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

Categorical Exclusion Review (CX)

DOI-BLM-ORWA-C040-2016-0006-CX
Date: June 10, 2016

A. Background

Project: Slater Creek Salvage

Location: W½SE¼ of Section 17, T. 30 S., R. 9 W., WM.

Project Description:

BLM stands within the previously thinned area of the Mister Slate CT Timber Sale (No. 09-38), analyzed as part of the Slater Rocks Environmental Assessment (EA OR128-07-01), experienced heavy windthrow in early 2016 due to winter storms. Blowdown occurred along the western boundary of the Mister Slate CT after a portion of Township 30 S., Range 9 W., Section 17, located on private lands immediately adjacent to Unit 3, was clear-cut harvested. Sixteen total acres of the Mister Slate CT (88 acres) were affected. Approximately 75 percent of the post-thinned residual trees within the affected area blew down. A majority of the affected trees are Douglas-fir with some grand fir; average DBH (diameter at breast height) is 15.4 inches. Specialists cruised the project area and estimated the downed trees equate to a volume of 107 MBF (thousand board feet). The project area is located within the Slater Creek-Middle Fork Coquille River 6th field watershed. Timely salvage of dead and dying trees is critical to capture merchantable timber volume before further deterioration occurs. Field visits verified Douglas-fir bark beetles have attacked downed trees. The BLM can prevent Douglas-fir beetle population increases that could affect nearby standing timber, by salvage of the downed trees as soon as possible after discovery, and no later than the following March (2017). Additionally, removal of trees would reduce control issues in the event of an escaped wildfire.

The BLM proposes to remove the downed trees across the affected 16 acres in Section 17 through salvage harvesting this summer (2016). Of the 16 acres, approximately 11 acres are located within the General Forest Management Area Land Use Allocation and 5 acres are located within the Riparian Reserves Land Use Allocation (Map 1). Additional hazardous leaning and root-sprung trees within the proposed salvage area could also be removed to permit safe operations.

Removal of the downed trees would be accomplished using cable and ground-based equipment. Existing roads and landings would be used; no new road or landing construction would be required. A 50-foot, no-harvest buffer would be maintained along all stream channels. The BLM would salvage downed trees where material exceeds the levels recommended to meet coarse woody debris (CWD). All snags would be retained unless removal is necessary for safety.

The project area is not located within a known northern spotted owl site, nor is it located within suitable or occupied MAMU habitat.

The following project design features are included in the site-specific design of the proposed action to eliminate or minimize adverse effects. These project design features are a compilation of resource protection measures identified by the Interdisciplinary Team and Best Management Practices identified in

the 1995 Coos Bay Record of Decision (ROD) and Resource Management Plan (RMP). The BLM would implement these project design features through project layout (physical delineation of treatment boundaries) and through contract provisions. The timber sale contract would be written and administered by the BLM and would require the timber sale purchaser to accomplish the requirements of the contract in a manner that is consistent with the actions and PDFs described herein.

General Harvest Operation

- 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.
- Ground based operations would be restricted to slopes of less than 35 percent and used off road only when soil moisture is $\leq$ 25 percent, typically mid-July to mid-September.
- Ground based operations would be carried out on slash mats as much as possible and on existing skid trails.
- Permanent, effective drainage would be provided on roads that are closed post-harvest. Waterbars, dips, or outsloping may be used to achieve effective drainage.
- Partial suspension during ground-based and cable yarding would be required to minimize soil disturbance.

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

- The standing Port-Orford-cedar tree hosting the Survey and Manage Lichen species, *Chaenotheca ferruginea*, and all standing, live trees within 50 feet of this site would be left undisturbed during salvage activities so that this species persists at the site.

Riparian Reserve

- Blowdown of whole trees, snapped boles, and branches within 50 feet of streams would be left to protect the structure and function of stream beds and stream banks.
- Spill prevention containment and countermeasure plans would be required to minimize the likelihood of contamination reaching a waterway.
- Full suspension over stream channels during cable yarding would be utilized to protect disturbance to stream bank structure and minimize sediment delivery to streams.

