Record of Decision

for

Upper Charley Subwatershed

Ecosystem Restoration Projects

(Forest Plan Amendment for Canada Lynx)

and

Finding of Non-Significant Amendment

USDA Forest Service

Umatilla National Forest
Pomeroy Ranger District
Garfield County, Washington

Sections 11-14, 22-28, and 33-36, of T.9N., R.42E.; Sections 8, 17-19, and 30, of T.9N., R.43E.; and Sections 3 and 4 of T.8N., R.42E., Willamette Meridian.

Background

The following narrative describes a series of events that have led up to this record of decision for the Upper Charley project. A clear understanding of this history will help place this decision into context with documents and events that preceded this decision.

Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects began August of 1998 when project information letters were mailed to interested parties and a notice to prepare and EIS was listed in the Federal Register. Availability of a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) was listed in the Federal Register on May 10, 2002 (Vol. 678 No.91 Page 31801). The decision was appealed. On August 29, 2002 the decision was affirmed by the Appeal Deciding Officer and found consistent with applicable laws, regulations, policies and the Forest Plan.

On May 21, 2003 (amended October 2, 2003) Oregon Natural Resources Council Fund (ONRC) filed in the United States District Court of Oregon, Civil No: 03-682-KI, a Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief against Linda Goodman, Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region; and United States Forest Service. ONRC claims “The Forest Service has thereby altered

the standards and guidelines of the Umatilla Forest Plan with respect to lynx and lynx habitat without amending or revising the Plan, and without public notice, in violation of NFMA" (First Amended Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief, Paragraph 87, Civil No: 03-682-KI). This lawsuit was stayed while the Forest Service reviewed lynx information in the Upper Charley area, including the issues raised by the First Amended Complaint, and by the decision in a case concerning timber projects on the Wallowa Whitman National Forest, ONRC v. Forsgren, 252 F. Supp. 2d 1088 (D. Or. 2003) (holding in part that a Forest Plan amendment is required before utilizing the lynx conservation Assessment Strategy.).

The Forest Supervisor decided to amend the Forest Plan and prepare a draft supplemental environmental impact statement. The DSEIS was listed in the Federal Register on July 8, 2005 (Vol. 70 No.130 Page 39508) for a 45-day comment period. The supplemental statement documents the environmental effects of adopting a Forest Plan amendment for Canada lynx in support of the May 2002 Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects FEIS and ROD.

The FSEIS and this record of decision tier to and reference the 2002 FEIS and ROD. The two environmental impact statement documents, therefore, must be thought of and used together as if they are one statement. This record of decision supports and complements the record of decision listed in the Federal Register on May 10, 2002. This record of decision does not change the record of decision listed in the Federal Register on May 10, 2002.

The decision to be made with this record of decision is whether or not the Forest Supervisor should amend Umatilla Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and incorporate management direction (objectives, standards, and guidelines) for Canada Lynx, only for the site-specific project called Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects. This record of decision documents that choice.

Paper copies of Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Projects FEIS, 2002 ROD, Final Supplemental EIS, and this record of decision are available upon request by contacting Terri Jeffreys at Pomeroy Ranger District. These documents may be viewed or downloaded from the following Internet site http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/uma/projects/readroom/.

Decision

After careful review of public comments, and the analysis disclosed in the FEIS, FSEIS, and project file, I have decided to amend the Umatilla Forest Plan to incorporate management direction (objectives, standards, and guidelines) for Canada Lynx, only for the site-specific project called Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects. Attachment 1 of this decision lists the objectives, standards, and guidelines that are amended into the Forest Plan.

Other than to amend the Forest Plan, this decision supports the decision made in, but does not change any other aspect of, Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects Record of Decision listed in the Federal Register on May 10, 2002.

Reasons for the Decision

I carefully considered concerns raised during scoping and comment periods to help make my decision (FEIS and ROD, FSEIS). I considered no action and a Forest Plan amendment for Canada lynx. My reasons for not analyzing two alternatives in detail are disclosed in the FSEIS, Chapter II. The following narrative presents why I did not select no action, and describes how I considered and addressed the purpose and need, the Canada lynx issue, and other resource concerns in making my decision.

