



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Coos Bay District Office

1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, OR 97459

Web Address: <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/coosbay>

E-mail: BLM_OR_CB_Mail@blm.gov

Telephone: (541) 756-0100 Toll Free: (888) 809-0839 Fax: (541) 751-4303



IN REPLY REFER TO

1792/5400 (ORC040)

DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA

Six Twigs Environmental Assessment

April 13, 2016

Dear Citizen:

The BLM has completed the Six Twigs Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA) and prepared a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). These documents contain analysis of the potential impacts of conducting regeneration treatments. The project is designed to implement management objectives and direction of the 1995 Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan.

You are encouraged to read the EA and preliminary FONSI and offer substantive comments prior to the close of the 30-day comment period, May 16, 2016. These documents are located on our BLM website at <http://1.usa.gov/23rZUnT>. The majority of the project would be implemented through multiple timber sales expected to be sold in fiscal years 2016 and 2017. A Decision Rationale document would be posted prior to any sale of timber.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be made available for public review at the address below during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays. Comments could be published as part of this EA document or other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently in the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

For further information, contact Racheal Jones at 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend OR, 97459 or (541) 756-0100, or by e-mail at OR_CoosBay_Mail@blm.gov, ATTN: Racheal Jones

Respectfully,

/s/ Teresa Stutesman

Teresa Stutesman

Myrtlewood Field Manager (Acting)



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DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA

Six Twigs Environmental Assessment

**PRELIMINARY
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for the
Six Twigs Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA**

I. Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), which contains analysis of the effects of implementing regeneration harvest on 217 acres of forested stands designated as the Matrix land use allocation. The EA contains two alternatives: a No Action Alternative and a Proposed Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative provides a useful baseline for comparison of environmental effects and demonstrates the consequences of not conducting regeneration. The Proposed Action Alternative (or proposed project) describes the effects of meeting the Purpose and Need of the EA, which includes (but is not limited to) conducting harvest and silvicultural activities within the Matrix, protecting federally listed species, and providing early-successional habitat. The Six Twigs Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) established the need for the proposed regeneration treatments after reviewing the differences between existing and desired stand conditions. The EA is attached and is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The proposed treatments are located in the following Township, Range, and Sections: T. 31 S., R. 14 W., Secs., 7, 14, 15, 18, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 32, Willamette Meridian.

The ID Team developed site-specific analysis for the EA under the management direction of the 1995 Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (1995 ROD/RMP). This EA is tiered to and in conformance with the Coos Bay District ROD/RMP and the 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 (Northwest Forest Plan) and its ROD as supplemented and amended by:

- Management of Port-Orford-cedar in Southwest Oregon Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and its ROD.
- Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines.

As stated in the ROD for the Northwest Forest Plan, the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) was developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems on public lands within the range of Pacific Ocean anadromy. The Six Twigs EA concluded the proposed project is consistent with the ACS objectives (EA pp. 71–78).

II. Finding of No Significant Impact

The EA effects analysis indicates that there would not be a significant impact on the quality of the human environment from the implementation of either alternative. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

Context

Context refers to the suitable scale for analysis (40 CFR 1508.27(a)). Potential effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed action have been analyzed within the context of the proposed project unit boundaries and the New River Frontal and Sixes River 5th field watersheds.

Intensity

Intensity refers to the severity of impact (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)). The following ten sections refer to the specific conditions/concerns addressed under 40 CFR 1508.27 and document the BLM's consideration of the intensity (severity) of the effects as addressed in the Six Twigs EA.

1. *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse* (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(1))

Any impacts, both beneficial and adverse, are not significant as they are consistent with the range and scope of those effects of timber management analyzed in the 1994 Final Coos Bay District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement to which the EA is tiered. Furthermore, any potentially adverse impacts would be diminished or eliminated by implementation of project design features (EA pp. 14–20).

2. *Public Health and Safety* (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2))

No aspect of the proposed action would have an effect on public health and safety. The public would not be allowed to enter hazardous work areas because the Six Twigs proposed project is located behind locked gates with no public access (EA p. 79). Smoke management from pile burning would adhere to the Oregon Smoke Management Plan (OAR 629-43-043) (EA p. 67, 78).

