

DECISION RECORD
for the Slim Chicken Timber Sale
(Reference: Topsy/Pokegama/Hamaker Forest Health Treatments
Environmental Assessment #OR014-98-01)

The impacts of the Slim Chicken Timber Sale are analyzed in the Topsy / Pokegama / Hamaker Forest Health Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA) No. OR014-98-01. This EA provides for a separate Decision Record each time a sale is proposed. This Decision Record applies only to the Slim Chicken Timber Sale that is scheduled to be sold July 31, 2002. A separate Decision Record for each proposed timber sale under the Topsy / Pokegama / Hamaker Forest Health Treatment Environmental Assessment (EA) is written to incorporate new and/or updated information about the site-specific area.

In January 2001, the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (S&M ROD) was signed. It provides additional direction and management guidelines for Threatened and Endangered (T&E) and Survey and Manage (S&M) species addressed in the Klamath Falls Resource Area Management Plan (KFRA RMP) and the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP). This information will be used to amend some of the Project Design Features (PDFs) addressed in the Topsy / Pokegama / Hamaker Forest Health Treatment EA. The amendments to the PDFs are primarily management recommendations that are required to protect S&M species addressed in the NFP that were not available at the time the FONSI was signed.

Implementing the new guidelines of the S&M ROD will result in more protection of S&M sites. As a result of more protection and less disturbance, the overall environmental impacts will be less than initially anticipated in the original EA. The new and/or updated information addressed in this Decision Record is not substantial enough to warrant a supplemental or amended EA or EIS.

New And/Or Updated Information

Threatened and Endangered or Sensitive Species

Northern Spotted Owls

Adjacent to the sale area are two 100 acre District Designated Reserves (DDR), one of which is also an Unmapped Late Successional Reserve (UMLSR). The Topsy northern spotted owl site is both a DDR and UMLSR. The Chicken Hills site is only a DDR. Under the Northwest Forest Plan, any active northern spotted owl nest site as of 1994 was withdrawn from the Matrix and designated an UMLSR. This is a reserve area where treatment is only allowed when a Late Successional Reserve (LSR) Assessment has been completed and approved by the Regional Ecosystem Office (REO). Under the Slim Chicken Timber Sale, no treatments are proposed within the DDR or UMLSR. In addition to the 100 acre DDR and UMLSR, the KFRA RMP designated District Designated Reserve Buffers (DDRDB) around the District Designated Reserves. The District Designated Reserve Buffers are part of the Matrix land allocation where timber harvest is allowed. The management objectives for the buffer areas are to maintain late successional habitat around the reserves (see page 23-26 of the KFRA RMP). Under the Slim Chicken, approximately 40 acres of the buffer area will be harvested using a Density Management prescription. There is no designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl in the sale area.

In addition to the established Chicken Hills DDR and Topsy DDR/UMLSR that were established in the KFRA RMP, a new pair of owls has been observed in Section 19 of the Slim Chicken Timber Sale. The results of the on-going surveys are stated below. A light Density Management thinning is prescribed for

the area in Section 19 where the new pair of owls has been observed.

Survey Protocol - The sale area has been monitored annually since 1992 to determine breeding status of local owls.

Survey Results - There has been one active northern spotted owl nest sites within 1.2 miles of the proposed sale area since 1992 (Topsy owl site). The same birds have been at this site since 1991 and have nested 9 of the 12 years. The adults at this nest site have reproduced 12 young in 12 years. In 2002, the Topsy owls nested and produced one young. In addition, a single, male spotted owl was first observed in Section 19 of the Slim Chicken Sale Area in 1999. In 2001, a pair of spotted owls was observed at this same site, but did not nest. In 2002, no northern spotted owls were detected at this site.

Management Recommendations - The Klamath Falls RMP states on Page 38; "Fall no trees within 1/4 mile of all active northern spotted owl nest sites from approximately March 1 to September 30 to avoid disturbance and harm to young owls." Annual monitoring of nest sites in the KFRA indicate that most owls fledge by late July. Therefore, in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the seasonal restriction has been changed to March 1 - August 10.

Management To Be Implemented - Monitoring of the nest sites will continue on an annual basis. If nesting occurs within the cutting area through the life of the timber sale contract, the above seasonal restrictions will be implemented.

