

A4001

Decision Memo
Forest Plan Amendment No. 1
Malheur National Forest
Prairie City Ranger District
Grant County, Oregon

The purpose of Amendment No. 1 of the Malheur National Forest Plan, is to modify three separate standards in the Snowshoe Recovery Area, John Day River and Malheur River Watersheds. This amendment has no affect outside the approximate 11,500 acre analysis area of National Forest lands, or for projects other than that described in the Snowshoe Fire Timber Salvage and Resource Recovery Project Environmental Assessment.

"Disturbance at one time" standards have been established in the Forest Plan to insure visually pleasing landscapes and the continual achievement of established visual quality objectives over time. This amendment allows implementation of the SnoA, SnoB, and SnoC timber sales by increasing the percent of area open at one time from 20% to 55%.

The need for greater "disturbance at one time" standards has resulted indirectly from the fire damage and mortality to vast stands of merchantable timber. While the fire itself did not create large, perceivable openings, proposed salvage of fire damaged stands will. Mitigation measures have been established which help meet the visual quality objective of partial retention. Removal of the dead and dying timber will allow for prompt reforestation, which will re-establish conifer vegetation more quickly.

The Forest Plan requires that "geographical boundaries of riparian areas are to be determined by on-site characteristics of soil and vegetation, but will be a minimum width of 100 feet from the edge of all Class II, II and III streams." Six existing roads in the Recovery Area (see attached maps), involving approximately 2.5 acres, are closer than 100 feet to the edge of the adjacent Class II and III streams, within Management Area 3A (Non-anadromous Riparian). However, the site characteristics of the road itself, plus the ground above the road, do not exhibit riparian characteristics even though within 100 feet of the stream's edge.

As a result, the riparian area boundary in these instances will be set at the fill slope of the roads involved. The 2.5 acres involved will be placed in the adjacent Management Area 14-Visual Corridors.

Forest Plan standards provide for identifying "replacement" old-growth areas, to counter possible catastrophic damage or probable deterioration of "dedicated" old-growth areas. Replacement areas should be located within 1/4 mile of the dedicated area, and should be 1/2 the size of the dedicated area. This amendment allows designating a replacement area greater than 1/4 mile from its associated dedicated area.

The Snowshoe fire burned all but 236 acres (remaining in 3 separate parcels) of the mature and overmature timber stands within the recovery area boundary, destroying dependent old-growth species habitat (pine marten and pileated woodpecker). As a result, the two designated areas which are a part of the Management Area 13 (Old-growth) assignment in the Forest Plan, and destroyed by the fire, are being relocated to currently suitable old-growth habitat outside the recovery area. Replacement areas should be designated in areas which will provide needed old-growth characteristics, by the time the designated areas expected

to expire. Intermingled private land and the devastation of vegetation by the fire makes it impossible to locate one of the replacement areas within 1/4 mile of its associated designated stand. As a result, this replacement area has been located back in the originally, designated area within the recovery area. The replacement area has been established to be the same size as its companion dedicated area, to allow for management of this area to meet habitat requirements for old-growth dependent species over time. This helps to compensate for the greater than 1/4 mile distance of the replacement area from the designated area.

I have determined the proposed changes to be non-significant since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950 and ID No. 2, FSH 1909.15).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Cathy Barbouletos
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, OR 97845
(503) 575-1731

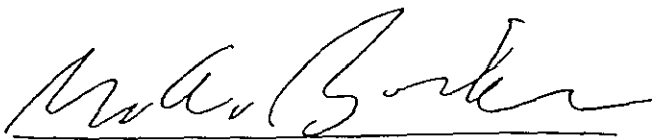
L.J. Sloan
District Ranger
Prairie City Ranger District
327 West Front Street
Prairie City, OR 97869
(503) 820-3311

Implementation of this decision can begin seven days after its publication in the Blue Mountain Eagle. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted within 45 days of this decision to:

John Butruille, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3623
Portland, OR 97204-3623

A copy of the notice of appeal must be sent to:

Mark Boche, Forest Supervisor
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, OR 97845



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

11/26/90
Date

Riparian Area Changes
 Forest Plan Amendment No. 1
 Malheur National Forest
 Prairie City Ranger District
 Grant County, Oregon

TANDARD

Legend

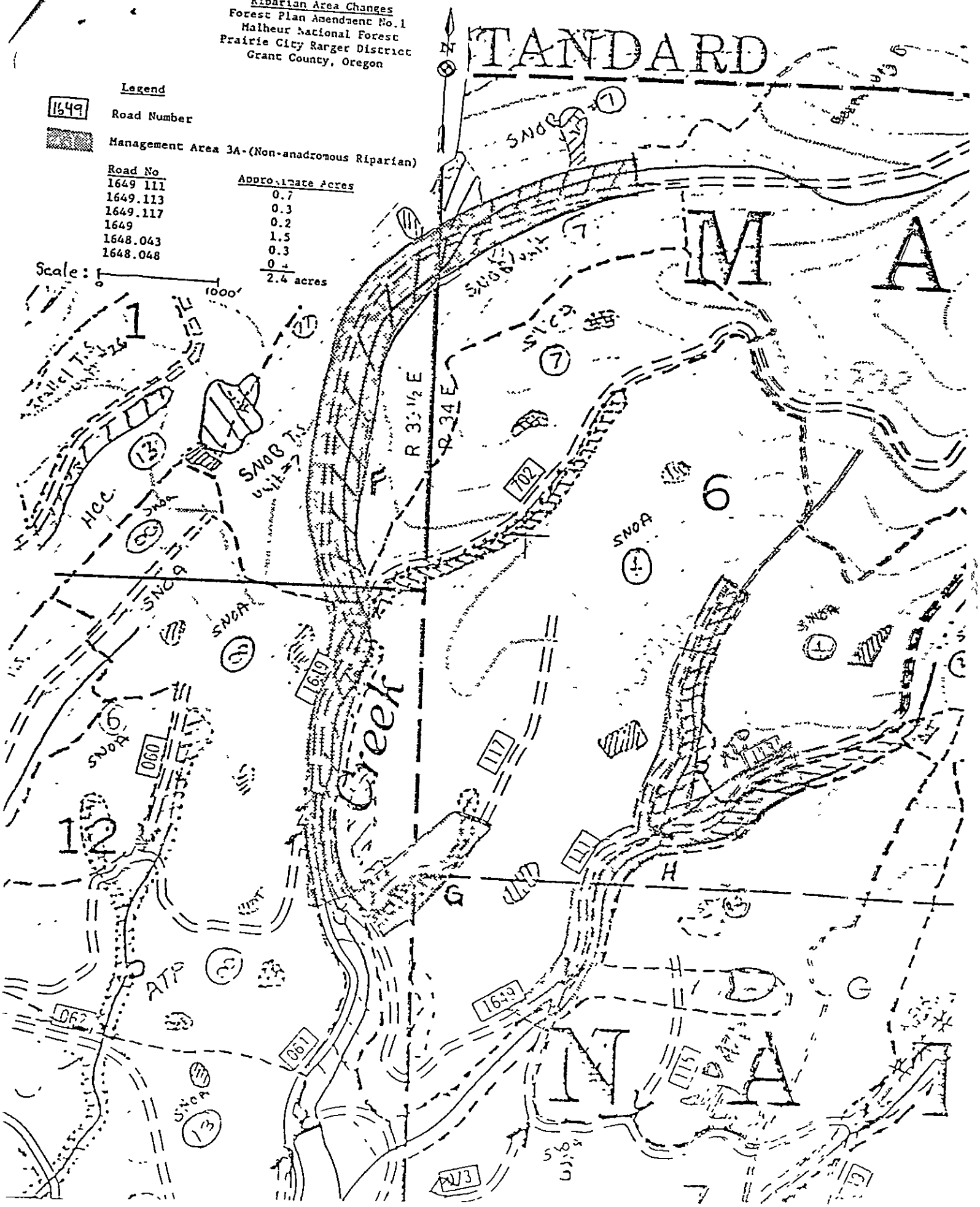
1649 Road Number

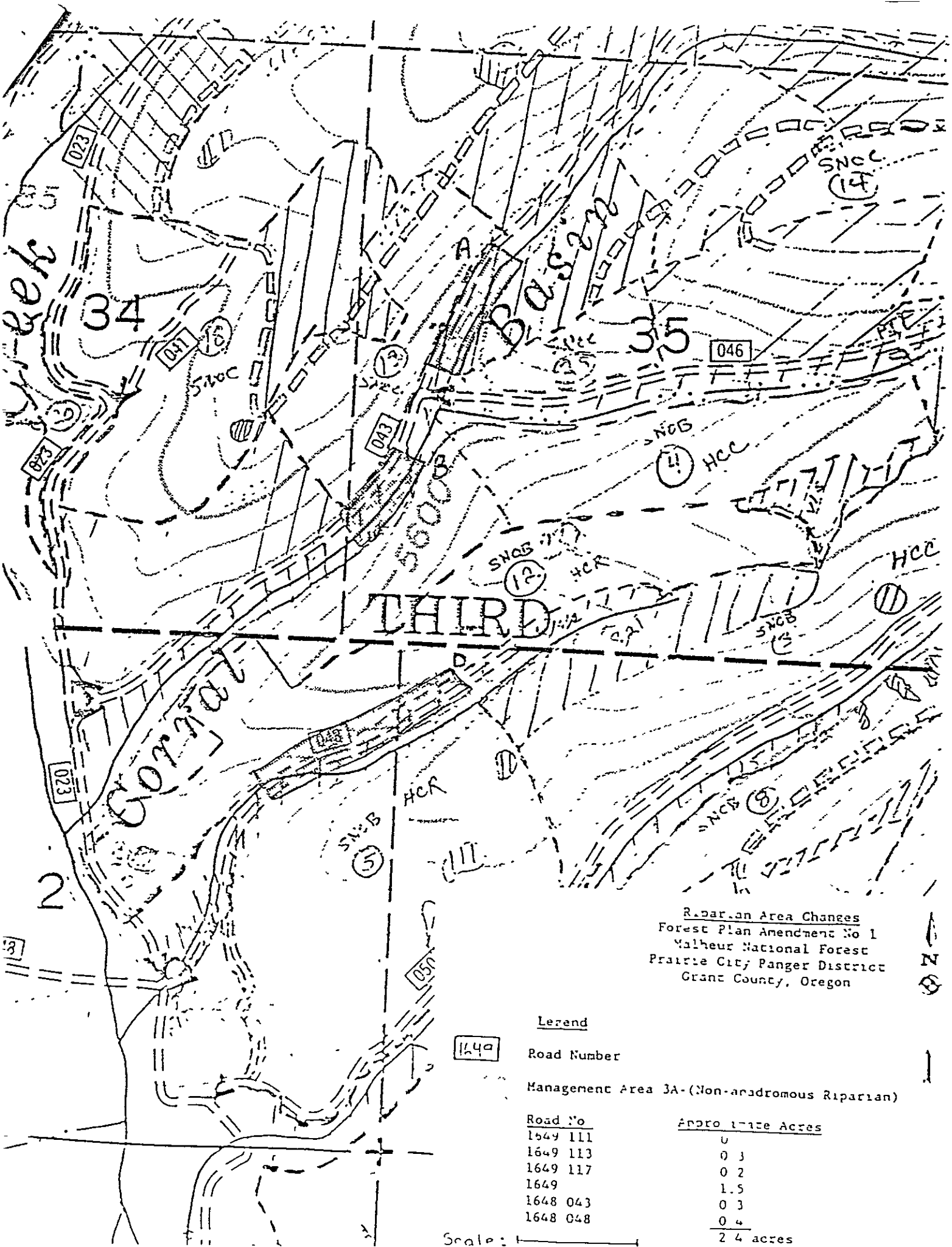
Management Area 3A-(Non-anadromous Riparian)

Road No
 1649.111
 1649.113
 1649.117
 1649
 1648.043
 1648.048

Approximate Acres
 0.7
 0.3
 0.2
 1.5
 0.3
 0.4
 2.4 acres

Scale: 1000'





Riparian Area Changes
 Forest Plan Amendment No 1
 Malheur National Forest
 Prairie City, Panger District
 Grant County, Oregon

Legend

1649

Road Number

Management Area 3A-(Non-acadromous Riparian)

Road No	Approximate Acres
1649 111	0
1649 113	0.3
1649 117	0.2
1649	1.5
1648 043	0.3
1648 048	0.4
	2.4 acres

Scale: _____

Decision Memo
Forest Plan Amendment No. 2
Malheur National Forest
Prairie City Ranger District
Grant County, Oregon

The purpose of Amendment No. 2 of the Malheur National Forest Plan, is to modify two separate standards in the Sheep Mountain Recovery Area, Malheur River and North Fork Malheur River Watersheds. This amendment has no effect outside the approximate 7255 acre analysis area of National Forest lands, or for projects other than that described in the Sheep Mountain Fire Timber Salvage and Resource Recovery Project Environmental Assessment.

"Disturbance at one time" standards have been established in the Forest Plan to insure visually pleasing landscapes and the continual achievement of established visual quality objectives over time. This amendment allows implementation of the Silver and Bullet timber sales by increasing the percent of area open at one time from 20% to 45% in the John Day Summit/Summit Prairie viewshed.

The need for greater "disturbance at one time" standards has resulted indirectly from the fire damage and mortality to vast stands of merchantable timber. While the fire itself did not create large, perceivable openings, proposed salvage of fire damaged stands will. Mitigation measures have been established which helps meet the visual quality objective of Partial Retention. Removal of the dead and dying timber will allow for prompt reforestation, which will re-establish conifer vegetation more quickly.

The Forest Plan requires that "geographical boundaries of riparian areas are to be determined by on-site characteristics of soil and vegetation, but will be a minimum width of 100 feet from the edge of all Class I, II and III streams " Three (3) existing roads in the Recovery Area (see attached maps), involving approximately two (2) acres, are closer than 100 feet to the edge of the adjacent Class II and III streams, within Management Area 3A (Non-anadromous Riparian). However, the site characteristics of the road itself, plus the ground above the road, do not exhibit riparian characteristics even though within 100 feet of the stream's edge.

As a result, the riparian area boundary in these instances will be set at the fill slope of the roads involved. The two acres involved will be placed in the adjacent Management Area 1-General Forest

I have determined the proposed changes to be non-significant since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950 and ID No. 2, FSH 1909 15)

Additional information can be obtained from:

Cathy Barbouletos
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, OR 97845
(503) 575-1731

L.J. Sloan
District Ranger
Prairie City Ranger District
327 West Front Street
Prairie City, OR 97869
(503) 820-3311

Implementation of this decision can begin seven days after its publication in the Blue Mountain Eagle. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted within 45 days of this decision to:

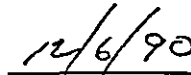
John Butruille, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3623
Portland, OR 97204-3623

A copy of the notice of appeal must be sent to:

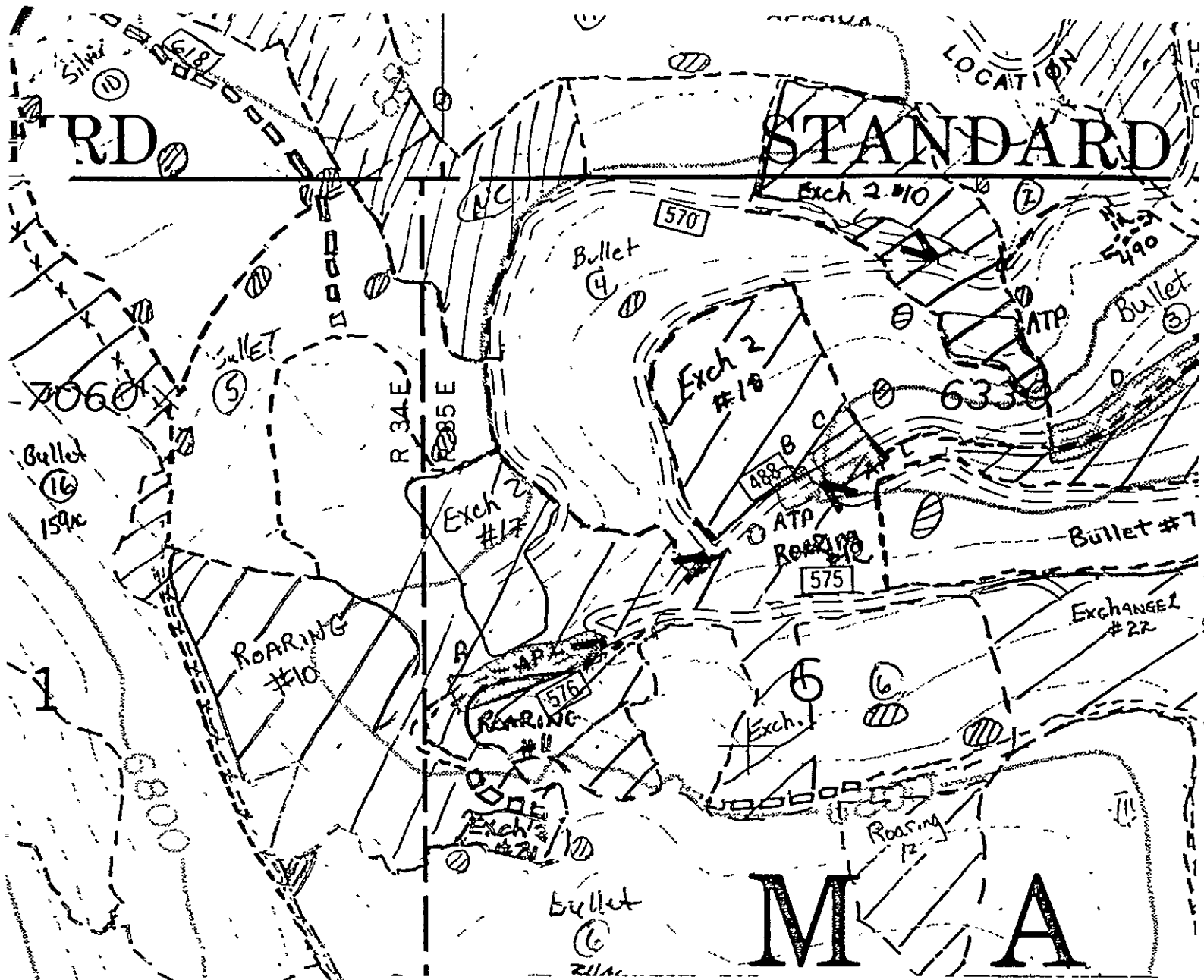
Mark Boche, Forest Supervisor
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, OR 97845



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor



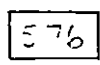
Date



Riparian Area Changes
 Forest Plan Amendment No.2
 Halheur National Forest
 Prairie City Ranger District
 Grant County, Oregon



Legend



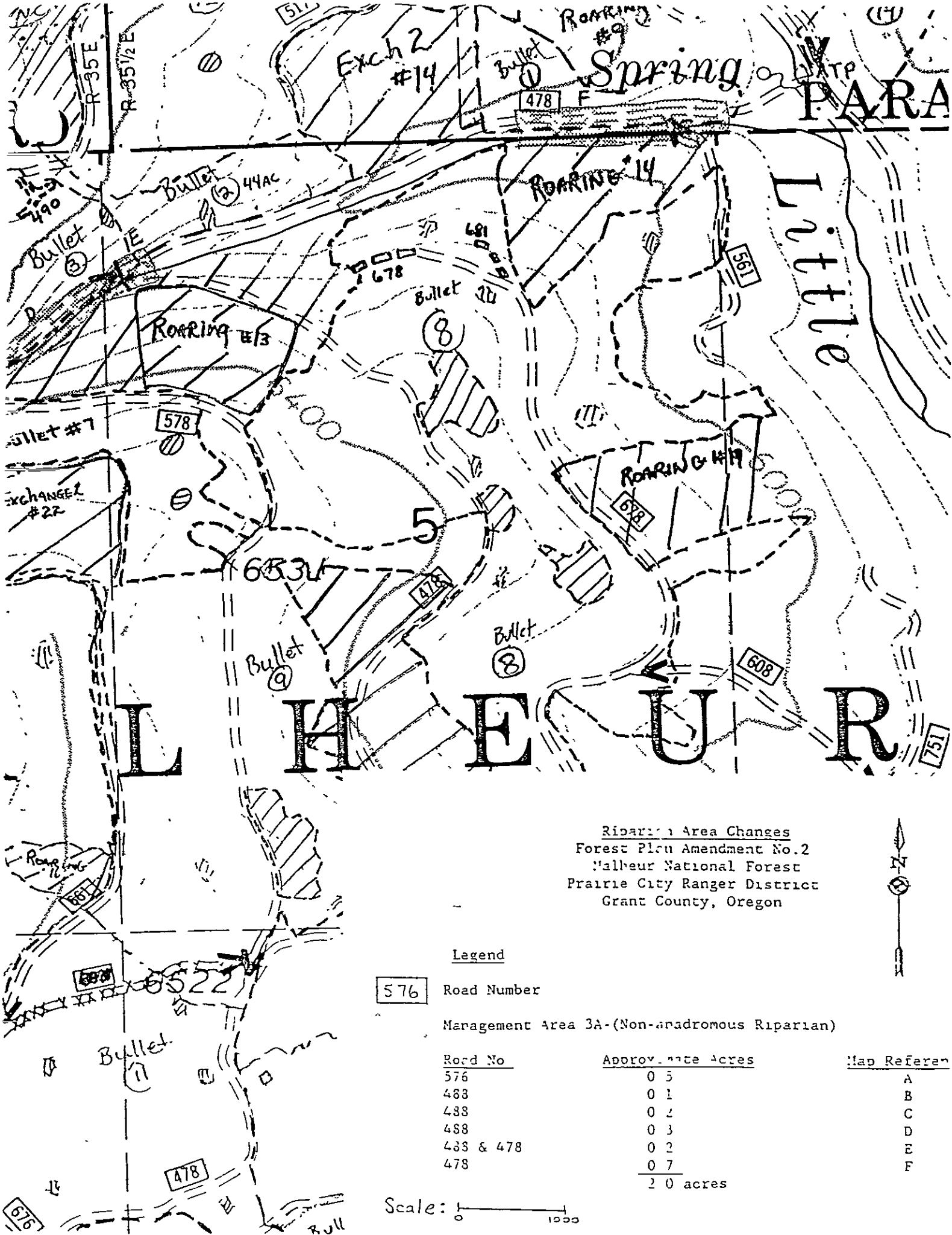
Road Number

Management Area 3A-(Non-madromous Riparian)

Road No	Approximate Acres	Map Referen.
576	0.5	A
488	0.2	B
488	0.2	C
488	0.3	D
488 & 478	0.2	E
478	0.7	F

2.7 acres

Scale: 1" = 1200'



Riparian Area Changes
 Forest Plan Amendment No. 2
 Malheur National Forest
 Prairie City Ranger District
 Grant County, Oregon

Legend

576 Road Number

Management Area 3A-(Non-anadromous Riparian)

Road No	Approximate Acres	Map Referen
576	0.5	A
488	0.1	B
488	0.2	C
488	0.3	D
488 & 478	0.2	E
478	0.7	F
	2.0 acres	

Scale: 1000

Decision Memo
Forest Plan Amendment No. 3
Malheur National Forest
Long Creek Ranger District
Grant County, Oregon

The purpose of Amendment No. 3 of the Malheur National Forest Plan, is to modify the satisfactory cover standard in the Jungle Analysis Area, Middle Fork of the John Day Watershed. This amendment has no affect outside the 5400 acre analysis area, or for projects other than that described in the Jungle EA.

Satisfactory cover standards have been established in the Forest Plan to maintain and enhance wildlife values. This amendment allows implementation of the Jungle Timber Sale by lowering the satisfactory cover standard from 10% to 7 %.

The need for a satisfactory cover percent below Forest Plan standards in the winter range portion of the analysis area was the result of an evaluation of the forest health condition within the area. Currently there are several damaging agents in stands through out the analysis area and analysis showed that vegetative treatment of high risk insect and disease stands now will provide long term satisfactory cover and qualtiy winter range habitat for deer and elk in the future.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950 and ID No. 2, FSH 1909.15).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Cathy Barbouletos
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

John L. Shoberg
District Ranger
Long Creek Ranger District
528 E. Main St
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-2110

Implementation of this decision can begin 30 days after its publication in the Blue Mountain Eagle. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted within 45 days of this decision to:

John Butruille, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3623
Portland, Or 97204-3623

A copy of the notice of appeal must be sent to:
Mark Boche, Forest Supervisor
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

12/10/90
Date

DECISION NOTICE AND FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 4
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

GABE COMMERCIAL THINNING REVIEW AREA

Grant and Harney County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Burns Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment that discusses the Gabe Commercial Thinning Review Area is available for public review at the Burns Ranger Station, Hines, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon. This project proposes commercial thinning timber harvest, road reconstruction and other associated activities on the Burns Ranger District, Malheur National Forest located in T.18S., R.32 E. and R.33 E., W.M., Surveyed, Grant and Harney County Oregon.

Based on the site specific analysis described in the Gabe Commercial Thinning Review Area Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to implement Alternative 4. This alternative with mitigation measures and monitoring, provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits and is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative.

Alternative 4 was selected because it initiates actions needed to achieve the desired future condition (DFC) by enhancing the quality of future cover for big game through commercially thinning silviculturally high priority stands that contain various damaging agents, including Western and Mountain Pine Beetles as well as some root diseases. Those stands to be commercially thinned under this alternative are the highest priority for treatment because they are most in danger of catastrophic losses to bark beetles. The associated loss of big game cover if those losses were to occur would greatly reduce the wildlife habitat values of the affected sub-watersheds. In addition, this alternative provides for the retention of big game cover that is at lesser risk to loss in relation to the other stands in the review area, ensuring the best combination of short-term and long-term management for all of the resources. Access and travel management also play an important part in achieving DFC. Access management within the analysis area will include physically closing 5.8 miles of roads.

Alternative 4 also:

1) Protects or enhances riparian areas by:

- Implementing a watershed improvement projects on Schurtz Creek, including shrub planting, bank stabilization and placement of instream structures to stop further development of head cuts and gullying.
- Grass seeding on disturbed soils within 100 feet of riparian areas to stop or reduce soil erosion.

2) Maintains water and soil quality.

3) Prohibits Timber harvest activities in unit 7 from May 1st to July 30th to minimize disturbance in elk calving areas.

4) Commercially thins approximately 580 acres of timber stands, with the objective being to increase growth rates and forest health. Treatments will consist of commercial thinning, site preparation and slash burning.

5) Reconstruct 1.9 miles of existing road. Approximately 5.8 miles of road will be closed to improve big game habitat.

6) Harvests approximately 1.8 MMBF from approximately 580 acres. All treatment will be by commercial thinning. All acres will be harvested using ground based skidding systems.

7) Underburning will be accomplished on all of the units for site preparation to encourage regeneration and eventual conversion to uneven age management.

8) Requires an amendment to the Forest Plan allowing total cover in the Gabe (14F) sub-watershed to be reduced from 18% to 17%.

Three other alternatives were considered in addition to Alternative 4. These alternatives were:

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative provides no treatment to occur at this time. Treatment of this Review Area would be reassessed at a future date.

