

DECISION RECORD
for the
LOWER SPENCER CREEK FOREST HEALTH TREATMENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT #OR014-96-02

DECISION

My decision is to implement the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative A) of the Lower Spencer Creek Forest Health Treatments Environmental Assessment, EA #OR-014-96-02. The treatment area is within the known range of the Northern Spotted Owl and the area analyzed in the Northwest Forest Plan. Consultation has been completed with the USFWS on the Kakapo Stew Timber Sale for the Northern Spotted Owl and a "no effect" determination was made for this sale only. The Kakapo Stew Timber Sale is the first advertised sale within the Lower Spencer Creek Forest Health Treatment EA analysis area. Consultation will be completed on additional timber sales from this analysis area as they are prepared.

DECISION RATIONALE

The decision is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Final Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (June 1995), the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management Habitat for Late-Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan), the Klamath Falls Resource Area Fire Management EA (OR-014-94-09), and the Klamath Falls Resource Area Integrated Weed Control Plan EA (OR-014-93-09). The impacts created by the above decision do not require further analysis as noted in the FONSI determination.

In addition, because the Lower Spencer Creek Forest Health Treatment EA analysis area lies within the overlap area of the Northwest Forest Plan and the ICBEMP, the decision was considered within the context of the Scientific Assessments associated with ICBEMP but no additional analysis was deemed necessary.

Alternative A was selected because it represents the major prescription provided by the Klamath Falls RMP. Further, the Proposed Action (Alternative A) is consistent with findings of ICBEMP's Scientific Assessments, which demonstrate the need to restore forest terrestrial habitat that continues to experience forest health problems across the project area.

Alternative B (retain *only* 16 to 25 large trees per acre), while also meeting requirements under the Northwest Forest Plan and Klamath Falls Resource Management Plan, was not selected because of its inadequacy in addressing forest health at a significant scale due to concentrating treatment on fewer acres. Also, Alternative B does not address health treatments needed in riparian reserves.

Alternative C (harvest only salvage volume) was rejected due to its inadequacy to address density control needed to improve stand resiliency. The Roaming Salvage Timber Sale Environmental Assessment (EA #OR-014-96-02) addresses salvage harvest in the Klamath Falls Resource Area, including immediate mortality problems.

No Action (Alternative D) was rejected because it would not resolve the immediate need to address density control concerns for improved forest health in the areas covered under the environmental analysis. Deferring harvest would result in continued suppression and loss of existing shade-intolerant species (ponderosa pine, sugar pine, and Douglas-fir). Existing conditions would not significantly improve if the areas were deferred from harvest; also, the impacts of future harvest would not vary substantially from those anticipated under the proposed action. Under No Action, the ongoing mortality in many existing stands would result in deteriorated stand conditions, increased fuel loads, and a corresponding increased risk of stand-replacing wildfires.

DISCUSSION

Treatments will be implemented using BLM timber sale procedures. The treatments are expected to occur during the next 3 to 6 years in up to 7 timber sales to treat the areas proposed in the EA. The total harvested sale volume and acres will not exceed those analyzed in the EA, 12 MMBF and 5,000 acres respectively, unless the EA is amended.

Thinning prescriptions will address not only larger trees, but also stems between 3 and 7 inches in diameter because many concerns about density, fuel loading, and stand-replacing fires are correlated to trees within this diameter range.

Mitigating Measures: Four mitigating measures were proposed:

Proposals 1 and 3: Connectivity Corridors

Defer harvest for 2 to 3 years in Sections 19 and 30 of T. 38 S., R.6 E. (proposed connectivity area) to allow for postmonitoring of initial timber sales under the Northwest Forest Plan. The intent of monitoring is to determine if prescriptions satisfy specific habitat requirements for the Goshawk and Connectivity Corridors. Frosty One (in progress) and Too Frosty timber sales (completed) are being monitored.

Recommendations from the Spencer Creek Watershed Analysis:

!

Maintain a late-successional connectivity corridor through Sections 19 and 30.

! Design a prescription that:

X

Maintains a corridor at least 600 feet wide and including 2 snags/acre equal to or greater than 20 inches dbh, with at least 40 percent of the area in late-seral stage and 60 percent having canopy closure; and the remainder of the corridor area at least in a mid-seral stage, having at least 40 percent canopy closure.

X Emphasizes retention of large down woody debris, including piles.

Decision: Implement Proposal 1. The Klamath Falls Resource Area Interdisciplinary Team decided to implement these proposals delaying harvest in the proposed corridor area in Sections 19 and 30 for up to three years. Existing Northwest Forest Plan Timber Sales under contract will be monitored when complete to assess post-harvest stand characteristics. Post-harvest monitoring will help determine the necessity for additional constraints on Matrix lands within the proposed corridor.

Proposal 2: Goshawk

Recommendation from IM No. OR-94-112 (dated June 22, 1994) regarding management of habitat for Northern Goshawk:

! Maintain habitat around known goshawk territories, as follows:.

X

Retain 60 percent canopy closure and late seral or old-growth conditions in designated 30-acre nest stand. Thinning from below will accomplish this objective.

! Maintain 400 acres around nest site, at a minimum, as follows:

X Retain 60 percent in late seral/mature forest and 40 percent mid/early forest. Open understory/plentiful dead and down material and 1-2 acre patch cuts will provide excellent goshawk foraging habitat.

The above measures should be applied to areas within 0.25-mile of known nests and roosts.

Decision: Implement Proposal 2 as stated. Some instances may exist where habitat requirements for

Threatened/Endangered species, such as Bald Eagles or Northern Spotted Owl, will take precedence over habitat requirements of the Northern Goshawk in areas when their habitats overlap.

Proposal 4: Special Status Plant Species

Winter harvesting in at least 18 inches of snow is required in timber sale areas within T. 39 S., R.6 E., Sections 17,19, and 20; T.38 S., R.6 E., Section 19 and 30 (SW¼ of the NW¼); and T. 38 S., R. 5 E., Section 13 to protect *Asarum wagneri* (Green-flowered ginger).

Decision: Implement Proposal 4, with allowance for summer logging, as described herein. Winter harvesting will be scheduled , where feasible, for areas containing concentrated populations of *Asarum wagneri*. However, due to variable snow depths and accessibility to these areas in the winter, some summer logging may be allowed to accomplish harvest objectives. Past experience with winter operations in the area indicate some difficulty in keeping access roads open during heavy snow years. Any summer operations will be conducted with caution to minimize impacts to concentrated populations of *A. wagneri*.

In addition to the above mitigating measures, the Klamath Falls Resource Area Interdisciplinary Team determined that no harvesting equipment would be allowed within the Spencer Creek Riparian Reserve Area, except on existing roads.

/s/ A. Barron Bail

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Klamath Falls Resource Area Manager

Date 11/18/97