Proposed Action

The McKenzie River Ranger District is proposing to remove approximately 15 dead and dying trees along a ½ mile segment of Forest Road 2672655 (see Attachment A). Associated activities would consist of road maintenance that includes rocking, brushing, blading, and rock compaction. No temporary roads or skid trails will be created with this project and all ground based equipment will operate from the existing 2672655 road. The site of the project sits on a ridge with slopes ranging from 5-15 percent. There are no streams within the project area.

Trees proposed for removal would be dead and dying Douglas fir trees with an average diameter of 36.4 inches and height of 165 feet. Guidance from the 2008 “Field Guide for Danger Tree Identification and Response” (USFS) was used to identify dangerous trees. The guide identifies a failure zone 1.5 times the tree height; therefore, based on a site tree of 165 feet tall, the guide recommends removing danger trees within 245 feet of all roadways. All dead and dying trees within this project are within 120 feet of the existing roadway; therefore they are within the above guideline limits.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to ensure a safe and efficient transportation system; alleviate future road maintenance issues; capture the value of the dead and dying trees prior to deterioration from insects and disease; and provide stimulus to the local economy. Improved safety along Forest Service Road 2672655 for the public and FS employees is the goal of the project, but there will be other positive effects. Road maintenance costs along this road will be greatly reduced by this more efficient project level action verses the treatment of numerous single failure events in the future. Small sales, like this one, are the preferred method of removing danger trees to eliminate hazardous situations.

Scoping and Public Involvement

The proposed project has been listed on the Willamette National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) since April 21, 2015. ([http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/willamette/projects-all](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/willamette/projects-all)). A Preliminary Decision Memo was published to the website above on October 16, 2015 and a scoping letter was emailed...
to members of the public and organizations who have previously expressed an interest in similar projects. Public comments on the proposed project were accepted from October 16 to November 16, 2015. No comments were received.

During internal scoping, McKenzie River Ranger District resource specialists raised no issues and found no significant effects on the human environment in relation to implementing this proposed action. All supporting documentation is located in the project file available at the McKenzie River Ranger District.

**Categorical Exclusion Criteria**

Decisions may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment when they are within one of the categories identified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR part 1b.3 or one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 sections 31.12 or 32.2, and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

The specific category for this proposed action is found in 36 CFR 220.6(e) (13) and described in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30, Section 32.2(13) “Salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction.” The proposed action may include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing. Examples include but are not limited to: (i) Harvest of a portion of a stand damaged by a wind or ice event and construction of a short temporary road to access the damaged trees and (ii) Harvest of fire-damaged trees. This category of action(s) is applicable because this project proposes to salvage dead and dying fire-damaged trees that are along an existing transportation system.

Several resource conditions must be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warrant further analysis and documentation. During development of the proposed action, a team of resource specialists determined whether or not any of the resource conditions are present, and if so, the degree of the potential effects on the listed resource. The mere presence of one of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. Based on the information in Table 1, I have determined no extraordinary circumstances exist for this project that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extraordinary Circumstance to be Evaluated</th>
<th>Present?</th>
<th>Degree of Potential Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><strong>Fisheries:</strong> The project will have no effect on the bull trout and spring Chinook salmon downstream from the project area. There will be no effect to Essential Fish Habitat designated under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The project will have &quot;no impact&quot; on three Forest Service special status species (caddisflies).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Evaluation of Extraordinary Circumstances Related to the Proposed Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extraordinary Circumstance to be Evaluated</th>
<th>Present? (Yes or No)</th>
<th>Degree of Potential Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife: A Biological Assessment for wildlife found that the project will have No Effect (NE) to the ESA-listed northern spotted owl. The project may affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect (NLAA) Critical Habitat (WCS3). A Biological Opinion (FWS reference: 01EOFW00-2015-I-0251) from the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and biological evaluations for fish, plants and wildlife species have been completed and documentation is available in the project files.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventoried Roadless Areas or potential wilderness areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Natural Areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Cultural surveys were performed in the project area, and no sites or historic properties were found.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Design Criteria

The following is a list of design criteria and/or mitigation developed for this project to avoid/reduce the environmental effects of the proposed activities:

- All haul and logging operations would be suspended if rainfall results in pooling or offsite movement of sediment into drainage courses.
- Directional felling of danger trees towards Forest Service Road 2672655 would be required to facilitate lifting of the logs, minimize soil disturbance, and damage to the existing roads.
- Minimize damage to residual trees and vegetation when falling and yarding, especially the large live diameter trees or snag habitat that does not pose a road hazard.
- All off-road equipment will be cleaned to remove all dirt and debris prior to entering National Forest System lands.
- The only trees to be removed will be danger trees that pose a danger to the roads by directly falling into the road or that may strike another tree and cause them to fall and hit the road.
- Yarding and loading operations would occur only on the 2672655 existing road surfaces to minimize soil disturbance.
- Slash from logging operation would be piled and burned or scattered beyond road prism.
• Cultural resource sites would be protected from ground disturbing activities through avoidance. Previous unknown archeological sites identified during project implementation that are in conflict with ground disturbances activities, would be evaluated to determine significance to the National Register of Historic Places; appropriate design criteria would be taken, including avoidance.

• The Forest Service shall include an approved traffic control plan in their timber sale contract, which will require timber sale purchaser to post warnings, flaggers, and other safety measures deemed necessary to protect road traffic during logging operations.

• Visual quality techniques would be utilized where possible to help maintain the scenic integrity of the area. Nevertheless, some effects of harvesting such as stumps may still be noticeable to travelers.

• If harvest operations occur on mixed-used roads, then Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) use will be prohibited during operations.

Decision and Rationale for Decision

Based on my review of the information presented in this document and the supporting documents in the project record, I have decided to implement the proposed action as described above.

Through past experience and review of similar projects, I have concluded that this project is not a major Federal action. It will have limited context and intensity (40 CFR1508.27), individually or cumulatively, to the biological, physical, social, or economic components of the human environment. It does not pose a violation of Federal, State, or local law requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The action that I have selected falls within a category established by the Forest Service that normally does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment and no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have any significant environmental effects. Therefore this action is excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, so neither will be prepared.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the amended Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. The project was designed in conformance with Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines as well as Standards and Guidelines for the following Land Allocations and Management Areas: Scenic-Partial Retention Foreground Area (11c) and General Forest Area (14a).

Administrative Review (Appeal) Opportunities

8006(b) directs that the pre-decisional objection process established in Section 428 of division E of the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-74, shall not be applicable to categorically excluded projects or activities. The Forest Service will continue to offer public involvement opportunities for categorically excluded projects as provided for in the agency’s NEPA Procedures, see 36 CFR 220.4(d) (SOPA) and 36 CFR 220.4(e) and 220.6(c) (scoping).

Comments received on the proposed action will be reviewed and considered prior to making a final decision; however, the project is not subject to appeal.

**Implementation Date**

Implementation is anticipated to begin June 2016.

**Contact Information**

For further information, please contact Shadie Nimer, Special Forest Products Coordinator, at the McKenzie River Ranger District, 57600 McKenzie Hwy, McKenzie Bridge, OR 97413; or email at snimer@fs.fed.us or phone at (541)822-7271.

Approved by:

Terry Baker
District Ranger
McKenzie River Ranger District
Willamette National Forest

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