

DECISION MEMO

**Griz Thin
(Stand 507089)**

**USDA Forest Service
Siuslaw National Forest
Central Coast Ranger District
Lane County, Oregon
Township 16 South, Range 10 West, Sections 6 and 7**

Background

The Cummins-Tenmile Watershed Analysis indicated that the seral types, age class distribution and fragmentation of mature forest habitat are outside the range of natural variability. It also indicated that plantations—especially older ones such as stand 507089—lack diversity (USDA 1995). In the upper Tenmile Creek area, the analysis recommended silvicultural treatment of managed stands to enhance future late-successional habitat, improve habitat diversity, and improve overall connectivity. Exams conducted on stand 507089 indicate the stand is overstocked, resulting in reduced tree growth and a lack of species diversity.

Decision

I have decided to enhance the development of late successional habitat and improve habitat diversity by:

1. Commercially thinning about 66 acres of stand 507089;
2. Creating stand diversity by applying a mixture of thinning regimes in the stand and under planting about 43 acres;
3. Increasing structural diversity by falling and leaving about 330 trees as coarse wood and creating about 396 snags in the stand;
4. Creating a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre meadow at the end of the existing temporary road; and
5. Adding about 50 pieces of large wood by hand to the largest stream adjacent to the unit.

Design criteria must include the most current requirements from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for federally listed wildlife. These requirements are described in a biological opinion (BO) and a corresponding letter of concurrence (LOC) (Habitat Modification BO and LOC 2007-2008; reference numbers 1-7-06-F-0192 and 1-7-06-I-0190).

As required by 36 CFR 219.35, I have considered the best available science in making this decision. The project record demonstrates a thorough review of relevant scientific information, consideration of responsible opposing views, and, where appropriate, the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

Scoping and Public Involvement

Scoping for this project included review of the management direction for the area in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Siuslaw National Forest (USDA 1990), as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan (USDA, USDI 1994); the Cummins-Tenmile Watershed Analysis (USDA 1995), the Late-Successional Reserve Assessment Oregon Coast Province-Southern Portion (USDA 1997), and the Assessment Report for Federal Lands in and Adjacent to the Oregon Coast Province (USDA 1995).

On January 29, 2008, 50 letters soliciting public comment on this proposed action were mailed to groups, organizations, and individuals who have asked to be kept informed of activities on the Siuslaw National Forest. Comments were requested by February 29, 2008. The project was also listed in the Siuslaw's Schedule of Proposed Actions. Three responses to this solicitation were received. Two were supportive of the project; one required more clarification. Responses to the comments were sent on May 29, 2008.

On June 4, 2008, the Public Notice of the Opportunity to Comment on Griz Thin was published in the *Eugene Register Guard*. No comments received during the 30-day comment period.

Extraordinary Circumstances Review

Site-specific conditions were reviewed on the ground to determine if the potential effects on resources would result in the existence of an extraordinary circumstance, thus precluding the use of the categorical exclusion:

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species

The Endangered Species Act requires that federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered or result in adverse modification to such species' designated critical habitat. As required by the Act, potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented by the District wildlife biologist, District fisheries biologist, and Forest botanist.

The selection, felling, lifting, and placement of the trees would follow design criteria developed for the Project that minimizes potential impacts to habitat for listed species (late-successional forest). Effects will be consistent with the current US Fish and Wildlife Service's Letter of Concurrence for wildlife, because no suitable habitat will be removed, and potential adverse effects to northern spotted owls and marbled murrelets from project-related disturbance will be within the limits consulted on for this type of project in the Central Coast Ranger District of the Siuslaw National Forest (Letter of Concurrence for Habitat Modification activities 2007-2008, FWS reference number 1-7-06-I-0190).

Based on the Project design, actions will not jeopardize the continued existence of these species or result in adverse modification to their designated critical habitat.

