

Alesea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan

Environmental Assessment



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United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management, Salem District

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Salem District

BLM



As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering economic use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Summary of Planning Area

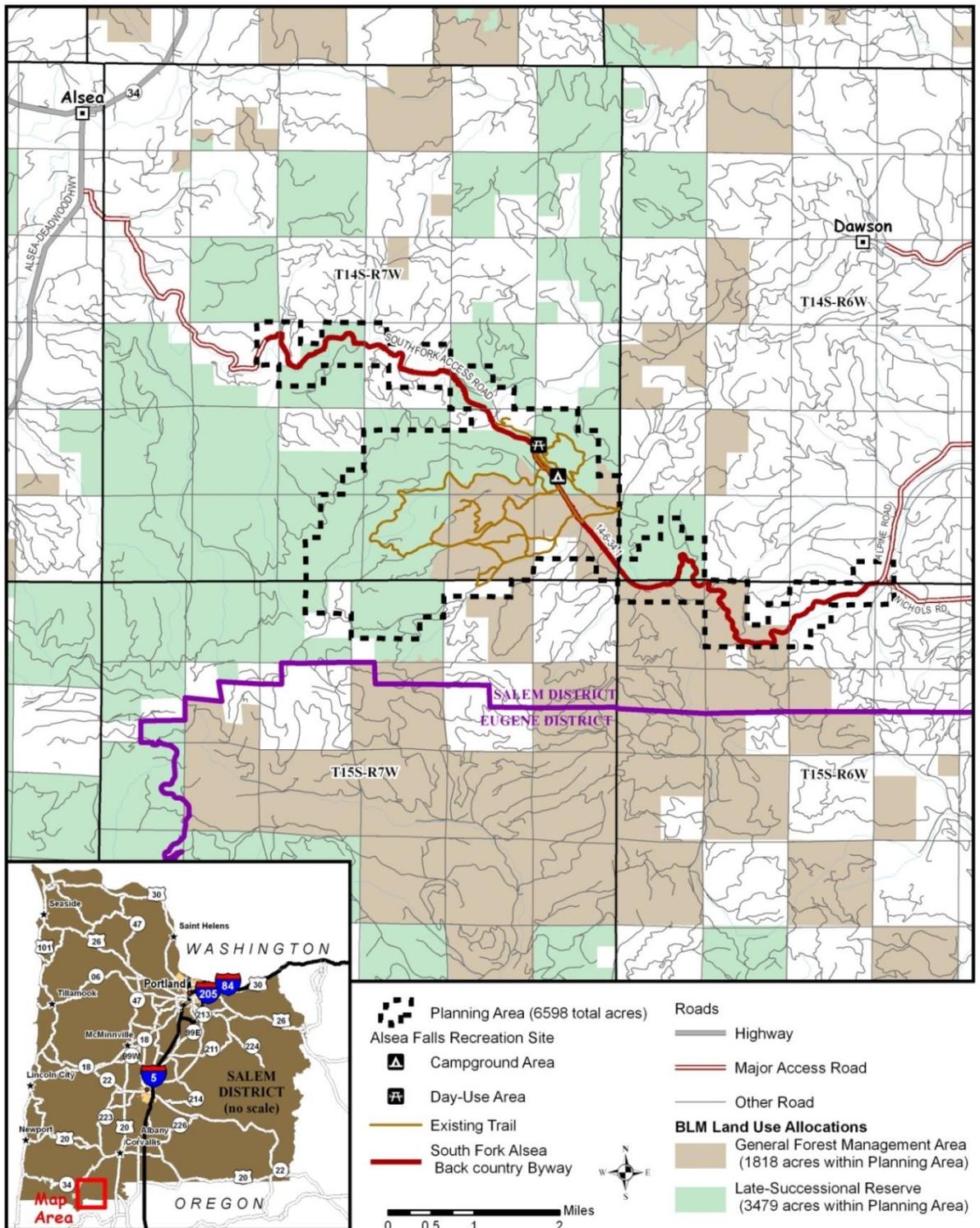
The Alsea Falls Recreation Area¹ is located 27 miles southwest of the city of Corvallis, Oregon in the forested foothills of the Coastal Mountains between the Willamette Valley and the Alsea Valley in Benton County (Figure 1). The planning area is within the Upper Alsea River fifth-field watershed and is situated primarily along the South Fork Alsea River and National Back Country Byway. The watershed exhibits traits typical of the coastal mountains including dense coniferous forests, a patchwork of timber management practices and heavy precipitation.

The Alsea Falls Recreation Area offers a wide variety of developed and dispersed recreation opportunities. The area offers camping, picnicking, swimming, angling, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, recreational driving, and forest product collection, all within an hour drive of the Corvallis and Eugene metropolitan areas.

The Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) is a guide for recreation management within the Alsea Falls Recreation Area. The RAMP would provide direction only for the management of recreation use and resources within the planning area (see Table 1). It would *not*: prioritize projects for resources other than recreation, establish or increase recreation fees, establish or modify land use allocations which guide timber management activities, make adjustments to off-highway vehicle designations make modifications to land tenure, or establish on its own any new regulations. Many of these management decisions would be addressed in the next resource management plan (RMP) effort.

¹ For the purposes of this planning effort, the Alsea Falls Recreation Area includes the scenic byway, the developed

Figure 1. Alsea Falls Recreation Management Area



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Table 1. Scope of This Planning Effort

This plan would:	This plan would NOT:
<p>Establish a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)² and Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMA)³ within the Alsea Falls Recreation Area. (see Figure 2 for the proposed SRMA and ERMA for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area)</p> <p>Define BLM's role in offering diverse, high quality recreation opportunities that contribute to meeting demand for recreation.</p> <p>Propose a recreation “niche” for the SRMA.</p> <p>Determine appropriate recreation activities and facilities to offer within the SRMA/ERMA while preventing resource degradation and contributing to the long-term health of lands.</p> <p>Identify specific on-the-ground development or modification actions to manage recreation use, protect resources and provide for a beneficial visitor experience.</p>	<p>Analyze or provide management direction for resources other than recreation such as timber, wildlife and fisheries.</p> <p>Make adjustments to land tenure or initiate any realty actions.</p> <p>Modify land use allocations that guide timber management activities.</p> <p>Make adjustments to off-highway vehicle designations.⁴</p> <p>Establish new fees or increase fees without a public process.</p> <p>Establish new regulations without being posted in the Federal Register.</p>

This Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) have been prepared by the Salem District to present and analyze potential management strategies for BLM-administered lands within the Alsea Falls Recreation Area. This EA will outline the No Action and Proposed Action alternatives, and will document the potential impacts of trail construction and site development projects.

The release of this EA marks the beginning of a formal 30-day comment period. The public comment period will run from October 9, 2012, to November 7, 2012. Stakeholders and members of the public are encouraged to provide feedback regarding the management alternatives during this period. Considering these comments, the BLM will refine and release a final Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP). A Decision Record that outlines the rationale for the decision, as well as an implementation schedule that identifies the proposed timing of specific projects, will accompany the final RAMP.

² SRMAs are administrative units where a commitment has been made to emphasize recreation by managing for specific recreation opportunities and settings on a sustained or enhanced, long-term basis.

³ ERMAs are identified areas where recreation is planned for and actively managed on an interdisciplinary-basis in concert with other resources/resource programs. ERMAs offer recreation opportunities that facilitate visitors’ freedom to pursue a variety of outdoor recreation activities and attain a variety of outcomes. Planning areas may contain more than one ERMA, with different management objectives addressing a wide variety of recreation-tourism issues, activities, conflicts, and particular recreation setting characteristics.

⁴ OHV access would be determined and managed with the next RMP effort.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The Alsea Falls SRMA and ERMA boundaries define the planning area, help determine the management of recreation use, and represent a commitment from the BLM to provide a higher level of recreation-related resources when compared with BLM-administered lands outside the SRMA/ERMA. There is a need to provide resource protection while increasing site accessibility, safety, availability of amenities, and site interpretation in a managed natural environment to provide for high quality recreation experiences. Current management actions to address these issues are taking place without a long-term comprehensive plan in place. The purpose of the proposed action is to establish a plan for future development and management direction for recreation resources within the SRMA/ERMA boundaries for the next 15 years.

Improve Site Accessibility, Safety, Signage, and Site Interpretation

There is an opportunity to improve the management of day-use activities focusing primarily around trail use, picnicking, swimming, and leisure activities. The BLM has identified opportunities for improving visitor safety on current trails. The integration of accessibility standards would provide accommodations for persons of limited mobility to experience nature.

There is also a need to improve the visitor information signage and messaging. The development of a cohesive interpretation and environmental education message would address visitor information needs and convey the BLM's management objectives within the recreation area.

Improve non-motorized trail opportunities

There is a need to improve existing non-motorized trails and increase non-motorized trail opportunities for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians within the recreation area. By providing additional non-motorized trail opportunities and modifying existing trails and trailheads, visitors to the recreation area would have adequate infrastructure to facilitate a better recreational experience. Beyond expanding current opportunities, there is also a need to correct sustainability issues in the current trail system. A trail sustainability study conducted in 2012 identified a number of concerns with the current system (e.g. steep grades, narrow trail widths).

In addition, members of the public came to BLM in 2009 with proposals for trail building within late-successional forests in the Alsea Valley, including areas around the Alsea Falls Recreation Site. Some of the trails proposed within the planning boundaries of this project are included in the proposed action.⁵

Increase Camping Opportunities

The potential for developed camping to meet future demand and growth is low given the number of existing available sites and opportunities. The Alsea Falls campground is often at capacity during summer weekends. An overflow of people, tents, and vehicles above the intended capacity in a campsite gradually expands the footprint and causes damage to resources.

⁵ Other trail proposals – including those in the Van Horn, Honeygrove, and Skunk Creek Areas are outside the scope of this planning effort and are not addressed further.

Bicyclists expressed a desire for walk-in or overflow camping opportunities. Equestrians also expressed an interest in camping opportunities within the recreation area. Expanding camping opportunities for non-motorized users would accommodate expected growth and demand.

1.3 Proposed Action

The Marys Peak Resource Area proposes to meet the purpose and need for the action through a series of activities intended to both enhance the recreation experience and address various resource issues in the recreation area. The BLM has developed phases for implementation of the projects analyzed in this planning effort. Activities within Phase 1 are focused on correcting current resource issues, improving the current trail system, and improving signage in the area. Phases 2 and 3 are focused on addressing future demand and expanding amenities.

A full description of the Proposed Action is included in Chapter 2, Section 2.4. The following is a bulleted summary of activities included in the Proposed Action:

Phase 1 of development

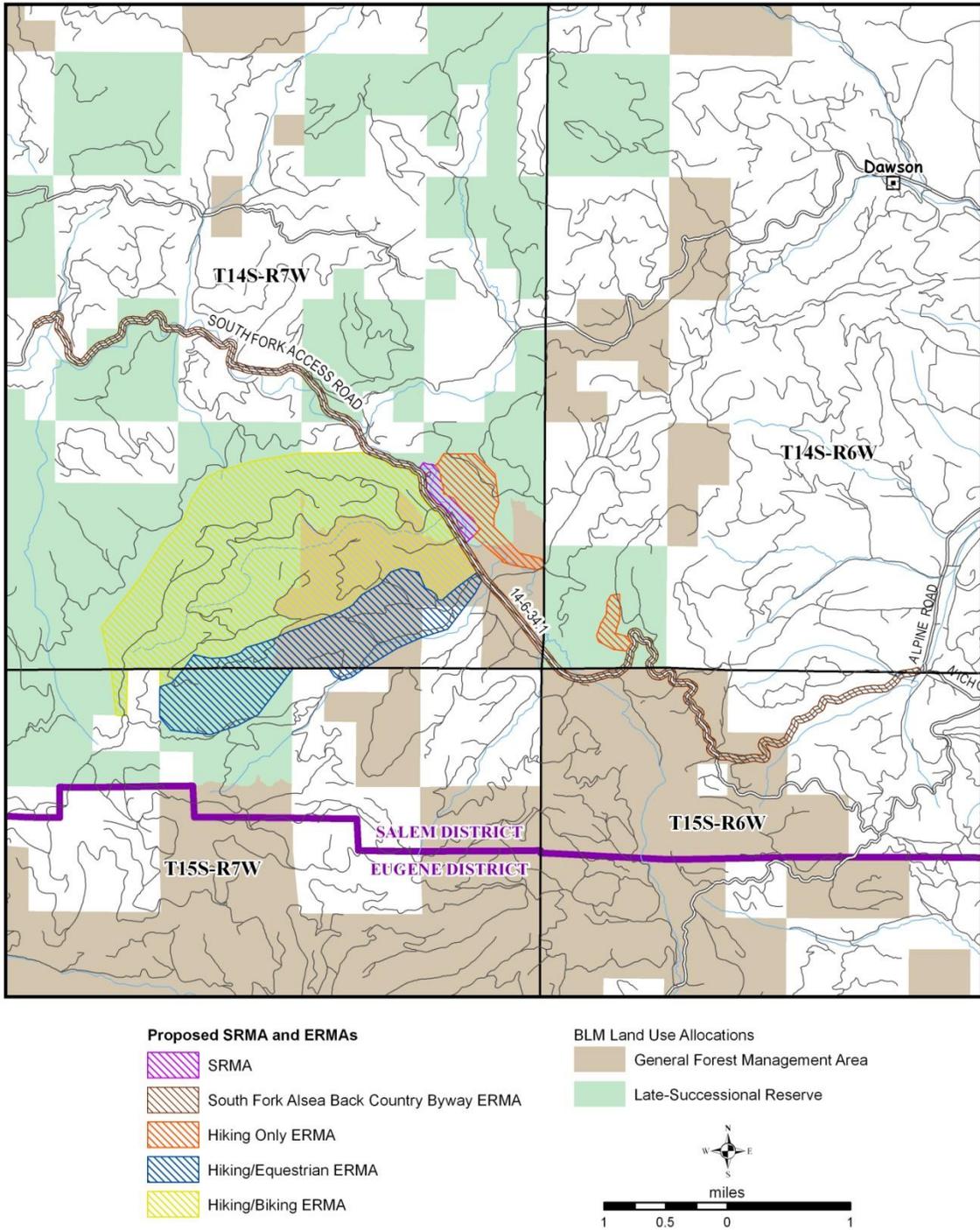
- Improvements to signage and visitor information kiosks.
- Identification of specific trail use “zones” around Fall Creek⁶ (southwest of the byway).
- Improvements to the trail system: approximately eight miles of new trail development/re-route of existing trails and four miles of existing trail/road improvements.
- Sustainability corrections to existing trails as needed.
- Improvements (including leveling and graveling the parking area and adding a pit toilet) to the current trailhead at the Fall Creek Road.
- Improvement of existing campsites (planting vegetation, creating tent pads, increasing designated parking areas).
- Repair and upgrade the existing trail to the waterfall and swimming area.
- Establishment of a non-shooting area along the Alsea Falls Recreation Site and non-motorized trail system.
- Six picnic sites located in the riparian area would be monitored and evaluated for resource issues and potentially closed. If the sites are closed, six additional picnic sites may be established west of the parking area.

Phases 2 and 3 of development

- Conversion of campsite 14 to a group campsite.
- Construction of up to five new tent sites to the east of campsite 14.
- Conversion of up to five underutilized picnic sites into walk-in campsites.
- Development of up to 10 miles of additional hiking/biking trails.
- Development of up to 5 miles of hiking/equestrian trails.
- Development of a trailhead on the 14-6-9 Road to accommodate equestrian use.
- Construction of an ADA accessible overlook of the falls.
- Construction of a gazebo or picnic shelter between the restrooms in the Day-Use area for group day use.

⁶ See Figure 8 on page 30 for location of key roads and the Fall Creek trailhead

Figure 2. Proposed Special Recreation Management Area and Extensive Recreation Management Area boundaries for Alsea Falls



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1.4 Conformance with Land Use Plan, Statutes, Regulations, and other Plans

The proposed action is in conformance with the *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*, May 1995 (RMP); *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, April 1994 (the Northwest Forest Plan, or NWFP); and *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, January 2001, as amended by July 2011 Settlement Agreement.

The above documents are available for review in the Salem District Office. Additional information about the proposed activities is available in the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan EA Analysis File, also available at the Salem District Office.

Survey and Manage Review: In 2011, a Settlement Agreement was reached in litigation regarding Survey and Manage species and the 2007 Record of Decision related to Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure in *Conservation Northwest v. Sherman, Conservation Northwest, et al. v. Sherman, et al.*, No. 08-1067-JCC (W.D. Wash., July 6, 2011). Projects that are within the range of the northern spotted owl are subject to the survey and management standards and guidelines in the 2001 ROD, as modified by the 2011 Settlement Agreement. The 2011 Settlement Agreement establishes certain categories of exemptions. Most of the projects proposed in the RAMP would qualify for exemption from conducting pre-disturbance surveys. As stated in the Settlement Agreement, the “Exemptions for Recreation Projects” are as follows:

- a. New recreational foot, mountain bike, or horse riding trail construction or relocation, or trail bridge construction, maintenance or replacement, where limited to trail work of less than five acres of clearing per trail project, and not including trails for motorized off-highway vehicles (Settlement Agreement p. 3).
- b. Projects covering less than five acres that improve an existing recreation site. Some examples of recreation site improvement include adding campsites to existing campgrounds, adding recreational structures or facilities in existing recreation sites, and expanding recreation sites. Projects related to recreation sites for motorized off-highway vehicles are not exempt (Settlement Agreement p. 3).

Relevant Statutes and Authorities

This section is a summary of the relevant statutes and authorities that apply to this effort:

- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) 1976** – Defines BLM’s organization and provides the basic policy guidance for BLM’s management of public lands.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969** – Requires the preparation of EAs or EISs on federal actions. These documents describe the environmental effects of these actions and determine whether the actions have a significant effect on the human environment.
- **Endangered Species Act (ESA) 1973** – Directs Federal agencies to ensure their actions do not jeopardize threatened and endangered species.

- **Clean Air Act (CAA) 1990** – Provides the principal framework for national, state, and local efforts to protect air quality.
- **Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) 1979** – Protects archeological resources and sites on federally-administered lands. Imposes criminal and civil penalties for removing archaeological items from federal lands without a permit.
- **Clean Water Act (CWA) 1987** – Establishes objectives to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation’s water.

1.5 Public Involvement and Identification of Relevant Issues

Planning for the Alsea Falls RAMP has been ongoing since an internal scoping meeting with the Marys Peak Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) in January 2010. The IDT, through record searches, field reviews, and the project planning process conducted internal scoping to help refine goals and objectives, analyze the area’s resources, predict the potential impacts of the management alternatives and produce planning documents.

The BLM conducted external scoping (seeking input from outside the BLM) for this project by means of a scoping letter mailed on February 16, 2010 to approximately 86 federal, state and municipal government agencies, nearby landowners, tribal authorities, and interested parties on the Marys Peak Resource Area mailing list. In March 2010, the BLM held two public meetings to solicit comments on the planning area. Held in Corvallis and Alsea, the meetings provided an open house forum for members of the public to explain their interests and concerns regarding management of BLM lands within the Alsea Falls RAMP. These meetings contributed to setting the scope of the plan and identified issues and concerns to address. The BLM followed up with another scoping letter, posted online and mailed to interested and affected parties, to solicit comment on draft plan alternatives. The comment period was open June 17 to August 31, 2010. The BLM received thirty comments during the scoping period.

A BLM website⁷ followed initial scoping to provide plan-related information and provide background for interested parties. The RAMP has also been included in the Salem District’s quarterly Project Update publication since 2010. The publication provides information regarding BLM’s current project work and provides contact information for public involvement.

Relevant Issues and Concerns

The internal and external scoping process helped BLM identify issues associated with this planning effort. The issues brought forward help formulate alternatives, identify appropriate design features, and analyze environmental effects of proposed management actions. These issues provide a basis for comparing the environmental effects of the proposed project and aid in the decision-making process. The goal of this planning effort is to effectively address these issues through a comprehensive recreation management strategy.

⁷ http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/salem/plans/alsea_index.php

Contribute to Local Economy and Visitor Services: *What ‘niche’ should the Alsea Falls Recreation Area fill in the regional recreation market? What possibilities exist for partnerships that can boost recreation related tourism and improve recreation opportunities?*

Facility Development and Camping Opportunities: *Within the recreation area, what facility or amenity development would occur to meet present and future visitor demand for recreation opportunities? To what degree and in which locations is camping appropriate?*

Trail Opportunities: *What management actions would occur on the existing non-motorized trail system to provide hikers, mountain bikers and equestrian users with additional opportunities to recreate in a forested setting within an hour drive from home? Would the non-motorized trail system expand? What actions would address the unsustainable portions of the trail system? What additional amenities would be provided?*

Weeds and Other Resources: *What management actions would reduce the effects to threatened or endangered flora and fauna species and the spread of noxious, non-native species based on existing and future recreation use? What management actions would reduce and minimize recreation-related impacts on area streams and other resources? What management actions would reduce the undesired social behaviors such as resource damage, dumping, vandalism, and human waste within the recreation area?*

Interpretation and Environmental Education: *What level of environmental education and interpretation would provide visitors with an enriching self-paced experience within the recreation area? What information are visitors seeking? What management practices does the BLM want visitors to know?*

1.6 Decisions to be Made

The BLM will identify which strategies are most appropriate for managing recreation resources and human use within the Alsea Falls recreation area. This includes determining:

- What type and level of visitor services, amenities, facilities, developments, and interpretation will be provided and in what locations?
- What numbers, types, and levels of permitted commercial and group activities are appropriate?
- What recreational experience opportunities and benefits are suitable to provide and where?
- To what extent will the Alsea Falls non-motorized trail system be modified, enhanced, and/or expanded?
- What limitations and restrictions are needed on certain recreation activities? For example: no shooting areas, weed free horsefeed, seasonal trail closures, or parking amenity utilization within the recreation site?

