

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION AND DECISION RECORD

2012 Elk City Southwest Pre-Commercial Thin

A. BACKGROUND

BLM Office: Cottonwood Field Office, Idaho

NEPA Register No.: DOI-BLM-ID-C020-2012-0009-CX

Subject Code/Case File No.: (5000)

Location of Proposed Action: Elk City Township, Idaho County, Idaho

Legal Description: BM, T. 29 N., R. 8 E, section(s) 29, 30

Description of Proposed Action:

The Cottonwood BLM Field Office is proposing a pre-commercial thin in a 51 acre stand located in the Elk City Township (see attached map). The stand was harvested (clear-cut) approximately 25 years prior and now contains upwards of 850 trees per acre, some planted, and some naturally regenerated. A pre-commercial thin would reduce the tree density to approximately 200 trees per acre (variable 15' x 15' spacing) favoring tree species such as western larch, western white pine, ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir and allow for a healthy, productive stand to grow into the future. Without thinning the stand is at risk of stagnation and increased insect and disease activity.

Approximately 650 trees per acre would be manually removed by crews of 2-20 persons utilizing chain saws in the spring/summer of 2012. Healthy trees of desired species with good form and vigor would remain. See the attached silvicultural prescription for more details. All activities would use existing roads; no new roads or trails will be constructed during this project.

The entire severed tree would be treated as slash due to the small diameter of the material. No product would be removed. Slash would either be piled on site by hand into piles approximately 6' by 6' by 6' in dimension or lopped and scattered to an average slash depth of no more than 24" or a combination of the two slash treatment methods. Piles would be burned according to an approved prescribed fire burn plan. Burning would likely occur in the fall seasons of 2012-2014 depending on fuel and weather conditions.

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

Land Use Plan Name: Cottonwood Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: December 21, 2009

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Goal FP-1 –Provide forest products to help meet local and national demands. Page 36.

Objective FP-1.4L: Over a 15 year period, offer 3,129 MMBF as a probable sale quantity of saw timber per year from the commercial forest land base of 40,598 acres. Page 37.

Action FP-1.4.6: Thinning can be used to achieve stocking rate, species composition and vigor goals and objectives identified in site-specific silvicultural prescriptions. Page 37.

Categorical Exclusion Documentation -- Extraordinary Circumstances Review
2012 Elk City Southwest Pre-commercial Thinning

NEPA Register No: DOI-BLM-ID-C020-2012-0009-CX

CX Reference No: 516 DM 11.9, CX No. C-7, "harvesting live trees not to exceed 70 acres, requiring no more than 0.25 mile of temporary road construction"

The BLM has reviewed the proposed action to determine if any of the following extraordinary circumstances exist, as listed in 43 CFR 46.215.

(a) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Yes__ No X

Comments/Explanation: The proposed action does not produce or store any chemical or hazardous materials which are known to be harmful to the public or environment. All work, including storage of saw fuel will be done in accordance with OSHA regulations.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

(b) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (EO 11990); floodplains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

Yes__ No X

Comments/Explanation -- historic or cultural resources: There are no known cultural resources in the proposed action area.

Specialist Name, Title: David Sisson, Archeologist

Date: January 31, 2012

Comments/Explanation -- park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks, monuments, or other ecologically significant or critical areas:

No ecologically significant or critical areas, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, monuments or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern exist near the project area or would be affected by the proposed action.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

Comments/Explanation -- drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains:

No drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands or floodplains exist in the project area or would be affected by the proposed action.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

Comments/Explanation -- migratory birds: Disturbance and/or displacement potentially may occur during project implementation in the short term to migratory birds that prefer young regeneration stands (20-30 years old). Suitable habitats occur within the general analysis area which may be used in the short term or long term by any migratory birds that may be disturbed or displaced from project implementation.

Categorical Exclusion Documentation -- Extraordinary Circumstances Review

Tree density and spacing will change post project to a more open stand within a small localized area (51 acres). Project implementation will have negligible adverse and beneficial effects to migratory birds (species dependent) that would utilize the treatment area. No significant impacts will occur to migratory birds or preferred habitats in the long term.

Specialist Name, Title: Craig Johnson, Fisheries/Wildlife Biologist

Date: February 1, 2012

(c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)].

