

DECISION NOTICE

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

MISERY LAKE TIMBER AND FUELS MANAGEMENT PROJECTS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**USDA Forest Service
Colville National Forest
Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts
Pend Oreille County, Washington**

I have decided to implement the proposed action described in the Misery Lake Timber and Fuels Management Projects Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA documents the site-specific analysis conducted by an interdisciplinary team to determine the potential environmental effects connected to ecosystem management activities, including use of prescribed fire to manage vegetation and fuels, timber harvest, reforestation, road construction and reconstruction, precommercial thinning, and wildlife habitat improvement. All activities are planned within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA). The Misery Lake project area covers WUI areas identified and delineated by the Pend Oreille County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan (2005). The community of Blueslide was identified as a community at risk by the Pend Oreille Local Fire Coordinating Group.

These actions will reduce the risk of stand-replacement wildfire in the interface area west of Blueslide by reducing hazardous fuels; managing stocking and species composition to lessen susceptibility to insect and disease outbreaks; and improving cover:forage ratio in big game winter range. Forest health and vigor will increase in treated units. A majority of the proposed fuel reduction activities will be done through contracts, providing employment opportunities to the local community.

The Regional Forester, on May 27, 1994, issued an EA amending the Eastside Forest Plans. This EA is titled *Continuation of Interim Management Direction Establishing Riparian, Ecosystem and Wildlife Standards for Timber Sales*. On June 8, 1995, the Regional Forester issued *Regional Forester's Forest Plan amendment No. 2: Revised Interim Standards for Timber Sales on Eastside Forests*, and on July 28, 1995, the Forest Service issued a *Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Inland Native Fish Strategy Environmental Assessment*. All alternatives adhere to this direction and represent the results of the screening standards outlined in the Interim Direction EA (EA page 1).

INTRODUCTION

The need to implement the Forest Service Strategic Plan (revision 2000) in a manner consistent with the Colville National Forest Land and Resources Management Plan, and utilizing commercial timber sales as a tool whenever possible forms the underlying basis for this project. This project is also designed to meet the goals of the Pend Oreille County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan (2005).

There is a need to reduce hazardous fuels¹ (ground fuels, ladder fuels, and forest crown continuity), for the purpose of reducing the risk of large, stand-replacing fires. The effect of reducing the risk of large, stand-replacing fires would be to: 1) decrease the probability that a future wildland fire would develop

¹ 10-year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan (USDA Forest Service, 2002)

into, or be sustained as, a stand-replacing or crown fire, 2) increase the ability to provide for public and firefighter health and safety during a wildland fire, and 3) increase the effectiveness and efficiency of protecting property within the wildland-urban interface². The Pend Oreille County, Washington, Community Wildfire Protection Plan includes the need to consider forest management efforts that would slow the approach of a fire that may threaten the community of Blueslide.

There is a need to remove diseased trees, reduce stand density, and modify tree-species composition for the purpose of improving forest health³. This will have the effect of 1) improving tree growth, 2) reducing tree and stand susceptibility to damaging insects and diseases, 3) improving the distribution of stand structures⁴ across the forest landscape, and 4) improving vegetative composition within areas adjacent to riparian corridors to help meet riparian habitat management objectives. These improvements in forest stand conditions are expected to reduce forest fuels and result in stands that are better able to withstand the effects of fire (EA page 3).

There is a need to treat the area to improve winter range habitat for big game. Providing quality winter range is a key factor in maintaining healthy herds of big game animals. West of the Pend Oreille River (including the Misery Lake project area), the Forest Plan emphasizes managing winter range for deer. The objective for deer winter range in the Forest Plan (page 4-106) is to “Manage for cover/forage ratios approaching 50:50 dispersed to provide for a maximum utilization of forage.” At least 20 percent of the cover component should be thermal cover and the rest can be thermal or hiding cover. The Forest Plan defines adequate thermal cover for deer as stands of evergreen trees that are at least 40 feet tall with a crown cover of 60 percent or greater. Designated winter range in the project area is low in forage (24 percent) and exceeds cover goals (76 percent).