Structural Legacies – Snags and Downed Wood

- All snags, including snags persisting from previous natural mortality events that exhibit decay, defect, or cavities, unless they pose a safety hazard, would be left to support cavity-nesting birds.
- All standing green trees that exhibit no signs of damage to the roots, boles, or crowns would be left to support wildlife and provide structural legacy.
- A minimum of 120 linear feet of logs per acre (decay classes 1 and 2, $\geq$ 16 inches in diameter at the large end and $\geq$ 16 feet in length) in addition to non-merchantable, freshly broken pieces and older logs with advanced decay (decay classes 3, 4, and 5) would be left to support species and protect the integrity of the substrate.

Reforestation

- Following salvage operations, visual surveys of the salvage area would be conducted to determine openings suitable for reforestation. If planting takes place, the planting stock would be principally genetically improved Douglas-fir and some disease resistant Port-Orford-cedar. Seedlings would be planted at approximately 435 trees per acre and receive Vexar tubing if needed for animal protection.

Roads Management

- The BLM would not construct new roads for this project; existing roads to facilitate haul would be used.
- Cable yarding, landing operations, and timber hauling on rock-surfaced roads would be permitted year round if necessary; road conditions would be monitored during winter use to prevent rutting of the rock surface and delivery of fine sediment to stream networks.

Noxious Weeds

- Heavy equipment would be cleaned by high-pressure washing to remove all mud, dirt, oil, and plant parts before moving onto BLM-managed lands; off-road equipment would inspected prior to entering the project area to prevent the introduction and spread of noxious weeds.
- Vehicles and equipment would be required on road and landing surfaces, except equipment specifically designated to operate off roads and landings (e.g., mechanical harvesters).

Fuel Treatments

- Slash would be accumulated into the fewest number of piles as possible, and be as free of soil and rock as possible. Landing piles would not be located closer than 15 feet to reserve trees or snags.
- Piles would be covered with 4 MIL black polyethylene sheeting to provide protection from heavy fall/winter rains and would not exceed 100 square feet per pile to minimize effects to air quality.
- Hazardous fuel reduction measures would be conducted along the 30-9-17.0 and 17.7 roads, which would remain open after harvest operations. These measures would include pilling all slash greater than 2 feet in length and up to 6 inches in diameter within 20 feet on each side of these roads.
- Areas identified for reforestation after logging could receive site prep and planting. Site prep could include slashing, lop and scatter, and hand piling. If necessary, hand piles would be covered and burned at a later date, when conditions allow.
- As an alternative to landing pile and burn, logging debris could be piled for biomass utilization. Piled biomass would be removed within 1 year after the piling occurs.
- Burning of landing piles would occur during the late fall and winter months, when adequate moisture has been received to prevent unwanted spread.
- Applicable State and Federal Laws would be followed during burning activities.

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 Conformance Review: The BLM developed this project under the management direction of 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. This 1995 ROD/RMP 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 (Northwest Forest Plan).

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

- 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).

- Remove salvage trees [within Riparian Reserves] only when a watershed analysis determines that that present and future woody debris needs are met and other Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives are met (p. 12).

The BLM conducted an Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) consistency review and determined that the proposed salvage project would not adversely affect ACS objectives as described by the Northwest Forest Plan. Of the 107 MBF of blowdown, whole trees, snapped boles, and branches would be retained 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 1 and 2, ≥ 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 3, 4, and 5).

This proposed action is also consistent with the 2001 ROD and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, as incorporated into the District Resource Management Plan.

Specialists conducted plant surveys for Survey and Manage and Bureau Special Status species and found one site of a Category "B" Lichen species, *Chaenotheca ferruginea*, on a standing Port-Orford-cedar tree. The Port-Orford-cedar tree and all live, standing trees within 50 feet of this site would be avoided so that the species persists at the site.