Current road access to the area would remain the same. Big game cover areas would not be impacted by management activities. Timbered stands considered high risk to insect and disease losses in need of stocking level reduction would not be treated.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This alternative provides for treatment of 680 acres of high priority stands by stocking level reduction. These stands are considered high risk to insect and disease activity and in need of stocking level controls. Current access would be reduced by closing 5.8 miles of roads.

ALTERNATIVE 3.

This alternative provides for treatment of 497 acres of high priority stands by stocking level reduction. These stands are considered high risk to insect and disease activity and in need of stocking level controls. Current access would be reduced by closing 3.7 miles of roads.

These three alternatives were not selected because they did not completely address the potential insect and overstocking problem concurrently with the potential big game cover problems that exist in the Review Area and the urgency to treat these areas. In addition, most of the lands in this Review Area are allocated for timber management.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989. Public scoping and analysis have been accomplished to meet the requirements of these decisions.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990 with one exception:

The total big game cover requirement for the Gabe Creek (14F) sub-watershed is currently below the Forest Plan Standard of 20%. Total cover is currently at 18% and would be further reduced to 17% under this alternative.

Therefore it is my decision to include Amendment Number Four to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 4.

The purpose of Amendment No. 4 to the Malheur National Forest Plan is to modify the total cover standard in the Gabe Creek (14F) Sub-watershed. This amendment has no effect outside the analysis area, or for projects other than that described in the Gabe EA.

Total cover standards have been established in the Forest Plan to maintain and enhance wildlife values. The total cover requirement for this sub-watershed is 20%. Currently, there is 18% total cover. This amendment allows implementation of the Gabe Commercial Thinning Timber Sale by lowering the total cover standard from 18% to 17%.

The need for a total cover percent below Forest Plan standards in the winter range portion of the sub-watershed was the result of an evaluation of the forest health condition within the area. Currently there are several damaging agents in stands through out the analysis area and analysis showed that vegetative treatment of high risk insect and disease stands now will provide long term cover and quality winter range habitat for deer and elk in the future.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Glen Stein
Forest Environmental Coordinator
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

William Ray Jr.
Acting District Ranger
Burns Ranger District
HC-74, Box 12870
Hines, Oregon 97738
(503) 572-7292

I gave particular attention to the improvement of big game cover in the review area over time. Summer range big game cover in the Calamity (14G) sub-watershed would be reduced from 20% to 19%. In addition, winter range big game cover in the Gabe (14F) sub-watershed would be reduced from 18% to 17%. The Forest Plan minimum is 20% for winter range. I have decided that the advantages of long term establishment of higher quality and greater quantity of big game cover through regeneration of a new stand below the existing stands would greatly outweigh the disadvantages of a short term reduction in cover.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

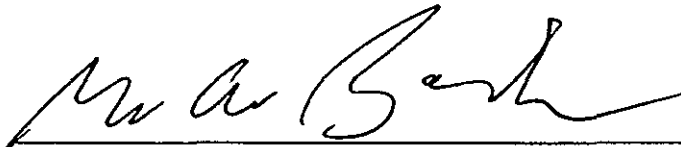
Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the Environmental Assessment have been disclosed within the appropriate context and will have little intensity. No significant effects to the human environment have been identified. This determination is based on the mitigation measures and monitoring requirements designed into the selected alternative and the following factors:

1. There will be no significant expected irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and past actions of similar context and intensity in this area.
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.
3. The Biological Evaluation and field review for the area was completed in 1990. No Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species of plants or animals were found.
4. Based on previous cultural resource surveys and those completed in 1990, cultural resource properties in this review area have been identified and recorded. The project will avoid and/or mitigate known sites. Prior to implementation of this project, the Forest Service will have on hand documentation of completed State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurrence consultation.
5. There will be no significant adverse impacts to wetlands or floodplains.
6. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet state water and air quality standards.
7. The physical and biological effects are limited to this review area.
8. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.

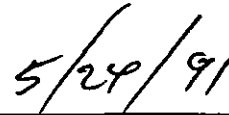
This project will be implemented seven days following the publication of the legal notice announcing this decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for the appeal, must be filed, in duplicate, with John Butruille, Regional Forester, (Reviewing Officer), USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper.

For further information, contact Rudy Hefter, Timber Management Assistant, Burns Ranger District, HC 74 Box 12870, Hines, Oregon 97738, 503-573-7292.



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor



Date

Decision Memo
Forest Plan Amendment No. 5
Malheur National Forest

Forest Plan Amendment No. 5 will allow hazard trees to be harvested in visual foregrounds prior to the completion of a visual corridor plan.

Forest Plan Standard #12 in Management Area 14 states (Forest Plan page IV-109):

"No harvest will occur in foregrounds of Sensitivity Level 1 or 2 corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed."

The intent of this standard was to ensure that visual corridor foreground areas (areas within a quarter mile of a major road) are managed in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner rather than by piecemeal analysis. It was not intended to leave trees, which could be hazardous near a road, trail or powerline, until a visual corridor plan was completed.

It is my decision to allow the harvest of trees in the visual foreground, which may fall onto a road, trail or powerline, prior to the completion of a visual corridor plan. I do not feel this decision will compromise the ability to manage the visual corridors in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner.

Insert into the end of Standard #12 (Forest Plan, page IV-109) the following wording: "Harvest of hazard trees which may fall onto a road, trail or powerline may occur prior to completion of a visual corridor plan, as long as the visual quality objective for the corridor can be achieved."

This is a programmatic decision at the Forest Plan level and additional site-specific analysis will need to be completed under NEPA prior to project implementation.

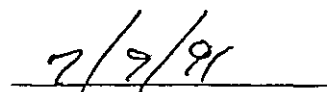
I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant; it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement. This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950 and ID No. 3, FSH 1909.15).

Implementation of this decision can begin 7 days after its publication in the Blue Mountain Eagle. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted within 45 days of this decision to:

John Butruille, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3623
Portland, OR 97204-3623

Additional information can be obtained from Cathy Barbouletos, Forest Planning Staff, Malheur National Forest, 139 N. Dayton, John Day, Oregon 97845, (503) 575-1731.


MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor


DATE

Decision Memo
Forest Plan Amendment No. 6
Malheur National Forest

Forest Plan Amendment No. 6 amends Chapter V of the Forest Plan to incorporate a more detailed monitoring plan. The attached document, Monitoring Plan 1991-1992, replaces pages V-10 through V-19 of the Forest Plan, signed May 25, 1990.

The intent of this amendment is to ensure that the monitoring program proceeds in an orderly fashion and is managed in an interdisciplinary manner. Of the 43 monitoring items listed in the 1990 Forest Plan, 41 of the monitoring items have remained unchanged; the enclosed document is more specific on what is to be monitored, when, and how that data is to be evaluated. This amendment makes the following changes:

Two monitoring items have been added: 1) Dispersed Recreation Facilities and 2) Trails System. Both dispersed recreation and trails are an integral part of the Forest Plan; monitoring of these items was overlooked originally.

Two monitoring items have been dropped: 1) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and 2) Plan Standards - General. I feel the nine recreation monitoring items will be adequate to monitor recreation on the forest. I feel that the 41 monitoring items in the enclosed Monitoring Plan adequate to monitor Forest Plan standards; therefore, the old monitoring item called Plan Standards - General, is no longer necessary.

Water Quality Protection and Water Cumulative Effects have been combined into one monitoring item called Water Quality/Cumulative Effects.

I do not feel this decision will compromise the ability to manage the monitoring program. In fact, this detailed monitoring plan will greatly enhance our monitoring effort. This is a programatic decision at the Forest Plan level. Project level implementation of the monitoring program will incorporate these changes.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant; it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement. This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950 and WO Amendment No.1909.15-91-1,26).

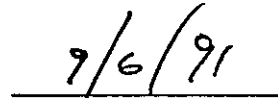
Implementation of this decision can begin 7 days after its publication in the Blue Mountain Eagle. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal," including the reasons for appeal and must be filed in duplicate with:

John Butruille, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3623
Portland, OR 97204-3623

Additional information can be obtained from Cathy Barbouletos, Forest Planning Staff, Malheur National Forest, 139 N. Dayton, John Day, Oregon 97845, (503) 575-1731.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor



DATE

DECISION MEMO
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 7

Malheur National Forest
Bear Valley Ranger District
Grant County, Oregon

Forest Plan Amendment No. 7 will modify the boundary between Management Area (MA) 1 (General Forest) and MA 14 (Visual Corridors) along portions of Forest Roads 15 and 16, as well as along a portion of County Road 63 (Izee Highway). Forest Roads 15 and 16 were reviewed as part of the Glade II Analysis Area, and the Izee Highway was reviewed as part of the Hog Analysis Area.

These modifications are based on new field-verified data that more accurately reflect the areas which are potentially visible from these roads. Utilizing the definitions from the Forest Plan, as well as guidelines in National Forest Landscape Management Volumes 1 and 2 (Agriculture Handbook numbers 434 and 462), the Forest Landscape Architect has re-delineated those areas along the travel routes that meet the definitions for foreground and middleground.

Forest Road 16

The Forest Plan established Forest Road 16 as a Sensitivity Level II road in the vicinity of the Glade II Analysis Area, with the foreground having a Visual Quality Objective (VQO) of Partial Retention. The Forest Plan assigned the foreground to MA 14.

The Forest Landscape Architect has conducted a field review of the 1980 visual inventories used in the Forest Plan. He has determined that approximately 275 acres of the 1980 inventoried foreground acres are either not potentially visible from Road 16 or actually occur in the background as seen from the road.

Forest Road 15

The Forest Plan established Forest Road 15 as a Sensitivity Level I road with the foreground having a VQO of Retention and the middleground having a VQO of Partial Retention. The Forest Plan assigned both the foreground and the middleground to MA 14.

The Forest Landscape Architect has conducted a field review of the 1980 visual inventories used in the Forest Plan for that portion of Forest Road 15 that borders on the Glade II area. He has determined that approximately 425 acres that had been mapped as foreground are actually middleground. He has also identified 11 acres along Forest Road 15 that were previously identified as background, and they actually occur as middleground.

County Road 63 (Izee Highway)

The Forest Plan established County Road 63 (Izee Highway) as a Sensitivity Level II road, with the foreground having a VQO of Partial Retention. The Forest Plan assigned the foreground to MA 14.

Within the Hog Analysis Area, the Forest Landscape Architect has reviewed the 1980 visual foreground boundary as used in the Forest Plan. He has determined that approximately 785 acres that had been mapped as foreground in 1980 actually occur as middleground.

Decision

I have decided to update the visual inventory lines based on the new field-verified data provided by the Forest Landscape Architect. These changes are shown on the attached maps. The changes only relate to the inventoried visual boundary lines and their associated Management Areas; the objectives for the revised foreground and middleground areas would remain the same as established in the Forest Plan (see Forest Plan, Appendix L, page L-1).

In the Glade II area, where acres are actually in the background rather than the foreground, approximately 275 acres along Forest Road 16 will change from MA 14 to MA 1, with a corresponding change in VQO from Partial Retention to Modification. Along Forest Road 15, approximately 425 acres will change from foreground to middleground, with no change in management area. However, these acres will be managed for a VQO of partial retention rather than retention. Also along Road 15, approximately 11 acres will change from background to middleground. Therefore, these 11 acres will change from a VQO of Modification to Partial Retention, and will change from MA 1 to MA 14.

Along the Izee Highway, the new field-verified foreground line will change approximately 785 acres from MA 14 to MA 1, with a change in VQOs from Partial Retention to Modification.

The net results of these changes for both project areas are:

Decrease in MA 14 (with corresponding increase in MA 1)	1049 acres
Decrease in Retention	425 acres
Decrease in Partial Retention	624 acres
Increase in Modification	1049 acres

The decrease in MA 14 acres is only 0.6% of the MA 14 acres identified in the Forest Plan (186,682 acres). The change in MA 1 acres is only a 0.2% increase of the MA acres shown in the Forest Plan (553,053 acres).

The acres moving to MA 14 (retention and partial retention VQOs) are more likely to receive unevenaged timber management and extended rotations, while those acres moving to MA 1 are more likely to receive evenaged management on shorter rotations. The less restrictive management style associated with MA 1 on the 1049 acres shown above could possibly increase the annual Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) by approximately 0.2 Million Board Feet, or less than 0.1% of the current ASQ. Because this increase is within the error limits associated with calculating ASQ, I will not modify the ASQ at this time. However, as field verification of visual boundary lines continues, through either project or corridor planning, I will monitor the results to determine whether the ASQ needs to be amended.

These changes do not affect the decision made in the Forest Plan to manage the Izee Highway and Forest Roads 15 and 16 as visual corridors; the changes merely refine Management Area boundaries based on site-specific reconnaissance.

This is a programmatic decision at the Forest Plan level, and additional site-specific analysis will need to be completed prior to any project implementation in either MA 1 or MA 14.


I have determined the proposed changes to be non-significant; they will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or environmental assessment (ID No.16, FSM 1950; and W.O. Amendment 1909.15-91-1, 26).

Implementation of this decision can begin 7 days after its publication in the Blue Mountain Eagle Newspaper. This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted within 45 days of this decision to:

John Butruille
USDA Forest Service
Pacific Northwest Region
319 SW Pine, P.O. Box 3622
Portland, OR 97204-3623

Additional information can be obtained from:

Cathy Barbouletos
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, OR 97845
(503) 575-1731



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

9/6/91

Date

DECISION NOTICE AND FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 8
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
GLADE II TIMBER SALE

Grant County, Oregon
USDA Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Bear Valley Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment that discusses the proposed Glade II Timber Sale is available for public review at the Bear Valley Ranger District and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor, both in John Day, Oregon. The Glade II Planning Area is located approximately 18 miles southeast of John Day, Oregon, in T.16S., R.32E., Sections 10-15, 22-24, and T.16S., R.33E., Sections 7, 16-21, W.M., Surveyed, Grant County Oregon.

DECISION

Based on the site-specific analysis described in the Glade II EA, it is my decision to implement Alternative 5, as modified on Page 3 of this document, as the plan of management for the resources of these National Forest System lands. Along with the Forest Plan Standards and mitigation measures outlined in the Glade II EA, Alternative 5 provides the best combination of physical, biological, social, and economic benefits.

This alternative calls for a commercial timber sale that will harvest an estimated 2.4 MMBF of timber from 483 acres. This alternative will construct approximately 0.2 mile of road and reconstruct 0.9 mile of road. It includes an Access Management Plan that will reduce open road densities from 5.13 miles per square mile to 2.11 miles per square mile. Alternative #5 also includes connected actions of slash disposal, site preparation, precommercial thinning, and reforestation.

Alternative 5 treats 100% of the highest priority stands for forest health, and begins entry into the foreground visual corridor of Forest Road 16. Total big game cover is reduced from 20% to 18%.

Alternative #5 also:

- Establishes a stream monitoring program to determine the effectiveness of in-stream structures in Bear Creek. These structures were installed in the summer of 1991. The monitoring would include establishing a macro-invertebrate sampling station, collecting stream morphology characteristics, collecting fish population and distribution data, and establishment of permanent thermographs in the Bear Creek system.

- Applies grass seed to all disturbed soils resulting from logging operations within 200 feet of riparian zones to arrest or reduce soil erosion.
- Applies the silvicultural prescription of "unevenaged management" on 208 acres (5% of the planning area).
- Retains big-game hiding cover adjacent to openings, and requires timing restrictions to protect calving and fawning habitat next to non-commercial forest openings and riparian/meadow complexes.
- Defers harvest in many Class IV riparian areas, allowing the watershed to recover from past harvest and grazing practices before additional activities occur in these areas.

I have selected Alternative 5 because:

- * It emphasizes treatment on those acres which have the highest susceptibility to bark beetles, while leaving those stands of moderate risk to provide cover for big game.

- * I feel that reducing cover 2% below standards is warranted in order to improve the health of the timber stands in the short-term and move towards desired future cover stands in the future. The aggressive road closure plan, which would reduce open road density to 2.11 miles per square mile, will help mitigate the effects of reduced cover. This mitigative effect is reflected in the Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI), which, at 0.49, is above the minimum of 0.40 and very close to the objective of 0.5.

A thorough cover analysis was conducted for the Glade II Planning Area, and a cover plan was developed to attain the Forest Plan Standards for satisfactory and marginal cover. The results of the cover plan shows that although marginal cover is reduced from existing conditions of 19% to 17%, sometime between the years 1995-2000 the 19% existing conditions level will be re-established. In addition, the cover plan displays that the Forest Plan Standard of 8% satisfactory cover will be attained in the year 2040.

- * It treats about 100 acres in the foreground of Forest Road 16. These stands are currently exhibiting some bark beetle mortality, and without treatment, continued mortality is expected. I feel entry is necessary at this time in order to maintain the tree health in the foreground, so that management options are not precluded in the future. Units are designed to meet the Partial Retention visual quality objective.

- * This alternative does not favor any single resource use or lean solely on maximizing commodity values. It promotes the best land stewardship with all the resources in striving to meet the desired future condition of the planning area as intended by the Forest Plan

However, I have decided to modify Units 4 and 26 of this alternative. Since the analysis was completed, active goshawk nests have been found in both of these units. Forest-wide standard #60 calls for protection of active raptor nest sites and the habitat immediately surrounding the nests. Current research, summarized in the analysis file, shows that goshawks may require 30 acres or more for their nest area, in stands that typically have high crown closure.

In Unit 4, most of the canopy closure is provided by a heavy overstory. I have decided to retain virtually all overwood trees and commercially and precommercially thin pockets of young pine in the understory. No harvest will occur within five chains of the nest tree. This is expected to maintain sufficient canopy closure for the goshawk, while somewhat increasing the health of the stand. Operations in the stand will be prohibited between March 15 and August 15 in order to minimize disturbance during the nesting period; this requirement may be waived if a wildlife biologist determines the area is not being used by goshawks in a given year.

Unit 26 does not have a two-storied structure, and any form of timber management would substantially alter the canopy closure necessary for the goshawk. Therefore, I'm deleting approximately 22 acres in the northern portion of unit 26 in order to protect the nest area; the remainder of the necessary goshawk habitat will be provided by the lodgepole old growth area which is immediately adjacent. Operations in the remainder of Unit 26 will be prohibited between March 15 and August 15 in order to minimize disturbance during the nesting period; this requirement may be waived if a wildlife biologist determines the area is not being used by goshawks in a given year.

Furthermore, I am directing the District Ranger to monitor both nest sites to determine whether these changes provide adequate protection for the goshawk.

By making these changes, I expect that marginal wildlife cover will be maintained in Unit 4 and the deleted portion of unit 26. This will increase marginal cover for this alternative from 17% to 18%. Treated acres will decrease from 483 to 461, and volume will decrease from 2.4 MMBF to 2.1 MMBF.

Other alternatives which were analyzed include:

Alternative #1:

The No Action Alternative. This alternative would continue present management activities and basic land stewardship activities. I did not select this alternative because it does not treat any of the high priority silvicultural stands which contain various damaging agents and does not move toward the desired future condition.

Alternative #2:

This alternative emphasized the use of unevenaged management in any stand with suitable structure for this type of treatment. This would have treated 40% of the highest priority silvicultural stands, reduced marginal cover by 4%, and harvested approximately 4.1 MMBF of timber; the access management plan would reduce open road density to 2.11 miles per square mile. I did not select this alternative because I felt the short-term impacts to big game marginal cover were too severe, and because it did not treat sufficient numbers of high priority acres for forest health.

Alternative #3:

This alternative emphasized the retention of all existing big game cover stands; treatment would have only occurred in those stands that had forest health concerns and did not currently qualify as big game cover. This would have treated 24% of the highest priority silvicultural stands, maintained total cover at 20%, and harvested approximately 0.5 MMBF of timber; the access management plan would reduce open road density to 2.11 miles per square mile. I did not select this alternative because it did not treat sufficient numbers of high priority acres for forest health reasons.

Alternative #4:

This alternative would have treated all of the stands within the planning area which have various forest health concerns. This would have treated 100% of the highest priority silvicultural stands, reduced marginal cover by 9%, and harvested approximately 5.5 MMBF of timber; the access management plan would reduce open road density to 2.11 miles per square mile. I did not select this alternative because I felt the short-term impacts to big-game would be too severe if marginal cover were reduced from 19% to 10%. I would prefer to take the risk of leaving those stands of moderate health risk in order to better meet big game cover requirements.

Alternative #6:

This alternative would have treated 77% of the highest priority silvicultural stands, reduced marginal cover by 2%, and harvested approximately 2.0 MMBF of timber; the access management plan would reduce open road density to 2.11 miles per square mile. This alternative is very similar to alternative 5 in terms of effects; however, I did not select it because it treats fewer high priority acres yet doesn't maintain any more cover for big game than does alternative 5.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

* I have given particular attention to non-anadromous riparian areas (MA 3A) for Forest Plan consistency. Approximately 2 acres will be harvested in Management Area 3A; this will occur only on lands classified "suitable" for timber management. Timber harvest will be subordinate to riparian-dependent resources.

* No timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.14).

* Manipulation of vegetation comply with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b).

* The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989. The proposed action will implement seeding as a prevention measure to combat introduction of noxious weeds since at this time no known sites occur within the Glade II Timber Sale area, and early treatment options will be utilized in the regeneration units.

In making this decision, I have reviewed Alternative #5 and find that the project is consistent with the goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990, with one exception:

Timber harvest in units 26 and 27 of Alternative would occur in the foreground of Forest Road 16 prior to the completion of its viewshed corridor plan (Management Area 14, standard #12).

Therefore, it is my decision to include Forest Plan Amendment Number 8 to this Decision Notice:

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 8

The purpose of Amendment No. 8 of the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is to implement timber management activities and connected actions in the Sensitivity Level II foreground visual corridor of Forest Road 16. This amendment has no effect outside the 4,525 acre planning area or for projects other than those displayed in the Glade II Environmental Assessment.

Forest Plan Management Area #14 (Visual Corridors) Standard #12 prohibits timber harvesting in Sensitivity Level I or II corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed. This amendment allows for timber harvesting in the visual foreground of Forest Road 16 prior to completion of its corridor plan. The need to harvest timber in this Sensitivity Level II foreground corridor was the result of an indepth evaluation of the existing Forest health conditions; anticipated mortality from mountain pine beetle infestations; and the development of a big-game cover plan to meet the long-term "desired future conditions" for wildlife and Forest health.

This amendment will allow treatment on about 100 acres within the foreground of Forest Road 16. Mortality is currently occurring in these stands, and future options to manage for visual quality may be limited if mortality continues. The proposed treatments will meet the visual quality objectives of partial retention, and I do not feel that they will compromise the ability to manage the visual corridors in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner in the future.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant, since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or Environmental Assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950, and W.O. Amendment 1909.15-91-1, 26).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Cathy Barbouletos
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

Douglas V. Robin
District Ranger
Bear Valley Ranger District
528 E. Main St.
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-2110

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the EA, I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions;
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated. There is no evidence that the effects of implementing the proposed activities are highly controversial, or that implementation will establish a precedent for future activities, or involve highly uncertain effects of unique or unknown risks;
3. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, of local laws, regulations and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment as well as state water and air quality standards;
4. There are no significant floodplains found within the proposed units, and wetlands within the planning area will be protected through avoidance by design or protection during operations;
5. Concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Office has been received. All inventoried cultural resource sites have been avoided during alternative design.
6. The in-field Biological Evaluation has been completed, and the results are the survey are documented in the analysis file. I am satisfied that this project will not impact any proposed, threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

APPEAL RIGHTS LANGUAGE AND NOTICING:

Implementation of this decision shall not occur within 7 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John F. Buttrille, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208, Reviewing Officer, within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

For further information contact Barbara Boaz, Timber Management Planner, 528 E. Main, John Day, Oregon 97845, 503-575-2110.

/s/ Mark Boche
MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor
139 NE Dayton Street
John Day, Oregon 97845

9/23/91
Date

DECISION NOTICE, FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 9
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

HOG TIMBER SALE

Grant County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Bear Valley Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) discussing the Hog Timber Sale is available for public review at the Bear Valley Ranger District Office in John Day, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor, also in John Day.

Based on the site-specific analysis and mitigation measures described in the Hog EA, it is my decision to implement Alternative 3 for managing these National Forest System lands. This project is located within the Bear Valley Ranger District, approximately 20 air miles southwest of John Day, Oregon, and occupies portions of T. 16 S. and T. 17 S. of R. 29 E., W.M., Grant County, Oregon.

Alternative 3 was developed taking wildlife and forest health considerations into account. No treatments are scheduled in existing wildlife cover stands, thereby maintaining the area at 15% total cover. Seventy-one of the 424 acres of potential future cover will be treated by this alternative (these are the more insect and disease-prone of the 424). Thirty-two percent of the beetle-susceptible and 29% of the mistletoe-infested acres will be treated in the Hog subwatershed. These comprise the highest priority stands from the forest health standpoint.

Alternative 3 will commercially harvest an estimated 4.3 million board feet of timber from approximately 732 acres, construct about 0.8 miles of road, and reconstruct about 9.8 miles equating to a present net value (PNV) of \$157,000. This decision also includes the connected actions of slash disposal, site preparation, precommercial thinning, and reduction of open road densities. Opportunities exist for riparian enhancement, aspen habitat improvement, and soil rehabilitation.

This alternative closes 19.5 of the 37 miles of road proposed for closure in the access management plan for Hog described in the EA. Open roads within the analysis area will be reduced from 60 miles to 40, reducing road density from 6.1 to 4.1 miles per square mile.

I feel that Alternative 3, with its specified mitigation measures, provides for the best combination of physical, biological, social, and economic benefits. This determination is based on the following factors:

- 1) Some of the steps needed to begin moving the analysis area from an existing condition to a desired future condition (as described in the Malheur National Forest Land Management Plan and the Hog EA) are taken here;
- 2) The productivity of timber stands exhibiting poor growth and vigor will be improved along with the productivity of stands exhibiting high incidences of insects and disease;
- 3) Elk habitat effectiveness will remain above Forest Plan standards;
- 4) Existing wildlife cover and most of the identified potential future cover will be maintained (except that portion of potential future cover exhibiting medium to high level risk of insect and disease outbreaks), enabling the analysis area to reach Forest Plan cover standards in 15-25 years;
- 5) The minimum amount of road construction it entails (0.8 miles);
- 6) Four riparian enhancement opportunities have been identified within the sale area boundary of this alternative. These are:
 - * placement of woody debris along the Silvies River to help trap silt and other substrate material;
 - * planting of deciduous shrub cuttings and caging of both planted and existing shrubs along Hog Creek to diminish impacts from grazing;
 - * construction of artificial beaver dam type structures along the stream course near the junction of the 721 and 741 roads to raise the channel, eliminate down cutting and draining of the water table, and trap sediments; and
 - * construction of an enclosure around a meadow in poor condition along Snowshoe Creek to help rehabilitate the area;(for more information on these opportunities, please refer to the fisheries report in the Analysis File for this timber sale);
- 7) This alternative promotes the best stewardship of all the resources without placing undue emphasis on any one use or leaning solely on the maximization of market values.

Other alternatives considered include:

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative is the "No Action" alternative. Management activities would be deferred to a later date at which time they would again be assessed. Any existing management activities would be allowed to continue along with routine land stewardship activities such as road maintenance and fire suppression, but any new timber harvest would be deferred.

