

DECISION RECORD
for
TOPSY/POKEGAMA/HAMAKER FOREST HEALTH TREATMENTS
(Environmental Assessment # OR-014-98-01)

DECISION

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) interdisciplinary team designed the Topsy/Pokegama/Hamaker Forest Health Treatments EA based on resource conditions in the project area. Implementation of the projects described in the EA is necessary to meet the objectives and direction of the Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Based on site-specific analysis, the supporting project record, management recommendations contained in the Topsy/Pokegama Landscape Analysis (1996), and management direction contained in the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP, I have decided to implement the Grenada West Riparian Reserve Vegetation Treatment as described in the proposed action (Alternative A) and associated Project Design Features. Understory thinning of primarily sub-merchantable material will occur adjacent to an intermittent stream channel in Township 40S, Range 7E, section 7 (see Figure 1). Specifically, this decision will result in:

- A service contract to implement density management thinning on approximately 50 acres, to be accomplished using hand crews equipped with chainsaws. This treatment would include:
 - Thinning of understory trees less than 10-inches diameter to an average understory spacing of 16-feet by 16-feet.
 - Thinning of understory trees less than 10-inches diameter under larger (20"+ dbh) pines that are in good condition to 10 feet out from the dripline or a 25-foot radius from the tree, whichever is greater. One or more leave trees in good condition would be left within the cleared area, and would be chosen based on species preference (described below).
 - Prioritization of leave trees by species, in the order of sugar pine, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, incense cedar, and white fir (thinning would focus most intensively on removal of white fir).
 - Removal of all western juniper in the project area (including within the streamside management zone described below).
- Piling and eventual burning of cut material.
- Utilization of cut material for firewood from a small portion of the treatment unit (approximately 7 acres).

Surveys

- All required surveys for Cultural, Wildlife, and Botanical resources have been completed.
 - No cultural sites are located within the project area; one site is located immediately adjacent to (but outside of) the project area.
 - This project will not adversely affect or contribute to the need to list (under the ESA) any special status wildlife species
 - No special status plants or noxious weeds were found in the project area.

Mitigations

- The Project Design Features / Best Management Practices described in Appendix A-2 of the EA shall be implemented.
- Cultural resource sites will be avoided. Should undocumented sites be discovered during project implementation, work shall stop and the Klamath Falls Resource Area Lead Archaeologist shall be notified immediately.

- A variable-width streamside management zone will be delineated adjacent to the intermittent stream channel. The average width of this zone will be 15 feet on each side of the stream (measured from the edge of the active channel). No piling will occur within 35 feet of the outer boundary of this zone.
- No snags, broadleaf trees, or shrubs will be cut.
- Piles will be located so as to avoid damage to leave trees and existing large woody debris, where practical.
- If previously unknown raptor nests are discovered within treatment units during project implementation, a wildlife biologist will be consulted to determine and implement appropriate mitigation measures, as described in Appendix A-1 of the EA.
- All vehicles and equipment will be cleaned off prior to operating on BLM lands. Removal of all dirt, grease, and plant parts that may carry noxious weed seeds or vegetative parts is required and may be accomplished with a pressure hose.
- Noxious weeds in the immediate area of operations shall be mowed to ground level prior to the start of project activities.
- All equipment and vehicles operating off of main roads shall be cleaned off prior to leaving the job site when the job site includes noxious weed populations. Removal of all dirt, grease, and plant parts that may carry noxious weed seeds or vegetative parts is required and may be accomplished with a pressure hose.

DECISION RATIONALE

The decision to implement this proposal meets the purpose and needs identified in the EA and furthers the intent established in the Northwest Forest Plan Aquatic Conservation Strategy and the Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) to implement restoration projects within Riparian Reserves. The intent of the “no harvest” widths described in Appendix A-2 of the EA was to protect water quality by avoiding ground disturbance and canopy removal adjacent to streams. Design features of the project (no use of mechanical equipment, a prescription focused on understory thinning, and restrictions on the location of slash piles) ensure that these objectives will be met while allowing implementation of restoration treatments.

Alternative B, which proposed treating Riparian Reserves only as needed to address hazard trees and fuels accumulation, was not selected because it does not maintain and restore the large conifer component within Riparian Reserves.