Reasons for Not Selecting No Action

I carefully weighed the potential outcome to this area if I had selected no action. I did not select the no action alternative because it does not address the purpose and need relative to Canada lynx, and would not have provided Forest Plan management direction for Canada lynx within Upper Charley project area. No action would have also resulted in dropping a number of activities that advance and would complete the overall purpose and need in Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects (FEIS, Chapters I and II).

Purpose and Need

I believe my decision affirmatively addresses and fulfills the purpose of and need for action and this decision and amendment will allow the remainder of the Upper Charley project in Canada lynx habitat to continue.

Canada lynx Issue

The FSEIS documents with public notice the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to Canada lynx and lynx habitat. This decision documents with public notice the amendment of the Umatilla Forest Plan with management direction for Canada lynx and lynx habitat. The amendment is consistent with NFMA, ESA, and NEPA procedures. All cumulative effects disclosed are consistent with amended Forest Plan standards and guidelines for Canada lynx (FSEIS, Chapter IV). Based on effects disclosed in the FSEIS and 2002 FEIS, my decision to amend the Forest Plan will lead to the conservation of Canada lynx habitat (Ruediger et al. 2000).

Several environmental groups were concerned that timber harvest and burning activities in Upper Charley project, within the Asotin LAU, could change lynx foraging and denning habitat into unsuitable habitat. I carefully looked at the trade-off between reducing suitable lynx habitat with proposed activities and benefits from the activities.

The Blue Mountains are considered dispersal habitat (FSEIS, Chapter III, pages 2-4) and there are no resident populations, so impacts to individual lynx are unlikely. The harvest and burning of vegetation within lynx habitat would reduce one percent of the suitable habitat within the Asotin LAU causing a cumulative total of 21 percent unsuitable. The expected unsuitable habitat condition is well within the standard of 30 percent unsuitable and a two percent

cumulative conversion to unsuitable habitat within the ten year period beginning in 2000; this is also consistent with the Forest Plan as amended.

Analysis of impacts to lynx habitat indicates implementation of the 2002 decision will result in a may affect but not likely adversely affect determination for Canada lynx. I decided that the long-term benefits from activities in lynx habitat out-weigh the short-term reduction in suitable habitat (FSEIS, Chapter IV, pages 2-9).

Amending the Umatilla National Forest Plan to incorporate management direction for Canada lynx habitat will have no measurable effect or change to implementing activities for the site-specific project called Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects, and therefore will not require re-initiation of consultation.

Public Involvement

The Forest Service sought information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, local Tribes, local agencies, and from other groups and individuals interested in or affected by the proposed action. The Forest's *Schedule of Proposed Activities* was updated quarterly to inform the public of changes in project status starting with the winter 1998 SOPA.

Date	Action
August 24, 1998	Project Information letters mailed to interested parties (158 letters)
August 25, 1998	*Federal Register:* Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS
September 29, 1998	District Open House to discuss project
March 23, 1999	Meeting with Nez Perce Tribal Representatives
April 13, 2000	Letters mailed to interested parties for notification of DEIS
April 21, 2000	*Federal Register*: Notice of Availability of DEIS
April 27, 2000	Legal notice in *East Oregonian* to request comments
June 1, 2000	Meeting with Washington State Fish and Wildlife Department
June 2, 2000	Meeting with Forest Watch Group
June 12, 2000	Comment Period ended (10 responses received)
April 5, 2002	Mailed FEIS and ROD and notification letters to stakeholders and federal agencies
April 8, 2002	Legal notice in *East Oregonian* appeal period ends May 30, 2002
April 23, 2002	Cancellation of legal notice issued on April 8, 2002 – one comment letter not included with FEIS and ROD
April 26, 2002	Letter to stakeholders announcing cancellation and reason why
May 9, 2002	Legal notice in *East Oregonian* appeal period ends June 23, 2002
May 10, 2002	*Federal Register* Notice of Availability for FEIS and ROD
June 23, 2002	Appeal period ends (2 responses received)
August 29, 2002	Acting Deputy Regional Forester, Richard Sowa, determined since the appeal review was not completed within regional timeframe the Responsible Official's ROD was the final determination of the USDA and not subject to further administrative review (36 CFR 215.13 (f) (3) and 215.17(b).

