

Foghorn Cleghorn Commercial Thinning
EA# OR-106-98-20
Decision Document

An Interdisciplinary (ID) Team of the Swiftwater Resource Area, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management has analyzed the proposed Foghorn Cleghorn Commercial Thinning project. This analysis and the "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) was documented in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. OR-106-98-20. The thirty day public review and comment period was completed on September 17th, 1998. One letter with comments was received as a result of public review.

The Swiftwater Resource Area Manager has decided to implement Alternative #3 (Multiple Entry Commercial Thinning) which the EA identified as the proposed action. The proposed action involves the commercial thinning harvest of young (second growth) timber in the Middle Smith watershed located in Sections 3, 4, 5 and 8; T21S R7W, W.M. Harvest activities will occur on 387 acres of commercial thinning and seven acres of road right-of-way clearcut and harvest approximately 4.3 MMBF of timber. Approximately 1.24 miles of road will be constructed of which 0.32 miles will be rocked and become part of the permanent transportation system and 0.92 miles will be temporary and tilled after use and returned to the productive land base. Approximately 11.2 miles of public road will have renovation and improvement and 0.7 miles of road will have full decommissioning.

The following objectives will be met by this proposal:

1. Practice ecosystem management as outlined in the ROD and RMP (EA, pg. 2).
2. "Produce a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities" (RMP pg. 33) and meet District PSQ goals.
3. Improve stand health by reducing the excess stocking in the forest stand in order to increase growth and vigor of the remaining individual trees within the GFMA.
4. Accelerate the development of large conifers of various form and structure for large trees and future recruitment of coarse woody debris (CWD) within the Riparian Reserve.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the implementation of the Preferred Alternative as outlined above.

Section II of the EA describes the Proposed Action as well as two other alternatives that were considered. The following summary discloses why those alternatives were not selected:

The **No Action Alternative** was not selected because the EA did not identify any impacts that could not be mitigated through project design features.

Alternative 2 (Single Entry Commercial Thinning) was not selected because it would have

resulted in too heavy of a thinning.

The sale date is planned for October 27, 1998 and the expected implementation of the project would begin in the summer of 1998. The contract duration will be 36 months. The project design features for this alternative are listed on pages 5-7 of the EA. These features have been developed into contract stipulations and will be implemented as part of the timber sale contract.

The proposed action will decommission road Nos. 21-7-3.7 and 21-7-10.1. Decommissioning will consist of: subsoiling of the roadbed, cross drain removal, construction of vehicle barriers, construction of water bars, and mulching and planting with conifer species.

The proposed action will require a mix of skyline cable logging (approximately 157 acres or 40%), helicopter logging (approximately 116 acres or 30%) and ground based (tractor) logging (approximately 114 acres or 30%).

Decision Rationale

The Preferred Alternative meets the objectives for lands in the Matrix and Riparian Reserve land allocations and follows the principles set forth in the ROD, dated April 13, 1994 and the RMP, dated June 1995. Approximately 150 acres of Riparian Reserves would be treated to acquire "...vegetation characteristics needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives. The objective is to accelerate tree growth to promote larger trees and canopies, and provide a future source of large woody debris for stream structure." (RMP pg. 25)

Cultural clearance with the State Historical Preservation Office was completed and resulted in a "No Effect" determination.

Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this project has been completed. The Biological Opinion concluded that the proposed action is "... not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the bald eagle, peregrine falcon, spotted owl or murrelet or adversely modify designated critical habitat for spotted owl or murrelets".

Consultation under Section 7(a)(4) of the Endangered Species Act has not been completed with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the Umpqua River cutthroat trout, Oregon Coast steelhead trout and Oregon Coast coho salmon. The sale contract will not be awarded until a final biological opinion or letter of concurrence, which includes a non-jeopardy determination, has been received. The sale was designed to follow the guidance of the RMP and the NFP, and to incorporate mitigations identified in the consultations on previously listed salmonids, as appropriate. Therefore, it is our expectation that the Biological Opinion will not make a jeopardy determination nor prescribe any reasonable and prudent measures or terms and conditions that are not already part of the sale design and mitigation. Because the United States retains the right to reject any and all bids for any reason, the mere offering of the sale does not make any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources which have the effect of foreclosing the formulation or implementation of any reasonable and prudent alternative measures. If additional reasonable and

prudent alternative measures or terms and conditions are prescribed which would require alteration in the terms of the sale contract, the agency retains the discretion (prior to contract award) to adjust the sale design accordingly and readvertise the sale if necessary.

This project received extensive review for consistency with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives by the ID Team as well as the Level I Team during formal consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). A finding of consistency was made in the FONSI subject to completion of consultation with NMFS.

This decision is based on the fact that the Preferred Alternative implements the Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) as stated in the ROD and RMP. The project design features as stated in the EA would protect the Riparian Reserves, minimize soil compaction, limit erosion, protect slope stability, wildlife, air, water quality, and fish habitat, as well as protect other identified resource values. This decision recognizes that impacts will occur to the resources, however, the impacts to these resource values would not exceed those identified in the ROD or in the RMP. The Decision provides timber commodities with impacts to the environment at a level within the bounds of the ROD and the RMP.

Comments were solicited from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners and certain State and local government agencies. No comments were received. During the thirty day public review period, comments were received from Umpqua Watersheds, Inc. (Francis Eatherington). None of the comments provided new information which should be considered in this decision. Most of the comments are the result of a difference of interpretation over the Northwest Forest Plan ROD, opposition to BLM policy or opposition to the harvest of timber on Federal lands.

Compliance and Monitoring

Monitoring will be conducted as per the guidance given in the ROD and the RMP.

Protest and Appeal Procedures

As outlined in Federal Regulations 43 CFR, 5003.3, "Protests of ... Advertised timber sales may be made within 15 days of the publication of a ... notice of sale in a newspaper of general circulation." Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer (John L. Hayes) and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of ... the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered. Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available to him/her. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of his/her review, serve his/her decision in writing to the protesting party. Upon denial of a protest ... the authorized officer may proceed with the implementation of the decision.

John L. Hayes, Area Manager
Swiftwater Resource Area

Date