Alternative C, the Fuels and Restoration Treatment Only alternative, was not selected because it does not allow removal of forest products (firewood). Firewood removal from one part of the treatment unit is a component of the overall project strategy, with regards to management of cut material.

Alternative D, which excludes the use of mechanical equipment, is an appropriate alternative for this project, but is no more appropriate than Alternative A.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The lead biologist determined that the project will have “No Effect” on Threatened and Endangered species, thus consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is not necessary.

No cultural resources were identified within the project boundary during the cultural resource survey and the adjacent historic site will be avoided. Formal Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation review is not required because there will be no adverse effect on cultural materials.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The KFRA initially sent out a public scoping letter on December 18, 1997. Then on May 27, 1998, a public tour of the project area was held. On May 28, 1998, the KFRA announced the availability of the Topsy/Pokegama/Hamaker Forest Health Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA). A number of letters were received. The main categories of the comments include:

1. A thorough analysis of the impacts of the proposed action is necessary for the following resources; soils, water, fish, wildlife, old growth, critical habitat, Late Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, and watersheds.
2. Objection to commercial logging or road activity in roadless areas.
3. Assurance that all surveys are complete.
4. Cumulative impacts analysis that considers adjacent private lands.
5. Status of Marten, Fisher, and Wolverine sightings.
6. Timely NEPA documentation and dissemination of documents to the public
7. Impacts to the Klamath Wild and Scenic River. Maintain ecological, recreational, and visual benefits.
8. Utilization of an array of forest products prior to implementing prescribed fires.
9. Aggressive thinning treatments to improve forest health
10. Economic and community benefits from forest management activities (employment).

I have reviewed the public comments described above and have discussed them with the interdisciplinary team of specialists on my staff. The comments received do not provide any substantial new information or new analysis, nor do they identify substantial new data gaps that would indicate additional analysis is needed. The EA contains thorough analysis of the impacts to the various resources for which concern was expressed. Required surveys have been completed. The cumulative impact analysis does consider foreseeable actions on adjacent lands. The public has had ample opportunity to participate in the NEPA process. This project is designed in part to provide economic and community benefits, improve forest health, and utilize the merchantable material generated from the project to the extent practicable. I am confident that the EA represents a thorough analysis of the site-specific impacts to affected habitats and species, particularly in light of the more comprehensive analysis done in the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP and Northwest Forest Plan to which the EA is tiered.

CONCLUSION

I conclude that this Decision Record is consistent with the Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan, the Record of Decision and Standard and Guidelines on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, and the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001).

There are no significant new circumstances or facts which were not addressed in the Topsy/Pokegama/Hamaker Forest Health Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA). Therefore, the Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) for this EA is still appropriate. This action incorporates the above Standards and Guidelines and Best Management Practices (BMPs).

This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act. All required field surveys were completed according to protocol and the required Section 7 consultation with U. S. Fish and Wildlife is on going. It is also consistent with The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations, and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice).

This decision will not have any adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

A Notice of Decision will be published in the Klamath Falls Herald & News. That notice will meet the requirement for purposes of protests under 43 CFR subpart 5003 - Administrative Remedies, and will establish the date initiating the protest period. Protests of this decision must be filed within fifteen (15) days after publication of the Notice of Decision. Send protests to:

Manager
Klamath Falls Resource Area
2795 Anderson Avenue, Bldg. 25
Klamath Falls, OR 97603.

Protests should contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. To be considered complete, a protest must contain, at a minimum:

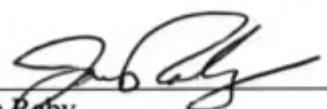
1. the name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest,
2. a statement of the issue or issues being protested,
3. a statement of the parts of the specific EA being protested by referencing specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, etc. included in the document,
4. a copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that you submitted during the planning process or a reference to the date the issue or issues were discussed by you for the record,
5. a concise statement explaining why the Resource Area Manager's decision is believed to be incorrect. This is a critical part of your protest. Document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents, environmental analysis documents, and available planning records (for example, meeting minutes or summaries, or correspondence).

A protest that merely expresses disagreement with the Resource Area Manager's proposed decision, without any data, will not provide us with the benefit of your information and insight. In this case, the Field Manager's review will be based on the existing analysis and supporting data.

Before deciding to file a protest, I encourage you to please contact me to determine if your concerns might be met in some other way via a protest or to assist you in the protest process if it is appropriate.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulation 43 CFR 5003.2 (a & c), the effective date of this decision is the date of publication of the Notice of Decision.

