

# Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan

## Final Decision and Decision Rationale

Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Environmental Assessment  
DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2013-0001

January 2013

United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management, Salem District  
Marys Peak Resource Area

T. 14 S. – R. 6 W., T. 14 S. – R. 7 W., T. 15 S. – R. 6 W., T. 15 S. – R. 7 W.,  
Willamette Meridian  
Benton County, Oregon

Responsible Agency: USDI – Bureau of Land Management

Responsible Official: Rich Hatfield, Field Manager  
Marys Peak Resource Area  
1717 Fabry Road SE  
Salem, OR 97306  
(503) 315-5968

For further information, contact: Tim Fisher, Project Lead  
Marys Peak Resource Area  
1717 Fabry Road SE  
Salem, OR 97306  
(541) 574-3142



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.

## 1.0 Introduction

The Alsea Falls planning area<sup>1</sup> 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 on the following page). The planning area is within the Upper Alsea River fifth-field watershed and is situated primarily along the South Fork Alsea River and a 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 planning area currently 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.

In 2010, the BLM initiated a planning effort to develop a management plan for the site. Through the planning and analysis process, a number of opportunities and resource issues were identified. Some of the existing infrastructure at the site is aging and is in need of maintenance attention. The trail system was patched together with old logging roads and short trail segments. The BLM identified and found support for the opportunity to enhance the existing system (particularly around Fall Creek).

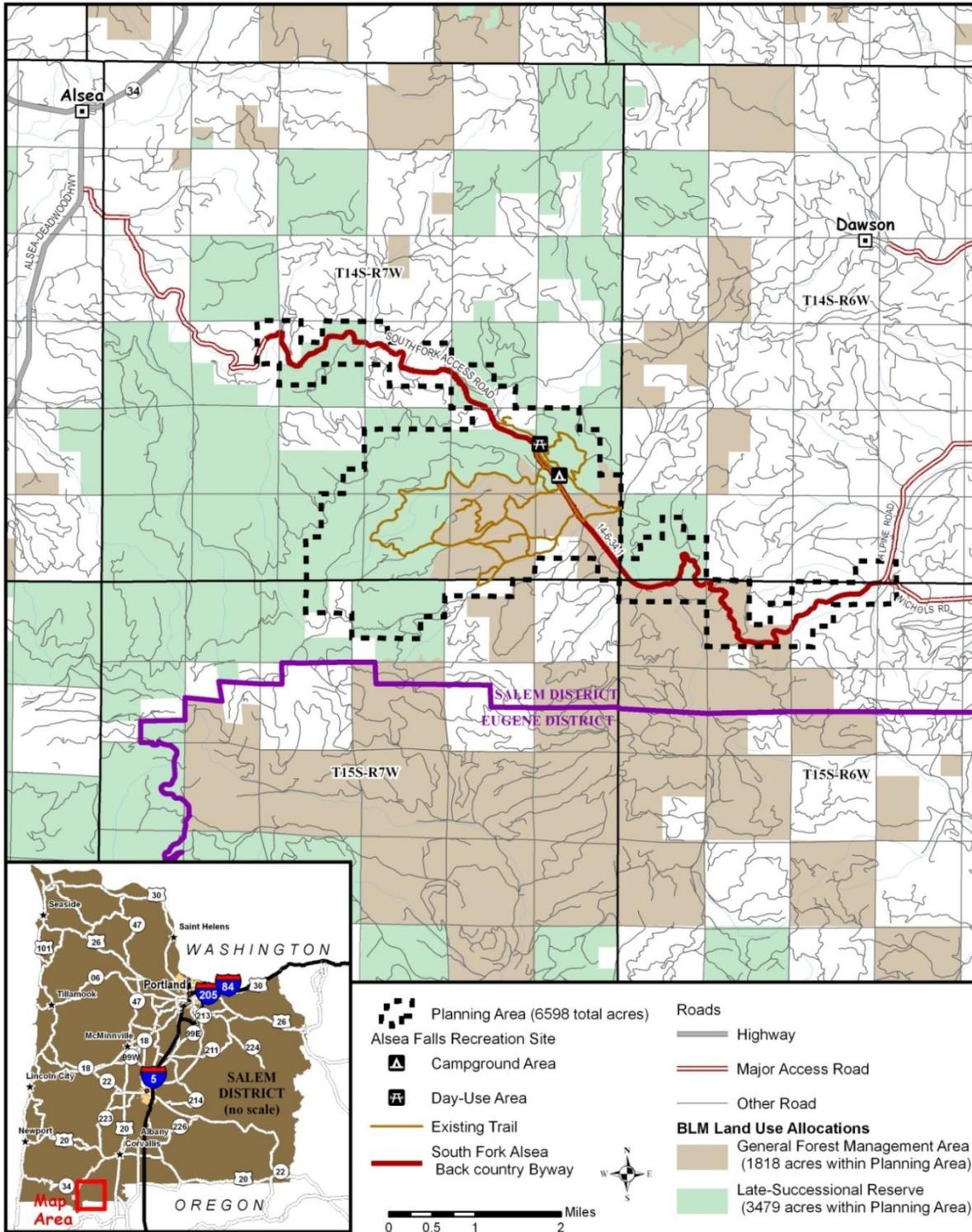
An Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2013-0001-EA) was available for public review from October 9, 2012 to November 7, 2012. I signed the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project on November 20, 2012.