Date	Action
August 11, 2004	*Federal Register:* Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental EIS
August 12, 2004	Project Information letters mailed to interested parties (168 letters)
June 29, 2005	Letters mailed to interested parties and federal agencies w/copies of Draft SEIS
July 8, 2005	*Federal Register*: Notice of Availability of Draft SEIS
July 9, 2005	Legal notice in *East Oregonian* to request comments
August 22, 2005	Comment period ended (3 responses received)

Alternatives Considered

The 2002 FEIS considered in detail five alternatives, including no action. Two other alternatives were considered but not analyzed in detail. All alternatives are described in detail in Chapter II of the 2002 FEIS and are summarized in the May 2002 record of decision.

The FSEIS considered in detail, no action and a Forest Plan amendment for Canada Lynx that would apply only to the site-specific project called Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects. Appendix C of the FSEIS provided a detailed listing of the objectives, standards, and guidelines for this amendment. Two alternative approaches to amend the Forest Plan related to Canada lynx were considered but not analyzed in detail (FSEIS, Chapter II).

Findings Required by Other Laws

National Forest Management Act

The Record of Decision (ROD) for Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects listed in the Federal Register on May 10, 2002 documented consistency with the National Forest Management Act (2002 ROD, page 25). This decision to amend the Forest Plan for the Upper Charley project does not change the 2002 findings. This decision is also consistent with the National Forest Management Act. A detailed discussion of NFMA compliance is included in Chapter IV of the FEIS as supplemented.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects listed in the Federal Register on May 10, 2002 documented consistency with the *Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision,* the accompanying *Land and Resource Management Plan*, as amended, (USDA Forest Service 1990), dated June 11, 1990 (FEIS, pages IV 63-65 and FSEIS pages IV 9-11, 2002 ROD 25-28). This decision to amend the Forest Plan for the Upper Charley project does not change the 2002 findings. This decision is also consistent with the Forest Plan as amended (FSEIS, Chapter IV).

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 FSEIS (pages I-2, I-4, II-2 and Appendix C-1), the action is limited in time in that it would only apply for the duration of the Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects. The Record of Decision for the Umatilla Forest Plan was signed June 11, 1990, so we are in year 15 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 management direction in the amendment applies only to lynx habitat and only for the duration of the Upper Charley project. The Upper Charley project is within the Asotin lynx analysis unit (LAU). There are about 41,446 acres of lynx habitat with in the Asotin LAU. Of that about 1,091 acres of lynx habitat are affected by the Upper Charley project; which is less than 3 percent of the total lynx habitat within the LAU. This amount is less than 0.08 percent of the Forest Planning area (1.4 million acres). Thus, the size of the area affected by the project and amendment is small when compared to the overall planning area.

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.

Objectives, standards, and guidelines of the amendment are specific to Canada lynx for the duration of the Upper Charley project. The amendment does not change the goals and objectives for other resources in the Forest Plan. The amendment does place limitations on timber management, wildland fire management, and road management within affected portions of the Upper Charley project. Effects of these limitations are disclosed by alternative in Chapter IV. The amendment is not expected to preclude or require other actions across the forest in lynx habitat and incorporation of this management direction will not change the amount of timber made available for public use outside this project area; will not require changes in grazing permits; plans of operation for mining; or the access and travel management plan (FSEIS, Chapter IV). Therefore, anticipated changes brought about by this amendment in the levels of resource activities and outputs (Forest Plan, page 4-16) projected for this planning period are not expected to be measurable.

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 amendment is specific to and for the duration of the Upper Charley project and will not apply to future decisions throughout the planning area (FSEIS, Chapter I, II, and IV). The desired future condition and land allocations are not changed by this decision (FSEIS, Chapter I, II, and IV). As discussed above in "goals, objectives, and outputs", the long-term levels of goods and services projected in current plan for the 15 year planning period are not measurably changed by the Forest Plan amendment.

Finding: On the basis of information and analysis contained in the FEIS, FSEIS 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.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

This decision to amend the Forest Plan for the Upper Charley project does not change the 2002 identification of the environmentally preferable alternative (2002 ROD, pp. 28-29).

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.

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 for the DSEIS 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 filed electronically at: appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Electronic appeals must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word (.doc), rich text format (.rtf), or portable document format (pdf) only. E-mails submitted to email addresses other than the one listed above, or in formats other than those listed, or containing viruses, will be rejected. It is the responsibility of the appellant to confirm receipt of appeals submitted by electronic mail.

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

Contact Person

For further information about this project, contact Monte Fujishin, District Ranger, Pomeroy Ranger District, 71 West Main St., Pomeroy, WA 99347, phone (509) 843-1891.

