



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Salem, Oregon 97306
<http://www.or.blm.gov/salem>



Dear Interested Public:

The Marys Peak Resource Area of the Salem District Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is in the early planning stages for the Dunk Tank Environmental Assessment and is requesting your consideration on the proposal. The enclosed Scoping Record provides additional details.

The purpose of the project is to achieve objectives identified in the Salem District Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Matrix and the Riparian Reserves land use allocations. To meet these objectives, the BLM is proposing forest management activities on approximately 765 acres of mid-seral forest. The project area is located approximately six miles southwest of Philomath, Oregon in Benton County. Road work, including maintenance of existing roadways, new construction, renovation, and post-harvest fuel reduction treatments are also being considered.

Submitting Comments

The purpose of this letter is to provide you an opportunity to share comments or concerns you may have about the project. Your input will help an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists further develop the project. Comments may be sent to the BLM, Attention: Tessa Teems, 1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, OR, 97306. Alternatively, comments may be submitted electronically to blm_or_sa_mail@blm.gov. We would appreciate your comments by July 22, 2015. Please return the enclosed **Interest Response Form** if you would like to receive future mailings about the project.

Your interest in the management of public lands is appreciated and we encourage your participation in the development of this project.

Sincerely,

Tessa Teems
Marys Peak Field Manager

Enclosure

* Note – Comments, including names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the same time as the EA during regular business hours (7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Dunk Tank Scoping Record

Why Here and Now?

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has collected data in many forest stands in the Marys River watershed in recent years. In 2014, a BLM interdisciplinary team (IDT) conducted an internal review of data on these and other forest stands and found many stands that could benefit from treatments to meet objectives defined by the 1995 Salem District Resource Management Plan (RMP).

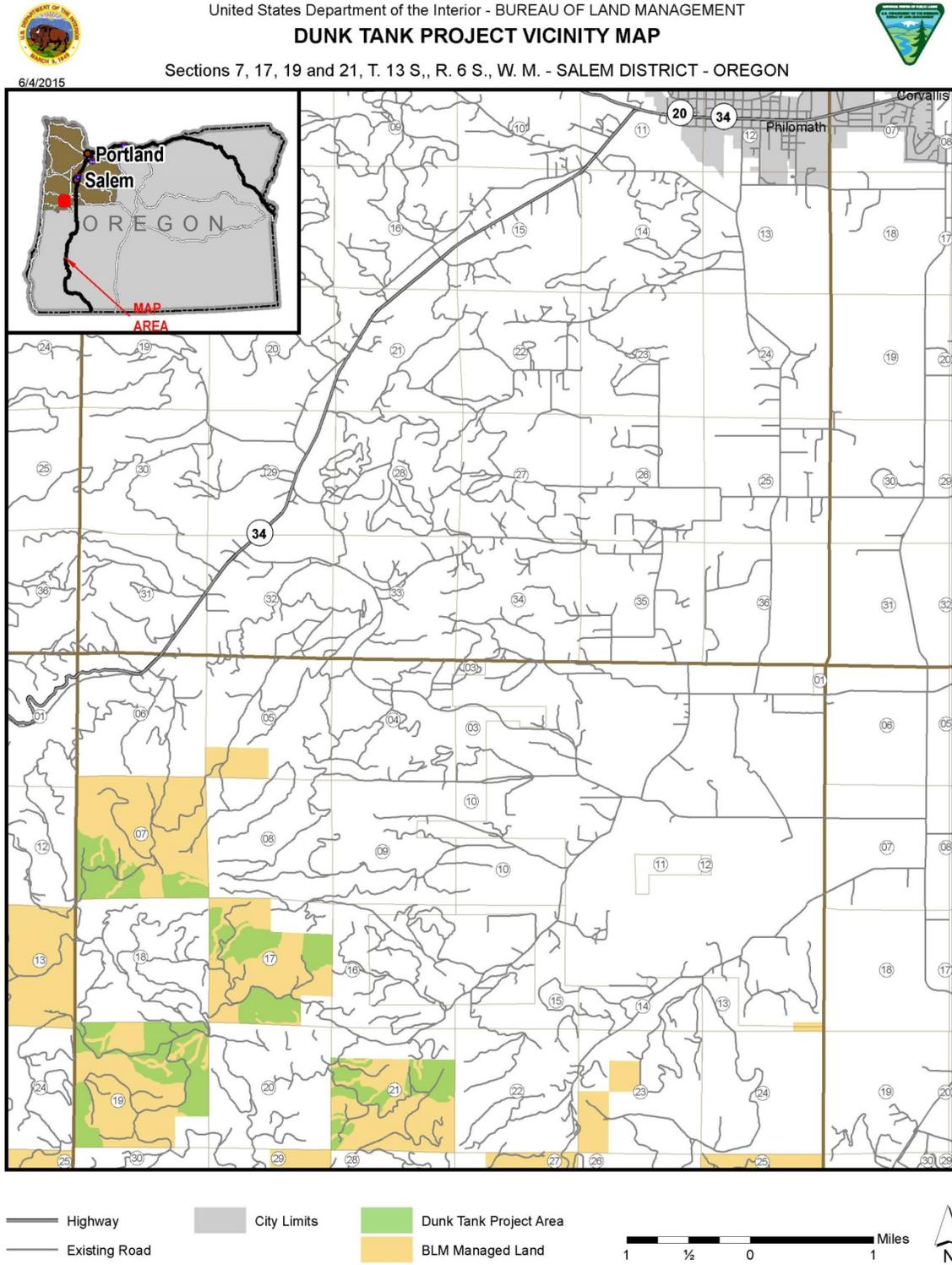
The Dunk Tank project area is located approximately six air miles southwest of Philomath, Oregon, within the headwaters of the Marys River fifth field watershed. The location map (Figure 1) shows the relation of the project area to adjacent communities and other BLM-managed lands.

