

Oregon State University Right-of-Way Grant Alsea Falls Meteorological Tower

Decision Record

Environmental Assessment: DOI-BLM-ORWA-S050-2016-0002-EA

July 2016

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Oregon State Office
Salem District
Marys Peak Field Office

Township 14 South, Range 7 West, Section 36, Willamette Meridian

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1.0 Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conducted an environmental analysis for the Oregon State University meteorological tower project, which is documented in the *Alsea Falls Meteorological Tower Environmental Assessment* (EA) (DOI-BLM-ORWA-S050-2016-0002-EA) and the associated project file. This decision authorizes the implementation of those activities directly related to and included within the project. This project is located within forested lands in the Matrix (General Forest Management Area) and Riparian Reserves land use allocations in the Upper Alsea fifth-field watershed in Benton County, Oregon.

2.0 Decision

I have decided to issue a right-of-way grant for the project, as described in the Alternative 2 of the EA, as modified in this decision record (DR), hereafter referred to as the “selected action” (Figure 1). This decision is based on site-specific analysis in the EA, the supporting project record, as well as the management direction contained in the *Salem District Resource Management Plan* (RMP) (1995), which are incorporated by reference in the EA.

Decision Summary

The BLM will issue a right-of-way grant that authorizes Oregon State University to construct a meteorological tower site to support carbon uptake and energy exchange research. The authorization is for the right to construct, operate, and maintain the site and trail foot path for 20 years.

Construction will occur in summer of 2016 and last approximately one to two months. The total area of disturbance is approximately one half acre. The selected action will be implemented as described in the EA (pp. 13-18) and as modified below. Project components include the tower, concrete foundations, guyed wires, enclosure fencing, equipment shed, access trail, a tree-based solar array, a powerline trench for the solar array, and road renovation. A summary of the key components are included below.

Tower and Associated Structures

The proponent will install a latticed monopole tower constructed of galvanized steel and measuring approximately 16.75 inches on each side of an equilateral triangle. The proponent’s original request described a 200-220 foot tall tower; however, the final tower will be less than 200 feet in height. A concrete foundation, approximately five feet on each side, will be constructed. The tower and equipment shed will be enclosed within a chain link fence (30 feet by 30 feet). Three guyed wires will be anchored approximately 150 feet from the base. Anchor points consist of buried concrete blocks, approximately four feet on a side, with steel anchor rods in the middle where the guyed cables attach. A level area next to the concrete tower foundation will be constructed for a small equipment shed.

Power to Site

Power to the site will be via a tree-based solar array. Three solar panels, 3 feet by 6 feet in size, will be hung in trees approximately 500 feet due west of the site. Mounting design will minimize damage to the trees. A trench, approximately 1 foot wide, 500 feet long, and 3 feet deep, will be dug for the power cable from the tree where the solar panels are hung to the equipment shed. The tree based solar array will be enclosed by a 20 foot by 20 foot fence.

Lighting

The Federal Aviation Administration provides lighting specifications for structures greater than 200 feet in height. Since the final tower will be less than 200 feet in height, the proponent will not be required to install lighting to these specifications.

Access

To drive components closer to the project side, approximately 1,500 feet of road will be opened by removing the log barriers, installing temporary drainage, and feathering back the water bars. A trail approximately 3 feet wide and 400 feet long will be constructed from the skid road to the project site. A temporary gate will be installed on the 14-7-25.1 road.

