United States Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coos Bay District

Categorical Exclusion Review (CX)

DOI-BLM-ORWA-C030-2016-0002-CX
Date: April 12, 2016

A. Project

Name: Cherry Creek Blowdown Salvage CX

Location: Coos County, Oregon, Willamette Meridian, T. 27 S., R. 11 W., Sec. 23

Description:
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Umpqua Field Office is proposing salvage harvest of wind-thrown, broken topped, and root sprung trees near the Cherry Creek tributary of the North Fork Coquille River. The project area is approximately 5 miles east of Fairview, Oregon.

Between December 2015 and January 2016, multiple storm systems moved through the region, accompanied by strong winds. These winds, combined with saturated soils, resulted in approximately 40 percent of the stand being blown down or severely damaged. The BLM thinned the proposed salvage unit in 2008 under the Bitter Cherry CT Timber Sale (ORC00-TS-2008.0002), which the BLM analyzed under the 2006 Middle Creek CTs II Environmental Assessment (OR125-04-17).

The total project area comprises approximately 31 acres; 18 acres of General Forest Management Area (GFMA) and 13 acres of Riparian Reserve (RR). Harvest systems would include ground-based harvesting on approximately 4 acres and cable systems on the remaining 27 acres. Ground-based harvesting areas would also be appropriate for cable yarding. The BLM's Cherry Creek Blowdown Salvage project would salvage approximately 600–700 Mbf of timber.

The area proposed for salvage is comprised primarily of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), with lesser components of western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) and grand fir (*Abies grandis*). The proposed salvage would include all merchantable volume not designated for retention as stated below. The BLM may harvest incidental green trees in landing locations or during the reconditioning of roads to facilitate safe haul.

Unit 1 is 45 years old and has a mean diameter of 16 inches. Units 2 and 3 are 54 years old and have a mean diameter of 17 inches.

Timely salvage of dead and dying trees is critical to capture merchantable timber volume before further deterioration occurs. Salvaging dead and dying trees would allow the BLM to retrieve some economic value from these trees located within the GFMA (i.e., Matrix) land use allocation. The BLM would salvage blowdown trees where material exceeds the levels recommended to meet coarse woody debris (CWD) and snag retention.

Project Design Features:

The following project design features (PDFs) are included in the site-specific design of the proposal to eliminate or minimize adverse effects. These PDFs are a compilation of resource protection measures identified by the Interdisciplinary Team and Best Management Practices identified in the *Coos Bay District Record of Decision* (ROD) *and Resource Management Plan* (RMP).

General Harvest Operations

- Ground-based operations would be restricted to slopes ≤35 percent and be used off road only when soil moisture is ≤25 percent, typically mid-July to mid-September.
- Ground-based operations would operate on slash mats as much as possible and maximize use of existing skid trails.
- Partial suspension during ground-based and cable yarding would be required to minimize soil disturbance.
- The BLM would require the timber operator to yard trees to log landings, where the tree tops and limbs would be removed.

Special Status Species - Including T&E and S&M Species

- Allow salvage operations on Unit 1 (northernmost/upper unit) only from September 30 to March 1 to avoid potential disturbance to NSO habitat (i.e., outside of the NSO breeding season).

Riparian Reserve

- Retain 4 snags per acre, including snags persisting from previous natural mortality events that exhibit decay, defect, and/or cavities.
- Retain approximately 1,600 cubic feet of blowdown within 50 feet of each intermittent stream within Units 1 and 3, consisting of whole trees, snapped boles and branches, to protect the structure and function of stream beds and stream banks in the short- and long-term.
- Retain, post-salvage, a minimum of 120 linear feet of logs per acre (decay classes I and II, ≥ 16 inches in diameter at the large end and ≥16 feet in length) in addition to non-merchantable, freshly broken pieces and older logs with advanced decay (decay classes III, IV and V).
- Refueling of gas- or diesel-powered machinery would not be allowed in close proximity to stream channels. Contractors would be required to have spill prevention containment and countermeasure plans to minimize the likelihood of contamination reaching a waterway.