1.7 Land Classification

Under the 1995 Salem District RMP, the BLM adheres to Northwest Forest Plan Land Use Allocations (LUAs). Three LUAs are present within the planning area boundary. Approximately 34 percent (1,818 acres) of the federal acres in the planning area is within Matrix and 66 percent (3,479 acres) in the Late Successional Reserve (LSR). Riparian Reserves, a land use allocation that overlays General Forest and LSR Riparian is also described.

Late-Successional Reserve objectives are to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems which serve as habitat for associated plant and animal species while maintaining a functional, interacting forest ecosystem.

Matrix objectives are to produce a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities to contribute to community stability, provide connectivity, provide habitat, and provide early successional habitat.

Riparian Reserve objectives are to provide habitat terrestrial species and allow activities as long as they do not interfere in the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives.

Chapter 2 Alternatives

The expected outcome of this effort is a comprehensive Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) that would outline and describe appropriate recreational development locations, allowable activities, and associated management for the next 15 years. Proposed actions would provide facilities and infrastructure that cater to existing visitors and expand camping and non-motorized day-use opportunities while minimizing environmental resource damage. Increasing site utilization through alterations, modifications, or expansion would meet the needs of present and expected future visitor demand. Chapter 2 describes overall management goals and objectives and describes each of the alternatives.

2.1 Management Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives are common to all management alternatives.

Table 2. Management Goals and Objectives	
Management Goals	
Adaptively manage recreational opportunities offered within the Alsea Falls Recreation Area for enhanced use, enjoyment, and safety of present and future generations.	
Manage recreation use in a manner that mitigates impacts on the ecological integrity of the planning area.	
Administer the area consistent with its identified ‘niche’ in order to maximize community and economic benefits.	
Management Objectives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a management strategy that is reasonable, cost-effective and implementable. • Create sustainable satisfying and environmentally responsible recreation opportunities for users to realize mental and physical benefits. • Engage in collaborative land management by working in partnership with private and public entities, organizations, and recreational user groups. • Publicize available recreational opportunities by utilizing technological advances in marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize public information to effectively communicate rules, regulations and relevant natural and human history. • Maintain and continue to provide for the current recreation mix of designated recreation for non-motorized trail users, campers, and day-users within the recreation area that meets current and future demand. • Increase accessible recreation opportunities for a wide range of the visiting public. • Continue to provide and monitor dispersed day-use activities and take management actions to prevent resource damage to the recreation setting.

2.2 Description of Alternatives

The BLM has received a number of comments during public meetings and throughout the scoping process. In addition to assisting in identifying issues, these comments have been used to develop and refine the Proposed Action alternative.

Recreation Niche Statement: Describes the “recreation niche” the Alsea Falls Recreation Area fills in the regional recreation market. Answers the question: what would the area be known for under the alternative?

Intent: Summarizes the reasoning behind the recreation niche and describes the priorities in managing the area. Describes the targeted visitors and what activities would be provided.

Each alternative also varies by four management themes:

Theme 1. Overnight Use: Includes all components of both developed and dispersed overnight use on BLM-administered lands within the planning area. This theme will address issues such as rules, regulations, facilities, and management strategies; as well as dispersed camping along the byway, near rivers, and the potential expansion, in suitable locations, to accommodate present and future user demand.

Theme 2. Day-Use: Includes the rules, regulations, facilities, management, and development strategies that concern non-overnight activities that occur within both developed and dispersed areas, including swimming, picnicking, recreational driving of roads open to vehicles including the byway, and recreational shooting. Although hunting and fishing are allowable day-use activities and occur within the recreation area, the State and Federal Departments of Fish and Wildlife manage and regulate these activities.

Theme 3. Trail System Management: Covers the non-motorized Alsea Falls Trail System, associated trailhead access points, as well as potential non-motorized trail expansion and road to trail conversions. The existing non-motorized trail system consists of 12 miles of closed road and 5 miles of natural surfaced trails including trails within the Alsea Falls Recreation Site and leading to Green Peak Falls.

Theme 4. Visitor Information and Interpretation: All the public services under BLM's control within the recreation area including administrative presence, safety for staff and visitors, information kiosks, interpretative materials, environmental education, signage, brochures and websites.

Management direction related to travel and transportation, charging of fees, and special recreation event permits (commercial, competitive, and group activities) applies to all alternatives and is found in Section 2.5 *Management Actions Common to All Alternatives*.

2.3 Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

Recreation Niche Statement: The Alsea Falls Recreation Area provides a variety of designated and dispersed recreation opportunities along a forested backcountry byway corridor between the Willamette and Alsea Valleys. Use is concentrated to the developed campground and picnic area locations of Alsea Falls for a self-directed experience.

Intent: Maintain current level of facilities and amenities. No development or expansion of recreation opportunities would occur within the recreation area. Actions would focus on modifications to existing facilities to address resource protection.

Alternative A proposes continuing current management practices and reflects existing conditions, recreation management, and operations within the recreation area, and provides background information for Alternative B that follows. No large-scale site development or alteration would occur. The Alsea Falls Recreation Site would remain managed under current rules and regulations. Actions would only address the most severe resource concerns. No new trails would be constructed and no changes or improvements would be made to trailhead access.

Theme 1: Overnight Use (Figure 3)

Designated developed overnight use would be limited to 16 existing campsites within the Alsea Falls campground. Dispersed camping is allowed on BLM-administered lands throughout the area; locations exist along the byway near Alsea Falls Recreation Site.

Developed Overnight Use

Estimated total capacity in Alsea Falls campground (assuming two vehicles/single site, four vehicles/group site, three individuals/vehicle): *102 overnight users*

Alsea Falls developed campground provides the following expanded amenities:

- Defined camping footprint and parking
- Metal fire ring
- BBQ grill
- Picnic table(s)
- Campsite post number
- Defined parking spot
- Potable water
- Four vault toilets
- Trash service
- Onsite campground host and recreation staff for security
- Self-service camping and day-use fee registration monitored by host and staff
- General site information through brochures, kiosks, bulletin boards, and internet
- Firewood sales
- Nearby trail system

An expanded amenity fee (\$12-\$20 per night) is charged for use of these sites by way of established first come, first serve self-registration process monitored by the staff and campground host. Rules including length of stay and quiet hours are established and clearly communicated at the registration kiosk. Recreation staff and volunteer hosts monitor visitors and clean the campsites.

Dispersed Overnight Use

No amenities are currently provided for dispersed overnight use within the Alsea Falls Recreation Area. Dispersed campsites within the area have resulted from unregulated overnight use. These undesignated dispersed sites are typically located at high quality sites near roads, rivers, or popular river access points. Unregulated overnight use has led to resource damage and associated social issues such as dumping, mud bogging, vegetative loss, and unsightly campsites. Staff will continue to monitor and clean sites as needed. Some dispersed sites may close and be restored to natural conditions if resource damage dictates.

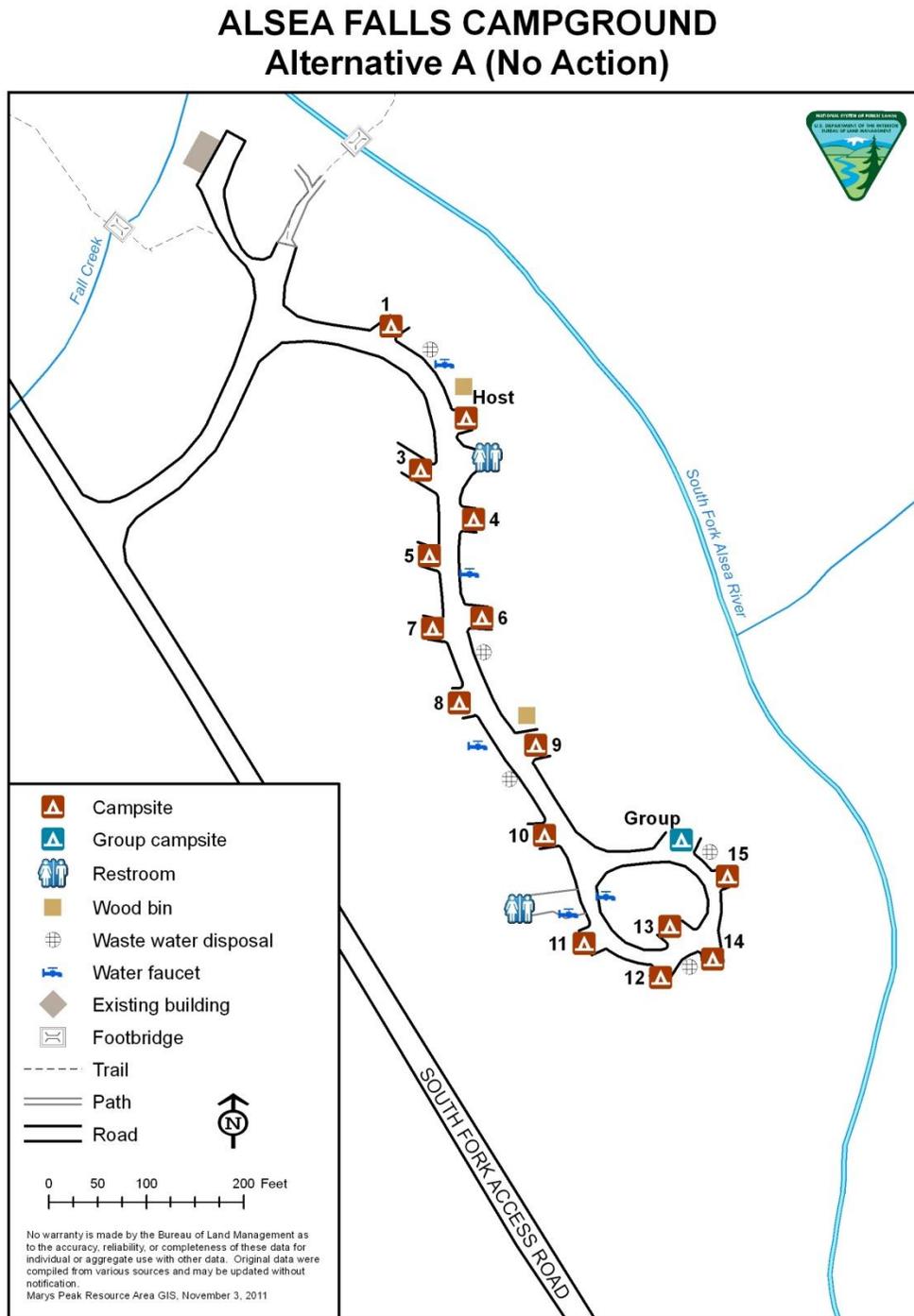
Additional Amenities

Daily maintenance includes cleaning of vault toilets, campsite, and picnic sites. Recreation staff or campground host monitor trash within the campground and picnic area. Full trash bags end up in a central garbage bin and transported to the landfill on a weekly basis by a local garbage company.

Regulations

No regulations specific to the area are in place. Relevant existing regulations include the 14-day overnight stay limit and others related to public use and occupancy applies to all public lands in Oregon and Washington. Fee collection is pursuant to applicable provisions of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA), 16 U.S.C. 6801 *et seq.*

Figure 3. Alternative A (No Action) Campground



Theme 2: Day-Use

Day-use activities within the recreation area include designated and dispersed picnicking, relaxing, non-motorized trail use, swimming, sightseeing, fishing, hunting, recreational shooting, and leisurely driving. No new construction would occur unless current infrastructure proves unsafe for staff and visitors. Existing trails would not provide accessibility all for ages.

Developed Day-Use

Overnight use is not authorized in the Alsea Falls picnic area. Day-use is concentrated at the Alsea Falls picnic area, where a \$3 standard amenity fee is assessed.

Alsea Falls picnic area provides the following standard amenities (Figure 4):

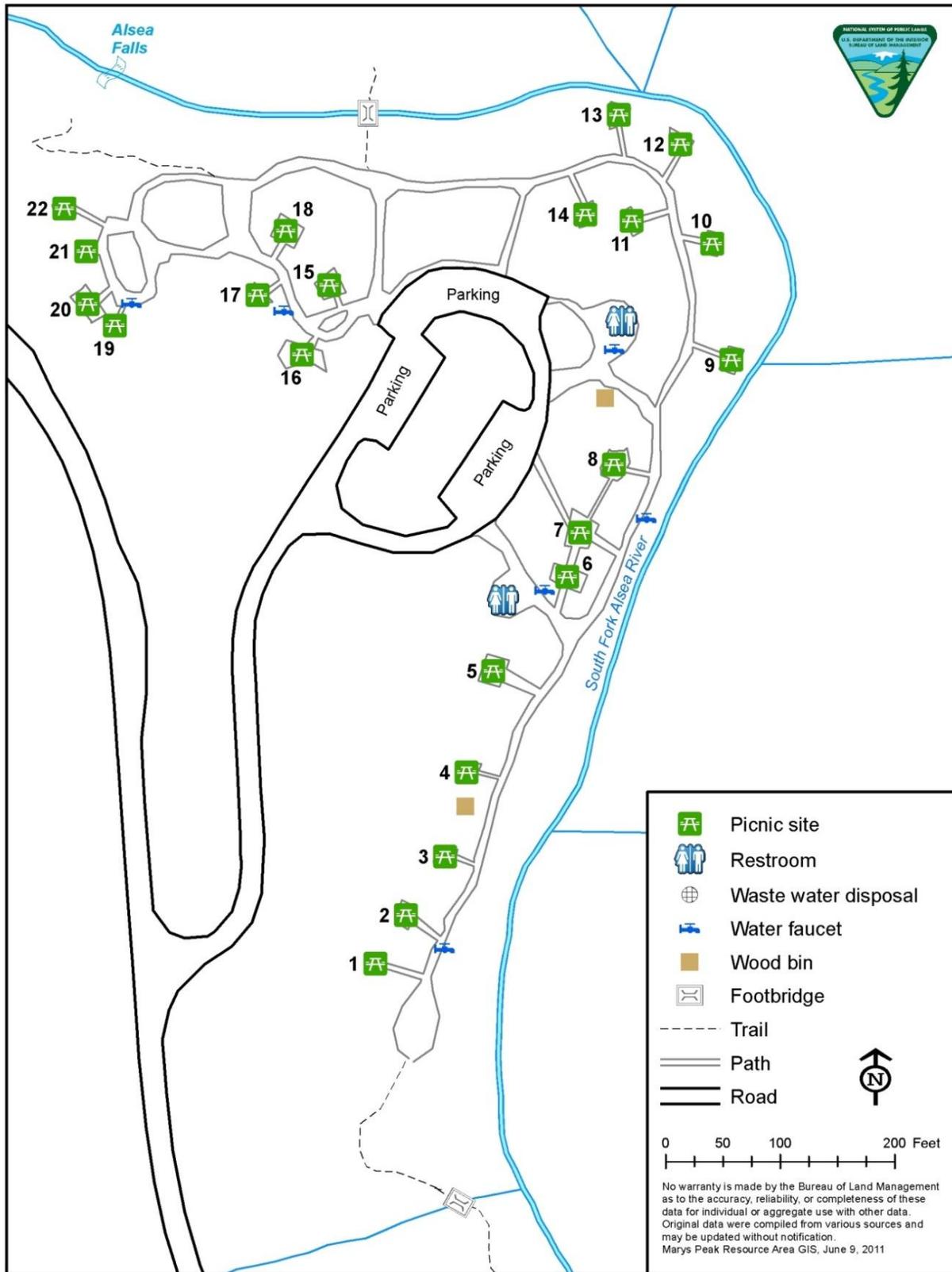
- Defined picnic site footprint
- Centralized parking lot
- Picnic table(s)
- Metal fire ring (some locations)
- BBQ grill (some locations)
- Potable water
- Four vault toilets
- Trash service
- Patrols by campground host and recreation staff for security
- Self-service day-use fee registration monitored by host and staff
- General site information through brochures, kiosks, bulletin boards, and internet
- Nearby trail system

Public use and occupancy regulations apply to all public lands in Oregon and Washington. These regulations and other rules are clearly communicated at the central registration kiosk. Recreation staff and volunteer hosts monitor visitors and clean picnic sites.

South Fork Alsea River National Back Country Byway and Dispersed Day-Use

Open roads are available to all day-use recreation activities. Only non-motorized forms of recreation are permissible behind gated roads. Regular brushing, removal of hazard trees, and maintenance to signage would continue to occur on the existing South Fork Alsea River National Backcountry Byway. Many river access points are user-created social trails with poor alignment leading to soil erosion and loss of riparian vegetation through trampling.

Figure 4. *Alternative A (No Action) Day-Use Area*



Theme 3: Trail System Management

Periodic maintenance would continue on the existing 17 mile, non-motorized Alsea Falls Trail System. The Fall Creek trailhead would provide limited parking for equestrian truck and trailers, though it would require substantial maintenance. Priority work would continue to be completed by paid youth crew labor and volunteer assistance. Regular maintenance including brushing, grubbing, removal of fallen trees and tread repair would continue, as agency funding is available. No new trail opportunities would be created.

Use of the system would continue to be limited to non-motorized users, including hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Some trails (including trails in the day-use area) restrict bike and equestrian use due to location and slope. Because of a limited weight bridge on the Stellar Jay Trail⁸, equestrian use on the Fall Creek trail system would continue to be very limited. While some visitor information boards exist, directional trail signage throughout the system is lacking. Equestrian parking would continue to be limited due to trailer and vehicle size constraints. All trails would remain open throughout the year.

Theme 4: Visitor Information and Interpretation

Safety

Providing for staff and visitor safety within the recreation site and trail system would remain a priority.

A campground host stays at the Alsea Falls campground during the recreation season (typically mid-May through early September), utilizing one of the campsites typically available to visitors. Amenities available to hosts include water hookups and use of a portable generator or gas for their personal generator to recharge batteries.

Seasonal staff have a duty station at Alsea Falls Recreation Site, but have the option of living onsite or arriving daily. Current staff amenities include water hookups, a power cord connected to a propane powered generator at the maintenance shop, and a regular cell phone. Phone service is anywhere from 2 to 10 miles away. Onsite living quarters for staff is currently located near the maintenance shop.

Running generators for electricity is noisy and disturbs some visitors, but is necessary to maintain power to run equipment and lights in the maintenance shop and recharge a variety of batteries that run tools, phones, and radios.

Contact with campers occurs daily, while contact with day-users varies. The campground host and recreation staff provide administrative presence daily. Law enforcement presence is a cooperative effort between BLM and the Benton County Sheriff's Office.

⁸ A brochure of the current trail locations and names in the Alsea Falls recreation area is available at the Salem District Office. Or at: http://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/files/brochures/Alsea_Falls_Trail_System.pdf

Radio communications with Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area and the Salem District office occur with a handheld, shop-mounted, or truck-mounted radio system broadcast over BLM frequencies.

Environmental Education, Interpretation, and Information

Existing general information and directional signage would be maintained or replaced. Bulletin boards and kiosks provide non-site specific interpretation while site brochures provide minimal history and directional information. Recreation opportunities would be publicized and promoted within the local area.

Signage includes:

- Rules and regulations posted at registration kiosks in the campground and picnic area.
- Large South Fork Access Road (South Fork Alsea River National Back Country Byway) entrance sign on the east and west terminus.
- Forest Service posters depicting flora and fauna from around the United States.
- Large map of travel routes and connections with the Eugene District BLM.
- Five wooden interpretation and information bulletin boards with maps, generic interpretation and other important periodic information.
- Road safety signage including speed limits and trail user crossings.
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife fishing regulations.
- Location maps or direction signs are fairly limited in the recreation area.

2.4 Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Recreation Niche Statement: The Alsea Falls Recreation Area provides non-motorized trail opportunities, developed camping and day-use activities, and environmental education and interpretation in a forested backcountry byway corridor between the Willamette and Alsea Valleys. Developed recreation site, non-motorized trail system, and targeted interpretive information allow for a relatively natural recreation experience close to rural communities and about an hour's drive from the Eugene and Corvallis urban population centers.

Intent: Provide a high quality visitor experience for designated and dispersed recreation opportunities while minimizing resource impacts. Depending on the setting, the range of activities includes camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing, non-motorized trail use, nature study, driving for pleasure, and hunting. Offer self-paced environmental education and interpretation opportunities where visitors can enjoy and explore nature, experience a sense of well-being, and gain knowledge in a developed recreation site and designated non-motorized trail system. Promote developed facilities, recreation activities, environmental education, and interpretation by publicizing available opportunities to communities and visitors.