My decision is based on the analysis documented in the EA and public comments received during the comment period. This decision authorizes the implementation of only those activities directly related to and included within the boundaries of the Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA) for the Alsea Falls Planning area. The attached Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) incorporates information from the EA and provides the future vision and direction for the recreation site.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this planning effort, the Alsea Falls planning area includes the scenic byway, the developed recreation sites (day-use and campground), the non-motorized trail system, and the surrounding area (approximately 6,598 acres – see the Vicinity Map on the following page). It includes a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and a number of Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs).

**Figure 1. Vicinity Map**



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data. Original data was compiled from multiple source data and may not meet U.S. National Map Accuracy Standards of the Office of Management and Budget. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification. Marys Peak Resource Area, Salem District, BLM

## 2.0 Decision

Having considered the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative identified in the Environmental Assessment for the Alsea Falls RAMP (EA # DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2013-0001-EA), and comments received on the EA, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action with a set of modifications, hereafter referred to as the selected action. The decision is in substance closely aligned with the Proposed Action analyzed in the EA, with some adjustments made in response to comments received on the EA. The table below summarizes the final plan as identified in this Decision and Recreation Area Management Plan and compares it with the selected action.

**Table 1. Modifications to the Proposed Action in this Decision**

Theme	Proposed Action from the Environmental Assessment	Changes from the Proposed Action to the Selected Action
<b>Overnight Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to campground to correct resource issues and improve the visitor experience.</li> <li>• Covert up to five underutilized picnic sites to walk-in (tent) campsites.</li> <li>• Expand campground by five tent sites (one group campsite and four individual sites).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change.</li> </ul>
<b>Day Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocate up to six picnic sites out of the riparian area to more suitable upland areas. (Target is up to 16 picnic sites total in the day use area.</li> <li>• Reconstruct the Alsea Falls Trail. (Trail is in the day use area.)</li> <li>• Existing designated trails and structures in the day use area would be repaired, upgraded, or modified to provide safer access to visitors.</li> <li>• Addition of a group use picnic site (shelter).</li> <li>• A no-shooting zone would be created near the park.</li> <li>• Install an ADA accessible overlook of the falls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change.</li> </ul>
<b>Trail System Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construct up to 23 miles of non-motorized trails within the planning area. (This includes 10-12 miles of trail in Phase 1 and future bike and equestrian expansion areas.)</li> <li>• Undesignated trails would be closed to protect resources and provide for visitor safety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 trail development (10-12 miles of trail at full build out) will include a portion designated as shared use – open to bikers, hikers, and equestrians. Replacement of the foot bridge across Fall Creek will be a high priority. Likewise, the trail to Alsea Falls will be a high priority action for Fiscal Year 2013.</li> </ul>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Proposed Action from the Environmental Assessment</b>	<b>Changes from the Proposed Action to the Selected Action</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riparian trail in the picnic area would be armored to reduce resource impacts.</li> <li>• Trails would continue to be limited to non-motorized uses.</li> <li>• The current Fall Creek parking area would be enlarged and striped to accommodate more traffic and the turning radius of larger vehicles.</li> <li>• Construction of a hiker-only trail – “South Fork Alsea Trail.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other components of the trail plan (including future expansion zones) remain the same.</li> </ul>
<b>Visitor Information and Interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking areas would be enhanced with parking stripes and speed bumps for visitor safety.</li> <li>• Signage of all kinds would be updated and blend in with the environment.</li> <li>• Emphasis would be placed on greater contact with visitors (websites, collaboration with community, events).</li> <li>• Recycle centers would be installed to allow reduction of waste (utilize existing wood corrals).</li> <li>• BLM would seek partnerships with the community to provide for trail maintenance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change</li> </ul>

### 3.0 Alternatives Considered

The EA analyzed the effects of the proposed action and the no action alternatives. No unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (section 102(2) (E) of NEPA) were identified. Complete descriptions of the proposed action and the “no action” alternative are contained in the EA, pp. 11 to 32.