The Dunk Tank project area is made up of approximately 765 acres of early- and mid-seral forests that span four sections of BLM lands in Benton County, Oregon. The project units are adjacent to previous BLM forest management projects (Gleason Creek and Duffy Creek) (Figure 2). The Dunk Tank project area is located in the part of the Marys Peak Resource Area where Matrix lands are concentrated. Matrix lands provide for a broad range of goals and objectives, including but not limited to, sustained yield harvest, contributing to local economies, and providing habitat for a variety of organisms. The Purpose and Need section of this scoping document provides specific RMP objectives for the Matrix and Riparian Reserves land use allocations that the Dunk Tank project would be designed to achieve.

The stands, ranging from 27 to 61 years of age, are within the Matrix (General Forest Management Area) and Riparian Reserves land use allocations. Stands are dominated by Douglas-fir and are generally overstocked, dense, and lacking in understory development and diversity (Photo 1). The IDT determined that the forest stands at Dunk Tank were appropriate for thinning treatments to meet objectives of the RMP.

The BLM has extensive experience in implementing silviculture treatments (such as commercial thinning, variable density thinning, and gap creation) in similar stands with positive results. Such treatments have shown to be successful in meeting key objectives defined by the Salem District RMP. Given the current condition of the Dunk Tank forest stands and of other management activities planned within the watershed, the IDT determined this area to be high priority for treatment.

Figure 1. Location Map



Purpose and Need

This project is currently being designed to meet the objectives and direction of the 1995 Salem District Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP provides direction on managing lands and resources within the Matrix and Riparian Reserves land use allocations.

In the Matrix (RMP pp. 20, 46):

- Apply silvicultural systems that are planned to produce, over time, forests which have the desired species composition, structural characteristics, and distribution of seral or age classes.
- Produce a sustainable supply of timber and other commodities to provide jobs and contribute to community stability.
- Provide habitat for a variety of organisms associated with both late-successional and younger forests.
- Manage timber stands to promote tree survival and growth.