Alternative B proposes to cater to the current mix of recreation users within the Alsea Falls Recreation Site and expand upon existing recreation areas. Camping opportunities would be expanded in the Alsea Falls Campground to accommodate anticipated future demand. The Alsea Falls picnic area would remain available, with the possibility of increased facilities to accommodate future use and visitors of all abilities. An overhaul of the 17 mile non-motorized Alsea Falls Trail System would realign, reroute, and restore unsustainable portions of the trail system. Up to an additional 23⁹ miles of new non-motorized trail would be constructed. Unauthorized and unstable trails in the riparian areas would be hardened, rerouted, or decommissioned to protect natural resources and visitor safety. Self-guided interpretive and environmental education programs would be developed.

Theme 1: Overnight Use

Developed Overnight Use

In addition to continuing current management within the recreation area, camping opportunities would be expanded within existing recreation sites based on demand and resource issues. This decision would be made within an adaptable framework that establishes standards and indicators for visitor satisfaction, occupancy rates, and other factors.

Existing gray water (sink) disposal stations would be replaced with wheelchair accessible stations and additional gray water units would be installed in the day-use area where camping is allowed.

⁹ This includes 8 miles of new hiker/biker trail in Phase 1 and an additional 15 miles of hiker/equestrian/biker trail in the expansion areas.

Expansion of camping opportunities would be phased over the life of the plan based on demand and funding. Phase 1 campground actions would include improving existing campsites, expanding existing parking, and addressing the proliferation of social trails.

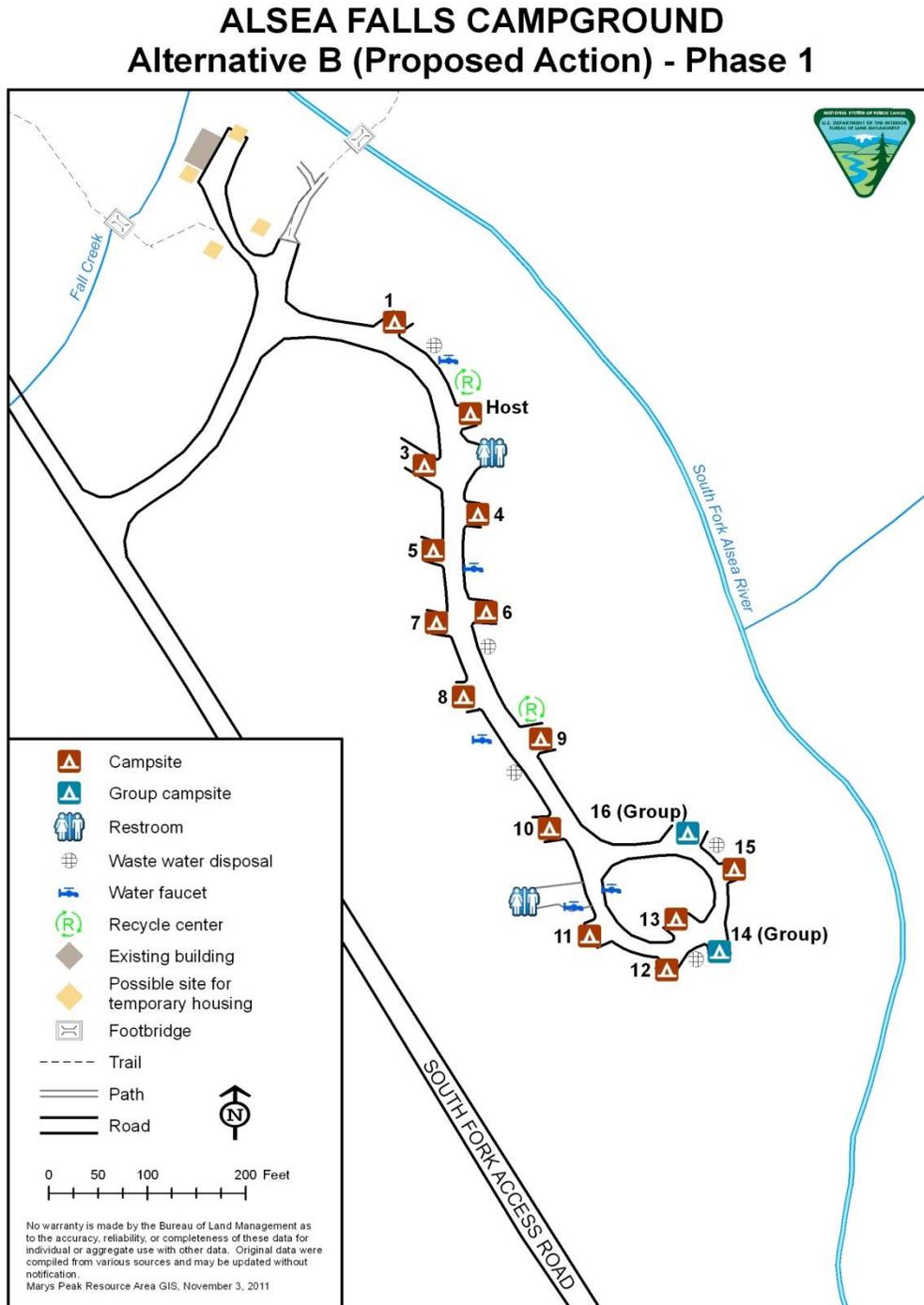
Phase 1 Campground Actions (Figure 5)

Sixteen campsites would remain open. Bureau staff has noticed gradual and undesigned expansion of some campsites. To reduce resource issues associated with this expansion and to meet demand for more camping space, the footprint of some existing campsites would be widened. Activities would include increasing designated parking to accommodate more vehicles, creating tent pads, elevating some campsites out of wet areas, and planting additional privacy screening between sites. Where needed, as determined by Resource Area specialists, barriers would be installed in campsites to prevent further expansion.

Campsite 16 would remain a group campsite. Gradual footprint expansion over the years has created resource issues. The footprint of this site would be reduced by planting native vegetation on the west end and limiting trails to the river. One designated trail to the river would be hardened, while all other trails would be closed and rehabilitated with native vegetation. To prevent visitors from driving into the campsite, a taller barrier would be constructed in the parking area.

Figure 5 on the following page shows the proposed Phase 1 campground actions described above.

Figure 5. Alternative B (Proposed Action) Campground Actions Phase 1



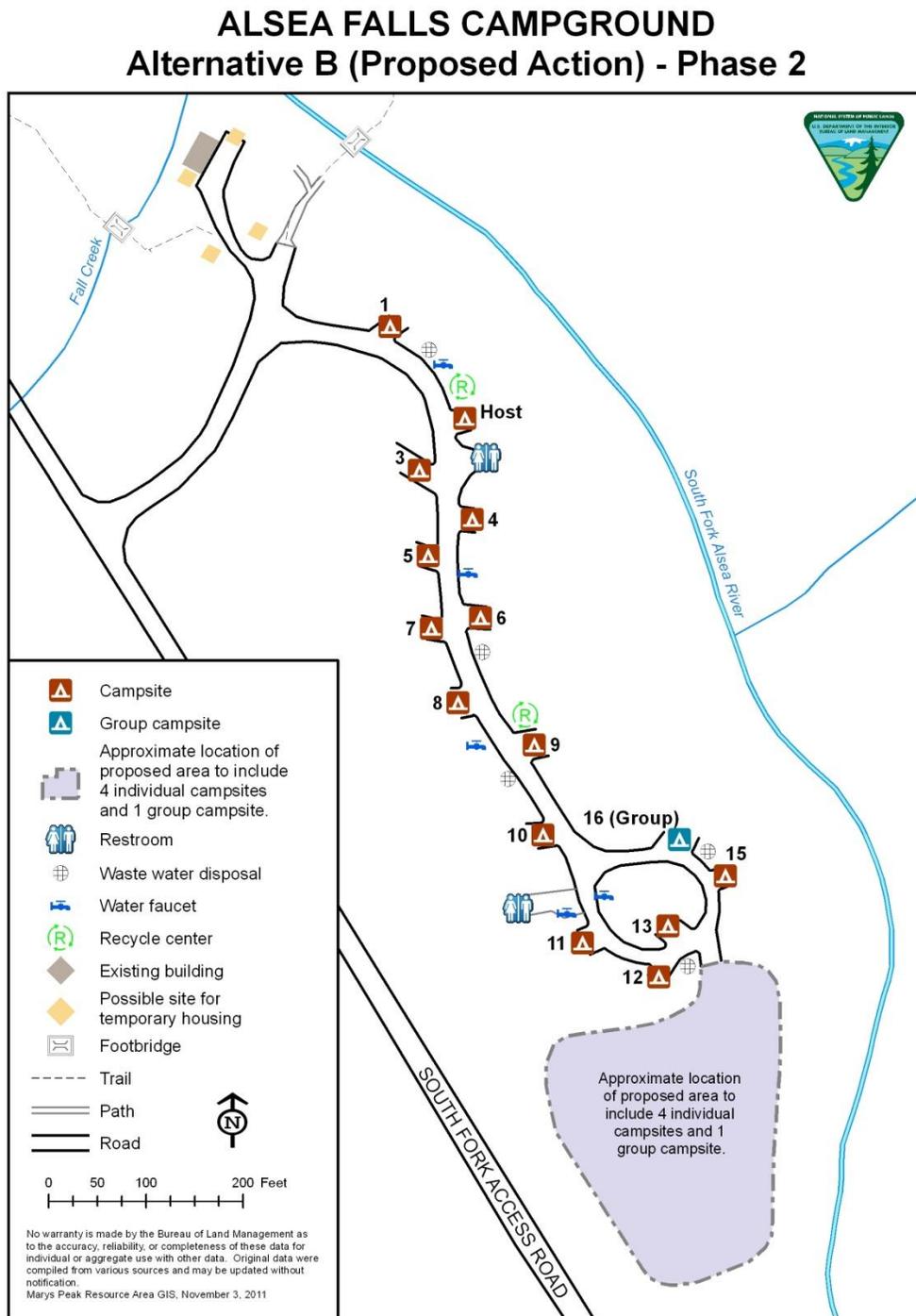
Phase 2 Campground Actions (Figure 6)

Campsite 14 would become a group campsite. Approximately two trees would be removed for parking expansion. Up to four tent pads would be created. One trail would be designated as a path to the river. Other unauthorized trails would be closed and rehabilitated with native vegetation.

Up to five tent sites (one group campsite and four individual sites) would be constructed to the east of campsite 14. These campsites would accommodate tents only. Each new campsite would include a fire ring, barbeque grill, picnic table and designated parking for one or two vehicles. These five sites would be closed to trailer use. A total of 20 campsites (18 individual and 2 group campsites) would be available for overnight use.

Figure 6 on the following page shows the proposed Phase 2 campground actions described above.

Figure 6. Alternative B (Proposed Action) Campground Actions Phase 2

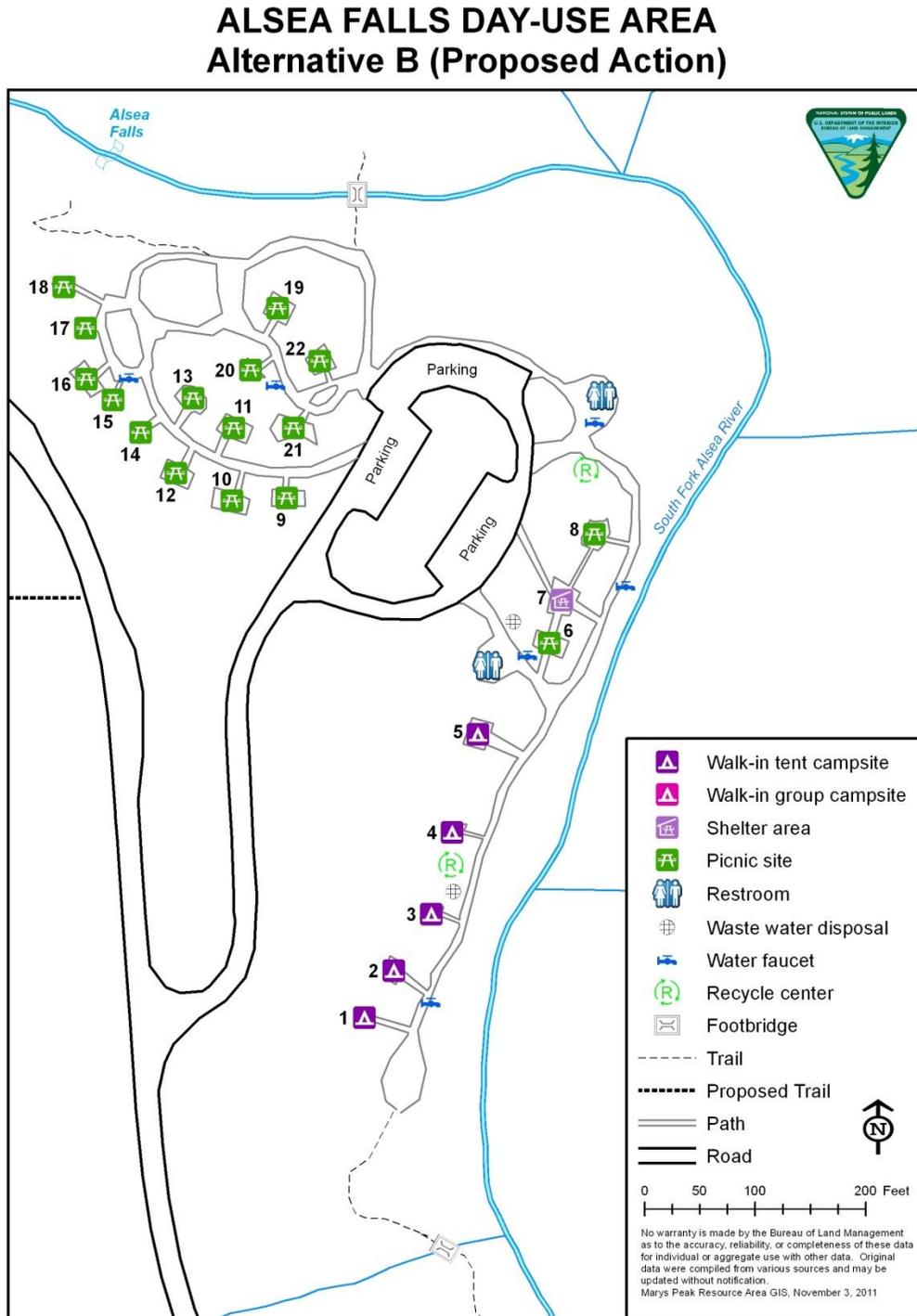


Phase 2 Day-Use Area Actions (Figure 7)

Up to five underutilized picnic sites would be converted to walk-in campsites. These campsites would accommodate tents only. Each new campsite would include a fire ring, barbeque grill, and a picnic table. Parking for one or two vehicles per site would be allowed in the day-use area parking lot. Parking for trailers would not be available.

Figure 7 on the following page shows the conversion activities described for Phase 2.

Figure 7. *Alternative B (Proposed Action) Phase 2 – Conversion from Day-Use to Overnight Camping*



Dispersed Overnight Use

Dispersed camping would continue to be allowed within the recreation area outside designated recreation sites. If necessary, sites with considerable resource concerns would be hardened or closed. Hardening sites may include installing natural barriers or adding riprap and gravel to improve drainage and reduce resource damage.

Recreation staff would continue to monitor and clean dispersed sites near the Alsea Falls Recreation Site as needed. Frequent patrols would occur during high use season and a greater emphasis would be placed on establishing regular contact between staff and visitors.

Theme 2: Day-Use

Phase 1. Developed Day-Use

Six underutilized picnic sites, located adjacent to the river in a riparian area, would be monitored and potentially closed. The existing trail to these sites would be decommissioned. Visitors would be directed through the central parking lot and back to the south, reconnecting to the existing trail system. Relocating the trail would facilitate separate camping and day-use activities once camping is allowed in this location (an action described in Theme 1, Phase 2.) If demand dictates, additional picnic sites would be built to the west of the central parking lot away from the river. Each picnic site would include a barbeque and picnic table.

Existing designated trails and structures to the base of the falls would be repaired, upgraded, or modified to provide safer access to visitors, reduce maintenance issues, and protect natural resources. Actions include the repair or installation of stairs or steps with nonslip surfacing, taller handrails, or rerouting trails to provide better access to visitors regardless of abilities, and to create a wider area to view the falls. To improve day-use safety around the falls, the existing trail would be modified to include additional handrails, upgraded steps, and obstacles such as roots and rocks would be removed. Unauthorized trails posing a hazard to visitors would be closed and signed.

Phase 2. Developed Day-Use

Eight picnic sites would remain open. As addressed in the to **Theme 1, Phase 2 Campground Actions** on page 24, up to five picnic sites to the east of the central parking lot would be converted to walk-in camping based on demand, funding, and staffing levels. A gazebo, pavilion, or shelter may be constructed between the two restrooms (see Figure 7).. Designated trails to the structure would be constructed and ADA approved. Other unauthorized trails would be closed and rehabilitated with native vegetation.

Phase 3. ADA accessible overlook of Alsea Falls

This alternative includes the construction of an ADA accessible overlook of the falls. The structure's precise location has not yet been determined, though a view from below the falls would be preferable to one from above. The structure would be designed to blend into the environment as much as possible. Vegetation removal would be minimized, but would occur

as to provide an optimal view. As with all phases of development, this element is dependent on funding and need.

South Fork Alsea River National Back Country Byway

Management of the South Fork Alsea River National Back Country Byway would continue by updating traffic regulation signage along the byway and adding new portal signs.

Dispersed Day-Use

Dispersed day-use activities would continue. The creation of a no-shooting zone near the Alsea Falls Recreation Site and non-motorized trail system would reduce the likelihood of shooting accidents and reduce user conflicts.

Theme 3: Trail System Management¹⁰

Summary of the Alsea Falls Trail System

Use of the Alsea Falls trail system would continue to be limited to non-motorized users including hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Trail maintenance and improvement would occur on the existing trails and up to 23 miles of new trails would be constructed or re-routed from existing trails for non-motorized uses.¹¹ Safe and adequate parking to accommodate non-motorized user groups would be provided.

This alternative would address sustainability issues on the existing hiking trails in the day-use area (Side Winder, Big Fir, and Buck Horn) and the biking and hiking trail in the campground/day-use area (South Fork Mile Trail). The existing trail system in the Fall Creek area would be improved and designed to accommodate hiking and biking use (see Figure 8, Proposed Trail System). Future expansion areas for biking, hiking, and equestrian use are also identified in Figure 8.

The restriction of public vehicular access on the trail system would continue. Access roads would be maintained in a serviceable condition to accommodate administrative vehicle access to the Alsea Falls trail system.

Existing Trail System Modifications and Improvements

Existing trail portions would be modified or improved to increase sustainability of the tread and provide for differing experiences. This includes the trail to Green Peak Falls trail, which is accessed through the Hull Oaks' Hubert McBee campground and continuing along the river trail from Alsea Falls day-use area.

¹⁰ Future trail development and expansion is contingent upon funding and work agreements with user groups.

¹¹ Three existing bridges have been submitted for deferred maintenance and are slated for repair/replacement in the next few years. This includes the foot bridge on the Stellar Jay Trail and the two foot bridges in the day-use site.

A riparian trail in the picnic area, identified by the IDT to have significant resource concerns, would be armored in an effort to keep it open to visitors. Other trails northeast of the scenic byway¹² and within the day-use area would also be modified to address sustainability concerns. Directional signage would be placed on trails at junctions to reduce confusion, and interpretation signage would be placed throughout the trail system at key points of interest.

The existing trail system at the Fall Creek Trailhead would be improved and expanded (see “New Trail System Development” below).

New Trail System Development

Future trail system development would be focused north and west of the scenic byway at the Fall Creek Trailhead.

Phase 1 of the trail system development in the Fall Creek area will focus on re-routing and connecting existing trails in the area (see Figure 8 for Phase 1 trails). The emphasis for this phase will be addressing known sustainability issues, moving use from roads to trails, and creating logical loops. The end result of this phase will be a 12 mile trail system that is designed for and open to hiking and biking.

A new hiking only trail would be constructed near the 14-6-31.1 Road.

Trails would conform to BLM design and construction criteria and the Forest Service trail building guide. Future trail expansion within the recreation area would require Adopt-a-Trail agreements with user groups to ensure assistance with trail construction and maintenance.

Future phases of trail system development include approximately five miles of equestrian/hiking trails and ten miles of new biking/hiking trails. These areas are north and south of the Phase 1 development and are identified as “expansion areas” in Figure 8.

