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**CATHERINE FOREST RESTORATION DECISION NOTICE  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT and CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION**

**USDA, Forest Service, Columbia River Gorge NSA**

**PROPOSED ACTION:** The proposed action described in the Catherine Forest Restoration EA is to thin and underburn approximately 2510 acres of Fire Regime I, condition class 2 and 3 tree stands in the Wildland-Urban Interface in the Catherine Creek area, to underburn approximately 1300 acres and retain 290 acres in untreated buffers:

- The proposed action calls for thinning approximately 1,111 acres in the Catherine Creek planning area followed by underburning. Thinning will mostly include trees <21” dbh (diameter at breast height) and will require some road maintenance and landing creation, mechanical tree yarding, piling of slash, and pile burning.
- No ground-based mechanical thinning on slopes greater than 30% and in the oak-pine woodlands (which do not require it). Approximately 1,399 acres will be thinned using chain saws only followed by hand-piling of slash and pile burning.
- Thinning will be “from below” meaning that the smallest--mostly understory trees in the stands will be removed first to achieve the prescribed canopy closure, species preference and size classes after treatment. Large legacy trees will remain. Lower branches on conifers between > 12-21” dbh will be considered for pruning up to 6 ft. to reduce ladder fuels.
- The proposal includes the release of overtopped oak and of large, legacy ponderosa pine trees by removing trees around them on approximately 500 acres.
- The proposal would create a prescribed underburning schedule for thinned tree stands and areas where fire can be reintroduced without thinning in the planning area. Approximately 1300 acres are proposed for underburning only.
- Slash in excess of what can be left on the ground will be chipped and spread on existing roads, grapple or hand piled and burned. Stands may require the establishment of 2.5-3 ft. wide fire-line dug before prescribed underburning where no other fuel break exists.
- Snags will be created in areas that are below requirements of the CRGNSA Management Plan.
- All treated stands will be monitored post-activity for invasive plants.

Haul routes are planned to be on existing roads or tracks except for a small temporary entry to a landing off Snowden Road.

**Treatment restrictions for intermittent and ephemeral non-fish bearing streams**  
**Management Plan buffer width: 50 ft.--Northwest Forest Plan (intermittent only): 200 ft.**

- Intermittent-No thinning or mechanical entry for 15 feet on either side of stream.
- Intermittent and Ephemeral- Ground based yarding, slash piling, or fire-line creation equipment will not be allowed to operate within 20’ of channels except to cross them at designated crossings.
- No mechanical constructed fire-line will be allowed within Riparian Reserves.

## **Treatment restrictions for Catherine Cr, Major Creek, and wetland buffers:**

Management Plan buffer width: 200 ft.

Northwest Forest Plan buffer width Major Cr: 400 ft.—Catherine Cr: 200 ft.

- 50 feet-No thinning or prescribed fire for 50 feet on either side of stream.
- 100 feet-No mechanical tree removal (i.e. cut using chainsaw only to the prescription for the stand type leaving larger wood on the ground, hand piling slash and schedule underburning if feasible--use sequential entries if necessary). Canopy closure reduction is 50% or less from existing conditions.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

### **Need for Action**

Fire Resilience: Fire behavior within the project area is anticipated to be consistent with the existing fuel characteristics in the area. Fires burning in light fuels pushed by typical gorge winds will spread rapidly. Recent examples of this include both of the Major Creek Fires (the first in July, 1999; the second in August, 1999) which burned through a portion of the project area and consumed one residence and some 600 acres. The challenge for fire fighters in light fuels is not the fire's resistance to control--but the rate at which the fire spreads.

Under high fire danger conditions, fires burning in heavier fuels can be anticipated to exhibit extreme fire behavior with torching, spotting, and crowning as the expected norm. On July 23, 2002, a lightning strike ignited a fire on Sheldon Ridge—eight miles south of the project area across the Columbia River in Oregon. The typical gorge winds and heavy fuels prompted extreme fire behavior including torching, spotting, and crowning. By July 25 the Sheldon Ridge fire had consumed some 15,000 acres. The fuels, elevation and topography are nearly identical to those found in the project area.