Thank you for your continued interest in the multiple use management of your public lands.



Jon Raby
Manager
Klamath Falls Resource Area

8/23/04

Date

Grenada West Riparian Reserve Vegetation Treatment

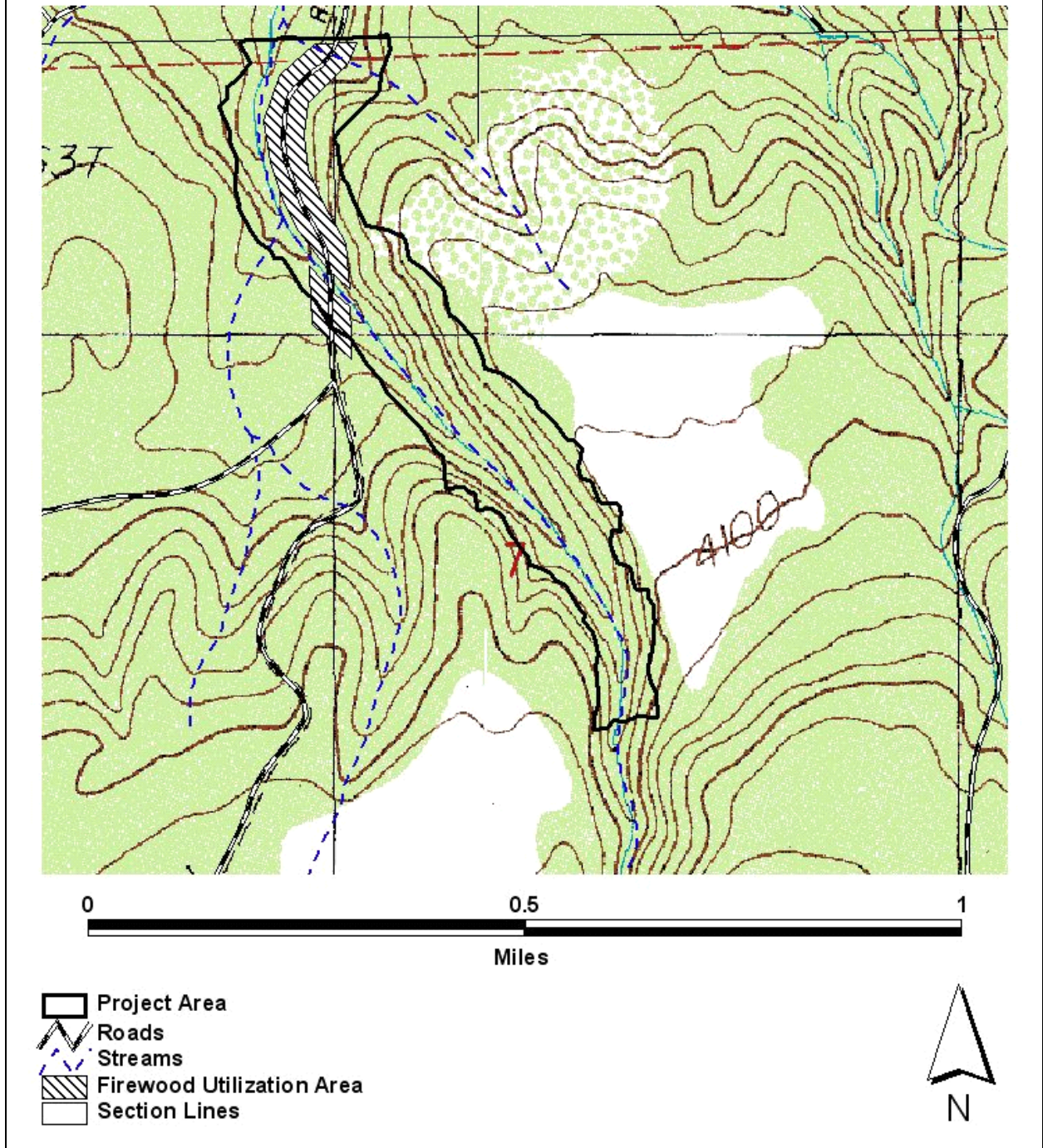


Figure 1. Map of project area and associated firewood utilization area.