/s/ Kevin Martin — 12/30/2005

KEVIN D. MARTIN — Date
Forest Supervisor
Umatilla National Forest

ATTACHMENT 1

LYNX MANAGEMENT DIRECTION
Umatilla Forest Plan Amended for the Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects

The following are lynx management objectives, standards, and guidelines incorporated into the Land and Resource Management Plan, Umatilla National Forest (1990) for the site-specific project called Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects (2000). The standards and guidelines address the risk to lynx productivity, movement, and mortality, in order to conserve lynx, and to reduce or eliminate adverse effects from management activities (Ruediger et al. 2000) on the Umatilla National Forest lands. Implementation of the following standards and guidelines is expected to support the management of lynx and their habitat and lead to the conservation of the species (Ruediger et al. 2000). This direction applies only to affected lynx habitat within the Asotin Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU).

Objectives would be incorporated into the Forest Plan on page 4-29 below Table 4-10 and above the paragraph staring with "Biological evaluation…" Standards and guidelines would be incorporated into the Forest Plan on page 4-91, bottom of the page following Peregrine Falcon Habitat, with a heading for Canada lynx. This amendment would apply only for the duration of, and to those actions proposed in lynx habitat for the site-specific project called Upper Charley Subwatershed Ecosystem Restoration Projects.

1.0. ALL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

1.1. Programmatic Objectives

Design vegetation management strategies that are consistent with historical succession and disturbance regimes. The broad-scale strategy should be based on a comparison of historical and current ecological processes and landscape patterns, such as age-class distributions and patch size characteristics. It may be necessary to moderate the timing, intensity, and extent of treatments to maintain all required habitat components in lynx habitat, to reduce human influences on mortality risk and interspecific competition, and to be responsive to current social and ecological constraints relevant to lynx habitat.

To sustain lynx populations through time, maintain or enhance the snowshoe hare prey base by providing vegetation with dense horizontal cover.

1.1.1. Standards

1. Management direction will generally apply only to lynx habitat on Umatilla National Forest lands within Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs).
2. Lynx habitat will be mapped using criteria specific to each geographic area to identify appropriate vegetation and environmental conditions. Primary vegetation includes those types necessary to support lynx reproduction and survival. It is recognized that other vegetation types that are intermixed with the primary vegetation will be used by lynx, but are considered to contribute to lynx habitat only where associated with the primary vegetation.
3. To facilitate project planning, delineate LAUs. To allow for assessment of the potential effects of the project on an individual lynx, LAUs should be at least the size of area used by a resident lynx and contain sufficient year-round habitat.

4. To be effective for the intended purposes of planning and monitoring, LAU boundaries will not be adjusted for individual projects, but must remain constant.

5. Prepare a broad-scale assessment of landscape patterns that compares historical and current ecological processes and vegetation patterns, such as age-class distributions and patch size characteristics. In the absence of guidance developed from such an assessment, limit disturbance within each LAU as follows: if more than 30 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU is currently in unsuitable condition, no further reduction of suitable conditions shall occur as a result of vegetation management activities.

1.1.2. Guidelines

1. The size of LAUs should generally be 16,000 - 25,000 acres (25-50 square miles) in contiguous habitat, and likely should be larger in less contiguous, poorer quality, or naturally fragmented habitat. Larger units should be identified in the southern portions of the Northern Rocky Mountains Geographic Area (Oregon, and SE Washington). In the west, we recommend using watersheds (e.g., 6th code hydrologic unit codes (HUCs) in more northerly portions of geographic areas, and 5th code HUCs in more southerly portions). Coordinate delineation of LAUs with adjacent administrative units and state wildlife management agencies, where appropriate.
2. Areas with only insignificant amounts of lynx habitat may be discarded, or lynx habitat within the unit incorporated into neighboring LAUs. Based on studies at the southern part of lynx range in the western U.S., it appears that at least 6,400 acres (10 square miles) of primary vegetation should be present within each LAU to support survival and reproduction. The distribution of habitat across the LAU should consider daily movement distances of resident females (typically up to 3-6 miles).
3. After LAUs are identified, their spatial arrangement should be evaluated. Determine the number and arrangement of contiguous LAUs needed to maintain lynx habitat well distributed across the planning area.

