Scoping Record
for the
Fall Creek Special Interest Area Fire Recovery Project

Introduction

The project area is in the Fall Creek watershed located approximately 14 miles up Forest Service Road #1800 between the Clark Creek Organization Camp and the Puma Campground. The legal description of the area is T18S, R2E, and Sections 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Willamette Meridian.

The Clark Fire burned a total of about 5000 acres in July of 2003, including about 3 miles along the Fall Creek Special Interest Area (SIA). The Fall Creek SIA is a popular recreation use area. The characteristics that draw the public to visit this area are the campgrounds and trail network set in an old growth forest setting along the scenic Fall Creek with its numerous pools attractive for fishing and swimming. The fire destroyed the Johnny Creek Nature Trail, which was in an old-growth grove. It burned through Bedrock Campground and portions of Fall Creek National Recreation Trail, Clark Butte Trail, Jones Trail and several dispersed campsites. This fire burned, at least to some extent, nearly all of the trees (about 45% of the trees lost between 80-100% of their crowns) along this section of the river corridor. The fire has destroyed the scenic quality of this area and left it in a burned -over forest condition.

The project area consists of the portion of the Fall Creek SIA burned during the Clark Fire. The project area is about 764 acres in size. Elevation ranges between 1,000 to 1,600 feet. The project area consists of the roaded area south of Fall Creek which is bisected by the paved Forest Service Road #1800. The Fall Creek National Recreation Trail runs along the north side of Fall Creek where the area is mostly un-roaded except for the access road to the Bedrock Campground and private property.

Proposed Action

The Middle Fork Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest proposes to restore the area of the Fall Creek Special Interest Area burned by the Clark Fire in a manner that provides for public safety, ensures the re-establishment of the forest setting, enhances the recreation experience, restores the riparian habitat, and manages forest fuels and coarse woody debris, and provides an economic return. The following activities are associated with this project:

1. falling of hazard trees to eliminate the danger to public safety around the developed recreational site of Johnny Creek Day Use and Nature Trail area, around the numerous dispersed recreation sites along Fall Creek, along sections of the Clark Butte, Fall Creek, and Jones Trails, around trailheads, turnouts, existing and proposed parking areas along main Fall Creek Road #1800, and along Forest Service Roads #1800, #1821, and #1821-190 within the fire area;
2. site preparation and reforestation activities to accelerate the re-establishment of the conifer forest setting;
3. re-develop the Johnny Creek Day Use site into an fire ecology interpretive site to promote public education;

4. restore the trails, trail signing , trail structures, and trailhead parking areas to enhance the recreation;
5. rehabilitate Fall Creek with stream bank stability projects, in stream log structures placement, and riparian planting to restore riparian habitat;
6. fuel hazard reduction activities to manage forest fuels to reduce risk of wildfires;
7. removal of merchantable fire killed timber volume that is excess to coarse woody debris habitat needs in the management of the future fuels loading and to recover the economic value;
8. road maintenance activities such as ditch line maintenance and culvert replacement on Forest roads to reduce effects on water quality;
9. traffic control log and boulder placement along the roadsides of Fall Creek Road #1800 to prevent off road driving.

These activities are expected to be implemented in fiscal year 2005.

Purpose and Need

The underlying purpose of the proposed action is to eliminate the hazard trees in order to provide for public safety around the developed and dispersed recreational sites, and along Forest roads and trails. The secondary purpose and need for the proposed action is to ensure the restoration of a forest setting within the Special Interest Area and along the Fall Creek riparian area; reduce the risk of fire by reducing the forest fuel accumulation, and to recovery the economic value of the fire-killed timber before it deteriorates, and to provide a source of funding for restoration activities.

Forest Plan Management Direction

The purpose and need for the proposed action is directed by the Land and Resource Management Plan of the Willamette National Forest (Willamette Forest Plan) as amended by the Record of Decision for the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (Northwest Forest Plan) on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. These plans provide the direction based on designated management areas (MA) and associated standards and guidelines S&G). The Willamette Forest Plan management areas for this project area are MA-5A – Special Interest Area, MA-12A - Developed Recreation Sites, and MA-7 – Old Growth Groves. The Northwest Forest Plan land allocations are MA-16A - Late Successional Reserve on the north side of Fall Creek and MA-15 - Riparian Reserve along Fall Creek.

Approximately half of the project area consists of the MA-5A- Special Interest Area which was designated along the river corridor of Fall Creek. The Willamette Forest Plan provides several management area specific standards and guidelines that pertain to this given situation in the Special Interest Area. Unregulated harvest for the purpose of salvaging mortality from catastrophic losses may be permitted in this management area with an environment analysis and appropriate documentation.

The other half of the project area is in MA-16A - Late-Successional Reserve. The Northwest Forest Plan outlines guidelines for salvage in Late Successional Reserves. The salvage guidelines are intended to prevent negative effects on late successional habitat, while permitting some commercial wood volume removal. The Northwest Forest Plan provides guidelines

specific to roads, trails, and recreation sites in Late Successional Reserves: Removal of snags and logs may be necessary to reduce the hazard to humans along roads and trails, and in or adjacent to campgrounds. (C-15)

The Willamette Forest Plan provides further direction in the Forest-wide (FW) Standards and Guidelines for situations when catastrophic events, such as wildfires, change the conditions of a management area. FW-199 states that when changed conditions occur, environmental analysis shall be conducted to determine the effects of the changed conditions on resource values, and to re-evaluate and consider modification of existing management area objectives. Visual quality settings, wildlife habitat effectiveness, recreational experiences and timber harvest opportunities may be affected by unforeseen changes in environmental conditions. Changed conditions may result from events, such as catastrophic wind, fire, flood, and insects. FW-200 states that the decision to salvage harvest for catastrophic losses after changed condition shall be based on an environmental analysis. The overall wildlife tree habitat conditions and coarse woody debris levels in the subdrainages shall be analyzed, particularly when scattered mortality harvests are considered.

Public Safety

Current Conditions

The Fall Creek Special Interest Area is a heavily used recreation area which is in close proximity to a large population base of the Eugene Springfield area and has year round accessibility. Fire-killed trees from the Clark Fire have created hazard trees within and adjacent to developed and dispersed recreational sites and along the recreation trails and Forest roads. The public recreating in the fire-affected portion of Fall Creek could be injured or killed by falling dead trees or falling tops and branches of fire-killed trees. The risk increases for recreation activities with long residence time such as overnight camping where the public is exposed to the danger over a longer period of time. The risk of dead trees falling and hitting people using the recreation facilities or traveling along the roadways has created hazardous conditions to public safety and commercial and administrative use.

Desired Conditions

The desired condition is to mitigate or eliminate known hazards trees within or adjacent to the developed recreation site (Johnny Creek Day Use and Nature Trail Area), around the numerous dispersed recreation sites, and along the high use sections of trails and trailhead parking areas within the Fall Creek Special Interest Area affected by the fire. The desired conditions includes the mitigation or elimination of known hazard trees along the Forest Service Roads #1800, #1821, and #1800-190 and various turnouts and existing and proposed parking areas.

Management Direction

The management direction for public safety in the operation and maintenance of recreation sites and Forest roads is outlined in Forest Service Manual 2332 and Forest Service Handbook 7709. Further direction and safety standards are provided by Oregon Occupational and Safety and Health Division for areas adjacent to Forest roads.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the proposed action is to mitigate or eliminate known hazard trees in areas of concentrated public use such as the Johnny Creek Day Use Area, the dispersed recreation sites, trails and trailhead parking areas, and along Forest roads and turnouts.

Aesthetic Recovery

Current Conditions

The Fall Creek Special Interest Area is a popular recreation use area. The characteristics that draw the public to visit this area are the campgrounds and trail network set in an old-growth forest setting along the scenic Fall Creek with its numerous pools attractive for fishing and swimming. The Clark Fire has burned 50-100% of the trees along Fall Creek corridor and either destroyed the scenic quality or disturbed the old-growth forest conditions. The forest setting along the river corridor has changed from a cool, shaded, closed canopy green forest to more open, warmer, sunny, fire-killed forest condition. The re-establishment of the conifer dominated forest is expected to be delayed due to the poor conifer seed crop in 2003 and post-fire shrub competition leading to negligible natural regeneration.

The fire destroyed the Johnny Creek Nature Trail (Old-Growth Grove) and Day Use Area, the Slick Creek Cave Interpretive Site, and burned over portions of the Fall Creek National Recreation Trail, Clark Butte Trail, Jones Trail, and several dispersed camp sites. Interpretive signing, trail signing, and several trail structures and bridges have been destroyed.

Desired Condition

Since the pre-fire forest condition was an old-growth conifer forest setting, the desired condition would be to re-establish these forest conditions. The re-establishment of these forest conditions will take over 100-200 years. The short term (50 years) desired condition would be re-establish a mixture of hardwood and conifers tree species while maintaining a legacy of coarse woody debris. Over time, the forest setting would follow the forest successional trajectory of a stand initiation consisting of seedlings and saplings, the small tree stem exclusion stage consisting of a closed canopy forest, an understory re-initiation stage of a mature forest, and shifting gap stage of old-growth. The target forest structure will be similar to the late-successional forest structure and conditions as described on pages 25-32 in the Late Successional Reserve Assessment (1998).

Management Direction

The Willamette Forest Plan provides general management goals and objectives for MA-5A - Special Interest Areas (page 138-140) and MA-12A - Developed Recreation Sites (page 216-218). The Forest Plan does not provide specific directions about the vegetation recovery after wildfires in scenic and recreation areas except for the Forest-wide S&G FW-199 which addresses Changed Environmental Condition (see above).

A few management area S&Gs address scenic quality and recreation experience for Special Interest Areas. MA-5A-02 directs that management practices should result in a physical setting that meets or exceeds the Roaded Natural (predominately natural-appearing environment) ROS class. MA-5A-04 provides direction in the event that unregulated harvest is necessary to salvage timber within the area, practices should be employed in a manner that seeks to achieve a VQO of Partial Retention. And MA-5A-06 directs that cutting and removal of vegetation shall be prohibited except to provide for the safety of users or to maintain or enhance the values in the area.

Purpose and Need
The purpose and need for the proposed action is to expedite and ensure the recovery of a conifer forest setting which would put the area on the trajectory toward re-establishing a forested condition and scenic quality.

Riparian Habitat

Current Conditions
The fire killed the riparian forest vegetation along about 2 miles of Fall Creek. This section of Fall Creek is a moderately to steeply incised valley with some alluvial reaches. Fall Creek is a Class I stream that provides habitat and contains spring chinook salmon, a listed threatened fish species. The Fall Creek corridor is also high recreation use area with campgrounds, dispersed recreation sites, trails, and numerous popular swimming holes located in the riparian zone. The fire consumed areas of soil stabilizing vegetation and organic material. Loss of riparian vegetation and increases in sedimentation may result in stream bank instability and increase in stream temperature. Fall Creek has been 303(d) listed by Oregon Department f Environmental Quality as a water body of concern for high water temperatures prior to the fire.

Desired Conditions
The desired condition is an aquatic environment that does not impede fish migrations and minimizes sedimentation from Forest roads that can have deleterious affects on aquatic organisms. Beneficial attributes to a healthy aquatic system would also include adequate supplies of large woody material to stream channels and sources of future large woody material recruitment from riparian reserves. Conditions in the watershed should support healthy aquatic and terrestrial populations of dependant native organisms.

Large woody material in the stream system should promote a healthy aquatic environment now and in the future. The presence of large woody material in Fall Creek will provide the following benefits to aquatic organisms and to terrestrial organisms that depend upon them for survival; scours pool habitat, dissipates high flow energy, retains sediments and accompanying nutrients for aquatic organisms, provides cover to aquatic organisms during high flows, creates channel complexity in the form of side channels, braids, and substrate diversity, and most importantly traps substrate, such as gravel and small cobble that provides habitat for invertebrates and creates spawning areas for fish species such as spring chinook salmon. A source of large woody material for future recruitment must be maintained in riparian areas to replace wood that is transported downstream from high flow events. The cycle of wood movement into and out of an area is constant and thereby necessitates a continuous supply for the long tern health of the stream environment.

Therefore, the riparian area along Fall Creek should be set on a pathway that provides for rapid tree (conifer) growth that will supply the stream network with large trees that are necessary to achieve the conditions outlined above. Large trees in the Fall Creek riparian area will provide shade for the stream channel and subsequently reduce or maintain water temperatures.

Management Direction
The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 as amended requires federal agencies in consultation with and with the assistance of US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service, to insure that actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of

endangered or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat of such species.

Under the Aquatic Conservation Strategy of the Northwest Forest Plan, Riparian Reserves are used to maintain and restore riparian structures and functions of streams, confer benefits to riparian dependent and associated species other then fish, enhance habitat conservation for organism that are dependent on the transition zones between upslope and riparian areas, improve travel and dispersal corridors for many terrestrial animals and plants, and provide for greater connectivity of the watershed. (B-13)

Complying with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives means that an agency must manage the riparian-dependent resources to maintain the existing conditions or implement actions to restore conditions (B-10).

Where catastrophic events such as fire, flooding, volcanic, wind, or insect damage result in degraded riparian conditions, allow salvage and fuel wood cutting if required to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives. (TM-1a, C-32)

The Northwest Forest Plan also provides additional standards and guidelines for felling tree which pose a safety risk (RA-2, C-37), salvaging trees in riparian reserves (TM-1b, C-32), reestablishment of vegetation characteristics (TM-1c, C-32), fuel treatments (FM-1, C-35).

The Fall Creek Watershed Analysis (1995) provides a listing of recommendations specific to Fall Creek for riparian vegetation and aquatic habitats restoration projects.

Purpose and Need

The propose and need of the proposed action is restore the forest conditions along the Fall Creek to provide future sources of large woody debris and to control soil erosion and stabilize stream banks.

Fuel Loading

Current Conditions

The debris from the Clark Fire and the falling of hazard trees will create fuels loadings over time (especially in 5-20 years) in excess of the standards and guidelines established in the Forest Plan and recommended in the Willamette Late Successional Reserve Assessment (1998) (LSRA). This part of the Fall Creek Special Interest Area has been mapped in the LSRA with a moderate to high fire risk. The fire risk rating is a combination of fire occurrence risk which is linked to the heavy recreation usage and the fire behavior risk linked to the old growth vegetation type. This high recreation usage could provide the ignition sources for future fires that could burn in a catastrophic manner given the expected build up of fuels over time as the fire-killed timber deteriorates. These future fuel loadings could cause an increase in fire intensities, increase the resistance to control and the ability of the firefighters to fight fires safely, increase fire spread which could threaten surrounding recreation facilities and private property, and impede the recovery of forest conditions.

Desired Conditions

The desired condition is to manage the fuel loadings to meet the appropriate standards for the given management area; provide for long term maintenance of coarse woody debris habitat; and

to reduce the risk of fire in the Fall Creek Special Interest Area. The management of fuels loading should create defensible space (varying quantity of fuel types and arrangements) which would improve the resistance to control wildfires.

The fine fuels and CWD levels should be based on recreation use with lower levels of fine fuels and CWD around recreation sites and along roads, moderate levels along trails and in areas of vegetation restoration, and higher levels isolated away from moderate to high public use areas

Management Direction

The Willamette Forest Plan does not provide specific direction for fuel loadings after catastrophic events, such as wildfires. The only direction provided is for management activities-created fuels. FW-252 directs that to ensure control of wildfires within established parameters for non-Wilderness areas, treatments should be planned to maintain fuels loadings in management activities-created fuels at or below the maximum acceptable ranges on 95% of the affected acreage as indicated in the tables associated with FW-252 in the amendment to Chapter IV of the Forest Plan. The amount of downed wood larger than 16" diameter is based on the direction in FW-212, FW-212a, FW-213, and FW-213a and prescriptions for amounts exceeding the ranges specified in Table IV-29 will be coordinated with fuel treatment personnel to ensure fire risks are considered.

The LSRA provides a process for determining coarse woody debris (CWD) levels in potential salvage situations in the Late Successional Reserves. The process begins by assessing four factors: 1) pre-burn landscape conditions; 2) pre-burn stand conditions; 3) post-disturbance risk (fire and insects); and 4) CWD retention levels. The process also includes a re-assessment of the fire risk by analyzing the fire zone type, landscape fire risk, and local fire risk in making recommendations for CWD prescribed levels and fine fuel treatment priority. Recommended CWD retention levels for mature and old growth in the Western hemlock series are given on page 134 of the LSRA...

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the proposed action is to manage the fuel loadings over time at the appropriate levels around the given recreation facilities and roadways and to reduce the risk of another potential fire in the Fall Creek Special Interest Area while providing for long term maintenance of coarse woody debris habitat.

Economic Recovery

Current Conditions

Conducting a thorough analysis of a burned area and to identify problem areas and identify effective rehabilitation treatments can be very costly. The planning process for a fire recovery project can range in cost starting at $100,000 and reaching $1,000,000 depending on the size and complexity of the fire. Implementing restoration treatments also add to the overall cost. The cost for restoration activities such as reforestation, fuel reduction treatments, in stream log and boulder placement, and to re-develop the Johnny Creek Day Use Area could reach $600,000. The majority of the forest stands in the Special Interest Area have sustained severe or complete mortality and currently have little value as proving scenic qualities or late-successional habitat. These stands do have value as wood products. Currently, the estimated value of the fire –killed timber in the Special Interest Area is approximately $5,500,000. This value will decline as the dead timber deteriorates (approximately 20% per year) due to insect and fungal activity.

Desired Conditions

The project's financial present net value based on the present value of revenues and the present value of financial cost produces an above cost project. Revenues produced from the fire-killed timber provide a return to the government and provide employment and income to the local communities. The fire-killed timber would provide a domestic source of forest products and offset the cost of accomplishing the restoration activities.

Management Direction

There are hierarchical goals, objectives, and policies for the National Forest that managers have to consider when proposing actions. Examples of these broad authorizations can be found in the following acts such as that Organic Administration Act of 1897 (30 Stat. 34, as supplemented and amended, 16 U.S.C. 473-478), that states that the National Forest shall furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States, the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stat. 215; 16 U.S.C 528-531), that authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture "...to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the national forests for multiple use and sustained yield of the several products and services obtained there from..." and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (90 Stat. 2949; 16 U.S.C. 1600 (note)), that states "it is the policy of the Congress that all forested lands in the National Forest System be maintained in appropriate forest cover with species of trees, degree of stocking, rate of growth, and conditions of stand designed to secure the maximum benefits of multiple use sustained yield management in accordance with land management plans." The District Ranger is implementing these broad authorizations with the proposed action to recover the economic value of fire-killed timber while meeting multiple-use goals and objectives for wildlife habitat, water quality, soil productivity, fuels management, and recreation safety.

Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the proposed action is to recovery the economic value of the fire-killed trees before the wood quality deteriorates. The revenues from the sale of the fire-killed timber would provide a return to the government and provide employment and income to the local communities. The fire-killed timber would provide a domestic source of forest products and offset the cost of accomplishing the restoration activities.

Decision to be Made

The responsible Federal official for the decision on the project is the District Ranger on the Middle Fork Ranger District of the Willamette National Forest. The decision will consider:

- How to abate the hazard created by the fire-killed trees,
- How will the fuel loading be managed over time
- What amount of CWD levels should be left on site,,
- How will the excess merchantable wood volume be recovered, and
- What associated treatments or restoration activities should be implemented?

The decision needs to be compatible with the multiple use objectives and meet environmental requirements for all resources as established in the Forest Plan as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan

Issues

Significant Issues

The following issues were identified as the significant issues for the project area. These significant issues will be addressed through the development of a range of reasonable alternatives which meet the purpose and need for the proposed action. Alternatives are generally formulated by different types and locations of treatments to meet evaluation criteria of significant issues. The planning team will study, develop, document appropriate alternatives, and discuss in detail the significant issues in the environmental assessment as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

Public Safety

The fire has killed numerous trees adjacent to developed and dispersed recreation sites and along Forest Service roads. These roads and recreational facilities are within the Fall Creek Special Interest Area which is a heavily used recreation area. The public recreating in the fire-affected portion of Fall Creek could be injured or killed by falling dead trees or falling tops and branches of fire-killed trees. The risk increases for recreation activities with long residence time such as day use or overnight camping where the public is exposed to the danger over a longer period of time. The risk of dead trees falling and hitting someone using the recreation facilities, hiking the trails, or traveling along the roadways has created hazardous conditions to public safety and commercial and administrative use.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Miles of roads abated
2. Miles of trails abated
3. Number of developed sites abated
4. Number of dispersed sites abated

Fuel Loading

The future fuel loadings created from the fire-killed trees may exceed the standards and guidelines established for fine fuels and coarse woody debris. The high recreation usage in this area provides the ignition sources for future fires that could burn in a catastrophic manner given the expected build up of fuels over time as the fire-killed timber deteriorates. These future fuel loadings could cause an increase in fire intensities; increase the resistance to control and the ability of the firefighters to fight fire safely; increase fire spread which could threaten the safety of recreationists, the surrounding recreation facilities, private property; and impede the recovery of forest conditions.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Tons/acre of fine fuel (0-3”) in 1 year, 5years, 10 year and 25 years
2. Tons/acre of large fuel (>16”) in 1 year, 5years, 10 year and 25 years
3. Fire risk level (high moderate, low)
4. Acres and type of fuel reduction treatments

Spring Chinook Salmon

Fall Creek contains and provides habitat for spring chinook salmon, a federally listed (*Threatened*) anadromous fish species. The Forest Service is required pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1978, as amended, to consult with the Fisheries Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA- Fisheries) on the determination of effects for land management projects. ESA requires that federal agencies shall ensure that any actions they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. Spring chinook salmon life cycles, such as spawning and rearing, can be disrupted by the presence of excess fine sediments and increases in stream temperatures. Proposed activities in the riparian reserves have the potential to impact water quality and fish habitat. In addition, large woody debris in stream channels aids in creating salmon habitat. The removal of the dead trees could adversely affect the current and future recruitment of large woody debris for fish habitat.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Biological Assessment Effects Determination (NLAA, LLA)

Non-significant Issues

The following issues were identified as being non-significant for the purposes of this project. Generally, these issues are mitigated by standards and guidelines provided in the Forest Plan, addressed through resource prescriptions, or decided upon by laws and regulations. These issues will only be discussed briefly in the assessment.

Recreational Use Capacity

There is a concern for either increasing or decreasing the diversity and amount of recreation opportunities in the Fall Creek area. Previous analysis indicates the Fall Creek Special Use Area is at or near its carrying capacity in terms of recreational use. The fire may have created opportunities for expansion in the number of dispersed camping sites, as understory vegetation has been significantly reduced and much of the area is flat enough the people could be tempted to drive vehicles off the main roads and create new, unofficial vehicle access to new camping sites. On the other hand, if dispersed sites are closed due to the safety concerns, additional pressures could be put onto the existing developed camping sites, and provide additional pressure for people to located new dispersed sites in other portions of the SIA.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Number of dispersed sites closed
2. Miles of road treated with traffic control barriers

Aesthetic Recovery

Forest Service Road #18 is a main travel route along the Fall Creek Special Interest Area. This area receives high recreation use and is known for its scenic qualities and late successional and old growth forest conditions. It is the goal of the Middle Fork Ranger District to get the area affected by the fire back to its former condition as soon as possible. While recovery of this condition certainly will take a considerable amount of time, there is a concern that this recovery

could take even longer than absolutely necessary. Considering that there was not a good conifer seed crop the year the fire occurred, there may be a need to plant trees to get conifers re-established and to prevent this area from going through an extended shrub and brush stage. There is also concern that recovery of the appearance of this area could be set back by several decades or more if another fire starts in the area and burned with great intensity due to a high accumulated of dead fuels.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Acres of planting
2. Years to establish 50 and 100 year old forest condition

Damage to Recreational Infrastructure

The same phenomenon of fire-killed tree deterioration that generates the safety concern above also applies to the high values structures associated with recreational use of this area. Falling portions of dead trees could damage trail bridges, restroom facilities, and parking areas. There will likely be little future funding to replace these structures should they be severely damage by falling dead trees.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Number and type of structures abated

Snag and CWD Habitat

The ecological significance of dead and decaying wood is becoming more and more evident in conifer forests of the Pacific Northwest. Large accumulations of snag and CWD provide wildlife habitat and influence basic ecosystem processes such as soil development and productivity, nutrient recycling, providing within stream structure. The Clark fire burned with various intensities but left a fairly significant area of higher mortality within the planning area boundary. Removal or treatment of a portion of this burned material may impact availability of snag and CWD habitat for species dependent on these habitat components.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. quantity, size and distribution of snags and CWD remaining after treatments
2. percent population levels
3. volume of material removed

Terrestrial Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species

Known sites for certain terrestrial T,E&S species do occur within or immediately adjacent to the project area and potential habitat exists for other species that are suspected to occur. Designated critical habitat for the spotted owl is included in the project area. Salvage associated activities could affect T,E&S species and their habitats within the project area.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. acres of suitable spotted owl habitat removed or degraded.
2. acres of suitable spotted owl habitat removed or degraded within proposed critical habitat.
3. acres disturbed within 200 feet of the main stem of Fall Creek.
4. # of acres disturbed from proposed operations.

Water Quality

Riparian area vegetation was killed by the fire along approximately 2 miles of Fall Creek and within the riparian area of several tributaries. The loss of stream-side vegetation will adversely affect water quality due to a reduction in vegetative shade during the summer season leading in an increase in water temperature. In portions of the fire area, soil stabilizing vegetation and organic matter on the ground surface were consumed. These effects could result in an increase in soil erosion and an adverse impact on water quality due to an increase in sediment delivery to streams.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Percent of stream channel exposed to direct solar radiation in August
2. Acres of activity area with exposed mineral soils that exceed 40% of the activity area in the riparian reserves.
3. Change in stream temperature

Potential Soil Erosion and Detrimental Soil Conditions

Soils within the Fall Creek SIA project area have a low to moderate surface soil erosion potential and a low to moderate potential for land failures (shallow and mass wasting) which could be a source of fine grain sediments to the streams. Roads in the Fall Creek SIA are the primary detrimental soil condition that has occurred from past management activities. Soils of the project area are susceptible to cumulative detrimental soil conditions (soil compaction, soil erosion, severely burned, soil displacement, and road construction), which will affect the long-term potential for soil erosion and soil productivity of the project area.

How will management activities (by alternatives) affect soil productivity and soil erosion?

Evaluation criteria:

1. Percent of activity area with cumulative detrimental soil conditions.
2. Acres of activity area with exposed mineral soils that exceed 40% of the activity area.
3. Tons per acre of potential soil erosion by management activities.

Economics

The economic efficiency is important in assessing the cost of planning and implementing forest management treatments and the benefits or revenues the project generates. Forest stands which have sustained severe or complete mortality may not currently have value as proving scenic qualities or late-successional habitat. Such stands do have value for wood products. This value will be lost, over time, as the dead timber deteriorates due to insect and fungal activity. This deterioration process is especially rapid in hemlock and hardwood species. Revenue produced

from the sale of the timber would provide a return to the government and provide employment and income to local communities. The fire-killed timber would provide a domestic source of forest products and help offset the cost of accomplishing the restoration activities.

Evaluation Criteria:
1. Timber Volume (MMBF)
2. Present Net Value (PNV)

Noxious Weeds

Fire restoration activities (including falling and removal of hazard trees, timber haul, project-related access, and road work) have the potential to spread noxious weeds that occur throughout the area. One aggressive non-native grass, false brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), is located in the vicinity of the fire area. This perennial grass has the potential to invade the fire area and form large colonies and may choke out tree seedlings and native plant communities. Established species such as evergreen and Himalayan blackberries (*Rubus laciniatus* and *R. discolor*) and Scot's broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) are also a concern with abundant populations present within the watershed. Continued vehicle access, project activities, and ground disturbance in the fire area may contribute to the spread of these and other noxious weeds. The spread of noxious weeds displaces native plants that may affect biotic communities.

Evaluation Criteria:
1. Acres of soil disturbances

Interdisciplinary Team Designation

The following planning team was designated based on those issues which the District Ranger anticipates as needing coordination in the development of alternatives.

Gary Marsh	Team Leader / Silviculturist
Kirk Lunstrum	Wildlife Biologist
Al Johnson	Hydrologist
David Murdough	Soil Scientist
Doug Larson	Fish Biologist
Kim McMahan	Botanist
Tim Bailey	Recreation
Charlie Rasler	Fuels Specialist
Mary Lee Sayre	Road Engineer
Carol Winkler	Archeologist
Julie Cox	Public Affairs
John Oberton	Fire Planner
Jane Kertis	Ecologist

The planning team will operate in an interdisciplinary manner and must be alert to additional issues and opportunities as well as changes to existing ones during the planning process. Other people should be consulted when appropriate.

Line Officer Direction

Ensure that the standards and guidelines are followed as outlined in the Willamette National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended by the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late Successional and Old-Growth Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.

Review the recommendations in the Fall Creek Watershed Analysis (1995) and the Willamette Late Successional Reserve Assessment (1998) for their site specific applicability and prepare prescriptions to move the area toward the desired condition.

Be sure to follow the direction established in the USDA Forest Service Manual and Handbooks for providing public safety in Forest Service recreation sites and along Forest roads and trails by identifying and removal of hazards trees in the operation and maintenance of these facilities. Make sure the evaluation is consistent with the Oregon Occupational and Safety and Health Division process for identifying hazard trees along roads. Consult the hazard tree analysis process and principles outlined in "Long-Range Planning for Developed Sites in the Pacific Northwest: The Context of Hazard Tree Management, FPM-TP039-92".

Consultation with Other Agencies and Interested Public

The following groups and individuals have been identified due to their past interest in this project area or with the District planning program:

Consulting Agencies

Army Corps of Engineers Resource staffs and rangers
Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division (OR-OSHA) inspectors
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
USDI Bureau of Land Management, Dianna Bus, forester
USDI Fish and Wildlife Service
USDC Fisheries Division – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Interested Publics

Jim Geisenger, AOL
Ross Mickey, American Forest Resource Council
Tim Ingalsbee, Western Fire Ecology Center
Doug Heiken, ONRC
Josh Laughlin, Cascadia Wildlands
James Johnson, Cascadia Wildlands
Roy Keene, consulting forester
Cedric Hayden, adjacent landowner and former State Representative
Ernie Nieme, EcoNorthwest, Middle Fork Watershed Council
Weyerhaeuser Co. Representatives, adjacent land owner
Roseboro Co Representatives, adjacent land owner
Chuck Sheppard, Bedrock Campground concessionaire

Steve, Bud, and Stub Steward, timber industry representatives
Oregon Forest Resource Institute, forest management organization
Obsidians
Native Plant Society
Many Rivers Group of Sierra Club
Joanne Vinton

Congressional

Terri Moffit, Senator Smith's office
Congressman Peter Defazio
David Dreher , Congressman Defazio's office

Tribal Consultation

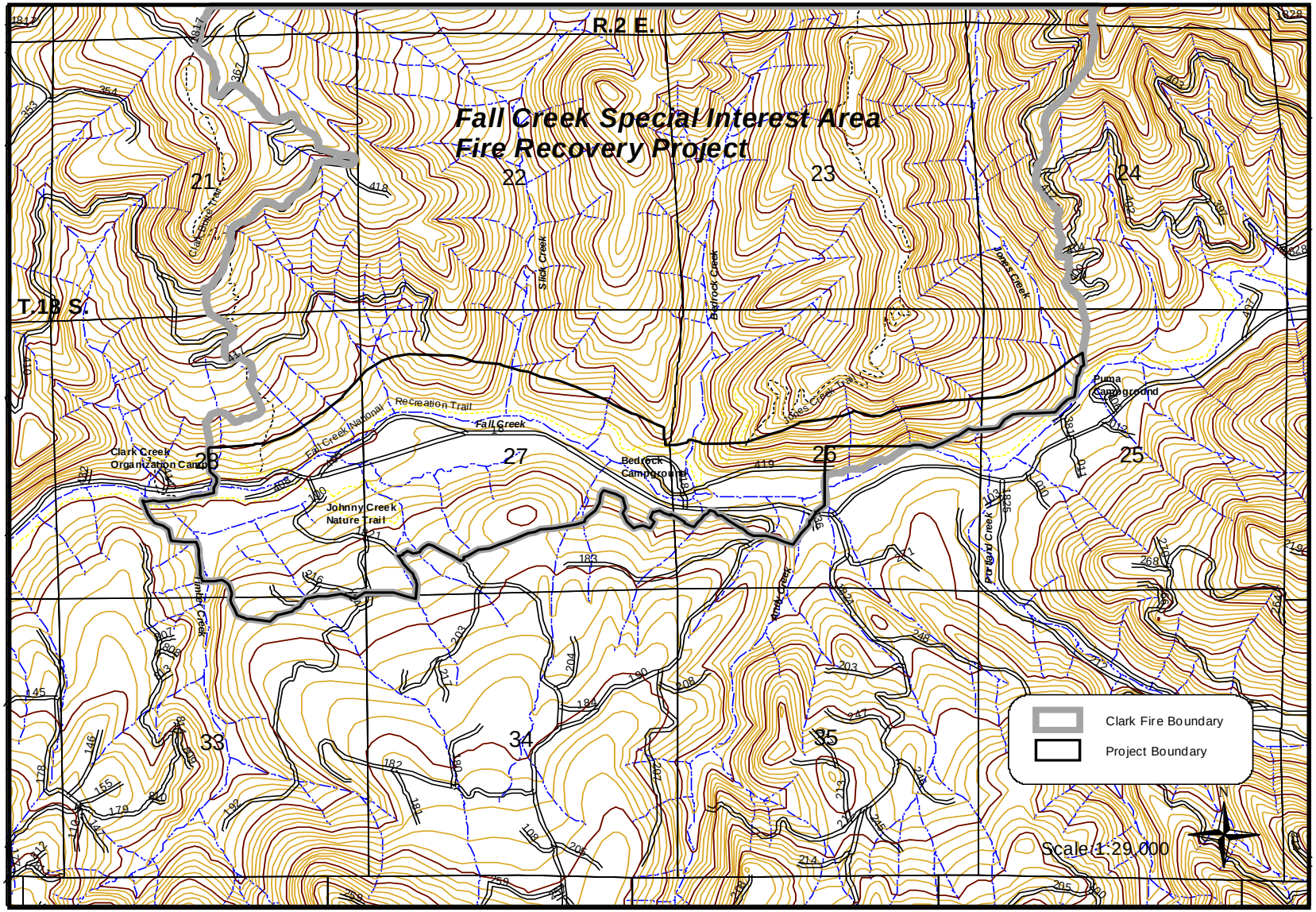
Klamath Tribe
Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde
Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians
Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs

A copy of the scoping record will be sent to these individuals and organizations listed above. Updated information on the proposed project will be reported in the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) for the Willamette National Forest distributed to individuals and organizations which have shown an interest in the Forest's resource planning. Consultation with various agencies and tribes will be initiated through phone calls and letters.

Project Schedule - The following planning stages and dates outlines the tentative project schedule: Scoping Meeting - 5/5/04; Alternative Review - 6/16/04**;** Resource Reports - 8/11/14**;** EA Published - 9/22/04**;** Decision - 11/10/04**;** Implementation - 5/1/05.

/s/ Rick Scott *5/12/2004*

RICK SCOTT Date
Middle Fork District Ranger


Fall Creek Special Interest Area
Fire Recovery Project
R.2 E.
T.18 S.
21
22
23
24
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26
27
28
33
34
35
Clark Creek Organization Camp
Johnny Creek Nature Trail
Fall Creek National Recreation Trail
Fall Creek
Bedrock Campground
Puma Campground
Clark Fire Boundary
Project Boundary
Scale 1:29,000
N