Decision

It is my decision to salvage trees downed by a winter windstorm on March 13th, 2011. The down trees included in this project are in the Fall Creek and Middle Fork drainages. Since many of these downed trees are in campgrounds or lying next to roads, it is anticipated that work will begin as soon as possible this spring to remove the roadside hazards, reduce the opportunity for firewood theft and allow for recreationists to use the campgrounds this summer.

There are four campgrounds and approximately 10 miles of roads in the project area, which will encompass two separate salvage sales determined by geography. These sales are; Broken Salvage in Fall Creek, and Black Salvage in the Middle Fork drainage.

All of the downed trees to be salvaged are either within improved campgrounds (recreation sites) or adjacent to Fall Creek Road (18), road 1817 and spur 412. The land allocations include Recreation Sites (the campgrounds), General Forest (most of the roadside area in Fall Creek) and Late Successional Reserve (a small portion of down trees next to road 18 just east of Puma CG).

The total volume to be harvested with these salvage projects will be approximately 200 thousand board feet.

The elevation of the project area ranges from 950 feet to 1500 feet.

Rationale For Decision

My rationale for this decision is:

- **Recreation** – Black Canyon, Broken Bowl, Bedrock and Puma Campgrounds are very popular and highly used during the summer months. Some of these campgrounds remain open into the fall to provide access for those interested in hunting, fishing or hiking. In the current condition none of these campgrounds are available for use by the public. (See photos)

- **Public Safety** – In many places, the downed trees next to the road or partially in the road pose a hazard to drivers. The Federal Highways Safety Act requires federally maintained level 3, 4 and 5 roads to have an area cleared of obstacles along the roadside. Routine road maintenance is more costly and difficult on roads where downed material limits access or creates obstacles.

- **Access** – Forest Service workers and the general public use forest roads for a variety of activities from fire fighting to hiking, fishing, camping, pleasure driving or hunting. Access to the forest is significant for all these activities and more. Ensuring safe access for forest users is critical to meeting demands and expectations for the National Forest.
Scoping and Public Involvement:
On April 6, 2011, a district scoping team of specialists including: the soils scientist/hydrologist, botanist, fish biologist, wildlife biologist, and archaeologist reviewed the proposal for this project. All comments and input were reviewed, recommendations were formulated and reports compiled by this interdisciplinary team are included in the project file.

A news release was sent out on April 19, 2011 and published in the local newspapers on April 21-25, 2011 notifying the public of the plan to salvage the blown down trees in these campgrounds in an effort to get them opened in time for the recreation season.

Reasons for Categorically Excluding the Action:
Based on a review of the expected effects of these activities, it has been determined that this project includes activities that are excluded from documentation, Forest Service Handbook, 1909.15 – National Environmental Policy Act Handbook, Chapter 30. Activities involving the repair and maintenance of recreation sites and facilities are covered in 36 CFR 220.6(d)(5) and the additional salvage activities are covered in 36 CFR 220.6(e)(13). A district interdisciplinary review has determined the following regarding extraordinary circumstances.

1. Steep slopes or highly erosive soils. Though steep slopes and erosive soils exist within the project area, the proposal is only to salvage the material within developed recreation sites or adjacent to roads neither of which include steep slopes. Within the campgrounds, mitigation measures will be in place to minimize disturbance to the soil or vegetation as well as damage to improvements. Therefore, little or no soil disturbance will take place. Any areas of disturbed soil will be revegetated.

2. Threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat. While the project area is either within or adjacent to suitable habitat for many TES, the disturbance associated with the salvage activities will be scattered over a large area but no one area will experience any long term disturbance. In addition, most of the activity will take place within recreation sites and will be short in duration.

3. Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds. All of the salvage activities will occur within the Fall Creek and Middle Fork watersheds. No flood plains will be affected by this salvage proposal. While some wetland or riparian areas exist within the project area, no material will be salvaged from those areas except the portion of the campgrounds which may be within a riparian area. Since the volume to be salvaged is either within a recreation site or outside riparian or wetland areas, it is the opinion of the district fish biologist that there will be no impact to the aquatic habitat. In addition, prior to the planning of this salvage project, downed logs suitable for 2011 stream enhancement projects on the district were set aside and will not be included in the salvage.

4. Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas. None present and therefore no adverse impact. The closest Wilderness Areas are the Waldo Wilderness which is more than 20 miles to the east of the nearest project site and the Diamond Peak Wilderness which is 32 miles from the nearest project site.

5. Inventoried Roadless areas. None of the salvage activities will take place within roadless areas or impact adjacent roadless areas.
6. **Research Natural Areas.** The closest RNA is 30 miles or more from the nearest project area. This project will not have any impact on it.

7. **Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.** There are documented cultural sites in the vicinity of some of the planned salvage locations, one of which is within the boundary of Bedrock Campground. However, trees killed in the 2003 Clark Fire were later salvaged from this campground using various mitigation measures to protect the any cultural resources present. Those same mitigation measures will be employed for this project. In the current condition, many rootwads from blown over trees have potentially exposed cultural resources and an important component of this project will involve replacing those rootwads to protect any historic properties which might have been exposed.

While there is the presence of extraordinary circumstances, it is found that there will be no adverse impacts to the resources or habitat, which would create extraordinary circumstances. Based on the above information, this action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

**Findings Required by Other Laws:**

The project will meet the direction and intent of the Willamette National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (WNF Plan), as amended by the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan).

**Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities:**

This project is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 220.6(d)(3).

**Implementation Date:**

Implementation of this project may begin immediately.

**Contact Person:**

For more information contact John Poet, Middle Fork Ranger District, 46375 Highway 58, Westfir, Oregon 97492. The phone number is (541)782-2283.

**Deciding Officer:**

__/s/Duane Bishop ________ 4/27/2011
Duane Bishop - District Ranger Date
Middle Fork Ranger District
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(541) 782-2283