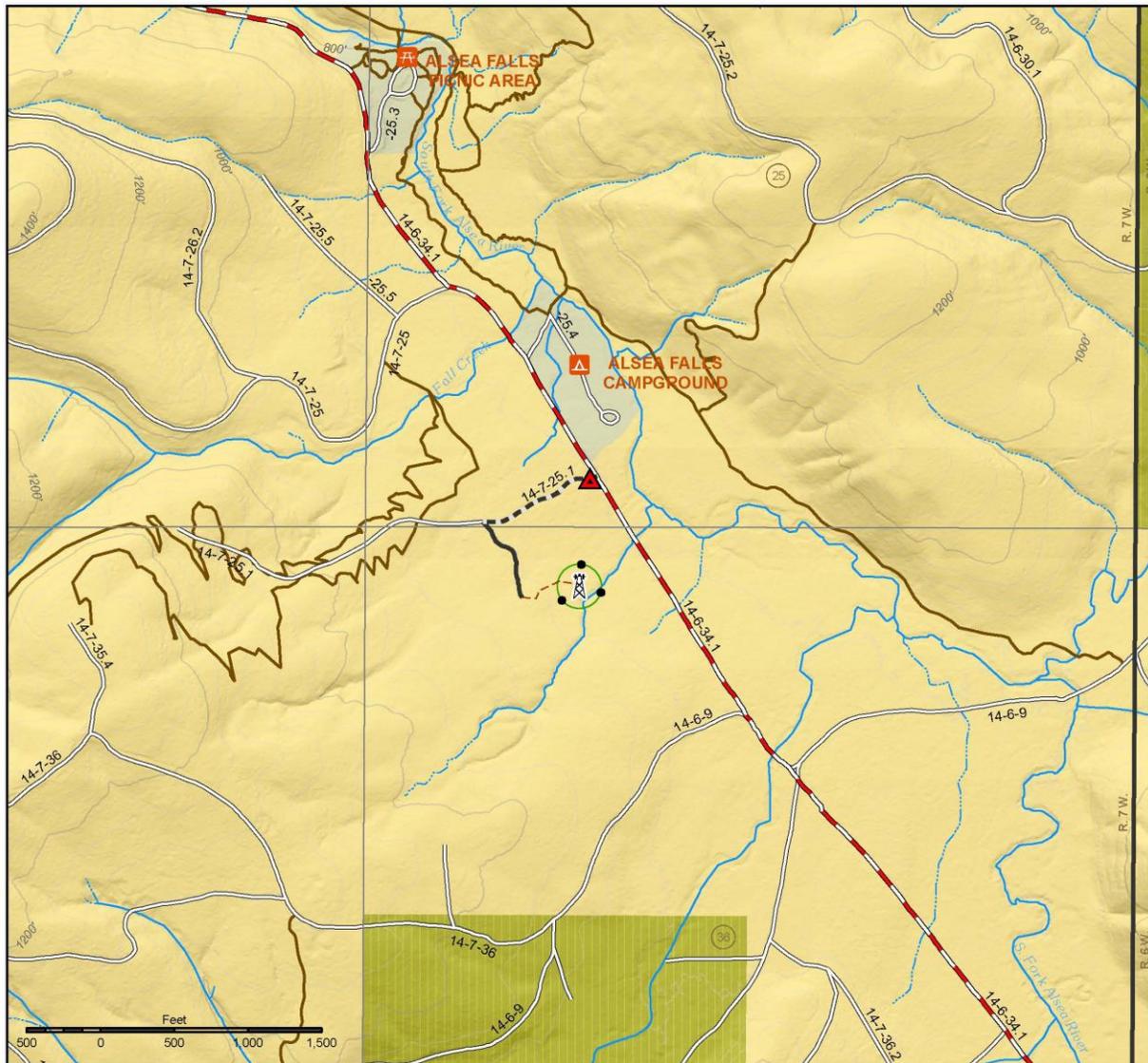
Tree Felling

Three trees will be felled near the tower site. Additionally, another three to five trees will be cut on BLM road 14-7-25.1. All trees will be left on-site as coarse woody debris (CWD).

Post-Construction

After construction is completed, the corrugated pipe and the temporary gate will be removed, water bars will be reconstructed, and the log barriers will be placed at their original locations. The constructed trail to the site will not be actively managed. The trail will be left to grow over and will only be used on an as-needed basis by OSU to monitor the site.

Figure 1. Selected Action



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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Blocked Road | BLM Recreation Site |
| Tower | Major Access Road |
| Anchor Point | Minor Road |
| Trail to be Constructed | Recreation Trails |
| Road to be Opened | Intermittent Stream |
| Skid Road | Perennial Stream |
| Anchor Points Radius (150 Feet) | Bureau of Land Management |
| | Weyerhaeuser Co |



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

3.0 Alternatives Considered

The EA analyzed the effects of the No Action and the Proposed Action alternatives. No unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (section 102(2) (E) of NEPA) were identified. The No Action alternative means that the BLM would deny the right-of-way grant. The BLM discussed an “alternate location” alternative as considered, but not analyzed in detail in the EA (pp. 17-18). The applicant, Oregon State University, identified the specific criteria needed to support their research. The site that Oregon State University currently operates on private land is no longer viable for their research because the land has been recently clearcut.

4.0 Decision Rationale

When writing this rationale, I consulted and reviewed the following documents and records:

- The EA and supporting project record (including public comments);
- Management recommendations within the South Fork Alsea Watershed Analysis (1995); and
- Management direction within the Salem District RMP.

I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the selected action, as described in Section 2.0 of this DR. My decision is consistent with the criteria described in the EA for selecting which alternative to implement (EA, p. 7). The selected action:

- Best meets the purpose and need of the project (EA Section 1.3);
- Is consistent with the Salem District RMP; and,
- Will not have significant impacts on the affected elements of the environment beyond those already anticipated and addressed in the RMP FEIS; and,
- Has been adequately analyzed.

