

**U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Roseburg BLM District, Oregon**

**Lurch
Commercial Thinning & Density Management**

Decision Document

SECTION 1 – THE DECISION

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the Lurch portion of the Proposed Action Alternative as described in the Elkhead Commercial Thinning & Density Management Environmental Assessment (EA) in Chapters 1 and 2 (EA #OR-104-07-10; pgs. 1, 4-10). In addition, approximately 30 acres and a spur road that were analyzed in the Elkhead EA as part of Adams Apple (Unit 19A) but were deferred due to issues regarding legal access will be included with Lurch. The Project Design Features that will be implemented as part of the Action Alternative are described on pages 12-16 of the Elkhead EA. These project design features have been developed into contract stipulations and will be implemented as part of the timber sale contract.

Lurch Commercial Thinning & Density Management will occur on five units (approximately 159 acres) of mid-seral, second-growth forest approximately 39-49 years old located in the Elk Creek/Umpqua River 5th Field Watershed in Section 13 of T. 23 S., R. 5 W. and Sections 7 and 19 of T. 23 S., R. 4 W, Willamette Meridian (see Figures 1 & 2). Of the 159 acres of treatment, approximately 6 acres will be removed for the development of spur roads and rights-of-ways. In addition, approximately 1.4 acres of timber will be removed for the development of spur roads and rights-of-ways on private industrial forest lands.

This project is within the General Forest Management Area (GFMA, 95 acres) and Riparian Reserve (64 acres) Land Use Allocations and will provide approximately 1.829 million board feet (1.829 MMBF) of timber available for auction. Approximately 934 thousand board feet (934 MBF) of timber will come from the GFMA and 895 thousand board feet (895 MBF) will come from the Riparian Reserve land use allocations. This project is in conformance with management direction from the ROD/RMP.

This decision is subject to administrative remedy under 43 CFR § 5003.2 and 5003.3.

Updated Information

The updated information, described below, has been considered but does not alter the conclusions of the analysis.

1) Unit Configuration:

Approximately 32 acres have been dropped from the four units originally analyzed as Lurch

(Units 7A, 7B, 13A, and 13B) since the release of the EA due to additional riparian areas and as a result of final mapping and unit layout. However, approximately 30 acres will be added to Lurch Commercial Thinning & Density Management as Unit 19A. This unit was analyzed in the Elkhead EA as part of Adams Apple Unit 19A but was deferred due to issues regarding legal access. Those legal access issues have since been resolved.

Within Lurch, there will be 64 acres of ground-based yarding (formerly 60 acres as proposed in the EA [pg. 8]) and 95 acres of cable yarding (formerly 100 acres as proposed in the EA [pg. 8]).

The EA (pg. 14) states that for ground-based yarding, harvesters will be limited to slopes less than 45 percent for distances less than 150 feet. This statement is in error and is corrected here to read that harvesters will be limited to distances less than 150 feet on slopes between 35 – 45 percent.

2) Spurs & Roads:

The spur roads that were proposed in the Elkhead EA to provide access for the Lurch harvest units have been renumbered. Table 1 (below) provides a cross-reference of the spur numbers as originally identified in the Elkhead EA with the newly designated road numbers. Spur #3 that was originally analyzed as part of Adams Apple in the Elkhead EA will be included in Lurch as the 23-4-19.3 road in order to access Unit 19A (also added from Adams Apple – see *Unit Configuration* above).

There will be approximately 1.11 miles of temporary spur roads constructed (formerly 1.05 miles were proposed in the EA); approximately 1.30 miles of road will be renovated (formerly 0.14 miles were proposed in the EA); and the 23-4-7.1 road will not be re-aligned (formerly 0.41 miles of the 23-4-7.1 road were proposed for re-alignment in the EA).