Yes__ No X

Comments/Explanation: The proposed action/use is not exclusive and is in accordance with the BLM's Multiple Use mandate. The effects of pre-commercial thinning are well documented and not controversial. Thinning the stand now will allow for the highest number of potential stand successional pathways in the future.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

(d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

Yes__ No X

Comments/Explanation: The environmental effects of pre-commercial thinning are known and positive in nature. Pre-commercial thinning is a common forest management activity within Idaho forests on public land. No unique or unknown risks will occur from use of the weir.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

(e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

Yes__ No X

Comments/Explanation: The proposed thinning conforms to the Cottonwood RMP, and qualifies to be categorically excluded. Thinning of the stand would help to achieve management objective for commercial forest land, and disturbance would be limited to the 51-acre stand and not require construction of a temporary road

Specialist Name, Title: Lorrie West, Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Date: February 8, 2012

(f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

Yes__ No X

Comments/Explanation: Other past, present and reasonably foreseeable forest management actions in the immediate area include the Whiskey South timber sale (partially implemented), the Whiskey South II timber sale (planning never completed or implemented), the South Township project (joint with USFS, for implementation in 2012), and the USFS Orogrande Community Protection Project (FS, proposed 2013). Potential environmental effects from this project include increased understory vegetation, increased health of overstory trees and decreased overstory tree biodiversity. All of these effects are small in scale and when combined with other action do not approach the threshold of significance. No cumulatively significant effects will result from this project.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

Categorical Exclusion Documentation -- Extraordinary Circumstances Review

(g) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.

Yes No

Comments/Explanation: There are no known eligible or listed properties on the National Register of Historic Places in the proposed action area. If any resources are located during the project implementation the archeologist will be notified. All piling and burning of piles will not occur on any properties if they are located.

Specialist Name, Title: David Sisson, Archeologist

Date: January 31, 2012

(h) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

Yes No

Comments/Explanation -- Plants: The project area does not provide suitable habitat for ESA-listed MacFarlane's four-o'clock or Spalding's catchfly and plant surveys of the project area did not document the occurrence of these plants. A "no effect" determination is concluded for ESA-listed plants. Whitebark pine is a designated Candidate Species, and the project area does not provide preferred habitat (high elevation subalpine/alpine habitats) and the tree species does not occur within the project area. A "no impact" determination is concluded for the Candidate whitebark pine.

Specialist Name, Title: Craig Johnson, Fisheries/Wildlife Biologist and Mark Lowry, Ecologist

Date: February 1, 2012

Comments/Explanation -- Wildlife: The project area does not occur within a mapped Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) and no mapped suitable lynx habitat occurs in the project area. However, the stand does provide good habitat for snowshoe hare (preferred lynx prey) and proposed treatments will adversely impact habitat for snowshoe hare. No recent documentation of occurrences for lynx exist for the Nez Perce National Forest. In summary, overall effects are discountable to Canada lynx because the project area does not occur within LAU and will not impact suitable habitat in a LAU. Project implementation will not affect connectivity between or within LAUs and a "no effect" determination is concluded for Canada lynx. The ESA-listed Northern Idaho ground squirrel had no documented occurrences for Idaho county and the project area does not provide preferred habitats, consequently a "no effect" determination is concluded. The project area does not provide suitable habitat for wolverine and yellow-billed cuckoo (large cottonwood stands), and a "no impact" determination is concluded for these designated Candidate species.

Specialist Name, Title: Craig Johnson, Fisheries/Wildlife Biologist

Date: February 1, 2012

Comments/Explanation -- Aquatic Species: The project area occurs within South Fork Clearwater River face drainages. The South Fork Clearwater River provides designated critical habitat for ESA-listed steelhead trout and bull trout. The South Fork Clearwater River also provides aquatic habitat for BLM sensitive fish species, which include spring/summer Chinook salmon, redband trout, westslope cutthroat trout and Pacific lamprey. When the project area was logged in the 1980s buffers were established for small perennial/intermittent water courses within the project area (100-150 feet). No vegetation treatments will occur within these buffer areas. Discountable erosion/sediment would occur from project implementation and no adverse impacts would occur to South Fork Clearwater River fish habitats. A "no effect" determination is concluded for ESA-listed steelhead trout, bull trout, and designated critical habitats. A "no impact" determination is concluded for BLM sensitive fish species.

Specialist Name, Title: Craig Johnson, Fisheries/Wildlife Biologist

Date: February 1, 2012

Categorical Exclusion Documentation -- Extraordinary Circumstances Review

(i) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Yes No

Comments/Explanation: The proposed action is in accordance with Federal, State and local and tribal laws.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

(j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898).

Yes No

Comments/Explanation: No low income or minority groups are adversely affected.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: December 14, 2011

(k) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007).

Yes No

Comments/Explanation: There are no known Indian sacred sites within or surrounding the project area.