1.2. Project

1.2.1. Standards

1. Within each LAU, map lynx habitat. Identify potential denning habitat and foraging habitat (primarily snowshoe hare habitat, but also habitat for important alternate prey such as red squirrels), and topographic features that may be important for lynx movement (major ridge systems, prominent saddles, and riparian corridors). Also identify non-forest vegetation (meadows, shrub-grassland communities, etc.) adjacent to and intermixed with forested lynx habitat that may provide habitat for alternate lynx prey species.
2. Within a LAU, maintain denning habitat in patches generally larger than 5 acres, comprising at least 10 percent of lynx habitat. Where less than 10 percent denning habitat is currently present within a LAU, defer any management actions that would delay development of denning habitat structure.
3. Maintain habitat connectivity within and between LAUs.

2.0. TIMBER MANAGEMENT

2.1. Programmatic Objectives

Evaluate historical conditions and landscape patterns to determine historical vegetation mosaics across landscapes through time. For example, large infrequent disturbance events may have been more characteristic of lynx habitat than small frequent disturbances.

Maintain suitable acres and juxtaposition of lynx habitat through time. Design vegetation treatments to approximate historical landscape patterns and disturbance processes.

If the landscape has been fragmented by past management activities that reduced the quality of lynx habitat, adjust management practices to produce forest composition, structure, and patterns more similar to those that would have occurred under historical disturbance regimes.

2.2. Project Objectives

Design regeneration harvest, planting, and thinning to develop characteristics suitable for snowshoe hare habitat.

Design project to retain/enhance existing habitat conditions for important alternate prey (particularly red squirrel).

2.2.1. Standards

1. Management actions (e.g., timber sales, salvage sales) shall not change more than 15 percent of lynx habitat within a LAU to an unsuitable condition within a 10-year period. *This period began with the listing of Canada Lynx in 2000 (calendar year).*
2. Following a disturbance, such as blowdown, fire, insects/pathogens mortality that could contribute to lynx denning habitat, do not salvage harvest when the affected area is smaller than 5 acres. Exceptions to this include:
   a) Areas such as developed campgrounds; or
   b) LAUs where denning habitat has been mapped and field validated (not simply modeled or estimated), and denning habitat comprises more than 10% of lynx habitat within a LAU.

   In these cases, salvage harvest may occur, provided that at least the minimum amount is maintained in a well-distributed pattern.
3. In lynx habitat, pre-commercial thinning will be allowed only when stands no longer provide snowshoe hare habitat (e.g., self-pruning processes have eliminated snowshoe hare cover and forage availability during winter conditions with average snowpack).
4. In aspen stands within lynx habitat in the Northern Rocky Mountains Geographic Areas, apply harvest prescriptions that favor regeneration of aspen.

2.2.2. Guidelines

1. Plan regeneration harvests in lynx habitat where little or no habitat for snowshoe hare is currently available, to recruit a high density of conifers, hardwoods, and shrubs preferred by hares. Consider the following:
   a) Design regeneration prescriptions to mimic historical fire (or other natural disturbance) events, including retention of fire-killed dead trees and coarse woody debris;
   b) Design harvest units to mimic the pattern and scale of natural disturbances and retain natural connectivity across the landscape. Evaluate the potential of riparian zones, ridges, and saddles to provide connectivity; and
   b) Provide for continuing availability of foraging habitat in proximity to denning habitat.
2. In areas where recruitment of additional defining habitat is desired, or to extend the production of snowshoe hare foraging habitat where forage quality and quantity is declining due to plant succession, consider improvement harvests (commercial thinning, selection, etc). Improvement harvests should be designed to:
   a) Retain and recruit the understory of small diameter conifers and shrubs preferred by hares;
   b) Retain and recruit coarse woody debris, consistent with the likely availability of such material under natural disturbance regimes; and
   c) Maintain or improve the juxtaposition of denning and foraging habitat.

3. Provide habitat conditions through time that support dense horizontal understory cover, and high densities of snowshoe hares. This includes, for example, mature multi-storied conifer vegetation in the west. Focus vegetation management, including timber harvest and use of prescribed fire, in areas that have potential to improve snowshoe hare habitat (dense horizontal cover) but that presently have poorly developed understories that have little value to snowshoe hares.

3.0. FIRE MANAGEMENT

3.1. Programmatic Objectives

Restore fire as an ecological process. Evaluate whether fire suppression, forest type conversions, and other forest management practices have altered fire regimes and the functioning of ecosystems.