Habitats affected are common habitats or common habitat elements in the area and on the Forest; therefore, habitat effects would not adversely affect any animal population.

Oregon Coast coho salmon were listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act on May 12, 2008. The Project will have no effect on threatened coho salmon and their designated critical habitat.

2. Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds

Floodplains: Executive Order 11988 requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. There will be no adverse impacts to floodplains; thereby complying with EO 11988 and FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3.2.

Wetlands: Executive Order 11990 requires federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with destruction or modification of wetlands. The Project will not modify or destroy wetlands. As such, the Project will not adversely affect wetlands; thereby complying with EO 11990 and FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3.2.

Municipal Watersheds: The actions associated with the Project will not affect any municipal watershed, thereby complying with FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3.2.

3. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas

The Project is not located in or near a congressionally designated area.

4. Inventoried roadless areas

The Project area is not located in an inventoried roadless area.

5. Research Natural Areas

The Project is not within any proposed or designated Research Natural Areas.

6. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites

As outlined in the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, no effects are anticipated on American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.

7. Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas

Based on a records search, the Project will not affect known archaeological or historic sites.

Findings Required By Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the 1990 Siuslaw National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Siuslaw Forest Plan), as amended by the 1994 Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan), including all plan amendments in effect on the date of the decision.

Other Laws and Regulations

National Forest Management Act—This Act requires all projects and activities to be consistent with the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. This project and decision are consistent with the Siuslaw Forest Plan, as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan.

Endangered Species Act—See previous section, Item 1.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act—The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA), as amended, was established to protect migratory birds. This act makes it illegal to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, or possess migratory birds or any part nest, or egg of any such bird (16 U.S.C. 703-7012). In January of 2001 an Executive Order 13186 was issued on the Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds. It specifies the need to avoid or minimize any adverse impacts on migratory birds. The order addressed the need to restore and enhance the habitat of migratory birds. This project and decision are consistent with the MBTA.

National Historic Preservation Act—See extraordinary circumstances review.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act—See extraordinary circumstances review.

National Environmental Policy Act—This Act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. The documentation of this decision supports compliance with this Act.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, this project will not result in any disproportionate impact to minority or low-income populations.

This project is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives. The ACS assessment is on file at the Waldport office.

Project implementation is consistent with other Federal, State, and local laws for the protection of the environment.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding this Project

Based on a review of the expected impacts and consultation with District and Forest resource specialists, I have determined that: (1) this action will have limited context and intensity; (2) there will be no irreversible commitment of resources or irretrievable loss of site productivity in the project area; (3) and there will be no apparent adverse cumulative or secondary effects. There are no known conflicts with any other planned or proposed activities on National Forest system land in the area. Therefore, this action is categorically excluded from documentation in either an Environmental Assessment or and Environmental Impact Statement.

The category for this action is found in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedure Handbook, Section 31.2, # 12 *Harvest of live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than 1/2 mile of temporary road construction.*

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented in 2009.

Administrative Review and Appeal

This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.12, because no expression of interest has been received prior to the end of the 30-day comment period, and the Responsible Official's decision does not modify the proposed action.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision contact Casey Hawes at (541) 563-8459, Central Coast Ranger District, Waldport Office, 1130 Forestry Lane, Waldport, OR 97394.



PAMELA J. GARDNER
District Ranger

9/19/08

DATE

Specialist Reports Completed for the Griz Thinning Project:

Wildlife Report and BE by Melissa Shelly and Randy Miller
Fisheries Report and BE, including the ACS Assessment by Jack Sleeper
Botany Report and BE by Marty Stein
Hydrology Report by Bill Conroy
Heritage Report by Phyllis Steeves

References

USDA Forest Service. 1990. Land and resource management plan (as amended by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan and 2001 amendment). Corvallis, OR: Siuslaw National Forest.

USDA Forest Service. 1995. Cummins-Tenmile Watershed Analysis. Corvallis, OR: Siuslaw National Forest

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