

**South River Programmatic Restoration
Environmental Assessment
(EA # OR 105-04-03)**

**Stouts Creek Instream Habitat Enhancement
Decision Document**

Prepared: May 4, 2006

Decision:

It is my decision to authorize placement of logs for instream habitat enhancement in a one-quarter mile reach of Stouts Creek in Section 3, T. 31 S., R. 3 W., W.M. The logs will be provided from an off-site source. No felling or pulling of live trees will be involved.

Field Office hydrology and fishery personnel have identified a deficiency of large woody debris resulting in: a reduction in pool complexity and volume; a lack of retention of gravel substrate; and reduced availability of spawning and rearing habitat for anadromous and resident salmonids. Placement of the logs will create four instream structures that will enhance habitat structure and complexity.

The following project design features will be implemented:

- All equipment will be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to mobilization in and out of the project area to minimize the risk of introducing soil from outside the project area that may be contaminated with noxious weed seed or other propagative materials. Any equipment removed during the life of the contract must be re-cleaned before being returned to the project area.
- In-stream work will be restricted to the period between July 1 and September 15, during low summer flows, consistent with conditions of the General Authorization of the Oregon Division of State Lands, and under permit from the Oregon Department of Forestry, unless otherwise coordinated with the ODFW and approved in writing by ODSL.
- The operation of heavy equipment used to place the logs will be expressly restricted to Road No. 30-3-34.0. Logs will be positioned using blocks and tackle.

Rationale for the Decision:

This project is a component of Alternative Two that is described in the South River Programmatic Watershed Restoration EA (pp. 6-7). Implementation will aid in meeting the objectives of restoring normal stream function by: aggrading the stream channel; improving aquatic habitat conditions in Stouts Creek by providing for longer retention of suitably-sized spawning substrates; and creating complex pool habitat for rearing and sheltering of anadromous and resident salmonids. Alternative One, the no action alternative, would not meet these objectives.

Placement of the instream structures in Stouts Creek will not result in any undue environmental degradation. The project is consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives contained in the ROD/RMP (pp. 20-21), in that it will help: maintain and restore in-stream flows; maintain and restore the natural sediment regime; and maintain and restore aquatic habitat. The project also implements management direction to restore stream channel complexity (ROD/RMP, p. 20).

Northern Spotted Owl

The project is considered not likely to adversely affect northern spotted owls. The project area is a minimum of 150 yards from a known owl activity center, putting it beyond the 35 yard disruption distance at which activities of the type involved would be likely to disturb nesting owls. As previously described, in-stream activities are restricted to the period of July 1 to September 15. This is past the time (March 1 to June 30) in which seasonal restriction for disturbance is required. Logs for the in-stream structures are being supplied from off-site. No live trees will be felled or pulled over in the project area so there would be no modification of habitat and no effect to owls in either the breeding or post-fledging periods.

The project site is located in Critical Habitat Unit OR-32. Because no trees would be felled or pulled over, there would be no modification to spotted owl habitat and the function of the critical habitat unit would be unaffected.

BLM Special Status and Special Attention (Survey & Manage) Wildlife Species

Mollusk surveys are not required in the project area because the project does not constitute habitat disturbance or modification as described on p. 10 of the *Survey Protocol for S&M Terrestrial Mollusk Species v3. 0* (Feb. 2003).

Suitable foraging habitat for great gray owls is present in proximity to the project site but surveys are not required because the project will not modify existing potential nesting habitat. To avoid the potential for disturbance, if great gray owls should happen to be nesting in the area, project work will not commence until after July 15th, the end of the nesting season.

BLM Special Status and Special Attention (Survey & Manage) Vascular and Non-vascular Plant Species

Surveys for Special Status and Survey & Manage species were conducted. The results of the surveys were negative.

Fish and Essential Fish Habitat

Stouts Creek provides spawning and rearing habitat for the Oregon coast coho salmon. This species was previously proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act as a threatened species. On January 18, 2006, the National Marine Fisheries Service determined that listing of the species was not warranted at this time. Oregon Coast steelhead trout were a candidate for threatened species status but have since been downgraded by the National Marine Fisheries Service to a species of concern.

The lower reaches of Stouts Creek are designated as Essential Fish Habitat. The effects to these coho salmon, steelhead trout and Essential Fish Habitat are primarily associated with sediment generated by the disturbance of stream banks and stream channels in association with and winching and placement of logs, judged by the National Marine Fisheries Service to constitute an "adverse effect" on Essential Fish Habitat.

Actions of this nature were programmatically consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and are addressed in *Endangered Species Act – Section 7 and Magnuson-Stevens Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation Programmatic Biological and Conference Opinion for Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and BIA/Coquille Indian Tribe Programmatic Activities Affecting SONC Coho Salmon, OC Coho Salmon, and OC Steelhead*, dated October 18, 2002.

Monitoring:


Monitoring would be done in accordance with the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (pp. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199), with emphasis on the following resources: Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status and SEIS Special Attention Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003.3 (a) - Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the Decision Notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon.

43 CFR § 5003.3 (b) states that: "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

As provided by 43 CFR § 5003.3 (c), protests filed after the 15-day period provided shall not be considered to have been filed in a timely manner and shall not be considered.



William S. Haigh
South River Field Manager
South River Field Office

5-8-06
Date