

**South River Commercial Thinning 2003
Environmental Assessment**

South River Field Office, Roseburg District
EA# OR-105-03-01

Date Prepared: November 14, 2003

Finding of No Significant Impact

The South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) for South River Commercial Thinning 2003. Three alternatives were analyzed consisting of Alternative One, "No Action", Alternative Two, "Proposed Action / Limited Winter Operations", and Alternative Three, "Proposed Action, Expanded Winter Operations." (EA, pp. 4-10)

The following Critical Elements of the Human Environment will not be affected by the alternatives proposed in the South River Commercial Thinning 2003 EA: Non-Native, Invasive Species (EA, p. 25-26); Wastes, Hazardous or Solid.

The proposed South River Commercial Thinning 2003 project is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low-income populations. No impacts to low-income or minority populations were identified by the BLM internally or through the public involvement process. Correspondence with local Native American tribal governments has not identified unique or special resources in the project areas which provide religious, employment, subsistence or recreation opportunities. Employment associated with the project will 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 will be no effect on potential Native American Religious Concerns (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b) (8)).

The commercial thinnings proposed in the South River Commercial Thinning 2003 project EA do 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)).

The BLM has conducted surveys for cultural resources on all proposed thinning units and road locations, completing its Section 106 responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act, in accordance with the 1998 Oregon State Historic Preservation Office protocols. As discussed in the EA (p. 25), no cultural or historical resources are known to be present. There will 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 and Essential Fish Habitat, or plant species were identified, as discussed below, arising from implementation of the South River Commercial Thinning 2003 project (EA, pp. 36-39 and 44-45). As a consequence, there will be no significant adverse impacts to any special status species (CEQ Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b) (9)). Any impacts will be within the range and scope of those analyzed in the Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/EIS).

Northern Spotted Owl

None of the proposed thinning units are located in designated critical habitat for the spotted owl.

Several proposed thinning units are overlapped by the provincial home ranges of one or more pairs of spotted owls, but none of the units are within ¼-mile of an activity center. As a consequence, thinning would constitute “No Effect” for disturbance to nesting owls.

Proposed thinning units provide dispersal and foraging habitat, but not suitable nesting habitat. It was determined that the proposed action would constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination because thinning will modify the utility of dispersal habitat in the short term (<10 years), but have less than a negligible likelihood of affecting owls in proximity to any of the units. Over the long term, the stands will develop greater suitability for foraging and dispersal.

Marbled Murrelet

Protocol surveys of suitable marbled murrelet nesting habitat within and contiguous to Units A and D of the Shep Boyardee project area were conducted in 2003 and will be completed 2004. To this point in time, no occupancy has been detected. In the event that occupancy is detected, these two units will be modified or deferred from any treatments.

Thinning would not remove any trees providing suitable nesting habitat for murrelets, but in the near term could remove adjacent trees that provide cover. In the long term, lateral crown development and the growth of larger tree limbs would provide additional nesting opportunities. As a consequence, thinning would constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination for habitat modification.

Daily operational restrictions will be employed on the Shep Boyardee project for units within ¼-mile of any unsurveyed suitable habitat to reduce the potential for disturbance in association with thinning operations. These restrictions consist of a prohibition on operations from 2 hours before sunset until 2 hours after sunrise, during the period of April 1st to August 5th. As a consequence, thinning operations constitute a “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” determination for the marbled murrelet for noise disturbance because there is a negligible likelihood of disturbing individual birds.

In the FY 2003-2008 Programmatic Biological Opinion (Log No. 1-15-03-F-160), dated February 21, 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concurred that projects of this nature are “not likely to adversely affect” the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, for either disturbance or habitat modification.

The South River Commercial Thinning 2003 project has been determined by the BLM as “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” the Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout. There will be no adverse effect to Essential Fish Habitat. This determination is based on the conclusions that there will be no effect on streamside shading and water temperatures, or on the present availability of large wood. Some negligible amounts of sediment may be derived in association with road renovation and timber hauling. This will not be sufficient to cause substrate embeddedness or increased turbidity in spawning and rearing habitat or Essential Fish Habitat located downstream of the project areas. In the case of Alternative Three, the proposed road improvements will improve habitat and water quality conditions in the long term by reducing road derived sediments. In a Letter of Concurrence, dated November 5, 2003, NOAA/Fisheries agreed with these findings.

Suitable habitat for Kincaid’s lupine is absent from the Shep Boyardee and Tater Tot project areas. Potential habitat is present in Section 23, T. 29 S., R. 3 W. in proposed Units A and B of the Wasted Days project area. These units would be surveyed and if the lupine is located, sites would be protected in accordance with the current management recommendations. As a consequence, thinning would have “No Effect” on the lupine.

Required protocol surveys for Survey and Manage plant and wildlife species will be conducted prior to any implementation decisions. At the time of implementation of any project proposed in the EA, documented sites would be protected in accordance with the current management recommendations.

The measures described above insure that the proposed 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.

Of the twelve points listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b), the following were considered and 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.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider the effects of this decision on the President’s National Energy Policy. Within the project areas, there are no known energy resources with the potential for commercial development, nor are there any pipelines, electrical transmission lines, or energy producing or processing facilities. As a consequence, the proposed South River Commercial Thinning 2003 would have no known adverse effect, either direct or indirect, on National Energy Policy.

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

11/17/03
Date