Vegetation management utilizing commercial harvest and/or noncommercial treatments (including prescribed fire, precommercial thinning, and reforestation) would improve forage opportunities and long-term cover habitat for ungulates. These treatments are also expected to reduce ground fuels and continuous fuel ladders. Future wildfires that occur in treated stands should burn cooler and be less likely to ascend into the crowns of over-story trees. The risk of a hot crown fire removing forest cover over large area would be reduced. (EA page 26)

The Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts conducted this EA to analyze options for restoring forest health and reducing hazardous fuels, and to provide data from which I could make a decision. Treating excess fuel build-up and beginning to restore fire to its historic function in the ecosystem would push treated areas towards a healthier, more resilient condition. Restoring early seral species to their historic level will improve sustainability and resiliency in this ecosystem and would result in a landscape that is less susceptible to insects and disease and better able to withstand effects of fire. Treatment options analyzed include commercial timber harvest, prescribed burning, and other timber and wildlife (winter range management) projects.

THE DECISION

Based on the analysis described in the Environmental Assessment, collaboration with the Kalispel Tribe and the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC), coordination with other state and federal agencies, and comments received from the public during this analysis, it is my decision to implement alternative B as follows:

² Cohesive Strategy Priority (USDA Forest Service, 2000)

³ A healthy forest is defined as the condition in which the forest (trees, stands and forested landscape) meets the desired conditions described in the Forest Plan.

⁴ A structural stage is a stage in development of a vegetation community. Examples of structural stages include stand initiation, stem inclusion, understory re-initiation, multi-stratum without large trees, multi-stratum with large trees, and single-stratum with large trees.

1. Prescribed underburning and site preparation burning treatments of approximately 6,197 acres to eliminate unwanted vegetation and reduce fuel levels;
2. Harvest of approximately 50,000 Ccf (hundred cubic feet) of sawtimber and other products from about 2,815 acres. About 643 acres (~23%) are regeneration (shelterwood) harvest;
3. Construction of approximately 4.8 miles of new system roads, and 0.5 miles of temporary roads. Reconstruction of approximately 20.8 miles of existing system road (includes light and moderate levels of reconstruction);
4. Utilize two existing rock pits outside the analysis area (the Gardiner Pit site is located in T. 34 N., R. 43 E., NE ¼, NE ¼, sec. 2, and the Ruby Quarry site is located in T. 36 N., R. 43 E., SW ¼, SW ¼, sec. 31);
5. Ground-based yarding on approximately 2,366 acres, skyline yarding on approximately 179 acres, and approximately 270 acres of helicopter yarding;
6. Site preparation for artificial (planting seedlings) regeneration on approximately 643 acres ;
7. Restoration work planned includes the closure and decommissioning of all or portions of Forest Roads 2700003, 2700005, 2700006, 2700008, 2700026, 3100430, 3100433, 3100435, 3100440, and 3100435 to reduce the number of road maintenance miles required by the Forest. The roads to be closed and decommissioned are located on National Forest system land. These roads would be signed for one year prior to official closure. A portion of forest road 2700005 is proposed for obliteration due to its close proximity to Ruby Creek. This section of the road would be relocated and the new section would become Forest Road 2700107;
8. Incorporating the *Colville National Forest Weed Prevention Guidelines* and *Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants* Record of Decision to prevent and manage competing and unwanted vegetation that may result from the proposed action;
9. Removal of dead or dying trees to reduce fuel levels and reduce potential for increasing detrimental insect populations; and treatment of substandard material (fuelwood, firewood, and pulpwood) to release residual stands from suppression caused by overstocking; and
10. All appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) and project design criteria as stated in the EA will be followed.