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
>
> (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:
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> 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 there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

Extraordinary Circumstances	Source	Initials	Date
a) Health & Safety Hazardous Materials	Reviewed by Hazardous Materials Coordinator	*/s/ J.J.*	*6/8/2016*
b) Unique Resources	Reviewed by Port-Orford Cedar Coordinator	*/s/ J.K.*	*6/6/2016*
c) Controversial Effects	Reviewed by NEPA Coordinator	*/s/ R.J.*	*6/6/2016*
d) Risks	Reviewed by NEPA Coordinator	*/s/ R.J.*	*6/6/2016*
e) Precedent	Reviewed by NEPA Coordinator	*/s/ R.J.*	*6/6/2016*
f) Cumulative	Reviewed by NEPA Coordinator	*/s/ R.J.*	*6/6/2016*
g) Cultural & Historic	Reviewed by Archaeologist	*/s/ K.W.*	*6/8/2016*
h) T & E Species	Reviewed by:		
	Wildlife Biologist,	*/s/ J.S.*	*6/9/2016*
	Fisheries Biologist	*/s/ J.J.*	*6/6/2016*
	Botanist	*/s/ T.R.*	*6/8/2016*
i) Violate Laws	Reviewed by:		
	NEPA Coordinator	*/s/ R.J.*	*6/6/2016*
	Hydrologist (Clean Water Act)	*/s/ T.M.*	*6/8/2016*
j) Environmental Justice	Reviewed by Environmental Justice Coordinator	*/s/ R.J.*	*6/6/2016*
k) Native American	Reviewed by District Native American Coordinator	*/s/ K.W.*	*6/6/2016*
l) Noxious Weeds	Reviewed by Noxious Weed Coordinator	*/s/ J.K.*	*6/6/2016*

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
(a) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
Rationale: The BLM did not identify any significant impacts on 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.		
(b) 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); floodplains (EO 11988), national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
Rationale: The District Archaeologist did not identify any historic or cultural resources within the project area. The project does not contain any park, recreation, 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 Reserves land use allocations.		
(c) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102 (2)(E)]		X
Rationale: Based on experience from similar timber harvest activities, there are no predicted environmental effects from the proposed salvage harvest that the BLM considers 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.		

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
(d) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks		X
Rationale: The Slater Gust project area is within the range of Port-Orford-cedar (POC); however, risk of spreading POC root disease was determined low and no project-specific design features are required for POC management. There are no other known uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks in salvaging trees within the Slater Gust Salvage project area. Salvaging dead and dying trees is a common BLM activity and past experience has shown no highly uncertain, potentially significant, unique, or unknown risks.		
(e) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
Rationale: Authorizing the removal of dead and dying trees does not set any precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. Similar salvage projects have taken place within the BLM with no evidence suggesting that this type of project will establish a precedent or decision for future action.		
(f) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects		X
Rationale: The BLM has conducted similar types of restoration activities in the past with no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effects.		
(g) 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 proposed activity would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.		
(h) 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: A BLM botanist, fisheries biologist, and wildlife biologist reviewed the area proposed for salvage harvest and determined that the proposed action would not have significant impacts on species listed—or proposed to be listed—under the Endangered Species Act nor would the proposed action have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. • Habitat for Threatened and Endangered plant species does not exist within the project area. • The proposed action is not located within designated Critical Habitat for ESA-listed fish species. The closest known distribution of ESA-listed fish (Oregon Coast Coho salmon) is approximately 0.4 miles downstream and would not be affected by the proposed action because harvest activities would not occur within the 50 feet along each of the stream, which would minimize potential sediment input and protect the stream from temperature increases (downed trees across streams would remain on site). • The project area is not located within a known northern spotted owl site, nor is it located within suitable or occupied MAMU habitat.		
(i) 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.		
(j) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
Rationale: This action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations. The project area is within the General Forest Management Area and Riparian Reserves land use allocations, which the BLM actively manages. There is no past evidence of low income or minority populations utilizing this area.		

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
(k) 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: A 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.		
(l) 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 BLM completed a Noxious Weed Risk Assessment for this project area. The following design features would be included in the proposed action to minimize the potential for introducing weeds to the planning area and/or spreading weed infestations that already exist within the planning area. • Contractor would wash all heavy equipment prior to entering the project area. • Vehicles and equipment would stay on road and landing surfaces, except equipment specifically designated to operate off roads and landings (e.g., mechanical harvesters).		