Specialist Name, Title: Zach Peterson, Forester

Date: February 1, 2012

(l) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and EO 13112).

Yes No

Comments/Explanation:

Spotted knapweed is an invasive species known to occur in the general area although canopy cover of trees in the project area is likely to reduce the potential for establishment or persistence of the species at the site. No opening of roads or large-scale soil disturbance is likely to occur as a result of the project. Appropriate prevention practices will be utilized during project implementation to reduce the opportunity for introduction and spread of invasive species. Inventory of the project area will be conducted post project and treatment implemented if necessary.

Specialist Name, Title: Lynn Danly, Natural Resource Specialist

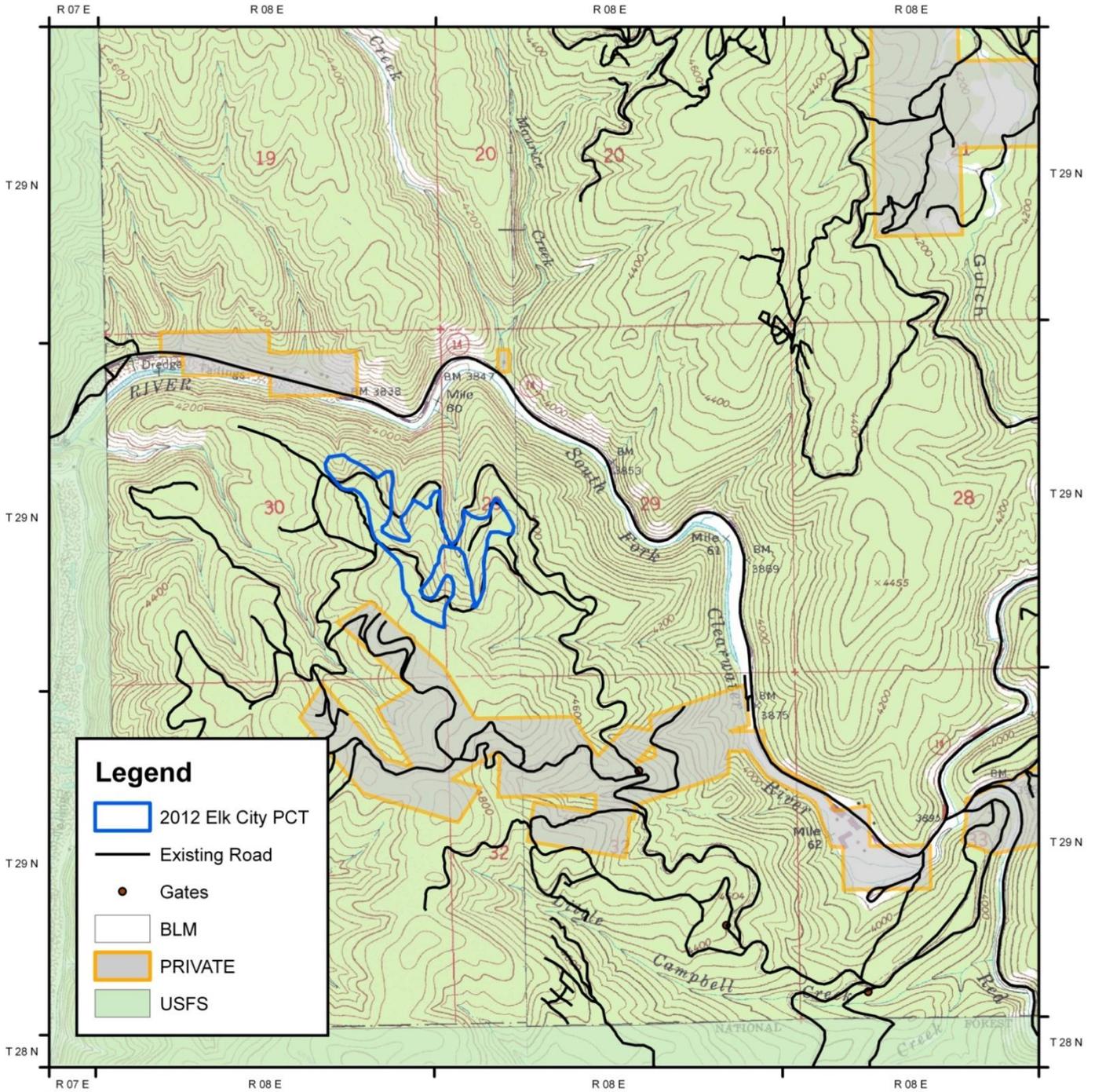
Date: 12/14/11

SILVICULTURAL PRESCRIPTION

STAND NUMBER: ELKC0202	LEGAL: NWSW, SEC. 29, T 29 N, R 8 E SE1/4, SEC 30, T 29N, R 8 E		
PROJECT: 2012 ELK CITY PCT	DATE: 12/14/2011	PHOTO #S: 2009 IDAHO COUNTY NAIP IMAGERY	
EXISTING STAND INFORMATION			
STAND SIZE: 51 acres	ELEVATION: 5100	ASPECT: N & NE	SLOPE%: 35
HABITAT TYPE: Generally ABGR/CLUN (520), with limited areas of ABGR/XEXE (510).		STAND STRUCTURE: An even-aged over-stocked regeneration stand (approximately 20 to 30 years old). Planted species include western larch, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine and western white pine. Naturally regenerated species include grand fir, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir and western larch.	
DENSITY: average 870 saplings per acre		VOLUME: Approx. total/acre= 0m Anticipate cut volume/acre= 0m	
PRODUCTIVITY: Medium to high site productivity is expected, soils are deep from granitic and volcanic ash parent material		INSECT, DISEASE, OTHER PROBLEMS: Currently the young stand is relatively free of (or not showing signs of) disease and insects. Concerns for the future include Indian Paint fungus in the grand fir, especially if frost cracks develop. Armillaria root rot pockets are likely present within the stand. Mountain pine beetle is an ongoing concern in the lodgepole pine species and blister rust is a concern in the planted western white pine. Mistletoe is very minimal in the adjacent stands and will likely not cause a significant problem.	
SOILS: Jughandle Loam association, Course-loamy, mixed Typic Cryochrepts		FUEL LOAD/MODEL: 8/10	
PAST MNGT ACTIONS: Clear-cut stand, broadcast burn, replant larch, ponderosa, Douglas-fir and western white pine.		ADJACENT LANDOWNERS: none	

STAND MANAGEMENT	
RMP RECOMMENDATION: Commercial Forest Management, also within a Desired Future Condition management block	TPCC CLASSIFICATION:
MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES: Reduce density of saplings to approximately 200 tpa retaining most vigorous, healthiest trees in order of preference: western white pine, western larch, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, grand fir.	ALTERNATIVES: Allow stand grow and self-thin.
RATIONALE FOR ALTERNATIVES: The alternative puts the stand at risk for stagnation, especially if the BLM isn't able to commercially thin the stand on a timely basis.	TARGET STAND DESCRIPTION: An even-aged, one cohort stand comprised of well-spaced healthy, well-formed disease free seed (overstory) trees.
SILVICULTURAL Rx: Pre-commercial thin to approximately 200 trees per acre favoring WL, WP, PP and DF first, ES 2 nd and GF/LP last. Promote a disease free, well formed, fast growing stand to move forward into the future for commercial thinning in approximately 20 years or when the Relative Density Index (RDI) approaches or exceeds 0.65.	
<p>MARKING CREW SUMMARY: Produce a healthy well stocked stand of high vigor containing approximately 200 trees per acre of a desired species mix.</p> <p>Designation by Description: Cut trees to approximately a 15' x 15' spacing. Favor western white pine, western larch, ponderosa pine then Douglas-fir of good form, dominance and health in that order. In areas of only lodgepole or grand fir, choose the healthiest, best formed and most dominant tree. Do not select grand fir with noticeable injuries (frost cracks, scars, etc.) unless that is the only option.</p> <p>From a dominant well-formed, disease free tree of a favorable species (WP,WL,PP, DF) remove trees within approximately a 15 foot radius. If another dominant or co-dominant, well formed, disease free tree of a favorable species is encountered within the cut radius, variability up to 30% in the spacing will be allowed, but the area should average 200 leave trees per acre across the unit. No leave trees should be retained that are closer than 10 feet apart.</p>	
PREPARED BY: Zach Peterson	REVIEWED BY: Robbin Boyce

2012 Elk City Pre-Commercial Thin



Legend

-  2012 Elk City PCT
-  Existing Road
-  Gates
-  BLM
-  PRIVATE
-  USFS



The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management. The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed. The following cannot be made Section 508 compliant. For help with its data or information, please contact the BLM Idaho State Office Webmaster at 208-373-4000.

Map Created: 12/14/2011

1:24,000
 0 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Miles
 Data displayed in UTM Zone 11N, NAD83
 USGS 1:24000 Quads: Elk City, Center Star Mountain