Timber harvest resulting from this EA is scheduled to be sold as two timber sales, the Misery Lake Timber Sale and the Blue Ruby Timber Sale, in calendar years 2008 and 2009.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

Reasons for the decision and how considerations were weighed and balanced in arriving at the decision are listed below. Alternative B, with project design criteria and BMPs identified on pages 13 through 24 in the EA, was selected because it:

1. **Reintroduces fire into the ecosystem.** Approximately 6,197 acres are proposed for treatment with prescribed fire (EA page 5), including fire/fuels and mechanical fuels treatments. Commercial thinning will be used to remove some of the fuels prior to prescribed burning to reduce the intensity of prescribed fires.
2. **Meets hazardous fuels reduction objectives.** Alternative B reduces fuels on a substantial portion of the project area (6,197 acres, 63% of the project area). While doing so, it also improves forest health and wildlife habitat. See EA pages 24-26)
3. **Addresses other identified issues and management concerns of the proposal in a balanced manner** (EA pages 6-10). This project proposes to improve stocking levels, stand vigor, move stands

toward target condition and toward the historical range of variability of structural stages (EA page 40). The objective is to increase the opportunity for residual trees to develop larger diameters and crowns faster than they would if left untreated (EA pages 40-41).

The effects of this alternative include the promotion of large tree habitat for management indicator species through commercial thinning and shelterwood harvest and the promotion of palatable forage for big game animals through prescribed burning (EA pages 46-47). No harvest or road construction is proposed within any old-growth areas (EA pages 5, 49, and 51) or core pine marten areas (EA page 51), and no existing lynx forage stands would be impacted by the project (EA page 52). Although there will be a reduction in canopy closure and horizontal cover in treated areas, travel corridors will be maintained and there will be a decreased risk of habitat loss to stand-replacement wildfire (EA page 53).

The effects determination concluded that the project is not likely to adversely affect gray wolf, grizzly bear, and bull trout; have no effect on Canada lynx, westslope cutthroat trout, redband trout, or pygmy whitefish; is not likely cause a trend to federal listing for bald eagle, wolverine, fisher, great gray owl, northern leopard frog, sandhill crane, or eared grebe; and have no impact on Townsend's big-eared bat.

There are no federally threatened or endangered plant species documented or suspected from the project area. Five sensitive plants are known to be present on six sites within the project area. Negative impacts to these species and their habitat are possible, but would be minimized with the implementation of recommended mitigation measures. Since the sensitive plants in northeastern Washington forests have evolved with fire, there should be no negative long-term cumulative effects from prescribed fires. (EA pages 53-54).

4. **Best addresses the management needs for winter range habitat.** Following commercial thinning the residual stands should be healthier overall. Potentially, these stands would become multi-layered and would provide overhead cover for a longer period of time than if they were not thinned. Commercial thinning would remove big game cover over the short-term but would promote healthier and longer lasting overhead cover over the longer term (EA page 47). Vegetation management activities would move the area closer to the Forest Plan direction of 50:50 forage-cover ratio (increases forage acres by approximately 37%) (EA page 47).
5. **Has the highest benefit:cost ratio and present net value.** Alternative B is economically viable based on the Present Net Value (PNV) values shown in Table 16 (EA page 91). This analysis includes the costs and benefits of fuel treatments outside of the timber sale units. If this project or a portion of the project is implemented as a stewardship project, then there should be enough revenue generated to cover the intended service work. In alternative B, the receipts from selling forest products would offset the service work required to reduce fuels (EA pages 90-91 economics)

Other Alternatives Considered In Detail Were:

Alternative A (No Action). No additional management activities would be implemented at this time. Only existing, on-going activities currently authorized for this area would continue. Alternative A was not chosen as the preferred alternative because it fails to meet the purpose and need of enhancing resource and ecosystem health and moving the analysis area toward the desired future condition. Alternative A is described on pages 11-13 of the EA.