Klickitat County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP): The Klickitat County CWPP identifies, as its third objective, the need to decrease the risk of catastrophic fire in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) by treating vegetation to reduce fuel loading and fuel ladders. The CWPP further states that county emergency management shall support such treatments on public lands administered by the USDA Forest Service and Washington Department of Natural Resources and private lands as well to “create conditions that would decrease the hazard of large wildfires.”

Ecosystem Components: The Cascades transition zone is an ecosystem that has been heavily impacted, declining in quality and quantity, due to human activities such as agriculture, land and housing development, fire suppression, and forest harvest practices. Human activities and development continue to fragment and alter natural processes. The pine-oak forests are recognized as a priority habitat by the state of Washington because their distribution is limited and their diversity is very unique. Many listed and important game species are dependent on these habitats.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the proposed action in the Catherine Planning Area is to:

- Take measured management action that will further the long-term objectives created by the collaborative group:
  - Fire Resilience: Wildfires will, as far as can be predicted, be surface fires that stay close to the ground under the majority of conditions. Maintenance underburns will be possible.
  - Ecosystem Restoration: Restore, as much as possible, the natural fire regime and associated habitats while protecting threatened, endangered or sensitive species and species.
- Reduce the immediate risk of high intensity wildfires that have the potential to result in loss of life, property, and important forest ecosystem components by removing the small trees that create fuel ladders into the crowns of larger trees and by increasing the spacing between trees.
- Release overtopped oak trees to forestall their rapid decline.
- Improve the growing conditions for large legacy ponderosa pine trees by removing the understory trees competing with them for moisture and light.
- Reduce the risk of bark beetle tree mortality by reducing the number of trees per acre.

**DECISION AND SUPPORTING RATIONALE**: After reviewing the analysis in the EA, and considering comments from the public, it is my decision to select alternative 2, the proposed action, including the implementation requirements and monitoring.

The factors I used in making my decision included consideration of resource issues identified during analysis, and meeting the underlining need for the proposal. I find this action, refined by an interdisciplinary team of resource scientists using the best available and relevant scientific information, responds in an appropriate manner to both meeting the need for the proposal, and addressing the resource issues that were raised. My reasons for selecting this alternative are outlined below:

### **Meeting Purpose and Need**

The proposed action meets the dual purposes of improving fire resilience and protecting ecosystem components by thinning stands to a point that allows prescribed underburning which will, over time, create a landscape where fire is more likely to remain on the ground rather than resulting in crown fires that have the potential to destroy the overstory large trees and to put human life and property at risk. The selected alternative treats the acres at risk and therefore meets the purpose and need for the project better than the no-action alternative.

The proposed prescriptions improve the fire resilience and recognize and protect the existing habitat role and current species composition of the stands. Thinning will be mostly from below, removing the smallest trees yet releasing large Oregon oak and ponderosa pine legacy trees. Canopy closure will be reduced no more than 30% from the existing canopy cover.

## Resource Issues

The collaborative group identified concerns related to how the proposal would be implemented and what effects the proposed activities would have on the issues described below. Issues raised during scoping and throughout the collaborative process were addressed by modifying the proposed action or developing additional implementation requirements. My responsive statements to the issues below are in *italics*:

Levels of smoke from slash and prescribed underburning may have a local, transitory effect on air quality and visibility. Limited visibility along roadways may cause short duration public safety issues. Sensitive members of the public may experience eye, throat, or lung irritation from these exposures. There is some risk that chronic, low-level exposure of workers or the public to smoke may lead to adverse health effects. *All prescribed burning will comply with the Clean Air Act and will be coordinated with the Washington State Department of Environmental Quality and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. Implementation requirements were designed to reduce the impacts from smoke (EA pages 36 and 64).*