The 23-4-7.1 road will not be renovated and used for this timbersale because portions of the road are overly steep, entrenched, and are aligned poorly in relation to streams and topography. Instead of using the 23-4-7.1 road, the 23-4-7.6 road will be constructed and then decommissioned following harvest operations. In addition, the existing 23-4-7.0 and 23-5-13.2 roads will have renovation (e.g. brushing and blading the driving surface) not originally included in the EA in order to bring these roads up to current standards for timber hauling.

Approximately 1.51 miles of roads constructed or renovated in Lurch and 0.4 miles of the 23-4-7.1 road will be decommissioned by water-barring, mulching with logging slash where available (or with straw if logging slash is not available), and blocking with trench barriers (Table 1). In addition, approximately 1 mile of compacted old roads (including portions of the 23-4-7.1 road), skid trails and landings will be subsoiled.

Table 1. Spurs & Roads in Lurch Commercial Thinning & Density Management.

Spur/Road Numbers		Length (miles)	Decision Road (miles)		
EA #	Decision #		Temporary Construction	Renovation	Decommission after Harvest*
Spur #1	23-4-18.1	0.14	0.14	0	0.14
Spur #2	<i>Will not be constructed</i>	<i>Will not be constructed</i>	<i>Will not be constructed</i>	<i>Will not be constructed</i>	<i>Will not be constructed</i>

Spur/Road Numbers		Length (miles)	Decision Road (miles)		
EA #	Decision #		Temporary Construction	Renovation	Decommission after Harvest*
Spur #3	23-4-7.7	0.05	0	0.05	0.05
Spur #4	23-4-7.6	0.62	0.62	0	0.62
Spur #5	23-4-18.2	0.06	0.06	0	0.06
Spur #6	23-5-13.3	0.16	0	0.16	0.16
23-4-7.1	23-4-7.1	0.40	0	0	0.40
23-4-7.3	23-4-7.3	0.06	0	0.06	0.06
Adams Apple Spur #3	23-4-19.3	0.36	0.29	0.07	0.29
Additional Roads	23-4-7.0	0.13	0	0.13	0.13
	23-5-13.2	0.83	0	0.83	0
Total		2.41	1.11	1.30	1.91

* Decommissioning will include water-barring, mulching with logging slash where available (or with straw if logging slash is not available), and blocking with trench barriers.

Compliance and Monitoring

Compliance with this decision will be ensured by frequent on the ground inspections by the Contracting Officer's Representative. Monitoring will be conducted as per the direction given in Appendix I of the RMP (pgs. 189-209).

SECTION 2 – THE DECISION RATIONALE

The Project Design Features described in the EA (pgs. 12-16) will minimize soil compaction, limit erosion, protect slope stability, protect wildlife habitat, protect fish habitat, protect air and water quality, as well as protect other identified resource values. I have reviewed the resource information contained in the EA and the updated information presented in this decision. This decision recognizes that impacts could occur to some of these resources; however, the impacts to resource values will not exceed those identified in the *Final - Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan / Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/EIS)*. This decision provides timber commodities resulting from silvicultural treatments whose effects to the environment are within those anticipated and already analyzed in the PRMP/EIS.

Chapter 2 of the EA describes two alternatives: a "No Action" alternative and a "Proposed Action" alternative. The No Action alternative was not selected because it did not meet the objectives from pages 1-2 of the EA to:

- comply with Section I of the O&C Act,
- contribute timber volume towards a sustainable supply of timber,
- contribute to the Roseburg District's annual allowable sale quantity of 45 MMBF,
- manage GFMA to assure a high level of sustained timber productivity, or
- perform density management within the Riparian Reserve to help forest stands develop late-successional characteristics and attain forest conditions that contribute to the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

SECTION 3 – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The BLM solicited comments from affected tribal governments, adjacent landowners, affected State and local government agencies, and the general public on the Elkhead Commercial Thinning & Density Management EA, which included the Lurch project, during a 30-day public comment period (March 18 – April 17, 2008). Two comments were received as a result of the public comment period.

Upon reviewing the comments, the following topics warrant additional clarification specific to the Lurch project: (1) roads and (2) ground-based yarding on slopes.

