

(3)

DECISION NOTICE,
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT, and
FINDING OF NON-SIGNIFICANT AMENDMENT

for the

BOLOGNA BASIN SALVAGE PROJECT

USDA FOREST SERVICE
Umatilla National Forest
Heppner Ranger District

Grant County, Oregon

1. BACKGROUND

In 2001, many of the stands in the Bologna Basin project area suffered defoliation from an outbreak of Douglas-fir tussock moth. The Forest Service identified 1,003 acres of severely affected trees for possible salvage treatment. These conditions would further increase already high fuel loads and would likely contribute to fires in the future.

The current level and spread of insect outbreaks and fuel conditions in Bologna Basin are symptoms of an underlying problem. The composition, structure, and function of these dry-forest ecosystems are currently outside of the historical ranges of variability¹ for similar ecosystems and vegetation conditions. Health problems in the stands are aggravated by overstocking, multi-storied conditions, and a shift in stand species compositions from historical trends. As a result, stands have become more susceptible to severe fire, insect, and pathogen disturbances. Compounding the impacts of the departure from historical ranges of variability is the increase in the amount of juniper trees over historical levels.

An Environmental Assessment for this project was previously released for public comment in June of 2003. Those comments and further analysis brought about the need for revisions to the June 2003 Environmental Assessment, including a Forest Plan amendment. In February 2004 another Bologna Basin Salvage Environmental Assessment was sent out for public comment. The EA summarizes the analysis completed for the proposed salvage and thinning of the affected stands. The EA is available for public review at the Heppner Ranger District in Heppner, Oregon, or at the Umatilla National Forest Supervisor's Office in Pendleton, Oregon. The EA is also available on line at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/projects/readroom/>.

¹ Historical Range of Variability: A characterization of fluctuations in ecosystem conditions or processes over time. Defines the bounds of ecosystem behavior that remain relatively consistent through time (Morgan et al. 1994).

2. DECISION

After careful review of the public comments and analyses disclosed in the EA and Analysis File, I have selected Alternative 3. My decision includes a non-significant Forest Plan amendment.

3. REASONS FOR DECISION

In making my decision I weighed all of the comments I personally received from people interested in this project. Issues raised during public involvement throughout this analysis process have been expressed from a variety of people interested in management of the National Forests. Responses to the Forest Service's scoping efforts expressed concerns about soils, water quality, wildlife habitat, noxious weeds, riparian habitat, risk to adjacent lands, and economics. The substantive questions and concerns raised by the public during both 30-day comment periods (for the June 2003 and February 2004 EAs) are addressed in the Analysis File.

The overwhelming consensus of the comments I received was to take action by recovering dead and dying trees in the Bologna Basin area by conducting mechanical thinning operations (logging). The decision to implement an action alternative was also very much supported by adjoining landowners to the Bologna Basin area. I have spoken with our neighbors and they were very concerned that if we took "no action", the risk for a wildfire spreading from Federal to private properties would be increased with the amount of "fuels" being created on National Forest lands as a result of tussock moth defoliation. Adjoining landowners have already taken the steps to thin their stands to address tussock moth defoliation and expect the Heppner Ranger District to do the same in order to lessen the likelihood of catastrophic wildland fire.

I have also decided to move forward with an action alternative as a result of the findings of specialists that can be found in Chapter 3 of the EA and in the Analysis File. After carefully reviewing these reports and their assessment of the environmental consequences of the No Action and Action alternatives, I have decided that by not acting, I would increase the likelihood of catastrophic wildland fire in the Bologna Basin area. I believe that the effects disclosed for the no action alternative in the EA, present an unacceptable future risk to our rangelands, forests, and adjacent private landowners. This area of the Forest has historically experienced wildfires as recently as 1996 (Wheeler Point Fire). By acting now and recovering value from dead and dying trees, and by thinning overstocked stands in the analysis area, funds could be collected that would be used for forest regeneration and improvement activities. I believe that by being proactive and treating stands now, we would lessen the possibility of a catastrophic wildland fire affecting the Bologna Basin area in the foreseeable future.