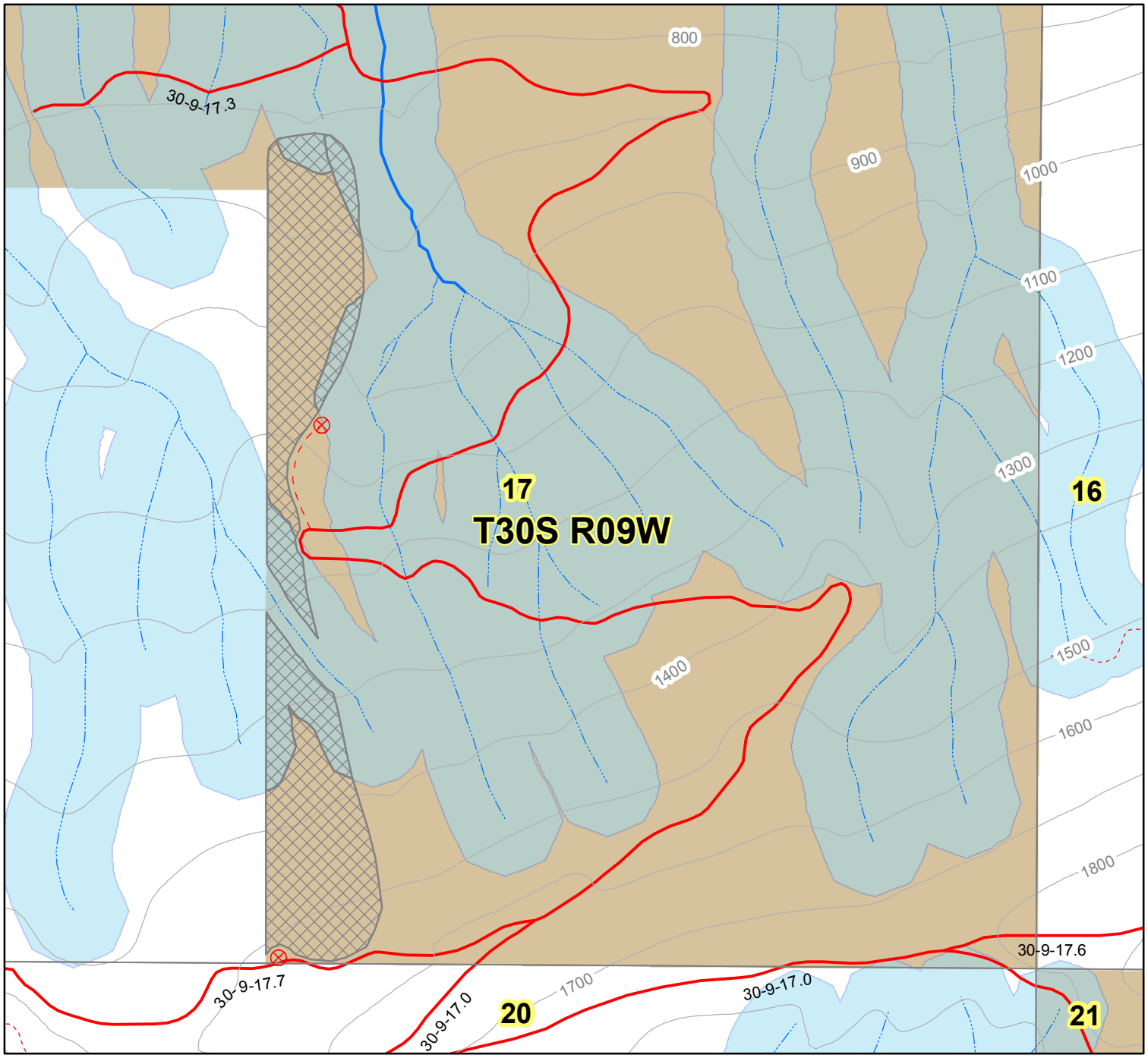
D. Signature

Authorizing Official: Field Manager: ***/s/ Kathy Westenskow*** Date: ***6/10/2016***

E. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, please contact Racheal Jones by mail at 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, Oregon 97459, by telephone at 541-756-0100, or by email at BLM_OR_CB_Mail@blm.gov.

Map 1 — Slater Gust Salvage



Legend

- Salvage Area
- Riparian Reserves (NWFP)
- General Forest Management Area
- Gravel Road
- Natural Surface Road
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream

0 250 500 750 1,000

Feet

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.