



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Forest Service

Pacific
Northwest
Region



Fish Creek Forebay Chinquapin Restoration Project

Umpqua National Forest

Diamond Lake Ranger District

February, 2009

Introduction and Project Location

The Fish Creek Forebay Chinquapin Restoration Project includes vegetative treatments to restore and maintain a unique wildlife habitat type on the Diamond Lake Ranger District. The project site is an approximately 11 acre stand of large diameter native chinquapin. This vegetative community creates an important habitat for wildlife species that desire or require broadleaved trees, as well as wildlife species that benefit from the large nut crops that come from this species. Project activities include:

- removal of understory trees and shrubs competing with desired chinquapin using chainsaws and handtools. Merchantable material (logs, firewood, etc.) may be removed from the site to meet fuels loading objectives and to be offered as a financial off-set for other restoration treatments,
- activity fuels treatments including piling/burning and/or mechanical mastication,
- site preparation activities to encourage natural regeneration from seed source or planting,
- chinquapin and other native species plantings or seeding,
- and site maintenance activities including mechanical mowing or underburning.

These activities would occur in T26S R03E Sect 33 and 34. The Umpqua Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) land allocation is MA-11 (Big Game Winter Range), and Northwest Forest Plan land allocations are Matrix (9 acres) and Late Successional Reserve (2 acres).

PURPOSE AND NEED, PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the project is to ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of a unique wildlife habitat type on the Fish Creek Flat Area of the Diamond Lake Ranger District. In order to retain this habitat, active vegetation management activities will be needed. The proposed project will eliminate trees and shrubs that are competing with desirable chinquapin overstory trees, implement cultural practices to stimulate regeneration of another age cohort in the stand, and provide for burning or mechanical maintenance activities.

Decision to be Made

After the 30-day comment period, I will decide whether to implement the action as proposed or whether to take no action at this time, with provisions that the project would include:

1. Project design features to reduce potential impacts to mycorrhizal fungi will be part of the project, and
2. Noxious weed prevention measures as recommended will be implemented.

Findings as Required by Law, Policy and Regulation

Finding of Consistency with Applicable Forest Service Management Direction and the National Forest Management Act

Based on my review of the interdisciplinary analysis for this project, I find that the project is consistent with the standards, guidelines, and amendments of the Umpqua National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan and is therefore consistent with the National Forest Management Act. This finding includes all of the following determinations documented in the specialists' reports for this project:

This project, as revised, will not prevent attainment of the goals and objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

This project is consistent with the 1990 Umpqua National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended by the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan.

Therefore, I find that the Fish Creek Forebay Chinquapin Restoration Project is consistent with all applicable Forest Service management direction.

Finding of Consistency with State Historic Preservation Office Policies

Based on my review of the heritage resource information, I find that the project is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act and that no heritage resources would be affected by this project.

Finding of Non-Jeopardy to Endangered, Threatened, or Sensitive Species and No Adverse Effect to Species Covered Under the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act

The analysis team's fisheries specialist has determined that this project would have no effect on any threatened species or their critical habitat, no effect on Essential Fish Habitat, and no impact on any sensitive species. This project complies with the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The analysis team wildlife biologist has determined that the project lies outside of designated spotted owl recovery habitat, but that proposed activities may effect canopy closure levels on dispersal habitat. This habitat change was of a sufficiently small scale that the biologist determined it would not likely cause an adverse effect to any resident spotted owl. The project is also consistent with Forest Plan direction and objectives for rare and unusual species and Forest Service Sensitive species. Therefore, I find that the Fish Creek Forebay Chinquapin Restoration Project will not likely adversely affect resident reproduction or recovery objectives and does not jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened wildlife species.

The analysis team's botanist has determined that this project would have no effect on threatened or endangered plant species or their critical habitat. With the inclusion of measures to reduce impacts to Sensitive fungi species, the project was determined to comply with agency direction for Sensitive plant species.

Finding of the Absence of Adverse Effects to Extraordinary Circumstances

Scoping to determine the presence or absence of potential effects on extraordinary circumstances began in the April 2008 (Third Quarter) Umpqua National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions. A single public response has been received. This letter

included several questions and expressed interest in commenting as the project progressed. Based on my review of the interdisciplinary analysis, I find that this project does not adversely affect any of the extraordinary circumstances listed in 1909.15, 30.3(2). Specifically, I find that this project will be implemented in a manner that does not adversely affect: (a) endangered or threatened species viability or their critical habitats, or any Forest Service sensitive species viability; (b) floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds; (c) Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness or National Recreation Areas; (d) inventoried roadless areas; (e) Research Natural Areas; (f) Native American religious or cultural sites, or archaeological or historic properties and sites.

Finding of Consistency with All Applicable Federal Laws and Regulations

Based on my review of the actions associated with this project and all applicable specialists' reports, I find that the project is consistent with the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, National Forest Management Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Therefore, I find that the Fish Creek Forebay Chinquapin Restoration Project is consistent with applicable Federal laws and regulations.

Finding of Exclusion from Further National Environmental Policy Act Analysis

Based on my review of (1) the actions associated with this project; (2) the environmental consequences documented in the interdisciplinary analysis; (3) the consistency of this project with applicable laws, regulations, and management direction; (4) the non-jeopardy to endangered or threatened species or heritage resources; and (5) the absence of adverse effects to extraordinary circumstances; I find that this project is not significant in either context or intensity (40 CFR 1508.27) and that no extraordinary circumstances are associated with these projects (FSH 1909.15). I also find that this project will produce no adverse environmental effects, individually or cumulatively, on the physical, biological, or social components of the human environment. Therefore, I find that the Fish Creek Forebay Chinquapin Restoration Project is categorically excluded from analysis in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement (40 CFR 1508.4 and FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3, Part 1) and that the category of exclusion is Category 31.2 (6) as identified in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30.

Appeals

Pursuant to the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California September 20, 2005 clarification in Earth Island Institute v. Ruthenbeck, this decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) in accordance with 36 CFR 215.

Contact Person

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