1) Roads

A comment questioned the need for the amount of spur roads as proposed in the EA and the perceived lack of decommissioning of existing roads and why Spur #6 [now the 23-5-13.3 road] is necessary.

The interdisciplinary team developed a proposed harvest plan using the existing road network to the greatest degree practical while still meeting the stated objectives and decision factors (EA, pgs. 2-3). Spur road impacts were minimized to the extent practicable while maintaining the ability to successfully implement the silvicultural prescription in a cost efficient manner while providing for the protection of soil and water quality, and meeting other land use objectives.

As stated above (pgs. 2-3), approximately 1.91 miles of road will be decommissioned by, water-barring, mulching with logging slash where available (or with straw if logging slash is not available), and blocking with trench barriers. In addition, Spur #6 [now the 23-5-13.3 road] has been reduced in length by approximately one third, from approximately 0.21 miles to 0.16 miles.

2) Ground-based Yarding on Slopes

A comment stated “[g]round-based operations are being allowed on slopes up to 60% steep for 150-feet in length. The EA failed to describe how many of these 150’, 60% stretches would be allowed...”

On page 30 of the Elkhead EA, the EA states that “[t]here are short slope pitches of 35 to 60 percent up to 150 feet in length where ground-based operations are designated.” Approximately 1 percent (2 acres) of the designated ground-based harvest area have slopes up to 60 percent, but ground-based equipment will not actually travel across the steeper slopes (i.e. 45 – 60 percent slope). The PDFs (EA, pg. 14) limit skid and forwarder trails to slopes less than 35 percent.

The EA (pg. 14) states that harvesters will be limited to slopes less than 45 percent for distances less than 150 feet. This statement is in error and is corrected here to read that harvesters will be limited to distances less than 150 feet on slopes between 35 – 45 percent.

Trees in the designated ground-based yarding areas with slopes between 45 – 60 percent will be yarded by equipment operating on gentler ground (i.e. less than 35 percent) and “reaching in”. Trees in these areas can be reached by a 20 foot harvester boom reaching up or down the slope as the harvester itself remains on less than 35 percent slopes.

Where harvester-forwarder or skidder operations are used, there is the option of hand-falling the tree to lead where the harvester boom reaches for the tree bole or a line is pulled to the tree bole from a skidder. By hand-falling to lead, harvester-forwarders or skidders will avoid operating on slopes greater than 45 percent and will generally not operate on slopes greater than 35 percent.

The remaining comments did not raise substantive issues that would influence my selection of the Action Alternative for Lurch based on the Elkhead Commercial Thinning & Density Management EA.

SECTION 4 – PROTEST PROCEDURES

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations at 43 CFR § 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests of this decision may be filed with the authorized officer [Marci L. Todd] within 15 days of the publication date of the notice of decision/timber sale advertisement in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon.

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 protest must clearly and concisely state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

Protests received more than 15 days after the first publication of the notice of decision/timber sale advertisement 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 her. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of her review, serve 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 Marci L. Todd, Field Manager, Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management, 777 NW Garden Valley Blvd; Roseburg, OR. 97470, (541) 440-4931.

Marci L. Todd, Field Manager
Swiftwater Field Office

Date

Figure 1. Lurch Commercial Thinning & Density Management: Units 7A, 7B, 13A, and 13B.

Township 23S, Range 04W, Section 07; Willamette Meridian.

Township 23S, Range 05W, Section 13; Willamette Meridian.