In making my decision, I also considered the fact that the Umatilla National Forest had recently completed a "Dry Forest Strategy" that identified areas of the Forest that are outside of their historic stand conditions and could benefit from active management treatments. Stands within the Bologna Basin analysis area fall within this strategy and I agree with the decision to treat "overstocked" stands by thinning them now. Many of the large, old trees in these stands are showing stress from over-crowding and we are losing the historic species composition and structure within these stands. As an added benefit, reduced stand densities will allow the District to more safely and easily reintroduce fire into this area under controlled conditions.

Some of the comments I received expressed a concern that ground-based timber harvest disturbs and compacts the soil. The arrangement of harvest debris and the amount of soil disturbance and compaction to be expected depends upon the harvesting system used. Whole tree (skidder) yarding poses a slightly greater chance of causing soil disturbance than harvester/forwarder yarding. Alternative 2 would have allowed the use of whole tree yarding on 424 acres. While the soil impacts of whole tree yarding in

Alternative 2 are consistent with the Forest Plan, I selected alternative 3 because harvester/forwarder (or similar) systems better distribute their weight across the soil and operate on top of a protective cover of harvest debris to reduce soil disturbance.

Whole-tree yarding results in large piles of activity fuels at landings. These piles would burn at high intensities, reducing soil productivity at the location of the piles. I selected Alternative 3 because the resulting activity fuels would lay in more uniform configurations in the units where they could be burned with the least damage to soils and soil productivity.

With no action, high-intensity wildland fire will likely occur in the long term as a result of fuel build-up, and soil cover would be removed on a large scale. This would expose a larger amount of soil to erosion, instability, and losses in productivity.

Threatened steelhead and regionally Sensitive redband trout exist downstream of the project area in East Bologna Creek. I fully recognize that the removal of dead trees and thinning of densely stocked stands could increase sediment in East Bologna Creek in the short term. However, the EA (Chapter 3, page 147 to 149, 154) discloses that the increase in sediment to any stream in the project area would not be measurable. If no action is taken at this time, the dead trees would fall and densely crowded stands would thin themselves via more insect infestations or disease. This would increase fuel loads, which could result in a large, high-intensity wildland fire in the long-term. A high-intensity wildland fire would likely increase stream temperatures due to more extensive loss of vegetation, as experienced on neighboring districts after the large fires of 1996. Such a fire could also increase sedimentation and decrease the quality of fish habitat in East Bologna Creek.

Alternative 2 was designed with a forwarder trail for unit 13 within the Riparian Habitat Conservation Area of an unnamed class 4 stream. This presented a minimal risk of sediment entering the stream system during the time of year that the stream has water flow. However, I selected Alternative 3 because it includes design and mitigation measures that would:

- Eliminate unit 13, and as a result, eliminate sediment production from the harvest of that unit by not using a forwarder trail in a Riparian Habitat Conservation Area.
- Improve water quality by closing 1.1 miles of Forest Road 2400140, which would eliminate vehicle traffic from two stream fords in East Bologna Creek.
- Require full suspension logging on all salvage and commercial thinning units to minimize soil disturbance.

As part of my decision, the selected alternative amends the Forest Plan. This amendment changes the Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI) from 70 to 67 for the Monument Winter Range. The HEI for the Monument Winter Range is currently (before treatment) 67, which is below the “desirable” index described in the Forest Plan. Even after the implementation of the selected alternative, the Monument Winter Range would still maintain an HEI of 67. I carefully read through the analysis of this Forest Plan amendment in specialist’s reports for Bologna Basin and discussed its effect to wildlife habitat before coming to my decision. I also weighed the potential outcome to this area if I had selected the No-Action Alternative. I concluded that by acting now and reducing hazardous fuels levels and thinning overstocked stands, that future stand conditions and thus cover and forage conditions within the Bologna Basin area would improve as compared to the consequences of a catastrophic wildland fire. Such an event could significantly reduce the HEI for the area as compared to the selected alternative.

