



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>

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1792/5400 (ORC040)

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

Six Twigs Environmental Assessment

July 14, 2016

Dear Citizen:

The BLM has prepared the Decision Rationale for the Six Twigs Sample Tree Falling Decision. Sample tree falling will occur within proposed timber harvest units analyzed in the Six Twigs Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA). Sample tree falling was a portion of the Six Twigs proposed action.

The Decision Rationale is located on our BLM website at <http://1.usa.gov/23rZUnT>.

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

Sincerely,

/s/ Kathy Westenskow

Kathy Westenskow

Myrtlewood Field Manager



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Six Twigs Sample Tree Falling

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

Six Twigs Environmental Assessment

DECISION RATIONALE

For

Six Twigs Sample Tree Falling

Six Twigs Environmental Assessment

Background:

The Myrtlewood Field Office, Coos Bay District Bureau of Land Management, previously prepared the Six Twigs Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA), which contained analysis of the effects of conducting regeneration treatments within the Six Twigs project area, as well as analysis of a No Action Alternative. This EA, which is incorporated by reference, resulted in a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) signed July 8, 2016. Sample tree falling was included in the EA (p. 11). Sample tree falling allows the BLM to formulate accurately volume tables, which the BLM will use to estimate the harvest volume from timber sales. Appendix B of the EA describes, in detail, sample tree falling. The following is an excerpt from Appendix B:

Conducting sample tree falling removes the measurement bias inherent in making visual estimates. Through checking measurements directly by felling a sample tree, cruisers can make corrections to their estimates. This is because sample tree falling provides the direct measurement of form class, bark thickness, taper, defect, breakage, volume and value without bias. This is a statistically valid sampling methodology (Bell and Dilworth 1997 (Revised), Iles 2003, USDI 1989) where cruisers select a portion of the cruise trees to be felled, bucked (cut-to-length) and scaled. By felling a sample tree and substituting the scale of the tree for the cruise in the volume calculations, it eliminates the measurement bias created through ocular estimation. Cruisers can apply the measurements gained by felling, such as form class, bark thickness, and stump to DBH ratio, to the remaining standing trees and incorporate that information into district databases.

Sample tree falling would improve the accuracy of the final timber cruise of the timber proposed to be sold in sales as part of the Six Twigs proposed action.

Proposed Action:

The BLM will implement sample tree falling in preparation of offering timber sales analyzed in the Six Twigs EA. The Six Twigs EA included that the trees felled for sample tree falling will be part of the final harvest volume. The use of sample tree felling is limited to the use of chainsaws and hand tools in the felling, bucking and measuring of selected sample trees. There is no road construction, use of ground-based equipment or any other manner of timber yarding associated with sample tree falling.

Sample tree falling will occur on approximately 217 acres, across all timber sale areas described in the Six Twigs EA. On average, 1 tree/2.5 acres will be felled for use in appraisal calculations. Not more than approximately 90 trees total will be cut in support of this cruising method. Each purchaser would remove felled trees in the harvest of the sales; however, if the sale does not occur after the trees are felled, they will remain on-site to provide down woody material. Sale locations are shown in the Maps for the Six Twigs EA, which are available at <http://1.usa.gov/23rZUnT>.

The EA included a complete list of project design features for sample tree falling (p. 16), which are measures to avoid, minimize, or rectify impacts on resources and are included as part of the proposed action. These project design features and description of the proposed action are hereby incorporated by reference. The following are design features that will be applied to sample tree falling:

- Only fell sample trees within a subset of those already designated for removal.
- Fall no more than 1 (one) sample tree per 2.5 acres.
- Apply all seasonal and daily timing restrictions for threatened and endangered species.
- Leave felled sample trees on site, which would provide down woody material, if the BLM were not to offer the timber sale.

Compliance and Conformance

The BLM developed the Six Twigs EA under the management direction of the 1995 Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP). The analysis supporting this decision tiers to the Final Coos Bay District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. The 1995 Record of Decision is also supported by, and consistent with, the 1994 Final Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its associated Record of Decision.