### 4.0 Decision Rationale

The existing recreation management situation within the Alsea Falls Planning area, as described in the EA, has led to a variety of issues including limited trail access, threats to public safety and impacts to natural resources. Scoping of partner agencies and members of the public identified these and other issues that should be remedied as part of this planning effort.

The selected action was chosen because it addresses these issues by providing the most comprehensive and realistic framework for managing recreation within the Alsea Falls Planning area. It is balanced in scope, enhancing a broad range of activities instead of improving the area for a select set of visitors.

The selected alternative emphasizes resource protection and an augmentation of the existing trail system. Table 2 demonstrates the relationship of the alternative to the purpose and need.

An important change in the selected alternative is the inclusion of equestrian use in the first phase of trail development. Originally, I proposed separating bikers and equestrians into separate trail zones. The first phase of development was to be an expansion of the existing system open to hikers and mountain bikers only.

After talking to users at our October open house and reading public comments on the Environmental Assessment, I have decided that the first phase of trail development will include a portion designated as “shared use” – open to bikes, hikers and equestrians.<sup>2</sup> As the trail is developed, resource conditions will be monitored. Based on conditions, use-specific seasonal restrictions will be implemented, if needed, to protect the resources and investment in trail development.

Once the initial shared-use system is in place, future expansion will occur in activity-specific zones. This future development will rely heavily on demand and volunteer resources.

**Table 2. Alternative Comparison**

<b>Comparison of Alternatives in regard to the Purpose and Need</b>	
<b>No Action Alternative (Alternative A)</b>	Continuation of current management practices. No large-scale site development or alteration would occur. Designated, dispersed camping areas would remain and be managed under current rules and regulations.
<b><i>Relationship to Purpose and Need</i></b>	<i>I did not select this alternative because it does not address the issue of public safety and natural resource degradation within the planning area. This alternative does not provide a framework for management recreation use and meeting future demand for activities like overnight camping.</i>
<b>Proposed Action (Alternative B)</b>	The Proposed Action caters to the current mix of recreation users within the Alsea Falls Recreation Site and expands upon existing recreation opportunities. 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 23 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.
<b><i>Relationship to Purpose and Need</i></b>	<i>I selected this alternative because it best meets the purpose and need identified for the project. This alternative will implement projects that improve the infrastructure at Alsea Falls and augment the existing recreation</i>

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 5-6 miles of this initial development will be a shared use trail, open to hikers, bikes, and horses. This shared use trail will link to use-specific trails. Use-specific trail development will be heavily dependent on interest and volunteer contributions.

## Comparison of Alternatives in regard to the Purpose and Need

*opportunities in the area.*

My decision includes a number of actions that will be implemented in phases over a number of years. My first priorities are to correct high priority resource issues and known safety concerns. Next, the exiting Fall Creek trail system will be expanded and developed. All proposed activities are funding dependent. Table 3 has the expected implementation schedule/priorities for the actions included in this decision.

This decision also incorporates a number of project design features (PDFs). These PDFs were identified in the EA (pp. 34-40) and are included in the Management Plan.

**Table 3. Prioritized Implementation Schedule**

<b>Implementation Schedule<sup>3</sup></b>	
<b>Within the first five years (Phase 1 development)</b>	
<b>Priority #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace footbridge across Fall Creek.</li> <li>• Rebuild trail to Alsea Falls.</li> <li>• Replace footbridges in day use area (as needed).</li> <li>• Augment existing trail system at Fall Creek. Full build out at phase one is a 10-12 mile system.</li> <li>• Design and development of the Fall Creek Trailhead</li> <li>• Correct resource issues on existing trail system, day use area, and campground.</li> <li>• Replace pit toilets in the campground.</li> <li>• Improvements to signage and visitor information kiosks.</li> <li>• Implementation of a non-shooting area around the park.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and construction of South Fork Alsea hiking trail.</li> <li>• Striping for parking and installation of speed bumps in day use and campground areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Within five-to-ten years (Phase 2 development)</b>	
<b>Priority #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversion of five picnic sites in the day use area to walk-in (tent) campsites.</li> <li>• As demand and volunteer opportunities arise, implement use-specific trail expansion areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As demand dictates, expansion of the campgrounds to include five additional tent sites (including one group site and four individual sites).</li> <li>• Addition of a group use picnic site (shelter).</li> <li>• Install an ADA accessible overlook of the falls.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Project implementation and timeframes are dependent on funding and partner opportunities.  
*Alsea Falls Recreation Area Management Plan Decision Record*  
 EA # DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2013-0001

