

Green Thunder Addendum Decision

for

*Green Thunder Addendum
Environmental Assessment*

EA #OR-104-06-02

(Addendum to EA # OR-104-99-04)

Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District

Prepared: June 27, 2006

Decision:

The Green Thunder Addendum Environmental Assessment (Addendum EA) revised the Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest EA (Green Thunder EA) in order to provide additional analysis for three issues and provide clarifying information for Survey and Manage program compliance. The issues in brief were: 1) clarification of road decommissioning 2) compliance with Connectivity/Diversity Block management specifically related to landscape planning analysis and best ecologically functioning stands and 3) discussion about the red tree vole as a prey species for the Northern spotted owl.

This decision along with the Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest Decision issued on December 15, 2005, to proceed with the timber sale, constitutes the final Decision for the Green Thunder timber sale. Based on analyses in the Green Thunder EA and the Addendum EA, with consideration of public comments received, it is my decision that no modifications to the original Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest Decision are necessary.

Consideration of Public Comments to the Addendum EA: Comments on the Addendum EA were received from one individual representing four organizations. The Decision Rationale addresses how those comments were considered in this decision. The Addendum EA adequately analyzed and addressed concerns that have been raised. No changes to the Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest Decision were deemed necessary.

Decision Rationale:

Road Decommissioning

As described in the Addendum EA (p. 3-4, attached map) the road decommissioning actions are accurately described for the public and decision maker. The effects from road decommissioning are unchanged from the effects described in the Green Thunder EA.

Concerns were raised in public comments that BLM, "... still failed to explain the effects of

road decommissioning” and that, “The EA depends on this important restoration component to offset the degradations of regeneration harvest.” Additionally the concern was raised that, “... decommissioning this [Spur #2] road will not reduce the official road density.”

Consideration Given: The effects of regeneration harvest as analyzed in the EA are not dependent on the road decommissioning as a restoration component. Roads are reviewed, analyzed, and treated to reduce their effects on water quality, soil productivity, and soil erosion as part of road management. Road decommissioning is one treatment option in this effort (ROD/RMP, p. 137). The effects from road management were analyzed in the Green Thunder EA (Green Thunder EA, pp. 24-30). Reduction of road densities is only required in Key Watersheds (ROD/RMP, p. 20). Since the Green Thunder project area is not in a Key Watershed, there is no requirement to reduce road densities.

Management Direction Compliance for Connectivity/Diversity Block Regeneration Harvest

The Addendum EA described in greater depth the broader landscape rationale for why regeneration harvest in the Connectivity/Diversity Block is appropriate for the Green Thunder timber sale (p. 5-6 and attached Figure 1-5 and 4-1 maps). The attached Figure 1-5 and 4-1 maps showed the spatial relationship of the Green Thunder Connectivity/Diversity Block regeneration harvest units to other Connectivity/Diversity Blocks within the Middle North Umpqua watershed, as well as spotted owl use areas and critical habitat designations. These units were not considered ‘best ecological functioning stands’ because they are not regularly used by the Northern spotted owl for nesting habitat. These considerations met the Roseburg District *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* management direction for Connectivity/Diversity Block (ROD/RMP, June, 1995, p. 152).

Landscape Scale: Concerns were raised in public comments that the Addendum EA maps of the Middle North Umpqua watershed did not adequately consider where the owl centers are in relation to the units. The concern raised was, “The BLM is required to do landscape scale planning for [Connectivity/Diversity Blocks], not watershed scale planning.”

Consideration Given: The location of known Northern spotted owl core activity areas in relation to the Green Thunder harvest units was not the issue being addressed in the Addendum EA. This is because the issue was previously addressed in the Green Thunder EA (p. 23-24). The specific issue addressed in the Addendum EA has to do with regeneration harvest in the Connectivity/Diversity Block land use allocation and its relationship to the landscape level plans. The Addendum EA maps only show the Middle North Umpqua watershed because the Connectivity/Diversity Block lands most relevant to the Green Thunder project area are in that watershed. The Little River watershed to the south of the project area has no Connectivity/Diversity Block and to the east in the Lower North Umpqua watershed the closest Connectivity/Diversity Block lands are over seven miles away. So the Middle North Umpqua watershed was the most logical and appropriate landscape scale within which to consider Connectivity/Diversity Block lands.

Best Ecologically Functioning Stands: Concerns were raised in public comments that, “The BLM failed to disclose what are the best ecologically functioning stands in the [Connectivity/Diversity] block.” Additionally comments raised the concern that the EA Addendum failed to disclose where the best ecologically functioning stands definition came from.

Consideration Given: Again, the specific issue considered was ‘best ecological functioning stands’ in relation to the Connectivity/Diversity Block land use designation. There is no definition for best ecologically functioning stands in the ROD/RMP. Therefore, for the Green Thunder project, the interdisciplinary team interpreted best ecological functioning stands as late-successional forests that Northern spotted owls are currently and regularly using for nesting habitat. The rationale for this is that 100 acres of the best Northern spotted owl habitat near a nest site (as of January 1, 1994) became an unmapped late-successional reserve under the NW Forest Plan (ROD/RMP, pgs. 29, 34). In a similar manner, the location of Northern spotted owl nesting was interpreted by the Green Thunder interdisciplinary team as an indicator of the best ecologically functioning stands.

Red tree voles as Northern spotted owl prey base

As described in the Addendum EA (p. 6), red tree voles are not an important part of the Northern spotted owl prey base. Any effects this project may have on red tree voles would be within those already considered in the biological opinion (Ref. No. 1-15-05-F-0512) covering removal of Northern spotted owl nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat.

Survey and Manage Program Compliance

As described in the Addendum EA (p. 7-8 and attached compliance documentation), the Green Thunder project complies with the provisions of the 2001 ROD, as amended or modified up to March 21, 2004. Thus, this Green Thunder Addendum Decision as well as the Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest Decision are both in compliance with the 2001 ROD as stated in Point (3) on page 14 of the January 9, 2006, Court order in Northwest Ecosystem Alliance et al. v. Rey et al.

Monitoring:


Monitoring will be done in accordance with provisions contained in Appendix I (Resource Management Plan Monitoring) of the ROD/RMP (p. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199).

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies at § 5003.3 (a) and (b), protests may be made within 15 days of the publication date of the decision notice. Publication of such notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon, constitutes the decision date from which such protests may be filed. Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and contain a written statement

of reasons for protesting the decision.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (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. The original Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest Decision and Timber Sale Notice were released on December 15, 2005, followed by a 15-day period during which protests of the decision could be filed. The principle of administrative finality precludes any further protest of the original December 15, 2005, Green Thunder Regeneration and Commercial Thinning Harvest Decision and the findings contained therein. Consequently, any further protest is specifically limited to the issues addressed in this Green Thunder Addendum Decision.



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6/27/06
Date