Access issues associated with the project area are complex as a result of the lands being combined together from many different acquisitions. A distinction is made between legal access and physical access. It is not uncommon to have physical access (an existing road), but no legal right of use to the road. Likewise, there are areas with legally defined access for which a road was never constructed. Lastly, there are areas with neither legal nor physical access. *The project was designed to use existing roads or to use thinning methods not requiring access by log trucks. The CRGNSA lands staff is currently in the process of acquiring the needed access rights (EA pages 28, 40-41, Appendix C).*

Sections of the treatment area are very steep (>50%), with thin soils. Construction of temporary roads and landings to facilitate thinning can increase the chance of landsliding, surface erosion and delivery of sediment to adjacent stream systems. *No temporary roads are proposed in these areas. Streams are protected by special riparian treatment restrictions (EA pages 29-30, 28, 36).*

Log yarding equipment (tractors, skidders, cable yarding) and burning has the potential to damage soil through compaction, displacement and sterilization. This in turn may increase erosion and decrease site productivity. *Project implementation requirements and restoration treatments to maintain soil productivity are included in the proposed action (EA pages 36-37).*

Public comment indicated that there would be long term benefits to wildlife and plant habitats as a result of this project, but there were concerns that the short-term impacts would not off-set the long-term benefits. *Project implementation requirements such as timing and buffers designed to eliminate or minimize short term effects are included in the proposed action (EA pages 27-28, 36-37).*

There were concerns that invasive plants would become established in areas with soil disturbance and infestations would occur within fairly pristine oak-pine-Douglas fir habitats. *Implementaton and monitoring requirements aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of noxious weeds are incorporated into the proposed action (EA pages 37, 46-47).*

There was a concern that converting current Douglas-fir habitats (including those with remnant old oaks and pines) into oak-pine habitats, as were likely present when fire regimes were at a more natural frequency and intensity, may not be desirable in all areas. *The proposal does not call for the conversion of current Douglas-fir habitat. Remnant Oregon oak and ponderosa pine are not numerous enough in the Douglas-fir dominated stands to convert the stand by releasing the legacy trees. Large Douglas-fir will also remain and younger fir trees will be thinned to an average canopy closure reduction of no more than 30% from existing closure within a desired range of 50-60% average total canopy. For example, if the existing total canopy closure of a fir-dominated stand is 100%, the lowest average canopy the treatment can produce is 70% (EA pages 11-14, 32-35, 80-83).*

Tree removal adjacent to streams and wetlands has the potential of increasing stream temperature and increasing sediment due to loss of stream shading and soil disturbance next to the water. This in turn may reduce water quality and degrade aquatic habitat. *The streams are protected by riparian treatment restrictions. The streams will benefit in the long term by the growth of larger trees to supply future large woody stream habitat. (EA pages 29-30, 28, 36, 115-118,180).*

There may be short term visible disturbance factors such as visible slash, stumps, boundary marking, etc. that will require mitigation to realize the benefits of the long term effect of larger trees in the viewsheds. *Scenic quality will improve in the long term as larger trees are visible on the landscape including ponderosa pine and Oregon oak. Implementation requirements designed to avoid short term impacts to scenic resources are incorporated in the proposed action (EA page 38).*

Residents and others who may be affected need to be informed. Bicycles use Courtney and Atwood roads to access areas inside and outside of the proposed project area. Most hiking by non-locals occurs during the spring flowering season in the open meadows of the lower Catherine Creek drainage. *Timing and implementation requirements for noticing residents and recreationists are part of the proposed action (EA page 38).*

There are potential risks to adjacent private property from escaped prescribed fires. *The proposed action includes the creation of fire line to protect private property from the risks of escaped prescribed fire. In addition, the underburns will be scheduled when weather and fuel conditions are favorable to reducing the risk of escaped fire. CRGNSA fire suppression resources will be available during the prescribed burn. (EA pages 43-44, 69-72).*