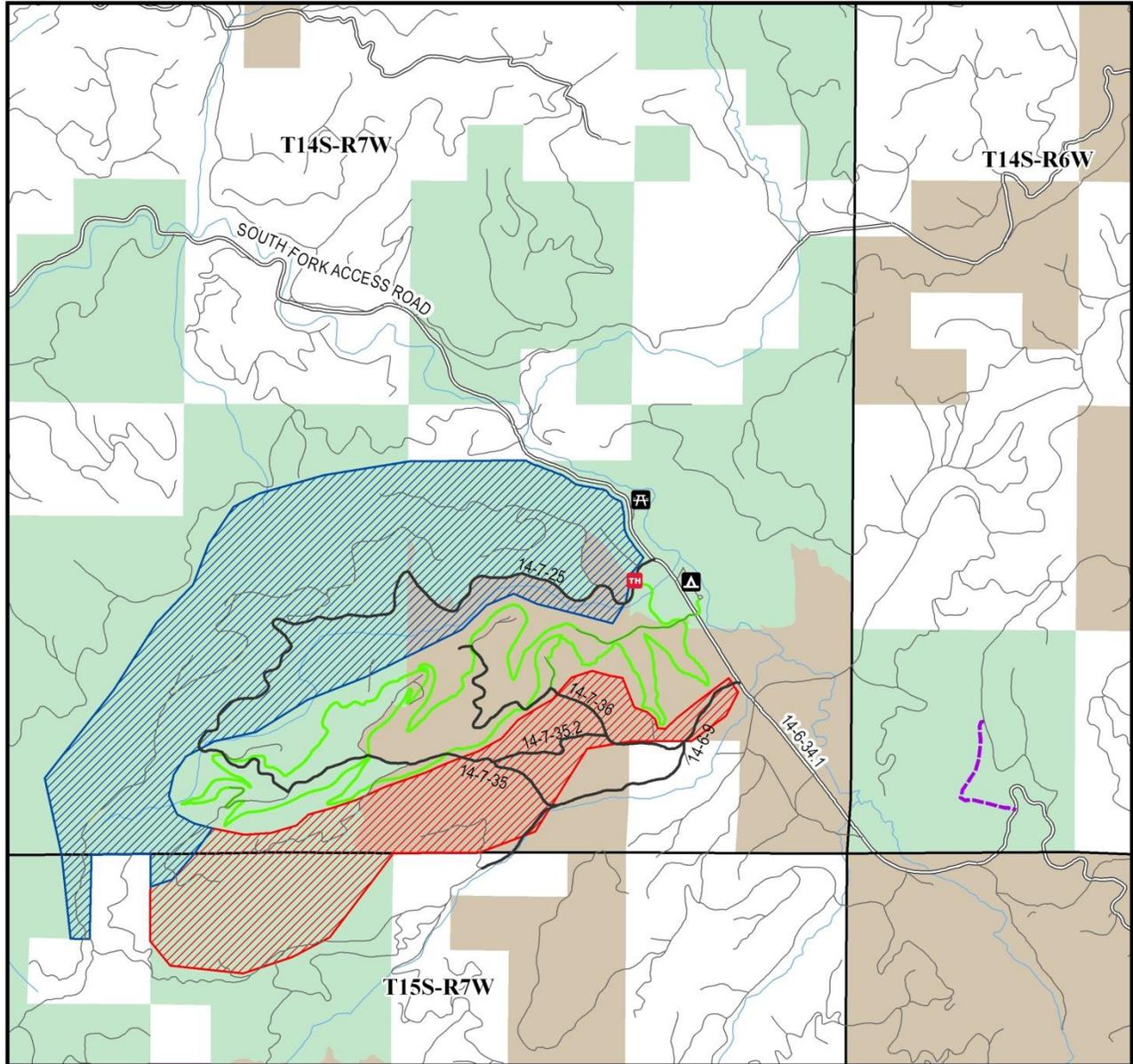
Trailhead Parking Improvements and New Construction

The first phase of trailhead improvements would address the Fall Creek trailhead, off the 14-7-25 road. The current trailhead is poorly signed and subject to rutting during the wet season. The existing site would require removal of debris, leveling and grading, and defining parking. An area appropriate for approximately seven to ten vehicles would be developed. Bulletin boards or kiosks would be installed to provide a trail system map, other pertinent user information, and house a fee tube. A restroom would be provided at the trailhead.

The construction of an equestrian-appropriate trailhead off of the 14-6-9 Road would occur in Phase 2. This trailhead would need to be of sufficient size to accommodate horse trailers and would support use of the proposed equestrian/hiking trail system. The improvement would consist of leveling, grading, and defining parking spaces.

¹² Includes the Side Winder, Big Fir, Buck Horn, and South Fork Mile Trails.

Figure 8. Trail System Changes, Development, and Additional Opportunities

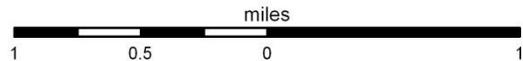


Proposed Expansion Plan

- Phase 1 Hike/Bike Trail
- - - New South Fork Trail
- Future Hike/Bike Expansion Area
- Future Hike/Equestrian Expansion Area
- TH Fall Creek Trailhead

BLM Land Use Allocations

- General Forest Management Area
- Late-Successional Reserve



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Theme 4: Visitor Information and Interpretation

Safety

Visitor safety would be improved through increased traffic control measures such as speed bumps, well-defined parking, updating signage, increasing radio communication capabilities, and developing sites that can accommodate a campground host and seasonal employee.

Parking spaces would be striped and speed bumps would be installed on roadways to facilitate safe driving and organized parking within the recreation site. The central parking lot within the day-use area would be enlarged to accommodate assigned parking for new walk-in campsites and reduce conflicts with day-users.

Up to two housing sites with a concrete pad and minimal hookups would be constructed for temporary housing for potential host applicants. A host site and seasonal site would better recruit individuals to serve the public and provide daily site operations and maintenance at Alsea Falls Recreation Site. Minimal site amenities would include a gray and black water dump location, low scale power source, and water hookups.

Patrols of developed and dispersed recreation locations during high use season (typically mid-June to early September) would be maintained. A greater emphasis would be placed on regular contact with visitors by BLM staff and volunteer hosts. The cooperative law enforcement effort between BLM and Benton County Sheriff's Office would continue.

Environmental Education, Interpretation, and Information

A plan to address interpretation and environmental education would be developed within the recreation area. Signage would direct visitors in a safe and efficient manner. Signs would be consolidated and be designed to blend into the environment as much as possible. Signage, kiosks, bulletin boards, websites, and brochures would be updated to reflect public information needs and help promote the site as a destination for non-motorized recreation opportunities. Additional bulletin boards or kiosks would be installed throughout the Alsea Falls Recreation Site.

Directional signage would be installed on all trails at appropriate junctions and interpretation signage would be placed periodically throughout the trail system at key points of interest. Signage would follow a cohesive sign and interpretation plan.

Collaborating with local communities on events and surrounding recreational opportunities would bring awareness to local residents and public seeking to expand their experience while visiting the recreation area and local communities.

Additional Amenities and Services

Recycling centers would be built to allow visitors to reduce the amount of waste transferred to the landfill. One center would be located in the existing wooden corrals. An additional recycling center would be built near the campground entrance.

Efficiencies for Providing Recreation

The BLM would seek partnerships and agreements with individuals, groups, local government and adjacent landowners to promote and expand the areas recreational opportunities and provide better recreation experiences to visitors. The building and maintenance of the trail system would depend greatly on these partnerships.

The BLM would look into efficiencies of providing recreation opportunities within and in the vicinity of the recreation area by exploring the possibility of providing recreation opportunities through nongovernmental providers such as concessionaires.

2.5 Management Actions

The following management actions would be implemented as staff and funding allow and is not dependent on a specific alternative being chosen.

All Themes

The Salem District non-native species management plan for weed treatments would be developed, tailored, and implemented within the recreation area. The plan would include methods of prevention, removal, and control of undesired species.

Resources would be protected and future degradation would be minimized within the recreation area by restoring damaged segments of the riverbank and harden a few selected trails to allow river access. Hardening may include structure installation.

Visitor traffic control measures would be implemented. Parking areas would be striped to encourage orderly parking.

Fuel loading would be monitored and reduced or treated as necessary, following standard protocol and procedure. Hazard trees would be reviewed based on district policy within the recreation area to include the identification, monitoring, and removal before the park opens for the season.

Safety

A no shooting zone would be created for the trail system and recreation site to provide for safety of visitors and staff. Signs would be posted at the boundary. This action would require processing through a Federal Register notice.

Environmental Education, Interpretation, and Information

The recreation area would be promoted to draw visitors into the local communities. The additional visitors may increase revenue in local communities.

Accessibility

Where possible, site developments would be made accessible to allow full participation by persons with disabilities or limited mobility. Existing facilities and amenities would be modified, improved, or replaced with ones accessible for the vast majority of abilities.

Efficiencies in Providing Recreation

Standard procedure manuals or plans for recreation site operations and maintenance tasks would be developed, including but not limited to the trail system, byway, signage, interpretation, fee collection, and others as needed.

Travel and Transportation Management

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) use within the recreation area will not be addressed within this RAMP. An official seasonal public vehicle closure (April 1 to September 30) of gates within the recreation area would occur to allow trail usage on closed roads. Administrative access would be provided for other BLM land management activities. OHV vehicle designations would be enforced and signage posted where necessary. Trails causing resource damage would be closed and returned to a natural state or rerouted, where feasible, to maintain a recreational opportunity. OHV access would be determined and managed with the next RMP effort.

Fee Collection

Recreation site fees for camping and day-use would continue under current regulations. All fees would be collected under authorization from and in compliance with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) [PL 108-447]. Consistent with REA, the public and Recreation Resource Advisory Committee would be provided with opportunities to make recommendations and comments regarding proposed fees changes.

Permitting of Special Recreation Events and Activities

A Special Recreation Permit (SRP) would continue to be required for all commercial, competitive, vending operations, or group events and activities within the recreation area. In the past, SRPs have been issued for mountain bike and road cycling events.¹³ It is unlikely that the implementation of this plan would appreciably affect the volume of SRP requests. Depending on workload and staffing capacity at the time of the request, applications for SRPs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. All SRPs must conform to current BLM Manual 2930 Recreation Permits and Fees and BLM Handbook H-2930-1 Recreation Permit Administration Handbook. Vending operations would be permitted only in association with a one-time special event or for firewood distribution within the recreation site.

2.6 Project Design Features

Project Design Features (PDFs) Common to All Management Actions

To contain and/or reduce noxious weed infestations on BLM-managed lands using an integrated pest management approach

- All soil disrupting equipment moved into the project area would be required to be clean and free of dirt and vegetation as directed by the contract administrator.
- All large areas of exposed mineral soil, as determined by the recreation specialist would be grass seeded with Oregon Certified (blue tagged) red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) at a rate equal to 40 pounds per acre or sown/planted with other native species as approved by the resource area botanist (BMP R-62).

¹³ Over the last five years, special recreation permit requests within the Alsea Falls recreation area have averaged two requests per year.

To protect ESA listed, special status, or Survey and Manage terrestrial animals

- Standards outlined in the applicable letters of concurrence or biological opinions in place at the time of implementation would be followed to prevent or minimize adverse effects to ESA listed terrestrial wildlife species.
- A wildlife biologist shall participate in the planning and design of all implementation activities that may affect any ESA listed, special status, or Survey and Manage species and would include surveys to protocol if required. Appropriate management recommendations would be followed or protection measures undertaken to prevent or minimize adverse effects.
- Required pre-disturbance surveys and known-site management for any special status or Survey and Manage animal species would be accomplished in accordance with BLM Manual 6840 - *Special Status Species Management*, and the *2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines as modified by the 2011 settlement agreement in Conservation Northwest v. Sherman* (Case No.08-CV-1067-JCC) or successive guidance.
- The resource area biologist would be immediately notified if any federally-listed, special status, or Survey and Manage animal species are encountered while implementing proposed project activities so timely protection measures can be incorporated, as deemed feasible.
- *Snag Retention:* Any trees or snags which are felled or otherwise knocked down would be retained on site as coarse woody debris if possible. All old-growth trees would be left standing and larger snags (above 15 inch diameter breast height) of all decay classes would be left standing to the greatest extent possible. Avoid cutting snags during the nesting season (March 1 to July 31).

To protect ESA listed, special status, or Survey and Manage plants/fungi

- Required pre-disturbance surveys and known-site management for any special status or Survey and Manage plant/fungal species would be accomplished in accordance with BLM Manual 6840 - *Special Status Species Management*, and the *2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines as modified by the 2011 settlement agreement in Conservation Northwest v. Sherman* (Case No.08-CV-1067-JCC) or successive guidance.

Pre-disturbance surveys would generally be accomplished through intuitive controlled methods, field clearances, field reconnaissance, inventories, database searches, known site maps and records and/or habitat examinations and in accordance with species survey protocols. Clearances for fungi are considered “not practical” and surveys are not required.

- The resource area botanist would be immediately notified if any federally-listed, special status, or Survey and Manage plant/fungal species are encountered while implementing proposed project activities so timely protection measures can be incorporated, as deemed feasible.

- Any wasting of soil or any large areas of exposed mineral soil would be planted with native plant species if available or otherwise sown with a seed mixture approved by the resource area botanist.
- All equestrian hay and straw would be required to be certified as weed free according to BLM policies.
- Noxious weeds would be treated according to existing resource area policies.

To protect Cultural Resources

- *Archeological survey:* Prior to any ground disturbing activity (including trail construction, facility development, and site restoration) the District Archaeologist would evaluate the activity and location to determine if a Class III archeological field survey would need to be conducted to locate any cultural resources within the project area. If cultural resources are discovered, apply best management practices by relocating proposed projects to avoid disturbing the site. According to Appendix D of the *Protocol for Managing Cultural Resources on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon*, post-project archeological survey would be conducted after all ground disturbing activities.
- If during project implementation and archeological, paleontological, or historical resources are discovered all project activities would cease until an archaeologist can be present to determine the significance of the discovery.

Project Design Features derived from Western Oregon Programmatic covering ESA listed Fish:

- Brushing – Leave a 10 foot buffer on intermittent and ephemeral channels and leave 20 foot buffer on perennial streams where brushing is limited to the trail tread width.
- Locate mobile infrastructure away from hazard trees. Rather than felling, consider limbing or topping hazard trees to alleviate hazard.
- Control user activities to alleviate compaction and vegetation loss in recreation areas and facilities.
- Do not remove downed wood (natural recruitment and as a result of hazard tree treatment) within 100 feet of listed fish streams and 50 feet of all other streams within 1 mile of listed fish (exception - clearing existing trails and where debris poses a safety risk). Outside these widths within the Riparian Reserve, consider using hazard trees for instream restoration projects.
- Within one site potential tree (SPT) of listed fish retain the maximum length of down logs possible. Consider relocating trail or provide safe passage over logs in lieu of cutting down logs.
- Existing trail construction - design and maintain proper drainage, especially near stream crossings.
- Dispose of slide waste in stable areas away from stream channels and floodplains.
- Provide erosion control (grass seed/silt fences/hay bales/etc.) to minimize sediment delivery to water bodies. Implement controls prior to wet season.
- Implement soil disturbing activities during the dry season.

- Maintain, operate, and store vehicles and gas-powered equipment to minimize risk of contaminants. 1) Inspect equipment daily if within 150 feet of streams. Repair prior to operation. 2) Refuel, store, conduct maintenance, and repair gas-powered equipment at least 150 feet from streams.
- Pressure treated wood is not to be used below the ordinary high water mark.
- Pressure treated wood must be stored out of contact with water and precipitation.
- Construction with pressure treated wood should be prefabricated away from water to the maximum extent possible. Construction with pressure treated wood over water would include containment (tarps, plastic sheeting, and tubs) to prevent waste material from reaching water surfaces.
- Prevent abrasion by users and place water proofing over pressure treated wood surfaces to prevent chips and dust contaminated with preservative from reaching water surfaces.
- For road maintenance prepare an erosion and pollution control plan and spill containment plan approved by COR and Fisheries Staff.
- Culverts on fish bearing streams in watersheds within ESA listed fish would be designed with approved stream simulation methods.
- Install drainage features to stable vegetated slopes with low probability of gullyng.
- Confine chip sealing to surfaces with existing chip seals. Apply chip seal and asphalt patching during in-water work periods to surfaces that may deliver to streams.
- Do not apply dust abatement within 24 hours of predicted rain. Do not apply dust abatement over stream crossings or road segments immediately adjacent to streams.
- Retain all functional woody debris at stream crossings. Maintenance would move upstream debris and replace debris downstream of crossings.
- Prepare concrete at least 150 feet from streams. Ensure fresh concrete does not come in contact with water bodies. Take measures to prevent pieces of concrete from falling into water bodies during construction or repair.
- Riprap use is limited to bridges and stream crossings to protect structures and replacement of pre-existing riprap.
- Stream bank stabilization activities would be limited to bioengineered solutions (root wads, log toes, coir logs, woody and shrubby plantings). A minimum amount of rock may be used in conjunction with bioengineered materials.
- Do not remove lead-based paint from structures over water bodies. If lead paint abatement is needed, contact fisheries staff prior to work.
- Stream crossing sites would likely be at least 0.5 mile apart, unless environmental conditions are favorable to accommodating a shorter distance.

New Trail Development and Existing Trail Modifications or Improvements

Trail Design and Designation

- Trail designation should avoid soils that have been identified as shallow with a depth of less than 20 inches. Within the Alsea RAMP this includes soil map units (SMUs) 23, 30, 31, and 56. These SMUs comprise less than 20 percent of the analysis area.

Trail Construction

- *Trail tread width:* Allowable width would range from three to eight feet down to bare mineral soil. Additional feet of tread would be needed to provide vista, resting, and passing locations (BMP REC-19).
- Suspend construction or maintenance of trails, where erosion and runoff would likely be delivered to water bodies (BMP REC-11).
- *Average trail grade guideline:* Average trail grade would not exceed 10 percent with a maximum grade of 15 percent.
- *Half rule guideline:* Trail grade or steepness would not exceed half the grade or steepness of the hillside.
- *Water crossing structures (culverts, bridges, or fords):* Any new construction of these structures would be designed to accommodate the 100 year flood event, allow unobstructed fish passage, and meet bankfull width (BMP REC-10).
- *Design appropriately placed trail outslope and grade reversals:* The planning area includes appropriately designed grade reversals to minimize trail tread erosion. Trail outslope of five percent or greater would be implemented to facilitate proper drainage (BMP REC-14).
- *Minimum Vegetation Removal:* Design trails with minimal vegetation removal through route location. Cutting live trees over 12 inches in diameter would be avoided wherever possible, except where they present a safety hazard or constriction. Vegetation and stumps would be cut flush to the ground for approximately eight feet wide to ten feet high depending on sight distance and trail users. Equestrians would need more clearance.
- All crossings would have to be hardened with a bridge or other structure to prevent sedimentation into the creek (BMP REC-14).
- Where feasible, stay at least 100 feet from water and minimize stream crossings, except where necessary to stabilize stream banks and minimize erosion.
- Encourage switchback placement to prevent erosion down and across trails.
- *Coarse Woody Debris:* Protect and retain coarse woody debris on the ground wherever possible. If suitable woody debris must be moved, the section of log within the trail's path would be cut and removed instead of moving the entire log (BMP REC-5).
- *Soil Quality:* Avoid the construction of new trails on shallow soils (soil depth generally less than 20 inches). If new trails are proposed on shallow soils, the hydrologist or soil scientist would recommend site-specific mitigation measures.

New Facility Development Including Roads, Trailheads, Campsites, Picnic Sites, Parking Areas, and Overlooks

- *Facility locations:* Locate facilities, where possible, in previously disturbed areas. Avoid stream channels, floodplains, fish spawning sites, and areas which require a high level of vegetation removal (BMP REC-2, 28).
- *Season of construction:* Facility construction would take place during the dry season (generally May through September) to avoid excess erosion and sediment inputs.
- Preventing loss of stream shading: Minimize or eliminate removal of streamside vegetation that provides shading and reduction of stream temperature through carefully locating facilities and trails in areas with lower density of vegetation (BMP S-9).

- *Appropriate drainage:* Facility and parking area design would mitigate interference with hydrologic patterns (BMP REC-1).
- *New roads added to the existing network of roads and trails within the developed campgrounds would include the following mitigation measures:*
 - ✓ Design roads to no more than the minimum width necessary for the intended purpose (BMP R-7).
 - ✓ Outslope permanent low volume roads to provide for surface drainage on slopes up to six percent gradient (BMP R-24).
 - ✓ Limit road construction, reconstruction, or renovation activities to the dry season. Keep erosion control structures current to allow for immediate storm proofing of the road way if necessary (BMP R-61).
 - ✓ Stormproof roads receiving infrequent maintenance to reduce road erosion and reduce the risk of washouts by concentrated water flows (BMP R-80).
 - ✓ Suspend stormproofing or decommissioning operations and cover or otherwise temporarily stabilize all exposed soil if conditions develop that cause a potential for sediment-laden runoff to enter a wetland, floodplain, or waters of the state. Resume operations when conditions allow turbidity standards to be met (BMP R-81).
 - ✓ Refuel all equipment at least 100 feet from water bodies to prevent direct delivery of contaminants into a water body (BMP RST-10).