I have not selected this alternative because:

- 1) Forest Health concerns would not be addressed and beetle-susceptible acres would remain vulnerable to insect attack and mistletoe acres would continue to degrade and spread;
- 2) Elk habitat effectiveness would remain below Forest Plan standards;
- 3) No roads would be closed;
- 4) No riparian enhancement opportunities would be implemented;
- 5) Volume that would be contributed to meet the objectives of the Forest Plan Timber Activity Schedule would be deferred; and
- 6) The first steps necessary to move the analysis area towards a desired future condition would not be taken.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This alternative addresses high, medium and low priority stands from a forest health standpoint, while also considering other resources. Forty-seven percent of the beetle-susceptible acres and 51% of the mistletoe infested acres would be treated here.

Approximately 7.5 million board feet of timber would be available to local mills, which together with the proposed 3.1 miles of road construction and the 12.5 miles of road reconstruction would equate to a present net value (PNV) of \$266,000. Additionally, 32 miles of road would be closed decreasing road density from 6.1 to 2.8 miles per square mile.

Both satisfactory and marginal cover stands would be treated with this alternative reducing total cover to 8% of the area. This lack of cover would be partially offset by the road closures mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Five riparian enhancement opportunities have been identified within the sale area boundary of this alternative (see the fisheries report in the Hog Timber Sale Analysis File).

I have not selected this alternative because:

- 1) Reducing total cover to 8%, 12% below Forest Plan standards, would be extreme given the nature of the forest health challenges faced. I am willing to take the risk of deferring treatment on selected mistletoe acres that have a lower degree of infection as well as beetle-susceptible acres that are not currently showing signs of activity. I will, however, direct the District Ranger to monitor the stands that are not treated;
- 2) Excessive cover reduction would further impact an already-impaired cover stand distribution;
- 3) Projected cover in 15-25 years will not meet Forest Plan standards because of the excessive treatment of cover stands and non-cover stands that have high potential for becoming cover; and,
- 4) Cumulative effects on acres being treated in recent and proposed harvests are not acceptable.

ALTERNATIVE 4

This alternative was developed with an emphasis on wildlife. It does not treat any existing or potential future cover stands.

Twenty-seven percent of the beetle-susceptible acres and 25% of mistletoe-infested acres would be treated. Available volume would be 3.9 million board feet, which together with 0.5 miles of road construction and 9.5 miles of road reconstruction would equate to a present net value (PNV) of \$146,000.

Satisfactory and total cover would remain at 5% and 15% of the area, respectively. Road densities would drop from 6.1 to 4.2 miles per square mile.

I have not selected alternative 4 for the following reasons:

- 1) Fewer beetle-susceptible and mistletoe-infested acres would be treated;
- 2) This alternative would maintain the same cover stands and reach cover standards at approximately the same time as Alternative 3, although less volume would be produced in the process;
- 3) Only two riparian enhancement opportunities have been identified within the sale area boundary of this alternative; and
- 4) This alternative does not move as rapidly toward the desired future condition of open road density as alternative 3.

CONSISTENCY FINDING:

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May 1989. The proposed action implements prevention and early treatment strategies.

No timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.14).

Manipulation of vegetation complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b).

In making this decision, I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990, with one exception:

Unit 8, located within the foreground of the Izee Highway (Highway 63) Visual Corridor, is presently exhibiting beetle activity and is a high priority for treatment (commercial thin).

Therefore, it is my decision to include Amendment Number 9 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 9

The purpose of Amendment No. 9 to the Malheur National Forest Plan is to allow the commercial thinning of Hog Timber Sale Unit 8 in the foreground of the Izee Highway (Highway 63) Visual Corridor prior to completion of the visual corridor plan. The beetle activity present in the unit was brought to light during the interdisciplinary analysis of the Hog subwatershed and was considered serious enough to warrant immediate action. This amendment has no effect outside of the analysis area or on projects not discussed in the Hog EA.

Management Area 14 Resource Element Standard No. 12 states (page IV-109 of the Forest Plan):

"No harvest will occur in foregrounds of Sensitivity Level 1 or 2 corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed. Exceptions to this will be considered for insect and disease conditions and sanitation salvage needs on a case-by-case basis, with visuals being the driving factor in decision making."

The intent of this standard is to ensure that visual corridor foreground areas (areas within a quarter mile of a major road) are managed in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner rather than by piecemeal analysis. The intent is not to curtail the treatment of areas where high incidences of insects and disease are causing above-normal levels of mortality and threatening the integrity of the corridor. Not treating these areas until their respective visual corridor plans are complete could have serious ramifications on the management of the visual resource.

It is my decision to allow the commercial thinning of Unit 8 in the foreground of the Izee Highway visual corridor prior to completion of the visual corridor plan. The mitigation measures outlined in the Hog Timber Sale EA will ensure that the unit conforms to the Forest Plan visual quality objective of partial retention. I do not feel this decision will compromise the ability to manage the visual corridor in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additional information can be obtained from Barbara Boaz, Timber Management Planner, 528 E. Main, John Day, Oregon 97845, (503) 575-2110.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the EA, I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, and therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

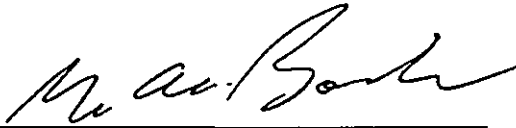
1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions;
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated. There is no evidence that implementation of the proposed activities will be highly controversial, establish a precedent for future activities, or involve highly uncertain effects of unique or unknown risks;
3. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, or local laws, regulations and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment as well as State water and air quality standards;
4. There are no significant floodplains found within the proposed units and wetlands within the planning area will be protected during operations or through avoidance by design;
5. Known cultural resource sites, based on an up-to-date survey, have been mitigated through avoidance. One unit within a cultural resource district will be mitigated by over-snow logging. State Historic Preservation Office concurrence will be on file prior to timber sale advertisement.
6. A Biological Evaluation survey has been conducted within the analysis area to determine the possible effects the sale would have on threatened, endangered, and sensitive wildlife, fish, and plant species. None of these species were found during the survey and I am satisfied that this project will not impact any proposed, threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.

APPEAL RIGHTS LANGUAGE AND NOTICING:

Implementation of this decision shall not occur within seven days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle Newspaper.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John F. Butruille, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208, Reviewing Officer, within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

For further information contact Barbara Boaz, Timber Management Planner, 528 E. Main, John Day, Oregon 97845, (503) 575-2110.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor
139 NE Dayton Street
John Day, Oregon 97845

9/26/91
Date

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
JOAQUIN COMMERCIAL THINNING REVIEW AREA
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 10

Harney County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Burns Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment that discusses the Joaquin Commercial Thinning Review Area is available for public review at the Burns Ranger Station, Hines, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon. This project proposes commercial thinning timber harvest and other associated activities on the Burns Ranger District, Malheur National Forest located in T.20S., R.31 E., W.M., Surveyed, Harney County Oregon.

Based on the site specific analysis described in the Joaquin Commercial Thinning Review Area Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to implement Alternative 5. This alternative with mitigation measures and monitoring, provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits and is considered to be the environmentally preferred alternative.

Alternative 5 was selected because it initiates actions needed to achieve the desired future condition (DFC) by enhancing the quality of future cover for big game through commercially thinning silviculturally high priority stands that contain various damaging agents, including Western and Mountain Pine Beetles as well as some root diseases. Those stands to be commercially thinned under this alternative are the highest priority for treatment because they are most in danger of catastrophic losses to bark beetles. The associated loss of big game cover if those losses were to occur would greatly reduce the wildlife habitat values of the affected sub-watersheds. In addition, this alternative provides for the retention of big game cover that is at lesser risk to loss in relation to the other stands in the review area, ensuring the best combination of short-term and long-term management for all of the resources. Access and travel management also play an important part in achieving DFC. Access management within the analysis area will include physically closing 14.7 miles of roads.

The review area contains no Pacific Yew.

Alternative 5 also:

- 1) Protects or enhances riparian areas by:
 - Implementing a watershed improvement project on Strawberry Creek, including shrub planting, bank stabilization and placement of instream structures to stop further development of head cuts and gullying.
 - Grass seeding on disturbed soils within 100 feet of riparian areas to stop or reduce soil erosion.
- 2) Maintains water and soil quality.
- 3) Commercially thins approximately 745 acres of timber stands, with the objective being to increase growth rates and improve forest health. Treatments will consist of commercial thinning, site preparation and slash burning.
- 4) Harvests approximately 2.7 MMBF from approximately 745 acres. All treatment will be by commercial thinning. All acres will be harvested using ground based skidding systems.
- 5) Provides for underburning on all of the units for site preparation to encourage regeneration and eventual conversion to uneven age management.
- 6) Provides needed stocking level reduction in MA-14, the Visual Corridor along U.S. Highway 395.
- 7) Requires a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan allowing entry into a visual corridor without a Visual Corridor Management Plan and changes the boundary of the corridor as it is illustrated in the Forest Plan.

Three other alternatives were considered in addition to Alternative 4. These alternatives were:

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative provides no treatment to occur at this time. Treatment of this Review Area would be reassessed at a future date.

Current road access to the area would remain the same. Big game cover areas would not be impacted by management activities. Timbered stands considered high risk to insect and disease losses in need of stocking level reduction would not be treated.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This alternative provides for treatment of 990 acres of priority stands by stocking level reduction. These stands are considered high risk to insect and disease activity and in need of stocking level controls. Current access would be reduced by closing 17.1 miles of roads.

ALTERNATIVE 3.

This alternative provides for treatment of 280 acres of priority stands by stocking level reduction. These stands are considered high risk to insect and disease activity and in need of stocking level controls. Current access would be reduced by closing 14.7 miles of roads.

ALTERNATIVE 4.

This alternative provides for treatment of 650 acres of priority stands by stocking level reduction. There would be no treatment of stands within MA-14, the Visual Corridor along U.S. Highway 395 under this alternative. Current access would be reduced by closing 16.3 miles of roads.

These four alternatives were not selected because they did not adequately address the potential insect and overstocking problem concurrently with the potential big game cover problems that exist in the Review Area and the urgency to treat these areas. In addition, most of the lands in this Review Area are allocated for timber management.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989. Public scoping and analysis have been accomplished to meet the requirements of these decisions.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990 with two exceptions:

There will be a commercial thinning entry into MA-14, the Visual Corridor along U.S. Highway 395 prior to the completion of a Visual Corridor Management Plan.

The boundary of MA-14, the Visual Corridor along U.S. Highway would be adjusted to reduce the size of MA-14 in the review area by approximately 360 acres.

Therefore it is my decision to include Amendment 10 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 10

The purpose of Amendment No. 10 of the Malheur National Forest Plan is to modify the Boundary of MA-14, the Visual Corridor along U.S. Highway 395 and to allow silvicultural treatment of effected stands within this corridor prior to the completion of a Viewshed Corridor Plan. The corridor boundary as designated in the Forest Plan was found to be in need of adjustment after intensive field reconnaissance during the winter of 1991.

There are approximately 360 acres of the designated corridor that cannot be seen from U.S. Highway because of topographic features. Because these areas cannot be seen from the designated travel route, they cannot be considered as part of the viewshed and will be changed to MA-1, General Forest.

An additional purpose of Amendment No. 10 is to proceed with a harvest treatment into MA-14, the Visual Corridor along U.S. Highway 395 prior to the completion of a Viewshed Corridor Plan.

There is an active and ongoing infestation of mountain pine beetles that has been accelerating in intensity during the past few years. The insect activity has been monitored by aerial detection surveys and by ground reconnaissance and verification. Root diseases including Fomes annosus and Black Stain Fungus are also spreading within the visual corridor. The mountain pine beetles and the root diseases are contributing to unacceptable levels of mortality in the corridor.

The need for stocking level reduction in the visual corridor is evidenced by the rate at which trees are dying as a result of the damaging agents described above. Stocking level reduction will provide for increased growth rates and will result in a healthier and more vigorous stand. Commercial thinning will be accomplished with emphasis on visual resource management. Spacing will be varied and views of large diameter ponderosa pine will be improved. No mature trees will be harvested. The primary management objective will be to protect and enhance the visual characteristics of the corridor.

Based on the analysis in this EA, I have determined these proposed changes to be non-significant since they will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additional information can be obtained from:

James M. Peña
District Ranger
Burns Ranger District
HC-74, Box 12870
Hines, Oregon 97738
(503) 572-7292

I gave particular attention to the proper allocation of Management Areas and the best resource management for them. Because portions of the visual corridor cannot be seen from the travel route, these portions of the allocation should be changed to MA-1, General Forest.

I further gave particular attention to the improvement of forest health in the corridor and protecting future management options. The stands in the corridor must be managed to become healthy and vigorous in order to have the chance to successfully fight off insect infestations and resist infection by diseases. This corridor will be managed to protect and enhance the visual characteristics with commercial thinning. Future management options will not be adversely affected by this amendment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the analysis disclosed in the Environmental Assessment for this project area, I find that these projects are not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This Finding is based on consideration of impacts both beneficial and adverse for the following factors:

1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.
2. There will be no significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
3. There will be no adverse impacts to wetlands, flood plains, other riparian areas, and dedicated old growth areas.
4. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.

5. The effects of this project are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The effects of this project on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial.

7. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.

8. Based on previous cultural resource surveys and those completed in 1991, cultural resource properties in this review area have been identified and recorded. The project will avoid all National Register eligible and undetermined sites. The Forest has documentation of completed State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurrence consultation which was received on September 24, 1991 (SHPO #12261).

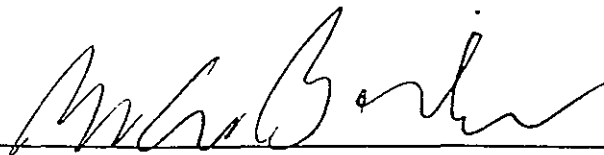
9. The Biological Evaluation and associated field surveys were completed in 1991. No Proposed, Endangered, or Threatened species were located. A sensitive species of fish, the Redband trout was observed in the planning area. Based on the Biological Evaluation for this species no significant adverse effects are expected from management activities.

10. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet state water and air quality standards.

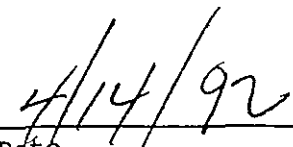
This project will be implemented seven days following the publication of the legal notice announcing this decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for the appeal, and must be filed in duplicate with John Butruille, Regional Forester, (Reviewing Officer), USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle news paper.

For further information, contact Rudy Hefter, Timber Management Assistant, Burns Ranger District, HC 74 Box 12870, Hines, Oregon 97738, 503-573-7292.



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor



Date

DECISION NOTICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
NON-SIGNIFICANT
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 12

BEECHNUT TIMBER SALE

Grant County, Oregon
USDA-Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Long Creek Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses the proposed Beechnut Timber Sale is available for public review at the Forest Supervisor's office in John Day, Oregon. The assessment evaluates site-specific management activities necessary to implement direction contained within the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), 5/25/90.

Based on the site-specific analysis and mitigation measures developed to avoid unacceptable impacts to the environment described in the EA, my decision is to implement Alternative 3 for the design of this project and the management of these public lands. This project is located approximately 9 air miles northeast of John Day, Oregon. It occupies all or parts of Sections 2 and 3, T.12 S., R.30 E.; Surveyed, Grant County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian of the Long Creek Ranger District, Malheur National Forest.

Alternative 3 will commercially harvest an estimated 1.0 million board feet of timber from approximately 96 acres and construct about 0.2 miles of temporary road on the Long Creek Creek Ranger District. Harvest areas 1, 2, and 4 will be included within the Huck Timber Sale and the remaining timber will be sold within the Beechnut Timber Sale. The majority of the timber to be harvested is dead or dying due to bark beetle activity or defoliation by the western spruce budworm. This decision includes the connected actions of slash disposal, site preparation, reforestation, diseased tree removal, animal damage control, and road closures.

I feel that Alternative 3, with its specific mitigation measures provides for the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits. This determination is based on the following factors:

- 1) The necessary steps are taken to move from the existing forest condition toward the desired condition as envisioned in the Forest Plan.
- 2) Salvage of dead and dying timber which has been affected by a variety of forest pathogens will occur. These areas will likely not provide wildlife cover habitat (satisfactory or marginal) in the future. Alternative 3 will best minimize timber losses and will provide timber products that will contribute to economic stability.
- 3) In insect damaged stands healthy tree species such as ponderosa pine, western larch, and lodgepole pine will be retained to provide: structural diversity and screening cover for wildlife habitat; a source of down woody debris for wildlife habitat and long-term site productivity; modify the

effects within the visual corridor; and a seed source for natural regeneration.

- 4) Timber stands that are currently exhibiting poor growth and vigor due to insects and disease will be regenerated.
- 5) Riparian and aquatic habitats are protected by establishing and maintaining appropriate buffer zones adjacent to and within harvest units.
- 6) Best Management Practices (BMP's) and Forest Plan Standards are applied throughout the planning area with respect to logging, road building and road maintenance. These include:

*Helicopter yarding all the logs on the steep slopes above Beech Creek to minimize the impacts to the visual corridor.

*Utilizing road construction, logging system, and slash reduction measures that will limit soil movement and soil compaction.

*Waterbars and other erosion control measures will be placed in skid trails. All disturbed soils within 100 to 200 feet of a Class I, II, III, or IV stream, or where eroded material could reach a stream, and skid trails with slopes greater than 20%, will be seeded and waterbarred for erosion control.

* Trees will be felled in such manner so that the direction of fall is away from the streamcourses. If a tree falls into or across a streamcourse, will be left in place unless removal of it is necessary to protect the stream or other resources.

- 7) Habitat will be maintained for primary excavators at levels established in the Forest Plan.

- 8) The elk habitat effectiveness index (HEI) in big-game summer range in the sub-watershed will be maintained above the minimum level established in the Forest Plan of .40. The HEI will drop from the current level of .67 to .64.

- 9) Satisfactory and marginal cover habitat levels will be maintained near those established in the Forest Plan in big game summer range. Satisfactory cover is currently below standards. Some marginal cover will be harvested but anticipated continued mortality will reduce crown closure below the 40% required to meet canopy closure for cover.

Summary of Percent Cover
Alternative 3

Sub-watershed	Satisfactory Summer	Marginal Summer	Total Summer	Current Condition Summer
Forest Plan Std.	12.0	5.0	20.0	20.0
Bear Creek	11.3	21.1	31.1	33.4

10) Open road densities in the big-game summer range will be maintained at lower levels than currently established with the Forest Plan. The road density will be 1.88/mi/sq mi.

All purchaser road closures will be completed immediately following harvest.

11) This alternative will not meet the visual quality objective of retention in the foreground within the visual corridor. This harvest will meet long-term objectives for visual management since stand mortality is high and there is still an increasing trend. The silvicultural prescription was modified to include mitigation measures to soften the effect especially in the high visibility areas.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative 1 - No Action

A commercial timber sale would not be proposed at this time. This alternative would continue present management activities such as road maintenance, fire suppression and other administrative duties. Significant stand mortality would continue to occur. This alternative was not selected because it does not take any actions I feel are necessary to move this area from its existing forest condition toward the desired condition.

Alternative 2

A commercial timber sale, that would harvest .6 million board feet (MMBF) from 96 acres; and construct .2 miles of temporary road.

This alternative to only salvage harvest the recent dead and high risk, present no long term solution to the forest health problem. It would meet visual management objectives in the short-term but as mortality continues to occur another stand treatment is likely in the future.

Alternative 4

A commercial timber sale, that would harvest 1.0 million board feet (MMBF) from 96 acres; constructs .4 miles of temporary road and .6 miles of permanent road.

I did not select this alternative because the increased visual effect of the logging disturbance and road construction. The skyline corridors would result in a network of corridor paths, many of which would be visible from the highway. The new road even though the location is on the ridge would also have a visual effect. The area near the landings, log drag will scar the ground which will have another effect visually. This alternative is however more cost efficient. The skyline logging and road construction is much less expensive than the helicopter yarding in alternative 3. But I feel the cost outweighs the addition visual damage which will be incurred by the skyline yarding.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation, 12/8/88 and the Mediated Agreement for Chemical Controls, 5/29/89. The proposed action emphasizes the prevention and early treatment strategies advocated in these documents.

No Timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.34).

All of the manipulation of vegetation complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27.

In making this decision, I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives and standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), 5/25/90, with one exception:

Timber harvest in areas 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the selected alternative will occur in the foreground of U.S. Highway 395 prior to completion of the viewshed corridor plan (Management Area 14, standard #12).

It is my decision to include Forest Plan Amendment Number 12 to this Decision Notice:

NON-SIGNIFICANT FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 12

The purpose of Amendment Number 12 of the Forest Plan is to implement timber management activities and connected actions in the Sensitivity Level I foreground corridor of U.S. Highway 395. This amendment has no effect outside the 628 acre planning area or for projects other than those displayed in the Beechnut Environmental Assessment.

Forest Plan Management Area #14 (Visual Corridors) Standard #12 prohibits timber harvesting in Sensitivity Level I corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed. This amendment allows for timber harvesting in the visual foreground of the highway prior to completion of the corridor plan. The need to harvest timber in this Sensitivity Level I foreground corridor was the result of an indepth evaluation of the existing Forest health conditions; anticipated mortality from Douglas fir bark beetle and spruce budworm infestations; and the development of a visual plan to meet the long term desired condition for the corridor.

This amendment will allow treatment of 76 acres within the foreground of U.S. Highway 395. Mortality is currently occurring in these stands, and future options to manage for visual quality will be limited if mortality continues to occur as anticipated. The proposed treatments will meet the visual quality objectives of partial retention, and I do not feel that they will compromise the ability to manage the visual corridor in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner in the future.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the analysis disclosed in the Environmental Assessment for this project area, I Find that these projects are not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This Finding is based on consideration of impacts both beneficial and adverse for the following factors:

1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.
2. There will be no significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
3. There will be no adverse impacts to wetlands, flood plains, other riparian areas, and dedicated old growth areas.
4. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.
5. The effects of this project are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The effects of this project on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial.
7. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.
8. Based on a cultural resource survey which was performed according to a State Historic Preservation Office approved Forest Inventory Plan and a survey completed in 1992, cultural resource properties in the analysis area were avoided during design of the harvest units and other project activities.
9. A Biological Evaluation to determine the effects of the project activities on the continued existence of species listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered was completed on 7/8/92. Potential habitat is available for the redband trout, no observations have been recorded in this area. With the sale design and mitigation measures established for the riparian areas and listed in the plan of operation, no significant effects will occur to redband trout. No sensitive plants or animals were found during field reconnaissance.
10. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet state water and air quality standards.

APPEAL RIGHTS LANGUAGE AND NOTICING

The Regional Forester, John E. Lowe, has determined that good cause exists to exempt this decision from review. Notification of this determination was published in the Federal Register on July 31, 1992. Therefore, this decision is exempt from further review under the provisions of 36 CFR 217.

Implementation of this decision may commence immediately.

For further information, contact John Shoberg, District Ranger, Long Creek Ranger District, 528 East Main Street, John Day, Oregon 97845, 503-575-2110.

for Francis Friebiger
MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

8/5/92
Date

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT # 15

SLIP AND SLIDE TIMBER SALES
SLIDE CREEK SUB-WATERSHED

Grant County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Long Creek Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses the proposed Slip and Slide Timber Sales in the Slide Creek subwatershed is available for public review at the Forest Supervisor's Office and the Long Creek Ranger District Office in John Day, Oregon. The assessment evaluates site-specific management activities necessary to implement direction contained within the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), 5/25/90.

Based on the site-specific analysis and mitigation measures developed to avoid unacceptable impacts to the environment described in the EA, my decision is the implementation of Alternative 3 for the design of this project and the management of these public lands.

This project is located approximately 45 vehicle miles north of John Day, Oregon. It occupies all or part of Sections 1-4, 9-15, T10S, R31E; Sections 15, 21-22, 27-28, and 33-34, T 9S, R31E; Surveyed, Grant County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian of the Long Creek Ranger District, Malheur National Forest.

Alternative 3 provides for the salvage harvest of approximately 19.0 million board feet of dead and dying, insect damaged Douglas-fir and white fir from approximately 3,070 acres. The alternative also constructs 5.4 miles of temporary road, reconstructs about 9.3 miles of road, in the Long Creek Ranger District. Approximately 3,016 acres (98 percent) of the timber to be harvested is located in mixed conifer stands where the cumulative effects of repeated defoliation, prolonged drought, overstocking, stem decay, mistletoe, and root rot infections have resulted in heavy mortality or predicted heavy mortality within the next 5 years. This decision includes the connected actions of slash disposal, site preparation, reforestation, unwanted tree removal, and animal damage control.

Other actions that I have decided to implement in the subwatershed include: road closures and obliterations to improve the quality of wildlife habitat; riparian and aquatic habitat improvement projects such as road closures in riparian zones, brush bundle placement in Slide Creek, installation of two log weirs to create a jump pool on Rice Creek, and conifer plantings along Rice Creek to improve stream shading.

I feel that Alternative 3 with its specific mitigation measures provides for the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits. This determination is based on the following factors:

- 1) It takes steps necessary to move from the existing forest condition toward the desired condition as envisioned in the Forest Plan.
- 2) Most of the high silvicultural priority stands will be harvested. Dead and dying trees will be utilized before they deteriorate and no longer have value as a merchantable wood product. Productive and vigorous stands of timber will be established through regeneration and stocking control treatments on sites that have been severely impacted by the spruce budworm. The overall resistance of the forest to future insect and disease attack will be increased. These are stands predicted to no longer provide wildlife cover habitat (satisfactory or marginal).
- 3) In all timber stands harvested, healthy trees will be retained to provide: structural diversity and screening cover for wildlife habitat; a future source of down, woody material for wildlife habitat and long-term site productivity; and a seed source for natural regeneration.
- 4) Long-term ecosystem recovery projects have been identified during the analysis process which will be planned and implemented as funds become available. These include projects such as:
 - Establishing and maintaining appropriate buffer zones adjacent to and within harvest units.
 - Removing and replacing roads that are currently located within stream zones.
 - Soil restoration (erosion control and ripping of temporary landings and roads)
- 5) The loss of vegetative cover, due to insect infestation, will continue to reduce the quality and quantity of cover available to big game animals. The selection of this alternative will improve big-game cover (marginal and satisfactory) approximately 15-25 years sooner than the no-action alternative.
- 6) Applying Best Management Practices (BMP's) and Forest Plan Standards throughout the subwatershed with respect to logging, road building and road maintenance. These include:
 - Stream crossings with roads were designed to ensure locations that minimize impacts to channel stability and riparian vegetation. Where possible, stream crossings were avoided.

-All temporary roads will be obliterated by the purchaser following use.

-Within riparian buffers, timber removal and operation of ground equipment will be restricted. Landings will not be located in riparian management areas, other wet areas or in drainage bottom areas.

-Skid roads over 20 percent gradient and areas of disturbed soil within 200 feet of streams will be seeded and waterbarred for erosion control; or skid trails will be ripped to restore the infiltrative capacity of the soils and reduce potential for surface flow, as well as scattering woody debris over disturbed sites to provide enhanced surface cover, dissipate velocities, and trap sediment on the slope.

