Decision Memo for the
2012 Canyon Creek Large Wood Enhancement Project

USDA Forest Service
Willamette National Forest
Sweet Home Ranger District

Linn County, Oregon T 14S, R 4E, Sections 28, 29, 30, 31

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to:

- Improve spawning and rearing habitat in Canyon and Owl Creeks for Upper Willamette Winter Steelhead that are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act.
- Improve stream complexity in Canyon and Owl Creeks.

The need for the project is:

- **Improve spawning and rearing habitat in Canyon and Owl Creeks**: Large wood contributes to the ability of a stream to trap and retain spawning gravels and to provide cover for rearing juvenile salmonids. Canyon Creek was identified in a 2001 stream inventory as lacking sufficient large wood. The survey found only 19 pieces of large wood per mile, while the standard is 80 pieces per mile. The lack of large wood contributes to poor habitat complexity for rearing, poor gravel retention, and poor spawning habitat in Canyon Creek.

- **Improve stream complexity**: Large wood in western Oregon streams leads to more complexity, which is important for cycling of nutrients, retention of gravel, regulation of downstream flash flooding, and good habitat conditions for aquatic organisms. The current lack of large wood is leading to poor stream complexity in Canyon and Owl Creeks.

Proposed Action

Place approximately 150 full-length and partial-length logs which are about 24” in diameter (some with rootwads attached) by helicopter and ground equipment in Canyon and Owl Creeks. A majority of the placement will occur on private timber land as part of a cooperative approach to watershed restoration in the South Santiam River Watershed under the Wyden Amendment authority.

A remnant side channel will also be reconnected using wood to divert flow in order to add an additional 1/3 mile of rearing habitat. A network of unauthorized ATV trails in the floodplain below the bridges will also be decommissioned during the project.
Source trees will be acquired from a 50 acre unit of the previous Flam Thin (sale closed 1998) by ground based tipping to retain root wads and felling with chain saw to create approximately ½ acre gaps, totaling no more than 4 acres. Ground based tipping will occur off existing spur in SW toe of the unit. All sub-dominant tree species and trees less than 22” in diameter will be retained. The source trees average approximately 24” in diameter and approximately 2 ½ miles from where they will be placed by helicopter.

**Proposed Design Criteria:**

- In channel large wood will be placed below twin bridges or at least ½ mile upstream to minimize risk to the structures.
- Large wood closer than ½ mile above the twin bridges will be placed on floodplains and placed between existing trees to maximize stability and minimize risk.
- Work will occur in September or October to minimize impacts to fish and wildlife.

**Scoping and Public Involvement**

Scoping letters including the project purpose and need and proposed action were sent to interested and affected people, tribes and agencies on January 20, 2012.

Internal scoping was conducted during the months of December 2011 to June, 2012 to identify potential road and resource management issues. Concerns over potential impacts to the bridges over Canyon Creek and Owl Creek were identified, and mitigated by changes in the proposed project design and location.

On Site meetings were held with representatives of the private landowner involved in the project to ensure agreement on the project location and design. The private landowners/managers Cascade Timber Consulting and Roseboro Lumber concurred with and supported the project.

**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) 1909.15-2008-1 sections 31, 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 project is found in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 30 Section 31.2 Category 7 which covers aquatic habitat improvement with native materials. This category requires a project file and a decision memo.

The table below evaluates whether there are extraordinary circumstances that would cause the proposed action to have significant environmental effects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extraordinary Circumstance to be Evaluated</th>
<th>Present?</th>
<th>Is project causing Significant Effect on this Resource?</th>
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<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>T and E Fish Species</strong> - There is Upper Willamette Steelhead spawning habitat at and above the project area. This project is designed to enhance the habitat and is covered by the ARBO Programmatic Consultation with National Marine Fisheries.</td>
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<td><strong>T and E Wildlife Species</strong> - Proposed activities are Not Likely to Adversely Affect the Northern Spotted Owl or its habitat. Proposed activities may disturb owls in the late breeding season, but such activities are not expected to disrupt owls from normal activity and Not Likely Adversely Affect the Northern Spotted Owl. Disturbance activities will be restricted from use during March 1st to September 30th if a Type I Helicopter is needed. All other activities would be restricted from march 1st to July 15th (USFWS ARBO TAILS#13420-2011-F-0129).</td>
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<td><strong>Critical Habitat &amp; Proposed Critical Habitat</strong> - Proposed activities are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Critical Habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl.</td>
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<td><strong>Sensitive Species</strong> – No sensitive wildlife species will be impacted by proposed activities.</td>
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<td>Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Although this is a municipal watershed, the project would not have an effect on water quality in Foster Reservoir, which is the water supply for the City of Sweet Home because sediment resulting from the action will not cause an increase in turbidity in the reservoir.</td>
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<td>Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No project activities occur in congressionally designated areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No project activities occur within Inventoried Roadless Areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research natural areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No project activities occur within or near Research Natural Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No project activities occur on American Indian or Alaska Native religious or cultural sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Project activities have no significant effect on archaeological sites, historic properties or areas.</td>
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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. The action addresses the purpose for the project and is expected to significantly enhance important aquatic resources and threatened species.

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, REGULATIONS AND POLICY**

I find that this project complies with all laws, regulations and policies regarding watershed restoration projects. The table below outlines the major laws, regulations and policies with respect to abandoned mine cleanup and displays how this project complies with those laws.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Enacted</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>How applied in this project</th>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)</td>
<td>Creates the environmental impact statement (EIS) and environmental assessment (EA) as instruments of environmental policy. Requires public participation. Council on Environmental Quality regulations allow federal agencies to exclude certain categories of actions from documentation in EA or EIS.</td>
<td>Scoping was conducted as required by NEPA. This project follows FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30 requirements for categorically excludable activities.</td>
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<td>1973</td>
<td>Endangered Species Act (ESA)</td>
<td>Provides broad protection for species of fish, wildlife and plants that are listed as threatened or endangered in the U.S. or elsewhere. Provisions are made for listing species, as well as for recovery plans and the designation of critical habitat for listed species. The Act outlines procedures for federal agencies to follow when taking actions that may jeopardize listed species, and contains exceptions and exemptions.</td>
<td>The project is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Applicable procedures were followed with respect to threatened and/or endangered species. No consultation was required with US Fish and Wildlife Service.</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>National Forest Management Act (NFMA)</td>
<td>Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to assess forest lands, develop a management program based on multiple-use, sustained-yield principles, and implement a resource management plan for each unit of the National Forest System. It is the primary statute governing the administration of national forests.</td>
<td>This project was developed in full compliance with NFMA via compliance with the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 1990, as amended. The project follows appropriate standards and guidelines and management direction for the Management Allocations in the project area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act)</td>
<td>Comprehensive statute aimed at restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation’s waters.</td>
<td>The South Santiam water quality impaired for temperature on the 303(d) list under the Clean Water Act, but has been delisted by the Willamette Basin TMDL.</td>
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**Appeal Rights**

No comments were received during the 30-day comment period so no parties have standing to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.

**Implementation Date**

Plans are to implement this project beginning in 2012 and 2013.

**Contact Information**

For further information about the project, please contact Lance Gatchell, District Hydrologist at the Sweet Home Ranger District, 541-367-3628 lgatchell@fs.fed.us 4431 Highway 20, Sweet Home, OR 97386

**Signature and Date**

CINDY GLICK  
Sweet Home District Ranger

5/25/12

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