



Forest
Service

Wallowa-Whitman
National Forest

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File Code: 1950
Route To:

Date: July 18, 2012

Subject: Snow Basin Vegetation Management Project Correction Notice

To: For the Record

Correction Notice to Snow Basin Vegetation Management Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The record of decision for the Snow Basin Vegetation Management Project EIS to implement Alternative 3 modified as the method of treatment and management within the Snow Basin project area was signed on March 19, 2012. This project has yet to be implemented. After further review of the decision, including informal partial resolution of five appeals (appeal #'s 12-06-00-477-215, 12-06-00-478-215, 12-06-00-479-215, 12-06-00-483-215 and 12-06-00-484-215), I have decided to make the following changes to the project:

Treatments in SSLT – Prescriptions in SSLT are designed to reduce stand density and fuels while retaining the large tree structure and species characteristic of the site types. The outcome will be stand density and structure more closely resembling the historic range of variability for the area. All old trees would be retained. All snags and large down logs would remain.

MSLT to SSLT –

Prescriptions in these units are designed to reduce stand density and fuels while retaining the large structure and species characteristic of the site types. Prescriptions are designed to retain multi-storied structure. Ponderosa pine and western larch would be retained regardless of size. All old trees would be retained. All snags and large down logs would remain.

Grand fir greater than or equal to 21 inches diameter breast height (dbh) – Removal of grand fir $\geq 21''$ would occur in situations where they are in direct competition with ponderosa, larch, Douglas fir or quaking aspen, and where they are inhibiting restoration of the species composition characteristic of the site types. However, grand fir with broken or forked tops or cavities will be retained for wildlife.

Mistletoe Treatments – Removal of mistletoe infested trees of all sizes would occur where mistletoe infested trees are impeding the development/restoration of the remaining stand. Removal of mistletoe infested large trees ($\geq 21''$ dbh) would occur where such trees are spreading mistletoe to an understory of the same species. Trees would be considered infested when the upper 2/3 of the tree has mistletoe. The emphasis for these treatments would occur primarily in areas/units adjacent to private property.

Previously Unlogged Areas – The Forest Service has not identified any previously unlogged areas for treatment in the Snow Basin project area.



Steep Slopes – All precautions are taken to avoid any concern for damage to steep slopes. Areas within ground based harvest units that are over 35% slope will not be impacted with heavy equipment. Any harvested trees in these areas will be line-pulled.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas – Restoration treatments within designated RHCAs are only identified for 38 acres in the project area, in situations where an existing open road bisects the RHCA. In these situations, the treatments are identified only for the area above the road, where no actual riparian areas are impacted, and where existing mitigation measures for minimizing potential impacts from the road have been implemented. Landings are located upslope from the road, no ground based equipment will be used on slopes greater than 30%, logging activities would be restricted to processor/forwarder operations, and all landings and skid trails will be seeded upon completion of activities in the area.

Temporary Roads – Temporary road construction has been kept to a minimum in the Snow Basin project. All temp roads will incorporate the following guidelines, found in the post-harvest rehabilitation plan:

- All temporary road construction equipment shall be required to be cleaned prior to moving into the project area to prevent movement of weeds.
- All temporary roads constructed with cuts and fills, will have fill material pulled back and out sloped on the road prism. To the extent practicable such placement will reestablish the original ground line (re-contouring). Slash and/or weed free straw will be distributed over the reclaimed cut and fill areas. When performing this work, machinery used will not be allowed outside the disturbed areas of the road, or outside the clearing limits of the temporary road. Prior to re-contouring roads with cuts and fills and all other temporary roads, the compacted running surface will be scarified to a depth of 6-12 inches.
- Temporary roads shall be closed and/or obliterated as follows: At junctions with other roads, the entrance of the temporary road shall be obscured for a distance (minimum 100 feet) necessary to make the road as indiscernible as possible from the intersecting road. This shall be accomplished by scarifying the roadbed, removing the road prism, and placing available soil, rock, brush, and debris to obscure the road entrance. The ditch line of the intersecting road shall be restored. All temporary culverts shall be removed and disposed of off National Forest Land, and the associated stream banks shall be laid back to the original contours. Any fill used in the installation of the temporary culverts may be removed and disposed of on the temporary roadbed.