## 5.0 Compliance with Direction

The Alsea Falls RAMP has been designed to conform to the following documents, which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM-managed lands within the Salem District:

- *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)*, May 1995: The RMP has been reviewed and it has been determined that the Alsea Falls Management Plan conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions (i.e.: complies with management goals, objectives, direction, standards and guidelines) as required by 43 CFR 1610.5 (BLM Handbook H1790-1). Implementing the RMP is the reason for doing this project (RMP p.1-3);
- *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* (the Northwest Forest Plan, or NWFP), April 1994;
- *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M ROD)*, January 2001).

The analysis in the Alsea Falls RAMP EA is site-specific and supplements analyses found in the *Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/FEIS)*, September 1994. The RMP/FEIS includes the analysis from the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NWFP/FSEIS)*, February 1994. In addition, the EA is tiered to the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement For Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M FSEIS)*, November 2000).

### Survey and Manage Review

The Alsea Falls RAMP is consistent with court orders relating to the Survey and Manage mitigation measure of the Northwest Forest Plan, as incorporated into the Salem District RMP.

*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).

### **Compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS)**

This BLM reviewed the proposed action and no action alternatives against the ACS objectives (ACSO) at the project scale (pp. 71-74). The No Action alternative does not move toward the attainment of ACS objectives, because it would maintain the current unstable bank conditions within the Day-Use and Campground areas. These areas are located in the floodplain of the South Fork Alsea River.

Overall, the Proposed Actions do not retard or prevent the attainment of any of the nine ACS objectives. Some of the proposed actions, such as bank stabilization, native vegetation planting, and unstable site decommissioning, would aid in meeting ACS objectives.

## **6.0 Public Involvement, Consultation, and Coordination**

### ***Public Scoping***

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 website<sup>4</sup> 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. The BLM has provided sufficient opportunities for public involvement.

### ***EA and FONSI Comment Period***

The BLM made the EA and draft FONSI available for public review from October 9, 2012 to November 7, 2012. The BLM invited the public, by means of a press release and letters to those on the mailing list, to attend an open house in Corvallis, Oregon on October 29, 2012. Information on the plan was presented to the 10 attendees. Representatives from the planning team and agency management were made available to discuss the EA and proposed action.

---

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/salem/plans/alsea\\_index.php](http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/salem/plans/alsea_index.php)

## ***Comments Received and Response to Comments***

The BLM received 13 comments on the EA during the comment period. Comments were received from members of the public and members of various conservation and recreation groups (including Backcountry Horsemen, Oregon Equestrian Trails, Team Dirt [mountain bike group], Benton Forest Coalition, and Oregon Wild).

Comments were generally favorable for the plan and the proposed activities. Comments received include:

- Interest in more equestrian opportunities, particularly the inclusion of equestrian use in the Phase 1 trail work at Fall Creek.
- Support for shared use trails.
- Requests for better signage in the area.
- Interest in a reservation system for the group site and composting toilets in the campground.
- Support of “purpose-built” trails.
- Desire for a balance of resource protection and recreational uses of the lands.
- Interest in minimizing tree removal when improving/expanding the planning area.
- Increased emphasis for hiking opportunities.
- Support for a firearm ban in the planning area.
- More hiking access to old growth areas.
- Modifying the existing gate system on the Fall Creek Road and Coleman Creek.

I carefully read the comments received on the EA. In response to these comments, I have partially modified the selected alternative as outlined in Section 4. Beyond the comments outlined above, I have also responded to other comments submitted during the comment period. Appendix A contains these responses.

The scoping and EA comment letters/emails are available for review at the Salem District BLM Office, 1717 Fabry Rd SE, Salem, Oregon.

## ***Consultation and Coordination***

### **Wildlife: United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

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, on-the-ground implementation of the projects involved in this RAMP must be consulted upon with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A project design feature 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 assessments (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, they would be described and analyzed in the biological assessment(s) pertinent at the time of construction.

### **Fish: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)**

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 Upper Willamette River (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.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

### ***Review of Finding of No Significant Impact***

I have determined that the FONSI for the Alsea Falls RAMP EA is accurate and valid for this project. I reviewed the comments on the EA and no information was provided in the comments that lead me to believe the analysis, data, or conclusions are in error or that the selected action needs to be altered (beyond my shared-use modification). There are no significant new circumstances or facts relevant to the selected action or associated environmental effects that were not addressed in the EA.