5.0 Compliance with Direction

This proposed action is in conformance with the Salem District RMP as amended and with court orders relating to the Survey and Manage mitigation measure of the Northwest Forest Plan. This project implements (is tiered to) the Final Environmental Impact Statements for the Salem District RMP (1995), as amended, as well as all documents contained in the EA project file. The EA is tiered to these documents as permitted by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1502.20).

Survey and Manage Review

The project does not constitute a ground-disturbing or habitat-disturbing activity that is subject to the Survey and Manage protocol because the project will not affect any habitat that supports Survey and Manage species. The scale and scope of the project are limited because it will occur on less than one-half acre in a forest stand less than 80 years of age, road renovation will occur on existing roads, and tree felling will be limited to approximately 10 trees. If the proposed activity is determined to not pose a potential significant negative effect at the site, then surveys are not required” (2001 S&M ROD p. 22).

Compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy

This BLM reviewed the alternatives against the ACS objectives at the project scale. The Selected Action does not retard or prevent the attainment of any of the nine ACS objectives (EA, pp. 41–43). The project is located approximately 150 feet from the nearest stream channel, vegetation removal will be minimal, and the project is not located within any Key Watersheds.

6.0 Public Involvement, Consultation, and Coordination

Public Scoping

The BLM provided opportunities for the public to provide input throughout the planning process. On February 18, 2016 the BLM sent a scoping letter to 18 potentially affected or interested individuals, groups, and agencies. Additionally, the BLM published a press release to announce the 30 day public scoping period. The BLM received nine comment letters and e-mails during the formal scoping period and considered these in the development and analysis of the project. The project has appeared in the quarterly BLM publication Project Update since summer 2015.

EA and Draft FONSI Comment Period

The BLM made the EA and draft FONSI available for public review from June 1, 2016 to June 30, 2016. The BLM did not receive any comments during this public comment period.

Consultation and Coordination

Wildlife: United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The Section 7 Consultation for the Proposed Action has been addressed by inclusion within a Biological Assessment (BA) that analyzed all projects that may adversely affect listed wildlife species on federal lands within the Northern Oregon Coast Range during fiscal years 2016 and 2017. This Proposed Action was evaluated in the ROW project category and has been designed to incorporate all appropriate design standards that were included in the BA. A Biological Opinion (Tracking number: 01EOFW00-2016-F-0136) was received from the Service on 2/29/2016. The Service concluded that this type of action, when implemented with applicable PDFs, will not adversely affect the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, or their designated critical habitat.

Fish: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

No effects are anticipated to Upper Willamette River (UWR) Spring Chinook salmon, UWR steelhead, Oregon chub, and Oregon Coast coho salmon in either watershed due to distance to occupied habitat; therefore, no ESA consultation is warranted.

Protection of essential fish habitat (EFH) as described by the Magnuson/Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act and consultation with NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is required for all projects which may adversely affect EFH of Chinook and coho salmon. The project area is more than 0.5 miles from Alsea Falls, which is the upstream limit of Oregon Coast coho salmon in the South Fork Alsea River Basin and 26 miles from nearest habitat utilized by Chinook and coho in the Marys River (Streamnet 2009). Tower construction will not deliver sediment to streams because of the distance of the project site (150 feet) to the nearest stream channel. Based on distance of the project site from the nearest stream channel and the distance from occupied habitat, the Proposed

Action will have no effects on EFH. Consultation with NOAA NMFS on EFH is not required for this project.

7.0 Conclusion

Review of Finding of No Significant Impact

I have reviewed the draft Finding of No Significant Impact that was published with the EA in June 2016. I have determined that change is not necessary because I have considered and concur with information in the EA and FONSI¹. I reviewed the EA and no information was provided during the public comment period that leads me to believe the analysis, data, or conclusions are in error or that the selected action needs to be altered. 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

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4. Form 1842-1 "Information on taking appeals to the Interior Board of Land Appeals" provides additional information on this process. To appeal, you must file a notice of appeal at the BLM Marys Peak Field Office within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appeal must be in writing and delivered in person to the Marys Peak Field Office as noted above. The BLM does not accept appeals by facsimile or email. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error. All BLM decisions under this part remain in effect pending appeal unless the Secretary of the Interior rules otherwise, or as noted in this part.

Approved by: _____


Paul Tigan
Marys Peak Field Manager

7/13/16

Date

¹ The signed FONSI includes corrections to minor typographical errors in the draft FONSI. These changes do not change the findings or conclusions.