Revise or develop fire management plans to integrate lynx habitat management objectives. Prepare plans for areas large enough to encompass large historical fire events.

Use fire to move toward landscape patterns consistent with historical succession and disturbance regimes. Consider use of mechanical pre-treatment and management ignitions if needed to restore fire as an ecological process.

Adjust management practices where needed to produce forest composition, structure, and patterns more similar to those that would have occurred under historical succession and disturbance regimes.

Design vegetation and fire management activities to retain or restore denning habitat on landscape settings with highest probability of escaping stand-replacing fire events. Evaluate current distribution, amount, and arrangement of lynx habitat in relation to fire disturbance patterns.

3.2. Project Objectives

Use fire as a tool to maintain or restore lynx habitat.

When managing wildland fire, minimize creation of permanent travel ways that could facilitate increased access by competitors.

3.2.1. Standards

1. In the event of a large wildfire, conduct a post-disturbance assessment prior to salvage harvest, particularly in stands that were formerly in late successional stages, to evaluate potential for lynx denning and foraging habitat.
2. Design bum prescriptions to regenerate or create snowshoe hare habitat (e.g., regeneration of aspen and lodgepole pine).

3.2.2. Guidelines

1. Design burn-prescriptions to promote response by shrub and tree species that are favored by snowshoe hare.
2. Design burn prescriptions to retain or encourage tree species composition and structure that will provide habitat for red squirrels or other alternate prey species.
3. Consider the need for pre-treatment of fuels before conducting management ignitions.
4. Avoid constructing permanent firebreaks on ridges or saddles in lynx habitat.
5. Minimize construction of temporary roads and machine fire lines to the extent possible during fire suppression activities.

6. Design prescribed burn prescriptions and, where feasible, conduct fire suppression actions in a manner that maintains adequate lynx denning habitat (10% of lynx habitat per LAU).

4.0. RECREATION MANAGEMENT

4.1. Programmatic Objectives

Plan for and manage recreational activities to protect the integrity of lynx habitat, considering as a minimum the following:

- Minimize snow compaction in lynx habitat.
- Concentrate recreational activities within existing developed areas, rather than developing new recreational areas in lynx habitat.
- On Umatilla National Forest lands, ensure that development or expansion of developed recreation sites or ski areas and adjacent lands address landscape connectivity and lynx habitat needs.

Maintain the natural competitive advantage of lynx in deep snow conditions.

4.1.1. Standards

1. On Umatilla National Forest lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU unless the designation serves to consolidate unregulated use and improves lynx habitat through a net reduction of compacted snow areas. Note: This standard does not apply to ski areas: see Ski Areas/Large Resorts below.
2. Map and monitor the location and intensity of snow compacting activities (for example, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, dog sledding, etc.) that coincide with lynx habitat, to facilitate future evaluation of effects on lynx as information becomes available.
3. On Umatilla National Forest lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes ands snowmobile play areas by LAU. This is intended to apply to dispersed recreation, rather than existing ski areas.

4.1.2. Guidelines

1. Provide a landscape with interconnected blocks of foraging habitat where snowmobile, cross- country skiing, snowshoeing, or other snow compacting activities are minimized or discouraged.
2. As information becomes available on the impact of snow-compacting activities and disturbance on lynx, limit or discourage this use in areas where it is shown to compromise lynx habitat. Such actions should be undertaken on a priority basis considering habitat function and importance.

4.2. Project

4.2.1. Standards

Developed Recreation:

1. In lynx habitat, ensure that actions do not degrade or compromise landscape connectivity when planning and operating new or expanded recreation developments.
2. Design trails, roads, and lift termini to direct winter use away from diurnal security habitat.

Dispersed Recreation:

1. To protect the integrity of lynx habitat, evaluate (as new information becomes available) and amend as needed, winter recreational special use permits (outside of permitted ski areas) that promote snow compacting activities in lynx habitat.

4.2.2. Guidelines

Developed Recreation:

1. Identify and protect potential security habitats in and around proposed developments or expansions.
2. When designing ski area expansions, provide adequately sized coniferous inter-trail islands, including the retention of coarse woody material, to maintain snowshoe hare habitat.
3. Evaluate, and adjust as necessary, ski operations in expanded or newly developed areas to provide nocturnal foraging opportunities for lynx in a manner consistent with operational needs, especially in landscapes where lynx habitat occurs as narrow bands of coniferous forest across the mountain slopes.