-Ground skidding equipment is generally restricted to slopes less than 35 percent. Where portions exceed 35 percent, timber will be directionally felled and/or winched to the tractor as needed to keep tractors off slopes over 35 percent; or will be skidded with a crawler mounted tractor (CMS) to reduce soil compaction and displacement.

-From April 15 to July 15 no equipment should be used within the stream channel on all Class I, II, and III streams. On Class IV streams with a well defined stream channel and/or significant flows, no equipment should be used within 1/2 mile of the confluence with a downstream, higher classified stream during this time period.

7) Total cover, satisfactory cover, and marginal cover levels will be below those established in the Forest Plan in big-game winter and summer range. All areas of satisfactory and marginal cover that are prescribed for treatment, are not expected to provide cover in the foreseeable future, due to insect defoliation and tree mortality.

Winter Range
Summary of Percent Cover
Alternative 3

Cover	Management Standard	Current Condition	Alternative 3
(Satisfactory)	10	2.0	2.0
(Marginal)	10	6.0	3.0
(Total)	25	8.0	5.0

Summer Range
Summary of Percent Cover
Alternative 3

Cover	Management Standard	Current Condition	Alternative 3
Cover (Satisfactory)	12	0	0
(Marginal)	5	26.0	8.0
(Total)	20	26.0	8.0

8) All temporary roads proposed for construction will be closed immediately following harvest, decreasing the potential for wildlife harassment. The subwatershed road density will be reduced in the future to .89 miles of road per square mile in winter range and 1.52 miles per square mile in summer range, to reduce vehicle traffic in the subwatershed. Closure of roads should encourage use of the area by wildlife following harvest.

9) It identifies a old-growth replacement stand within 1/4 mile of the dedicated old-growth stand. Approximately 20 acres of this replacement stand would be treated. Much of the Douglas-fir and grand fir component would be removed by harvesting, to prepare the site for increased pine regeneration. Harvesting will reduce the canopy closure shortterm, but will promote old growth characteristics desired by the pileated woodpecker in the longterm.

10) The Pacific yew, Taxus brevifolia, occurs both as an upright tree and shrub in the sub-watershed. Recently, Taxol, a substance extracted from yew tree material is considered a promising cancer fighting compound. The protection measures recommended in the Interim Guide to the Conservation and Management of Pacific yew (1992) will be followed to ensure yew gene pools will be preserved in the subwatershed. Protection measures incorporated include:

-Exclusion of yew concentrations from harvest units.

-Sheltering trees (up to 27 live trees per acre) will be retained to reduce yew exposure to temperature extremes, sunlight, and logging damage.

-During site preparation and fuel treatment activities, yew and the trees shading them will be protected to maintain at least 50 percent of the existing populations of yew trees and shrubs.

The Slide Creek subwatershed contains lands allocated to MA 1, General Forest; MA 2, Rangeland; MA 3B, Anadromous Riparian Areas; MA 4A, Big-game Winter Range; MA 13, Old Growth; and MA 16, Minimum Level Management. Each MA has specific goals as discussed in the EA, and these goals together with Forest Plan standards are the basis for establishing the desired future condition.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative 1 - No Action

This alternative continues with the current management of the area and would not initiate any new and/or additional activities. It would result in further deterioration of forest health. As a result, big-game cover and the shading component of the riparian habitat would continue to decline. Monetary value, of the trees that die as a result of the insect infestation, would be lost. No rehabilitation or area improvement projects would occur.

Alternative 2

A commercial timber sale, that would harvest 20.0 million board feet (MMBF) from 3284 acres; construct 5.4 miles of temporary road, reconstruct 9.3 miles of road.

I did not select this alternative because of cumulative impacts on big-game habitat. Concentrated harvest in stands primarily composed of Douglas-fir and grand fir would create large harvest units that in many areas would be located adjacent to recently harvested areas. Combined with the effects of past harvest activities this alternative would severely reduce cover in some areas short term, reducing movement of wildlife between cover stands. Most migration corridors used by wildlife species to travel between summer and winter ranges would be eliminated. These stands are at risk to future insect infestations, but are providing valuable wildlife cover habitat and migration corridors. I feel that treatment of these stands should be deferred until there is certainty that the cover benefits to wildlife would be lost due to continued insect damage, or until existing plantations in the area develop into cover. At this time, there would be minimal wood fiber losses if this alternative is not implemented.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation (12/8/88) and the Mediated Agreement for Chemical Controls (5/29/89). The proposed action emphasizes the prevention and early treatment strategies advocated in these documents.

No Timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.34).

All of the manipulation of vegetation complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990, with two exceptions:

Reduction of big-game cover stands in winter range, and reduction of big-game habitat effectiveness index (HEI) in winter range, a Forest Plan Amendment is required.

It is my decision to include Forest Plan Amendment Number 15 to this Decision Notice:

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 15

The purpose of Amendment No. 15 of the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is to bring big-game cover levels and habitat effectiveness index below the standards outlined in the Forest Plan. This amendment has no effect outside the Slide Creek subwatershed.

My rationale for dropping below cover and HEI in winter range is twofold. First, vegetative treatment of silviculturally high priority stands will provide for long term cover, both satisfactory and marginal, thus moving this area towards the desired future condition. If these cover stands are not treated now they will move from a cover condition to a non-cover state due to current and expected future mortality. Secondly, this decision will provide quality winter range habitat for deer and elk in the future. Mitigation measures for this action are open road densities that will be .89 miles per square mile, well below Forest Plan standards.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant, since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or Environmental Assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950, and W.O. Amendment 1909.15-91-1, 26).

Other Forest Plan Concerns--Not Amendments

This alternative will create openings from 10 to 200 acres. While a majority of the created openings will be greater than 40 acres, this is permitted through exemption language in the Forest Plan for catastrophic situations such as the present insect epidemic (FP IV - 36).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the EA, I have determined that this is not a major federal action which will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination was made considering the following factors:

- 1) Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions.
- 2) No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated. There is no evidence that implementation of the proposed activities will be highly controversial, establish a precedent for future activities, or involve highly uncertain effects or unique or unknown risks.
- 3) The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant federal, state, or local laws, regulations, and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment as well as state water and air quality standards.
- 4) There are no adverse impacts to floodplains, wetlands, prime farmlands, or unique characteristics of the analysis area.
- 5) Based on a cultural resource survey which was performed according to a State Historic Preservation Office approved Forest Inventory Plan and survey completed in 1991, cultural resource properties in the subwatershed were avoided during design of harvest units and other project activities. These procedures fulfill the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act requirements that cultural resources be considered early in the planning process.
- 6) A Biological Evaluation and field review has been conducted within the sub-watershed. No sensitive plants were found during field reconnaissance. Mitigation measures outlined for riparian areas will protect potential Preble's shrew habitat and redband trout habitat.

APPEAL RIGHTS LANGUAGE AND NOTICING

Implementation of this decision shall not occur within 7 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 333 SW First Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208, Reviewing Officer, within 45 days of the date that legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

For further information, contact John Shoberg, District Ranger, Long Creek Ranger District, 528 East Main Street, John Day Oregon 97845, 503-575-2110.

for Francis Fiebigler
MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

8/19/92
Date

DECISION NOTICE AND FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #16
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

DRY ANALYSIS AREA

Grant County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Bear Valley Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) for the "Dry Analysis Area" in the Upper Canyon Creek TLW's/Dry Soda/Wickiup/Lower Gap Creeks Subwatershed is available for public review at the Bear Valley Ranger District, John Day, Oregon, and at the office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon.

The Dry Subwatershed contains lands allocated to:

- MA 1-2 - General Forest and Rangeland
- MA 3B - Anadromous Fisheries
- MA 4A - Big-Game Winter Range Maintenance
- MA 12 - Developed Recreation Sites
- MA 13 - Old-Growth
- MA 14 - Visual Corridor

Each management area (MA) has specific goals as discussed in the EA, and these goals, together with Forest Plan Standards, are the basis for establishing the desired future condition.

DECISION:

Based on the site-specific analysis described in the Dry EA, it is my decision to implement Alternative 5, as modified on Page 4 of this document, as the plan of management for the resources of these National Forest System lands. In conjunction with Forest Plan Standards, Mitigation Measures, and Features Common to all action alternatives (outlined in Chapter II of this EA), Alternative 5 provides the best combination of physical, biological, social, and economical benefits.

ALTERNATIVE 5

Due to the insect infestation occurring in the mid-1980's, most of this project's efforts are those of rehabilitation and reduction of the fuel loads.

This alternative will reduce fuel loading on 933 acres to minimize the potential of high intensity catastrophic wildfires.

MA 1 (General Forest), MA 4A (Big-Game Winter Range Maintenance) and MA 14 (Visual Corridor) -- on stands with heavy fuel loading, remove merchantable dead trees from units where green tree cutting is proposed and then underburn. If no green trees are proposed to be removed, the unit will be underburned only. The underburning will also reduce fir encroachment and perpetuate ponderosa pine. Planting understocked patches with ponderosa pine and larch will create productive healthy timber stands.

Timber harvest will occur on 978 acres, yielding 2.6 million board feet from stands classified at risk silviculturally this decade, but not classified as big-game cover. In visual foreground, a modified silviculture treatment will enhance visual quality (in the future) on those stands rated at risk this decade. Acres treated include:

1. 347 acres of pine bark beetle susceptible timber stands to minimize potential epidemics;
2. 269 acres of mistletoe-infected stands to convert acres to more productive timber stands; and
3. 362 acres of spruce budworm defoliation stands and Douglas-fir bark beetle infected stands, followed by planting of ponderosa pine and larch to create productive timber stands.

Connected actions that will be implemented are slash disposal, site preparation, thinning, and reforestation.

This alternative will maintain marginal cover in the subwatershed; however, treatment will increase both satisfactory and marginal cover in the subwatershed by the year 2033. The elk habitat index (HEI) will be raised from 0.2 to 0.39 on summer range and on winter range HEI will not change from the existing 0.41.

This alternative will build 0.5 mile of system road and reconstruct 0.2 mile of road to allow reasonable road access into the subwatershed for product removal and managers. All the new construction will be closed following use.

An adequate Replacement Old-Growth area has been identified for Dedicated Old-Growth Block #241. This area will be managed and serve as replacement for the existing Dedicated Block in the event of possible catastrophic damage or deterioration of the Dedicated Block.

A feeding area for pileated woodpeckers has been identified and overlaps with the Replacement Old-Growth Block. This area will contain an average of two hard snags or more per acre and is found within 1/4 mile of Dedicated Old-Growth Block #241.

An Access Management Plan that reduces the road density in the subwatershed will be implemented. Road closures will proceed as funding becomes available. This plan will reduce the miles of open road in the subwatershed from 49.1 miles to 27.6 miles. Summer range open road density will reduce from 5.2 miles per square mile to 3.0 miles per square mile. Winter range open road density will reduce from 2.7 miles per square mile to 1.3 miles per square mile.

The fuels and harvest treatments will maintain snag levels and down woody material as specified in the Forest Plan.

This alternative will adhere to the water withdrawal guidelines for Canyon Creek which restrict the timing and amount of water withdrawal that will occur for activities (road construction, road maintenance, and dust abatement) to be implemented with this alternative.

I have selected Alternative 5 because:

- * It takes steps necessary to move from the existing forest condition toward the desired condition as envisioned in the Forest Plan.

- * It reduces the fuel loading which will minimize the potential of high intensity catastrophic wildfires.

- * It adequately addresses the higher priority Forest Health concerns by treating stands that are currently exhibiting poor growth and vigor due to insect and disease damage. This alternative will treat only the high risk stands (stands with a high probability of having an insect and/or disease epidemic this decade).

- * It modifies treatment in MA 14 to improve aesthetics and perpetuate a significant ponderosa pine and larch component in the stand structure. This alternative will maintain a multi-layered stand appearance and will create small (less than 2 acres) openings scattered across the foreground with the remainder of the vegetation having a thinned appearance. These small openings and fire scars (black areas left after the area is underburned) will be evident for approximately two years, then will appear as natural small openings with feathered edges, scattered across the landscape. The activities in the middleground will meet the visual quality objective of partial retention.

- * It does not treat any acres that are currently classified as marginal cover. The subwatershed currently has no satisfactory cover; however, the proposed treatments are projected to develop acres into satisfactory and marginal cover over time. In 30 years, it is projected that this subwatershed will have 34% marginal cover and 23% satisfactory cover without any future harvest, insect or disease infestations, or catastrophic fire.

- * It does not favor any single resource use or lean solely on maximizing market values. Where other alternatives may address certain issues more effectively, this alternative promotes the best land stewardship striving to meet the desired future condition.

- * I have reviewed this alternative as to the effects it will have on the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness. Units 77, 78, 80, and 94 lie between existing roads and the wilderness boundary. The wilderness boundary in this area follows a major ridge system; therefore, activities would be topographically separated from the wilderness and would have little impact on wilderness values. No roads will be constructed between existing roads and the wilderness. Public involvement was an important element of this analysis, buffering the wilderness did surface in the beginning; however, as the analysis proceeded, buffering did not develop as a major issue. The wilderness boundary has been posted; therefore, the possibility of encroachment has been addressed. Trail #217 goes through the upper portion of unit 94 before entering the wilderness. The upper portion of this unit (94A) will be helicopter logging in order to minimize ground disturbance near the trail. The silviculture prescription is uneven-age management and slash will be hand piled.

MODIFICATION

However, I have decided to modify this alternative by deferring treatment on units 81 and 82. Since the analysis was completed, the field survey portion of the biological evaluation has been completed, which has confirmed that there is over a 50% chance that Preble's shrew are present. Oregon State University is presently confirming our identification. I considered delaying my decision on what to do with these units until this confirmation; however, this is not the only reason for deferring treatment. Since the analysis was completed, goshawks have been observed in the area adjacent to these units on three separate occasions. A possible nest tree is also located less than 1/2 mile north of the units. Fledglings had already left the nest at the time of observation of the adult goshawks; hence, confirmation of the nest tree will not occur until next nesting period. Forest-wide Standard #60 calls for protection of active raptor nest sites and the habitat immediately surrounding the nest. Current research, summarized in the analysis file, shows that goshawks may require 30 acres or more for their nest area, in stands that typically have high crown closure.

The habitat in this area is marginal at present and any form of timber management would substantially alter the canopy closure necessary for the goshawk. Therefore, I am deferring treatment of units 81 and 82 which will decrease the timber harvest acres from 978 to 929, and volume will decrease from 2.6 MMBF to 2.5 MMBF. Road construction will decrease from 0.5 mile to 0.2 mile. I am not proposing any timing restrictions.

Furthermore, I am directing the District Ranger to monitor this area to see if goshawks continue to use the area. Timber management has occurred on a large portion of the adjacent area in the past few years. Goshawks might not continue to use the area even without this modification; therefore, further study and monitoring is needed to determine the desired future condition of these acres. The District Ranger will also monitor these units to ensure that pine bark beetle activity does not reach epidemic stage. If pine bark beetle activity does increase and drops these units from effective goshawk habitat, timber harvest will continue if needed to achieve the desired future condition on these acres.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

ALTERNATIVE 1 - No Action

This alternative would continue present management activities such as road maintenance, fire suppression, and other administrative duties. No new activities like timber harvest or fuels reduction would occur this entry but would not be precluded as a future management opportunity. Alt. 1 does display a means of comparing the action alternatives and their trade-offs to the existing condition of the subwatershed.

This alternative would not change the potential for high intensity catastrophic wildfires. The fuel loading will be unchanged on 1,370 acres classified as heavy fuel loading. No activity would occur to reduce fir encroachment or perpetuate ponderosa pine.

The dead standing trees created by the spruce budworm epidemic would continue to fall, increasing the concentration of down woody material on the ground.

No activity is proposed to treat the 686 acres susceptible to a pine beetle epidemic, 1,245 acres of mistletoe infected stands, or 1,370 acres of spruce budworm defoliated timber stands. The stands were rated as to whether silviculture treatment this decade was necessary to keep from "losing" the stand (losing -- without treatment, the growth and health will be reduced with insect and disease infections a high probability). A rating of low risk indicated that the present stand condition would continue this decade and that some action alternatives did not propose treatment on these low risk stands.

Big-game cover would remain at no satisfactory cover, 8% marginal cover on summer range, and 10% marginal cover on winter range for the subwatershed.

No road reconstruction or construction would occur.

The miles of open road would remain at 49.1 miles.

No activities are proposed within the visual corridor, dedicated old-growth area, or riparian areas.

Opportunity to contribute volume to the Forest Plan Timber Activity Schedule would not occur at this time.

I did not select this alternative for the following reasons:

- * It would not take any action to move this area from the existing forest condition toward the desired future condition.
- * It would not change the potential of catastrophic wildfires.
- * It would not address insect or disease concerns.
- * Further timber mortality would occur.
- * It would not improve wildlife elements within HEI calculations.
- * It would not reduce the open road density.
- * It would not contribute to the Forest's Timber Activity Schedule.
- * It would not capture the opportunity to salvage timber within the subwatershed.

ALTERNATIVE 2, 3, 4, and 6

Features Common to these alternatives:

Replacement Old-Growth area and a feeding area for pileated woodpeckers would be identified the same as Alternative 5.

An Access Management Plan that reduces the road density in the subwatershed would be implemented the same as Alternative 5.

The treatments in the Action Alternatives would maintain snag levels and down woody material as specified in the Forest Plan.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This alternative would treat most of the acres that have been identified as heavy fuel loading in the subwatershed. Acres within the spruce budworm study plot were deferred from treatment until the study has been completed. This alternative would reduce fuel loading on 1,195 acres to minimize the potential of high intensity catastrophic wildfires.

MA 13 (Dedicated Old-Growth #241), MA 14 (Visual Corridor), MA 4A (Big-Game Winter Range Maintenance), and MA 1 (General Forest) -- The dead trees would be removed prior to underburning to reduce the fuel loading. Plant those patches which are understocked with ponderosa pine and larch to improve aesthetics and diversity. The underburning would also reduce fir encroachment and perpetuate ponderosa pine.

This alternative would treat most of the stands in the subwatershed that are pine beetle susceptible, mistletoe-infected, defoliated, or Douglas-fir beetle infested. Timber harvest would occur on 2,371 acres, yielding 8.3 million board feet. Acres treated would be:

1. 675 acres of pine bark beetle susceptible timber stands to minimize potential epidemics;
2. 954 acres of mistletoe-infected stands to convert acres to more productive timber stands; and
3. 742 acres of spruce budworm defoliated stands and Douglas-fir bark beetle infested stands followed by planting of ponderosa pine and larch to create productive timber stands.

This alternative reduces summer range marginal cover from 8% to 3% and winter range marginal cover from 10% to 4% in the subwatershed; however, treatment would increase both satisfactory and marginal cover in the subwatershed by the year 2033.

This alternative proposes 2.4 miles of system road construction and 0.2 miles of road reconstruction to allow reasonable road access into the subwatershed for product removal, recreationists, other Forest users, and managers. All the new construction will be closed following use.

I did not select this alternative because:

* It would have impacted wildlife habitat too severely, both as a single action and cumulatively with recent timber sales. This alternative would reduce the amount of total cover in the subwatershed, which is already below Forest Plan Standards.

* It would have impacted the visual corridor too severely by creating an opening larger than 10 acres, and shelterwood harvests would not meet the visual quality objective of Retention in the foreground.

* It would have implemented underburning and salvage logging in Dedicated Old-Growth block #241. This block is currently being heavily used by wildlife species dependent on mature/overmature forest conditions and is providing ecosystem diversity in this subwatershed.

ALTERNATIVE 3

This alternative would reduce fuel loading on 1,195 acres to minimize the potential of high intensity catastrophic wildfires. These are the same acres that Alternative 2 treated; however, the method of reducing the fuel loading changed by management area.

MA 13 (Dedicated Old-Growth #241) -- do a series of underburns to eliminate the fire hazard. Burn material that is currently on the ground. As the standing dead falls, creating a fire hazard, additional underburn(s) in two year intervals will be done until fire hazard is eliminated.

MA 14 (Visual Corridor) -- in stands with heavy fuel loading, treat 20% of the acres yearly (over a five year period) in two-to-three acre patches by felling the dead trees and underburning the concentrations of fuel. Plant those patches which are understocked with ponderosa pine and larch to create productive healthy timber stands.

MA 1 (General Forest) and MA 4A (Big-Game Winter Range Maintenance) -- in stands with heavy fuel loading, fall the pockets of dead trees, and underburn the stands. The underburning would also reduce fir encroachment and perpetuate ponderosa pine.

Timber harvest would occur on 1,468 acres, yielding 5.2 million board feet. These were the same stands as Alternative 2 except that stands classified as big-game cover were not proposed for treatment. Acres treated would be:

1. 388 acres of pine bark beetle susceptible timber stands to minimize potential epidemics;
2. 563 acres of mistletoe-infected stands to convert acres to more productive timber stands; and
3. 517 acres of spruce budworm defoliated stands and Douglas-fir bark beetle infected stands, followed by planting of ponderosa pine and larch to create productive timber stands.

In units 1, 3, 29, 46, 85, and 86 the harvest activity is not proposed for accomplishment until fuel loading reduction is achieved.

This alternative maintains marginal cover (10% on summer range and 8% on winter range) in the subwatershed; however, treatment would increase both satisfactory and marginal cover in the subwatershed by the year 2033.

This alternative proposes 1.8 miles of system road construction and 0.2 mile of road reconstruction to allow reasonable road access into the subwatershed for product removal, recreationists, other Forest users, and managers. All the new construction will be closed following use.

I did not select this alternative because:

* It would have impacted the visual corridor with underburns (smoke and black burn spots) for five years, and shelterwood harvests would not meet the visual quality objective of Retention in the foreground.

* It would have implemented underburning in Dedicated Old-Growth block #241. This block is currently being heavily used by wildlife species dependent on mature/overmature forest conditions and is providing ecosystem diversity in this subwatershed.

ALTERNATIVE 4

This alternative would reduce fuel loading on 244 acres to minimize the potential of high intensity catastrophic wildfires enlarging from government land to private ownership or vice versa.

MA 13 (Dedicated Old-Growth #241) -- on acres with heavy fuel loading within 400 feet of private land, fall the dead trees and underburn the concentrations of fuel.

MA 14 (Visual Corridor) -- on stands with heavy fuel loading within 400 feet of private land (use Road 331 or old unit 95 boundary as the distance when they are within the heavy fuel loading stand), fall the dead trees, and underburn the concentrations of fuel.

Timber harvest would occur on 832 acres, yielding 2.9 million board feet. These were from the same stands as Alternative 2 except that stands classified as big-game cover or stands within the visual foreground were included from harvest. Acres treated would be:

1. 260 acres of pine bark beetle susceptible timber stands to minimize potential epidemics;
2. 438 acres of mistletoe-infected stands to convert acres to more productive timber stands; and
3. 134 acres of spruce budworm defoliated stands and Douglas-fir bark beetle infected stands, followed by planting of ponderosa pine and larch to create productive healthy timber stands.

This alternative maintains marginal cover in the subwatershed; however, treatment would increase both satisfactory and marginal cover in the subwatershed by the year 2033.

This alternative proposes 1.6 miles of system road construction and 0.2 mile of road reconstruction to allow reasonable road access into the subwatershed for product removal, recreationists, other Forest users, and managers. All the new construction will be closed following use.

I did not select this alternative because:

* It would only treat 25% of the acres of pine beetle susceptible, mistletoe-infected, defoliated, or Douglas-fir beetle infested stands.

* It would only treat 18% of the heavy fuel loading acres.

* It would have implemented underburning on 12 acres of dedicated old-growth block #241.

ALTERNATIVE 6

This alternative would reduce fuel loading on 798 acres to minimize the potential of high intensity catastrophic wildfires. These were the same stands as Alternative 5 except for those stands that were still needing a sensitive plant survey in 1992.

MA 14 (Visual Corridor), MA 4A (Big-Game Winter Range Maintenance, and MA 1 (General Forest) -- on stands with heavy fuel loading, fall the pockets of dead trees and underburn the stands. The underburning would also reduce fir encroachment and perpetuate ponderosa pine.

Timber harvest would occur on 540 acres, yielding 1.0 million board feet from stands classified at risk silviculturally this decade, but not classified as big-game cover. In visual foreground, a modified silviculture treatment would enhance visual quality (in the future) on those stands silviculturally rated at risk this decade. This alternative also deferred treatment on stands that are located between existing roads and the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness boundary. Other stands deferred were those requiring sensitive plant surveys in 1992. Acres treated would be:

1. 213 acres of pine bark beetle susceptible timber stands to minimize potential epidemics;
2. 27 acres of mistletoe-infected stands to convert acres to more productive timber stands; and
3. 300 acres of spruce budworm defoliated stands and Douglas-fir bark beetle infected stands, followed by planting of ponderosa pine and larch to create productive timber stands.

This alternative maintains marginal cover in the subwatershed; however, treatment would increase both satisfactory and marginal cover in the subwatershed by the year 2033.

This alternative proposes 0.2 mile of system road construction and 0.2 mile of road reconstruction to allow reasonable road access into the subwatershed for product removal, recreationists, other Forest users, and managers. All the new construction will be closed following use.

I did not select this alternative because:

- * It treated fewer insect or disease acres than Alternative 5.
- * It treated fewer fuel load acres than Alternative 5.

CONSISTENCY FINDING:

* No timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.14).

* Manipulation of vegetation comply with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27(b).

* The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May of 1989. The proposed action implements prevention and early treatment strategies.

* Pacific yew has not been identified within the Dry Subwatershed. If Pacific yew is found during logging operations, the protection measures recommended in the Interim Guide to the Conservation and Management of Pacific yew (1992) will be followed to ensure the preservation of yew gene pools.

* In making this decision, I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Malheur National Forest, signed May 25, 1990, with one exception:

Timber harvest would occur on 482 acres (units: 29, 42, 43, 46, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 63, 67, 69, 71, 72, and 73) in the foreground of County Road 65 and Forest Road 15 prior to the completion of its viewshed corridor plan (Management Area 14, standard #12).

Therefore, it is my decision to include Forest Plan Amendment Number 16 to this Decision Notice:

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 16

The purpose of Amendment No. 16 of the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is to implement timber management activities and connected actions in the Sensitivity Level I foreground visual corridor of County Road 65 and Forest Road 15 (part of the Wilderness Loop). This amendment has no effect outside the 8,138 acre planning area or for projects other than those displayed in the Dry Environmental Assessment.

Forest Plan Management Area #14 (Visual Corridors) Standard #12 prohibits timber harvesting in Sensitivity Level I or II corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed. However, (Standard #12) exceptions to this will be considered for insect and disease conditions and sanitation salvage needs on a case-by-case basis, with visuals being the driving factor in decision making (see Forest-wide Standard #3). This amendment allows for timber harvesting in the visual foreground of County Road 65 and Forest Road 15 prior to completion of its corridor plan. The need to harvest timber in this Sensitivity Level I foreground corridor was the result of an indepth evaluation of the existing Forest health conditions including:

1. anticipated mortality from mountain pine beetle infestations;

2. the existing condition of spruce budworm defoliated stands and Douglas-fir bark beetle infected stands;
3. improving the productivity of mistletoe-infected stands; and
4. improving the amount of big-game cover to meet the long-term "desired future conditions" for wildlife and Forest health.