Rationale - These measures conform with the Biological Opinion and the KFRA RMP and NFP to protect and mitigate impacts to northern spotted owls in the immediate vicinity of the Slim Chicken Timber Sale.

Accipiters -

Northern Goshawks

Survey Protocol - The sale area has been annually monitored since 1997 to determine breeding status of a pair of northern goshawks.

Survey Results - There has been one active northern goshawk nest sites within 1.2 miles of the proposed sale area since 1997 (Chicken Hills goshawk). The adults at this nest site have reproduced 7 young in 5 years (this does not include 2002). In 2001, the goshawks were present but their nesting status was unknown.

Management Recommendations - The Klamath Falls RMP states on Page 38; "Provide up to a 30-acre buffer around known and future activity centers.

Management To Be Implemented - A 2-3 acre no-cut buffer was placed around each known nest tree. Outside this no-cut buffer, a 30 acre modified prescription was implemented. The prescription called for a light understory thinning of primarily the suppressed and intermediate trees. In addition to the no-cut buffer and modified prescription, a seasonal restriction will be implemented from March 1 to August 31 if nesting is confirmed.

Rationale - These measures conform to the KFRA RMP to protect and mitigate impacts to northern goshawks in the Slim Chicken Timber Sale Area.

Survey and Manage (S&M) Species

Protocol Surveys Completed

S&M Species Surveyed to Protocol	Number Found	Table 1-1 Jan. 2001 ROD Category	Table 1-1 2001 ASR	Management Recommendations	Management to be Implemented
Fungi					
<i>Clavariadelphus ligula</i>	7	B (Manage All Known Sites)	B (Manage All Known Sites)	Maintain microsite conditions Limit soil compaction	25' radius buffer No entry
<i>Clavariadelphus sachalinensis</i>	1	B (Manage All Known Sites)	B (Manage All Known Sites)	Maintain microsite conditions Limit soil compaction	60' radius buffer Can reach in and
<i>Gyromitra melaleucoides</i>	1	B (Manage All Known Sites)	Removed SSS Review*	Maintain microsite conditions Limit soil compaction	60' radius buffer Can reach in And cut.
<i>Mycena monticola</i>	36	B (Manage All Known Sites)	Removed SSS Review*	Maintain microsite conditions Limit soil compaction	25' radius buffer No entry
<i>Plectania milleri</i>	6	B (Manage All Known Sites)	Removed	Maintain microsite conditions Limit soil compaction	60' radius buffer No entry
<i>Spathulara flavida</i>	1	B (Manage All Known Sites)	B (Manage All Known Sites)	Maintain microsite conditions Limit soil compaction	60' radius buffer No entry
Aquatic Mollusks					
<i>Fluminicola sp.</i>	0	A (Manage All Known Sites)	A (Manage All Known Sites)	None found No management needed	N/A
Terrestrial Mollusks					
<i>Helminthoglypta herleini</i>	0	B^4 (Manage All Known Sites)	E^4 (Manage All Known Sites)	None found No management needed	N/A
<i>Pristoloma articum crateris</i>	0	B^4 (Manage All Known Sites)	B^4 (Manage All Known Sites)	None found No management needed	N/A

*Removed from the Survey and Manage list, however Known Sites will continue to be managed until the agencies review the species for special status/sensitive plant lists.

Surveys

Pre-disturbance surveys required under the Northwest Forest Plan were completed in areas within and immediately adjacent to the Slim Chicken Timber Sale. Surveys were conducted following NWFP Survey Protocols in the fall of 2000 and spring of 2001 in the Slim Chicken Timber Sale area. In January 2001, the S&M Record of Decision amended the 1994 NWFP. The 2001 S&M ROD amended pre-disturbance survey requirements and changed the Protection Buffer status and ranges of several species on the Survey and Manage list. These changes are reflected in Table 1-1 in the January 2001 S&M ROD. In 2000, surveys were completed following the requirements in the 1994 NWFP. In 2001, surveys were completed following requirements in the January 2001 S&M ROD.