There are potential risks to cultural resource sites that will require mitigations in order to realize the benefit of reducing fire risk by reducing excess fuels with prescribed fire. *Implementation requirements designed to avoid impacts to cultural resources are incorporated into the proposed action (EA page 38).*

### **Findings and Consistency Determination**

I find that the Action Alternative for the Catherine Forest Restoration project is consistent with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) Management Plan provided that it is implemented as described in the EA, and the following conditions are applied:

## **Air Quality**

1. Minimize the amount of material burned by making it available for other uses such as personal use firewood and habitat restoration projects as a first priority.
2. When necessary, excess material shall be burned only when weather conditions minimize impacts from smoke. These include: burning on cloudy days when residual smoke cannot be seen; burn during low visitor time periods; and burning during periods of atmospheric instability for better smoke dispersal. Generally these conditions exist or a window can be found in all seasons. It is the most difficult from December to March when inversions are common.

## **Natural Resources** (Natural Resource Mitigation Plan as required by CRGNSA Management Plan)

3. This project was designed to use existing roads. New temporary roads shall be considered only if the protection of resources requires it and shall be very short (<.15 mile). Any temporary road shall be pre-designated and agreed to by the CRGNSA hydrologist, engineer and archeologist prior to tree removal activities.
4. Track-mounted piling equipment or other low-impact equipment shall operate on top of slash to minimize soil disturbance where possible.
5. Ground based yarding, slash piling, or fire-line creation equipment will not be allowed on slopes steeper than 30%. These steeper areas will be hand piled if fuel reduction is necessary.
6. No mechanically constructed fire-line shall be allowed within Riparian Reserves.
7. Skid roads determined by the Forest Service to have detrimental soil compaction will be ripped to a depth of 18", water-barred, sown with native grass seed, and mulched with fine slash.
8. Any new temporary roads and all landings not part of an existing road shall be decommissioned and restored as per #7 above as part of contract completion.
9. Scenic Area Management Plan standards for soil productivity will be met in the project area. These state that not more than 15% of an activity area will be detrimentally disturbed. This includes compaction, displacement, puddling and removal of organic layers exposing mineral soil. This will require the designation of skid trails.
10. Ground based yarding, slash piling, or fire-line creation equipment in ground-based treatment areas will not be allowed to operate within 20' of intermittent or ephemeral channels except to cross them at designated crossings.
11. Trees will be directionally felled away from streams and wetlands.
12. All wetland-dependent vegetation shall be left undisturbed.
13. Invasive plant issues shall be part of project effectiveness monitoring and the yearly CRGNSA eradication program shall prioritize needs in the planning area.
14. Clean equipment before entering NFS lands and before moving to each treatment area in a manner that will ensure that it is not contributing to the spread of invasive plants. Known patches of invasive plants shall be avoided to forestall spread until eradicated.
15. Snags and large woody debris shall be provided or preserved as per the CRGNSA Management Plan. Burn pile location shall take less than 10% of the area and shall protect trees, snags, and down wood.
16. Treatment areas shall be reviewed for snag creation needs as part of this project.
17. Snags and down wood shall not be taken for firewood. Firewood permits and signs at cutting areas shall state this prohibition and encourage compliance.