Site Restoration

- *Natural ground cover:* Restore natural ground cover to areas closed to public entry and impacted by previous public use, with a focus on riparian habitats and improving the scenic qualities of the recreation setting (BMP REC-25).
- *Campsite restoration:* Restore ground cover and remove or harden undesignated, user-created trails around existing campsites within 100 feet of the South Fork Alsea River.
- *Public access:* As necessary, prohibit and block public access to areas undergoing restoration treatments.
- *Cultural resource protection:* In areas with potential cultural resources, determine whether restoration activities would increase or decrease the probability of site protection compared with no action.
- *Native species:* Utilize site-appropriate native species for all restoration activities (BMP REC-26).

2.7 Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail

An alternative with a substantially larger planning area was dropped from analysis due to the lack of planning information, uncertainty of future budgets, and expected maintenance of developments. The BLM lacks staff and budget to provide the necessary maintenance on remote trail systems that are not near extensive investment areas such as Alsea Falls Recreation Site.

An alternative to increase development of the Alsea Falls Recreation Site, including expanding amenities to provide for cell service and electricity, was considered in the early planning stages.

Public comment favored keeping the campground in a more primitive condition and did not support further development of this alternative.

A proposal to develop an Olympic training center was brought to the BLM during the scoping period. This is outside the scope of the planning effort. The BLM is not providing this type of recreation opportunity or experience.

2.8 Comparison of Management Alternatives

The table below provides a bulleted comparison of Alternative A – Continuation of Existing Management (No Action) and Alternative B – Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action).

Table 3. Comparison of Alternatives	
Alternative	Goal and Intent
<p>Alternative A Continuation of Existing Management</p>	<p>Recreation Niche Statement: The Alsea Falls Recreation Area provides a variety of designated and dispersed recreation opportunities along a forested backcountry byway corridor between the Willamette and Alsea Valleys. Use is concentrated to the developed campground and picnic area locations of Alsea Falls for a self-directed experience.</p> <p>Intent: Provide current level of facilities and amenities. No development or expansion of recreation opportunities would occur within the recreation area. Actions would focus on modifications to existing facilities to address resource protection.</p>
<p>Alternative B Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)</p>	<p>Recreation Niche Statement: The Alsea Falls Recreation Area provides non-motorized trail opportunities, developed camping and day-use activities, environmental education and interpretation in a forested backcountry byway corridor between the Willamette and Alsea Valleys. Developed recreation site, non-motorized trail system, and targeted interpretive information allow for a relatively natural recreation experience close to rural communities and about an hour's drive from urban population centers. Visitors will relax with family and friends while discovering the outdoors in a developed recreation site.</p> <p>Intent: Provide for and improve high quality visitor experience for designated and dispersed recreation activities including camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing, non-motorized trail use, nature study, target shooting, driving for pleasure, and hunting while minimizing resource impacts. Offer self-paced environmental education and interpretation opportunities where visitors can enjoy and explore nature, experience a sense of wellbeing, and gain knowledge in a developed recreation site and designated non-motorized trail system. Promote developed facilities, recreation activities, environmental education, and interpretation by publicizing available opportunities to communities and visitors.</p>

Theme	Alternative A Continuation of Existing Management	Alternative B Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)
Overnight Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 existing campsites within Alsea Falls campground (1 group site). • Dispersed camping is allowed on BLM-administered lands throughout the recreation area; locations exist along the byway near Alsea Falls recreation site. • First come first serve self-service fee registration process. • Most severe resource concerns would have management actions. • Nearby trail system. • No additional camping opportunities would be provided. 	<p><u>Phase 1:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to campground to correct resource issues and improve the visitor experience. <p><u>Phase 2:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day-use area: actions include converting up to 5 underutilized picnic sites to walk-in (tent) campsites; each new campsite would include a fire ring, barbeque grill, picnic table, and assigned parking for one or two vehicles. • Parking for trailers would not be available within these sites. • Campground: expansion actions include constructing approximately five tent sites within the campground (one group campsite and four individual sites).
Day Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 existing picnic sites. • No new construction would occur unless current infrastructure proves unsafe for staff and visitors. • Existing trails would not provide accessibility all for ages. • No camping allowed. • Only non-motorized forms of recreation permissible on trails and gated roads. • Day-use activities picnicking, relaxing, non-motorized trail use, swimming, sightseeing, fishing, hunting, recreational shooting, and leisurely driving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer 16 picnic sites, moving sites away from river; up to 11 underutilized sites would be closed (includes five converted to walk-in tent camping). • Existing designated trails and structures would be repaired, upgraded, or modified to provide safer access to visitors. • Addition of a group use picnic site (shelter). • A no-shooting zone would be created near the park. • Install an ADA accessible overlook of the falls.
Trail System Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic maintenance would continue on the existing 17 mile trail system (5 miles dirt, 12 miles gated forest roads). • Limited equestrian parking; trailer and truck size constraints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By utilizing volunteer and youth groups for maintenance, construct up to 23 miles of non-motorized trails within the recreation area. • Undesignated trails would be closed to protect resources and provide for visitor safety.

Theme	Alternative A Continuation of Existing Management	Alternative B Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fall Creek trailhead would provide parking for equestrian truck and trailers and would require substantial maintenance. • Regular annual maintenance would continue funding is available. • Directional signage throughout system is lacking. • Trail system would continue to be limited to non-motorized users. • All trails would remain open throughout the year. • No new trail opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riparian trail in the picnic area would be armored to reduce resource impacts. • Trails would continue to be limited to non-motorized uses. • The current Fall Creek parking area would be enlarged and striped to accommodate more traffic and the turning radius of larger vehicles.
Visitor Information and Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current signs would remain in place. • Limited power would continue to be provided by a propane-powered generator. • Patrols and visitor contact would continue at their current frequency. • Onsite camp host – amenities include water, portable generator. • Seasonal staff duty station of Alsea Falls. • Cooperative law enforcement between BLM and Benton County. • Bulletin boards and kiosks provide non-site specific interpretation. • Brochures about site would remain available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking areas would be enhanced with parking stripes and speed bumps for visitor safety. • Signage of all kinds would be updated and blend in with the environment. • Emphasis would be placed on greater contact with visitors (websites, collaboration with community, events). • Recycle centers would be installed to allow reduction of waste (utilize existing wood corrals). • BLM would seek partnerships with the community to provide for trail maintenance (currently has 1 group doing maintenance and 1 group interested in helping out).

Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects

3.1 Recreation, Rural Interface, and Visual Resource Management

(Incorporated by reference: Meredith, Traci. 2011. Recreation, Rural Interface, and Visual Resource Management Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

The planning area is important to local residents of Alsea, Alpine, and Monroe as a place to recreate near home. The planning area is within a recreational forest setting and accessed by the paved South Fork Alsea River National Back Country Byway (aka the South Fork Alsea Access Road). Evidence of man-made modifications (roads, timber harvest activities, utilities, buildings, houses, recreation sites, trails) is visible from both private and public lands within or in the vicinity of the planning area.

Developed Recreation

The planning area contains a mixture of designated and dispersed recreational opportunities. The Alsea Falls recreation site, as listed in the no action alternative (Section 2.3), has a campground and day-use area, access to a non-motorized trail system that utilizes roads, potable water, vault restrooms, site presence, fee station, information kiosks and bulletin boards, and site brochures. Campground amenities include 15 individual campsites, 1 group site, designated site parking, camp host, and firewood sales. Day-use area amenities include 22 picnic sites, centralized parking, and view of the falls. No other environmental education or interpretation exists within the planning area. The paved South Fork Alsea River National Back Country Byway is an alternate route for travelers to the Oregon Coast by connecting the Willamette Valley to Highway 34. Vehicle use of the Byway increases during the months of May through October. Traffic counters at both ends of the byway recorded an average of nearly 58,493 vehicles for the 2010 fiscal year. The privately-owned McBee campground is a quarter mile west of the BLM-managed Alsea Falls Recreation Site. McBee campground provides reservable group camping area with pit toilets, covered picnic tables, trail access, and view of Green Peak falls from the trail starting within the campground.

Most recreation use occurs within these two developed recreation sites. The majority of visitation occurs in July and August, but varies due to economic factors and weather conditions. Results from a visitor survey conducted in 2001 indicated that visitation is nearly split between repeat visitors at 49 percent and first time visitors at 51 percent. Many repeat visitors are from surrounding communities.

Dispersed Recreation

Visitors come to the area for a variety of recreation activities such as camping, picnicking, swimming, hunting, target shooting, bike riding, hiking, nature viewing, relaxing, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, collection of forest products, and occasional horse riding. Undesirable and unauthorized activities, including dumping, occur throughout the project

area. Alsea Falls averaged approximately 30,693 annual visitors from 2004 through 2010; 67 percent from day-use and 33 percent from camping.

Alsea Falls Trail System and Trailhead Access

The Alsea Falls trail system is located approximately 30 miles southwest of Corvallis, Oregon and 40 miles northwest of Eugene, Oregon. Its close proximity to these populous areas makes it a convenient recreation opportunity for residents of the southern Willamette Valley. The trail system is accessible from the Fall Creek trailhead along the Alsea Falls Backcountry Byway and contains nearly eight miles of closed forest roads and single-track trails open to hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

The trail system is popular with mountain bike users and, to a lesser degree, hikers. Equestrians make up a very small portion of users within the system¹⁴. Visitor use within the Alsea Falls trail system is estimated at less than 1,000 visitors annually. The moderate amount of use throughout this area has led to a trail system that has seen very low levels of annual maintenance. Limited use, coupled with infrequent annual tread maintenance, has resulted in a trail system that is in need of reestablishment of routes and better defined opportunities.

The distribution of users throughout the trail system follows several trends, the following use estimates are based BLM staff observations:

- **Hiking:** Approximately 75% of annual visits to the Alsea Falls trail system are centered on the hiking only trails adjacent to the developed overnight and day-use facilities.
- **Mountain Biking:** Approximately 25% of annual visitation occurs on the Alsea Falls shared use trail system, accessed via the Fall Creek trailhead.
- **Equestrian:** It is estimated that equestrian use accounts for less than 1% of total annual visits to the Alsea Falls trail system.

To evaluate the current condition and long-term potential of the trail system, BLM personnel worked with the International Mountain Biking Association's Trail Solutions team to complete a sustainability analysis. The assessment looked at both social sustainability (patterns of user behavior and potential conflict) and environmental sustainability (the ability of the trail to handle current and expected use without intensive maintenance attention).

Evaluating *environmental sustainability* of trails is based on several factors including:

- Prevailing slope to trail grade alignment ratio
- Absolute trail grade
- Canopy cover and adjacent vegetation
- Soil type and rock content
- Current tread condition (widening, muddiness, etc.)
- Level of anticipated use

¹⁴ Field reviews conducted the summer of 2012 found little to no evidence of equestrian use in the SRMA.

Evaluating *social sustainability* of trails took several factors into consideration:

- Current volume of use on existing trail system.
- Primary recreational activities within the project area
- Opportunities for creating a sustainable trail system from a beneficial outcomes standpoint
- Opportunities for enhancing opportunities for activity specific (mountain biking, hiking, equestrian) users

Applying these factors, the assessment found numerous segments unsustainable. Poor alignment and lack of proper drainage were the primary drivers of undesirable trail conditions. The assessment also identified the potential for phased development of additional trails within the system to enhance opportunities for mountain bikers, hikers, and equestrians. The Trail Sustainability Assessment is available for review at the Salem District Office.

Off-Highway Vehicles

The majority of the recreation area's OHV use designation is open (11,698 acres), 642 acres is limited to existing roads and trails, and 25 acres are limited to designated roads and trails. There are no designated OHV trails within the planning area. Many roads off the South Fork Alsea River are gated to restrict traffic, as are private land holdings throughout the recreation area. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this planning effort will not address OHV management.

Rural Interface

Rural interface zones are BLM-administered lands intersecting a half-mile buffer surrounding county zoning. The BLM must take into account homes located near proposed projects. The west end of the planning area, sections 18 through 20 of T. 14 S., R. 7 W., is located within a rural interface zone as defined in the Salem District RMP (p. 39).

Visual Resources

Visual resource values and opportunities to maintain scenic quality are greatest on BLM-administered lands seen from state and county scenic highways and roads, parks, rural residential areas, scenic ACECs, special recreation management areas, and recreation sites and trails. The intermixed land ownership pattern between public and private lands greatly limits the BLM's ability to manage the planning area as a contiguous viewshed. Timber management operations near or adjacent to the planning area are observable from private and public lands and major roads. The view from major roads and highways of the surrounding terrain is one of timber management, various age classes of trees are visible. The RMA does contain some private inholdings, which are not included within this EA.

The planning area contains all four BLM visual resource management (VRM) classes based on current project acreage information and ArcGIS data layers for VRM on the Salem District. Visual modifications within the planning area include varying degrees of timber management activities.

BLM's responsibility to manage the scenic resources of the public lands is established by law:

- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA)** states, “...public lands will be managed in a manner which will protect the quality of the scenic (visual) values of these lands.”
- **The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)** requires that measures be taken to “...assure for all Americans...aesthetically pleasing surroundings.”

Other Resources

There are no designated Wild and Scenic Rivers within the planning area. The Alsea River is an eligible recreational Wild and Scenic River approximately two miles to the northwest of the planning area. There are no wilderness areas within the proposed Alsea Falls recreation management area.

Environmental Effects

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

With the exception of unexpected changes (i.e. wildfire or disease), recreation opportunities would continue to be provided within the Alsea Falls recreation site. Camping would be limited to two designated campgrounds within the analysis area, Alsea Falls and the privately owned McBee Campground, and dispersed BLM lands. No new recreation opportunities would be developed or constructed. Any recreation-related problem areas would be evaluated to determine whether they warrant closing or remain open with modifications.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Recreation

Within the recreation area, new designated recreation opportunities would include new non-motorized trail construction, converting picnic sites to campsites, constructing picnic sites and campsites, making existing recreation opportunities within the Alsea Falls Recreation Site accessible to a wide range of public, and increasing opportunities for public to engage in activities that enhance well-being. Recreational visitation would increase with in the enhanced recreation opportunities outlined in the proposed action (EA section 2.4). Increased advertising and promotion of the recreation area and BLM’s management activities would also increase visitation to the area.

Overall, Alternative B would enhance and increase recreational opportunities for the various user groups that utilize the Alsea Falls Recreation Area. Phase 1 trail work (including the creation of loops and moving use off of roads) would provide a much better experience for hikers and bikers in the Fall Creek area. By concentrating energy and resources in this area initially, the agency can wisely allocate resources to an existing trail system in close proximity to the developed amenities (campground and day-use) in the Alsea Falls Recreation Area.

In Phase 1, proposed separation of uses (particularly, bikers and equestrians) would limit horse use of the Fall Creek trail system.¹⁵ The current trail system, however, is not appropriately designed for a safe mixing of bike and horse use. The trails in the area have a relatively narrow tread in most places (1-3') with limited clearing distance.¹⁶ In addition, the exiting trailhead at Fall Creek is too narrow to allow safe and efficient parking for horse trailers.

Given the current low equestrian use and the work that would be required to retrofit the exiting trail system, it is not practical to design a trail system in Fall Creek that would accommodate hikers, bikers, and equestrians on the same trail. The Proposed Action would utilize the existing trail system and make improvements to enhance the experience of hikers and bikers. Depending on public interest and funding, Phase 2 proposals for equestrian/hiking trails and parking would enhance opportunities for horse use at the Alsea Falls Recreation Area.

For camping, Phase 1 activities would enhance the user experience and correct resource issues. Future phases of development would expand the campground and convert picnic sites to walk-in camping. These actions will accommodate future demand for camping. In the day-use area, actions are designed to anticipate future visitor demand and better accommodate various user groups.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Proposed Action includes a prohibition on recreational shooting in close proximity to the developed recreational facilities and trails in the Alsea Falls area. Currently, recreational shooting in the Alsea Falls area appears to be fairly limited and focused at the various dispersed camping sites in the area. However, shooting in close proximity to trails and developed recreation sites is a potentially dangerous situation. If the ban is put in place, there may be some minor displacement of users; however, given the low level of shooting that is currently occurring, the impacts to this user group should be insignificant.

The implementation of a shooting ban would require additional public notification and a Federal Register notice.

The emphasis on environmental education and interpretation of the recreation site, recycling centers, and site locations for hosts and staff would provide a better overall visitor experience to the Alsea Falls Recreation Site. The proposed actions to improve visitor safety may diversify and increase site utilization.

Lands outside of designated sites mentioned in the affected environment would remain available for dispersed recreational opportunities. Off-highway vehicle use would remain as

¹⁵ As referenced elsewhere, equestrian use on the Fall Creek trails is very low and already limited by an undersized bridge on the Stellar Jay Trail.

¹⁶ The average clearance on trails in the Fall Creek area is 3-5'. The recommended clearing for trails shared by bikes and horses is 10-12'. See the Forest Service's "Equestrian Design Guidebook for Trails, Trailheads, and Campgrounds" available at: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/publications/fs_publications/07232816/

open (94.6 percent), limited to existing roads and trails (5.2 percent), and limited to designated roads and trails (0.2 percent) until a future Salem District RMP is completed and OHV use is reevaluated. Dispersed campsites would remain open with modifications to reduce resource damage. Any dispersed recreation, including camping and OHV use, causing resource damage would either be restored or modified to reduce resource damage. Restored areas would be closed to further recreation use. Modified areas would continue to provide a recreation opportunity without damaging resources. No reconstruction of closed trails or campsites would be allowed.

Rural Interface

In general, property owners near BLM-administered lands tend to be concerned with noise, traffic, effect to the visual landscape, water quality, wildlife values, and increased public access leading to increased problems such as threat of fire start, garbage, dumping, and vandalism. During the scoping process, residents expressed a desire to be including in publicizing the area and for their communities to see increased business from tourism.

Visual Resources

Some of the planning area is visible from the towns of Alsea and Alpine. Rolling mountains, trees, and vegetation obscure much of the view and BLM lands are often unidentifiable from other lands when looking at the landscape from any vantage point.

The proposed projects would comply with VRM objectives based on PDFs in the EA. The major change to visuals would be in the day-use area, where visitors are not accustomed to seeing tents and shelters. Just as the same for construction, once vegetation grows to screen these sites from other visitors, the visual disturbance to day-users would be decreased.

New construction would increase the amount of mineral soil areas exposed when trails, picnic sites, campsites, and shelters are constructed. Visual disturbance of the planning area would be associated with modifications to vegetation and other ground disturbing activities. Activities would remove vegetation, route around trees whenever possible, and potentially damage additional small vegetation near the construction area. Damaged undergrowth vegetation and tree limbs would brown, leaving the view from the immediate area undesirable to some until regrowth. Fuel reduction treatment may include lopping and scattering of debris into the environment so as not to attract the attention to recreationalists.

Evidence of construction activities would not be observable as understory vegetation returns to a more natural appearance, the forest continues to mature, and recreationalists utilize areas. An overall forested setting and most of the canopy would remain. Understory vegetation and the remaining trees would rebound, grow, and continue to green up.

Cumulative Effects

Creating more recreation opportunities within the planning area could potentially increase tourism-related revenue to surrounding communities of Alsea and Alpine. A well-developed non-motorized trail system would provide outlets for nearby residents to recreate. The trail system would be recognized as a place to hold events. Proposed activities within the planning

area would have beneficial impact on recreational users.

3.2 Air Quality, Fire Risk, and Fuels Management

(Incorporated by reference: Mortensen, Kent. 2011. Air Quality, Fire Risk, and Fuels Management Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

Air Quality

The major source of air pollutants within the analysis area would generally come from potential wildfire starts, from increased campfire smoke, and from associated resource management activities including prescribed burning (swamper burning, hand or machine pile burning) on BLM and adjacent lands, and dust from the use of unsurfaced roads in association with increased recreational use.

The analysis area is located approximately five miles west the Willamette Valley Smoke Sensitive Receptor Area, eighteen miles southwest of the city of Corvallis, Oregon, and closer to numerous unincorporated, rural areas. Recreational use of fire in campgrounds is regulated by the Oregon Department of Forestry. The anticipated increase in recreational use that would affect the airshed would occur on BLM and private industry managed land as well as BLM, private, and county maintained asphalt, gravel, and dirt surfaced roads.

Fuels Management

The current dead fuel load in the analysis area has not been intensively identified for this project. Prior to fuel reduction treatments, the BLM would use GTR PNW-105 *Photo Series for Quantifying Natural Forest Residues in Common Vegetation Types of the Pacific Northwest* (Maxwell and Ward, 1980) to assess fuel loading.

Environmental Effects

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

Air Quality

With no changes in the management plan for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area, there would be no increase in the level of provided facilities and amenities, no large scale site development or alteration, and the area would continue to be managed under the current rules and regulations. There would be an occasional need for hazard reduction. Consequently, in the short term there would be and no localized effects to air quality outside the current use of campfires and roads. In the long term more dispersed camping would be likely as the recreational facilities located at Alsea Falls reach their maximum carrying capacity.

Fire Risk and Fuels Management

With no changes in the management plan for the Alsea Falls recreation area the no action alternative would allow the analysis area to continue on its current trend. The current risk of

a fire start would remain low. The same areas currently behind locked gates would remain relatively inaccessible to the public. The risk of a wildfire would gradually increase as the fuel load accumulates and the stands near the mean interval for a naturally occurring return of fire.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Air Quality

Dust created from vehicle traffic on gravel or natural-surface roads, campsite construction, and road maintenance would contribute short-term effects to air quality. None of these management activities would create dust above threshold levels. These effects would be localized to the immediate vicinity of the activities.