5.0. SKI AREAS / LARGE RESORTS

5.1. Programmatic Objectives

When conducting landscape level planning on Umatilla National Forest lands, allocate land uses such that landscape connectivity is maintained.

5.1.1. Standards

1. Within identified key linkage areas, provide for landscape connectivity

5.2. Project

5.2.1. Standards

1. When planning new or expanding recreational developments, ensure that connectivity within linkage areas are maintained.

5.2.2. Guidelines

1. Plan recreational development, and manage recreational and operational uses to provide for lynx movement and to maintain effectiveness of lynx habitat.

6.0. FOREST ROADS AND TRAILS

6.1. Programmatic Objectives

Maintain the natural competitive advantage of lynx in deep snow conditions.

6.1.1. Standards

1. On Umatilla National Forest lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU. Winter logging activity is not subject to this restriction.

6.1.2. Guidelines

1. Determine where high total road densities (>2 miles per square mile) coincide with lynx habitat, and prioritize roads for seasonal restrictions or reclamation in those areas.
2. Minimize roadside brushing in order to provide snowshoe hare habitat.
3. Locate trails and roads away from forested stringers.
4. Limit public use on temporary roads constructed for timber sales. Design new roads, especially the entrance, for effective closure upon completion of sale activities.
5. Minimize building of roads directly on ridgetops or areas identified as important for lynx habitat connectivity.

7.0. HIGHWAYS

7.1. Programmatic Objectives

Reduce the potential for lynx mortality related to highways.

Ensure that connectivity is maintained across highway rights-of-way

7.1.1. Standards

1. Within lynx habitat, identify key linkage areas and potential highway crossing areas.
2. The Forest will work cooperatively with the Federal Highway Administration and State Departments of Transportation to address the following within lynx geographic areas:
   a) Identify land corridors necessary to maintain connectivity of lynx habitat.
   b) Map the location of "key linkage areas" where highway crossings may be needed to provide habitat connectivity and reduce mortality of lynx (and other wildlife).

7.1.2. Guidelines

1. Where needed, develop measures such as wildlife fencing and associated underpasses or overpasses to reduce mortality risk.
2. Evaluate whether land ownership and management practices are compatible with maintaining lynx highway crossings in key linkage areas. On public lands, management practices will be compatible with providing habitat connectivity. On private lands, agencies will strive to work with landowners to develop conservation easements, exchanges, or other solutions.

7.2. Project

7.2.1. Standards

1. Identify, map, and prioritize site-specific locations, using topographic and vegetation features, to determine where highway crossings are needed to reduce highway impacts on lynx.
2. Within the range of lynx, complete a biological assessment for all proposed highway projects on Umatilla National Forest lands. A land management agency biologist will review and coordinate with highway departments on development of the biological assessment.

7.2.2. Guidelines

1. Dirt and gravel roads traversing lynx habitat (particularly those that could become highways) should not be paved or otherwise upgraded (e.g., straightening of curves, widening of roadway, etc.) in a manner that is likely to lead to significant increases in traffic volumes, traffic speeds, increased width of the cleared ROW, or would foreseeably contribute to development or increases in human activity in lynx habitat. Whenever rural dirt and gravel roads traversing lynx habitat are proposed for such upgrades, a thorough analysis should be conducted on the potential direct and indirect effects to lynx and lynx habitat.

8.0. LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

8.1. Programmatic Objectives

In lynx habitat and adjacent shrub-steppe habitats, manage grazing to maintain the composition and structure of native plant communities.

8.2. Project Objectives

Manage livestock grazing within riparian areas and willow carrs in lynx habitat to provide conditions for lynx and lynx prey.

Maintain or move towards native composition and structure of herbaceous and shrub plant communities.

Ensure that ungulate grazing does not impede the development of snowshoe hare habitat in natural or created openings within lynx habitat.

8.2.1. Standards

1. Do not allow livestock use in openings created by fire or timber harvest that would delay successful regeneration of the shrub and tree components.
2. Manage grazing in aspen stands to ensure sprouting and sprout survival sufficient to perpetuate the long-term viability of the clones.
3. Within the elevation ranges that encompass forested lynx habitat, shrub-steppe habitats should be considered as integral to the lynx habitat matrix and should be managed to maintain or achieve mid seral or higher condition.
4. Within lynx habitat, manage livestock grazing in riparian areas and willow carrs to maintain or achieve mid seral or higher condition to provide cover and forage for prey species.