18. Any snags cut for worker safety shall remain on the ground. Snags >12" dbh will not be cut without prior FS approval.
19. Project activities except prescribed fire will occur outside of the growing season of plants and the general nesting/rearing season for birds, gray squirrel and other wildlife species (March 1 through June 30). Prescribed fire shall not occur March 15-June 30.
20. No project activities are allowed within ¼ mile of a bald eagle nest from January 1 through August 15. Nest and roost trees shall be retained.
21. No project activities are allowed within 650 ft. of goshawk nest from March 1 through August 31. Nest trees shall be retained. Surveys to be conducted before implementation.
22. All active western gray squirrel (WGS) nest sites shall have a 50 ft. no-thinning buffer around the nest tree. The trees within the buffer will be limbed to a 10' height to reduce crown fire risk, as needed. As nests are located, the most current WDFW management recommendations will be consulted; currently the 2006 Draft Washington State Recovery Plan for the WGS. Deviations from the Management Recommendations may be prescribed to fit local site characteristics, as collaborated with WDFW before implementation.
23. No loud (thinning activities including chainsaws) activity will occur within 400 ft. of active WGS nest trees from March 1 through August 31.
24. If the scenic area or state wildlife biologist determines that the area is needed as winter range (such as due to harsh winter weather), no mechanized equipment (including chainsaws) will be used between December 15-March 1 to reduce cumulative disturbance to deer/elk on their designated winter range.
25. If any sensitive wildlife or flora is located during the project, the Scenic Area wildlife biologist or ecologist shall be notified and appropriate measures taken to ensure protection.
26. Areas where post treatment field surveys indicate that a majority of the vegetation was removed and slow vegetation recovery is expected will be seeded with a native seed mixture to reduce the chance of surface erosion.
27. Revegetate all disturbed areas with desired native bunch grass, forb and shrub species. Appropriate forage species include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), deerbrush (*Ceanothus integerrimus*), and others.
28. Known sites of sensitive plant species shall be protected by a buffer (200 ft) around each site within which no pile burning or mechanized equipment (except chain saws) shall be allowed. Any newly found sites will be given similar protection.

### **Scenic Resources**

29. No permanent leave tree marking shall be used except the marking of boundary trees near the base of each tree.
30. Stumps >10" dbh shall be flush cut in the immediate foreground (within 50 ft) of Snowden Road.
31. The landing at Snowden Road shall retain screening from existing trees as seen from Snowden Road wherever safety concerns permit.
32. Minimize the visual exposure of the BPA powerline to adjacent properties by maintaining the tallest screening trees in stands traversed by BPA lines.

### **Recreation and Recreational Facilities and Access**

33. Trail users, residents and the general public will be notified of thinning and underburning activities by posting warning signs at key trail intersections at a minimum of four weeks

before the activity. Develop and distribute press release/key messages to local press, outdoor equipment stores, user clubs, user organizations, and the Forest Service web site.

34. Before project commences, pursue necessary agreements with landowners for access.
35. Firewood will be made available to the public only on roads where public access is allowed rather than on roads owned by others where the Forest Service is allowed access for administrative purposes only.
36. The implementation window for hauling and ground-based machine operation is July 1-October 15. This window may be extended to February 28 in the event of a prolonged dry period as determined by the contract administrator in consultation with CRGNSA resource specialists.

### **Cultural Resources**

37. Archeological sites shall be identified in the field and taken out of the treatment boundaries, including the appropriate buffers.
38. Should any historic or prehistoric cultural resources be uncovered during project activities, the Forest Service, or their agents, shall cease work and immediately notify the CRGNSA office and the Washington State Historic Preservation Office (Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation). If the cultural resources are prehistoric or otherwise associated with Indian people, the Forest Service shall also notify the Indian tribal governments within 24-hours.

### **Vegetation Management**

39. All prescriptions and marking guides shall include canopy closure as a control on the extent of tree removal, and use variable spacing for diversity and to maintain interlocking canopies.
40. De-commissioned landings shall be considered as areas suitable for planting ponderosa pine and/or Oregon oak seedlings.
41. Adaptive Management effectiveness monitoring may require changes to prescriptions after first treatments are monitored. Changes must reflect the intent of the original prescriptions to meet the stated desired conditions, mitigations and effects to resources.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **Public Scoping and Coordination with the Tribes and other Agencies:**