This amendment will allow treatment on about 482 acres within the foreground of County Road 65 and Forest Road 15. Mortality is currently occurring in these stands, and future options to manage for visual quality may be limited if mortality continues. The proposed treatments will meet the visual quality objectives of retention, and I do not feel that they will compromise the ability to manage the visual corridors in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner in the future.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant, since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This amendment is categorically excluded from further documentation in an EIS or Environmental Assessment (ID No. 16, FSM 1950, and W.O. Amendment 1909.15-91-1, 26).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Bud Sloan
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

Douglas V. Robin
District Ranger
Bear Valley Ranger District
528 E. Main St.
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-2110

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the EA, I have determined that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions;
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated. There is no evidence that the effects of implementing the proposed activities are highly controversial, or that implementation will establish a precedent for future activities, or involve highly uncertain effects of unique or unknown risks;
3. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, or local laws, regulations, and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment as well as State water and air quality standards;

4. There are no significant floodplains found within proposed units. Wetlands within the planning area will be protected through avoidance by design or protected during operations;

5. Known Cultural Resource sites have been mitigated through avoidance. Malheur National Forest Supervisor's Office has signed and certified that cultural resource surveys have been completed and comply with the 106 process (agreement between Forest Service and the State Historic Preservation Office).

6. A Biological Evaluation has been completed to determine the effects of activities on threatened, endangered, and sensitive animal, fish, and plant species. The Biological Evaluation identified eleven potential habitats. Allium campanulatum was found within proposed harvest unit 38 and will be protected with ATP (areas to protect). Preble's shrew was found in unit 82 (Oregon State University is presently confirming identification). By implementing the modification on Page 4 of this document and mitigations in the EA, it was determined that no conflict would occur. No further considerations are recommended at this time.

These survey results were recorded on August 7, 1992. The specific results of these surveys can be found in the Dry Analysis File within the Biological Evaluation report.

APPEAL RIGHTS LANGUAGE AND NOTICING:

Implementation of this decision shall not occur within 7 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle Newspaper.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208, Reviewing Officer, within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

For further information, contact Barbara Boaz, Timber Management Planner, Bear Valley Ranger District, 528 E. Main, John Day, Oregon 97845, 503-575-2110.

for Francis Fiebigler
MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor
139 NE Dayton Street
John Day, Oregon 97845

8/21/92
Date

DECISION NOTICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 17
FOR THE
GENESIS NEW PERSPECTIVES DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Grant County, Oregon
USDA-Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Prairie City Ranger District

I have reviewed the Prairie City District Ranger's analysis and recommendations for establishing healthy ecosystems on the lands known as the Genesis Planning area. Based on the analysis contained in the Environmental Assessment for the Genesis New Perspectives Demonstration Project, dated October 1, 1992, and consistent with our fiduciary responsibilities to Indian tribes, I have decided to implement a blend of alternatives C and D. These alternatives serve to best protect the trust resources of Indian tribes who have treaty reserved off-reservation rights to take fish at their usual and accustomed grounds and stations, as well as other treaty rights on lands ceded to the United States. I also feel that this blend of alternatives will do the best job of restoring this ecosystem, while preserving the natural values of the area, and will provide fiber to local timber dependent communities. The following actions will take place on the 5926 acre project area:

1. Reduce fuels and reintroduce fire in a manner that mimics natural processes to lower the risk of catastrophic fires and re-establishes healthy stand conditions. A combination of treatments would be employed as follows:

- a. Underburning on 1501 acres;
- b. Mechanical treatment and burning of 717 acres; and
- c. Broadcast burning on 569 acres.

The total acres treated with fire will be 2787.

Low intensity burning, under prescribed conditions, is intended to reduce "ladder fuels" and to initiate a mosaic of burned acres on a landscape level to help restore the vegetation to a more resilient state.

Treatment of designated old growth, including that done for research, and selected riparian areas with prescribed fire to reduce fuel loadings will be the subject of a separate appealable decision document; however, the analysis done to date and subsequent additional public involvement will be the basis for those decisions. I expect that this decision will be made by December 15, 1992.

2. Existing vegetation or heavy residual shelterwood will be left in all stands identified as highly visible. Background and middleground would be managed for visual enhancement in the "seen" area such that the effects of harvest would be mitigated by the retention of trees above the level necessary to provide adequate shade and seed. The introduction of more artificial qualities on the landscape caused by skyline corridors, roads, skid trails, harvest unit boundaries, and fuel treatments will be avoided.

3. Establish conditions which minimize insect and disease epidemics and restore ponderosa pine/western larch on sites where either species is well adapted. The treatment measures, along with accompanying post-sale work, specified in the selected alternative include:

- a. Shelterwood harvest 967 acres;
- b. Seedtree harvest 292 acres;
- c. Sanitation Thinning 627 acres;
- d. Selection/Uneven-aged Management 234 acres; and
- e. Combined shelterwood and seedtree 303 acres.

Treatments scheduled are for this entry only. Subsequent examination, monitoring, evaluation, and analysis will be done to determine any future treatments. The mechanical treatment strategies contained on element 3 have the least impact on watershed health and stability.

To facilitate rapid removal of timber products, logging within big-game winter range during the normal winter closure period will be allowed under a two-stage entry process designed to limit disturbance to big game. This will be accomplished by confining all logging activities to no more than one-half of the winter range area at a time.

Manage for an average of 2.4 snags left on a 40-acre basis. This is 100 percent of the habitat potential as outlined in the Forest Plan, but less than suggested by recent modeling techniques such as the Marcot model. We will manage for dead and down large woody material at the Forest Plan level of two pieces per acre, at least 75 percent uncharred. This recognizes that we are leaving areas, such as old-growth and riparian areas, which may provide higher levels of snags and woody material.

In blending alternatives C and D, I have decided at this time to select the strategy in Alternative C that defers treatment of approximately 740 acres of cover due to the seriousness of the cover situation in the area. These acres are currently providing satisfactory/marginal cover; however, at their current rate of deterioration, it is assumed that they will shortly become security/hiding cover. Because of this I am directing the District Ranger to monitor cover areas not currently scheduled for mechanical treatment to assess their condition and potentially initiate the use of low intensity prescribed fire, or other appropriate treatments, to promote resiliency of vegetation, including stocking level control.

4. Establish riparian vegetation to restore stream temperature, bank stability, and diminish sediment loading to promote clean, cold water and health of aquatic and terrestrial species. Specifically I am deciding to:

- a. Meet the Forest Plan standards for all riparian areas.
- b. Add 60 acres of riparian habitat to the inventory.
- c. Fence 10 acres of riparian area to exclude use by cattle.
- d. Treat stream reaches B and D with directional felling of trees to disrupt traditional use patterns of livestock and big game; promote natural processes and adopt other measures as specified below (see #6).
- e. Cage browse plants only as necessary.
- f. Plant hardwood species only after the completion of ecological site potential surveys.

5. Manage road system to reduce sediment, provide access for management activities, and control access to promote security for big game and other wildlife species, as represented by the following specific actions:

- a. Obliterate 4.3 miles of existing native surface road.
- b. Close 8.3 miles of road yearlong with the initiation of commercial activities.
- c. Seasonally close 19.3 miles of road during winter range use period. Over-snow vehicles will be allowed outside of winter range.
- d. Upgrade Road 2600306 to a maintenance level III; service level C to ensure passenger car access to part of the area.
- e. There will be approximately 100 feet of road constructed at the end of the 2600306 road to provide access to private lands outside of the planning area. Construction of this road extension will be completed by the private land user and be built to Forest Service specifications. All winter use restrictions described in this decision notice will apply to this portion of road.

The net effect of these actions will reduce the open road density from 4.0 miles/square mile to 2.7 miles/square mile. During winter range use period, all roads in the winter range will be closed to motorized vehicle traffic.

f. Snowmobile use will continue to be allowed, on weekends only, on designated trails on portions of roads 2600306, 2600315, and 2600318. To facilitate safe use of these roads by snowmobilers, a CFR closure will be initiated to prohibit wheeled, motorized vehicles from the junction of Highway 26 and Forest Road 2600306 from 6:00 pm Friday to midnight Sunday, December 15 to March 15, for the life of timber sale operation.

g. A gate will be installed on Road 2600306 near the junction of 2600306 and 2600315. The closure sign will prohibit wheeled, motorized vehicles from December 1 to March 30 to promote security of big game and other wildlife species in winter range. The closure will allow administrative use by permit.

h. The obliterated and closed segments of the existing road network will be examined for recreation trail opportunities.

i. A non-motorized trail from the junction of roads 2600306 and 2600308, generally north following the ridge line, to the 2600308 road and back to the junction will be constructed. An interpretive shelter will be constructed at the above mentioned road junction to be used for education and recreational purposes. Disruption of dispersed recreation is believed to be minimal. Dispersed recreation activities will be enhanced.

6. Manage livestock and big game, and treat areas of soil compaction, to improve water quality, fish habitat, and upland watershed function by:

a. Reconstructing existing improvements and/or developing springs as identified in the EA, for protection of associated riparian values.

b. Directing the District Ranger to take aggressive action within the fullest extent of the law concerning cattle in trespass on National Forest lands. Forest Service boundary fences will not be constructed to prevent trespass of livestock.

c. Discontinuing issuance of temporary grazing use permits within the Davis Creek allotment and allowing those watersheds and riparian areas to rest and recover.

d. Treating areas of compacted soils to improve infiltration rates and watershed function, including skid trails and landings following commercial activities.

e. Limiting total utilization on unsatisfactory stream reaches to 35 percent.

f. Reconstructing the Danish-Reynolds Fence (#40463 & #40464), Davis-Danish Allotment Boundary fence (#40463).

7. The treatment of noxious weeds throughout the project area and unwanted plants in the Sumpter Valley Railroad Interpretive Site will be analyzed under a separate Environmental Document in 1993.

I believe we are taking a significant step toward the Desired Future Condition with an array of treatment options while simultaneously providing for retention of the most cover for big-game and non-game species and to restore health in range riparian and forest ecosystems.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED OTHER THAN THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative management activities, including the No Action Alternative, are discussed in Chapter 3 of the Environmental Assessment for the Genesis Demonstration Project. Monitoring activities for this project are common to all action alternatives and are described in Chapter 6 of the Environmental Assessment. Following is a summary of those alternatives.

Alternative A

This alternative would meet minimum Forest Plan standards. The goal is to reach the Desired Future Condition for riparian habitat. Harvest activities would occur on 2943 acres. There would be no provision for winter logging. Activities would result in minimum Forest Plan standards for big-game cover and snags. Post-harvest fuels treatment would be accomplished on all harvested areas. Riparian habitat would be managed by fencing 92 acres and prescribed burning 17 acres of riparian area and eliminating the Davis Creek grazing allotment. Access management would be designed to meet Forest Plan standards in the short term.

Alternative B

By implementing harvest activities, big-game cover would move quickly toward Desired Future Condition while providing commodity extraction and allowing logging in the winter range during its use period. Harvest activities would occur on 3077 acres, 1408 acres of which are currently providing big-game cover. Connectivity corridors would be designed to allow movement and security of big game by not harvesting some areas. Logging would be allowed on one-third of the winter range at a time during its use period. Roads within the winter range would be closed yearround. Snags would be managed at minimum Forest Plan standards. No harvest would occur within riparian habitat; however, trees would be felled and left on 11 acres of riparian habitat. These riparian acres would be prescribe burned. The season of use on the Reynolds Creek grazing allotment would be changed to a 6-week period between May 1 and June 30. The Davis Creek allotment would remain a vacant allotment. Post-harvest fuels treatment would be accomplished on all harvested acres.

Alternative C

The area would be managed to provide habitat connectivity, maximum satisfactory cover for big game, and limit fragmentation. Harvest would occur on 2423 acres. Without restrictions, logging would be allowed on 852 acres on winter range during its use period. Snags would be managed at minimum Forest Plan standards. Post-harvest fuels treatment would be accomplished on all harvested acres and 647 acres of old growth would be treated with prescribed fire. Riparian management would include the construction of 10 acres of fence and combining the Davis Creek and Reynolds Creek grazing allotments.

Alternative D

This alternative emphasizes visual management. Background and middleground would be managed for visual enhancement in the "seen" area while concentrating harvest activities in the "unseen" areas. Harvest would occur on 3188 acres. The effects of harvest in the "seen" areas would be mitigated by the retention of trees above the levels necessary to provide adequate shade and seed. Stands in the "seen" areas would appear less open than those in the "unseen" areas. Old growth would be managed on 407 acres using prescribed fire, 170 acres of which would be helicopter logged. The Regional snag model would be used in the "seen" area, providing 2 to 4 snags and 10 to 20 green replacement trees per acre. Logging in the winter range during its season of use would not be allowed. Total cover for big game would exceed Forest Plan standards; however, satisfactory cover would drop below Forest Plan standards. Post-harvest fuels treatment would be accomplished on all harvested acres. Harvest would occur on 19 acres of riparian habitat and 10 acres would be fenced.

No Action

The No Action Alternative is considered a continuation of those projects for which environmental analysis documents have been completed and approved. None of the activities described in the action alternatives would occur.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Genesis Demonstration Project provided numerous opportunities for public involvement at several levels. Several partnership opportunities emerged from an extensive public involvement program. They are expected to occur during the research, implementation and monitoring phases of the project. Public participation activities to date include:

- Public meeting on forest health projects, John Day.
- Public field trip of Genesis and Over Timber Sale project areas.
- Tour for timber industry representatives;
- Meeting and tour with National Audubon Society and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Presentation for Grant County Chamber of Commerce.
- Field trip for editor of Blue Mountain Eagle.
- Field trip for Grant and Harney County Court members.
- Meeting with Oregon Natural Resources Council and Forest Conservation Council.
- Field trip with Blue Mountain Natural Resources Institute.
- Meeting with Prairie City school teachers and administrators.
- Meeting with adjacent landowners and Oregon Department of Forestry to explain planning process and seek ideas and partnerships.
- Public meetings to present list of proposed actions to public.
- Proposed alternatives mailed to participants in the planning process.

Early communication with adjacent private property owners identified opportunities for joint actions, such as prescribed burning and riparian area enhancement.

Another potential partnership came from discussions with representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation. Involvement of young people from the tribes in project monitoring of watersheds and streamside riparian areas was discussed.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation (12/8/88) and the Mediated Agreement for Chemical Controls (5/29/89). The proposed action emphasizes the prevention and early treatment strategies advocated in these documents.

No timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.34).

All of the manipulation of vegetation complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27.

In making this decision, I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan, 5/25/90) with four exceptions. These are:

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 17

The purpose of this Amendment to the Malheur National Forest Plan is to modify four different standards concerning Management Area 14 - Visual Corridors in the Upper John Day River Watershed. These modifications are needed to allow the silvicultural treatment of severely damaged vegetation due to declining forest health. This Amendment has no effect outside the approximate 5920-acre analysis area of National Forest lands, or for projects other than described in the Genesis Demonstration Project Environmental Assessment.

The following standards have been established in the Forest Plan to ensure visually pleasing landscapes and the continual achievement of established visual quality objectives over time:

"No harvest will occur in foregrounds of Sensitivity Level 1 or 2 corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed. Exceptions to this will be considered for insect and disease conditions and sanitation salvage needs on a case by case basis, with visuals being the driving factor in decision making" (Standard #12, Management Area 14).

"A created opening is no longer an opening when trees in the stand reach a height of 20 feet. Consider terrain, species composition, and size when insuring that a created opening is closed. Objective is for opening to remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape" (Standard #13, Management Area 14).

Guidelines for timber management within foreground retention areas require that within the Mixed Conifer timber working group the following will apply:

Percent of area open at one time	10%
Percent cut in any 10 year period	3-7%
Maximum created opening size of regeneration harvest	2 acres

(Standard #17, Management Area 14).

Guidelines for timber management within middleground partial retention areas require that within the Mixed Conifer working group the following will apply:

Percent of area open at one time	20%
Percent cut in any 10 year period	8-10%
Maximum created opening size of regeneration harvest	10 acres

(Standard #19, Management Area 14).

This amendment allows the implementation of silvicultural treatments to be initiated for vegetation recovery on approximately 1050 acres of visual management "seen" area. With this action, an opening in the foreground may reach 20 acres in size. This is occurring in an area of existing severe tree mortality and blowdown.

In the middleground, the Danish timber sale, which occurred before implementing the current Forest Plan, exceeded the new standards for visual quality by creating openings greater than 10 acres in size. Nearly 14 percent of the seen area received regeneration type cutting.

To blend these previous activities and treat heavy tree mortality, an additional 25 to 31 percent of the area will receive regeneration type cutting. Cumulatively, this will have 30 to 45 percent of the seen area exhibiting some type of regeneration type harvesting at one time over any 10-year period. These percentages are based on a computer analysis and are approximations.

The need for silvicultural entry in the viewshed corridor prior to the completion of a corridor plan has resulted directly from the extensive damage to the vegetation by severe forest health decline. This decline is a result of years of drought and epidemic insect damage.

Mitigation measures have been established which help meet the visual quality objectives in the short term. Removal of the dead and dying vegetation will allow for prompt reforestation, which will re-establish healthy, vigorous vegetation more quickly.

I have determined the proposed change to be nonsignificant since it will not alter the multiple use goals and objectives for the long-term and resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the analysis disclosed in the Environmental Assessment for this project area, I find that these projects are not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This Finding is based on consideration of impacts both beneficial and adverse for the following factors:

1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.
2. There will be no significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
3. There will be no adverse impacts to wetlands, floodplains, and other riparian areas, and dedicated old-growth areas.
4. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.
5. The effects of this project are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The effects of this project on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial.
7. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.
8. Based on a cultural resource survey which was performed according to a State Historic Preservation Office approved 1991 Malheur National Forest Inventory Plan and a survey completed in 1992, all cultural resource properties in the analysis area were avoided during design of the harvest units and other project activities.
9. A Biological Evaluation to determine the effects of the project activities on threatened, endangered or sensitive species was completed on September 19, 1992.

Potential habitat exists for wintering bald eagles (listed as Threatened). Restrictions and mitigation measures have been designed into the alternatives. A "no effect" determination has been made and concurred with by the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service. Redband trout (Sensitive species) were found in Dan's and Isham creeks. With mitigation measures established for riparian areas, no significant effects will occur. Preble's shrew was suspected to occur within the planning area; However, surveys were completed and none were found. Allium campanulatum and Oryzopsis hendersonii were suspected to occur within the planning area. Surveys were completed and neither species was found.

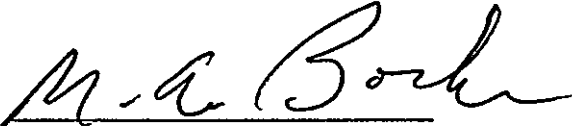
10. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet State water and air quality standards.

APPEAL RIGHTS LANGUAGE AND NOTICING

Regional Forester, John E. Lowe, has determined that good cause exists to exempt this decision from review. Notification of this determination was published in the Federal Register on October 2, 1992. Therefore, this decision is exempt from further review under the provisions of 36 CFR 217.

Implementation of this decision may commence immediately.

For further information, contact William E. Ray, Jr., District Ranger, Prairie City Ranger District, PO Box 337, Prairie City, Oregon 97869, 503-820-3311.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

10/13/92
Date

DECISION NOTICE
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 18
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FORKS TIMBER SALE REVIEW AREA

Harney and Grant Counties, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Burns Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment that discusses the Forks Timber Sale Review Area is available for public review at the Burns Ranger Station, Hines, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon. This project proposes commercial timber harvest and other associated activities on the Burns Ranger District, Malheur National Forest located in T.17S., and T.18S., R.33 E., and R34E., W.M., Surveyed, Harney and Grant Counties, Oregon.

Based on the site specific analysis described in the Forks Review Area Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to implement Alternative 4 with the following exception: Units 16 and 17 are deleted and no new specified road construction will occur. This alternative with mitigation measures and monitoring, provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits.

Alternative 4 was selected because it initiates actions needed to achieve the desired future condition (DFC) by enhancing the health of the timber stands and protecting the quality of future cover for big game through stand treatments in silviculturally high priority stands that contain various damaging agents, including Western and Mountain Pine Beetles as well as some root diseases. Those stands to be harvested under this alternative are the highest priority for treatment because they are most in danger of catastrophic losses to bark beetles and root disease. The associated loss of big game cover if those losses were to occur would greatly reduce the wildlife habitat values of the affected sub-watersheds. In addition, this alternative provides for the retention of big game cover that is at lesser risk to loss in relation to the other stands in the review area, ensuring the best combination of short-term and long-term management for all of the resources. Access and travel management also play an important part in achieving DFC. Access management within the analysis area will include closing 12.4 miles of roads.

The review area contains no known occurrences of Pacific Yew.

Alternative 4 also:

- 1) Protects or enhances riparian areas by:
 - Implementing a watershed improvement project on the East Fork of Wolf Creek, including shrub planting, bank stabilization and placement of instream structures to stop further development of head cuts and gullyng.

- Grass seeding on disturbed soils within 100 feet of riparian areas to stop or reduce soil erosion.

2) Maintains water and soil quality.

3) Harvests approximately 923 acres of timber stands, with the objective being to increase growth rates and improve forest health. Treatments will consist of regeneration, overstory removal and uneven age management of timber stands, site preparation and slash burning.

4) Harvests approximately 5.7 MMBF from approximately 923 acres. Logging systems will include helicopter and ground based skidding systems.

5) Provides for continuing salvage opportunities over a five year period. All salvage sales would be required to be within the guidelines and constraints of the E.A. for wildlife habitat, riparian protection, water quality protection and soil protection.

6) Provides for site preparation to ensure regeneration and eventual conversion to uneven age management.

7) Increases Old-growth Area HMB 035 from 221 acres to 300 acres and designates Old-growth Replacement Areas HRO 034 and 035.

8) Requires a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan allowing designation of Old-growth Replacement Area HRO 034 greater than one-quarter mile from the existing old-growth stand.

Three other alternatives were considered in addition to Alternative 4. These alternatives were:

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative provides no treatment to occur at this time. Treatment of this Review Area would be reassessed at a future date.

Current road access to the area would remain the same. Big game cover areas would not be impacted by management activities. Timbered stands considered high risk to insect and disease losses would not be treated.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This alternative provides for treatment of 939 acres of priority stands by a variety of methods including regeneration, overstory removal and stocking level control. These stands are considered high risk to insect and disease activity and in need of stocking level controls. Current access would be reduced by closing 14.5 miles of roads.

ALTERNATIVE 3.

This alternative provides for treatment of 346 acres of priority stands by regeneration of overstory removal. These stands are considered high risk to insect and disease activity and in need of stocking level controls. Current access would be reduced by closing 10.7 miles of roads.

These three alternatives were not selected because they did not adequately address the potential insect and overstocking problem concurrently with the potential big game cover opportunities that exist in the Review Area and the urgency to treat these areas. In addition, most of the lands in this Review Area are allocated for timber management.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989. Public scoping and analysis have been accomplished to meet the requirements of these decisions.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990 with one exception:

Old-growth Replacement Area HRO 034 will be located more than one-quarter mile from Old-growth Unit HMB 034.

Therefore it is my decision to include Amendment 18 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 18

The purpose of Amendment No. 18 of the Malheur National Forest Plan is to designate Old-growth Replacement Area HRO 034 greater than one-quarter mile from Old-growth Unit HMB 034. This replacement area, with harvest treatments to improve the health and vigor of the stand, would be much more suitable to be managed as a replacement for HMB 034. There are no suitable old growth replacement stands in closer proximity to the dedicated old growth. The proposed HRO 034 is the closest suitable replacement area.

HRO 034 currently has old growth characteristics but would be at the same risk as HMB 034. Harvest treatments designed to increase the health of the stand and to provide for continuing long term regeneration are required in HRO 034. Without these treatments, the stand would remain at approximately the same risk to deterioration as HMB 034.

I have determined these proposed changes to be non-significant since they will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

I gave particular attention to the proper allocation of Management Areas and the best resource management for them. I further gave particular attention to the improvement of forest health in the review area and protecting future management options.

The Old Growth and Old Growth Replacement stands in the review area must be managed and protected to remain healthy and vigorous in order to preserve the opportunity to manage them for the species dependent upon them. Future management options will not be adversely affected by this amendment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that these projects are not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. There will be no significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.
3. The Biological Evaluation and field review for the area was conducted in 1991 and 1992. No Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species of plants or animals will be effected.
4. Based on previous cultural resource surveys and those completed in 1991, cultural resource properties in this review area have been identified and recorded. The project will avoid all National Register eligible and undetermined sites. The Forest has documentation of completed State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurrence consultation which was received on June 12, 1991 and is documented in Survey Number MNF/643-90/076.
5. There will be no adverse impacts to wetlands, flood plains, riparian areas, or to dedicated old growth areas.
6. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements that are designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet State water and air quality standards.
7. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.
8. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.
9. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the Environmental Assessment have been disclosed. The physical and biological effects are limited to this project area.

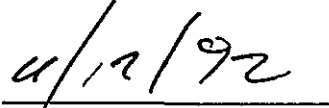
This project will be implemented seven days following the publication of the legal notice announcing this decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for the appeal, and must be filed in duplicate with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, (Reviewing Officer), USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle news paper.

For further information, contact Rudy Hefter, Timber Management Assistant, Burns Ranger District, HC 74 Box 12870, Hines, Oregon 97738, 503-573-7292.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor



Date

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #19
LEEK TIMBER SALE
ELK/MOSQUITO/DEEP CREEK SUBWATERSHED

Grant County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Long Creek Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses the proposed Leek Timber Sale in the Elk/Mosquito/Deep Creek subwatershed is available for public review at the Forest Supervisor's Office in John Day, Oregon. The assessment evaluates site-specific management activities necessary to implement direction contained within the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), 5/25/90.

This project is located approximately 30 vehicle miles northeast of John Day, Oregon. It occupies all or part of Sections 23, 25, 26, 34-36, in T.9S., R.32E; Sections 28-35 in T.9S., R.33E.; Sections 1-3, 11-13 in T.10S., R.32E; and Sections 3-10, 17, 18 in T.10S., R.33E; Surveyed, Grant County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian of the Long Creek Ranger District, Malheur National Forest.

Based on the site-specific analysis and mitigation measures developed to avoid unacceptable impacts to the environment described in the EA, my decision is a modification of Alternative 3 for the design of this project and the management of these public lands. I have decided to modify Alternative 3 in several ways:

- * Treatment of unit 23 will be deferred to maintain big game security cover between two harvest units. This unit is approximately 21 acres in size, and is located 1/4 mile north of Elk Creek.
- * Change the boundaries of units 5, 11, 12 and 20 to maintain wildlife travel corridors and cover needs;
- * Modify silvicultural prescriptions in units 1, 5, 25, and 49 to maintain wildlife security.
- * Scarify and seed native surfaced roads that are to be closed under this proposal to minimize sedimentation.

My rationale for these modifications is based on internal, public and State concerns for big game habitat quality and fish values, clean cold water, and watershed function.