9.0. OIL & GAS LEASING, MINES, AND RESERVOIR DEVELOPMENT

9.1. Programmatic Objectives

Design developments to minimize impacts on lynx habitat.

9.1.1. Guidelines

1. Map oil and gas production and transmission facilities, mining activities and facilities, dams, and agricultural lands on public lands and adjacent private lands, in order to assess cumulative effects.

9.2. Project

9.2.1. Standards

1. On projects where over-snow access is required, restrict use to designated routes.

9.2.2. Guidelines

1. If activities are proposed in lynx habitat, develop stipulations for limitations on the timing of activities and surface use and occupancy at the leasing stage.
2. Minimize snow compaction when authorizing and monitoring developments. Encourage remote monitoring of sites that are located in lynx habitat, so that they do not have to be visited daily.
3. Develop a reclamation plan (e.g., road reclamation and vegetation rehabilitation) for abandoned well sites and closed mines to restore suitable habitat for lynx.
4. Close newly constructed roads (built to access mines or leases) in lynx habitat to public access during project activities. Upon project completion, reclaim or obliterate these roads.

10.0. PUBLIC-PRIVATE LAND OWNERSHIP

10.1. Programmatic Objectives

Retain lands in key linkage areas in public ownership.

10.1.1. Standards

1. Identify key linkage areas by management jurisdiction(s) in management plans and prescriptions.

10.1.2. Guidelines

1. In land adjustment programs, identify key linkage areas. Work towards unified management direction via habitat conservation plans, conservation easements or agreements, and land acquisition.

10.2. Project

10.2.1. Standards

1. Develop and implement specific management prescriptions to protect/ enhance key linkage areas.
2. Evaluate proposed land exchanges, land sales, and special use permits for effects on key linkage areas.

11.0. HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

11.1. Programmatic Objectives

Maintain and, where necessary and feasible, restore habitat connectivity across forested landscapes.

11.1.1. Standards

1. Identify key linkage areas that may be important in providing landscape connectivity within and between geographic areas, across all ownerships.
2. Develop and implement a plan to protect key linkage areas on Umatilla National Forest lands from activities that would create barriers to movement. Barriers could result from an accumulation of incremental projects, as opposed to anyone project.
3. Evaluate the potential importance of shrub-steppe habitats in providing landscape connectivity between blocks of lynx habitat. Livestock grazing within shrub-steppe habitats in such areas should be managed to maintain or achieve mid seral or higher condition, to maximize cover and prey availability. Such areas that are currently in late seral condition should not be degraded.

11.1.2. Guidelines

1. Where feasible, maintain or enhance native plant communities and patterns, and habitat for potentia11ynx prey, within identified key linkage areas. Pursue opportunities for cooperative management with other landowners.

12.0. TRAPPING, CONTROL, AND SHOOTING

12.1. Programmatic Objectives

Reduce incidental harm or capture of lynx during regulated and unregulated trapping activity, and ensure retention of an adequate prey base.

Reduce incidental harm or capture of lynx during predator control activities, and ensure retention of adequate prey base.

Reduce lynx mortalities related to mistaken identification or illegal shooting.

Maintain the natural competitive advantage of lynx in deep snow conditions.

12.1.1. Standards

1. Predator control activities, including trapping or poisoning on domestic livestock allotments, on Umatilla National Forest lands within lynx habitat, will be conduct by Wildlife Services personnel in accordance with Wildlife Services Annual Work Plan and FWS recommendations established through a formal Section 7 consultation process.
2. On Umatilla National Forest lands in lynx habitat, allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas by LAU. This is intended to apply to dispersed recreation, rather than existing ski areas.

12.1.2. Guidelines

1. The Umatilla National Forest should work cooperatively with States and Tribes to reduce incidental take of lynx related to trapping.
2. Initiate interagency information and education efforts throughout the range of lynx in the contiguous states. Utilize trailhead posters, magazine articles, and news releases, state hunting and trapping regulation booklets, etc., to inform the public of the possible presence of lynx, field identification, and their status.
3. The Umatilla National Forest should work cooperatively with States and Tribes to ensure that important lynx prey are conserved.