In Riparian Reserves to (RMP pp. 7–14):

- Apply silvicultural treatments to restore large conifers to Riparian Reserves.
- Apply silvicultural practices for Riparian Reserves to control stocking, reestablish and manage stands, and acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.
- Design and implement watershed restoration projects in a manner that promotes long-term ecological integrity of ecosystems, conserves the genetic integrity of native species, and attains Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.



Photo 1. *Typical forest stand at Dunk Tank.*

This photo is representative of the stand conditions at Dunk Tank. Stands are generally single-storied, even age, and simple in structure. Conifer understory is limited.

Location: 13-6-19

Field Data

The BLM has completed several resource surveys thus far, including but not limited to, stand exams, stream identification, fish presence, and botanical surveys. Other resource surveys are underway or planned for this year.

The mid-seral stands lack the structure and conditions to trigger surveys for marbled murrelets and red tree voles. However, a small patch (approximately nine acres) of the project area is adjacent to an older stand in section 19. Because of this proximity, the BLM has elected to survey for red tree voles on these nine acres. The BLM will complete discretionary and exploratory surveys for the northern spotted owl and will continue inventory on trails in the area. Surveys results will be included and discussed in the EA.

Proposed Action

The BLM is proposing density management and commercial thinning within the Dunk Tank Environmental Assessment. The project may be divided into two or more timber sales. No other projects are included in the proposal at this time.

Commercial thinning and density management – Commercial thinning is being considered on approximately 500 acres of forest stands in the Matrix. Density management is being considered on approximately 265 acres of forest stands in the Riparian Reserves. Silvicultural prescriptions would be designed to reflect the current conditions and treatments needed to meet management objectives. Timber would be harvested by traditional ground-based (75 percent) and skyline (25 percent) yarding methods.

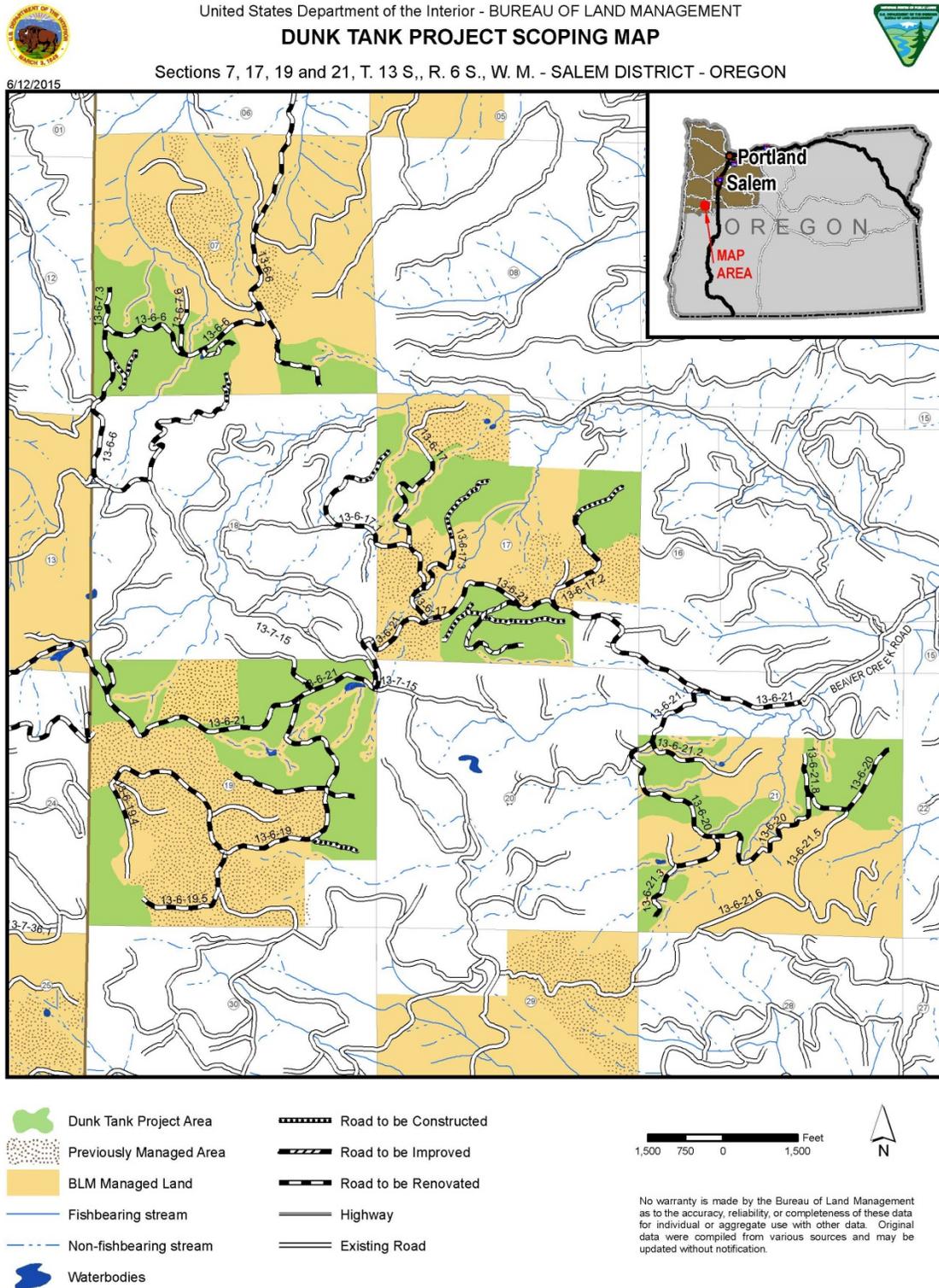
Connected Actions – Road work and post-harvest fuel reduction treatments are actions being considered in conjunction with the timber harvest project.