Alternative 3, modified, will commercially harvest an estimated 7.7 million board feet of timber from approximately 1,273 acres, construct 4.7 miles of road, and reconstruct an estimated 16.6 miles of road on the Long Creek Ranger District. Approximately 85 percent (1077 acres) of the timber to be harvested is located in mixed conifer stands where the cumulative effects of repeated defoliation, prolonged drought, overstocking, stem decay, mistletoe, and root rot infections have resulted in heavy mortality or predicted heavy mortality within the next 4 years.

Prescriptions will leave all pine, larch, lodgepole, spruce and healthy Douglas-Fir. Some commercial thinning will occur if stands are overstocked. This decision includes the connected actions of slash disposal, site preparation, reforestation, unwanted tree removal, and animal damage control. Other actions that I have decided to implement in the subwatershed include: road closures to improve the quality of wildlife habitat; riparian and aquatic habitat improvement projects such as road closures in riparian zones, tree and shrub planting in riparian zones to improve streamside shading, and spring protection fencing.

I feel that Alternative 3, modified, with its specific mitigation measures provides for the best combination of physical, biological, social, and economic benefits. This determination is based on the following factors:

- 1) It takes steps necessary to move from the existing forest condition toward the desired condition as envisioned in the Forest Plan.
- 2) It salvages 75 percent of timber stands that currently exceed 30 percent mortality in the subwatershed (614 of 816 acres). In addition, 50 percent of timber stands that are predicted to incur high future mortality would be treated (627 of 1253 acres). These are stands predicted to lose big game cover value. It will minimize timber losses and will provide timber products that will contribute to economic stability.
- 3) In all timber stands harvested, healthy trees will be retained to provide: structural diversity and screening cover for wildlife habitat; a future source of down woody material for wildlife habitat and long-term site productivity; and a seed source for natural regeneration.
- 4) It regenerates timber stands that are currently exhibiting poor growth and vigor due to insect and disease damage.
- 5) It protects and enhances riparian and aquatic habitat by:
 - Establishing and maintaining appropriate buffer zones adjacent to and within harvest units.
 - Removing and replacing roads that are currently located within stream zones.
- 6) Applying Best Management Practices (BMP's) and Forest Plan Standards throughout the subwatershed with respect to logging, road building, and road maintenance. These include:
 - Stream crossings with roads were designed to ensure locations that minimize impacts to channel stability and riparian vegetation. Where possible, stream crossings were avoided.
 - All temporary roads will be obliterated by the purchaser following use.
 - Within riparian buffers, timber removal and operation of ground equipment will be restricted. Landings will not be located in riparian management areas, other wet areas, or in drainage bottom areas.

-Skid roads over 20 percent gradient and areas of disturbed soil within 200 feet of streams will be seeded and drainage structures will be installed to control erosion; or skid trails will be ripped to restore the ability of the soil to absorb water and reduce potential for surface flow. The scattering of woody debris over disturbed sites will also be used to provide enhanced surface cover, slow water or sediment movement, and trap sediment on the slope.

-Ground skidding equipment is generally restricted to slopes less than 35 percent. Where portions exceed 35 percent, timber will be directionally felled and/or winched to the tractor as needed to keep tractors off slopes over 35 percent; or will be skidded with a low ground pressure machine designed to reduce soil compaction and displacement.

-From April 15 to July 15, no equipment will be used within the stream channel on all Class I, II, and III streams. This restriction will also apply to a Class IV stream if there is a well defined stream channel or significant flow and it is within a 1/2 mile of the confluence with a Class I, II or III stream.

7) Habitat will be maintained for primary excavators at or above levels established in the Forest Plan.

8) An estimated 153 acres of precommercial thinning would be completed to reduce stand competition, and improve growth and vigor of plantations. Precommercial and commercial thinning on 1,413 acres would be delayed 5 to 10 years to retain short-term cover in wildlife travel corridors until adjacent harvest areas begin to provide cover.

9) It will improve the elk habitat effectiveness in big-game summer and winter ranges. The elk habitat effectiveness level will exceed the minimum levels established by the Forest Plan in summer range (general forest).

**Summary of Habitat Effectiveness Levels
Alternative 3 (modified)**

Summer Range	Management Standard	Existing Condition	Alternative 3 Modified
Cover Quality	.4	.72	.72
Cover Spacing	.3	.47	.57
Road Density	.4	.50	.59
Forage Quality		.50	.50
Habitat Effectiveness	.4	.54	.59

Winter Range	Management Standard	Existing Condition	Alternative 3 Modified
Cover Quality	.4	.71	.73
Cover Spacing	.3	.47	.46
Road Density	.5	.06	.16
Forage Quality	.4	.50	.50
Habitat Effectiveness	.5	.31	.41

Note: Figures are based on road densities after completion of purchaser road closures. Other road closures are proposed and will be completed in the future. Habitat effectiveness levels will continue to improve as additional road closures are completed.

10) Total cover and marginal cover levels will be maintained above those established in the Forest Plan in big-game summer range. Satisfactory cover will be reduced below Forest Plan standards. Satisfactory cover treated is predicted to fall out of cover within four years due to insect defoliation and tree mortality.

Total cover and satisfactory cover levels will not meet Plan standards in winter range. Only marginal cover will meet or exceed the Forest Plan standard. However, it is unlikely cover percents will be met if nothing is treated because natural mortality will lower cover below standards.

**Summary of Percent Cover
Alternative 3 (modified)**

Summer Range Cover	Management Standard	Existing Condition	Alternative 3
Satisfactory	12	21	9
Marginal	5	20	15
Total	20	41	24
Winter Range Cover			
Satisfactory	10	11	9
Marginal	10	15	11
Total	25	26	20

11) All roads proposed for construction will be closed immediately following harvest, decreasing the potential for wildlife harassment. The subwatershed road density will be reduced in the future to 4.4 miles per square mile in winter range and 1.5 miles per square mile in summer range to reduce vehicle traffic in the subwatershed. Road density will be unchanged by this proposed action in the wildlife emphasis area. The Forest Plan standard for winter range will not be met due to the need for continued access for private, and permitted uses in the area. The road closures associated with this proposed action will allow more efficient use of the area by wildlife.

**Summary of Road Densities
Alternative 3 (modified)**

Summer Range	Existing Condition	Alternative 3 Modified
Road Density (Ml./Sq. Ml.)		
1999 Standard 3.2	1991/ 2.5	
2039 Goal 1.5		
After Purchaser Closures		1999/ 1.5
After All Closures		2039/ .5

Winter Range	Existing Condition	Alternative 3 Modified
Road Density (Mi./Sq. Mi.)		
1999 Standard 2.2	1991/6.7	
2039 Goal 1.0		
After Purchaser Closures		1999/ 4.4
After All Closures		2039/ .5

12) It allocates 171 acres north of Deep Creek to Management Area (MA) 13, Old Growth, as a replacement stand for dedicated old-growth stand 121. Prescribed burning is the only treatment planned to move this towards the desired future condition, to prepare the site for increased pine regeneration and promote old-growth characteristics favorable for pileated woodpecker habitat.

13) There will be no effect on Pacific yew, Taxus brevifolia, which is currently supplying a substance considered a promising cancer fighting compound. Pacific yew has not been found in this subwatershed.

The Elk/Mosquito/Deep Creek subwatershed contains lands allocated to MA 1, General Forest; MA 2, Rangeland; MA 3B, Anadromous Riparian Areas; MA 4A, Big Game Winter Range; MA 7, Indian Rock-Vinegar Hill Scenic Area; MA 13, Old Growth; MA 14, Visual Corridors; MA 16, Minimum Level Management; and MA 21, Wildlife Emphasis Area. Each MA has specific goals as discussed in the EA, and these goals together with Forest Plan standards are the basis for establishing the desired future condition.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative 1 - No Action

A commercial timber sale would not be proposed at this time. This alternative would continue present management activities such as road maintenance, fire suppression, and other administrative duties. This alternative was not selected because it does not take any actions I feel are necessary to move this area from its existing forest condition toward the desired condition. Changes in timber stand age class distribution, stocking, and species mix would not occur. Stands with high existing levels of tree mortality (816 acres) and stands predicted to incur high mortality (1,253 acres) within the next 5 years would not be treated. I feel that failure to improve the condition of these stands and recover the value of dead and dying trees could not be justified.

Alternative 2

A commercial timber sale, that would harvest 7 million board feet (MMBF) from 1,072 acres; and construct 4 miles of road and reconstruct 14.5 miles of road.

I did not select this alternative because only 69 percent of the stands with high existing mortality and 39 percent of the stands predicted to incur high mortality would be treated. An additional 500 acres of high priority stands are predicted to lose 40 to 80 percent of their mature trees in the next four years.

Wood fiber of dead and dying trees would not be utilized in a manner which would minimize losses and maximize outputs in a cost-effective manner. I feel that additional wood fiber could be utilized from the analysis area while meeting the various resource objectives and environmental standards identified in the Forest Plan.

Alternative 4

A commercial timber sale that would harvest 13.1 million board feet from 2,101 acres; and construct 8.9 miles of road and reconstruct 18 miles of road. I did not select this alternative because of cumulative impacts on big-game habitat. Concentrated harvest in stands primarily composed of Douglas-fir and grand fir would create large harvest units that in many areas would be located adjacent to recently harvested areas. Combined with the effects of past harvest activities this alternative would severely reduce cover in some areas short term, reducing movement of wildlife between cover stands. Most migration corridors used by wildlife species to travel between summer and winter ranges would be eliminated. Many of the additional stands that would be treated in this alternative currently have lower levels of insect damage and mortality. These stands are at risk to future insect infestations, but are providing valuable wildlife cover habitat and migration corridors. I feel that treatment of these stands should be deferred until there is certainty that the cover benefits to wildlife would be lost due to continued insect damage, or until existing plantations in the area develop into cover. At this time, there would be minimal wood fiber losses if this alternative is not implemented.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation (12/8/88) and the Mediated Agreement for Chemical Controls (5/29/89). The proposed action emphasizes the prevention and early treatment strategies advocated in these documents.

No Timber will be sold from lands not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.34).

All of the manipulation of vegetation complies with the seven requirements of 36 CFR 219.27.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990, with two exceptions:

The reduction of both big-game satisfactory cover and big-game habitat effectiveness index value for winter range require Forest Plan amendments. It is my decision to include Forest Plan Amendment 19 to this Decision Notice:

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 19

The purpose of Amendment No. 19 of the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is to bring big-game cover levels and habitat effectiveness index below the standards outlined in the Forest Plan. This amendment has no effect outside the 9,100 acre Elk/Mosquito/Deep Creek subwatershed.

My rationale for dropping below satisfactory cover and HEI in winter range is twofold. First, vegetative treatment of silviculturally high priority stands will provide for long term cover, both satisfactory and marginal, thus moving this area towards the desired future condition.

If these cover stands are not treated now they will move from a cover condition to a non-cover state due to current and expected future mortality. Secondly, this decision will provide quality winter range habitat for deer and elk in the future.

I have determined these proposed changes to be nonsignificant, since they will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that these projects are not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. There will be no significant irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.
3. A Biological Evaluation for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive animal, fish, and plant species indicates that this project will ensure their viability and is not likely to result in a trend toward Federal listing for any species.

Potential habitat is present for two sensitive mammal species (wolverine and Preble's shrew) and one sensitive fish species (redband trout).

Field reconnaissance was not recommended for Preble's shrew or redband trout. The biological evaluation revealed that there is a low risk for potentially affecting these species due to the design of this project and the mitigation measures outlined for protection of riparian areas and water quality.

A prefield evaluation of available information for the sensitive plant species on the Malheur National Forest indicated that suspected habitat for five species could be present in the analysis area. These include Allium campanulatum, Lycopodium complanatum, Pellaea bridges, Oryzopsis henderoni, and Ranunculus oresterus. During field reconnaissance the presence of these habitats was verified for all species. Field surveys were conducted from May 24, 1992 through June 16, 1992, to encompass flowering periods. No sensitive plant species were found during field reconnaissance.

4. Based on a cultural resource survey which was performed according to a State Historic Preservation Office approved Forest Inventory Plan and survey completed in 1992, cultural resource properties in the subwatershed were avoided during design of harvest units and other project activities. These procedures fulfill the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act requirements that cultural resources be considered early in the planning process.

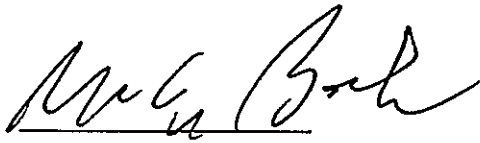
5. There will be no adverse impacts to wetlands, flood plains, riparian areas, or to dedicated old growth areas.
6. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements that are designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet State water and air quality standards.
7. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.
8. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.
9. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the Environmental Assessment have been disclosed. The physical and biological effects are limited to this project area.

IMPLEMENTATION AND NOTICING

This project will not be implemented for 30 days following the signing of this decision.

The Regional Forester has determined that good cause exists to exempt this decision from review. Notification of this determination was published in the Federal Register on November 10, 1992. Therefore, this decision is exempt from further review under the provision of 36 CFR 217.

For further information, contact John Shoberg, District Ranger, Long Creek Ranger District, 528 East Main Street, John Day Oregon 97845, 503-575-2110.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

4/22/92
Date

DECISION NOTICE
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
NON-SIGNIFICANT FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 20
FOR THE
HOG FLAT PLANNING AREA

Harney County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Burns Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses the Hog Flat Planning Area is available for public review at the Burns Ranger Station, Hines, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon. The Decision Notice proposes commercial timber harvest, road reconstruction, and other resource improvement work on the Burns Ranger District, Malheur National Forest.

The Planning Area is located in T. 17 S., R. 33 1/2 E., sections 25, 26, 35, and 36, T. 17 S., R. 34 E., sections 19 and 29-32, Grant County, Oregon, and T. 18S., R. 33 1/2 E., sections 1, 2, and 11-13, T. 18 S., R. 34 E., sections, 4-9, 17, and 18, Harney County, Oregon.

Based on the analysis disclosed in the EA for this project, I have selected Alternative 2. This alternative with its associated mitigation measures and monitoring, provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits.

The selected alternative initiates actions needed to move toward the desired future condition (DFC) for timber, wildlife, access management, and water as described in the *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan, signed May 25, 1990)*.

Activities called for in Alternative 2 include:

1. *Timber Harvest and Road Reconstruction*

Approximately 3.2 million board feet of timber would be harvested from 14 units. Logging would occur on 771 acres, with all logging being ground based skidding. The following silvicultural treatments would be applied: 175 acres of seed tree/shelterwood treatments; 375 acres of uneven-aged, selection; and 221 acres of commercial thinning.

Road reconstruction would total 1.3 miles.

2. *Stand and Site Improvement Projects*

Stocking control on commercial thinning, and uneven-aged units would be done to reduce mortality and increase growth rates. The 175 acres of seed tree/shelterwood treatments would be artificially regenerated. Site preparation would be done as needed to improve access for tree planting and to encourage natural regeneration on the uneven-aged units. Methods to be used to prepare the site would include prescribed burning, and manual and mechanical methods. Under-stocked and non-stocked areas remaining after these treatments would be reforested. Precommercial thinning would be done on uneven-aged and commercial thinning units where trees are sub-merchantable and overstocked

3. *Access Management*

Approximately 29.1 miles of road would be left open for resource management activities and for public uses such as hunting, woodcutting, and dispersed recreation opportunities. Approximately 5.6 miles of road would be closed to improve big game use of existing habitat and to decrease negative effects on water quality.

4. *Riparian Improvement Projects*

Wade Spring Creek (from Wade Spring to 1643 road, - approximately 1.2 miles) located in T. 17 S., R. 33 1/2 E., section 25 would have structures installed to arrest channel erosion, stabilize banks, and vegetation planted to allow rebuilding of the stream channel.

Miller Flat Creek (from headwaters to the 1643908 road, - approximately 0.3 miles) located in T. 17 S., R. 33 1/2 E. section 36, would have structures installed to stop channel erosion, stabilize banks, and vegetation planted to allow rebuilding of the stream channel. —

Drainages located in Hog Flat (2 segments, of approximately 0.75 miles) located in T. 18 S., R. 34 E., sections 5, 8, and 17, would have structures installed to stop channel erosion, stabilize banks, and vegetation planted to allow rebuilding of the stream channel.

Aspen Stand Rehabilitation: Five aspen stands located throughout the planning area where chosen for various culturing practices to maintain healthy viable stands over time.

5. *Prescribed Burning*

1000 acres of underburning would be conducted to reduce fuel loading of naturally accumulated and activity generated slash, this burning is proposed for implementation within the next 5 years. 2800 acres are proposed to be prescribed burned within the next 20 years, with the exact timing and acreage being determined by funding, availability of work forces and variations in weather patterns.

6. *Wildlife Improvement Projects*

Approximately 900 acres of prescribed burning would be conducted to improve browse and forage. Live and dead trees would be designated as wildlife trees as directed in the Forest Plan.

7. *Water Development Improvement Projects*

Improve ten existing water developments to improve water availability for wildlife, domestic livestock, and use during emergency fire suppression activities, the following projects are included: Fencing Blinn Spring and Hog Flat Spring headboxes, replace a trough at Wade Spring, and add a second trough at Geroge Riley Spring, reconstruction of six reservoirs

8. *Designation of Old-Growth Replacement Stand*

Designates an old-growth replacement stand (HRO 036) for designated old-growth stand (HMB 036)

I considered three other alternatives in addition to Alternative 2. These alternatives were:

ALTERNATIVE 1

This alternative was the no action alternative and would not have implemented any actions at this time. Current road access in the area would remain as it is today. Big game cover areas would not have been impacted by management activities. Timbered stands considered high risk to insect and disease potential or in need of stocking level control would not have been treated.

I did not select this alternative because it does not address the purpose and need established in the environmental assessment.

ALTERNATIVE 3

This alternative would have treated those acres identified as high priority areas due to current insect and disease infestations and predicted mortality caused by overstocking. Unit size and created opening standards would have been relaxed to allow regeneration units up to 60 acres in size.

I did not select this alternative because the impacts of created openings of 60 acres would have been detrimental to wildlife. Harvesting travel corridors that connect the northeast portion of the planning area with adjacent subwatersheds would adversely impact big game migration through the area, and would limit secure travel between the Wild and Scenic corridor and areas to the west of the planning area.

ALTERNATIVE 4

This alternative would have treated overstocked ponderosa pine stands using uneven-aged treatments in those stands that are experiencing current mortality and second growth stands would be commercially thinned to reduce stocking levels to avoid insect infestations. No regeneration harvesting would be done in this alternative, and no harvesting would be proposed in the big game winter range.

I did not select this alternative because it would not treat 265 acres of high priority mixed conifer stands, and 86 acres of high priority ponderosa pine second growth stands. These stands are experiencing mortality and over time would not provide big game cover.

There is no Pacific Yew within the planning area.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation* which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989

The proposed action is also consistent with direction given in the Malheur Wild and Scenic River Environmental Assessment (August 1992).

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990 with one exception.

Old Growth Replacement area HRO 036 would be located more than 0.25 mile from Designated Old Growth area HMB 036. Therefore it is my decision to include Amendment 20 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice. The proposed HRO 036 is the closest suitable replacement area, it is located approximately 0.40 miles from HMB 036. The area currently meets standards for Old Growth and would receive no silvicultural treatments with this proposal, a 35 acre prescribed fire is proposed for a portion of the area to reduce natural fuels, provide habitat diversity for wildlife, and improve forage opportunities. The only other stand available for Old Growth replacement located within 1/4 of a mile of the designated Old Growth is severely infested with Western dwarf mistletoe. The appropriate stand management for this area would preclude it from meeting Old Growth requirements for a long period of time. Deferring treatment in this stand would allow the dwarf mistletoe to perpetuate and continue to degrade the stand.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 20

Forest Plan Amendment Number 20 allows one time site specific deviation from Forest Plan Standard MA13 Old-Growth, #5 to designate Old Growth Replacement area HRO 036 greater than 0.25 mile from HMB 036. This amendment does not set precedent for any activities outside this project area or for future projects.

I have determined these proposed changes to be non-significant since they would not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long term management of the Old Growth resource for this area. Adoption of this amendment would not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additional information can be obtained from:

Bud Sloan
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

James M. Pena
District Ranger
Burns Ranger District
HC 74, Box 12870
Hines, Oregon 97738
(503) 573-7292

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that these projects are not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. There would be no significant irreversible or irremediable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
2. No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment are anticipated.
3. The Biological Evaluation and associated field surveys were completed in 1992. No Proposed, Threatened or Endangered species were found. A sensitive fish species (redband trout) is found in the planning area. Based on the Biological Evaluation for this species and associated mitigation measures, no significant adverse effects are expected from management activities.
4. Based on previous cultural resource surveys and those completed in 1992, cultural resource properties in this project area have been identified and recorded. The project would avoid known

sites. Project concurrence has been obtained following procedures stipulated in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Malheur National Forest and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

5. There would be no adverse impacts to wetlands, flood plains, other riparian areas, or to dedicated old growth areas.

6. The proposed action would be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action would meet State water and air quality standards.

7. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.

8. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.

9. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the Environmental Assessment have been disclosed. The physical and biological effects are limited to this project area.

Implementation of this decision will not occur before 7 days have elapsed following publication of legal notice in the *Blue Mountain Eagle* newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, (Reviewing Officer), USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208 within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the *Blue Mountain Eagle* newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

For further information, contact Rudy Hefter, Timber Management Assistant, Burns Ranger District, HC 74 Box 12870, Hines, Oregon 97738, (503) 573-7292.


MARK A. BOCIAK
Forest Supervisor


DATE

DECISION NOTICE
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 21
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DRIVEWAY TIMBER SALE REVIEW AREA

Harney County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Burns Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment that discusses the Driveway Timber Sale Review Area is available for public review at the Burns Ranger Station, Hines, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon. This project proposes commercial timber harvest and other associated activities on the Burns Ranger District, Malheur National Forest located in T.19S. and T.20S., and R.33E., W.M., Surveyed, Harney County, Oregon.

Based on the site specific analysis described in the Driveway Review Area Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to implement Alternative 4 with the following exception: Unit 22 is deleted to ensure the protection of a sensitive plant, Allium campanulatum. This alternative with the associated mitigation measures and monitoring, provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits.

Alternative 4 was selected because it initiates actions needed to achieve the desired future condition (DFC) by enhancing the health of the timber stands and protecting the quality of future cover for big game through stand treatments in silviculturally high priority stands that contain various damaging agents, including Western and Mountain Pine Beetles as well as some root diseases. Those stands to be treated under this alternative are the highest priority for treatment because they are most in danger of catastrophic losses to bark beetles and root disease. The associated loss of big game cover if those losses were to occur would greatly reduce the wildlife habitat values of the affected sub-watersheds.

The review area contains no known occurrences of Pacific Yew.

Several projects were analyzed concurrently with the timber stand management activities proposed in this review area, and their effects were estimated during the analysis. Additional decisions will be made resulting from the analysis relating to range facility improvements, forage enhancement, Aspen regeneration, etc., in decision documents to be published at a later date. In addition to the activities already described, alternative 4 also:

1) Protects or enhances riparian areas by:

- Implementing a watershed improvement project on Muddy Creek, including shrub planting, bank stabilization and placement of instream structures to stop further development of head cuts and gullying.

2) Maintains water and soil quality.

3) Harvests approximately 1,756 acres of timber stands, with the objective being to salvage dead and dying trees excess to other resource needs, and to increase growth rates and improve forest health. Treatments will consist of 50 acres of commercial thinning, 24 acres of shelterwood and the remainder of the acres to be uneven age management treatments.

4) Harvests approximately 5.2 MMBF from the above acres. Logging systems will be ground based skidding systems.

5) Provides for continuing salvage opportunities over a five year period. All salvage sales would be required to be within the guidelines and constraints of the E.A. for wildlife habitat, riparian protection, water quality protection and soil protection.

6) Provides for site preparation by prescribed fire to assist in regeneration and maintaining favorable conditions for uneven age management.

7) Closes approximately 9.6 miles of roads that are no longer needed for administration and protection of the area, or are contributing to a degradation of water quality.

8) Requires a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan allowing HEI in the winter range portion of subwatershed 14I to drop below forest plan standards.

9) Rehabilitates approximately 105 acres of compacted soils by subsoiling, ensuring the area is in compliance with regional guidelines.

10) Provides the most silvicultural treatments to achieve or move toward achievement of desired future conditions for the timber stands and big game habitat in the review area.

11) Protects dispersed recreation sites.

12) Reconstructs those portions of roads 1705 and 2850 that are currently contributing sediment deposits into Muddy Creek and other streamcourses in and adjacent to the review area.

Three other alternatives were considered in addition to Alternative 4. These alternatives were:

THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action provides for treatment of 1299 acres of stands, all of which achieve stocking level control to lessen the risk to attacks by insects and disease. This alternative retains some important cover for big game habitat but closes the fewest roads; 3.1 miles. The Proposed Action was distributed to approximately 180 people and organizations expressing an interest. Their responses identified areas they had concerns about and helped identify issues used in producing alternatives. Those concerns expressed by the respondents suggested additional and more intensive treatments than were included in the Proposed Action.

ALTERNATIVE 2

Under this alternative no treatment to occur at this time. Treatment of this Review Area would be reassessed at a future date. Current road access to the area would remain the same. Big game cover areas would not be impacted by management activities. Timbered stands considered high risk to insect and disease losses would not be treated.

ALTERNATIVE 3

This alternative provides for treatment of 930 acres of stands, 467 of which achieve stocking level control to lessen the risk to attacks by insects and disease. Those stands receiving salvage treatments alone, remain at high risk to insects and disease. This alternative retains the most cover for big game habitat and closes the most roads; 12.0 miles.

These three alternatives were not selected because they did not adequately address the potential insect and overstocking problems existing in the review area and the urgency to treat these areas. The purpose and need for the activities are most completely addressed by alternative 4.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989. Public scoping and analysis have been accomplished to meet the requirements of these decisions.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990 with two exceptions:

- 1) The cover requirements in the Big Game Winter Range Maintenance (MA-4A) portion of Subwatershed 14I cannot be in compliance with the Forest Plan.
- 2) HEI and big game cover will be below the Forest Plan standards in the Big Game Winter Range Maintenance portion of Subwatershed 14I.

Therefore it is my decision to include Amendment 21 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 21

The purpose of Amendment No. 21 of the Malheur National Forest Plan is:

Allow the HEI and big game cover to be below Forest Plan Requirements in the Big Game Winter Range Maintenance (MA-4A) portion of Subwatershed 14I.

I have determined that the proposed amendment is non-significant since it does not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additional information can be obtained from:

L. J. (Bud) Sloan
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

James M. Pena
District Ranger
Burns Ranger District
HC-74, Box 12870
Hines, Oregon 97738
(503) 572-7292

I gave particular attention to the proper allocation of Management Areas and the best resource management for them. I further gave particular attention to the improvement of forest health in the review area and protecting future management options. The big game cover in the review area must be improved by ensuring healthy and vigorous stands of timber will be there. Future management options will not be adversely affected by this amendment.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

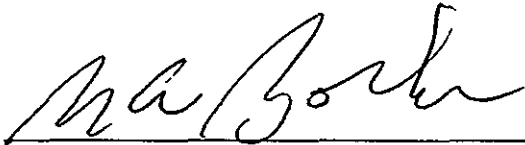
Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, I find that this is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the Environmental Assessment have been disclosed within the appropriate context and intensity.