Created Structural Legacies – Snags and Downed Wood

- Retain all standing green trees that exhibit no signs of damage to the roots, boles, or crowns.
- Retain at least 2–4 snags per acre of the largest size class available to support populations of cavity nesting birds and aid in development of coarse woody debris.

- Retained snags would generally be clumped along the sides of the harvest unit and at least one tree length away from BLM road 27-11-23.2 in order to facilitate a safe transportation system and salvage operations.
- A minimum of 120 linear feet per acre of coarse woody debris (CWD) would be reserved during this project. CWD would be comprised of logs ≥16 inches diameter and 16 feet in length in decay classes I and II.

Reforestation

- Following salvage operations, visual surveys of the salvage area would be conducted to determine openings suitable for reforestation. A suitable mix of conifer species—based on site characteristics—would be planted as recommended by the BLM Silviculturist.

Roads Management

The BLM would not construct new roads for this project. The BLM would utilize existing roads to facilitate haul.

- Except for the seasonally restricted area (Unit 1), cable yarding, landing operations, and timber hauling on rock-surfaced roads would be permitted year round. Road and landing conditions would be monitored during winter use to prevent rutting of the rock surface and delivery of fine sediment to stream networks.
- Landing operations and haul on native surface roads (27-11-23.6) would be restricted to dry season typically mid-July to mid-September.
- Road 27-11-23.6 would be reopened to facilitate salvage access and haul. Upon completion of salvage operations, the road surface would be scarified, seeded, and permanent drainage features (e.g., waterbars) installed. Rip rap boulders would be reinstalled to block the road.
- Bare soil areas created from landing construction would be mulched with certified weed-free straw, or equivalent, and seeded with a BLM-approved weed-free native grass seed mix.

Noxious Weeds

- Off-road equipment would be washed and inspected prior to entering the project area to prevent the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. Power washing is preferred to remove all mud, dirt, oil, and plant parts before moving onto BLM-managed lands.

Fuel Treatments

- All roads and their shoulders (including ditch lines) within the harvest area that are to remain open to the public should have roadside hazard reduction completed before logging equipment leaves the site.
- Piling of activity slash at landing sites for burning is preferred. Scattering of activity slash at landing sites should only be done if there is no room available to pile or there is not enough slash to build a pile.
- Pile slash (1/2 inch up to 4 inch diameter) within 20 feet of the edge of the road.

- Slash piles should be at least 20 feet from reserve trees and any retained coarse wood whenever possible. If space is limited, piles should be located as far as possible from the reserve tree(s) or coarse wood.
- On year-round open roads, slash materials of sufficient size would be segregated from roadside slash piles for extended utilization (i.e., firewood) to reduce the volume of slash burned.
- Place segregated material where it is accessible to the public and safe from consumption during pile burning operations.
- To protect the dry slash from becoming too wet to burn cleanly and completely, adequately cover roadside slash piles with 4-mil black polyethylene sheeting.
- Burning would be done during the late fall/early winter to reduce the chances of a fire escaping control.
- Burning would be done in compliance with the Oregon Smoke Management Plan.

Cultural Resources

- If found, the BLM would suspend all project implementation activities near any objects or sites of possible cultural value such as historical or prehistoric ruins, fossils or artifacts and notify the Authorized Officer.

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance Review

The BLM developed this project to conform and be consistent with the *1995 Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (1995 ROD/RMP). The analysis supporting this decision tiers to the *Final Coos Bay District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (USDI 1994). This 1995 *Record of Decision* is also supported by, and consistent with, the *1994 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) on Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* and its associated *Record of Decision* (USDA/USDI 1994).

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

1995 Resource Management Plan (RMP) Objectives:

> Provide for salvage harvest of timber killed or damaged by events such as wildfire, windstorms, insects, or disease, consistent with management objectives for other resources (p. 52).

The project areas do not contain habitat for Survey and Manage species, therefore it is consistent with the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan as amended by the 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (2001 ROD).

