

DECISION RECORD
for
JOHNSON/SHEEPY RIPARIAN RESERVE VEGETATION TREATMENTS
(Environmental Assessment # OR-014-02-04)

DECISION

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) interdisciplinary team has designed the Johnson/Sheepy Riparian Reserve Vegetation Treatments 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).

Based on site-specific analysis, the supporting project record, management recommendations contained in the Jenny Creek Watershed Analysis (1994), and management direction contained in the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP, I have decided to implement the first year of the Johnson/Sheepy Riparian Reserve Vegetation Treatments as described in the proposed action, Alternative 1, and associated Project Design Features. This Decision Record applies to four treatment units within Riparian Reserves that will be thinned in 2003.

Specifically, this decision will result in understory thinning within four treatment units (see Figures 1 and 2):

- Johnson Creek: Approximately 90 acre treatment unit, with 40 foot no-treatment buffers adjacent to Johnson Creek and 20 foot no-treatment buffers adjacent to an unnamed tributary.
- West Fork Johnson Creek: Approximately 43 acre treatment unit, with 20 foot no-treatment buffers adjacent to the West Fork of Johnson Creek and an unnamed tributary.
- East Fork Johnson Creek: Approximately 30 acre treatment unit, with 20 foot no-treatment buffers adjacent to the East Fork of Johnson Creek.
- Sheepy Creek: Approximately 30 acre treatment unit, with 20 foot no-treatment buffers adjacent to Sheepy Creek.

The total area within the above treatment units is approximately 193 acres. Within these treatment units thinning would occur on about 168 acres during the year 2003 or 2004.

Surveys

- All required surveys for Wildlife, Botanical, and Survey and Manage resources have been completed.
 - The Johnson Creek unit contains numerous Survey and Manage (S&M) *Fluminicola* sp. sites in the stream channel. Surveys detected no other S&M mollusks within the 2003 treatment units.
 - Surveys detected no S&M vascular plants, fungi, or wildlife species within the 2003 treatment units.
 - As described in the EA, special status wildlife species occur near some of the 2003 treatment units.

- Green-flowered wild ginger, a special status plant species, occurs within some 2003 treatment units.
- Required Cultural surveys will be completed prior to project implementation.

Mitigations

- The Project Design Features / Best Management Practices described in Section 5 of the EA shall be implemented.
- No-treatment areas shall be delineated adjacent to all streams (including those within treatment units focusing on younger, even-aged forest stands).
- A larger 40 foot no-treatment buffer in the Johnson Creek unit will be delineated to maintain habitat for *Fluminicola sp.* and meet the objectives listed in the Survey Protocol Management Recommendations.
- The seasonal operating restrictions described in Section 5 of the EA will be implemented to minimize disturbance to special status species.
- As discussed in the EA, the type of activity and the delineation of no-treatment buffers will minimize detrimental effects to green-flowered wild ginger populations.
- 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 Section 5 of the EA.
- If surveys detect cultural resources within treatment units, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented, as described in Section 5 of the EA.

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.

Alternative 2, which proposed thinning only within stands consisting of young age classes (primarily plantations), was not selected because it does not maintain and restore the large conifer component that occurs within older forested stands within Riparian Reserves. Although implementing Alternative 2 would address density and species composition concerns in younger forests within Riparian Reserves, this alternative does not address the processes and conditions that are causing mortality of large conifers and poor recruitment of pines.

Alternative 3, the No Action Alternative, was not selected because it does not meet the resource management objectives for Riparian Reserves identified in the Klamath Falls RMP and the Northwest Forest Plan. It would not address existing conditions and trends related to ecological function of Riparian Reserves and watershed restoration that have been identified. In older forested stands within Riparian Reserves, large pines that provide stream shading, wildlife habitat, and future sources of large woody debris would continue to be at risk from competition of dense white fir understories and excessive fuel

loading. In younger, more even-aged stands, the time required for recovery of older forest conditions would not be reduced.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

Following preparation of the Environmental Assessment (EA) the Klamath Falls Resource Area staff prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to summarize for the public the fact that an Environmental Impact Statement would not need to be prepared. Both the EA and FONSI were sent out for a public comment and review period of thirty (30) days. Two public comments were received via electronic mail from Oregon Natural Resources Council and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

The appropriateness of the FONSI is reaffirmed as there were no specific comments that would reverse the Finding of No Significant Impact. Comments received were considered in preparation of this Decision Record. A summation of comments follows:

- A request for a reference to the 2002 version of the 303(d) list of water quality impaired streams on page 10 of the EA (rather than the 1998 version; there have been no changes in listing status for any streams in the analysis area);
- A request for clarification of measures to be taken to prevent adverse impacts to water quality;
- A request for clarification of the location of the lands to be treated;
- Recommendations regarding the thinning prescription and a fuel management plan;
- Questions about lynx, and comments about adequacy of the analysis of sensitive species,
- Questions about the impact of livestock grazing, and,
- Concerns regarding preparation of a FONSI prior to public review of the environmental assessment.