4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Eight alternatives were considered in the development of the EA. Five of these alternatives were eliminated from detailed study. These alternatives are described along with the reasons for their elimination on pages 24 to 27 of the EA. Some of the comments received on the EA suggested that these alternatives should be considered in detail, but I stand by the reasons they were eliminated from detailed analysis. Three alternatives were developed in detail (EA, Chapter 2) and are compared in Table 11 of the EA (EA, pages 50 to 53).

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 was the “No-Action” alternative. The District received comments in response to this and past projects in this area requesting that nature be allowed to “take its course.” This alternative would have allowed the vegetation identified as needing treatment at this time to progress through natural successional processes. Current biological and ecosystem processes would have been allowed to continue as they are in the present condition. Current management direction and existing activities such as grazing, fire protection, and road maintenance would continue.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2, the proposed action, would have used a combination of harvest, thinning, juniper removal, and planting on 1,003 acres to move stand densities and species compositions closer to the historical range of variability for the Bologna Basin area. Specifically, this alternative would:

1. Salvage timber harvest approximately 528 acres.
2. Commercial thin 475 acres.
3. Non-commercial thin approximately 555 acres.
4. Reduce juniper on approximately 571 acres.
5. Prescribe burn 448 acres.
6. Plant trees on approximately 190 acres.
7. Build approximately 0.9 miles of temporary roads.
8. Temporarily open approximately 9.9 miles of closed roads.
9. Control damage to planted seedlings by animals (using non-poisonous methods such as Vexar® tubing and gopher trapping).
10. Amend the Forest Plan to change the habitat effectiveness index standard from 70 to 67 only in the Monument winter range for the site-specific project called Bologna Basin Salvage.
11. Allow whole-tree yarding on 20 units (424 acres).

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 was the selected alternative. Further details describing this alternative are disclosed in the EA on pages 38 to 49. This alternative would treat 995 acres and except in the following respects, be the same as the proposed action:

1. Salvage timber harvest approximately 520 acres (eliminating Unit 13).
2. Reduce juniper on 563 acres.
3. Prescribe burn 440 acres.
4. No whole-tree yarding would be allowed, and harvester forwarder (or similar) yarding would be required on all harvest units.
5. 1.1 mile of Forest Road 2400140 would be closed.

The mitigation measures that were developed reflect existing direction found in the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and program direction established on the Forest. The specific mitigation measures associated with the Bologna Basin Salvage project that will be implemented are listed on pages 44 to 47 of the EA.

Activities and their effects, including the implementation of mitigation measures, will be monitored by the Forest Service as described on pages 47 to 48 of the EA.

5. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

As described in the EA (pages 15 to 16) scoping was initiated when the project was listed in the Spring 2002 quarterly edition of the Umatilla National Forest Schedule of Proposed Activities.

Scoping letters (dated April 8, 2002 and April 11, 2002) were sent to two local Tribes and another (dated April 12, 2002) was sent to 95 organizations, individuals, and other agencies that had indicated an interest in this type of project. A notice describing the project and requesting public comment was published in the *East Oregonian* newspaper on April 23, 2002.

A public meeting, sponsored by the Heppner Ranger District, Oregon Department of Forestry, and Prairie Wood Products (a local business) was held on March 27, 2002, in the nearby community of Monument to discuss the tussock moth epidemic and possible treatment options. A tour of the Bologna Basin area was held on July 26, 2002, to give interested publics an opportunity to discuss concerns associated with the defoliation and possible treatment alternatives with the District Ranger and specialists. Eight people attended this trip. These scoping efforts resulted in responses from 18 individuals and organizations, and two government agencies (Table 4 of the EA, page 16). In addition, a petition was received from 151 local residents (three of whom also responded in separate letters) supporting removal of insect-infested trees. A summary of scoping comments is provided in Appendix C of the EA.