The Umpqua Field Office Hydrologist performed an Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) consistency review and determined that the proposed salvage project would not adversely affect ACS objectives. Greater than 1,600 cubic feet of blowdown consisting of whole trees, snapped boles and branches would be retained in, over and within 50 feet of each intermittent stream channel to protect the structure and function of stream beds and stream banks in the short- and long-term. Elsewhere in the Riparian Reserves, a minimum of 120 linear feet of logs per acre (decay classes I and II, ≥16 inches in diameter at the large end and ≥16 feet in length) would be retained post-salvage in addition to non-merchantable, freshly broken pieces and older logs with advanced decay (decay classes III, IV and V). Riparian Reserves would contain 4 snags per acre including older snags with defect or cavities. Blowdown in and over several small, less than 1 acre wetlands would be excluded from salvage to protect these resources.

C: Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with the Department of Interior Manual 516 DM 11.9 #C.(8):

> Salvaging dead or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 mile of temporary road construction. Such activities:
>
> (a) May include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.
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> (b) May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and
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> (c) Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment, by artificial or natural means, of vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.
>
> (d) For this CX, a dying tree is defined as a standing tree that has been severely damaged by forces such as fire, wind, ice, insects, or disease, and that in the judgment of an experienced forest professional or someone technically trained for the work, is likely to die within a few years. Examples include, but are not limited to:
>
> i. Harvesting a portion of a stand damaged by a wind or ice event.
>
> ii. Harvesting fire damaged trees.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the proposed action and no extraordinary circumstances described under 43 CFR § 46.215 apply.

Extraordinary Circumstances	Reviewed by:	Initials	Date
(1) Health & Safety Hazardous Materials	Hazardous Materials Coordinator		4/12/2016
(2) Unique Resources	Port-Orford-cedar Coordinator		4/12/2016
(3) Controversial Effects	NEPA Coordinator	lmp	4/12/2016
(4) Risks	NEPA Coordinator	lmp	4/12/2016
(5) Precedent	NEPA Coordinator	lmp	4/12/2016
(6) Cumulative	NEPA Coordinator	lmp	4/12/2016
(7) Cultural & Historic	Archaeologist		4/12/2016
(8) T& E Species	Wildlife Biologist		4/12/2016
	Fisheries Biologist	JEF	04-13-16
	Botanist	JS	4/12/16
(9)Violate Laws	NEPA Coordinator	lmp	4/12/2016
(10) Environmental Justice	Environmental Justice Coordinator		4/12/2016
(11) Native American	District Native American Coordinator		4/12/2016
(12) Noxious Weeds	Noxious Weed Coordinator		4/12/2016 for

A summary of the extraordinary circumstances is listed below. The action must have a significant or a disproportional adverse effect on the listed categories to warrant further analysis and environmental review.

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
Rationale: The BLM did not identify any significant impacts on the public health or safety from the proposed action. Operations would follow Federal and State Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards designed to prevent job-related illness or injuries. Operations would remove and fall standing trees that currently represent a hazard to workers and the public. The proposed action would allow for access to federal lands for resource management and fire protection; and provide the public with safe passage along roads.		
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principle drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
Rationale: The Umpqua Field Office Silviculturist surveyed the area for Port-Orford-cedar (POC)—with respect to Port-Orford-cedar root disease—and did not observe any POC trees. The proposed salvage area is within Units 11 and 12 of the 2008 Bitter Cherry Timber Sale, which did not show any POC volume (Exhibit B). The District Archaeologist did not identify any historic or cultural resources within the project area. The project does not contain any park, recreation, or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, sole or principle drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, national monuments, migratory birds or other ecologically significant or critical areas. The project is located in General Forest Management Area (GFMA) and Riparian Reserve.		
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102 (2)(E)]		X
Rationale: Based on past experience from similar timber harvest activities, there are no predicted environmental effects from the proposed salvage harvest that are considered highly controversial, nor are there unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses. The Coos Bay District ROD/RMP established land use allocations and Management Direction that authorizes this activity, and as such, unresolved conflicts regarding other uses of these resources would not occur. This project's Categorical Exclusion Authority allows for the removal of dead and dying trees not to exceed 250 acres.		
2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
Rationale: The activities proposed in this CX are long-standing practices on BLM-administered lands. An interdisciplinary team of BLM specialists reviewed this project and determined there are no highly uncertain, potentially significant, unique, or unknown risks.		
2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
Rationale: The BLM's salvage harvest proposed in this CX is addressed—and authorized—under the 1995 Coos Bay District ROD/RMP. The salvage harvest proposal does not establish a precedent or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. The salvage harvest proposal represents implementation of the land use plan.		
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects		X
Rationale: The proposed action salvages blowdown and dying trees in the Cherry Creek area. The BLM's		