Goshawks – An area of 30 acres has been delineated around active goshawk nests. Timber harvest shall be deferred in these nest areas for as long as the nest is active. Potentially disruptive activities around the nest area will also be deferred until after the nesting season.

Pileated Woodpeckers – The known pileated woodpecker nest tree will be protected during implementation of prescribed fire-only treatments in Unit RXF-34. Also, prescribed fire treatments within Unit RXF-34 will be conducted outside the nesting season (i.e. fall burning), unless the nest tree is known to be unoccupied.

Fuel Breaks adjacent to private property – Where treatment is proposed, we will manage stands within ½ mile of private property as a first priority for fuels reduction. Stands would be managed near the lower management zone of the stand density index for the site, except in areas identified as wildlife connectivity corridors. Dry sites are anticipated to have a residual canopy closure of approximately 50%. This will also potentially provide for additional wildlife forage (deer/elk) in

these areas. We will coordinate with Oregon Department of Forestry on all fuel treatments planned within ½ mile of private property to facilitate future treatment opportunities on private lands.

Fuel Treatment/pre-commercial thin units adjacent to private property – Pre-commercial thinning within ½ mile of private property would occur to reduce ladder fuels and fire intensity prior to prescribed burning in portions of units 5, 106, 352, RXF7, RXF9, RXF14, RXF15, RXF28, and RXF34.

Firewood – All areas suitable for firewood gathering will be made available to the public upon completion of treatments. All non-utilized decked material would be made available to firewood permit holders. In fuel treatment units adjacent to open roads, we will thin trees up to 10” dbh, within 300 feet of the road, in order to provide additional firewood for firewood permit holders. Roads will remain open for a period of time following completion of treatment in these units, or during periods of inactivity, in order to provide opportunity for firewood gathering.

Field visits – The Forest Service will host field visits to areas with similar prescriptions as those developed for the Snow Basin project, to allow for discussion about the desired outcomes of the project.

Group Selection Units – Approximately 130 acres of restoration treatment would be proposed as a new project, available for public review and comment. These units were previously proposed as regeneration harvest in the original proposed action and DEIS for Snow Basin. They were dropped from the Final EIS because of concerns about culmination of mean annual increment. The new proposal would have a prescription of group selection to retain multi-storied structure and characteristic species composition while reducing stand density and fuels. Portions of units 80, 81, 233, 241, 243, 250, 252 and 283 would be treated. Old trees would be retained, as well as large ponderosa pine, western larch, and Douglas-fir. Openings in the canopy up to 2 acres would occur, on approximately 38 acres within the units. Thinning may occur where thinning would help create more characteristic stand densities. Under-stocked openings may be spot burned to provide sites for natural regeneration of ponderosa pine and western larch where needed. Snags and large down logs would be retained for wildlife and ecological processes. This project would be issued as a proposal with a draft Supplemental EIS. As such it would be available for public review and comment, and may be modified based on issues and concerns identified during the comment period. A subsequent record of decision would be issued regarding any future treatments of these units.

Implementation of this project will occur in stages. A number of commercial, non-commercial, and service contracts will be offered over the course of the next several years to achieve the desired outcomes. Initial stages of implementation are scheduled to begin in 2012.

Resource specialists have reviewed these changes and found that the effects of implementing them are well within those described in the Snow Basin Vegetation Management Environmental Impact Statement. There will be no effects from these changes on any Proposed, Endangered, Threatened or Sensitive plant or wildlife species nor to any Cultural Resources. With these modifications, there are no significant changes to the effects identified in the EIS and record of decision.

Approved:

MONICA J. SCHWALBACH
Forest Supervisor