

DECISION RECORD
for the Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale
(Reference: Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Rattlesnake Reservoir
Forest Health and Woodland Treatments
Environmental Assessment #OR014-99-6)

Introduction

The impacts of the Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale are analyzed in the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA) #OR014-99-6 which provides for a separate Decision Record to be prepared at the time each sale is proposed. This Decision Record applies only to the Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale (the third timber sale proposed under this EA), which is scheduled to be negotiated in October, 2002. The Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale is located in the Swan Lake Rim area, T.37SS R.10E. section 24, T.37S. R.11.5E. Section 32, and T.38S. R11.5E. Section 5. A separate Decision Record for each proposed timber sale under the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA) is written to incorporate new and/or updated site specific information about the timber sale area. A total of 48 acres in three units is scheduled for thinning. Approximately 101MBF is marked for removal.

The Authorized Officer has the authority to negotiate sales under 250MBF (Timber Sale Handbook 5400-1A.1.) The reason the sale is being negotiated is that the three tracts designated for thinning are small and isolated. The three units cannot efficiently be added to other sales due to there isolation. They lie immediately adjacent to private forest lands owned by Jeld-Wen Corporation. Jeld-Wen is presently thinning their own lands in the area. Access to the proposed harvest units is across Jeld-Wen lands. The stands would immediately benefit from thinning due to present overstocking. The thinning would reduce future risk of insect related mortality and wildfire.

Site-Specific Information

Threatened and Endangered Species

- < Northern Spotted Owls - The proposed treatment area is on the east side of the resource area and is outside the boundary defined in the Northwest Forest Plan for northern spotted owl habitat.
- < Bald Eagles - No known nest sites occur in the area. A senior biologist assisted in marking one of the units that is used by wintering Bald Eagles for roosting. An uneven-aged silvicultural prescription which retains both larger and understory trees was implemented.
- < Lost River and short nose suckers - The proposed treatment would not impact habitat for the suckers because:
 - 1) There are no perennial or fish bearing streams in the proposed treatment area, and;
 - 2) The Lost River is about 10 miles, at its nearest point, from the proposed project area.

Survey and Manage Species

- < The Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale area is outside the Northwest Forest Plan boundary that requires compliance with the new Record of Decision for Survey and Manage Species.

Cultural Surveys

- < Cultural surveys have been completed in the area for a previous prescribed burning project. No cultural sites are located in the area. If a cultural site is located, cultural protection and management procedures outlined in the EA will be followed.

Riparian Reserves

- < There are no perennial or intermittent streams within the boundaries of the proposed timber sale.
- < There is a single ephemeral drainage near Unit 1. Best management practices as specified in the Klamath Falls Resource Management Plan and EA will be implemented which specify crossing at right angles to the draw. In addition, debris will be placed below the crossing for catchment of any

sediment.

- < The Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale lies within the Yonna Valley basin which does drain into the Lost River. Rattlesnake Springs, which lies about 0.25 - 0.50 miles to the east of the project area drains into Rattlesnake Creek and then eventually into an irrigation ditch.

Vegetation

- < Forested vegetation consists primarily of mixed aged ponderosa pine with minor amounts of incense cedar and white fir. Densities of the stands will be reduced to approximately 90 to 120 square feet of basal area to reduce the density below the mortality threshold for pine stands.
- < Vegetation in the area was surveyed in September of 1998 prior to a proposed prescribed burning project. A summary of that survey report is in the EA file. No sensitive, threatened, or endangered plants were found or are suspected to occur in the project area.
- < Fragmentation of large blocks of mature forest was an issue raised during the initial scoping. BLM does manage a large contiguous block along Swan Lake Rim. Approximately 60-70% of that what BLM manages on Swan Lake Rim is classified as Juniper Woodlands, 10-15% is rock outcrops, and about 20-25% is isolated forested areas including mature forested stands. One of the objectives of the silvicultural prescription for the Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale is to maintain a component of mature trees to provide for continual late Successional habitat. The proposed treatment is generally an individual tree selection/density management harvest where approximately 20- 30% of the basal area is removed. Upon completion of harvest, the isolated stands will still be classified as mature forest.

Other

- < Approximately 2000 feet of a minimum standard road would be constructed on BLM land to access unit 1. This road will be used in the future for juniper and prescribed burning treatments in this area. The road will require minimal excavation and will be water barred, seeded, and blocked upon completion of this project.

Other Issues Addressed In EA

The EA addresses a number of issues including those raised during the public scoping and tours. Those issues that are addressed in the EA include;

- Number and size of trees to be removed (partial cutting versus clearcutting)
- Reduction of ground fuels
- Availability of firewood for the public
- Forest health problems on federal lands on the eastside
- Impact on deer herds
- Roadless areas \geq 1000 acres
- Treatment of older forest stands
- Roads (new construction and obliteration)
- Salvage
- Soil disturbance
- Vegetation disturbance
- Use of prescribed fire
- Riparian Reserve treatments
- Watershed Analysis

Some of the issues raised during public scoping do not apply to the proposed project because the project areas are outside the Northwest Forest Plan geographic boundary. These issues include:

- Soil and Vegetation disturbance in Key Watersheds - The term "Key Watersheds" is applicable to lands within the boundaries of the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP). There are no "Key Watersheds" in the Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale project area.