Public notification regarding the need to restore fire-dependent forest landscapes began in the Burdoin Mountain Planning Area in the winter 2001. In April of 2005, a collaborative and on-going public involvement process was developed and incrementally improved over the years. On March 22, 2006, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Manger sent a letter to known interested parties including the Indian tribal and local governments, state and federal agencies, and adjacent landowners requesting participation in a collaborative effort to design a forest restoration project in the Wildland-Urban Interface in the Rowena and Catherine Creek areas. All the meetings were announced and open to the general public with the meeting notes placed on the CRGNSA website. Discussions on the Catherine area began on June 15, 2006 with an independent facilitator. The proposed action was the result of the collaborative effort among the following interested individuals, organizations, and agencies:

- 3 private landowners or interested parties
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Gifford Pinchot Task Force
- Oregon Natural Resources Council
- USDA, Forest Service

A scoping letter and project description, dated September 2 with an extension on September 18, was mailed or e-mailed to approximately 263 individuals, organizations and agencies interested or affected by the proposal recommended through the collaborative process. The letter requested comments on the detailed project description. The collaborative group met with the Forest Service on September 21 to offer comments and to recommend the riparian prescription. (For a listing of agencies and organizations contacted the reader is referred to section 4.4 of this environmental document). On March 13, the Forest Service sent out a consistency review application to interested parties, adjacent landowners, the CRGNSA tribes, and the collaborative group for a 30-day comment period with comments due on April 16. This notice was also added to the CRGNSA website.

## **OTHER ALTERNATIVES**

### **Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative**

Under the no action alternative no tree thinning, prescribed fire, or associated actions would occur on federal lands within the Catherine Planning Area to improve fire resilience or restore ecosystem components. The following alternatives were discussed by the collaborative team but eliminated from detailed study:

#### **Prescribed Fire Only**

The use of prescribed fire (under burning) was considered for all stands in the Catherine planning area and eliminated from detailed analysis because the present level of fuel loading and fuel configuration does not support the safe application of this management tool without pre-thinning in this Wildland-Urban Interface. The exclusion of fire has resulted in an increase in fuel loading, with accumulations of needle duff, branches, brush, and under-story trees, creating a "fuel ladder" which allows surface fires to travel upwards into shrub under-stories and then to tree crowns. Prescribed burning would probably burn hot with high flame lengths lethal to all trees, including large trees.

Prescribed burning only became a prescription within a wider framework of tools—for example in the Burdoin Mountain sub-area where stands have been thinned, the existing grassy meadows within the Catherine sub-area, or other areas with light fuel loads.

#### **No treatment of Steep Slopes and Stands with No Access**

The Management Plan does not allow new roads in the Open Space zone and the collaborative group was not in favor of potentially introducing the negative effects of temporary road building on slopes greater than 30% in the area. Such road building would also be costly. Therefore, there are areas that can only be accessed on foot. The group considered not treating these areas but came to the conclusion that some effort should be made to treat these areas using non-mechanical means or by helicopter where feasible. The driving factor for not recommending this alternative is that it does not meet the purpose and need.

#### **Treatment of 8" DBH or less on Steep Slopes and Stands with No Access**

Same reasons apply as for No Treatment of Steep Slopes above. In addition, the fuel specialists are of the opinion that some larger diameter trees could be felled and the larger portions left on the ground. Therefore, these stands should be treated to prescription where possible rather than be held to a particular size limit not related to the prescription.

#### **Shaded Fuel Break**

The collaborative group was not in favor of this approach because it is too single-resource oriented. The protection of ecosystem components from in-growth and fire exclusion would not be addressed by this alternative. Therefore, this alternative does not meet the purpose and need.

