

**Johnson Creek Commercial Thinning**  
**EA# OR-104-97-16**  
**Decision Document**

An interdisciplinary (ID) team of the Swiftwater Resource Area, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management has analyzed the proposed Johnson Creek Commercial Thinning project. This analysis and the "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) was documented in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. OR-104-97-16. The thirty day public review and comment period was completed on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998. One letter with comments was received as a result of public review.

The proposed action involves the commercial thinning harvest of second growth forest in Smith River Watershed located in Sections 2, 3, 9, 11 and 15; T21S R7W; W.M. Harvest activities will occur on 303 acres and harvest approximately 2300 MBF of timber.

The following objectives will be met by this proposal:

1. For the Matrix portion:
  - a. "Produce a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities " (RMP pg. 33) and meet District ASQ goals (GFMA). "Provide connectivity ... between late-successional reserves" (RMP, pg. 33) (Connectivity).
  - b. Improve stand health by reducing the excess stocking in the forest stand to increase the growth and vigor of the remaining individual trees.
2. For the Riparian Reserve portion:

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 in order to comply with the ACS objective #8 of 'restoring structural diversity of plant communities in riparian areas'.
3. For the laminated root rot study area:

PNW's long term objective is to learn how to rank the severity of the disease during stand exams and ways to treat the stand in order to manage the affect of the disease.
4. Implement ecosystem management as outlined in the ROD and RMP (EA; pg. 3, para. D4).
5. For the Key Watershed:

Reduce existing road mileage and pursue watershed restoration projects to conserve watershed conditions for at-risk anadromous salmonids and resident fish species.

Section II of the EA describes three alternatives: a "no action" alternative and two action alternatives. Alternative A is a conventional Logging alternative and was the ID Team's "Proposed Action". Alternative B is a reduced roading alternative that is the same as alternative A except a proposed unit would be dropped along with its associated road related impacts. The "No Action"

alternative was not selected because the EA did not identify any impacts that were beyond those identified in the EIS and could not be mitigated through project design features. This alternative would not meet the objectives cited above. Alternative B was not selected because the road related impacts were not considered to be significantly less than the impacts of Alternative A.

### Decision

It is my decision to authorize the implementation of the Proposed Action Alternative as outlined above. The following change to the EA should be noted: Page 6, paragraph C1a(3) indicates that no trees would be yarded across streams. In most cases this is true, however, in some cases logs may need to be yarded across streams. In these cases the logs will be fully suspended.

The sale date is planned for September 22, 1998 and the expected implementation of the project would begin in the summer of 1999. The contract duration will be 36 months. The project design features for this alternative are listed on pages 6 to 8 of the EA. These features have been developed into contract stipulations and will be implemented as part of the timber sale contract.

The EA (Section II) describes the Proposed Action. The following specifics are noted as the result of sale layout: A total of 5,860 ft. (1.1 mi.) of temporary road will be constructed. A total of 12.0 mi. of existing road will be renovated.

### Decision Rationale

The Proposed Action Alternative meets the objectives for lands in the Matrix and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations and follows the principles set forth in the ROD for the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP), dated April 13, 1994 and the RMP, dated June 1995.

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 is summarized as saying that the 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 owls and 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 decision is based on the fact that the Proposed Action Alternative implements the Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs) as stated in the NFP and the 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 FSEIS. The Proposed Action Alternative provides timber commodities with impacts to the environment at a level within the bounds of the FSEIS.

BLM's adherence to the Standards and Guidelines of the ROD would generally allow project compliance with the ACS objectives. Site specific or project analysis has been done to verify this assumption. An additional measure requiring the completion of an "Erosion Control Plan" prior to beginning road renovation is also included as a recommendation of the Geotechnical Engineer. The Biological Assessment contains analysis that documents how this project complies with the ACS objectives.

During the thirty day public review period comments were received from Umpqua Watersheds, Inc. (Francis Eatherington) which are addressed below. These comments were considered in the formulation of this decision.

**!** BLM failed to include an alternative in the EA where Unit 2B would be excluded from the project. The BLM NEPA handbook requires that: "Alternatives to the proposed action must be considered and assessed whenever there are unresolved conflicts involving alternative uses of available resources." A reasonable range of resources must include a proposal to drop the unit.

The EA clearly shows that an alternative was included in the analysis that would have dropped Unit 2B:

**"Alternative B: Reduced Roading** - This alternative is the same as alternative A, except Unit 2B would be dropped to eliminate the renovation of the 21-7-3.4 Road and its associated impacts to fisheries." (EA, pg. 5)

**!** The BLM has not been successful with the past mitigation such as washing equipment that enters the area. This was the practice of past timber sales, yet the spread of scotch broom has exploded.

The comment expresses the belief that equipment washing has been a past practice in the BLM. The BLM Roseburg District did not have a practice of equipment washing in past (pre-NFP) timber sales. The few NFP sales with this provision that have been implemented on the ground have not had sufficient time to monitor its effectiveness.

**!** The required surveys were not completed as required by the Survey and Manage strategy of the NFP. For instance, no Red Tree vole surveys were done.

Surveys for the Red Tree vole were not done because surveys are not required according to BLM/FS Memorandum No. OR-97-009.

Compliance and Monitoring

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

Protest and Appeal Procedures

Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 states that “[w]hen a decision is made to conduct an advertised timber sale, the notice of such sale shall constitute the decision document.” This notice will be placed in *The News Review* and constitute the decision document with authority to proceed with the proposed action. 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.

For further information, contact John L. Hayes, Area Manager, Swiftwater Resource Area, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, 777 NW Garden Valley Blvd; Roseburg, OR. 97470, 541 440-4931.

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John L. Hayes, Area Manager  
Swiftwater Resource Area

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Date