An Environmental Assessment for this project was previously released for public comment in June of 2003. Those comments and further analysis brought about the need for revisions to the original Environmental Assessment, including a Forest Plan amendment. Scoping for the amendment was conducted in January of 2004 through a letter to 154 interested parties, including all respondents to previous scoping and comment solicitations. This scoping effort generated four responses. In February 2004 another Bologna Basin Salvage Environmental Assessment was sent out for public comment and received 4 responses. Substantive comments are addressed in Appendix D of the EA (Analysis File).

6. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

a. Context

The actions included in the selected alternative are described in Chapter 2 of the EA. The detection of effects may differ by the resource and by the scale of analysis. Therefore, multiple scales and levels of analysis were used to determine the significance of the actions' effects on the human environment. The project area is 995 acres of the Umatilla National Forest in northwestern Grant County, near the town of Kimberly, Oregon. The selected alternative would move stocking levels, species compositions, forest structure, and fuel loads within a dry upland forest toward their historic ranges. It would also improve forest health. The management activities applied would also affect future fire severity, wildlife and its habitat, soil stability and productivity, water quantity and quality, and the regional economy. The impacts of the selected alternative on each of these are disclosed in the EA (Chapter 3). These analyses also found that there would be no effects to fish, fish habitat, or noxious weeds. Therefore, in context, this project is local in scope.

b. Intensity

The environmental effects of the following actions are documented in Chapter 3 of the Bologna Basin Salvage Environmental Assessment: commercial and non-commercial thinning of trees, juniper reduction, prescribed burning of activity and natural fuels (includes building fire control line), tree planting, temporary roads, opening closed roads, animal damage control, and closing/decommissioning a road. The beneficial and adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed within the appropriate context, and effects are expected to be low in intensity because of project design and mitigation. Significant effects to the human environment are not expected. The rationale for the determination of significance is based on the environmental assessment, in light of the factors listed below:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)).

The interdisciplinary team analyzed and disclosed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the actions on forest vegetation (EA, pages 64 to 69), fire severity and fuels (pages 78 to 84), wildlife (pages 106 to 130), soils (pages 131 to 138), water (pages 147 to 155), fish populations and aquatic habitat (pages 162 to 166), noxious weeds (pages 168 to 170), economics (pages 173-175), and visual quality (pages 176 to 177). The direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative included the following:

- improved stand health
- long-term development of single-layer, late/old forest structure
- improved habitat for wildlife dependent on these conditions
- improved habitat for species dependent on dry forest types
- species compositions more in line with historic conditions
- reduced tree densities
- improvements in fuel condition class
- reductions in fuel loads and fuel continuity
- improved ability to control wildfire

- a small increase in forage habitat
- improvements to water quality in East Bologna Creek due to road closure
- \$509,000 to the U.S. Treasury, and 53 jobs and \$1.56 million to the local economy
- short-term decreases in ground fuel moisture
- short-term increases in fuel loads
- smoke emissions from prescribed burning
- a small reduction in habitat connectivity between late/old structure stands (58 acres)
- reduced numbers of dead standing trees (although these numbers would remain within Forest Plan standards)
- a small shift of marginal cover to forage (although marginal and total cover would remain within Forest Plan standards)
- compaction and mobilization of soil from mechanized harvest and temporary road construction (although no mobilized soil would reach streams)
- localized impacts to soil stability and productivity from pile burning
- short-term impacts to visual quality

While the EA discloses short-term and minor deviations from the existing conditions, in my experience on similar projects, none of these effects have been found to be significant. All of these effects would result in conditions that are consistent with the Forest Plan.

2. Effects to public health and safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)2)).

The selected alternative, as mitigated, would not measurably change water quality (EA, pages 138 to 155 and 180-182) and is consistent with the Forest Plan and the Clean Water Act. Dust abatement and measures to implement prescribed burning would ensure compliance with air quality standards (EA, pages 44 to 47). Prescribed burning operations would comply with the State of Oregon's Smoke Management Implementation Plan in order to reduce the effects of smoke on public health (EA, pages 179 to 180). Additional mitigation measures are designed to protect public health and safety by requiring safe road standards and road signing.