1. There will be no significant expected irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and past actions of similar context and intensity in this area.
2. There will be no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to soil, water, wildlife resources, or other components of the human environment.
3. The Biological Evaluation and field review for the area was conducted in 1991 and 1992. No Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species of plants or animals will be affected.
4. Based on previous cultural resource surveys and those completed in 1991, cultural resource properties in this review area have been identified and recorded. The project will avoid all National Register eligible and undetermined sites. The Forest has documentation of completed State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurrence consultation which was received on September 13, 1991 and is documented in Survey Number MNF/643-89/074.
5. There will be no significant adverse impacts to wetlands or floodplains.
6. The proposed action will be in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action will meet state water and air quality standards.
7. The physical and biological effects are limited to this review area.
8. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety due to implementation of the proposed project.

This project may be implemented seven days following the publication of the legal notice announcing this decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal", including the reasons for the appeal, and must be filed in duplicate with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, (Reviewing Officer), USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle news paper.

For further information, contact Rudy Hefter, Timber Management Assistant, Burns Ranger District, HC 74 Box 12870, Hines, Oregon 97738, 503-573-7292.



MARK BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

4/13/93
Date

**DECISION NOTICE,
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT #22**

**VV SALVAGE SALE
VINEGAR/VINCENT CREEK SUBWATERSHED**

Grant County, Oregon
USDA Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Long Creek Ranger District

The USDA Forest Service proposes to initiate a salvage sale of approximately 1,300 acres of land in all of portions of T. 10 S., R. 34 E. Sections 12, 13, 24, and 25; T. 10 S., R. 35 E., Sections 7, 8, 17-21, and 28-34, and T. 11 S., R. 35 E., Sections 3-9 and 16-20. An Environmental Assessment has been prepared to discuss and document these proposed actions.

DECISION NOTICE

This action is consistent with the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. It is also in compliance with the Record of Decision for the Pacific Northwest Region Final Environmental Impact Statement for Management of competing and unwanted vegetation and the associated Mitigated Agreement.

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment it is my decision to adopt Alternative III. This alternative proposes to promptly salvage 1,293 of dead and dying Douglas-fir and white fir trees and commercially thin 77 acres of ponderosa and lodgepole pine stands within the analysis area (estimated 9.8 million board feet).

This alternative provides for:

1. The accelerated recovery of stands affected by insects
2. Treatment of even aged ponderosa and lodgepole pine

Because most fir trees that are dead or expected to die within the next 4 years, I have decided they will be salvaged in this alternative. Trees providing wildlife habitat predicted to survive 4 years from now, will not be removed. This alternative does not include any management activities within riparian areas and associated aquatic habitat identified in the Forest Plan.

A 156 acre replacement old growth stand will be treated. The objective of the treatment will be to control stand deterioration by insect damage and to enhance the development of desired old growth characteristics. No precommercial thinning is proposed.

In this alternative I have also decided to treat 3 even aged stands of pine totalling 77 acres. These stands are identified as marginal wildlife cover and considered incapable of maturing into satisfactory cover given existing stand density and single layered structure. This alternative features a habitat management prescription developed by a wildlife biologist and silviculturist designed to increase diversity in pine stand structure, reduce probability of future insect attack, and to promote the development of satisfactory wildlife cover. The long term objective of this treatment is to accelerate pine stand conversion to satisfactory cover and to compensate for the deteriorating cover in the adjacent fir stands.

One of the two identified replacement old growth areas will be treated in this alternative. A direct and indirect effect of treating a 156 acre replacement old growth stand will be a notable reduction in the risk and potential impacts of catastrophic loss due to wildfire. Another direct effect will be to create more open habitat characteristics similar to what is expected to occur if current mortality is left to take its natural course. The treatment and restorative reforestation of this replacement old growth area will move this stand toward desired conditions in a shorter time than if left to natural processes.

Currently satisfactory cover in the Vinegar/Vincent sub-watershed is below standards and is expected to decline slightly in the next 4 years. However, treatment of these stands will permit us to replant and improve habitat conditions in the shortest time possible. The number of acres to be planted in Vincent Creek are 268 and the number in Vinegar Creek are 1025.

My decision to chose this alternative will significantly benefit the Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI) for big game. Existing open road density will be notably reduced following the completion of purchaser closures by 1996. The HEI will inversely increase as the open road density decreases. Vincent Creek HEI will increase from 0.40 to 0.52 and Vinegar Creek from 0.57 to 0.61. In this case, Vinegar and Vincent Creeks exceed Forest Plan standards of 0.40 for 1999 and of 0.5 for 2039. The effect on big game's ability to effectively utilize habitat due to lower road densities will be even more critical as hiding cover continues to decline due to insect damage.

A notable portion of the Access and Travel Management Plan would be accomplished in conjunction with the salvage sale featured in this alternative. Open road density will be effectively decreased by 1999. The Forest Plan standard for open road density in 1999 is 3.2. Density in Vincent Creek will be reduced from 4.76 to 2.86 and in Vinegar Creek it will be reduced from 2.88 to 1.91, both creeks significantly lower than the Forest Plan Standards.

A majority of the existing roads needing immediate management attention to lessen existing resource damage will be addressed in this alternative. Approximately 1.45 miles of new system road and 3.7 miles of temporary roads will be constructed and closed with this

alternative. Access to 9 of 19 existing dispersed campsites will be maintained and potentially 11 new campsites will be created in front of earthen berms used to close roads.

MITIGATING MEASURES

All mitigating measures and monitoring requirements applied to meet Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and Interdisciplinary Team recommendations will be followed in the implementation of this project. They can be found on pages II-4 through II-12 of the Environmental Assessment. The key mitigating measures are:

Road Management

1. Barricades/Gates - All proposed road gates (under specified road construction) will be installed by the purchaser prior to initiating harvest activities on the road. During periods that the purchaser is not operating on the road, barricades/gates will be closed and locked to reduce wildlife harassment.
2. Timber sale purchaser will not haul logs or conduct logging on the portions of the 2010 and 2010618 roads which are designated snowmobile routes, on weekends between December 1 and April 1. Also purchasers will maintain a sufficient bed of snow to provide running surface on the designated snowmobile route.
3. Riparian Resources - During the alternative design phase, all proposed stream crossings were discussed with the Interdisciplinary Team hydrologist to ensure that location and design did not adversely impact channel stability and riparian vegetation. Where possible, stream crossings were avoided. Dates when instream work will be restricted are from September 1 to July 15 (see: C5.232, C6.315)
4. Water Sources - To insure that no adverse alteration to the stream channel or bank stability occur, all proposed water sources for road construction, reconstruction, and dust abatement will be reviewed by a fisheries biologist or hydrologist prior to use. Stream channels should not be blocked, dug out, dammed, or otherwise changed without this review. Sources currently reviewed include:
 - T. 10 S., R. 35 E., Section 19, NW of the NE.
 - T. 10 S., R. 35 E., Section 29, SW of the NW.
 - T. 10 S., R. 35 E., Section 34, SE of the SW.
 - T. 11 S., R. 35 E., Section 17, SW of the NE.
 - T. 11 S., R. 35 E., Section 20, NE of the NE.
5. Public Information Signing - A meadow at the foot of Vincent Creek which is heavily used by campers will be closed to motorized use. The closure is necessary to mitigate riparian damage occurring from vehicles. Campers may continue to use the meadow as long as their vehicles are left outside the barricade. To mitigate impacts to campers who use the area regularly, an informational sign will be constructed and installed at the site prior to its closure. This sign will be constructed with KV funds. The Knutson-Vandenberg Act (KV) provides for collecting funds from timber sale purchasers to finance part of the cost of the sign. It will be installed at least one year before Road 2010243 is closed. If KV funds cannot be obtained, the sign will be purchased through

recreation and watershed improvement funding. The sign will explain why and when the meadow will be closed and will direct campers to an alternate camp location further up road 2010.

Forest Health

1. Prescription - Applicable mitigation measures identified in the VV Salvage Sale Silvicultural Prescription will be implemented to ensure units are adequately restocked within 5 years of final treatment. These measures include methods to be used to manage competing vegetation, restoration of compacted soils, reduction of slash, reforestation by planting, animal damage control, and shade blocking.
2. Best Management Practices - Conduct an Interdisciplinary Team review of the completed project to determine the effectiveness of the best management practices applied.

Operations

1. Tree Protection - Cone trees, potential crop trees, seed trees, snags, green snag replacement trees, and other leave trees will be protected from damage during timber sale activities. When necessary, protection measures that may be used include:
 - Skyline and helicopter yarding
 - Equipment restrictions to specified skid roads/trails with endlining required
 - Directional falling
 - Stage falling and stage logging
 - Control of skid trail widths and approval of skid trail locations in advance of falling
2. Ground skidding equipment is generally restricted to slopes less than 35 percent (see: Forest Plan page IV-37, Standard #101). Where portions exceed 35 percent, timber will be directionally felled and/or winched to the tractor as needed to keep tractors off of slopes over 35 percent; or will be skidded with a crawler-mounted tractor to reduce soil compaction and displacement.
3. Full suspension of logs will be required when yarding across streams with perennial flow.
4. Helicopter logging will be used to treat Units #1, 2 and 5 to mitigate unacceptable disturbance of soils and riparian areas and to avoid unreasonable road construction costs and impacts.

Wildlife

1. Special Habitats - All animal dens, wallows, seeps, or springs that were not detected during field reconnaissance, that are found during unit layout and marking should be protected according to Forest Plan direction (see: Forest Plan page IV-31, Standard #56).

2. Raptor Nests - If any nests are found, a wildlife biologist will be notified to recommend if surrounding habitat will need special protection. Wherever possible, trees with inactive nests will be retained to provide habitat for secondary nesters (see: Forest Plan page IV-32, Standard #60a).
3. Threatened and Endangered Species - Contract provision C6.25# will be included to protect habitat of sensitive species. In the event that protection measures prove inadequate, if other such areas are discovered, or if new species are listed as federally threatened, endangered, or sensitive by the regional forester, the USDA Forest Service may either cancel or modify the project.
4. From September 1 to July 15, no heavy equipment will be allowed to enter class I, II, and III streams, for road construction activities such as culvert placement or bridge construction. On class IV streams, with a well defined stream channel and/or significant flows, no equipment will be allowed to cross within 1/2 mile of the confluence with a downstream, higher classified stream during this time period. If the class IV stream channel does become dry during this time period, a fish biologist needs to be contacted to review any proposed crossings.
5. Old Growth Replacement Area - A 156 acre old growth replacement stand will be treated to mitigate the impact of existing stand health conditions and improve the opportunity for this stand to provide future ecologically sustainable old growth characteristics.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative I - No Action

A commercial salvage sale would not be proposed at this time. This alternative would continue present management activities such as road maintenance, fire suppression and other administrative activities. This alternative was not selected because it does not take any actions I feel are necessary to move this area from its existing forest condition toward the desired condition. Changes in timber stand age class distribution, stocking, and species mix should not occur. Stands with high existing levels of tree mortality and stands predicted to incur high mortality within the the next 4 years would not be treated. I feel that failure to improve the condition of these stands and recover the value of dead and dying trees could not be justified.

Alternative II

Alternative II consists of a commercial salvage sale that would harvest an estimated 9.4 million board feet from 1,293 acres and construct (and close) approximately 1.45 miles of new system roads and 3.1 miles of temporary roads.

I did not select this alternative because it is the same as Alternative III except it would not treat the 77 acres of pine. Alternative II misses the opportunity to promote the development of satisfactory wildlife cover while at the same time improving the health and vigor of the pine stand.

Public Involvement

Early in the planning process, potential interested publics and agencies were contacted in an effort to determine the relevant issues associated with the proposed action. A Malheur National Forest "Town Meeting" was held in John Day, Oregon on February 28, 1991, and in Burns, Oregon on February 29, 1991, to solicit comments on this and other proposed projects. In addition, on November 5, 1991, letters were sent to various individuals, agencies, and groups to solicit specific comments on the proposed action. Finally, on October 29, 1992, a packet of information was sent out requesting comments on proposed alternatives and access management plans.

Consistency Finding

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990, with one exception:

Forest Road 2010 will remain open to provide access to vinegar Hill/Indian Rock Scenic Area. It is my decision to include Forest Plan Amendment 22 to this Decision Notice:

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 22

The purpose of Amendment #22 of the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is to allow public access to the Vinegar Hill/Indian Rock Scenic Area. Forest Plan direction for the Scenic Area states, "Close existing roads to public use." My rationale for providing access to this portion of the scenic area is twofold. First, I want to retain access for current and potential mineral exploration and second, to continue to provide recreational access to Vinegar Hill, Black Butte and trails in the area.

I have determined these proposed changes to be nonsignificant, since they will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the Forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on the balance the effect will be beneficial.

This salvage sale will have neither significant beneficial or adverse effects. This sale is merely expediting the natural process of the forest. Dead and dying trees will be removed and then the area will be replanted.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

This sale will not significantly effect public health or safety. The watersheds will not be significantly effected because there is no salvage of dead or dying trees within anadromous riparian areas. The airshed will not be significantly effected because any prescribed burning conducted would meet the requirement of the *Oregon State Smoke Management Plan*. Safety would not be significantly effected. While logging operations are in effect, the sale area will be signed.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

A cultural resource survey has been completed and all known significant sites have been identified and will be protected. The survey was conducted according to an inventory plan approved by Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. This inventory is consistent with an agreement between the USDA Forest Service R6/PNW, Oregon SHPO, and the advisory council on historic preservation.

There are no parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas within or adjacent to the analysis area.

Wetlands comprise less than 5 percent of the analysis area. No adverse effects are anticipated. Adherence to Forest Plan standards and mitigation measures would prevent any adverse impacts on these areas.

4. The degree to which the effects of the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

During the scoping process we have not received phone calls, letters or any other means of communication indicating that the effects of this Federal action may be highly controversial. There has been no substantial disputes as to the size, nature or effect of this action.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no highly uncertain or unique or unknown risks involved. This sale is very similar to many other sales already completed on the district and nothing is being done that is unique to this sale.

6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

These actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan. Precedent in these actions has already been set by previous timber sales. Roads leading into the area have already been built, logging for other sales has been completed.

7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.**

In the next 3 years, approximately 10 subwatersheds (totalling 95,305 acres) and an estimated 10,000 acres of insect damaged trees could likely be proposed for treatment. These subwatersheds are located in the area north of the Upper Middle Fork John Day River. These future sales will meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines in all areas and therefore will not have any cumulatively significant impacts.

The indirect cumulative effects of loss of cover due to western spruce budworm would continue to be an adverse impact on big game habitat. The treatment of insect damaged stands is expected to improve cover conditions in the long-term, as intensive reforestation efforts are accomplished. Big game migration routes would likely be changed as a result of disturbances from treatment activities. Changes in migration routes are expected to be temporary until restoration activities are completed and road densities are reduced.

8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.**

There are no districts, sites, highways, structures or object listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places within or adjacent to the analysis area.

Cultural and historic resources, as mentioned in number 3, have been identified and will be protected.

There are no significant scientific resources within or adjacent to the analysis area.

9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

No endangered or threatened species or its habitat is within or adjacent to the analysis area as was found in the VV Biological Evaluation (see the VV Analysis File).

10. **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.**

All Federal, State and local laws protecting the environment are being followed. The document meets state air and water quality standards and follows all regulations in the National Environmental Policy Act and National Forest Management Act.

Findings Required By Other Laws and Regulations National Forest Management Act Requirements

1. **Suitability (36 CFR 219.27 (c) (1))**

No timber harvesting will take place on any lands unsuitable for timber production.

2. **Vegetation Management (36 CFR 219.27 (d) and 16 USC 1604 (k))**

Clearcutting was analyzed and found to be inappropriate for any unit in this sale. All units will be treated with a shelterwood, regeneration salvage, or thinning method.

3. **Restocking (36 CFR 219.27 (c) (3) and 36 CFR 219.27 (b)(2))**

Experience has determined that harvest and regeneration practices planned can be expected to result in adequate restocking within the next 5 years. All areas that will not be restocked naturally will be planted to bring them up to adequate standards.

4. **Vegetation Manipulation (36 CFR 219.27 (b))**

Management prescriptions were chosen to do the most good for the health of each unit and the surrounding stands, wildlife, water and soil. No unit will be permanently impaired. Transportation of logs will take place only on roads that will not be adversely impacted by logging traffic. Harvesting will take into consideration the multiple use goals of the area and will be designed such that it will have the least amount of impact on these goals.

Implementation and Noticing

Except for the 77 acres of none salvage and the Forest Plan Amendment, which may not be implemented for 7 days after legal notice appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle, this project may be implemented immediately.

The Regional Forester has determined that good cause exists to exempt the salvage units from review. Notification of this determination was published in the Federal Register on May 7, 1993. Therefore, the decision to harvest the salvage units is exempt from further review under the provisions of 36 CFR 217.

The decision to harvest the 77 acres of ponderosa pine and lodgepole pine stands and the Forest Plan Amendment #22 is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written Notice of Appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, 333 SW First Street, P. O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208, Reviewing Officer, within 45 days of the date that the legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle.

For more information contact John Shoberg, Long Creek District Ranger at 503-575-2110 or 528 W. Main, John Day, OR 97845.



MARK BOCHE

Malheur Forest Supervisor

5/20/93
DATE

DECISION NOTICE,
NONSIGNIFICANT FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT 23
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
TIN CAN PLANNING AREA

Harney County, Oregon
USDA - Forest Service
Malheur National Forest
Burns Ranger District

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that discusses the Tin Can Planning Area is available for public review at the Burns Ranger Station, Hines, Oregon, and at the Office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon. The Decision Notice proposes commercial timber harvest, road construction and reconstruction, and other resource improvement work on the Burns Ranger District, Malheur National Forest.

The Planning Area is located in T.18S., R.33E., sections 26, 34, and 35; and T.19S., R.33E., sections 1-18, 20, and 21, Harney County, Oregon.

Based on the analysis disclosed in the EA and the project record for this project, I have selected Alternative 3 with the following modifications:

Of Units 17 and 24 in Alternative 3, one unit would be underburned and the other unit would have fuels pulled away from the large trees and then jackpot burned to reduce the fuel loadings.

I am making these modifications because the unit that will be understory burned will provide an opportunity to see if this type of management could work to treat dedicated old growth areas and protect them from potentially devastating wildland fires.

This alternative concentrates on salvaging dead and dying trees, and improving the health, growth, and vigor of ponderosa pine, the preferred species for this site. It improves Old Growth Area #27 through consolidation of fragmented pieces and by designating replacement areas for Old Growth Areas #27 and #29. It offers the best short-term and long-term strategy for wildlife habitat. I believe that this alternative with its associated mitigation measures and monitoring, provides the best combination of physical, biological, social and economic benefits.

There are a total of 1054 acres of suitable old-growth in the Planning Area, of these, 587 are inside the dedicated stands. Outside of dedicated old-growth stands there are 467 acres of suitable old-growth. The selected alternative will treat 87 of these acres. Both MRs (Management Requirements) in the planning area were identified as being suitable for pileated woodpeckers.

The selected alternative initiates actions needed to move toward the desired condition for timber, wildlife, access management, old growth habitat, and water as described in the *Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest* (Forest Plan, signed May 25, 1990).

Activities called for in Alternative 3 include:

1. ***Forest Health***

Thirty-seven percent of silvicultural priority 1 and 2 areas, 13% of priority 3 and 4 areas, and 11 percent of priority 5 and 6 areas will be treated. This will reduce the stress caused by competition. It should also remove infected trees and sanitize the stands involved.

2. ***Access Management***

Approximately 3.5 miles of Forest Service road #1705 would be reconstructed. Approximately .8 miles of new construction would be needed. Approximately 16.3 miles of road would be closed to improve big game use of existing habitat and to decrease negative effects on water quality.

3. ***Timber Harvest***

Approximately 1.6 million board feet of timber would be harvested from 25 units. Logging would occur on 646 acres, with logging being ground based skidding with some cable logging. The following silvicultural treatments would be applied: 444 acres of seed tree/shelterwood treatments; 13 acres of overstory removal; and 189 acres of commercial thinning.

Stocking control on commercial thinning units would be done to reduce mortality and increase growth rates. The 440 acres of seed tree/shelterwood treatments would be artificially regenerated. Site preparation would be done as needed to improve access for tree planting. Methods to be used to prepare the site would include prescribed burning, and manual and mechanical methods. Under-stocked and non-stocked areas remaining after these treatments would be reforested. Precommercial thinning and commercial thinning units would be done where trees are sub-merchantable and overstocked respectively.

4. ***Designation of Old-Growth and Old-Growth Replacement Stands***

I have decided to relocate Old Growth Area #27 to the SE side of Brophy Creek. The area formerly occupied by Old Growth Area #27 is now MA-1.

I am also designating old growth replacement stands (HRO 027 and HRO 029) for designated old-growth stands (HMB 027 and 029).

5. ***Riparian Improvement Projects and Wildlife Improvement Projects***

Seven springs would be developed and/or fenced to protect elk wallows and lessen damage caused by cattle, including Diamond J Spring and Surprise Spring.

The 49 Spring will be developed to improve water availability for wildlife, domestic livestock, and use during emergency fire suppression and prescribed burning activities.

Vegetative riprap would be placed where necessary to stabilize stream banks, etc. Vegetation would be planted to allow rebuilding of the stream channel.

Aspen Stand Rehabilitation Aspen stands located throughout the planning area were chosen for various culturing practices, including burning, fencing, and thinning of conifers, to maintain healthy viable stands over time.

Approximately 250 acres of prescribed burning and 137 acres of brush beating would be conducted to improve browse and forage. Live and dead trees would be designated as wildlife trees as directed in the Forest Plan.

6. *Prescribed Burning*

1500 acres of underburning would be conducted to reduce fuel loading of naturally accumulated and activity generated slash. A 28 acre prescribed fire is proposed for a portion of the HRO 029 area to reduce natural fuels, provide habitat diversity for wildlife, improve forage opportunities, and help establish an understory. Providing that prescribed burning is successfully completed in replacement old growth areas, prescribed burning would be used in Dedicated Old Growth areas to decrease the amount of ladder fuels and stimulate understory growth.

I considered three other alternatives in addition to Alternative 3. These alternatives were:

ALTERNATIVE 1

This was the no action alternative. Road access in the area would remain as it is today. No management activities would take place in big game cover areas. No forested stands considered high risk to insect and disease potential or in need of stocking level control would have been treated. Dedicated Old Growth Area #27 would remain as is and no replacement old growth areas would be allocated for Dedicated Old Growth Areas #27 and #29.

I did not select this alternative because it does not meet the purpose and need identified for this area as described in the environmental assessment.

ALTERNATIVE 2

This alternative would have harvested the mature and overmature timber and managed the residual understory.

I did not select this alternative because the residual understory would not last, due to insect and disease, until the next commercial entry.

ALTERNATIVE 4

This alternative would prescribe harvest activities that emphasize big game habitat protection. No regeneration harvesting would be done in big game winter range.

I did not select this alternative because it would not treat 100 acres of high priority ponderosa pine second growth stands. These stands are experiencing mortality and over time would not provide big game cover

There is no Pacific Yew within the planning area.

Decisions Needed

As part of the environmental analysis process the following decisions to be made were identified in the environmental assessment. Included is a brief discussion of how each was addressed in this decision.

1. Should silvicultural activities be implemented that harvest dead and dying trees? Yes, this is addressed by items 1 and 3.
2. Should silvicultural activities be implemented that improve growth rates and vigor? Yes, this is addressed by items 1, 3, and 4.
3. Should silvicultural activities be implemented that increase seral tree composition and increase stocking levels in previously harvested timber units? Yes, this is addressed by item 1.
4. Should wildlife cover be reduced below current levels for the short term in order to reduce insect and disease problems and produce healthier cover stands? Yes, this is addressed by items 1, 2, and 3.
5. How many miles of road should be closed to protect/improve water quality and big game habitat? Yes, this is addressed by item 2.
6. Should wildlife habitat and riparian improvement projects be implemented? Yes, this is addressed by items 2 and 5.
7. Should fire be reintroduced into the old growth and replacement old growth areas in order to reduce hazardous fuel loadings and ladder fuels? Yes, this is addressed by item 4 and 6.
9. Should Old Growth Area #27 be relocated and replacement old growth areas be designated for Old Growth Areas #27 and #29? Yes, this is addressed by item 4.

CONSISTENCY FINDING

The proposed action falls within the scope of, and is consistent with the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation* which was published in December of 1988, and the supplemental Mediated Agreement, signed May, 1989.

In making this decision I have reviewed the alternative and find that the project is consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards and guidelines as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest (Forest Plan), signed May 25, 1990 with one exception.

Only 30 percent of Old Growth area HRO 027 currently meets old growth characteristics. The other 70 percent is experiencing heavy mortality, and is very fragmented and roaded. Old Growth area HRO 027 will be moved to the SE side of Brophy Creek and the area currently allocated will be reallocated to MA 1. Therefore it is my decision to include Amendment 23 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice. The proposed HRO 027 and 029 are the closest suitable replacement areas.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 23

Forest Plan Amendment Number 23 moves Dedicated Old Growth Area #27 to Brophy Creek drainage with the currently designated MA-13 lands reallocated to MA-1.

I have determined that the proposed changes are non-significant since they do not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for the long term management of the Old Growth resource for this area. Adoption of this amendment would not significantly change the forestwide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In making this decision I specifically considered the selection of stands that meet the old growth criteria, distribution pattern, and the objective of minimal fragmentation.

Additional information can be obtained from:

Bud Sloan
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

James M. Pena
District Ranger
Burns Ranger District
HC 74, Box 12870
Hines, Oregon 97738
(503) 573-7292

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I find that the propose action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the consideration of both beneficial and adverse effects as disclosed in the environmental assessment, and the detailed analysis contained in the project record for the following factors:

1. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed project.
2. There would be no impacts to wetlands, flood plains, or other unique characteristics of the geographic area.
3. The effects of this project are not highly controversial.
4. The effects of this project are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. Sufficient information is available to make a reasoned choice among alternatives based on the analysis information in the environmental assessment and other past actions of a similar nature.
5. The proposed action does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.
6. There are no significant cumulative effects expected as a result of this action. The effects of this project were considered together with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions

7. Based on previous cultural resource surveys and those completed in 1992, cultural resource properties in this project area have been identified and recorded. The project would avoid known sites. Project concurrence has been obtained following procedures stipulated in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Malheur National Forest and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

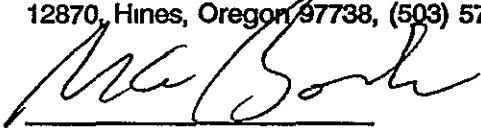
8. The Biological Evaluation and associated field surveys were completed in 1992. No Proposed, Threatened or Endangered species were found. A sensitive fish species (redband trout) is found in the planning area. Based on the Biological Evaluation for this species and associated mitigation measures, no significant adverse effects are expected from management activities.

9. All actions are in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements designed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action would meet State water and air quality standards.