- Soil and Vegetation disturbance in Municipal Watersheds. There are no Municipal Watersheds in Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale project area.
- Activities in Late Successional Reserves (LSRs). Late Successional Reserves are a land allocation of federal land within the NFP boundaries that are set aside to manage for late successional dependent species. In the Klamath Falls Resource Management Plan, there is no designated Late Successional Reserve land allocation on lands outside the Northwest Forest Plan boundaries.
- Surveys for “Survey and Manage Species”. This is a NFP requirement only and is not required for KFRA lands east of Klamath Falls. Surveys were completed for bald eagles, golden eagles, goshawks, and great gray owls.
- Pacific Yew does not occur within the project area. Within the KFRA, Pacific Yew is located only in isolated areas and primarily in cooler westside riparian reserves in the Surveyor Mtn area.
- Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat. The Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale area is primarily a ponderosa pine/western juniper forest type and is outside the range of the northern spotted owl.

Consultation

The treatment area is outside the known range of the northern spotted owl and the boundary of the area analyzed in the Northwest Forest Plan. Therefore, no consultation was required for the northern spotted owl. Informal consultation has been completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the entire analysis area (Bly Mtn., Swan Lake Rim, and Whiteline Reservoir) for Lost River and short nose suckers and bald eagles. The KFRA senior biologist has made a site specific “No Affect” determination for the proposed Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale for all T&E species.

Consistency

The decision is consistent with the goals and objectives of the:

- ◻ Final Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and its Record of Decision (June 1995).
- ◻ Klamath Falls Resource Area Fire Management EA (OR-014-94-09)
- ◻ Klamath Falls Resource Area Integrated Weed Control Plan EA (OR-014-93-09).
- ◻ Interior Columbia Basin Final Environmental Impact Statement / December 2000

The *Interior Columbia Basin Final Environmental Impact Statement - Proposed Decision* (ICBEMP - FEIS) was published in December of 2000. Alternative S2 was selected as the preferred alternative. No official direction has been given to the agencies in regards to incorporating that decision into the individual land use plans (RMPs) for the administrative units. The Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale will not preclude implementing the Proposed Decision but generally complies with the direction of Alternative S2 which states “The intent of management direction for landscape dynamics is to maintain or, if necessary, restore the health, productivity, and diversity of native fish, wildlife, and plants; maintain or improve water quality; sustain stream flows; and maintain and/or enhance the resiliency of forests and rangelands to fires, disease, and other disturbances.” (Page 3 - ICBEMP - FEIS Proposed Decision).

Decision For The Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale

My decision is to implement the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative A) of the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA #OR-014-99-6) for the Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale. This will involve harvesting approximately 101 thousand board feet (MBF) from 3 units totaling approximately 48 acres.

Alternative A was selected because it best meets the overall objectives of the Klamath Falls RMP while minimizing impacts. All impacts identified in the environmental assessment and identified by the general public have been analyzed and are within the scope of the FEIS. Soil disturbance levels continue to be monitored annually throughout the KFRA to determine if impacts exceed those analyzed in the Klamath Falls FEIS. Continual monitoring using pre and post treatment stand exams of other RMP timber sales

indicate that post-harvest stand characteristics (including canopy closure, residual large tree component, structure, and down woody material) are in compliance with the Klamath Falls RMP. Post-harvest biological surveys are indicating that the residual stands are continuing to serve as late successional habitat for bald eagles, golden eagles, northern goshawks, and northern spotted owls. A number of RMP harvested stands have received a follow-up underburn to reduce fire risks and initial results are positive. Alternative B (exclude Swan Lake Rim) was rejected because the density and juniper encroachment issue is relevant to forest and woodlands on Swan Lake Rim. If helicopter logging on Swan Lake Rim is too costly, only those commercial forest stands that can be ground based logged will be treated.

Alternative C (salvage only) was also rejected because it does not adequately 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.

Alternative D (no treatment) was rejected because it provides no economic benefit to communities associated with harvesting and processing forest products. The only density control under Alternative D would be through the use of prescribed fire. Existing conditions would not significantly improve if the areas were deferred from harvest. Under the no treatment alternative, ongoing mortality in many existing stands may result in deteriorated stand conditions, increased fuel loads, and a corresponding increased risk of high intensity wildfires.

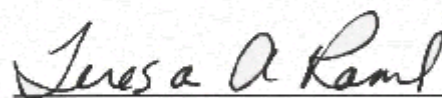
Mitigating Measures

- 1) During the public scoping, there were requests that firewood be made available upon completion of harvesting. No firewood will be available for the general public from this project area because public access is limited. With the large amount of noncommercial fuel reduction work being done in the Bly Mtn./Klamath Forest Estates area, combined with the juniper woodland treatments in the Gerber Block, the KFRA has been able to meet most of the requests for firewood.
- 2) One of the issues raised during the public scoping and tours was the illegal dumping of trash on public lands in the area. Because most of the BLM lands in the treatment area are behind locked gates controlled by Jeld-Wen, illegal dumping on public lands does not appear to be a problem at this time in Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale area. Most of the illegal dumping problem is occurring in the Bly Mtn./ Klamath Forest Estates area where cleanup options are being considered.

I have determined that neither a supplement to the Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA) #OR014-99-6 Environmental Assessment (EA) nor a change to the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is necessary for these reasons:

The Bly Mtn. / Swan Lake / Whiteline Reservoir Forest Health and Woodland Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA) addressed the proposed Rattlesnake Negotiated Timber Sale project. There will be no substantial changes to the actions as proposed in the EA. The actions are within the scope of the alternatives identified in the EA and the environmental impacts are within those analyzed in the EA.

There are no significant new circumstances or facts relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the modification to the proposed action or its impacts which were not addressed in the EA.



Teresa A. Raml
Field Manager, Klamath Falls Resource Area

Date 10/1/02

Rattlesnake

Williamette Meridian
T37S., R10E., Section 24
T37S., R11.5E., Section 32
T38S., R11.5E., Section 5

Timber Sale Contract Map

Contract No. OR014-TS3-1
Exhibit A
Page 1 of 1