3. Effects to unique characteristics of the geographic area (40 CFR 1508.27(b)3)),

There would be no effect to prime farmland, forestland, or rangeland (EA, page 184), floodplains or wetlands (EA, page 182), inventoried roadless, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers (EA, pages 184 to 185). There are no parklands or ecologically critical areas that could be affected by this action.

4. Effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)4)).

There are differing opinions in the community on the management actions necessary to improve forest health and reduce fire intensity in Blue Mountain forest ecosystems. The level of controversy or interest in what course of action to take regarding forest management is not the focus of this criterion, rather the degree of scientific controversy over the effects disclosed in the analysis. No significant disagreements have been identified with the disclosure of effects in Chapter 3 of the EA. While some comments differed

with my conclusion that the proposed action would affirmatively respond to the purpose and need, the reasons for this difference are based on opinions, not with the disclosure of effects.

The Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) permits salvage, thinning, prescribed fire, and planting in this area, and these activities have historically been conducted in this area. The EA effectively addressed and analyzed all major issues associated with the project. During scoping, 30-day public review of the EA, and effects analysis, no scientific controversy over unacceptable effects was identified.

5. Effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain, or involve unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.28(b)(5)).

The best available scientific information provided the foundation for designing the Bologna Basin Salvage project. Salvage, thinning, planting, and prescribed fire have been implemented successfully on dry sites within the Heppner Ranger District. These past activities have been monitored (Analysis File) and the monitoring results provide a good baseline for predicting future outcomes. Recent monitoring has found that Best Management Practices for the protection of soil and water resources are effective in keeping detrimental impacts to within Forest Plan standards. I am satisfied that the project design, as mitigated, and the effects disclosed in the EA present no highly uncertain or unknown risks.

6. Establishment of a precedent for future actions with significant effects or implication of a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).

Harvest is not a new activity within this analysis area and the proposed prescribed burning of natural and activity fuels has occurred in numerous parts of the Umatilla National Forest. Harvest, thinning, planting, and prescribed burning are allowed in this area by the Forest Plan. The EA effectively addressed and analyzed all major issues associated with the project. While sustaining dry forest stands at or near historic conditions would require increased use of prescribed fire in the future, this would also reduce fuel loads and continuity so that wildfires would have lower risk of catastrophic effects. The Forest Plan amendment applies only to the Bologna Basin Salvage project, only within the Monument Winter Range, for the duration of the project. Based on this information, implementing the Bologna Basin Salvage decision will not set precedent for future actions with significant effects.

7. Relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).

The Environmental Assessment discloses the projected cumulative effects (EA, Chapter 3) of implementing the Bologna Basin Salvage project. The list of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities in the area that were considered for the cumulative effects analysis for each resource topic is in Appendix B of the EA. These cumulative effects are not considered to be significant at the scale and time frame addressed by this analysis and decision. Regarding the Forest Plan amendment, the EA analyzed the cumulative effects of the amendment on big game habitat. I recognize some cumulative effects will occur (although HEI would remain the same). However, the amendment does not require other amendments in any other winter range, and will not apply for any other time than that required to complete this project. In addition the EA also disclosed that the State of Oregon will still be able to meet their management objectives in this winter range. While there are cumulative effects, I am satisfied that the project design, as mitigated, and the effects as disclosed in the EA present no significant cumulative effects.

8. Effects to resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

The project area has been inventoried for cultural and historic resources. No heritage properties were located within the proposed treatment units (EA, page 178 to 179). Any cultural or historic resources discovered during the project will be avoided. The Forest has complied with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for the Bologna Basin Salvage EA. There are also no scientific resources within the project area.