The BLM responded to comments via electronic mail. Concerning location of treatment areas, the BLM prepared the analysis based on specific project sites. A map showing the treatment units proposed for 2003 (see Figure 3) is provided with this Decision Record. Additional decision records with supporting analysis will be prepared prior to implementation for treatment units not described in this decision record.

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,

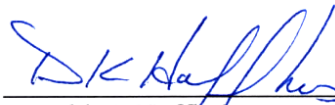
- 2) a statement of the issue or issues being protested,
- 3) a statement of the parts of the specific EA being protested by referencing specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, etc. included in the document,
- 4) a copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that you submitted during 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.

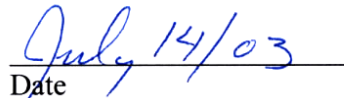
Before deciding to file a protest, I encourage you to please contact me to determine if your concerns might be met in some other way via a protest or to assist you in the protest process if it is appropriate.

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.



Donald K. Hoffheins
Acting Manager,
Klamath Falls Resource Area


Date

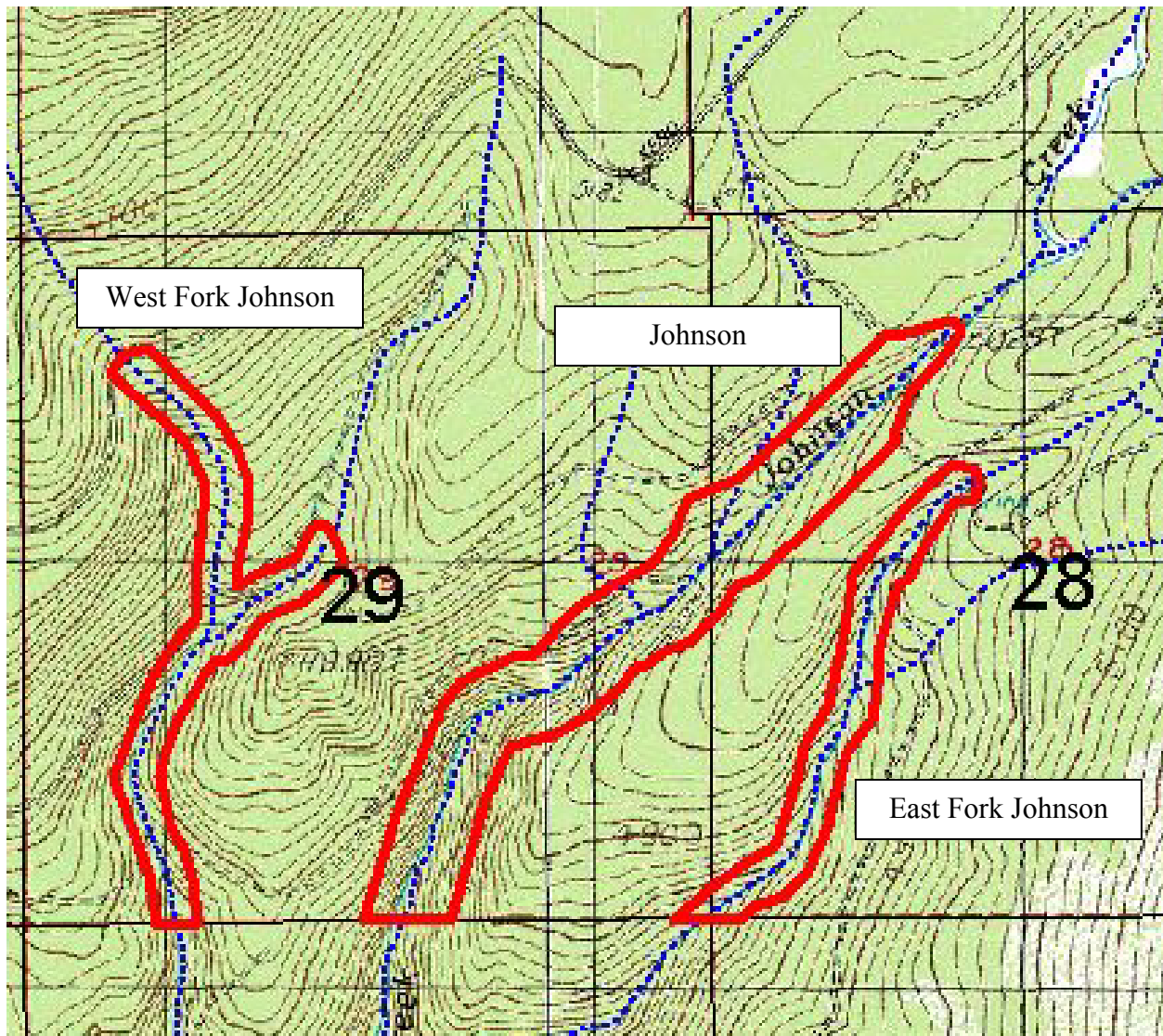


Figure 1. 2003 treatment units in the Johnson Creek subwatershed (USGS Surveyor Mountain and Little Chinquapin quadrangles).

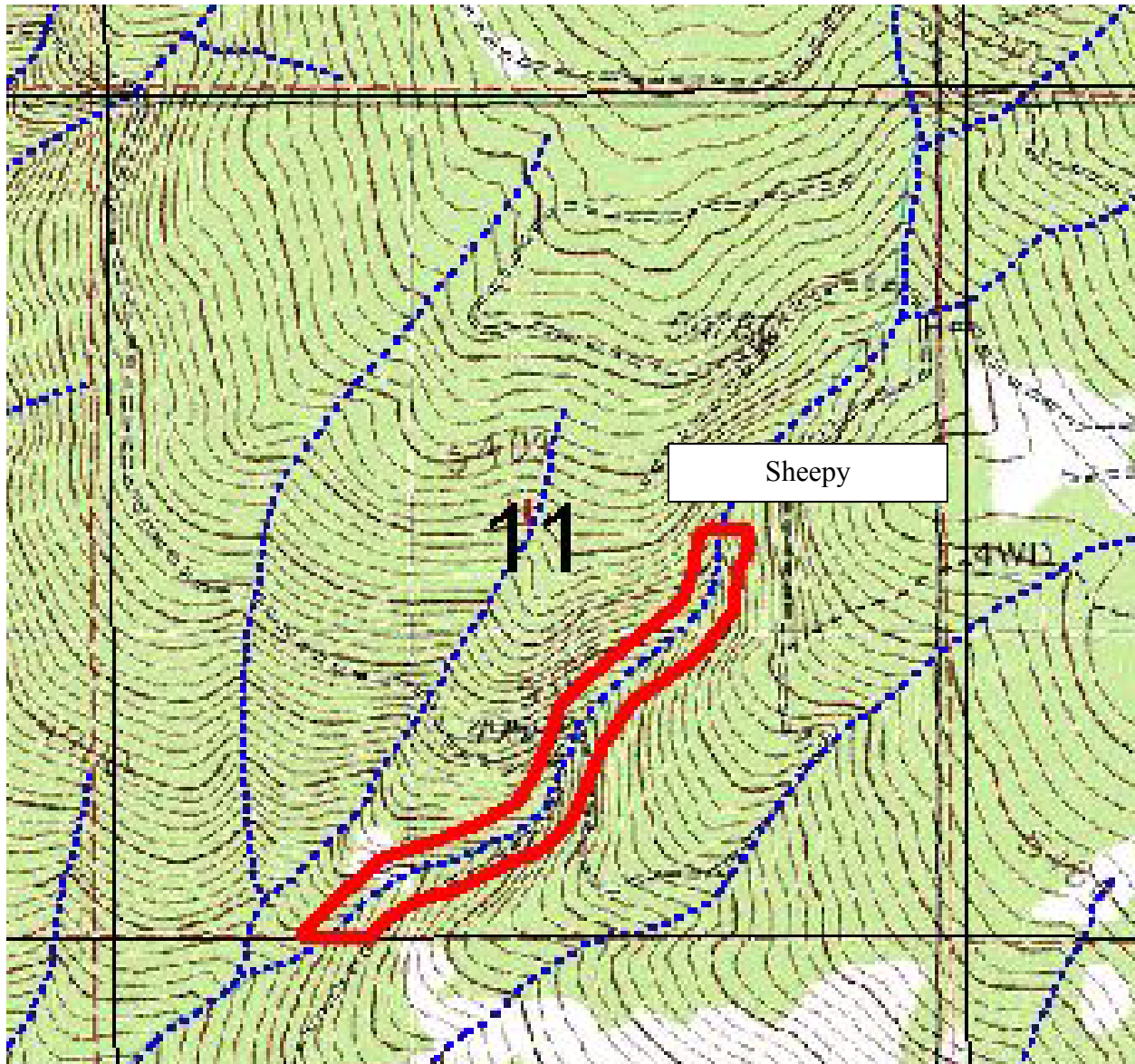


Figure 2. 2003 treatment unit in the Sheepy Creek subwatershed (USGS Surveyor Mountain quadrangle).