Fire Risk and Fuels Management

The fuel load would increase as a result of the proposed action. Slash created by falling trees to expand campsites and picnic areas and to improve trails, and views of Alsea Falls would add fine fuels and coarse woody debris to the surrounding timber stands and increase the risk of fire in the area. Resource Area specialists will monitor fuel loading. If determined to be a fire hazard or threat to public health and safety, the BLM would implement fuel reduction treatments in accordance with regulations.¹⁷

Cumulative Effects

Air quality issues would be local and of short duration during project activities. With the current trend in the public's activities on federal lands the potential for wildfire starts would be expected to increase slightly as facilities are upgraded and recreational opportunities increase. Future timber harvests and associated prescribed fire projects or other fuels reduction projects would further mitigate the potential spread of wildfire in the analysis area. Cumulative potential for a wildfire start would slowly increase in the longer term over the next few decades as surrounding timber stands continue to grow.

3.3 Fisheries and Aquatic Systems

(Incorporated by reference: Snedaker, Scott. 2011. Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

The proposed actions occur within the Upper Alsea River fifth field watershed, which includes several streams in addition to the South Fork Alsea River. Chinook, coho, steelhead, cutthroat trout, pacific lamprey, western brook lamprey, and sculpin are present within the analysis area. Alsea Falls blocks access to all anadromous movement to the upper South Fork Alsea River.

¹⁷ Fuel reduction treatments may include, but are not limited to, lopping and scattering, chipping, or burning

Key features to aquatic habitat are stream flow, temperature, large wood, and sediment. Baseline stream channel flow and temperature information for the project area can be found under the Hydrology and Water Quality analysis (Section 3.4). In general, the hydrology analysis indicated conditions for project area stream flow and temperature to be typical of the northwest. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) habitat surveys describe the baseline condition for sediment and large wood. In general, surveyed habitat conditions are mixed in the project area streams with a tendency for sediment and large wood being less than desirable condition.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

The Oregon Coast (OC) coho salmon Evolutionary Significant Unit is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (73 FR 7816-7873). OC coho salmon are present in all drainages of the project area within the Upper Alsea River fifth field watershed, except those above Alsea Falls. OC Coho distribution does not extend above Alsea Falls.

Other threatened species in the Marys Peak Resource Area include the Upper Willamette River (UWR) spring chinook salmon, UWR winter steelhead, and Oregon chub. These species are not located within the analysis area and no impacts from project activities are anticipated.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

The existing recreation area would generally remain unchanged. In general, impacts to aquatic habitat would be minor with the implementation of the No Action alternative. Maintenance actions in the park and along defined trails would be implemented consistent with consultation requirements. User-defined trails locally impairing vegetative recovery within the riparian adjacent to the South Fork Alsea River in the park area and impacts to stream bank of the South Fork Alsea River adjacent to campsites would likely continue to impair river function.

Limited sediment and floodplain impacts may continue to occur due to resource damage problems occurring from the existing trails and picnic sites adjacent to the Alsea Falls at the day-use area. Tread surfaces along most of this trail is unhardened and erosion is occurring. The tread would likely continue to degrade with continued use, resulting in erosion reaching the South Fork Alsea River. The source area of erosion is small and these localized effects would be limited to minor site level increases in turbidity and sediment reaching resident and anadromous fish habitat during heavy rainfall events. Impacts to fish and aquatic habitat would likely be undetectable; background turbidity in the South Fork Alsea River would also likely be elevated during these early winter freshets.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Where in-stream work is necessary (crossing upgrades and installation) and fish are present the stream channel would be dewatered via an upstream berm and either pumped or piped to below the project site. Dewatering the project site during construction could limit movement of native fish during project implementation. In the short term, a small number of resident fish could be directly negatively affected during the dewatering period. Implementing instream project activities during the ODFW (2008) In-water Work Timing between July and August would minimize impacts to fish. Conducting fish removal prior to start of project work would further reduce the direct impacts to resident fish.

With the implementation of applicable PDFs, all other proposed project activities are not expected to measurably affect aquatic habitat. The potential effects to flow, temperatures, large woody debris (LWD) recruitment, and sediment which in turn could indirectly impact fish and aquatic habitat are described below.

Flow Effects

Reductions in canopy closure and vegetative cover can result in changes in peak or base flows, which in turn can impair the availability or quality of aquatic habitat. The magnitude of peak flow enhancement from campsite expansion, construction, and day-use expansion activities was determined to be immeasurable (Wegner 2011). As no discernible changes in peak and base flows within the treatment area are anticipated, there are no anticipated effects to fish and aquatic habitat.

The Fall Creek trailhead parking lot expansion would have minimal effects on vegetative cover. Impermeability may increase at the site scale, potentially resulting in increased runoff. However, the project area is at least 250 feet from the nearest stream channels and is draining to nearly flat surfaces. The buffer would be expected to allow infiltration of surface flows prior to reaching stream channels, minimizing risk of peak/base flow changes. No effects to fish and aquatic habitat would be anticipated.

The proposed Alsea Fall overlook would be located between 5 and 50 feet from the South Fork Alsea River. This would result in a small reduction in canopy and vegetative cover adjacent to the stream, approximately 0.04 acres, which in turn could alter peak/base flows. Based on the very small area of canopy affected within the 7th field drainage, approximately 0.001 percent, no alternations to fish and aquatic habitat would be expected.

Based on small tread width, flexibility of locating trails, and proposed PDFs, trail construction would have little effect on canopy closure and vegetative cover that could increase peak/base flows. Trail construction could lead to an increase in the drainage network, which could result in increased runoff rates where trails are connected to stream channels. PDFs would minimize hydrologic connection (locate trails away from streams, minimize stream crossings, install water bars upstream of stream crossings) thus changes in peak/base flows would not be anticipated. Changes in sun exposure would be of short duration as the stand recloses over a three to five year period (Chan et al. 2004). Based on the

very small size of the opening and the short duration of change in solar exposure, effects to fish and aquatic habitat are not expected to be measurable.

No negative impacts to stream flows would occur with the proposed decommissioning of the day-use sites. Proposed decommissioning would restore approximately ½ acre of floodplain adjacent to the South Fork Alsea River. Improvement in vegetation and floodplain function as a result of recovery on 1/2 acre would be expected to have a slightly positive effect on flows, though would likely be undetectable to fish and aquatic habitat.

Temperature Effects

Protection of stream shade is the critical component in protecting stream temperature regimes (Beschta et al. 1989, Belt et al. 1992, Moore et al. 2005). According to the stream shading sufficiency analysis, stream protection zones (SPZ) of 70 feet would be sufficient to protect critical shade in the primary shade zone, based on topography being less than 30 percent slope and average tree heights of 140 feet (BLM 2009, Snook 2008). Vegetation removal in the secondary shade zone (outer edge of SPZ to approximately one tree height from the stream) would not result in canopy reduction of more than 50 percent. Based on the shade sufficiency analysis, the PDFs, and locations, the small size of the openings, the proposed actions, campsite construction and day-use expansion, would be unlikely to impact fish and aquatic habitat both at the site and downstream.

New trail construction would have little effects on canopy closure and vegetative cover. Application of PDFs (limiting brushing to the trail tread width within 20 feet of perennial streams, and 10 feet of intermittent streams combined with locating trails away from stream channels and limiting stream crossings) would minimize changes in solar exposure from trail construction; therefore, impacts to fish and aquatic habitat would be unlikely.

Large Woody Debris Effects

Loss of CWD and LWD due to stand removal can alter the stability and quality of aquatic habitat (Beechie et al. 2000, Chamberlin et al. 1991). Some of the proposed activities occur between 60 feet and the site potential tree height (210 feet) from streams. The proposed action area would affect a combined area of approximately 3 acres in the first site potential tree height. Wood recruitment studies conducted in the Pacific Northwest have shown the majority of woody debris recruitment occurs within 18 to 20 meters (59 to 65 feet) of the stream edge (McDade et al. 1990, Van Sickle and Gregory 1990, Meleason et al. 2002). Approximately 0.1 acres of the effected three acres would be within 65 feet of the South Fork Alsea River. Due to the extremely small amount of recruitable wood removed and the protection of wood recruitment in the SPZ, the proposed actions would not be expected to cause measurable effects to aquatic habitat at the site or downstream.

The proposed trail construction with application of PDFs would have little effect on wood recruitment. Trees over 12 inches in diameter would be avoided to the extent practical, though falling may occur for safety. Locating trails away from streams and minimizing the number of crossings would further limit the probability of having to cut trees near stream channels. Trees fallen for trail construction would be left on site to the extent practical. Trees would also be directionally felled toward streams. Trail construction may have a short term

beneficial increase in wood recruitment but the magnitude would be very small (a tree or two at a crossing site). Over the long term impacts to aquatic habitat from the limited tree removal would likely be undetectable.

No negative impacts to LWD would occur with the proposed decommissioning of day-use sites. Decommissioning would restore approximately 0.5 acres of riparian adjacent to the South Fork Alsea River. Over the long term, conifer regeneration in the project area would have positive impacts on LWD recruitment potential to the South Fork Alsea River.

Sediment effects

Proposed activities are unlikely to result in any measurable changes in sediment delivery to the surrounding stream network (Wegner 2011). Vegetated buffer widths ranging from 40 to 100 feet are sufficient to prevent sediment from reaching streams (Burroughs and King 1989, Corbett and Lynch 1985, Swift 1984). The majority of the proposed actions would occur more than 60 feet from streams and would be unlikely to transport sediment to streams. Stream protection buffers would be expected to capture sediment prior to reaching stream channels. As the proposed actions are not likely to measurably alter water quality characteristics at the treatment sites, they would be unlikely to alter aquatic habitat downstream.

A few activities, including some stream crossing treatments the Alsea Falls overlook platform construction and picnic site decommissioning, are proposed less than 40 feet of the South Fork Alsea river or stream channels. Construction activities within 40 feet or adjacent to streams may locally increase sediment movement and turbidity. Fish would be expected to move away from areas of high turbidity to areas of low turbidity or reducing activity during periods of elevated turbidity (Bjornn and Reiser, 1991). Implementation of erosion control measures would minimize turbidity generation during construction and decommissioning activities. Rehabilitating disturbed stream banks upon completion of the construction would accelerate recovery of riparian vegetation and protect bank stability. Bed load transport and turbidity would be expected to recover to background levels after the first winter.

In general, the risk of sediment reaching stream channels is unlikely for the majority of new trail construction and trail realignment occurring more than 40 feet upslope and more than 300 feet upstream from fish habitat. Therefore, effects to fish and aquatic habitat would generally be unlikely. However, stream crossing activities (culvert and bridge construction) associated with trail construction and renovation may locally increase sediment movement and turbidity in stream channels. Erosion control measures would minimize turbidity during construction. Stream crossing activities located at least 300 to 400 feet from fish habitat would be expected to assimilate mobilized sediment prior to reaching fish habitat (Duncan et al. 1987). Rehabilitating disturbed stream banks upon completion of the construction would accelerate recovery of riparian vegetation and protect bank stability. Bed load transport and turbidity would be expected to recover to background levels after the first winter. As such, impacts to fish and aquatic habitat would likely be undetectable.

Cumulative Effects

The proposed action alters a very small percentage of the riparian area within the Upper Alsea Watershed. Due to temporal and spatial separation, small scale, and application of PDFs and BMPS, project activities would not cause any measurable short-term or long-term affects to fisheries and aquatic resources; therefore, no cumulative effects are anticipated.

Extensive road work has occurred on BLM and adjacent industrial forest over the last decade in the Upper Alsea River Watershed. Substantial restoration work has occurred to improve road stability, reduce road generated sedimentation, and remove barriers to aquatic habitat movement at stream crossings in the watershed. Site level road work and hauling, both private and public, have had negative and positive impacts on aquatic habitat. However, these projects are unlikely to detectably alter fish productivity at the fifth field scale due to the small scale of project work and lack of connectivity between treatment areas. Impacts of other hauling activities from private forests may contribute to cumulative impacts to fish habitat at the fifth field scale. However, the magnitude and extent of impacts from hauling are impractical to assess or predict, due to high degree of variability of hauling which may occur within a watershed from one year to the next.

3.4 Hydrology and Water Quality

(Incorporated by reference: Wegner, Steve. 2011. Hydrology and Water Quality Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

The analysis area is located south-west of Corvallis, Oregon in the coast range at elevations ranging from 300 – 3,300 feet¹⁸. The majority of the project areas lie below the transient snow zone (TSZ), an elevation zone subject to rain-on-snow events (ROS) that have the potential to increase peak flows during winter or spring storms. This zone varies with temperature during winter storms, but in the coast range of Western Oregon it is assumed to lie between 2,000-3,000 feet in elevation. The general project area receives approximately 50-60 inches of rain annually and has a mean 2-year precipitation event of 4.50 inches in a 24-hour period

Project area stream flow

Project streams are similar to other Western Oregon streams where highest discharge takes place during winter storm events. Summer base-flow normally begins in perennial channels sometime in late July and continues through October. Many small headwater channels (intermittent or ephemeral) dry up completely during this period.

Potential for peak flow augmentation

In Joanne Greenberg's research (Hydrologic Process Identification for Western Oregon, p. 7) she assumed an elevation of 2,300 as the break between rain dominant and rain-on-snow

¹⁸ Unless otherwise indicated, geographic information is an estimate derived from the BLM's GIS database.

(ROS). OWEB also cites 2,300 feet (page A-58, Appendix A - Ecoregion Description) as a minimum elevation for ROS generated peak flows in the coast range. Because all of the proposed campground modifications are located at an elevation below 900 feet, there is currently a low risk for peak-flow enhancement in the project watershed.

Existing Peak Flow and Water Quality Effects from Roads

Road surfaces have been implicated as important contributors to increased peak flows. As the slope increases, the extent of surface and subsurface disturbance required to construct a stable road increases. The amount of possible road construction for the new campsite access would not produce any significant change from the existing conditions in the road network. Work would generally occur during summer months and remain a minimum of 50 feet from the river channel on the flat terrace area which does not drain towards the river.

Project Area Stream Channels

Stream channels in the main trail construction project areas (Coleman Creek) are primarily small 1st and 2nd order headwater streams; these are “source” reaches, following the classification of Montgomery and Buffington (1993). On the steeper slopes (10 to 20 percent), these have developed into constrained, well armored step-pool channels. Inside the Alsea Falls Park, the South Fork of the Alsea River is perennial fish bearing and lower gradient than its tributaries. While the banks of the South Fork Alsea River are of a soil/rock mix, the channel bottom is dominated by bedrock and is very stable. All of the stream channels in the potential project areas are considered to be low in their amount of contributed large wood from nearby riparian forest but are well shaded. Any hazard trees within the SPZ of the campground expansion area would be left as long as they do not pose a threat to public safety or the safety of existing structures (culverts and bridges, etc.).

Project Area Wetlands

No wetland or pond complexes are identified within the project areas. These sites mostly coincide with high water tables identified in the BLM GIS Timber Production Capability Classification Wetland sites are excluded from treatment in this proposal.

Project Area Water Quality

The water quality parameters such as stream temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations (both inter-gravel and in water), hydrogen ion concentration (pH), and turbidity are not expected to be impacted by the limited extent and minor impact on tree canopies included in this proposal and were not reviewed in depth for this analysis.

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) 2004-2006 303d List of Water Quality Limited Streams is a compilation of streams which do not meet the state’s water quality standards. The South Fork Alsea River is 303d-listed for exceeding summer temperature standards from river mile 0 to 17.2, approximately three stream miles downstream of the proposed project.

The DEQ also published an assessment, the 319 Report, which identifies streams with potential non-point source water pollution problems (2004 Oregon Statewide Assessment of

Nonpoint Sources of Water Pollution). The lower South Fork Alsea River is listed for having moderate water quality conditions affecting fish and aquatic habitat.

As stated in the fisheries and aquatic habitat report, proposed actions are not expected to affect stream temperatures at the site or downstream. With the application of PDFs and BMPs, proposed actions are not expected to have any detectable effects on fisheries and aquatic habitat.

Environmental Effects

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

Under this alternative the existing water quality conditions, stream flows, and channel conditions at the project sites would continue their current trends. There would be no substantial change to water quality or quantity. Bank erosion would continue near the trail bridge and from the user created trails near campsite 16.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Stream channels and wetlands

There would be no direct alteration of the physical features of the project area stream channels or wetlands under this proposal. Limited new road construction is proposed in Phase 2 of the campground expansion that occurs inside the Riparian Reserve, and would be located on a flat terrace to the South Fork Alsea River. The proposed location of the road and new camp sites is 130 feet from the river channel. This area does not drain towards the river and sediment issues would be controlled by the use of BMPs.

The overlook for the falls would require some construction activity near the banks of the South Fork Alsea River but the location of the overlook would be on bedrock outcrops and channel stability would not be impacted. The expansion of the Fall Creek trailhead would require the removal of some trees in an old timber sale unit but the area is flat and not near any stream channels or wetlands.

Campground: There are currently several user-created trails to the stream that are causing bank erosion. This site has a large existing disturbance area and a riparian restoration project would be necessary to remove the user created trails and designate a single, hardened trail to limit the erosion of the banks into the channel. This site would also have a cedar rail fence constructed to limit user access to the new hardened trail and to protect the revegetation activities in the reclaimed area of the old disturbance footprint. Revegetation would include planting with sword fern and other native plants. Hardening of the access trail would include gravel and or flat rock where needed for stability near the river edge.

Day-Use Area: A group shelter site is also proposed at the day-use area. This site is located only 60 feet from the South Fork Alsea River. Based on BMP REC-28, this site is allowed as long as it is not an overnight group site. Six picnic sites would be closed and restored that are located closer than 50 feet from the South Fork Alsea, removing sedimentation and safety

concerns from these sites as they are located at a lower elevation in the active floodplain of the channel. There is an existing bank slump area near the bridge crossing from the day-use parking lot which contributes a limited amount of sediment during high flow events. The established design features and BMPs will ensure that stream banks, wetlands and channel beds are protected from direct physical alteration or disturbance by equipment.

Direct and Indirect Effects

In addition, the proposed action is unlikely to affect stream flow in a measurable manner and therefore any indirect effects to stream channels as a result of increases in peak flows is unlikely. Thus, the proposed action would be unlikely to result in any measurable effects, such as increases in bank erosion, channel incision, loss of floodplain connectivity or alteration of local wetland hydrology that could result from augmented peak flows or altered watershed hydrology. With the required mitigation of stabilizing the stream banks near the bridge and near group campsite 16, the stream bank condition would improve compared to the existing condition. No impacts from the recent waterline replacement project and hazard tree removal in the campground were identified as a result of those activities and no impacts are anticipated to stream channels in the park area from these proposed activities.

New trail construction and maintenance would adhere to PDFs (Section 2.6) and BMPs listed in Appendix A. There would be no direct alteration of stream channels or wetlands and the BMPs and PDFs would ensure that erosion above natural levels or sediment delivery to stream channels would not take place.

Watershed Hydrology

Mean Annual Water Yield

Since the vegetation removal project areas (new campsites, picnic sites, and access road) are located below the elevation zone normally subject to transient snow accumulations in the winter, the small reduction in stand density is unlikely to result in any increase in snow accumulation and melting during ROS events. In the coast range of Oregon, below transient snow zone elevations, reductions in stand density are unlikely to result in an augmentation of peak flow (Moore et al., 2005). The expected maximum project acres (three acres) reflect that 0.0001 percent of the South Fork Alsea watershed would be impacted. Impacts would not be measurable. Therefore, this proposal is unlikely to result in any detectable changes in water yields or peak flows.

Peak Flow Effects from Roads

This proposal would not substantially alter the existing road density or impact peak flows. It would maintain the current condition and trends relative to hydrology and stream flow based on the existing roads.

Water Quality

The water quality parameters such as stream temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations (both inter-gravel and in water), hydrogen ion concentration (pH), and turbidity are not expected to be impacted by this proposal. The proposed layout of campsites and possible access road, and the partial tree removal required would meet the TMDL

requirement of maintaining more than 50 percent crown coverage in the secondary shade zone which begins 70 feet out from the channel banks. The TMDL language also requires maintaining 80 percent shade coverage for the stream between the channel and 70 feet into the riparian zone. With the required mitigation of stabilizing the stream banks near the bridge and near campsite 16, the stream bank condition would improve compared to the existing condition.

Cumulative Effects

The condition of the watersheds in the project area indicates a low risk for an existing augmentation of peak flows from canopy reductions in the proposal. The removal of individual trees would not result in increases in forest openings in the ROS zone and therefore would be unlikely to result in a detectable augmentation of peak flows. New road construction would be unlikely to alter surface or subsurface hydrology in a manner that would result in a detectable change in stream flow. Since the proposal is unlikely to result in a detectable direct or indirect effect to peak flows, it would further be unlikely to contribute cumulatively to any existing augmentation of peak flows in the project area watersheds.