9. The Bologna Basin Salvage project would not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).

The selected alternative would protect endangered, threatened, and sensitive species and their habitats as required under the Endangered Species Act. There are no unique or isolated populations of wildlife or plants (EA, at pages 177 to 178; and Biological Evaluations for aquatic, terrestrial, and plant species in the Analysis File). Except for northern bald eagle, no Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species of plants or animals or their habitat would be affected (Bologna Basin Salvage Biological Evaluations). The proposed activities “may affect, [but are] not likely to adversely affect” the Threatened northern bald eagle and its habitat (EA, page 121). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this “not likely to adversely affect” finding in consultation required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (Analysis File, Clearances section). The activities would have no effects on potential habitat of Endangered gray wolf (EA, pages 124 to 125). Salvage, thinning, juniper removal, fuels treatments, and road treatments would have no impact on Threatened Middle Columbia steelhead trout, Sensitive redband trout, or Sensitive Columbia spotted frogs (EA, pages 162 to 163, 165). The area would continue to provide a diversity of plant and animal communities which meet overall multiple-use objectives. Although use patterns may change due to these activities, sufficient habitat remains to ensure viability of all species in the area (EA, pages 106 to 130 and 162 to 166).

10. The Bologna Basin Salvage project does not threaten a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).

Adoption of the selected alternative is fully consistent with the following statutes, regulations, and executive orders: the Clean Air Act (EA, pages 179 to 180), the Clean Water Act (EA, pages 180 to 182), Executive Orders 11998 and 11990 for the protection of floodplains and wetlands (EA, on page 182), and Executive Order 12898 for the adoption of strategies to address environmental justice concerns (EA, pages 182 to 183), Executive Order 13186 for the protection of migratory birds (EA, pages 183 to 184). The selected alternative would not affect the civil rights, privileges, or status quo of consumers, minority groups, and women (EA, page 187 to 188).

Finding

On the basis of the information and analysis contained in the EA and all other information available as summarized above, it is my determination that adoption of the Bologna Basin Salvage project (as reflected in the decision), does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environment Impact Statement is not needed.

7. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

a. NFMA and Forest Plan Consistency

In accordance with 36 CFR 219.27, I conclude from the results of site-specific analysis documented in the EA and Analysis File that timber harvest would only occur on those lands identified in the Forest Plan as suitable for timber production (EA page 182).

The selected alternative is consistent with the *Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision*, the accompanying *Land and Resource Management Plan* (USDA Forest Service 1990), dated June 11, 1990 (EA, pages 185 to 187).

- No salvage, thinning, burning, planting, yarding, or temporary roads would occur within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas and these activities would be mitigated so they will not cause detrimental changes in riparian areas (EA, pages 44 to 47).
- Soil and water would be conserved through project design and mitigation (EA pages 38 to 43, consistent with Forest Plan Amendment #10 – PACFISH (EA, pages 165 to 166, 185 to 187, 207 to 217).
- The selected alternative would also be consistent with the Regional Forester's Forest Plan Amendment, also known as the "Eastside Screens" (EA, pages 186 to 187).

b. Finding Of Non-Significant Amendment

The Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Handbook (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12) lists four factors to be used when determining whether a proposed change to a Forest Plan is significant or not significant: timing; location and size; goals, objectives and outputs; and management prescriptions.

Timing: The timing factor examines at what point over the course of the Forest Plan period the Plan is amended. Both the age of the underlying document and the duration of the amendment are relevant considerations. The handbook indicates that the later in the time period, the less significant the change is likely to be. As noted in the EA (pages 37 to 38 and 43), the action is limited in time in that it would only apply for the duration of the Bologna Basin Salvage project. The Record of Decision for the Umatilla Forest Plan was signed June 11, 1990, so we are in year 14 of 15.

