

Decision Memo

Strauss Creek BPA Powerline Salvage

USDA Forest Service
Three Rivers Ranger District, Colville National Forest
Stevens County, Washington
SE1/4 of Sec.33, T37N, R40E

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to remove previously felled trees within the BPA (Bonneville Power Administration) powerline right-of-way. The need was caused when danger trees were felled by the powerline company as part of the "Transmission Line Right-of-Way Management Plan. The trees are on the ground and can be utilized for wood products. This need was acknowledged by some members of the public who would like to see the material utilized before there is significant wood deterioration.



Figure1, Right-of-way clearing for the BPA powerline.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to salvage felled material from the 15 acre powerline right-of-way. The trees were felled fall of 2007. This is consistent with the *Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* where the management goal for Management Area 5 is to provide naturally appearing landscapes while providing wood products. The trees to be removed were those felled for powerline safety. There may be a need to fell a few additional trees along the 7000141 road to meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards for operating equipment, but they will be minimal. INFISH (Inland Native Fish Strategy) buffers will be applied. There will not be any need for new road construction or reconstruction for this project. The project area crosses Aladdin Highway (C9435), but the majority of the area can be accessed using Forest Service roads 7000140 and 7000141. All the material will be pulled or skidded to existing roads. Areas of disturbed soil will be seeded with a noxious weed free seed mixture, following the *Colville National Forest Weed Prevention Guidelines*. The Forest Service will notify BPA of this project so BPA can contact those involved regarding safety measures and possible conflicts with BPA's facilities.

Decision

I have decided to implement the proposed action, as stated on page 1, including mitigation measures and Best Management Practices, which will ensure that the project meets all applicable Federal and State laws for protection of the environment, including the *Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*. I find that this project meets the identified purpose and need. I am also approving the following recommended mitigation measures to ensure resource protection is achieved:

Hydrology

1. *Logs will be yarded across the channel at the ford only.*
2. *The ford crossing will be improved and stabilized upon completion of the salvage project.*

Fisheries

3. *Do not take trees within 75 feet of the stream channel. This area is marked on the ground with flagging.*
4. *The ford should be left in a state that assures fish passage (Advise the fisheries biologist).*
5. *Do not use the ford during high water (April 15- June 15).*

The Special Use permit allows for the permit holder to cut trees within the right of way. This practice falls under LH-3 in the Inland Native Fish Strategy Standards and Guidelines. This S&G requires that activities in rights of way do not adversely affect inland native fish and not retard the attainment of Riparian Management Objectives. Due to the mitigations, the project will not adversely affect inland native fish and not retard the attainment of Riparian Management Objectives; therefore the project meets the Intent of INFISH.

Soils

6. *To minimize compaction and erosion from skid trails and landings, all skid trails should be at least 130 feet apart for tractor logging equipment except when converging (i.e. at landings).*
7. *To avoid detrimentally compacting new areas, areas that are already detrimentally compacted should be reused to the extent possible. The area under the powerline has generally been impacted by equipment – use this area instead of impacting areas outside of the clearing, utilize FR 7000141 for the landing.*
8. *To control the extent of detrimental soil conditions, prevent compaction of areas outside of landings and skid trails by keeping heavy mechanized equipment on designated skid trails.*

Fuels

After felled material is removed from site, the remaining activity fuels should be displaced such that: ▫ an average of 5 – 7 tons per acre is distributed throughout the right-of-way ▫ depth of activity fuels should be less than one foot ▫ no piles of activity fuels should be left, or constructed.



Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be implemented to ensure resource protection. The General BMP's that are relevant to this project are included in the analysis file. I have reviewed specialist reports to determine if any extraordinary circumstances exist concerning implementation of this project. I have also reviewed public scoping comments, the *Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*, and applicable US Forest Service manual direction in reaching this decision.

Figure 2, Gravel ford across Strauss Creek.

Specialists analyzed the project for potentially significant effects, including cumulative effects, on the following:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species;
- Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds;
- Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas;
- Inventoried roadless areas;
- Research natural areas;
- American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites;
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas.