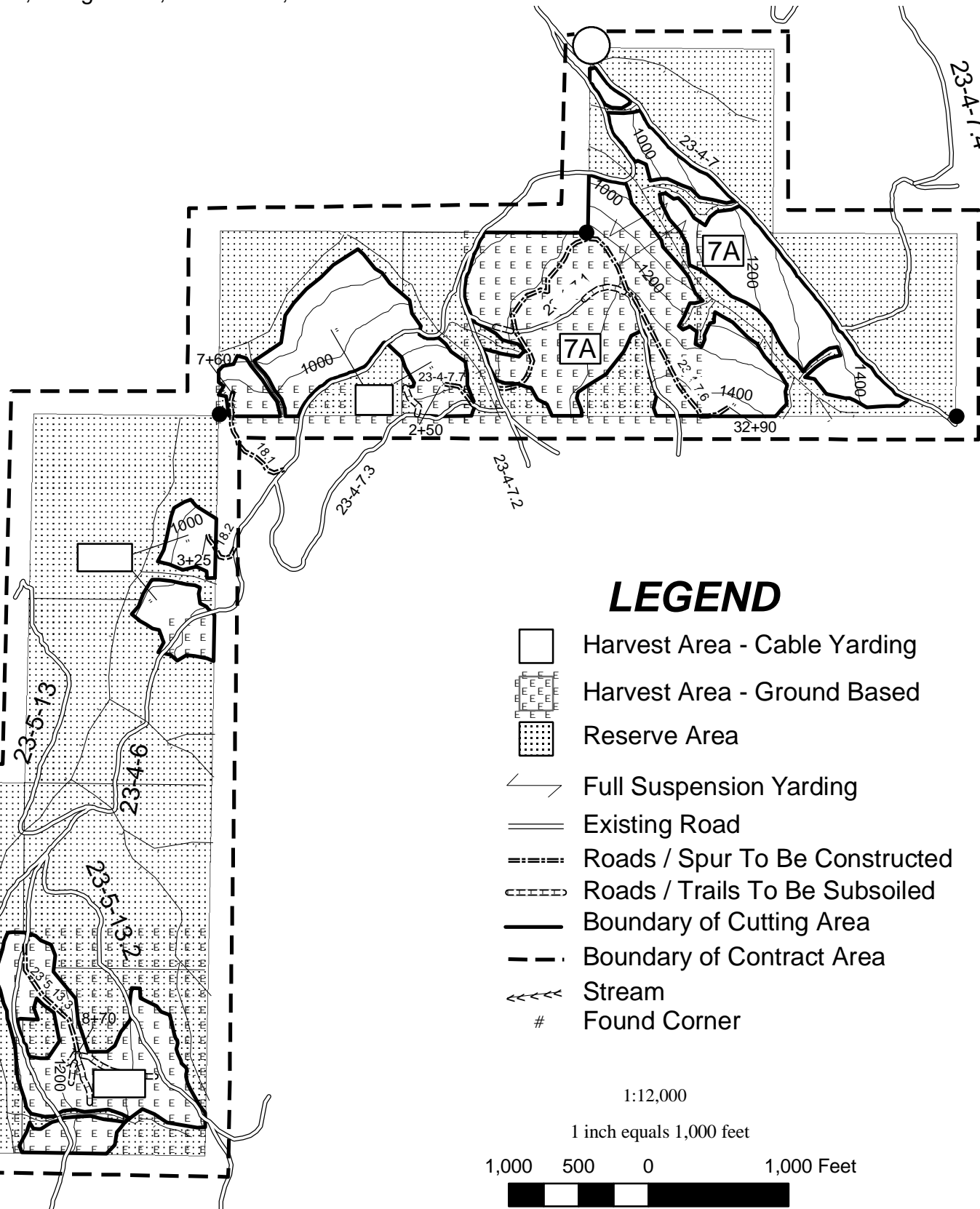
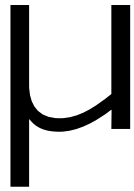
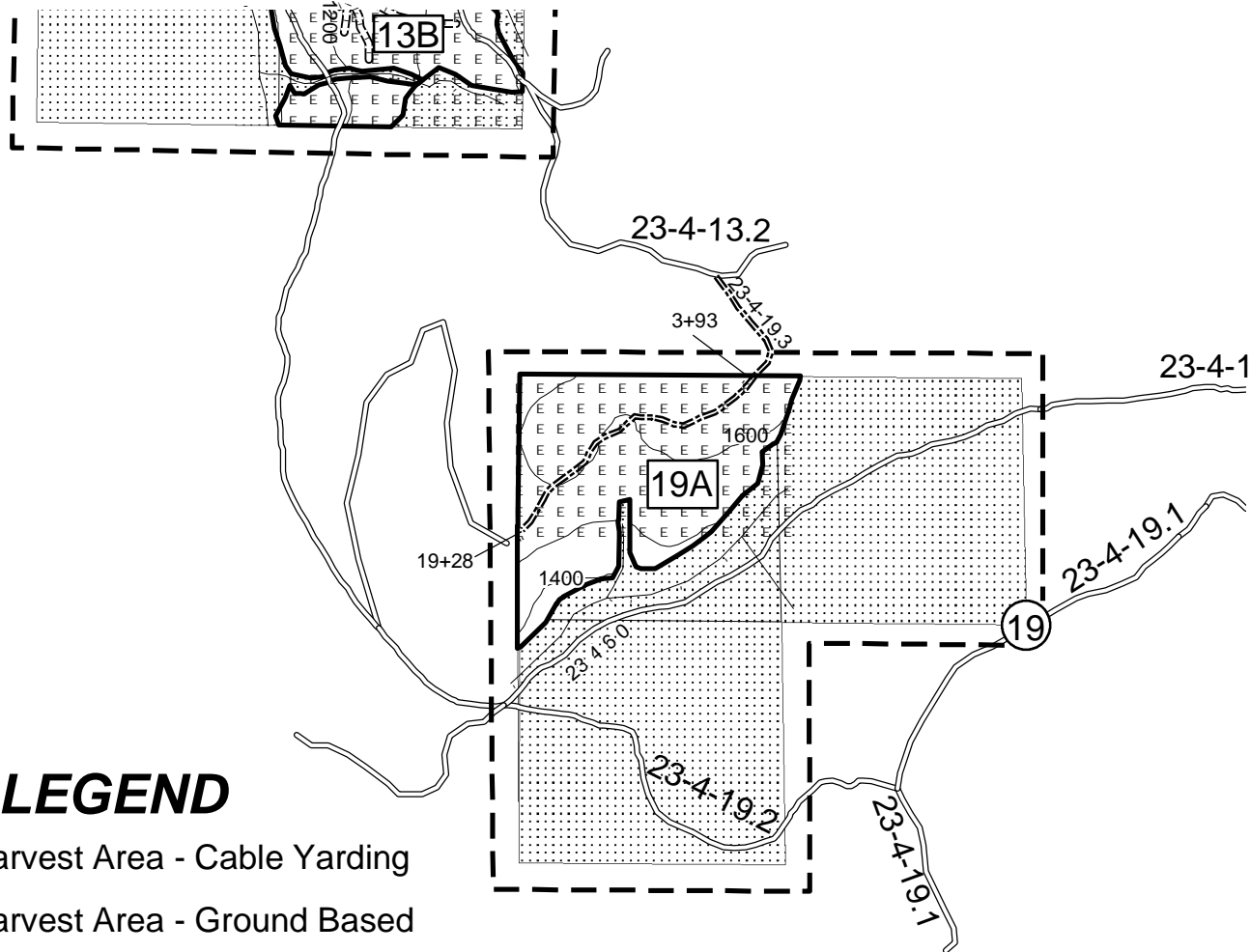








Figure 2. Lurch Commercial Thinning & Density Management: Unit 19A.

Township 23S, Range 04W, Section 19; Willamette Meridian.



LEGEND

-  Harvest Area - Cable Yarding
-  Harvest Area - Ground Based
-  Reserve Area
-  Full Suspension Yarding
-  Existing Road
-  Roads / Spur To Be Constructed
-  Roads / Trails To Be Subsoiled
-  Boundary of Cutting Area
-  Boundary of Contract Area
-  Stream
-  Found Corner

1:12,000

1 inch equals 1,000 feet

1,000 500 0 1,000 Feet