## **No Burning**

The most important reason not to pursue this alternative is that opening stands through thinning will quickly increase the understory growth and fuel load. Underburning is required to control this growth. The investment of expensive small-diameter thinning can reasonably be offset over years of maintenance underburning which is expected to be much less expensive. However, frequent thinning is not acceptable as a continual tool because it is too expensive and because the collaborative group is interested in pursuing a more natural path to maintain resiliency. In many areas, burning is the only way to remove the fuels because of access. One of the objectives of this forest restoration is to put fire back into the landscape because it was a basic ecological input in dry forest areas such as Catherine. Mechanical thinning does not and cannot mimic all of the beneficial effects to the ecosystem. Therefore, this alternative does not meet the purpose and need.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:** Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the EA, the comments received from the public, and the agency response to those comments, I have determined that the implementation of the Catherine Creek Forest Restoration is not a major Federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

Beneficial and adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in this EA have been disclosed within the appropriate context and will have little intensity. No significant effects to the human environment have been identified concerning the thinning, road maintenance, road reconstruction, temporary road construction, hauling, slash treatment, prescribed underburning and associated actions described for the Catherine Creek Forest Restoration project.

This determination is based on the implementation requirements designed into the selected alternative and the following factors:

- There will be no significant effects to any Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive wildlife, fish or plant species with this project (EA, Appendix A pages 162-164).
- The proposed project area was surveyed for all Northwest Forest Plan Survey and Manage species and none were found. (EA Appendix A page 162).
- The project meets the Northwest Forest Plan Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives (EA pages 115-118).
- The CRGNSA Archeologist determined that this undertaking (Catherine Forest Restoration, as mitigated) would have “No Adverse Effect” to any cultural resources. The State Historic Preservation Officer for Washington concurred with this determination. (EA page 103).
- This project complies with EO 12898 regarding environmental justice. No disproportionately high and adverse human and environmental effects on minorities and/or low-income populations were identified during the analysis and public information process (EA, page 141).
- The Catherine Forest Restoration project will not significantly affect public health or safety. This action will not set a precedent and was not found to threaten a violation of any Federal, State, or local law. (EA, page 141 and Chapter 3, regulatory framework for all resources).

- No significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources were found for the Catherine Forest Restoration project. There are no flood plains, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, or other unique designations in the project area except the general designation as a National Scenic Area which is protected by the consistency determination on page 5 of this document and is based on the findings contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.
- Uneven aged management systems utilized in this project are appropriate for meeting the land management objectives identified in the Forest Plan and consistent with the seven vegetation manipulation requirements of 36 CFR 219.27 (b) (EA pages 3-4, 115-118, 32-45, Chapter 3, Appendix A).

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITY:** This project was subject to a 30-day objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 ending on May 23, 2007 as noticed in the Oregonian. No objections were filed.

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** This project may begin immediately with consideration of the appropriate work windows described in the implementation requirements:

PROJECT ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION WINDOWS ( LIGHT GRAY SHADING)												
ACTIVITY	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN
THINNING & HAULING DRY MILD WINTER									NOT ALLOWED			
HAULING IN WET WINTER					NOT ALLOWED							
THINNING & HAULING IN WINTER RANGE						NOT ALLOWED IN SEVERE WINTER						
PRESCRIBED FIRE										NOT ALLOWED		
THINNING OR FIRE	WITHIN ¼ MI. BALD EAGLE NEST				NOT ALLOWED							
THINNING OR FIRE	WITHIN 400' WG SQUIRREL NEST Or 650' GOSHAWK NEST							NOT ALLOWED				

**CONTACT PERSON:** For further information concerning this decision contact: Diana L. Ross at the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, 902 Wasco Avenue, Hood River OR 97031. Her telephone number is (541) 308-1716 and e-mail address is [dlross@fs.fed.us](mailto:dlross@fs.fed.us). A copy of the EA can be accessed on the CRGNSA website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia/projects/>.

*/s/Daniel T. Harkenrider*

DANIEL T. HARKENRIDER  
Area Manager

Date: May 31, 2007

cc via e-mail: Jill Arens, Executive Director; Columbia River Gorge Commission  
Nathan Baker, Friends of the Columbia Gorge  
Collaborative Team