Additional projects of greater scope are in the planning and implementation stages in the Upper Alsea River watershed: Bummer Ridge Mid-Seral Enhancement (268 acres), North Fork Overlook Mid-Seral Enhancement (329 acres), and Buck Roberts Mid-Seral Enhancement (218 acres). These thinnings would retain approximately 50 percent of the existing crown density. Even with the consideration of these activities, the potential for impacts to peak flows remains low for the South Fork Alsea River.

3.5 Soils

(Incorporated by reference: Adams, Peter. 2011. Soils Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

Project area soil map units

Within the proposed project area the majority of the soils are moderately deep to deep soils that are well drained with a low potential for surface runoff. These moderately deep soils are predominately composed of clay to clay loam and silty loam soils. The majority of the soils around the campground where the majority of the ground disturbance is proposed have soils mapped as soil map units (SMU) 110 and 136. Approximately 80 percent of the ground disturbing work is proposed on SMU 110.

SMU 110 (Alsea Falls Campground and Day-Use Area) is categorized by a deep soil that is well-drained and has a high available water capacity. The landform is composed of terraces and floodplains with approximately 0 to 3 percent slopes. This SMU has a rating of little limitation for campgrounds, not limited due to slope for paths and trails, low to moderate resistance for soil compaction, and a slight erosion hazard based on slope and soil erodibility.

SMU 136 (minor portion of Day-Use Area) is categorized by a deep soil that is well-drained with a moderate to very high available water capacity. The landform is composed of mountainside and hillsides with approximately 35 to 60 percent slopes. This SMU has low applicability for campgrounds or roads and trails, very limited due to slope for paths and trails, low to moderate resistance for soil compaction and an erosion hazard of severe based on slope and soil erodibility. While a minor portion of the Day-Use area is mapped as SMU 136, it lies within the transition zone between SMU 110 and 136. It is more similar in nature to SMU 110 rather than SMU 136.

Environmental Effects

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

As stated in the hydrology report, the existing conditions at the project sites would continue on their current trends. There would be no immediate changes to soil quality or soil erosion. Bank erosion at two locations would continue: near the trail bridge and the user created trails near group campsite 16. The lack of surface vegetation cover and the resulting erosion coming off group campsite 16 and the trails would continue to contribute to erosion be delivered to the stream course.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

The proposed actions in the Alsea Falls recreation area would not adversely effect soil quality or appreciably increase the rate of soil erosion. Due to their depth and structure, these soils are not prone to excessive levels of erosion or compaction.

Rehabilitation actions at group campsite 16, planting native vegetation and closing user-defined trails, would reduce soil erosion. The Alsea Falls overlook would require some construction activity near the banks of the South Fork Alsea River, but the overlook would be on bedrock outcrops and soil quality or site productivity would not be impacted.

Proposed Roads

The only proposed road construction is associated with developing additional campsites within the Alsea Falls Campground. The area had been previously logged and still has the template from a skid or temporary road prism. This road prism is sufficiently distant from the creek, thus not adding additional sediment to the creek, and is not actively eroding. The proposed road would utilize the existing temporary road prism and if expansion were necessary, expansion would occur away from the river.

Trails

Trail Development within the Alsea RAMP is divided between known proposed trails and potential future trails. Project Design Features discussed in Section 2.6 of this EA are recommended to be implemented for trail design and designation.

Potential future trails

By adopting the referenced PDFs, it is unlikely that the designation of future trails within the Alsea Ramp project area would result in an adverse effect to soil quality, site productivity, or unacceptable levels of soil erosion. If it is necessary to designate a trail that is inconsistent with the above referenced PDFs, a soil scientist would review the trails on the ground to determine if additional mitigation measures are necessary and to recommend the type of use (foot, equestrian, or mountain bike).

Cumulative Effects

The proposed activities would not adversely affect soil quality, site productivity, or soil erosion rates. It is within the range of effects as described in the Salem District RMP and unlikely to result in a cumulative impact to soil resources. The designation of future trails is unlikely to result in the occurrence of an adverse cumulative effect to soil quality or site productivity provided that the PDFs discussed under the trails section are adopted into the Alsea Falls RAMP.

3.6 Vegetation

(Incorporated by reference: Snook, Hugh. 2011. Vegetation Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

The majority of the project area occurs within the Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)/Red Alder (*Alnus rubra*)/Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) grouping which occurs on the west slopes of the Oregon Coastal Mountains. This grouping is described in the Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (V.1, chapter 3, pp.29-32). More specifically, the majority of the project area occurs within a western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) plant association (McCain and Diaz 2002) and is dominated by a coniferous forest that is comprised mainly of Douglas-fir and western hemlock.

A few unique habitats (cliffs, meadows, waterfalls, ponds) occur along the Alsea River and within the project area. They include a few small, generally less than one acre, open grassy meadows with Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*) scattered around the perimeter. In addition, a few grand fir (*Abies grandis*) dominated conifer stands are within the recreation area which generally occur in the grand fir plant association that is more common on the eastern slopes of the Oregon Coast Range Mountains adjacent the Willamette Valley at lower elevations. Further, red alder (*Alnus rubra*) and big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) plant associations are common along riparian areas and in areas with high water tables. The shrub/forb layer in the project area is mainly dominated by salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), Oregon grape (*Berberis nervosa*), and sword-fern (*Polystichum munitum*).

Threatened and Endangered, Bureau Special Status, Survey and Manage Botanical and

Fungal Species

There are no “known sites” of any T&E botanical species within the recreation area. There are numerous bureau special status and Survey and Manage lichen, bryophyte and fungal species known sites scattered throughout the recreation area.

Non-Native Plants and Noxious Listed Weeds

The following noxious weeds are known from within or adjacent the project area; blackberries (*Rubus armeniacus*, *R. procerus*, *R. discolor*), bull and Canadian thistles (*Cirsium vulgare* and *C. arvense*), false brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), herb Robert and shiny leaf geranium (*Geranium robertianum*, *G. lucidum*), meadow knapweed (*Centaurea xmoncktonii*), Scot’s broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), and tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).

Environmental Effects

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

Threatened and Endangered, Bureau Special Status, Survey and Manage Botanical and Fungal Species

Threatened and endangered botanical and fungal species are not affected, since no known sites are known to occur within the project area.

All known sites of bureau special status and Survey and Manage botanical and fungal sites would continue to be protected due to no additional recreational development under this proposal outside of the existing recreation infrastructure. However, known sites could inadvertently be destroyed by dispersed campsites, through illegal trail creation activities, vegetative theft, tree felling, log removal, OHV use on non-approved trails, and other unplanned ground disturbing activities.

Non-Native Plants and Noxious Weeds

Maintenance of existing roads and trail systems would continue to occur and any ground disturbance would be localized. Noxious weed inventories and weed control (physical, chemical and biological control) in and around the recreation areas would continue. The risk rating for any adverse effects from the establishment of noxious weed populations in the project area would remain low due to continual inventory and control efforts by the Marys Peak Resource Area staff.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed action)

Threatened and Endangered, Bureau Special Status, and Survey and Manage Botanical and Fungal Species

Federal T&E botanical or fungal species are not affected, since no known sites are known to occur within the project area. Although many bureau special status and Survey and Manage species are known to occur within the recreation area, none are known to occur within any of the proposed new project areas (campground and picnic area expansions, new trail and/or bridge construction areas). No known sites would be impacted through the implementation of

this alternative.

This project could affect any species that are not practical to survey for and known sites were not located during subsequent surveys. These species would mainly include special status and Survey and Manage hypogeous fungi species. However, the majority of the listed hypogeous fungal species have no known sites within the Marys Peak Resource Area or the Northern Oregon Coast Range Mountains.

Non-Native Plants and Noxious Weeds

This alternative would also maintain existing improvements, roads, and trail systems and have the same impacts as the No Action alternative. Trail and campsite construction would create exposed mineral soil environments favorable for the establishment of non-native plant species. All of the known noxious weed species that occur near the project area are classified by the Oregon Department of Agriculture as “B” designated weeds. “B” designated weeds are weeds of economic importance which are regionally abundant, but which may have limited distribution in some counties. Where implementation of a fully integrated statewide management plan is not feasible, biological control shall be the main control approach.

All of the noxious weeds species that are known to occur near the project area are regionally abundant and are widespread throughout western Oregon, with the exception of false brome. However, weed inventories conducted within Benton County in the summers of 2010 and 2011 reveal false brome is widespread within the Alsea basin, the recreation area and Benton County. A fully integrated statewide management plan has not been implemented for any of these species.

Any adverse effects from the establishment of these noxious weed species within the SMRA are not anticipated and the risk rating for the long-term establishment of these species and consequences of adverse effects on this project area is considered low because:

- PDFs and mitigation measures have been incorporated into this project to keep the amount of exposed mineral soil minimized,
- PDFs require large areas of exposed soil to be seeded with weed free grass seed
- the size of the ground disturbing projects are considered small and localized,
- the implementation of the Marys Peak integrated non-native plant management plan allows for monitoring and providing additional inventories within the SMRA which would result in early detection of non-native plant species and would allow for effective control measures to be implemented,
- there are no other Oregon listed noxious weed species that are anticipated to become established with the implementation of this project and design features,
- the implementation of this alternative would occur in phases which would limit annual soil disturbance within the project areas. Non-native species would be eradicated as funding allows.

Cumulative Effects

Any adverse effects from the removal of native vegetation would be localized because of the small size of the projects and because the implementation would be completed in phases.

There would be no affect to T&E, bureau special status, or Survey and Manage species since none are known from the project areas which are scheduled to disturb the soil. The risk rating for any adverse effects through the implementation of any alternatives within this project is low. Keeping all trail systems designated as non-motorized and maintaining closed gates, to limit motorized vehicles within the recreation area, also minimize opportunities for the distribution of non-native plants.

3.7 Wildlife

(Incorporated by reference: Price, Roy. 2011. Wildlife Report for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment.)

Affected Environment

Landscape Level Conditions

The BLM managed lands in this watershed were extensively logged in the late 1940s through the mid 1980s. Private timber lands were also logged during this period with a recent upturn in harvest activity. The Upper Alsea Watershed (81,300 acres) has 43,040 acres of BLM-managed lands (53 percent) and 903 acres of Forest Service lands (1.1 percent). About 24,510 acres (56 percent) of the watershed is composed of early to mid-seral conifer forest habitats. About 16,110 acres (37 percent) of the watershed is late-seral/old-growth (LSOG) conifer forest. The intervening parcels of private ownership are dominated by early-seral and mid-seral forest stands that are currently managed on short rotations (40-60 years).

A broad-scale analysis of federal lands within this part of northern Oregon was presented within the Late Successional Reserve Assessment, Oregon Coast Province - Southern Portion (RO267, RO268), [referred to as the LSRA, see USDA-FS and USDI-BLM 1997]. The LSRA considers this watershed to function as an important corridor of mixed seral stages which form a connecting linkage to adjacent blocks of federally managed lands farther west. Much of the BLM managed land in this watershed is expected to grow into older forest habitat over the next several decades.

Stand Level Conditions

The Alsea Falls recreation area encompasses mostly mid-seral conifer and mixed conifer-hardwood stands. Narrow riparian hardwood stands lie along the river and side tributaries, with some interspersed small patches of wetland shrubs. Most of the mid-seral conifer stands within the recreation site were recently thinned. Most of the 17 miles of existing trails pass through mid-seral conifer stands. Only 0.5 miles of these existing trails passes through LSOG forest. Most of the proposed new trails would pass through LSOG forest which includes several small patches of old-growth forest having individual trees that are over 350 years old.

Special Habitats and Special Habitat Components

Special habitat types as recognized by the Salem District RMP and the associated Watershed Analyses include caves, cliffs, exposed rock, talus, wetland types, and meadows. These habitat types often host unique floral and faunal species that contribute valuable biodiversity to the local landscape. The existing trail that runs along the east side of the South Fork Alsea

River passes through or along the edge of some wetland and meadow habitat patches. The recent thinning and hazard tree treatment at the recreation area has greatly reduced the likelihood of future snag removal for the next decade or so. Snag falling for public safety concerns may be necessary adjacent to the existing trails and the proposed new trails.

Special Status and Special Attention Species

The only Special Status Species that may be affected by the proposed action are the northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. Other Bureau Sensitive wildlife species (such as red tree voles and some mollusk species) may be present in the mid-seral and LSOG forest stands where existing facilities and trails are located. These species are not anticipated to be affected by project activities because: (1) proposed actions would not alter existing stand-level habitat conditions, (2) the footprint of ground disturbance for new trails and campsites is negligible; and (3) these species are not likely to be affected by the short-term noise disturbance of new construction.

Northern Spotted Owl

Most of the Alsea Falls Recreation Area is composed of mid-seral conifer stands that have recently been thinned and may provide marginal dispersal habitat for spotted owls. The adjacent LSOG forest patches where existing and proposed trails are planned provide suitable nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for this species. The BLM and cooperators have conducted spotted owl surveys in the Upper Alsea and adjacent watersheds since the mid 1980s. There is a spotted owl site (#2302A) located about 0.8 miles north of the Alsea Falls Recreation Site. The owl pair first nested there in 2010 but failed to produce any juvenile owls. Within the median provincial home range (1.5 mile radius, USFWS et al. 2008) of this owl site, there is approximately 960 acres of suitable habitat (22 percent of 4,523 acres), with less than 1 percent contributed by private lands. This home range overlaps the entire Alsea Falls Recreation Site and about four miles of existing trails, and 1.7 miles of proposed trails. There are about 252 acres of suitable habitat within the core area (50 percent of 500 acres); with about 4 percent (20 acres) contributed by private lands. The recreation site and most of the existing and proposed trails lie within designated critical habitat (CHU OR-7) for the spotted owl (USDI-FWS 2008a). However, critical habitat for the northern spotted owl is in the process of being revised and it is not known if CHU OR-7 would change.

Marbled Murrelet

There are no known occupied murrelet sites within or adjacent to the recreation site or trail locations. The young conifer stands within the recreation site lack suitable nesting structure for marbled murrelets. The LSOG forest stands where some of the existing and proposed trails are located provide suitable nesting structure for murrelets (large mossy branches, potential nesting platforms, and well-developed canopy cover) (McShane et al. 2004). Surveys for marbled murrelets were conducted in Section 23 and 26 (2005 and 2006) to the northwest of the recreation site, but failed to detect any murrelets. No murrelet surveys were required for this assessment. The recreation site and all of the trails that lie within LSR lands are also within murrelet Critical Habitat Unit OR-04-J (USDI-FWS 1996).

Birds of Conservation Concern

All of western Oregon, including the Upper Alsea River Watershed, lies within the Northern

Pacific Forests Bird Conservation Region (USDI-FWS 2008b). Within this region there are several migratory land birds which are considered Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) because they appear to be exhibiting downward population trends for several years (Altman 2008; Rich et al. 2004, USDI-FWS 2008b). Thirty-three of the 88 landbird species that regularly occur in the Marys Peak Resource Area are considered BCC species (See Table 4). Twenty BCC species have a high likelihood of occurring within the project area.

Table 4. Bird Species Groups Likelihood of Occurrence within the Project Areas

Bird Species Grouping	Within MPRA	Likelihood of occurrence in Project Areas ¹			
		High	Moderate	Low	Not Present
Bird of Conservation Concern	33	20	7	6	0
Other Regularly Occurring Landbirds	55	30	8	17	0
Total bird species	88	50	15	23	0

1). The likelihood that bird species occur in the project area is based on recent literature review (see Appendix B of the wildlife report).

Survey and Manage Species

As addressed in section 1.4 of this EA, a Settlement Agreement was reached in 2011. The 2011 Settlement Agreement establishes certain categories of exemptions. Most of the projects proposed in the RAMP would qualify for exemption from conducting pre-disturbance surveys. As stated in the Settlement Agreement, the “Exemptions for Recreation Projects” are as follows:

- c. New recreational foot, mountain bike, or horse riding trail construction or relocation, or trail bridge construction, maintenance or replacement, where limited to trail work of less than five acres of clearing per trail project, and not including trails for motorized off-highway vehicles (Settlement Agreement p. 3).
- d. Projects covering less than five acres that improve an existing recreation site. Some examples of recreation site improvement include adding campsites to existing campgrounds, adding recreational structures or facilities in existing recreation sites, and expanding recreation sites. Projects related to recreation sites for motorized off-highway vehicles are not exempt (Settlement Agreement p. 3).

Environmental Effects

Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative)

This alternative would maintain the current facilities and existing network of trails without adding any additional facilities or trails in the project area. The current pattern of overnight, day-use, and trail use would marginally increase over time. No wildlife habitats would be altered and the existing forest stand development processes would continue within the recreation site and existing trail locations. The current pattern of habitat use by wildlife species within the recreation site and along the trail network would be expected to continue unchanged. There would be no effects anticipated to occur to any special status wildlife species, federally listed wildlife species, or designated critical habitat.

Alternative B: Increased Demand Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Landscape and Stand Level Effects

Proposed activities within the analysis area would have no discernible effect on the landscape level habitat conditions within this watershed. The proposed activities have a very small ground disturbance footprint and would not appreciably change the stand level forest structure or alter the development of future forest stand conditions in the project area. Felling of snags would be negligible with implementation of the project design criteria for this component.

Special Habitats and Special Habitat Components

No special habitat types would be adversely affected by the proposed day-use and campground expansion. Special habitat types along or adjacent to proposed new trails would be adequately protected by incorporated design features such that they would maintain their existing habitat value. Because of the reduction in vegetation trampling and human disturbance, many species of wildlife would benefit from the proposed relocation of part of the existing trail system from riparian zones (high use areas for wildlife because of the presence of water and diverse cover).

Special Status and Special Attention Species

Northern Spotted Owl

A summary of potential effects to spotted owls from all project activities is provided in Table 5. There would be no change to the current habitat conditions within the home range of the resident spotted owls. Resident or dispersing owls may forage in stands adjacent to the recreation site including stands with existing and proposed new trails. There are no existing or proposed trails within the nest patch (300 meter radius around the nest) of the active owl site, or on BLM-managed land in the core area (0.5 mile radius around the nest) in Section 23. Based on PDFs and proposed trail and other facility locations, the proposed activities within suitable habitat would not remove any older overstory trees or affect canopy closure.

Because all existing and proposed trails would be located outside of the current nest patch, increased human use of existing and proposed trails which may occur during the critical breeding season (March 1 – July 7) is unlikely to disrupt the known resident owls. The actions proposed in the RAMP are “not likely to adversely affect” spotted owl critical habitat because forested stands would maintain their function to support spotted owls in a manner as before modification and would not slow the development of future late successional conditions. With the project design features, the habitat modification from new trail construction and campground expansion would be spread out through the stand or not in suitable habitat and should not lower nesting opportunities.

Marbled Murrelet

Table 5 provides a summary of effects to marbled murrelets and their habitat. No known murrelet sites would be affected by the proposed action. Noise disturbance from trail construction or heavy use within suitable habitat may affect breeding murrelets if present, but

with the PDFs to protect ESA listed, special status, or Survey and Manage terrestrial animals incorporated into the RAMP, actual disturbance to murrelets is unlikely and thus no effect to murrelets from disturbance is anticipated.

Based on PDFs and proposed trail and other facility locations, the potential activities planned through murrelet suitable habitat would not remove any overstory trees or affect canopy closure. Thus, no effect to murrelets from habitat modification is anticipated.

Critical habitat is designated to provide for the conservation and eventual recovery of the species. The primary constituent elements (PCE) of murrelet critical habitat are (1) individual trees with potential nesting platforms and (2) forested areas within 0.5 mile of individual trees with potential nesting platforms with a canopy height of at least one-half the site-potential tree height. Some existing trails and most of the proposed new trail lie within PCE-1 or PCE-2 stands. Based on the PDFs and proposed trail and other facility locations, the potential activities planned through murrelet suitable habitat would not remove any overstory trees or affect canopy closure. Thus at the stand scale, the trail construction and maintenance, minor campground expansion, and other projects are “not likely to adversely affect” murrelet critical habitat.

Table 5. Summary of Effects to Federally Listed Wildlife Species and Critical Habitat.

Component of Concern	Determination ¹	Notes
Northern Spotted Owl		
Noise Disturbance	NLAA	May disturb undetected spotted owls if they exist, but would not disrupt breeding of the known pair.
Habitat Modification	No Effect	In spotted owl suitable habitat the proposed trails would not remove any overstory trees or affect canopy closure.
Critical Habitat	NLAA	Some existing trails and most of the proposed new trail lie within critical habitat but stands would maintain structure.
Future Habitat Conditions	No Effect	Habitat would continue to progress toward LSOG.
Marbled Murrelet		
Noise Disturbance	No Effect	There are no known occupied murrelet sites within or adjacent to the recreation site or trail locations. Surveys for marbled murrelets were conducted in Section 23 and 26 (2005 and 2006) to the northwest of the recreation site, but failed to detect any murrelets.
Habitat Modification	No Effect	In murrelet suitable habitat the proposed trails would not remove any overstory trees or affect canopy closure.
Critical Habitat	NLAA	Some existing trails and most of the proposed new trail lie within PCE-1 or PCE-2 stands but would still maintain structure.
Future Habitat Conditions	No Effect	Habitat would continue to progress toward LSOG.

1). Effect determinations for purposes of Endangered Species Act consultation include: LAA= likely to adversely affect, NLAA= not likely to adversely affect, and No Effect.