In June of 2002, the 2001 Annual Species Review (ASR) was released changing the status and range of many species on the Survey and Manage List. The changes between the January 2001 S&M ROD and the 2001 Annual Species Review are shown in Table 1-1 of the Annual Species Review. Survey and Manage fungi species in the Slim Chicken Timber Sale were managed according to their category in the January 2001 ROD instead of the 2001 Annual Species Review Table 1-1. Background information on surveys, non-survey and manage species found, and methods used can be found in the project binder.

Rationale

Based on available scientific literature and extensive field experience, the local specialists within the resource area consider the above measures adequate to protect the fungi that were found during pre-disturbance surveys. The 2001 Annual Species Review was not used for Managing Known Sites on the Slim Chicken Timber Sale because there was not sufficient time between the release of the 2001 ASR and the Slim Chicken Timber Sale date to remove protection buffers. More Survey and Manage species in the sale area are protected under the 2001 ROD than the 2001 ASR released in June of 2002.

Plectania milleri (6 sites in the sale area) was the only species found in Slim Chicken Timber Sale that was completely removed from the Survey and Manage list and its sites will remain buffered. Considering the harvest prescription and presence of these fungi species within neighboring reserves, the long-term survival of these S&M fungi species in the Slim Chicken Timber Sale area is highly likely without further site protection or additional thermal clumps. Soil compaction restricts fungi establishment and growth; therefore, Best Management Practices (BMPs) for reducing soil disturbance and soil compaction will be employed.

Protection Buffer Species - Great Gray Owls

Survey Protocol - The sale area has been annually surveyed from 1996-2002 in accordance with the survey protocol for Great Gray Owl (May 12, 1995 direction from the Regional Interagency Executive Committee Members and California Federal Executives, and BLM Informational Bulletin No. OR-97-311 that described adjustments to the original great gray owl protocol.)

Survey Results – No detections have been recorded.

Management Recommendations - Although the S&M 2001 ROD does not require protection of a new nest site after the date of the Decision Record, the Great Gray Owl is considered a raptor and the standard timber sale E4 clause will be used to protect any new Great Gray Owl nest site. Protection of the nest tree and a no-cut buffer up to 3 acres in size would be reserved around any identified nest tree.

Management To Be Implemented – Surveys for Great Gray Owls will in the Slim Chicken Timber Sale area will continue on an annual basis. The standard timber sale E4 clause will be included in the timber sale contract.

Rationale – If a nest tree is located in the future, the proposed management recommendation allows for the protection of the nest tree and the surrounding area even after the Decision Record is signed and pre-disturbance surveys are completed. Concurrently, the management recommendation allows for minimal disruption of a sold timber sale contract as intended in the S&M 2001 ROD.

Other Issues Addressed in EA

Soils

Detrimental soil disturbance as a result of timber harvesting activities is an issue addressed in the EA. A number of mitigating measures are proposed in the EA to reduce the impacts to soils (page 32 of EA). For the Slim Chicken Timber Sale, some site-specific factors that will help reduce soil impacts include:

1. Gentle slopes. Much of the Slim Chicken is on slopes less than 15 percent.
2. Existing slash on the forest floor. Some of the area was precommercially thinned 10 to 15 years ago. As a result, there is a layer of old precommercial thinning slash that will help cushion the soil from disturbance.
3. No submerchantable thinning (3'-7" material) is proposed as part of this timber sale. Upon completion of the timber sale, a separate service contract using a slash buster will be issued to do the precommercial thinning. On recently completed timber sales that have been monitored, the KFRA required submerchantable thinning concurrently with the commercial sawlog thinning.

Although post treatment monitoring of this project design feature has indicated a positive impact of reducing ladder fuels and stand densities in the understory, the soil impacts increased slightly due to the requirement to harvest the smaller trees in the stands using the mechanical harvester. Using a slash buster as proposed above should reduce overall soil impacts because the machine generally passes over the site only once and the material is grounded-up in lieu of being yarded with a skidder.

4. Winter time logging will be optional but not mandatory because the snow depths in the sale area generally do not exceed twenty inches in depth on a permanent or consistent basis in the winter.

The EA also discusses using a rubber tired harvester/forwarder operation (Mitigation Measure 1). The advantage of using rubber tired equipment versus track mounted equipment is less soil is displaced when the rubber tired equipment has to pivot or turn. However, the disadvantage of using a rubber tired harvester/forwarder is this form of harvesting leaves the limb slash in the units and results in increased fuel loading.