Request for an Alternative from the Public

The District received one request from The Lands Council to consider developing and analyzing a non-commercial logging alternative. Logging systems and harvest methods were discussed during collaboration with interested individuals and groups and resolved into one proposed action (alternative B). Per direction under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, development of alternative B through

collaboration with the public addressed the concerns expressed by The Lands Council, and no additional alternatives were required.

The District did not receive any other requests from members of the public for additional alternatives.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COLLABORATION

Public involvement was initiated when the Misery Lake Timber and Fuels Management Projects were first identified in the fall 2004 Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). Planning for this project included public participation and consultation with the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Colville Confederated Tribes, Spokane Tribe, and the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition (NEWFC). In addition to a news release published in the Newport *Miner* and *Selkirk Sun*, public input was solicited by letters sent to all individuals, groups, adjacent landowners, grazing permittees, and State and Federal agencies known to be interested in projects of this type. The issues identified through this process are presented in chapter 1 of the EA on pages 6- 9. In addition, public meetings were held to discuss the proposed projects with adjacent landowners and interested members of the public. The first meeting was held at the Newport district office on December 8, 2006, and the second meeting was held near the project area at the US Air Force Tacoma Creek Command Post on September 22, 2007.

Fifteen comment letters or emails were received during the scoping period. Primary issues raised in the comment letters include road management (open versus closed roads; maintenance level of open roads); effectiveness of road closures; improvement and protection of wildlife habitat; concern about fuel buildup adjacent to private property; prevention of noxious weed spread; feasibility of project design; and protection of range improvements.

Collaboration

The NEWFC group includes mill workers, conservationists, business owners, recreationists, loggers, and foresters. The purpose of this group is to:

- design and implement forest restoration and fuels reduction projects that demonstrate innovative approaches to forestry.
- demonstrate how a diverse coalition of stakeholders can work together to successfully promote restoration forestry and community protection from wildfire.
- use the projects to educate the public about the ecological and socio-economic benefits of restoration forestry and fuels reduction strategies.
- develop model forest restoration and fuels reduction projects that can be emulated in other regions of the country.

On September 30, 2006, the NEWFC formally requested to collaborate with the Forest Service on the Misery Lake project, with a goal of “minimizing controversy, and to reach a high level of support for the timber sales”. In an effort to better understand the treatment proposals, various members of the NEWFC met with the Forest Service on several occasions (12/8/2006; 3/14/2007; 4/16/2007) to discuss the project, and treatment information was exchanged over the course of project analysis work to clarify issues and attempt resolution of differing opinions.

District representatives met with members of the NEWFC and other members of the public at two public meetings (6/12/2006; 9/22/2007) to discuss treatment proposals and receive public input.

During collaboration meetings with the NEWFC two primary issues were discussed. The following provides a summary of the discussion. Complete documentation of the collaboration discussions can be found in the project file.

Road construction and reconstruction – the concern was that the Forest Service not increase the mileage of system roads within the project area. The Lands Council members (part of the NEWFC) at these meetings discussed the groups desire to reduce road mileage on National Forest System lands due to lack of federal funds to provide sufficient maintenance, potential for increased noxious weed spread, potential for impacts to wildlife populations, and potential for increased sediment input to streams.

The NEWFC members and interdisciplinary team (IDT) members discussed each proposed specified road location, along with why the IDT felt it was needed (e.g., management access, relocation to protect streams); each road proposed for closing, decommissioning, or obliteration; and proposed temporary road locations. Based on these discussions the IDT relocated some roads and shortened some roads. The specified road construction for the Misery Lake project was reduced from approximately 5.9 miles of new road to approximately 4.8 miles. The current proposed action incorporates these changes, and would result in a net decrease (approximately 3.2 miles) in system roads following project implementation. The NEWFC members concurred with the road management activities proposed with this project.