Birds of Conservation Concern

In the central Oregon Coast Range the majority of birds complete their breeding cycle within the April 15 to July 15 time period, while some birds (eagles, owls, hawks, woodpeckers) begin breeding as early as February or March and others (flycatchers, finches) may not finish breeding until August. Due to the ubiquitous nature of breeding birds within their suitable habitat, it is reasonable to expect that soil disturbance (affecting ground-nesting birds) and vegetation manipulation may have a direct negative impact on bird nesting success if it occurs during the breeding season. At the watershed scale, this proposed action is expected to have no discernible negative effects on populations of BCC species because the effects of trail construction and re-alignment and campground expansion would be temporary (one or two breeding seasons) and would affect a negligible amount of potential nesting habitat.

Cumulative Effects

There would be no cumulative negative effects to wildlife species or habitats because the proposed activities would not appreciably alter the existing habitat value in the project area.

Chapter 4 Aquatic Conservation Strategy Compliance

Compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS)

Based on the environmental analysis described in the previous sections of the EA, Marys Peak Resource Area Staff have determined that the project complies with the ACS on the project (site) scale. The project complies with the four components of the ACS, as follows:

- **ACS Component 1 – Riparian Reserves:** Maintaining canopy cover along all streams and the wetlands would protect stream bank stability and water temperature. Mitigation measures to decrease camper foot traffic near camp site 16 would improve bank stability. Riparian Reserve boundaries would be established consistent with direction from the *Salem District Resource Management Plan*.
- **ACS Component 2 – Key Watershed:** A portion of the Tobe Creek Watershed is within the project analysis area, but no actions are proposed in this watershed.
- **ACS Component 3 – Watershed Analysis:** A watershed based analysis was completed for this project.
- **ACS Component 4 – Watershed Restoration:** The actions proposed in this management plan would help to improve campground facilities and stabilize portions of the day-use and campground areas to reduce potential sediment sources to the South Fork Alesia River. This work is expected to result in long-term improvement in the watershed.

Marys Peak Resource Area Staff have reviewed this project against the ACS objectives at the project or site scale with the following results. The No Action alternative does not move toward the attainment of ASCO 3,4, 5, 7 or 8 because it would maintain the current unstable bank conditions near campsite 16 and day-use sites 9-14 which are located in the floodplain of the South Fork Alesia River. The proposed action(s) do not retard or prevent the attainment of any of the nine ACS objectives for the following reasons.

ACSO 1: Maintain and restore the distribution, diversity, and complexity of watershed and landscape-scale features to ensure protection of the aquatic systems to which species, populations, and communities are uniquely adapted.

No Action Alternative: The No Action alternative would maintain the development of the existing vegetation and associated stand structure at its present rate. The current distribution, diversity, and complexity of watershed and landscape-scale features would be maintained.

Proposed Action: Improvements to the day-use and campground areas would maintain watershed and landscape features to ensure protection of aquatic systems. Proposed trail construction is not expected to be of a large enough scale to alter any of the items in this objective. The proposed action when combined with other proposed actions in the Upper and Lower Alesia River Watersheds are unlikely to have detrimental cumulative effects on the hydrologic regime.

ACSO 2: Maintain and restore spatial and temporal connectivity within and between watersheds.

No Action Alternative: The No Action alternative would have little effect on connectivity except in the long term within the affected watersheds.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action alternative does not include any activities that have the probability of impacting connectivity between watersheds so there is no effect expected in this objective.

ACSO 3: Maintain and restore the physical integrity of the aquatic system, including shorelines, banks, and bottom configurations.

No Action Alternative: The current condition of physical integrity would be maintained for the majority of the analysis area. The shoreline near camp site 16 and near day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would continue to erode from excessive uncontrolled visitor use.

Proposed Action: The shorelines near campsite 16, and day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would be stabilized and access restricted to fewer locations to stabilize the bank with resloping and planting activities. Some rock placement could also be completed to help stabilize the banks. Some type of rustic fencing would be constructed to limit the user access to the stream bank to specific locations that would be hardened with gravel or wood chips to help reduce the potential for sediment entering the river. The removal of day-use sites 9-14 from the active floodplain of the river is also expected to improve the functioning of the floodplain because the infrastructure would be removed and the area revegetated. These actions are expected to restore the items in this objective.

ACSO 4: Maintain and restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems.

No Action Alternative: The current water quality would be maintained for the majority of the analysis area. The shoreline near camp site 16 and near day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would continue to erode from excessive uncontrolled visitor use causing short term and localized water quality concerns.

Proposed Action: The shorelines near campsite 16, and day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would be stabilized and access restricted to fewer locations so that the bank could be stabilized with resloping and planting activities. If warranted some rock placement could also be completed to help stabilize the banks. Some type of rustic fencing would be constructed to limit the user access to the stream bank to specific locations that would be hardened with gravel or wood chips to help reduce the potential for sediment entering the South Fork Alsea River. The removal of day-use sites 9-14 from the active floodplain of the South Fork Alsea River is also expected to improve the functioning of the floodplain because the infrastructure would be removed and the area revegetated. The proposed projects would help restore water quality over the long-term by restoring more natural channel conditions.

ACSO 5: Maintain and restore the sediment regime under which aquatic ecosystems evolved.

No Action Alternative: It is assumed that the current levels of sediment into streams would be maintained in the majority of the analysis area. The shoreline near camp site 16 and near day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would continue to erode from excessive uncontrolled visitor use causing short term and localized sediment inputs that are outside the natural sediment regime for the watershed.

Proposed Action: The shorelines near campsite 16, and day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would be stabilized and access restricted to fewer locations to facilitate bank stabilization with resloping and planting activities. The removal of day-use sites 9-14 from the active floodplain of the South Fork Alsea River is also expected to improve the functioning of the floodplain because the infrastructure would be removed and the area revegetated. These actions would help move the sediment regime back towards a more natural level for this aquatic ecosystem.

ACSO 6: Maintain and restore in-stream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats and to retain patterns of sediment, nutrient, and wood routing.

No Action Alternative: No change in in-streams flows would be anticipated.

Proposed Action: No change in in-streams flows would be anticipated.

ACSO 7: Maintain and restore the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands.

No Action Alternative: The current condition of flood plains and their ability to sustain inundation and the water table elevations in meadows and wetlands is expected to be maintained in the majority of the analysis area. Day-use sites 9 – 14 would remain in the active flood plain of the South Fork Alsea River and impact the functioning of the floodplain due to the infrastructure located at each site.

Proposed Action: The removal of day-use sites 9-14 from the active floodplain of the South Fork Alsea River is expected to improve the functioning of the floodplain because the infrastructure would be removed and the area revegetated. These actions would allow the floodplain to function more normally in terms of sediment deposition and water holding capabilities because the area would have the hardened paths removed, structures removed and revegetated to a more natural state.

ACSO 8: Maintain and restore the species composition and structural diversity of plant communities in riparian areas and wetlands to provide adequate summer and winter thermal regulation, nutrient filtering, appropriate rates of surface erosion, bank erosion, and channel migration and to supply amounts and distributions of coarse woody debris sufficient to sustain physical complexity and stability.

No Action Alternative: The current species composition and structural diversity of plant communities would continue along the current trajectory. Diversification would occur over a

longer period of time. The existing unrestricted visitor use near campsite 16 and day-use sites 9, 10, 12, and 13 would continue to display higher than desired rates of erosion due to the loss of riparian vegetation in those areas.

Proposed Action: Access would be restricted to fewer locations at the shorelines near campsite 16 and several day-use sites and so that the bank could be stabilized with resloping and planting activities. These actions would help reduce the level of bank erosion back towards a more natural level for this aquatic ecosystem.

ACSO 9: *Maintain and restore habitat to support well-distributed populations of native plant, invertebrate and vertebrate riparian-dependent species.*

No Action Alternative: Habitats would be maintained over the short-term and continue to develop over the long-term with no known impacts on species currently present.

Proposed Action: Habitats would be maintained over the short-term and continue to develop over the long-term with no known impacts on species currently present. Riparian planting activities at the stream bank restoration sites would use only native species found in the project area.

Chapter 5 Contacts and Consultation

5.1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fish

The Oregon Coast (OC) coho salmon Evolutionary Significant Unit is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (73 FR 7816-7873). OC Coho Salmon do not migrate past Alsea Falls (BLM 1995). Most activities are upstream of OC coho habitat. Proposed picnic area and campsite construction and upgrades may cause short-term affects to the listed fish or listed critical habitat in the Upper Alsea Watersheds. For this reason, a May Affect determination was made for OC coho salmon and OC coho salmon critical habitat and consultation with NMFS prior to implementation may be required.

A No Affect determination was made for UWR Chinook salmon, UWR winter Steelhead, and Oregon chub primarily due to the distance of listed habitat from the proposed action. No consultation would be required for these species.

Compliance of the proposed projects with guidance described in *Reinitiation of the Endangered Species Act Section 7 Formal Programmatic Consultation and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Fish Habitat Restoration Activities in Oregon and Washington, CH 2007 - CY 2012* (NMFS 2008) would provide consultation coverage for the “May Affect” actions of the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan project.

Wildlife

Due to potential effects to spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and their designated critical habitat, as outlined in Table 2, Section 7(a) of the Endangered Species Act requires that the on-the-ground implementation of the projects involved in this RAMP be consulted upon with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A PDF of the RAMP is that “Standards outlined in the applicable letters of concurrence or biological opinions in place at the time of implementation would be followed to prevent or minimize adverse effects to ESA listed terrestrial wildlife species.”

Currently the majority of the on-the-ground projects similar to those being proposed are addressed by inclusion within two “not likely to adversely affect” programmatic or batched biological assessment (BAs). The programmatic BA covers activities (such as trail and campground maintenance) with the potential to disturb spotted owls and marbled murrelets and currently covers fiscal years 2010 thru 2013. The batched BA analyzes projects (such as tree removal) that may modify the habitat of listed wildlife species on federal lands within the Northern Oregon Coast Range completed every two years. The current batched biological assessment covers fiscal years 2011 and 2012. As on-the-ground implementation of the projects proposed through the RAMP come closer to fruition, then they would be described and analyzed in the biological assessment(s) pertinent at the time of construction.

5.2 National Marine Fisheries Service

Protection of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as described by the Magnuson/Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act and consultation with NOAA NMFS is required for all projects which may adversely affect EFH of Chinook and Coho Salmon. The proposed actions addressed in the RAMP EA are not expected to adversely affect EFH due to distance of all activities associated with the projects from occupied habitat in either the Upper Alsea or Marys River Watersheds. Consultation with NOAA NMFS on EFH is not required for these projects.

Chapter 6 List of Preparers and Major Sources

6.1 List of Preparers

Project Lead (2012)	Tim Fisher
Project Lead, Recreation (2009-2011)	Traci Meredith
Outdoor Recreation Specialist (2012)	Debra Drake
Trails	Zach Jarrett
Archeologist/Cultural Resources	Heather Ulrich
Botanical Resources/Non-Native Invasive	Ron Exeter
Fisheries	Scott Snedaker
Fuels	Kent Mortensen
GIS/Mapping	Michelle Davis and Susan Sterrenberg
Hydrology and Water Quality	Steve Wegner
NEPA coordinator	Stefanie Larew
Roads Engineer	Steve Cyrus
Silviculture	Hugh Snook
Soils	Peter Adams
Timber Management	Cory Geisler
Wildlife	Roy Price/Scott Hopkins

Major Sources

6.2 Interdisciplinary Team Reports

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Exeter, R. 2011. Botanical Report. Marys Peak Resource Area, Salem District, Bureau of Land Management. Salem, OR.

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Appendix A

Alsea Falls RAMP - Water Quality Management Plan

Introduction

Water Quality Management on BLM-administered lands that are covered under the Alsea Falls RAMP EA is based on the site specific application of Best Management Practices (BMPs) and disclosed as Project Design Features (PDFs).

Best Management Practices

Best Management Practices are required by the federal Clean Water Act as amended to mitigate the potential for non-point source pollution. Non-point source pollution is pollutants detected in concentrated water (e.g. stream or lake) from a wide range of recreation management activities on federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. BMPs are considered the primary methods for achieving Oregon's water quality standards.

The overall goal is not to strictly adhere to the wording of the BMP, but rather to implement the intent of the prescribed BMP. That is to protect, promote and enhance water quality in order to meet federal and state water quality objectives. In that matter, BMPs are site specific and the implementation of the BMP is tailored to the "on the ground" conditions. The following BMPs are site specific application to recreation management activities undertaken by the Alsea Falls RAMP Environmental Analysis on the Marys Peak Resource Area.

Table 1.0 Best Management Practices

BMP No.	Roads
R7	Design roads to the minimum width needed for the intended use as referenced in BLM Manual 9113.
R24	Outslope temporary and permanent low volume roads to provide surface drainage on road gradients up to 6 percent unless there is a traffic hazard from the road shape.
R61	Limit road and landing construction, reconstruction, or renovation activities to the dry season. Keep erosion control measures concurrent with ground disturbance to allow immediate stormproofing.
R62	Seed and mulch disturbed soil areas upon construction completion. Where straw mulch or rice straw mulch is used; require certified weed free, if readily available. Mulch shall be applied at no less than 2000 pounds per acre.
R80	Stormproof open resource roads receiving infrequent maintenance to reduce road erosion and reduce the risk of washouts by concentrated water flows. Stormproof temporary roads if retained over-winter.
R81	Suspend stormproofing/decommissioning operations and cover or otherwise temporarily stabilize all exposed soil if conditions develop that cause a

	potential for sediment laden runoff to enter a wetland, floodplain or waters of the state. Resume operations when conditions allow turbidity standards to be met.
BMP No.	Restoration
RST10	Refuel equipment including chainsaws at least 100 feet away from water bodies to prevent delivery of contaminants to a water body.
BMP No.	Recreation Activities
REC1	Implement erosion control measures on all recreation sites to stabilize exposed soils.
REC2	Locate new recreational facilities, developed and dispersed sites outside of the water influence area (hiking trails and picnic sites can be excluded).
REC5	When conducting recreation site maintenance, do not cut logs or course woody debris if any portion of that material extends into the active stream channel.
REC10	Stream crossings will be designed to accommodate active channel width, bedload, and fish passage without exceeding capacity or diversion of the 100-year flood event
REC11	Suspend construction or maintenance of trails where erosion and runoff into waterbodies would occur.
REC14	Drain dips will be installed on approaches to stream crossings that drain towards the stream and reinforced with rock or wood for longevity.
REC19	If trail width is too wide for the designated use (such as old roads converted to trails) consider tilling one side of the trail, covering with brush, and seeding or planting.
REC25	Position fill or waste material in a location that would avoid direct discharges to streams or wetlands.
REC26	Restored stream banks would be planted with native vegetation, mulched, and planted with water tolerant species where appropriate.
REC28	Site camps for permitted group overnight camping would be greater than 100 feet from surface water.
BMP No.	Silvicultural Activities
S9	Within Riparian Management Areas, design size, shape and placement of harvest activities to maintain as much effective shade as possible.

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared an environmental analysis to present a range of potential management strategies for the Alsea Falls Recreation Area. This strategy will analyze the potential effects on recreation use and the area's natural resources. Each alternative contains direction for Overnight and Day-Use management, trail system management, and Alsea River National Back Country Byway management for the next 15 years. The project area is located on BLM lands in Benton County, Oregon.

The Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment (EA) (# DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2013-0001) documents the environmental analysis of the proposed action. The EA is attached to and incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) determination. The EA and FONSI will be made available for public review from October 9, 2012 to November 9, 2012.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon review of the Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan EA and supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, supplemental or additional information to the analysis in the RMP/FEIS in the form of a new environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following discussion.

Context [40 CFR 1508.27(a)]: Potential effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed action have been analyzed within the context of the project area boundaries and the Upper Alsea River 5th field watershed. Management actions identified under the proposed management plan would directly affect less than one percent of the 56,118 acres of this watershed.

Intensity refers to severity of impact [40 CFR 1508.27(b)]: The following text shows how that the proposed project would not have significant impacts with regard to ten considerations for evaluating intensity, as described in 40 CFR 1508.27(b).

1. [40 CFR 1508.27(b) (1)] – *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse*: The effects of proposed recreation management actions are unlikely to have significant (beneficial and adverse) impacts (EA Chapter 3) for the following reasons:
 - Project design features described in EA Section 2.6 would reduce the risk of effects to affected resources to be within RMP standards and guidelines and to be within the effects described in the RMP/EIS.

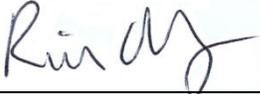
- *Recreation* (EA Section 3.1): Recreation activities and facilities provided under the proposed recreation management actions are similar to those offered elsewhere in the region, including those on BLM-administered land. These actions are unlikely to result in a large-scale displacement of visitors across a variety of activities.
 - *Visual Resources* (EA Section 3.1): Beneficial effects to visual resources include the closure of disturbed sites and revegetation with natural species.
 - *Air Quality, Fire Risk, and Fuels Management* (EA Section 3.2): Beneficial impacts to fire risk would result from a reduction in the number and location of potential accidental starts from recreation activity. Fire hazard including fuel loading and fuel type would be unaffected.
 - *Fisheries* (EA Section 3.3): The proposed recreation management actions would have little to no impact on spawning and rearing habitat for fisheries within the planning area. Decreased sediment delivery and mitigation of riverbank impacts would result through enhancements to river access points.
 - *Hydrology and Water Quality* (EA Section 3.4): Projects are unlikely to have a measurable impact on overall water quality including bacteria levels, temperature, and turbidity. The actions are likely to have any overall beneficial impact on water quality by increasing facilities for sanitation and minimizing riverbank erosion. Beneficial impacts to the recreation setting and visitor experience would likely occur.
 - *Soils* (EA Section 3.5): The proposed activities would not create sufficient soil compaction from the creation of additional campsites, roads, or trails that would adversely affect soil quality or site productivity. Hence, the proposed activities are not likely to result in measurable effect on soil quality or adverse soil erosional rates.
 - *Vegetation* (EA Section 3.6): No overall stand conditions or types would be altered as a result of the proposed recreation management actions. Few trees are likely to be removed as a result of planned management activities. No substantial additional spread or introduction of non-native invasive species is expected. Impacts to native botanical species would be limited and overall beneficial in nature as sites are rehabilitated and native vegetation is re-established.
 - *Wildlife* (EA Section 3.7): Little to no habitat modification would occur as a result of the proposed recreation management actions. Impacts to wildlife would be reduced as sensitive areas are closed to public access.
2. *[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (2)] – The degree to which the proposed recreation management actions affect public health or safety:* The proposed recreation management actions would not adversely affect public health or safety because these actions are expected to reduce illegal activity and reduce the occurrence of theft, vandalism and vehicular accidents. Site development, access restrictions and provision of facilities would likely improve overall public safety (EA Section 3.1).
 3. *[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (3)] – Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:* The proposed project would not affect historical or cultural resources because project design features would require pre-disturbance surveys to be completed prior to project implementation (EA Section 2.6). The proposed project would not affect parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers

or ecologically critical areas because these resources are not located within the project area.

4. *[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (4)] – The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:* The proposed recreation management actions include strategies and actions that are similar to actions BLM implements in similar areas without highly controversial effects. These actions are unlikely to be highly controversial based on extensive public scoping, outreach, and stakeholder involvement in the planning process.
5. *[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (5)] – The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:* Possible effects of the proposed recreation management actions have been analyzed based on reliable data and professional judgment. These effects are reasonably foreseeable and comparable to effects of recreation management actions elsewhere on BLM-administered land.
6. *[40 CFR 1508.27(b) (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:* The proposed recreation management actions would not establish a precedent for future actions nor would it represent a decision in principle about a further consideration for the following reasons: 1/ The project is in the scope of proposed activities document in the RMP EIS. 2/ the BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without setting a precedent for future actions or representing a decision about a further consideration.
7. *[40 CFR 150B.27(b) (7)] – Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts:* The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) evaluated the project area in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions on each affected resource and determined that the cumulative impact of these actions does not reach the threshold for significance (EA Chapter 3).
8. *[40 CFR 150B.27(b) (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:* The project would not affect these resources because no sites listed within the National Register of Historic Places are present within the planning area and projects near sites eligible for the National Register would require a pre-disturbance survey and appropriate mitigation or protection measures (EA Section 2.6).
9. *[40 CFR 150B.27(b) (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 (ESA) of 1973:* The proposed project is not expected to adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat for the following reasons:
 - *ESA Wildlife* (EA Section 3.7): Effects to the species are not significant because proposed recreation management actions do not have a measurable impact on habitat conditions or wildlife behavior patterns.

- *ESA Fish* (EA Section 3.2): Effects to ESA fish are not significant because the proposed recreation management actions would have little to no impact on spawning and rearing habitat within the planning area. ESA Consultation is described in EA Sections 5.1 and 5.2.

10. [40 CFR 150B.27(b) (10)] – *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:* The proposed recreation management actions have been designed to follow Federal, State, and local laws (EA Section 1.4).

Approved by:  10/3/2012
Rich Hatfield Date
Marys Peak Field Manager