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
interdisciplinary team reviewed the project and incorporated PDFs into the project design to minimize any potential effects to resources and prevent off-site effects that would contribute to the cumulative effects of other projects in the area.		
2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
Rationale: The BLM archaeologist reviewed this project. The project area does not contain any properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.		
2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Threatened or Endangered Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
Rationale: The BLM botanist, fisheries biologist, and wildlife biologist reviewed the areas proposed for salvage harvest. The interdisciplinary team has determined that the proposed action will have no significant impacts on species listed—or proposed to be listed—on the List of Threatened or Endangered Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. The Umpqua Field Office Botanist determined there were no Threatened or Endangered plant species in or near the project area. The Umpqua Field Office Fisheries Biologist determined that the project area does not contain listed fish species. The closest fish habitat is approximately 1,110 feet downstream of Unit 3, and the intermittent stream that drains Unit 3 goes subsurface; and therefore, has no surface connection to downstream fish habitat. Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for ESA or the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is not needed. The Umpqua Field Office Wildlife Biologist determined that the proposed salvage operations does not contain marbled murrelet habitat, critical habitat, or unsurveyed suitable habitat within disruption or disturbance distances from the salvage area. The Umpqua Field Office Wildlife Biologist determined that the project area does not contain northern spotted owl (NSO) nest patches, core areas, or critical habitat. Unit 1 is within the disturbance distance of two acres of mapped NSO roosting and foraging habitat[1] and, as such, could be disturbed by noise if operations occur during the breeding season. The 2-acre potential disturbance area is not designated as critical habitat. The BLM proposes to implement seasonal restrictions on Unit 1 to eliminate potential effects to NSO.		

[1] Mapped roosting and foraging habitat is treated like nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for consideration of disturbance.

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
The BLM does not propose to remove or modify NSO or marbled murrelet habitat. Consultation under the ESA with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not required with the implementation of seasonal restrictions for NSO on Unit 1. The Umpqua Field Office Wildlife Biologist also determined that there is no habitat for Survey and Manage species, and there is no habitat for other Special Status species.		
2.9 Violate a Federal, State, Local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
Rationale: The proposed salvage follows the Coos Bay RMP's direction for management of public lands in the Coos Bay District, and, as such, complies with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. This project would not violate Federal, State, local, or Tribal laws.		
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
Rationale: The Coos Bay District BLM, either internally or through public involvement in BLM project planning in the past, has not identified any potential effects that would indicate that this type of project would have a disproportionately high or adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X
Rationale: The BLM archaeologist reviewed this project; no sites of sacred, religious, or ceremonial value have been identified in the project area. This project would not act to limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners.		
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X
Rationale: The proposed salvage harvest area does contain some Himalayan blackberry along the road in Unit 1. The BLM would incorporate PDFs such as washing and inspecting equipment prior to entry into the project area to reduce the risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds. Other potential weed spread and effects will be controlled by including this area in the 2017 weed treatment plan.		

D. Signature

Authorizing Official:

Field Manager: _____ Date: 4/13/2016

E. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Heather Partipilo at Bureau of Land Management, Coos Bay District, 1300 Airport Way, North Bend, Oregon 97459, (541) 751-0100, or email at BLM_OR_CB_Mail@blm.gov, Attn: Heather Partipilo.

Figure 1. Windthrow trees in the Cherry Creek project area.

Figure 2. Windthrow trees on BLM road 27-11-23.2.

Figure 3. Windthrow trees in the Cherry Creek project area.

Figure 4. Windthrow trees in the Cherry Creek project area.

Figure 5. Windthrow trees in the Cherry Creek project area.

Figure 6. Windthrow trees in the Cherry Creek project area.

Figure 7. Windthrow trees in the Cherry Creek project area (Unit 1).