Road work – Approximately two miles of new road construction is currently being considered. Final disposition of newly constructed roads (whether a road will be left open, decommissioned, or placed in storage) has not yet been determined. Such a decision would be made on a site-specific basis that considers the likelihood of future management activities, access needs, the stability and condition of the road, the likelihood of road-related problems, and other needs or concerns.

Renovation and improvement is proposed on approximately 20 miles of existing roads in and around the project area. Work is intended to provide for safe operations that reduce the risk of road-related resource damage. Road renovation may include, but is not limited to, ditch cleaning, replacing culverts, replacing aggregate surfacing, blading and shaping, and roadside brushing.

Post-harvest fuels reduction – Surveys would occur upon the completion of harvest activities to determine the need to reduce fuel loading and fire risk. Swamper burning, hand, machine, and landing pile construction and burning may be used individually or in combination in areas where fuel loading is heavy, the fire risk is determined to be high, or otherwise determined to be necessary to meet the purpose and need for the project.

Figure 2. Dunk Tank project units and proposed road work



Alternatives to the Proposed Action

The BLM is considering an alternative with larger no-cut buffers in the Riparian Reserves to allow for a wide range of management options in the future. No regeneration harvest is being considered at this time. The BLM will review comments received during the public scoping period to assess the need for further alternative development.

Decisions to be Made

Is the Proposed Action consistent with management direction?

Should the project be implemented as proposed or are there reasonable alternatives to meeting the Purpose and Need?

Initial Issues

Initial discussions with the interdisciplinary team have identified a potential resource issue that may require further consideration and/or alternative development.

The project area has many trails and is a popular area for motorized bikes. The BLM has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a user group in the area. How would the proposed project affect motorized bike recreation in the area?

Interest Response Form

Complete the form below if you wish to receive future mailings related to this project.

I would like to be on the mailing list for the *Dunk Tank EA* as described in the attached letter.

Return this form to:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Stefanie Larew
1717 Fabry Road SE
Salem, OR 97306

Please Print Clearly:

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

If you prefer to respond electronically, you may submit the above information to Stefanie Larew, Project Lead, at slarew@blm.gov.