



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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File Code: 1570

Date: October 25, 2012

Route To:

Subject: Appeal Recommendation, South George Vegetation Management Project

To: John Laurence, Acting Forest Supervisor, Umatilla National Forest

Background

On July 17, 2012, Monte Fujishin, District Ranger for the Umatilla National Forest signed a record of decision (ROD) for the South George Vegetation Management Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). His decision to implement Alternative B, as modified includes:

- 2,900 acres of fuels treatment including pile burning and prescribed burning;
- 3,000 acres of prescribed landscape fire;
- 1,150 acres of non-commercial thinning and ladder fuel removal;
- Using helicopter, skyline, and ground based logging systems, implement 3,020 acres of improvement cutting (variable thinning); 80 acres of low thinning; 550 acres of seed tree regeneration harvest; and 250 acres of clearcut harvest with reserve trees;
- Road maintenance on 46.5 miles of ML 2 and ML 3 road;
- Use of 32.5 miles of ML 1 road;
- 3 miles of temporary road construction.

Modifications to the decision include:

- Implementation of helicopter logging in units #1 (approximately 100 acres) and #10 (approximately 158 acres) will be based on economic feasibility at the time of operation. If not economically feasible stand characteristics may still be manipulated by other methods such as manual thinning and burning. This strategy will only be implemented in the remaining stand structure can be properly protected to maintain other resource values. This also will result in less temporary road construction (approx. 0.64 miles).
- Decommissioning of approximately 31 miles of system roads.
- Any unauthorized non-system roads or trails located in harvest units will have entry areas made impassible after harvest activities.
- Hogback Road (FR 4302) will have the existing seasonal closure extended annually from September 15 to November 30th and will change from an operational maintenance level 3 to operational maintenance level 2.

Four appeals (#12-06-14-0001-215, #12-06-14-0002-215, #12-06-14-0003-215 and #12-06-14-0004-215) were filed by Steve Pozzanghera (State of Washington: Department of Fish and Wildlife), Tom Partin (American Forest Resource Council - AFRC), Lindsay Warness (Boise Cascade) respectively and one combined appeal (#0004) was filed jointly by The Lands Council



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(Jeff Juel), Blue Mountain Biodiversity Project (Karen Coulter), and Hells Canyon Preservation Council (David Mildrexler).

AFRC requested that an additional 6,000 acres be added to the planning area and requests that "providing sawlogs and wood fiber products for utilization by regional and local industry be made a key issue.

Boise Cascade requested that the Forest Service implement the project while supplementing the ROD with additional volume and that the Forest conduct more widespread and intensive fuel reduction and provide a restoration buffer to protect the private landowners near and within the project area.

The coalition of conservation groups requested that the ROD be withdrawn or remanded and that a supplemental EIS be prepared to address issues presented by them, and that the project be revised to ensure consistency with the NEPA, ESA, NFMA, APA, and all applicable regulations.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.17, an attempt was made to seek informal resolution of the appeals. The appeal filed by Steve Pozzanghera for the State of Washington was subsequently withdrawn after informal disposition and will not be addressed further. The record indicates that informal resolution was not reached with American Forest Resource Council, Boise Cascade or The Lands Council/Blue Mountain Biodiversity Project/Hells Canyon Preservation Council.

Review and Findings

My review was conducted in accordance with 36 CFR 215.19 to ensure that the analysis and decision are in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and orders. The appeal record, including the appellant's issues, has been thoroughly reviewed. Having reviewed the FEIS, ROD, and the project record as required by 36 CFR 215.19(b), I conclude the following:

1. The decision clearly describes the actions to be taken in sufficient detail that the reader can easily understand what will occur as a result of the decision.
2. The selected alternative as modified will accomplish the purpose and need established. The purpose and need stated in the FEIS reflects consistency with direction to implement the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.
3. The decision is consistent with policy, direction, and supporting evidence. The record contains documentation regarding resource conditions and the Responsible Official's decision document is based on the record and reflects a reasonable conclusion.
4. The record reflects that the Responsible Official provided adequate opportunity for public participation during the analysis and decision making process. The Responsible Official's efforts allowed interested publics the opportunity to comment and be involved in the proposal. The decision was modified based on comments received on the draft EIS.

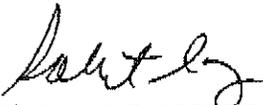
After considering the claims made by the appellants and reviewing the record, I found that the Responsible Official conducted a proper and public NEPA process that resulted in a decision that

is consistent with the Umatilla National Forest LRMP. I found no violations of law, regulations, or Forest Service policy.

Recommendation

After reviewing the appeal record, I recommend affirming the decision, with the instruction of completing an errata sheet that corrects minor errors that have been found since the ROD was signed and posting this errata sheet to the Forest's public website as well as provide it to appellants. Overall, I believe that the project documentation adequately supports the Forest Supervisor's decision with regards to all appeal points raised by the appellant.

Enclosed with this memo are my responses to each appeal issue.



ROBERT F. SANCHEZ
District Ranger

cc: Debbie Anderson, Lillian M Compo