In reviewing the analysis file, I have found that no extraordinary circumstances exist regarding this project.

Public Involvement

The proposed project was listed in the *Schedule of Proposed Actions* on March 28, 2008. Letters dated April 9, 2008 were sent to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Kalispell Tribe, and Spokane Tribe of Indians concerning the proposed action. One comment letter was received indicating that the project was clear to proceed. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during a 30 day scoping period which began on April 16, 2008 and ended on May 16, 2008. In addition, scoping letters were sent to 29 members of the public, agencies, and organizations that are on the Three Rivers Ranger District mailing list. That list is contained in the project analysis file. One comment was received by email and it read:

“Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. I have no concerns with this project other than you and your staff getting the timber removed in a timely manner in order to minimize fiber and value loss of these products. I trust that you will take into account necessary precautions to get this job done.”(Nielsen 5/02/2008)

Two comments were received from nearby landowners, one by phone one by walk-in, looking at using the felled trees for potential firewood.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the management objectives as indicated in Chapter 4 of the *Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1989)*, as amended by the *Regional Forester’s Forest Plan Amendment 1 and 2 (1993 and 1995)*, and *INFISH (1995)*, and is tiered to the FEIS for the *Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* as required by the National Forest Management Act. This project was designed in conformance with the prescription of the Forest Plan Management Areas 5.

National Forest Management Act of October 22, 1976 (NFMA):

Provisions of NFMA applicable to all projects require the following: (a) resource plans and permits, contracts, and other instruments shall be consistent with the land management plan; (b) insure consideration of the economic and environmental aspects of management, to provide for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife, and fish; and (c) provide for diversity of plant and animal communities. All of these considerations and requirements are addressed in the Decision Memo and the various resource reports in the project file. Therefore, project actions are consistent with these provisions of NFMA.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment as per regulations of July 29, 2003, (Interim Directive 1909.15-2003-2 to USDA Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Chapter 30, section 31.2, Category 13). The project meets the criteria for Category 13 by salvaging dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres with no more than ½ mile of temporary road construction. Under Category 13 salvage harvest is allowed in areas where trees have been damaged by forces such as fire, wind, ice, insects, or disease and still have some economic value as a forest product. The use of this category is limited to salvage of dead and dying trees by timber purchasers. Within the 250 acres, this category allows incidental removal of trees for temporary roads, landings, and skid trails as determined by the Forest Service in the timber sale contract specifications.

This action does not pose a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. It does not, individually or cumulatively, have a significant effect (40 CFR 1508.4) on the quality of the human environment.

This is not a major Federal action. It will have limited context and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27), individually or cumulatively, to the biological, physical, social, or economic components of the human environment. It will have no adverse effect upon public

health or safety; consumers, civil rights, minority groups and women. There is no foreclosure of options upon old growth forest, or to designated or proposed Wilderness.

Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, ordered federal agencies to identify and address the issue of environmental justice.¹ Public scoping did not find that the proposed action would affect the civil liberties of any American Citizen. In accordance with Executive Order 12898, no minority or low income populations would be disproportionately impacted by implementation of the proposed action.

The Forest Archaeologist reviewed the project for heritage resources. This project is a “No Effect” undertaking and may proceed as planned, as per Section 106 compliance, dated April 9, 2008. Feedback was also received from the *Spokane Tribe of Indians* clearing this project.

A Biological Evaluation (BE) was prepared by the Forest wildlife biologist, botanist, and fisheries biologist. The project will have no effect upon threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive animals and plants.

Implementation Date

This project may be implemented immediately.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal (36 CFR 215.12(f)).

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Erick Warren, Three Rivers Ranger District, 255 W. 11th Street, Kettle Falls, WA, (509) 738-7700.

/s/ Fred L. Way

June 18, 2008

FRED L. WAY

Date

District Ranger
Three Rivers Ranger District

¹ Environmental Justice issues consider the adverse human health and environmental effects of agency programs that would disproportionately affect minority and low-income populations.

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