Implementation of this decision will not occur before 7 days have elapsed following publication of legal notice in the *Blue Mountain Eagle* newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John E. Lowe, Regional Forester, (Reviewing Officer), USDA Forest Service, 318 SW Pine Street, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208 within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the *Blue Mountain Eagle* newspaper, John Day, Oregon.

For further information, contact Rudy Hefter, Timber Management Assistant, Burns Ranger District, HC 74 Box 12870, Hines, Oregon 97738, (503) 573-7292.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

July 15, 1993
DATE

**DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NO 24

BASKET SALVAGE TIMBER SALE

Prairie City Ranger District

USDA - Forest Service

Malheur National Forest

Prairie City, Oregon

INTRODUCTION

An Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing a proposed timber sale within the Big Creek and Summit Creek drainages, south of the town of Prairie City, on the Prairie City Ranger District has been completed. The EA and Project File are available for public review at the Prairie City Ranger Station, 327 West Front Street, Prairie City, Oregon, 97869.

The Basket Salvage Timber Sale Analysis Area encompasses approximately 540 acres within the Big Creek and Summit Creek drainages approximately 32 miles south of the town of Prairie City in the Blue Mountains of northeast Oregon. The analysis area lies wholly within National Forest Lands within Grant County. The legal description of the area is T.16S., R34E., Sections 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 17, and 18, and T.16S., R.33 1/2E., Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 13, and 24, WM, State of Oregon.

The analysis of the Basket Salvage Sale area was conducted utilizing the direction within the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

DECISION

Based upon the analysis conducted by the Interdisciplinary (ID) Team, which is documented in the Basket Salvage Timber Sale EA and project file, I have decided to implement Alternative III, as described in Part V below. In summary this decision includes the harvest of approximately 150,000 board feet of timber from approximately 530 acres; watershed improvements on approximately 12,000 feet of Summit Creek; and fencing and/or caging of aspen within the riparian area of Summit Creek.

Prior to the initiation of the EA, the interdisciplinary team reviewed the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest to describe and compare the "desired future condition" of this area with the "existing Forest condition". From that review, the following purposes and needs for this proposal were identified:

Proposed Timber Management

Purpose and Need: the purpose and need of the proposed timber harvest is to:

1. Remove hazard trees along Forest Road 16, thus providing for public safety.
2. Salvage dead and dying timber to recover the value of wood fiber and contribute dollars to the 25% fund for Grant County.
3. Maintain and/or create a visually pleasing view along Forest Road 16.
4. To promote healthy, vigorous forests less susceptible to insect and disease infestations.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

After review of the work of the ID Team, I have decided to implement **ALTERNATIVE III**. This decision includes the associated standards, guidelines, management requirements and mitigation measures as prescribed in the EA.

I believe my decision provides a high degree of net public benefit. **ALTERNATIVE III** includes the following measures designed to enhance effectiveness:

1. A series of specific actions and mitigation measures prescribed to meet watershed, fishery, visual, wildlife, and cavity nesting habitat needs, and addressing concerns for public safety (hazard tree removal).
2. A series of sale area improvement activities will be scheduled in the timber sale Knutson-Vandenberg (KV) Plan to enhance area resource values.

The selected alternative will move the area toward the desired future conditions highlighted in the Forest Plan. It addresses the purpose and need outlined in the previous section. I believe it is the most economical alternative and does the best job of protecting and enhancing critical resource values.

Other key features of the chosen alternative are:

1. It provides for public safety by removing hazard trees from along Forest Road 16.
2. It meets Forest Plan standards for snag levels while providing wood fiber to the mills and contributes to the 25% fund for Grant County.
3. It provides for enhancement of riparian vegetation and watershed improvement work to decrease stream temperatures, restore bank stability, diminish sediment loadings, and provide for pools and spawning beds for trout.
4. It provides for the salvage of valuable wood fiber while maintaining the visual quality objectives of retention. Implementation of this alternative will not foreclose any option prior to the completion of the Visual Corridor Plan for the Wilderness Loop.

ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement was initiated through a mailing of the proposed action to persons and cooperating agencies on the District National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping mailing list. The proposed action was mailed out November 30, 1992. Several responses were received, which are on file and available for public review upon request. From these responses, issues were identified. These issues, along with internal management concerns were screened by the Interdisciplinary (ID) team for their significance and relevance to the proposal. The following section lists those issues determined to be significant.

The following issues were identified as significant issues by the Interdisciplinary Team:

Issue 1: Watershed

There was a concern for the lack of large woody material in streams adjacent to project area.

There was also a concern for the removal of hazard trees from within Management Area 3A.

Issue 2: Visuals

This issue centers around the removal and salvage of dead and dying timber from within the immediate foreground of Forest Road 16 prior to the completion of a Visual Corridor Plan.

Another issue that was raised but not felt to be significant enough to drive alternatives was public safety along Forest Road 16 during logging operations. (This issue was dealt with as a mitigation measures in each alternative).

Response to Issues

I believe **ALTERNATIVE III**, responds effectively to the resource issues raised during the analysis as described below:

1. Watershed:

There is a concern for the lack of large woody material in streams and the removal of hazard trees from within Management Area 3A, Non-anadromous riparian areas. This decision address those concerns through:

The placement of large woody material along approximately 12,000 feet of Summit Creek.

Only those trees that would fall onto or across Forest Road 16 will be marked for removal within Management Area 3A. The removal of these trees will require a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan, which will be made part of this Decision.

2. Visual

There is a concern for the removal of dead and dying timber within the immediate foreground of Forest Road 16 prior to the completion of a Visual Corridor Plan. This decision addresses this issue through:

A non-significant Forest Plan Amendment has been developed and will be made part of this decision (see below).

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

NFMA Consistency

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the implementing regulations require specific findings to be made when implementing the Forest Plan (16 USC 1604 (j)). I have reviewed **ALTERNATIVE III** with the ID Team and document the following findings:

1. Suitability for Timber Production. The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and the district Silviculturist reviewed all units proposed for timber harvest and determined that they are located on suitable lands capable of being regenerated within five years of timber harvest.(36 CFR 219.27(c))

2. Vegetative Manipulation. The management prescriptions proposed for the harvest of timber within this decision comply with the requirements found in 36 CFR 219.27(b) for the manipulation of tree cover.

3. Consistency with Forest Plan

Through detailed discussion with the ID Team, and review of the analysis and project files, I find **ALTERNATIVE III** to be consistent with goals, objectives, and management area standards as stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan for Malheur National Forest, with one exception:

1. Removal of dead and dying timber from within the immediate foreground of Forest Road 16 prior to the completion of a Visual Corridor Plan.

Therefore, it is my decision to include Amendment Number 24 to the Forest Plan in this Decision Notice.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENT NUMBER 24

The purpose of Amendment No. 24 to the Malheur National Forest Plan is to allow the sanitation salvage of dead and dying timber of Basket Salvage Unit 1 in the foreground of Forest Road 16 visual corridor prior to completion of the visual corridor plan. The beetle activity present in the unit was brought to light during the interdisciplinary analysis of the Basket project area and was considered to be serious enough to warrant immediate action. This amendment has no effect outside of the analysis area or on projects not discussed in the Basket Analysis file.

Management Area 14 Resource Element Standard No. 12 states (page IV-109 of the Forest Plan):

"No harvest will occur in foregrounds of Sensitivity Level 1 or 2 corridors until viewshed corridor plans have been completed. Exceptions to this will be considered for insect and disease conditions and sanitation salvage needs on a case-by case basis, with visuals being the driving factor in decision making."

The intent of this standard is to ensure that visual corridor foreground areas (areas within a quarter mile of a major road) are managed in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner rather than a piece meal analysis. The intent is not to curtail the treatment of areas where high incidences of insects and disease are causing above-normal levels of mortality and threatening the integrity of the corridor. Not treating these areas until their respective visual corridor plans are completed could have serious ramifications on the management of the visual resource.

It is my decision to allow the sanitation salvage of Unit 1 in the foreground of Forest Road 16 visual corridor prior to completion of the visual corridor plan. The mitigation measures outlined in the Basket Salvage Sale EA will ensure that the unit conforms to the Forest Plan visual quality objective of retention. I do not feel that this decision will compromise the ability to manage the visual corridor in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner.

I have determined the proposed change to be non-significant since it will not alter the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term resource management. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Malheur National Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Additional information concerning these amendments can be obtained from:

L.J. "Bud" Sloan
Forest Planning Staff
Malheur National Forest
139 N. Dayton
John Day, Oregon 97845
(503) 575-1731

William E. Ray, Jr.
District Ranger
Prairie City Ranger District
P. O. Box 337
Prairie City, Oregon 97869
(503) 820-3311

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative 1: No Action

Under this alternative, no action would be taken to respond to the purpose and need identified in Chapter 1-B. None of the activities described would take place within the analysis area at this time.

Alternative 2:

Purpose

This was the original proposed action that was scoped with the public.

Summary of Alternative Features

1. Harvest of hazard trees along Forest Road 16.
2. Sanitation salvage of dead, dying, and beetle infested timber on approximately 530 acres.
3. Total volume to harvest, approximately 150,000 board feet.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed the provisions of 40 CFR 1508.27 (b) in terms of the project context and intensity relationships in determination of project significance. I find that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, it is my decision not to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. My rationale for not preparing an EIS includes the following:

1. There would be no significant beneficial or adverse impacts to the environment, with the implementation of the selected alternative.
2. The selected alternative will not significantly affect public health or safety. The timber sale purchaser will be required, through the Timber Sale Contract, to provide for public safety along Forest Roads.
3. No known cultural sites or wetlands will be affected by the implementation of the selected alternative. Suitable provisions would be included in operational contracts that any subsequently discovered cultural sites are protected. Removal of hazard trees from the riparian area will not affect the integrity of this area.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial.
5. The effects of the implementation of the selected alternative are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The proposed project represents the implementation of routine management direction established in the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Malheur National Forest and does not set any unusual precedent for future actions.

7. This proposed action is not related to other insignificant actions that if combined would create cumulatively significant impacts.

8. The proposed action will not have any impact on sites, structures or objects that are listed or deemed eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Nor is it expected to cause any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or Historic Places.

9. Based on the effects analysis, there will be no effect to threatened or endangered species.

10. The selected alternative is consistent with all requirements set forth in Federal, State and local laws established for the protection of the environment.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE AND APPEAL RIGHTS

Implementation of this decision may begin 7 days after legal notice is published in the Blue Mountain Eagle Newspaper (John Day, Oregon).

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Written Notice of Appeal must be filed in duplicate within 45 days from the date of the legal notice of this decision to:

John E. Lowe, Regional Forester
Pacific Northwest Region
333 S.W. First Avenue
P. O. Box 3623
Portland, Oregon 97208-3623

Failure to file the appeal in compliance with the procedures identified in 36 CFR 217.8 and 217.9 could result in dismissal of appeal.

The Environmental Assessment and Project File are available for public review at the Prairie City Ranger Station, 327 West Front Street, Prairie City, Oregon. For further information on this decision contact William E. Ray, Jr., District Ranger, Prairie City Ranger District at (503) 820-3311.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor



DATE

Decision Notice
Finding of No Significant Impact
and
Forest Plan Amendment
for
Incorporation of the Columbia River Basin
Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Policy
and Implementation Guide
into the Malheur National Forest
Land and Resource Management Plan

Introduction:

This Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) addresses former Regional Forester John Buttrulle's direction to review and amend, if necessary, the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan to incorporate the "Columbia River Basin Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Policy and Implementation Guide" (CRBPIG).

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to assist the Forest Supervisor in making this decision and is available for review at the office of the Forest Supervisor in John Day, Oregon.

Decision:

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, it is my decision to implement Alternative I as the course of action. This decision will amend the Forest Plan. The Amendment is contained later in this document. Alternative I will amend both Management Areas (MA) 3A and 3B and will provide Management Area specific Desired Future Conditions (DFC) and more specific numeric standards for these Management Areas. The elements that are being added include:

- A. Sediment/Substrate
- B. Water Quality
- C. Channel Morphology
- D. Riparian Vegetation

A standard is also being added that provides for site specific evaluation of the existing condition to establish the geographic boundary of the riparian areas.

Rationale for the decision:

I have selected Alternative I because:

- It is responsive to the issues of 1) incorporating the standards into MA3A and 2) providing a standard for width to mean depth ratio.
- It best meets the Regional Forester's current direction.
- It will provide specific direction to guide the conservation, recovery and restoration of aquatic resources.

Other Alternatives Considered:

No Action

This alternative would continue the existing Forest Plan direction.

I did not select this alternative because it does not meet the purpose and need. This alternative would not have met the Regional Forester's direction to incorporate the CRBPIG into the Forest Plan.

The Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would have provided nearly the same DFC and standards as the selected alternative, except that it would apply only to MA3B and did not include a standard for width to mean depth ratio. I did not select this alternative because it had been my intent to add specific direction for MA3A at a later date and I now feel it is time to address that issue. I also feel that the standard for mean width to depth ratio needed to be included at this time.

Public Involvement:

Early in the process, a copy of the proposed amendment was distributed to interested and potential parties, these included the various local tribes, local industry and others. As a result of this review, it was determined that an EA would be prepared. A copy of the purpose and need and proposed action were then sent to the same people, as well as others, who had expressed an interest in riparian areas and/or forest plan amendments. Letters were received from three respondents and one comment was received verbally. These responses led to the development of an additional alternative.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

I have determined that overall, the action to be taken under this Decision is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect, either individually or cumulatively, the quality of the human environment. Further site-specific analysis with appropriate NEPA analysis is required for each site-specific project affected by this Decision. Any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources and the significance of any environmental impact will be identified and assessed at that time.

I have considered the following factors in this determination:

1. This Decision is programmatic, rather than site or project specific. The effects are local, rather than statewide, regionwide, or nationwide.
2. No known unusual circumstances exist because the Decision does not impose any highly uncertain, unique, or unknown environmental risks. The Amendment is based on professional scientific interpretation of research and forest conditions, and fish and wildlife habitat needs. The standards are similar to measures being adopted to meet the threatened and endangered anadromous fish habitat requirements.
3. No adverse effects to any historical places or loss of scientific, cultural, or historic resources would occur because no ground-disturbing activities are approved, required, or mandated by this Decision and existing forest plan standards adequately address mitigation measures for these resources.
4. The Direction would not produce any significant irreversible, irretrievable, or cumulative effects for the following reasons: 1) no ground-disturbing activities are approved, required, or mandated by this Decision; 2) the Biological Evaluation for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species concluded that the proposed action would not adversely affect the listed species or critical habitats.
5. This decision is not related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant impacts, because the direction is programmatic, and does not approve, require, or mandate any project.
6. This Decision will not threaten to violate federal, state, or local requirements imposed for the protection of the environment because no ground-disturbing activities are approved, required, or mandated by this Decision and any projects planned using the interim standards will receive appropriate NEPA analysis.
7. The Direction would not likely cause highly controversial environmental effects because controversy in this context refers to cases where there is a substantial dispute as to the size, nature, or effect of the federal actions, rather than opposition to its adoption. The scientific basis for this interim direction has been evaluated by Forest Service biologists and scientists. The decline in fish habitat has not been disputed.
8. This Decision will not set a precedent for future actions likely to result in significant environmental consequences, nor will it represent a decision in principle about future consideration because the Eastside EIS will develop an ecosystem management strategy that more than likely will supersede this Decision. Furthermore, standards are based on some of the same scientific information used in the Environmental Assessment for the Implementation of Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California, published for Notice and Comment at 59 Fed Reg 14356 (March 25, 1994)

Therefore, I have concluded that no significant adverse or beneficial effects on the physical, biological, or human environment will occur, thus no Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for this direction.

NFMA Finding of non-significant amendment:

I find that adoption of this amendment would not significantly change the forest-wide impacts disclosed in the Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), Forest Service Manual 1922.5, and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 5.32, I have determined that this forest plan amendment is not significant based on the following factors:

Timing: Upon completion of the Eastside Ecosystem EIS, this direction is expected to be confirmed or superseded by new direction. Such new direction is expected to occur before the end of the planning period for this forest plan. Therefore, the timing of the amendment does not make it significant.

Location and Size: These effects as related to location and size are not anticipated to differ from that already described in the Forest Plan FEIS.

Goals, Objectives, and Outputs: The amendment does not alter the long-term relationship between levels of goods and services projected by the Forest Plan. I do not expect any significant change in outputs. Therefore, it is not likely that any opportunity is being foregone to achieve projected outputs in later years of the planning period.

Management Prescription: The amendment does not change the desired future condition for land and resources from that contemplated by the existing management direction in the forest plan; rather, it further defines it. It does not affect the whole planning area, but only those portions of the land in the riparian areas. The standards do not change forest plan allocations or management areas.

Appeal Rights.

Implementation of this decision shall not occur until 7 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Blue Mountain Eagle Newspaper.

The decision to adopt management direction through non-significant forest plan amendment is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217, not 36 CFR 215. The regulation at 36 CFR 215.1 indicates that it applies only to "projects and activities implementing forest plans." Pursuant to 36 CFR 215 4(e), the decision to make non-significant amendments to forest plans is expressly subject to appeal under 36 CFR 217.

Any written Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must include the reasons for appeal. A written notice of appeal, in duplicate, must be filed with John E. Lowe, Reviewing Officer, P.O. Box 3623, Portland Oregon 97298-3623, within 45 days of the date that legal notice of this decision appears in the Blue Mountain Eagle Newspaper.

For further information, contact Glen Stein, Environmental Coordinator, 139 N.E. Dayton, John Day Oregon 97845 or (503) 575-1731. An Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Incorporation of the Columbia River Basin Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Policy and Implementation Guide into the Malheur National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, is available for review at the Malheur National Forest Supervisors office.



MARK A. BOCHE
Forest Supervisor

8/18/94
Date

**MALHEUR NATIONAL FOREST
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
PLAN AMENDMENT #29
MANAGEMENT AREA 3A**

The following is a description of the proposed Management Area specific Desired Future Condition (DFC) for MA3A. This DFC belongs in the Management Area section of the Forest Plan.

Desired Future Condition (DFC)

Maintain or restore the habitat conditions which result in compliance with Oregon State Water Quality Standards and ensure viable populations of aquatic and riparian-dependent species. The habitat elements (features) of sediment/substrate, water quality, channel morphology and riparian vegetation will be managed within their natural ranges of variability. The balance of these elements within these ranges of variability is to be considered the quantitative expression of achieving desired condition.

Below are the proposed changes that would be made to the Standards and Guidelines section of the Forest Plan.

RESOURCE ELEMENT STANDARDS

Standard 5.

**Fish, Water
Quality, and
Wildlife**

5. Manage riparian areas to achieve the following desired conditions by habitat element, sub-element and numeric value. These values are to be measured on a subwatershed basis, and to the degree the individual riparian area contains these specific habitat elements.

<u>Element/Sub-Element</u>	<u>Numeric Values¹</u>
A. Sediment/Substrate	
1) Cobble embeddedness	≤ 20% embedded
B. Water Quality	
1) Water temperature	
a. Forestwide, existing temperature < 68° ²	No increase
b. Forestwide, existing temperature > 68° ²	Reduce to 68°F
c. Bull trout spawning and rearing habitat ³	≤ 55°F
d. Cutthroat trout spawning and rearing habitat	≤ 55°F
C. Channel Morphology	
1) Large woody debris	
a. Ponderosa pine eco-systems	maintain 20 to 70 pieces/mile; at least 12 inches in diameter and 20% > 20 inches

¹ These values are based upon the best information currently available and are considered to be consistent with management area desired future condition. If new information becomes available in the future which indicates changes in the numeric values to achieve the stated desired condition, these values may be inserted as a clarification/correction to the individual standard.

It is expected that individual subwatersheds may contain conditions for which these numeric values are not appropriate. If necessary, based upon the required stream and riparian field survey data, these numeric values may be adjusted on a subwatershed basis, or smaller, site-specific basis, if needed. (Reference the Columbia River Basin Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Policy and Implementation Guide, 2.B.(3), p.9)

² Instantaneous reading at any given time.

³ Average of the daily Maximum temperature for seven consecutive days (this applies to B 1 c, d).

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| | in diameter, and at least 35 feet long <u>or</u> 1 1/2 times the bankfull width of stream |
| b. Mixed conifer ecosystems | maintain 80 to 120 pieces/mile; at least 12 inches in diameter and 20% > 20 inches in diameter; and at least 35 feet long <u>or</u> 1 1/2 times the bankfull width of stream |
| c. Lodgepole pine ecosystems | maintain 100 to 350 pieces/mile; at least 6 inches in diameter and 10% > than 12 inches in diameter; and at least 18 feet long <u>or</u> 1 1/2 times bankfull stream width |

2) Pool frequency

based upon range expected for "Rosgen" type B & C streams,⁴ with upper limits adjusted for streams > 75' to be consistent with "Pacfish" values.⁵

⁴ David L. Rosgen, "A Classification of Natural Rivers," 1993.

⁵ Implementation of Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California.

Total Range of Frequency

Bank-full Width (ft)	Pools/Mi
5	151-264
10	75-132
20	38-66
25	30-53
50	15-26
75	10-23
100	8-18
125	6-14
150	5-12
200	4-9

3) Bank stability
(forested ecosystem)

90% stable, no
decrease if above 90%
stable

4) Lower bank angle
with stream gradients
 $\leq 2\%$ (non-forest
ecosystem)

50- 75% of banks
with 90 degree angle
or greater (undercut)

5) Width :Depth Ratio

< 10 , mean wetted
width divided by
mean depth (all
systems)

D. Riparian Vegetation

1) Potential large woody
debris (forested eco-
system)

to provide a rate of
input to maintain
large woody debris
standard C 1

2) Ground cover

90% of site potential,
covered by
herbaceous species,
litter, rock, moss or
lichens

3) % of stream bank vegetated	90% of site potential
4) Shade/canopy closure	
a) Ponderosa pine series	40-55% canopy closure
b) Mixed conifer species	50-65% canopy closure
c) Lodgepole pine	60% - 75% canopy closure
d) Hardwood/meadow complex	80% shaded

Standard 6.

6. A site specific evaluation of the existing condition should be conducted when project activities are planned for a riparian area. This evaluation will be based upon the data gathered by a "Hanken and Reeves" Level II Survey, or equivalent, and Malheur Protocol For Riparian Area Surveys. These surveys will establish the geographic boundary of the riparian area. The boundary location is to be recorded in the management area layer of the TRI System (GIS).

**MALHEUR NATIONAL FOREST
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
PLAN AMENDMENT #29
MANAGEMENT AREA 3B**

The following is a description of the proposed Management Area specific Desired Future Condition (DFC) for MA3B. This DFC belongs in the Management Area section of the Forest Plan.

Desired Future Condition (DFC)

Maintain or restore the habitat conditions which: result in compliance with Oregon State Water Quality Standards; ensure viable populations of riparian-dependent species; and increase the smolt production of the anadromous fishery by doubling the carrying capacity of existing habitat within twenty years. The habitat elements (features) of sediment/substrate, water quality, channel morphology and riparian vegetation will be managed within their natural ranges of variability. The balance of these elements within these ranges of variability is to be considered the quantitative expression of achieving desired condition.

Below are the proposed changes that would be made to the Standards and Guidelines section of the Forest Plan.

RESOURCE ELEMENT STANDARDS

Standard 5.

**Fish, Water
Quality, and
Wildlife**

5. Manage riparian areas to achieve the following desired conditions by habitat element, sub-element and numeric value. These values are to be measured on a subwatershed basis, and to the degree the individual riparian area contains these specific habitat elements.

<u>Element/Sub-Element</u>	<u>Numeric Values¹</u>
A. Sediment/Substrate	
1) Cobble embeddedness	≤ 20% embedded
B. Water Quality	
1) Water temperature	
a. Forestwide, existing temperature < 68° ²	No increase
b. Forestwide, existing temperature > 68° ²	Reduce to 68°F
c. Bull trout spawning and rearing habitat ³	≤ 55°F
d. Cutthroat trout spawning and rearing habitat	≤ 55°F
e. Chinook salmon spawning and rearing habitat	≤ 55°F
C. Channel Morphology	
1) Large woody debris	
a. Ponderosa pine eco-systems	maintain 20 to 70 pieces/mile; at least

¹ These values are based upon the best information currently available and are considered to be consistent with management area desired future condition. If new information becomes available in the future which indicates changes in the numeric values to achieve the stated desired condition, these values may be inserted as a clarification/correction to the individual standard.

It is expected that individual subwatersheds may contain conditions for which these numeric values are not appropriate. If necessary, based upon the required stream and riparian field survey data, these numeric values may be adjusted on a subwatershed basis, or smaller site-specific basis, if needed. (Reference the Columbia River Basin Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Policy and Implementation Guide, 2.B.(3), p.9)

² Instantaneous reading at any given time.

³ Average of the daily Maximum temperature for seven consecutive days (this applies to B.1 c, d, e).

	12 inches in diameter and 20% > 20 inches in diameter; and at least 35 feet long <u>or</u> 1 1/2 times the bankfull width of stream
b. Mixed conifer ecosystems	maintain 80 to 120 pieces/mile; at least 12 inches in diameter and 20% > 20 inches in diameter; and at least 35 feet long <u>or</u> 1 1/2 times the bankfull width of stream
c. Lodgepole pine ecosystems	maintain 100 to 350 pieces/mile; at least 6 inches in diameter and 10% > than 12 inches in diameter; and at least 18 feet long <u>or</u> 1 1/2 times bankfull stream width
2) Pool frequency	based upon range expected for "Rosgen" type B & C streams, ⁴ with upper limits adjusted for streams >75' to be consistent with "Pacfish" values. ⁵

⁴ David L. Rosgen, "A Classification of Natural Rivers," 1993.

⁵ Implementation of Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California

Total Range of Frequency

Bank-full Width (ft)	Pools/Mi
5	151-264
10	75-132
20	38-66
25	30-53
50	15-26
75	10-23
100	8-18
125	6-14
150	5-12
200	4-9

3) Bank stability
(forested ecosystem)

90% stable, no decrease if above 90% stable

4) Lower bank angle with stream gradients $\leq 2\%$ (non-forest ecosystems)

50- 75% of banks with 90 degree angle or greater (undercut)

5) Width :Depth Ratio

<10, mean wetted width divided by mean depth (all systems)

D. Riparian Vegetation

1) Potential large woody debris (forested ecosystem)

to provide a rate of input to maintain large woody debris standard C.1

2) Ground cover

90% of site potential, covered by herbaceous species, litter, rock, moss or lichens

3) % of stream bank vegetated

90% of site potential

4) Shade/canopy closure

a) Ponderosa pine series	40-55% canopy closure
b) Mixed conifer species	50-65% canopy closure
c) Lodgepole pine	60% - 75% canopy closure
d) Hardwood/meadow complex	80% shaded

Standard 6.

6. A site specific evaluation of the existing condition should be conducted when project activities are planned for a riparian area. This evaluation will be based upon the data gathered by a "Hanken and Reeves" Level II Survey, or equivalent, and Malheur Protocol For Riparian Area Surveys. These surveys will establish the geographic boundary of the riparian area. The boundary location is to be recorded in the management area layer of the TRI System (GIS).

**END
OF
PHYSICAL
FILE**