3. *Unique characteristics of the geographic area* (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3))

There are no known unique characteristics of the geographic area. Specifically there are no known prime or unique farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, or wilderness values within the project area (EA p. 80).

4. *Degree to which effects are likely to be highly controversial* (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4))

The proposed project is not unique or unusual. The effects of the both the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative are well known and not controversial. The BLM has experience implementing actions similar to both the proposed project and the No Action Alternative in similar areas. Personal dislike of the BLM implementing management direction of the Coos Bay District RMP does not constitute scientific controversy.

Furthermore, the proposed project and No Action Alternative fall well within the management actions/direction of the Coos Bay District RMP. As stated in the EA, "The Coos Bay District RMP projected that in the third decade (fiscal years 15–24), the District would harvest 7,900 acres of timber using

regeneration harvest techniques to meet the ASQ... Implementing regeneration treatments analyzed in this EA would contribute 217 acres (or 2.7 percent) to the third decade projection (7,900 acres).”

5. *Degree to which effects are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5))*

The possible effects of the proposed activities on the quality of the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risk. Timber harvest is a common practice on lands managed by the BLM in western Oregon. None of the public comments received indicated unique or unknown risks to the human environment.

6. *Consideration of whether the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6))*

The proposed project does not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant effects. The timber management program on BLM-managed lands in western Oregon is a well-established program, thus implementation of the proposed project would not establish a new precedent.

7. *Consideration of whether the action is related to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7))*

The ID Team evaluated the proposed project area in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions (p. 22). No cumulatively significant impacts are identified in the EA. These include impacts discussed in the EA under forest structure (pp. 23–28), wildlife (pp. 28–41), botany (pp. 41–44), fisheries (pp. 44–51), water resources (pp. 51–63), soil resources (pp. 63–65), fuel loadings (pp. 65–67), and climate change (pp. 67–71).

8. *Scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8))*

The proposed activities would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If archaeological resources are discovered prior to or during harvest activities, all activities in the vicinity would cease immediately and the Authorized Office and a BLM cultural resource specialist would be notified. Work would proceed only after authorization from the BLM (EA p. 79).

9. *Threatened or endangered species and their critical habitat (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9))*

- ❖ The Myrtlewood Field Office initiated consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for evaluation of effects to the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet. On February 1, 2016 (Tails No. 01EOFW00-2016-F-0068) the BLM received a Biological Opinion that concludes the Six Twigs proposed project “is not likely to jeopardize the spotted owl or the murrelet because the proposed project has been planned consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan.”
- ❖ The Myrtlewood Field Office has determined that the proposed activities would have “no effect” to federally threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon and its associated Critical Habitat; thus consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service is not required. The proposed action would also not result in adverse effects to Essential Fish Habitat as designated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1855 as amended).
- ❖ There are no threatened or endangered botany species within the project area.

10. *Any effects that threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10))*

The proposed project was designed to conform to Federal, State, and local laws imposed for the protection of the environment (EA p. 3).

This project complies with the Coastal Zone Management Act, as there would be no adverse effects to Coastal Zone resources from implementing this project because water quality would not be impacted (pp. 51–63).

Analysis has also concluded that implementation of the proposed actions would not change the likelihood of and need for listing of any Special Status Species under the ESA as identified in BLM Manual 6840 and BLM OR/WA 6840 policy.

On December 17, 2009, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington issued an order in *Conservation Northwest, et al. v. Sherman et al.*, No. 08-1067-JCC (W.D. Wash.), granting plaintiffs' motion for partial summary judgment and finding NEPA violations in the Final Supplemental to the 2004 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines (USDA and USDI, June 2007). In response, parties entered into settlement negotiations in April 2010, and the Court filed approval of the resulting Settlement Agreement on 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 Six Twigs proposed project 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) as modified by the 2011 Settlement Agreement.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider the effects of this decision on the President's National Energy Policy. As there would be no impact to the exploration, development or transportation of undeveloped energy sources from the proposed action, a Statement of Adverse Energy Impacts is not required.

Conclusion

Based on the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA), and all other information available to me I have determined that the proposed action would not have a significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. I have determined that the effects of the proposed activities would be in conformance with the 1995 Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan for the Coos Bay District.

Myrtlewood Field Manager (Acting)

Date