Residual stocking – the concern was that the Forest Service retain sufficient trees following harvest activities to meet aesthetic values of their member groups. The suggestions from NEWFC members included meeting a minimum stocking level, maintaining trees throughout the proposed harvest unit, and minimizing the size and distribution of created openings (defined by NEWFC as areas with no trees) in all units proposed for commercial harvest activity. NEWFC members and IDT members met both in the office and in the field to discuss specific treatments and options. Where the IDT had unit-specific residual stocking information, that information was provided to NEWFC members for their review.

Due to the high concentration of lodgepole pine with height-diameter ratios greater than 100 and crown ratios less than 40%, agreement was reached that proposed treatment units in this project would not all meet the residual stocking levels desired by members of NEWFC. The Forest Service agreed to leave pockets of trees as well as individual trees; try to distribute trees designated for retention throughout the proposed units; and to retain the larger, fire-resistant trees in the units proposed for shelterwood harvest. These agreements are reflected in the unit-specific treatment prescriptions⁵.

The IDT also worked with the range allotment permittee to ensure that issues or concerns related to permit administration would be addressed. The permittee wanted to make sure that any reductions of natural barriers created by project activities would not change the accessibility of new areas to his cattle as well as protection of existing range allotment improvements. He was also interested in opportunities for improving access to one of his holding corrals. The IDT members reviewed these concerns with the permittee on the ground and included the following in the design of the project:

- Existing range allotment improvements would be protected in any resulting contracts or force account projects.
- If natural barriers to livestock are breached by the proposed activities, fencing would need to be constructed, or other methods utilized to limit livestock dispersal.
- A stock driveway would be constructed in the southern end of unit 44 to allow livestock to be trailed from the creek crossing near the southeast corner of unit 44 southeast to the corral in the powerline right-of-way. This would encourage cattle to move away from the creek and allow for better management by the permittee.

⁵ Unit-specific prescriptions are located in the Misery Lake project file.

New access to the permittee's holding corral was reviewed on the ground by IDT members and the permittee. Although the proposed access location was determined not to be feasible due to soil and other resource concerns, the permittee would still have access to his holding corral.

Discussion on how concerns and comments were or were not addressed in the effects analysis, or incorporated in the project design, may be found in appendix F of the EA and in the Project File.

Consultation

Separate government-to-government consultation was conducted with the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation, and the Spokane Tribe. Letters were mailed to all three governments on 4/19/2004, 5/3/2004, 11/20/2006, and 6/9/2008. None of the governments raised any concerns with the proposed project.

FOREST PLAN CONSISTENCY

The actions of alternative B comply with the Colville National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), including amendments. The following are my reasons for this finding:

1. The actions of the project are consistent with the following Forest Plan objectives prescribed in chapter 4 of the Forest Plan:
 - MA-1, Old growth Habitat (Forest Plan pages 4-69 to 4-72).
 - MA 5, Scenic/timber (Forest Plan pages 4-93 to 4-96).
 - MA 6, Scenic/winter range (Forest Plan pages 4-97 to 4-100).
 - MA 7, Wood/forage (Forest Plan pages 4-101 to 4-104).
 - MA 8, Winter range (Forest Plan pages 4-105 to 4-108).
2. The actions are consistent with the management prescriptions and Forestwide Standards and Guidelines found on Forest Plan pages 4-35 through 4-60 (EA pgs. 4; pg. 22; pgs. 39, 45, 46, 78, and 79). The actions of this project which alter vegetation comply with the requirements of 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3) by following the Forestwide Standards and Guidelines, as well as the management prescriptions for management areas 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (EA pages 4; 13-24 project design criteria and BMPs).
3. The actions are consistent with direction contained in Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment #2 (EA pages 1, 11, 12, 15, 16, 38, and 71),
4. The actions are consistent with INFISH direction (EA pages 1, 11, 18 (design criteria #46), 31, 51, 56-61, 64, and 65; Fisheries Specialist Report.
5. The actions are consistent with the *Colville National Forest Noxious Weed Prevention Guidelines* and the Regional Forester's October 11, 2005 amendment to forest plans in Region 6, *Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants*, (Preventing and Managing Invasive Plants Record of Decision, appendix 1-1). This management direction includes invasive plant prevention and treatment/restoration standards intended to help achieve stated desired future conditions, goals and objectives. (EA pages 9, 13, 14, [project design criteria #16-23 and #48]; pages 27, 42-45 noxious weeds; pages 46-48 management indicator species; page 77 soils; page 83 and 85 range management ; Project Analysis File, Noxious Weeds specialist report).
6. The actions in alternative B are consistent with the Forest Plan because project design criteria Best Management Practices which address impacts have been fully applied in the planned actions (EA pages 13-24 project design criteria; pages 25-26). The project is feasible and reasonable, and it results in applying management practices that meet the Forest Plan overall direction of protecting the environment while producing goods and services (EA page 31; page 38 air quality; page 44 noxious weeds; pages 45-48, and 52 wildlife; page 55 sensitive plants; page 65