As there are infected Port-Orford-cedar (POC) trees within the project area, this project includes implementing management practices from the 2004 Final Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for Management of Port-Orford-cedar in Southwest Oregon and its Record of Decision.

Analysis has also concluded that implementation of the proposed action as described in the Six Twigs EA will not increase the likelihood of or the need for listing of any Special Status Species under the ESA as identified in BLM Manual 6840 and BLM OR/WA 6840 Policy. Botany Special Status Species surveys are complete on all units for species in which surveys are practical.

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.

The BLM requested formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for evaluation of effects to the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet. The USFWS issued a Biological Opinion on February 1, 2016 (Tails No. 01EOFW00-2016-F-0068) 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” (USDI 2016). The BLM would incorporate all of the applicable Terms and Conditions of the Biological Opinion.

The BLM did not request consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service. The Six Twigs EA concluded the proposed project would have a “no effect” to threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon and would not adversely affect essential fish habitat under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1855 (b)).

This project complies with the Coastal Zone Management Act and I have determined that there will be no adverse effects to Coastal Zone resources from implementing this project. There will be no effects to water quality.

The Six Twigs EA complies with the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Clean Air Act. This project area does not contain any Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, designated Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers or prime or unique farmlands. There were no concerns identified regarding Cultural Resource Values, Native American Religious Concerns or Environmental Justice issues. The Six Twigs EA (DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2013-0003-EA) resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), thus development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Public Involvement

The public was informed of the availability of the EA and unsigned FONSI for review through a direct notification (April 15, 2016) to those on the District’s mailing list, which included adjacent landowners, the web update group, and others who requested notice of this type of project. The BLM also posted an announcement on the District’s website, <http://1.usa.gov/23rZUnT>. The EA and unsigned FONSI were available for review until May 20, 2016. The BLM received two comment letters. Due to these comments, the BLM made some clarifications on timber productivity in Chapter 3 and expanded the section of the EA that discusses public input.

These updates do not constitute substantive changes or result in different outputs or alternatives; no additional or different analysis was conducted based on comments received during public review. These changes in the EA did not invalidate the analysis supporting the Six Twigs FONSI, which was signed on July 8, 2016.

Rationale for the Decision

Using the Decision Factors for this project (EA p. 3), I am choosing to authorize sample tree falling for the following reasons:

- Implementation of this portion of the proposed action best meets the Purpose and Need described in the Six Twigs EA (pp. 1–3); the No Action Alternative does not meet the Purpose and Need.
- It is consistent with the 1995 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan for the Coos Bay District of the Bureau of Land Management.
- It provides cost-effective management that would allow for accurate cruises and facilitate final preparation of the Six Twigs timber sales.
- It complies with other major applicable laws, regulations, and Bureau policies.

Administrative Remedies

The decision described in this document is a forest management decision and is subject to protest by the public. In accordance with Forest Management Regulations under 43 CFR Subpart 5003 Administrative Remedies, protests of this decision may be filed with the authorized officer, Kathy Westenskow, within 15 days of the publication date of the notice of decision/timber sale advertisement in The World newspaper, Coos Bay, Oregon.

43 CFR 5003.3(b) states: "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and would contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail (email) or facsimile (fax) protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Coos Bay district office will be accepted. The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

43 CFR 5003.3(c) states: "Protests received more than 15 days after the publication of the notice of decision or the notice of sale are not timely filed and shall not be considered." Upon timely filing of a protest, the authorized officer shall reconsider the project decision to be implemented in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information to her. The authorized officer shall, at the conclusion of the review, serve the protest decision in writing to the protesting party(ies). Upon denial of a protest, the authorized officer may proceed with the implementation of the decision as permitted by regulations under 5003.3(f).

If no protest is received by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) within 15 days after publication of the decision notice, this decision will become final. If a timely protest is received, the project decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and the Coos Bay district office will issue a protest decision.

For further information contact Racheal Jones at 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, OR 97459; by phone at 541-756-0100; or by email at BLM_OR_CB_Mail@blm.gov, Attn: Racheal Jones.

Decision Approved by:

/s/ Kathy Westenskow

July 14, 2016

Kathy Westenskow
Myrtlewood Field Manager

Date