Location and Size: The key to location and size is context, or "the relationship of the affected area to the overall planning area. . . [T]he smaller the area affected, the less likely the change is to be a significant change in the forest plan." The planning area for the Umatilla National Forest is about 1.4 million acres (Forest Plan, page 1-4). The Monument Winter Range, within which the amendment would be effective is 58,600 acres out of 277,677 acres of winter range on the forest (21 percent). The amendment would only apply to the 995 acres of the Bologna Basin Salvage project within the Monument Winter Range (2 percent). The Bologna Basin Salvage would change marginal cover to forage (the amount of marginal cover being one of the determinants of habitat effectiveness index) on 58 acres of the Monument Winter Range (0.1 percent). It is the effect to cover on these 58 acres that triggers the need for the Forest Plan amendment.

Thus, the size of the area projected to be affected during the project's time period (two years or less) is very small when compared to the total size of the Monument Winter Range.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs: The goals, objectives, and outputs factor involves the determination of "whether the change alters the long-term relationship between the level of goods and services in the overall planning area" (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, section 5.32(c)). This criterion concerns analysis of the overall Forest Plan and the various multiple-use resources that may be affected. In this criterion, time remaining in the 15-year planning period to move toward goals and achieve objectives and outputs are relevant considerations. The anticipated changes brought about by this amendment in the levels of resource activities and outputs projected in the plan (Forest Plan, page 4-16) are expected to be minimal in the one year remaining in the planning period. For example, the chosen alternative would have no measurable effect on the ability of the State of Oregon to manage for and address their population objectives for the Monument elk herd (EA, page 119).

Management Prescriptions: The management prescriptions factor involves the determination of (1), "whether the change in a management prescription is only for a specific situation or whether it would apply to future decisions throughout the planning area" and (2), "whether or not the change alters the desired future condition of the land and resources or the anticipated goods and services to be produced" (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, section 5.32(d)). In this criterion, time remaining in the 15-year planning period and changes in desired future conditions or the anticipated goods and services to be produced are relevant considerations.

The proposed change in habitat effectiveness index applies to the Monument Winter Range only for the Bologna Basin Salvage project (EA, page 38). The existing habitat effectiveness index in the Monument Winter Range is 67 and future projects in the Monument Winter Range would also require an amendment if those projects affect habitat effectiveness index. The change in management prescription is only for a specific situation and the effects are short-term and do not affect future decisions throughout the planning area.

The desired future conditions and land allocation as specified in the Forest Plan would not change. As discussed above in "goals, objectives, and outputs", the long-term levels of goods and services projected in current plans are not measurably changed by the Forest Plan amendment. This information supports the determination that the proposed changes do not constitute a significant amendment of the Forest Plan.

Finding

On the basis of the information and analysis contained in the EA and all other information available as summarized above, it is my determination that adoption of the management direction reflected in my decision does not result in a significant amendment to the Forest Plan.

8. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

Jeff Blackwood, Forest Supervisor
Umatilla National Forest
2517 S.W. Hailey Avenue
Pendleton, OR 97801

9. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. Any individual or organization who submitted substantive comments during the comment period may appeal. Any appeal of this decision must be in writing and fully consistent with the content requirements described in 36 CFR 215.14. A written appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Reviewing Officer (the Regional Forester) within 45 days of the date of publication of the legal notice regarding this decision in the *East Oregonian* newspaper. Send appeals to:

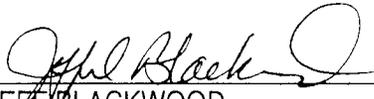
Linda Goodman, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
ATTN: Appeals Office
PO Box 3623
Portland, Oregon 97208-3623

The street location for hand delivery: 333 SW 1st Ave, Portland, OR (office hours: 8-4:30 M-F). Send faxes to: 503-808-2255. Appeals may be Emailed to: appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

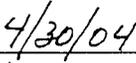
For further information regarding these appeal procedures, contact the Forest Environmental Coordinator Dave Herr at (541)278-3869.

10. CONTACT PERSON

For further information about this project, contact Andrei Rykoff, District Ranger, Heppner Ranger District, P.O. Box 7, Heppner, OR 97836 (541) 676-9187.



JEFF BLACKWOOD
Forest Supervisor
Umatilla National Forest



Date