

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

DECISION RECORD

Ninemile Timber Sale Revised Decision
DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2013-0005-EA

1. Background

This decision rescinds and supersedes the previous Ninemile Timber Sale Decision Record signed on September 17, 2014. That decision record included a restriction to conserve “all” of specific tree species and size classes. Upon reconsideration, this is impractical to implement. While it remains the intention of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to conserve these species and size classes, the limitations specified in paragraph 2 of this revised decision record provide a more practical means to do so.

Forest wildfires are a major threat to individuals living in the wildland-urban-interface within the project area, and also to the Bonneville Power Administration high voltage transmission line that crosses the project area. To reduce the threat, this fuel treatment project would thin the forest and remove hazardous fuels.

2. Decision

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action authorizing the following actions;

- Construct about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of temporary road, which would be closed at the end of the project;
- Thin the forest by harvesting trees located on 200 acres of forested land, which could produce about 1 million board feet of timber;
- Conserve all old ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees located on southern aspects by thinning understory fir and pine trees;
- Conserve western white pine, western red cedar, dominant overstory western larch and Engelmann spruce trees located on northern aspects. The BLM will retain these species on site with an upper diameter limit of 14 inches for western red cedar, western white pine and Engelmann spruce for removal. Any western white pine showing symptoms of blister rust, regardless of size, will be cut. Western Larch will have a diameter limit of 18 inches for removal;
- Conserve all active raptor nests, and provide nesting habitat for migratory songbirds;
- Decrease fire hazard on 100 acres of forested land adjacent to the Bonneville Power Administration's transmission line;

- Restore fire adapted ecosystems and reduce hazardous fuels by prescribed burning on 300 acres;
- Restore forest stands to historic species composition by planting disease resistant western white pine and western larch seedlings in openings created by logging or prescribed burning on the wet/warm vegetative cover types, and by planting ponderosa pine seedlings in openings created by logging or prescribed burning on the dry conifer vegetation cover type;
- Implement hazardous fuels monitoring on treatment units;
- Implement wild fire effectiveness monitoring of the project;
- A domestic water source located within the project area has been identified through the scoping process. No activities are proposed in the drainage where the water source is located;
- Retention forestry would be applied to all ponderosa pine trees over 100 years old that are located on south facing aspects. Additionally, a twenty acre intact forest with large structure would be retained adjacent to the East Fork Ninemile Creek (Lindenmayer,et.al. 2012);
- Riparian conservation areas would be established on all perennial and intermittent streams in the project area to maintain water quality and reduce the potential for sediment to reach the creek. Additionally, the majority of the constructed roads would be about ¼ mile away from the creek;
- Large blocks of forest reserve areas within the project area would be conserved to minimize disturbance to wildlife populations. All known or discovered wetlands, seeps, bogs, elk wallows and springs less than one acre in size would be protected with a 100-foot "no activity" buffer along their perimeters;
- The timber harvest activities would minimize impacts to soil and water quality through contract stipulations and best management practices (BMPs), including: restrictions on operating when soil moisture is greater than 25%, proper spacing of skid trails; limiting tractor skidding to slopes of 40% or less, and installing waterbars and other drainage measures as recommended by the BLM. Project inspectors would be on site during construction activities to ensure that proper procedures are followed. All disturbed ground would be re-vegetated as soon as possible with the District approved seed mix. To reduce sources of noxious/invasive seed and/or plant parts and minimize risk of spreading existing infestations, pre-existing weed populations would be treated prior to project activities;
- Preventing new weeds species from entering the project area is the highest priority for protecting the area from weed invasion. Pre-harvest measures would include removing all mud, dirt, and plant parts from all off-road vehicles and off-road equipment before entering BLM lands. Cleaning must occur off BLM lands. (Cleaning requirements do not apply to vehicles that would stay on the established roadway and use the constructed landing. These areas are more easily monitored and treated if weed establishment occurs.);

- Opportunities for weed invasion in disturbed sites would be reduced by seeding all disturbed soil (except the travel way on surfaced roads) in a manner that optimizes plant establishment for that specific site. A certified weed-free seed mix that includes fast-growing, early season species would be used to provide quick, dense re-vegetation;
- Reduce impacts of weed populations following project completion. Post-harvest activities would employ an integrated weed control strategy of: monitoring and treatment of weed infestations on off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails, roads, landings, skid trails, and treatment areas. Weed treatments will use biological controls, mechanical removal, and/or herbicides after considering the effectiveness of all potential methods and combination of methods. Road and trail closures would reduce the likelihood of weed introduction, spread and persistence in these areas;
- Work on the project area would be accomplished with care to ensure that no oil, diesel, gas or other harmful materials foul the soil or enter any stream;
- All burning would be in conformance with air quality regulations, and coordinated with the North Idaho Airshed Group to maintain air quality. BMPs would be applied to reduce effects from road dust, i.e. road watering;

3. Authority

The field office manager has the authority to sell timber located on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management in accordance with 43 CFR 5000.

4. Rationale

The proposed action would create a landscape that is more resilient to wildland fire and protect the urban interface. The decision is in conformance with the Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan and was essentially the same as the proposed action analyzed in detail in EA number DOI-BLM_ID_C010-2013-0005-EA. The proposed action would cause no significant impacts to the environment, as documented in the Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) for the original proposed action, dated September 17, 2014. The proposed action would create an environment that will improve the health of the forest by regenerating dying lodgepole pine, thinning understory trees and conserving old trees. The south facing ponderosa pine forest will be revitalized by prescription burning. The proposed action will implement a project identified in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan for County of Shoshone, 2011 Revision.

5. Public Involvement

Local residents who live within the project area and interested parties received written notification about the proposed action. The public scoping comment period occurred from 2/1/2014 to 4/1/2014. During the comment period four comments were received. All comments were concerned about maintaining the quality of their drinking water sources. Domestic drinking water would not be affected, as described in the Water Resources Section (Section 7.9) of the Environmental Assessment.

6. Coordination and Consultation

The project has been coordinated with Jon Cantamessa & Vince Rinaldi: Past Shoshone County Commissioners, Current Shoshone County Commission, Coeur d'Alene Tribe of Idaho, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service.

7. Protest and Appeal

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with the Forest Management Regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Subpart 5003 – Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer, Kurt Pavlat, within 15-days of publication of the Notice of Decision in a local newspaper. The publication date of the Notice of Decision in the newspaper of record (*The Coeur d'Alene Press*) is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file a protest. Protestants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

43 CFR 5003.3 (b) states that: "Protests shall be filed with the Authorized Officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the following address will be accepted:

Field Manager
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83815

The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error. Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of decision are not timely filed and shall not be considered.

Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the project decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of the review, serve the protest decision in writing to the protesting party(ies). Upon denial of a protest, the authorized officer may proceed with the implementation of the decision.

If no protest is received by close of business within 15 days after publication of the notice of decision, this decision will become final.

/s/

7/29/15

Kurt Pavlat
Field Manager

Date

Attachments: