



Late Mungers FAQ

Grants Pass Field Office, Medford District

What is Late Mungers?

The Late Mungers Integrated Vegetation Management project is a proposal to promote and develop safe and effective wildfire response, fire resilient land and habitat for special status species near the communities of Murphy and Williams. Proposed treatments include prescribed fire, small diameter thinning, commercial thinning, and selection harvest on approximately 7,435 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered lands. The proposal includes 798 acres of proposed commercial treatments, which would be divided into two timber sales, one called “Late Mungers” and the other called “Penn Butte.” Learn more about the Late Mungers project on BLM’s ePlanning website at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2018484/510>

The Late Mungers project is the initial implementation-level project under the BLM Medford District’s Integrated Vegetation Management for Resilient Lands Environmental Assessment (IVM-RL EA).

What is Integrated Vegetation Management?

The IVM-RL EA Decision created a toolbox for the BLM to increase the scope, scale, and pace of fuels treatments and vegetation management projects. This allows the BLM to improve the health of forests, create safe and effective places for firefighters to engage, and address climate change. This work will encourage healthier forests that are more resilient to wildfire and drought, protect adjacent communities from large-scale wildland fires, and improve habitat for special status wildlife and plants.

Learn more about the IVM-RL EA on BLM’s website: <https://on.doi.gov/3uERiNp>.

What public engagement opportunities exist for Late Mungers?

The BLM has committed to public engagement for all projects that include commercial harvest tied to the IVM-RL EA. The Grants Pass Field Office is offering several opportunities for public engagement: the draft Determination of NEPA adequacy (DNA) will be posted on ePlanning website on April 28 for a public comment period, ending on May 30, 2022. The BLM is hosting a public webinar on May 10 that includes a community listening session as well as a field trip on May 14 to show different treatment prescriptions in the Late Mungers Project Area. ePlanning is the best spot to visit to provide an official comment or learn more about the engagement opportunities. To sign up for the webinar register at:

https://blm.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_nisogQSJSO2qixecwXMgiA

What is a relevant and “substantive” comment on the Late Mungers DNA?

A DNA worksheet contains:

- A. Proposed Action- which details the proposal, why it is needed, what project design features would be implemented.
- B. Land Use Conformance- all proposals must be in compliance with the Southwest Oregon Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision which was analyzed in the Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (2016).



C. Five questions on a variety of topics including range of alternatives, new information or circumstances, sufficiency of public involvement etc.

Comments that address these sections of the DNA are most beneficial for the BLM to consider. Your comments may indicate clarifications that are needed, where there are errors in the document, or if you have new relevant information for the BLM to consider.

Comments that are “for” or “against” the project **without supporting rationale** are not useful for the BLM.

Why is the BLM conducting commercial treatments in Late Successional Reserves?

Fifty-one percent of all forests in southwest Oregon are overly dense and our area has the highest need for restoration, via thinning and prescribed fire, in all of Oregon and Washington. The Southwest Oregon Resource Management Plan identifies active management objectives for Late Successional Reserves (LSR), including commercial thinning/group selection harvest on 17,000 acres in LSR per decade. These commercial treatments are designated to develop, maintain, or promote northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) nesting-roosting habitat. In addition, the BLM manages LSRs to: 1) enable forests to recover from past management measures, 2) respond to climate-driven stresses, wildfire and other disturbance events, 3) ensure positive or neutral ecological impacts from wildfire, and 4) contribute to northern spotted owl recovery.

Commercial harvesting in LSR provides what the BLM terms as “non Allowable-Sale-Quantity (ASQ) volume” which is a by-product of active management. There is no sustained-yield objective for these units, instead, the focus is habitat management and improving forest resilience. The BLM does not declare an amount of non-ASQ volume or otherwise commit to producing a specific amount of non-ASQ volume, either annually or per decade. “Commercial” refers to the size of the tree greater than 8-inches diameter at breast height (DBH). Commercial thinning is a tool to promote and develop northern spotted owl nesting-roosting habitat by creating structural diversity; reduce competition to legacy trees and improve tree vigor in general, re-balance open and closed forest conditions, create growing space for the next generation of legacy trees, and break up continuous canopy connectivity, reducing the likelihood of crown fire.

Is the BLM conducting site-specific analysis for the Late Mungers Project?

The BLM is conducting project-specific evaluation, through a DNA worksheet, that provides site-specific context and identifies methods that would accomplish desired outcomes such as improving northern spotted owl habitat, fire resilience, increased structural complexity, or increasing tree diversity. In the draft DNA worksheet, the BLM has described the following project-specific information: preliminary treatment units; results of cultural and biological resource surveys and studies; the methods, objectives and prescriptions for the proposed treatments. The IVM-RL EA was programmatic in nature, which means that BLM analyzed routine actions that are done repeatedly and have similar impacts. This approach was taken to increase the pace and scale of landscape treatments in order to address the critical needs of creating more resilient landscapes and habitat, protecting communities from the threat of wildland fires, and improving habitat conditions.

How is BLM protecting large, fire resilient trees in the Late Mungers Project Area?



Late Mungers is designed to protect and culture large, old trees. The project protects large trees by removing adjacent trees and fuels. Clumps of fire tolerant legacy trees would be retained. Conifer trees (pine [*Pinus spp.*] and Douglas fir [*Pseudotsuga menziesii*] greater than or equal to 36-inches DBH) and hardwoods greater than 24-inches DBH would be retained. In non-conifer plant communities, large conifers and hardwoods (often greater than 24-inches DBH) would be retained. Thinning also creates growing space for the next generation of legacy trees.

Is the BLM proposing to “clearcut” and conduct “regeneration harvest” in LSR?

BLM is not “clearcutting” or implementing regeneration harvests in Late Mungers. The BLM is proposing skips (untreated areas) and gap openings of variable sizes (all under 2 acres) in portions of the stands to:

- Create growing space to regenerate fire-adapted species.
- Increase heterogeneity/layering.
- Disrupt fuel profiles and create variability in litter fall and surface fuel accumulations.
- Decrease competition in insect and disease patches and low vigor forested areas.
- Develop future cohort of trees.

Why here? How does Late Mungers benefit the communities of Murphy and Williams?

Consistent with the IVM-RL EA and described above, Late Mungers would create conditions that reduce the potential for stand-replacing crown fire (i.e., stand level hazard) and set stands up to better receive fire (prescribed or wildfire), and reduce flame length. These conditions would indirectly improve safe and effective wildfire response and improve opportunities for direct attack of a wildfire. The Late Mungers project design provides the opportunity to tie strategic “linear feature” treatments into “area based” treatments grouped together and extends to adjacent private lands, meeting neighbors at their fence. This approach provides greater influence to modify fire behavior and slow fire spread and create safer opportunities to limit large fire growth. Between 2008-2020, there were 219 fuel treatments intersected by 57 fires. Sixty percent of the time, the treatment contributed to wildfire control. When it comes to moderating fire behavior, the BLM found that 68 percent of the time, fuel treatments moderated fire behavior. In the 12 previous years, 30 fires started, and were contained, within a fuel treatment.

Beyond reducing threats to our forests and communities from wildfires, these treatments would help bolster the biodiversity that we value in Southwest Oregon by developing, maintaining or improving habitat for endangered and sensitive species. These actions return a natural balance to our forests and help create conditions for resilience in the face of drought, climate change and disturbance (e.g., insect, disease infestations and fire).