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DECISION RECORD #1 FOR UPPER SPENCER CREEK EA NO. OR014-03-03 PROJECT: SURVEYOR TIMBER SALE

INTRODUCTION

This Decision Record is the first Decision Record that will authorize work to begin on actions proposed and analyzed in the Upper Spencer Creek EA No. OR014-03-03. This Decision Record addresses only the **Surveyor Timber Sale** that is located in a portion of the project area presented and analyzed in the EA. I will be making further decisions on the remaining components of the proposed action summarized in Table 2 of the EA including; additional commercial timber harvest, non-commercial treatments, Riparian Reserve treatments, DDR treatments, prescribe fire, road building, road improvement, road decommissioning, large woody debris placement in streams, revegetating Riparian Reserves, and aspen stand enhancement.

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) interdisciplinary team has designed the Upper Spencer Creek EA based on: (a) current resource conditions in the project area and (b) to meet the objectives and direction of the Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan. The proposals presented and evaluated in the Upper Spencer Creek EA reflect what the interdisciplinary team determined to be the best balance and integration of resource conditions, resource potential, competing management objectives and expressed interests of the various public that commented and surrounding communities.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement Alternative 1, the Preferred Alternative, and the Project Design Features (Appendix B of EA) proposed in the Upper Spencer Creek EA (EA No. OR014-03-03). The approved action will result in a timber sale (Surveyor Timber Sale) within the Upper Spencer drainage. Specifically, this decision will result in:

- One 406 acre / 9.6 MMBF Commercial Timber Sale consisting of 278 acres of Density Management Harvest, 126 acres of Regeneration Harvest, and 2 acres of Right-of-Way Clearing.

- Approximately 61 acres will be cable logged and 345 acres tractor logged.
- 2 acres of R/W clearing (20.8 stations of new road construction), 770.5 stations of road improvement or renovation, and approximately 35.4 stations of road ripping and 2 road blocks
- Following harvest, many of the units will receive site preparation treatments using both mechanical and prescribe burning methods as described in the EA. Regeneration units as well as other areas will be subsequently planted.
- No Riparian Reserves will be treated as part of the Surveyor Timber. A separate Decision Record and potentially a service contract will be used to implement treatments within the Riparian Reserves located in the contract area.
- Treatments as a result of this Decision will span over a 3-7 period or up until the reforested areas are fully stocked.

Surveys

- All required surveys (Wildlife, Vegetative, Survey and Manage, and Cultural) have been completed. A number of Survey and Manage (S&M) sites were located and buffered for protection (See Survey and Manage section of EA).

Mitigations

- The Project Design Features / Best Management Practices described in Appendix B of the EA shall be implemented
- My decision does not include a mandatory requirement to harvest over snow. However, an optional clause shall be inserted into the timber sale contract and the total purchase price reduced if the Purchaser chooses to harvest over snow.

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 and the Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) to manage the Matrix lands with commercial forest products as a major objective.

Alternative 2, the No Action Alternative, is rejected because it does not meet the resource management objectives for the Matrix identified in the Klamath Falls RMP and the Northwest Forest Plan. It would not address or alter many of the existing conditions and trends relative to healthy vegetative conditions, resource protection, and watershed restoration that were identified both in the EA and in the Spencer Creek Watershed Analysis. With No Action, these conditions would not be improved or mitigated; certain undesirable ecological trends would continue unchanged and, in some cases, would be exacerbated with the passage of time. For example, high fire hazard conditions would continue and increase, stand vigor and forest health would continue to decline, existing erosion problems would continue uncorrected, the successional trends that are contributing to a loss of pine would continue, and certain beneficial economic opportunities in the adjacent communities would be foregone.

Alternative 3, Fuels and Restoration Treatment Only, is rejected because it also does not meet the resource management objectives for the Matrix identified in the Klamath Falls RMP and the Northwest Forest Plan. Although Alternative 3 would reduce erosion problems and high fuel hazard conditions, certain beneficial economic opportunities would be foregone because no commercial timber harvest would be implemented.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Pursuant with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), consultation was completed with the US Fish and Wildlife Service; Biological Assessment dated June 12, 2003; Biological Opinion dated June 24, 2003. The Service has determined that the proposed action will not jeopardize the continued existence of the northern spotted owl and has issued an incidental take for the proposed action due to habitat modification.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was notified of this project in accordance with 36 CFR §805.5(b). They have raised no objections to the BLM's finding that it would not adversely impact sites of cultural or historic significance.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The KFRA requested public comments on the Upper Spencer Creek EA on two different occasions. The first was an initial scoping letter dated April 3, 2001 that outlined the proposed treatments for the analysis area. Two comment letters were received. Upon completion of the EA, the public was again notified on April 4, 2003 and allowed to comment during a formal thirty (30) day public comment period. A single comment letter was received from the public regarding the Upper Spencer EA from Oregon Natural Resources Council. The main categories of the comments include:

1. Unacceptable impacts to soil, water, fish, wildlife, old growth, critical habitat, Late Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, Tier 1 Watersheds, and spotted owls from harvesting, ground-based logging, and road construction.
2. Objection to commercial logging or road activity in uninventoried roadless areas.
3. Signing of a FONSI before soliciting public comments and an erroneous finding that the impacts will not be significant.
4. Survey and Manage surveys are not complete.
5. The analysis of the cumulative watershed effects (CWE) in regards to Aquatic Conservation Strategy, peak flows, short and long term impacts, is inadequate.
6. The effect of thinning on reducing large woody debris recruitment.
7. An erroneous claim that the analysis is not lynx habitat.
8. Impacts of livestock grazing on restoration activities.

I have reviewed the public comments stated above and have discussed them with the interdisciplinary team of specialists on my staff. The comments received do not provide any substantially new information or new analysis. Nor do they identify substantial new data gaps that would indicate additional analysis is needed. Finally, the comments do not

identify any significant new data which would alter the effects described in the EA. I am confident that the EA represents a thorough analysis of the site-specific impacts to affected habitats and species, 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

A. Plan Consistency

Based on the information in the Upper Spencer Creek EA and in the record, 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). This decision is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, The Native American Religious Freedom Act and cultural resource management laws and regulations. It is also consistent with 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).

B. Summary

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(1)), the decision for the Surveyor Timber Sale will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the first Notice of Sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located. This newspaper is the Klamath Falls Herald and News.



Jon Raby
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Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management



Date