hydrology; page 77 soils; page 79-80 scenery management; page 83 range management; page 87 heritage; and page 91 economics).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined through the Misery Lake Timber and Fuels Management Projects Environmental Assessment that this is not a major Federal action individually or cumulatively that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. (EA chapter 3)
2. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed action (EA pages 36-38 [air quality]).
3. The proposed action in this area does not affect any areas which are considered for roadless status under the Colville Land and Resource Management Plan of 1988 (EA pages 5 and 31), nor does it affect wilderness or other unique areas such as Research Natural Areas (EA page 31);
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. Because there is no known scientific controversy of the impacts of the project. Consumers, civil rights, minority groups, public health and safety, and women will not be significantly affected (EA page 92 [environmental justice]; pages 36-38 [air quality]);
5. We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. There were no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified in any of the effects analyses conducted for the Misery Lake project. (EA Chapter 3)
6. These actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan (EA page 1 and pages 3-4 [management area guidelines]);
7. There are no known significant cumulative effects with the proposed action and other projects implemented or planned, on areas separated from the affected area of this project, beyond those evaluated in chapter IV of the FEIS for the Forest Plan (EA chapter 3 and appendix C);
8. It is expected that there will be no adverse impacts to heritage resources (EA page 87). The Forest Archaeologist reviewed the project for heritage resources and determined the project is a “no effect” undertaking, as per Section 106 Compliance, dated 12-21-2007, and may proceed as planned (EA pages 86-87; 23-24 [design criteria #83-85]);
9. Endangered, threatened, or sensitive species which may inhabit the area will not be significantly affected. These include the gray wolf (Endangered), grizzly bear (Threatened), Canada lynx (Threatened), bull trout (Threatened), bald eagle (Sensitive), wolverine (Sensitive), Townsend’s big-eared bat (Sensitive), fisher (Sensitive), great gray owl (Sensitive), northern leopard frog, sandhill crane, eared grebe (all sensitive), and pygmy whitefish, westslope cutthroat, and redband trout (all sensitive) (EA pages 52-53). On November 27, 2007, the US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that this project as described in the BE is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle, gray wolf, grizzly bear and bull trout.

There are no federally threatened or endangered plant species documented or suspected from the project area. By implementing the recommended mitigations, alternative B may impact individuals, but is not likely to result in a trend to federal listing or loss of viability of the species. Any additional sensitive plant species found during project activities, during sale preparation, or sale contract activities would be protected (EA page 16 [design criteria #34]);

10. The proposed action does not threaten a violation of Federal, State or Local law, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (Forest Plan requirements; EA pages 1-3 [purpose and need]; pages 13-24 [project design criteria]; pages 52-53, and appendix D [Endangered Species Act]; pages 42-45 [noxious weeds]; pages 36-38 [Clean Air Act]; pages 86-87 [National Historic Preservation Act]; Clean Water Act and Washington State water quality criteria [EA Project Analysis File: Hydrology specialist report]);
11. Alternative B does not propose road construction or reconstruction within Inventoried Roadless Areas identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps contained in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2, dated November 2000, which are held at the National Headquarters office of the Forest Service, and any subsequent update or revision of those maps.