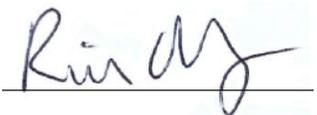
### ***Administrative Review Opportunities***

Notice of this decision will be posted on the Salem District internet website. The action is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR Part 4. For additional appeal information, please contact Stefanie Larew, Marys Peak Environmental Coordinator, at 503-375-5601.

### ***Implementation Date***

If no appeals are filed, this decision will become effective after February 16, 2013. For additional information, contact Tim Fisher, Project Lead, 750 NW Lighthouse Dr., Newport, Oregon, 97365, or at

(541) 574-3142.

Approved by: 

Rich Hatfield  
Marys Peak Field Manager

January 15, 2013

Date

## **Appendix A: Response to Public Comments Received on the Alsea Falls RAMP EA (EA# DOI-BLM-OR-S050-2012-0001)**

The BLM received twelve comment letters during the comment period for the Alsea Falls EA. In some cases the comments have been quoted directly from commenter's responses and in some cases they have been paraphrased. Comments are in *italics*. The BLM response follows each comment. As stated earlier, the majority of the comments were favorable of the plan and proposed activities. Those comments are not included below.

- 1. Comment:** *Since the BLM acknowledges that 75% of visits to trails are by hikers, and very few equestrians visit the Falls, I question the emphasis on bike/hike trails and equestrian/hike trails in phases of construction. It's the scenic aspects of the Falls that draw people to visit, and an opportunity to hike through stands of giant trees will keep them coming back. Mountain biking is primarily a form of exercise. There are no lack of mountain biking trails around Corvallis and Eugene available for that purpose. Hiking is a form of visual appreciation, and the classic old growth stands in the Fall Creek and Coleman Creek drainages should be utilized to that effect.*

**Response:** As stated in the EA (p. 4), one component of the purpose and need is to increase non-motorized trail opportunities; this includes opportunities for not just hikers, but bikers and equestrians as well.

There are a number of trail opportunities in the Alsea Falls area. The Benton Forest Coalition has done a very good job of mapping and flagging many of these opportunities. As the EA and decision outline, the first priority for the Alsea Falls Planning area will be to enhance and augment the existing trail system at Fall Creek. The Fall Creek area is partially built-out and contains a cleared area for a trailhead and approximately 17 miles of trail/old logging road. The vast majority of this mileage, though, is old logging roads. My decision will expand the existing trail system to 10-12 miles at Fall Creek with a portion of that mileage (approximately 5-6 miles) shared-use. The Fall Creek Trailhead will also be developed.

I wish to take advantage of the infrastructure in place at Fall Creek before we begin developing other areas around Alsea Falls. New trails require trailhead parking, stream crossing, signage, trail routing, etc. The cost for such development quickly adds up. To me, it seems sensible to improve the area we have before moving into new areas.

- 2. Comment:** *The Fall Creek gate and second Coleman Creek gate [should] be left open to make these trails more accessible.*

**Response:** For now, the gate system at Alsea Falls will not change. A number of roads in the planning area are gated. The history of these gates is varied but they have helped to limit the proliferation of dispersed camping, off-road use, noxious weed dispersal, and other uses and conditions which are difficult to manage. The gate at Fall Creek, for example, helps to maintain the current non-motorized character of the area. As the trail system is developed, decisions on locked gates may be re-visited – particularly in terms of how these gates support or limit the desired recreation experience in the area.

3. **Comment:** *Yesterday, I hiked the six mile loop – Hard Rock Road – Billy Buster – Bailout – Stellar Jay and was dismayed to see that the 4-5 trees across Stellar Jay have not been removed as was recommended three years ago to enable horses to use the trail safely. Have you left the trees purposely to prevent horses from using this trail?*

**Response:** I am unclear as to the location of the 4-5 trees across the Stellar Jay Trail. Most of the trails in the Fall Creek area have received minimal maintenance over the years and no particular trail has been intentionally neglected. (One of the trails on maps for the area – “Coyote Canyon” – is nearly impossible to follow on-the-ground.) Equestrian use of the area, while permitted, has been very low to non-existent. Nevertheless, in my decision, I have agreed to include this use on the initial shared-use component of the system.

4. **Comment:** *The bridge [across Fall Creek] is totally adequate for horses to cross so please stop using this as an excuse.*

**Response:** This fall BLM engineers reviewed the footbridge across Fall Creek. The bridge failed a number of safety criteria and was deemed unsafe for any use (including equestrians). As of December 2012, the bridge is signed as closed to the public. A new bridge will be installed in the spring/summer 2013.