Of the ten 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 within the scope of impacts anticipated in the PRMP/EIS, and 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.

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Date