OTHER FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAW

Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003

The Misery Lake Timber and Fuels Management Projects are consistent with the intent and purposes of Title I of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003. The project was developed collaboratively with the NEWFC, and the selected alternative will implement hazardous fuels reduction projects, and incorporates project design criteria consistent with the Act. It reduces hazardous fuels and fire hazard in the wildland-urban interface of an at-risk community. It proposes effective fuel reduction in the WUI developed by the local community and fire districts as part of their Community Wildfire Protection Plan. (EA pages 1-3; 6-9; 11-13 [design criteria #1-9]; and Silviculture and Fire specialist reports.)

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 EA and the various resource reports in the project file. Therefore, project actions are consistent with these provisions of NFMA.

The selected actions which alter vegetation meet the minimum specific requirements of 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3) of the National Forest Management Act. Rationale is as follows:

1. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged (EA pages 65-77).
2. A site-specific determination assures that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest (FSM 1921.12g) (EA page 14 [design criteria #12]); silviculture specialist report).
3. Streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water are protected from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions (EA pages 55-62 [fisheries]; 62-65 [hydrology])
4. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber: See Rationale for the Decision, above.
5. Stands of trees are harvested according to requirements for culmination of mean annual increment of growth (however, thinning or other stand improvement measures are excepted from this requirement.) (EA pages 38-42; and Silviculture specialist report).

6. This project includes cutting designed to regenerate even-aged stands of timber. Regeneration cutting proposed in this project is consistent with the National Forest Management Act because conditions listed in 16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3) are met, as follows:
 - (a) Where shelterwood, or other regeneration cuts are prescribed, they are appropriate to meet the objectives and requirements of the Colville Land and Resource Management Plan. (EA pages 15, 16, 22, 23, 26, 29, 43, 47, 50, 54, 65, 71, 76, 77, 80, and 82).
 - (b) The interdisciplinary review has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts have been assessed on each advertised sale area and the cutting methods are consistent with the multiple use of the general area.
 - (c) Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (EA pages 22 [design criteria] and 78-80).
 - (d) Areas to be cut during one harvest operation using regeneration harvest methods are less than 40 acres.
 - (e) Timber cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, esthetic resources, cultural and historic resources, and the regeneration of timber resources. (EA pages 45-53 (wildlife), 55-62 (fisheries), 62-65 (hydrology), 65-77 (soils), 78-80 (scenery management), 80-82 (recreation), 86-87 (heritage resources)).
7. This project includes road construction and temporary road construction. Vegetative cover will be reestablished on the roadway and associated disturbed areas within 10 years. (EA page 18 [design criteria #45]; Transportation Report in project file, page 7).
8. Constructed roads will be designed to standards appropriate for their intended uses, and will consider safety, costs, and impacts on the land and resources.

This project incorporates project design criteria in accordance with the 1976 National Forest Management Act. (EA page 13; EA project analysis file: Silviculture and Fire specialist reports.)

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITY

A pre-decisional objection opportunity was offered on this project under 36 CFR 218. No objections were received. This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215 (per regulations at 36 CFR 218.1). The objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 provided the sole means of administrative review for this HFRA project. This objection process has been completed.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Because no objections were filed on this project, implementation may occur immediately. The Forest intends to offer project contracts for bid prior to September 30, 2008.

CONTACT PERSON

For further information regarding this project, contact Amy Dillon, Interdisciplinary Team Leader and District Environmental Coordinator, at the Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger District, 315 North Warren, Newport Washington 99156, (509) 447-7300; or at 12641 Sullivan Lake Road, Metaline Falls, Washington 99153, (509) 446-7500.

SIGNATURE OF THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

/s/ Karen R. Mollander
KAREN MOLLANDER
Acting Forest Supervisor

7/24/08
Date

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