The KFRA is continuing to monitor soil impacts of on-going operations on an annual basis as required in the RMP. In addition, all operations are monitored to determine what combination of the mitigating measures described on page 32 of the EA could be used to best mitigate impacts under similar site-specific conditions.

Fuels

The excessive fuel loads in the Slim Chicken sale area are primarily a result of past precommercial thinning, incidental mortality, and fire suppression policies. The decision is to treat the slash in a combination of ways. For the timber sale, all trees will be whole-tree yarded or yarded with the tops attached to reduce the amount of fuels added to the area. In addition, as separate treatments and service contracts, the slash and overstocked submerchantable stands in specified areas will be thinned and crushed with a "slash buster" and/or underburned. A slash buster is designed to thin small diameter stands (1-6" DBH) and then break up slash concentrations to increase decomposition rates and spread fuels in preparation for underburning. Whole tree yarding will occur on the entire timber sale area, approximately 2100 acres. Underburning, small diameter thinning, and/or slash crushing will occur on up to 2000 acres.

Consultation

The Slim Chicken Timber Sale is within the known range of the northern spotted owls and the area analyzed in the Northwest Forest Plan. In 1999, the BLM began a programmatic biological assessment for the Topsy / Pokegama / Hamaker Forest Health Treatment Environmental Assessment. However, in lieu of completing a programmatic biological assessment for the entire analysis area, the KFRA and USF&WS determined to consult on the individual Slim Chicken Timber Sale. Over the past year, the KFRA and USF&WS have toured the sale area and surrounding northern spotted owls sites and reviewed the proposed silvicultural prescriptions. The KFRA completed the biological evaluation on March 14, 2002 for the Slim Chicken Timber Sale. On June 20, 2002, the KFRA initiated formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and determined that the proposed action "may affect", and "is likely to adversely affect" northern spotted owls and will result in a "no effect" determination for the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), shortnose sucker (*Chasmistes brevirostris*) and Lost River sucker (*Deltistes luxatus*). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on June 27, 2002 concurred with the BLM's determination for northern spotted owls and issued a non-jeopardy biological opinion for the proposed action.

Consistency

The initial Decision Rationale and the supplemental information is consistent with the goals and objectives of the:

- C Final Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and its Record of Decision (June 1995).
- C 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).
- C Klamath Falls Resource Area Fire Management EA (OR-014-94-09)
- C Klamath Falls Resource Area Integrated Weed Control Plan EA (OR-014-93-09) 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).

The Topsy/Pokegama/Hamaker Forest Health Treatments Environmental Assessment analysis area lies within the overlap area of the Northwest Forest Plan and the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. This decision was considered within the context of both of these management efforts, including the Scientific Assessments associated with ICBEMP. No additional analysis is deemed necessary at this time.

Decision For The Slim Chicken Timber Sale

My decision is to implement the Proposed Action Alternative (Alternative A) of the Topsy/Pokegama/Hamaker Forest Health Treatments Environmental Assessment (EA #OR-014-98-01) for the Slim Chicken Timber Sale, involving harvest of approximately 3,900 thousand board feet (MBF) over approximately 2,100 acres. The new and/or updated information presented above concerning threatened and endangered and survey and manage species, is sufficiently addressed in the EA and this Decision Record. The Slim Chicken Timber Sale treatment will be implemented using BLM timber sale procedures and is expected to occur over the next 2 to 3 years.

I have determined that neither a supplement to the Environmental Assessment (EA) nor a change to the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Slim Chicken Timber Sale is necessary for these reasons:

- The existing EA for the Slim Chicken Timber Sale fully covers the project as modified by the proposed mitigation and adjustments. There will be no substantial changes to the action as proposed in the EA. The action as amended is within the scope of the alternatives identified in the EA, and the environmental impacts are within those analyzed in the EA and less than those anticipated for the preferred alternative in that assessment.
- 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. The EA anticipated protecting Survey and Manage species in accordance with the Record of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan and the KFRA RMP. The surveys conducted for this sale satisfy the survey requirements for this sale as amended by the S&M ROD which was approved in January 2001, and fulfills the Survey and Manage Commitment identified in the EA.

/s/ Teresa A. Raml
Teresa A Raml
Field Manager

7/01/02
Date