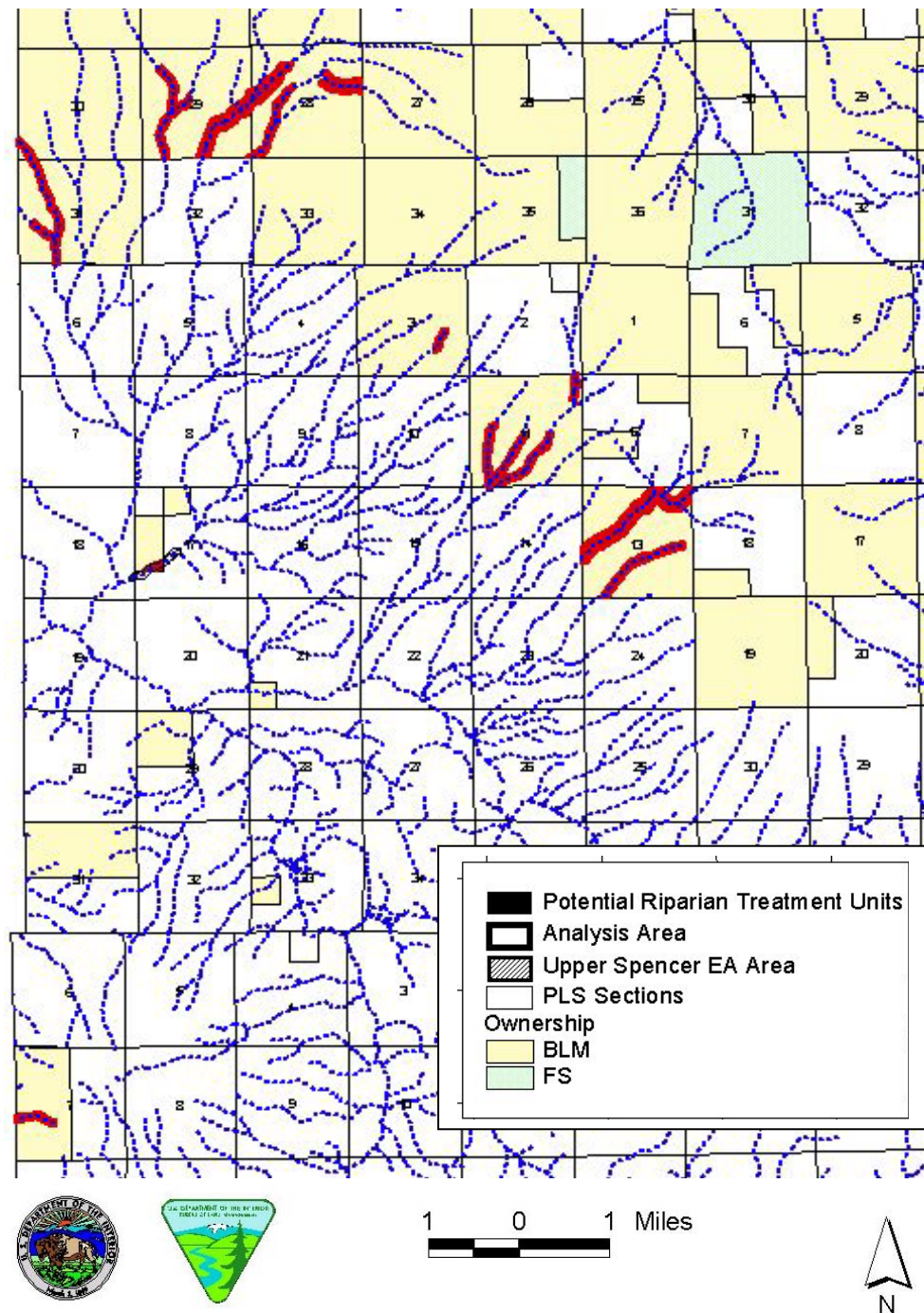


Figure 3. Potential treatment units (highlighted in red) in the Johnson/Sheepy Creek analysis area. Additional treatments in units other than the four described in this Decision Record will be described in future Decision Records.