

DECISION MEMO

Ninemile Non-WUI Fuels Reduction Project

Fremont-Winema National Forest
Chiloquin Ranger District
Klamath County, OR

PROPOSED ACTION: The Chiloquin District Ranger is proposing to reduce fuels on 111 acres by commercially and precommercially thinning trees, treating the thinning slash and brush, and underburning the accumulated natural fuels. One unit of approximately 39 acres will be treated starting with commercial harvest, followed by whipfelling, piling of the whipfall slash, shredding of the brush component and underburning the accumulated natural fuels. Commercial thinning will be between 4 inch and 21 inch diameter at breast height. The other unit, approximately 72 acres, will not require commercial harvest as part of its fuel reduction. Primary activities in this unit will be brush shredding and incidental small tree thinning, followed by underburning. The purpose of the project is to reduce fuels in the non-WUI portion of the Ninemile Project area. The location of the project is T34S, R8E, Sections 31 and 32, and T35S, R8E, Sections 6 and 5.

SCOPING: The project was discussed with Klamath Tribal Directors at the pre-SOPA meeting in November, 2001. On January 14, 2002 Elwood Miller, Jr., Director of Natural Resources, appointed Will Hatcher, Tribal Forester as the Key Contact for Natural Resources. Mr. Hatcher participated in developing the Ninemile Project, including the non-WUI units in this decision.

Public scoping was started by placing the proposed project on the Winema Winter 2000-2001 Schedule of Proposed Actions and on the website. A public scoping letter was sent on May 15, 2002 to the Chiloquin District NEPA mailing list. The mailing list of individuals and organizations contacted is on file in the project record.

No comments specific to the non-WUI units were received from the public. Refer to the Ninemile project record for comments made about fuels reduction in general.

DECISION AND REASON FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION: I have reviewed the interdisciplinary analysis and have decided to proceed with the proposed fuel reduction. The thinning and underburning will reduce the fire hazard in this non-WUI area and contribute toward completion of fuels reduction work considered in the Ninemile Project area. Cultural resource monitors will be used during piling and underburning activities as deemed necessary by the Zone Archeologist. Equipment will be free of soil, seeds, and other vegetative material before working on National Forest lands to reduce the chance of noxious weed introduction. The work is expected to begin during summer 2005.

This action falls within FSH 1909.15 Section 31.2, Category 10; "Hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire, not to exceed 4500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing, not to exceed 1000 acres." The project area falls within Fire Regime 1, Condition Class 3, and is outside the wildland-urban interface.

No extraordinary circumstances exist that might cause the action to have significant effects; therefore, the action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. Based on the environmental analysis and past experience, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS: This action is consistent with the management direction, including standards and guidelines, as outlined in the Winema Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as amended, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement documenting the analysis for the Plan. This action will comply with requirements of the Clean Water Act.

No significant impact is expected on Sensitive, Threatened or Endangered species. A rating of May Impact Individuals or Habitat (MIIH) was determined for the Sensitive species Pacific fringe-tailed bats and Pacific pallid bats. This determination predicted minor, indirect disturbance of roosting and foraging bats from noise, and from smoke during underburning. All other species received No Impact or No Effect determinations.

No significant impact is expected on cultural resources. No significant impact is expected on parkland, floodplains, wetlands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas. There are no anticipated significant impacts on consumers, minority groups, American Indians, women or civil rights. There are no anticipated significant impacts to Treaty and trust responsibilities with the Klamath Tribes. Consultation with the Klamath Tribes was done under provisions of the 1999 Memorandum of Agreement.

There are no known significant indirect, cumulative, or unavoidable adverse effects on the environment. There is no threat to public health or safety. The project fully meets INFISH direction. Implementation of this proposal meets the resource protection requirements of 36 CFR 219.17.

APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES/IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.4(a) this decision is not subject to requirements for Notice and Comment. This decision is not subject to appeal, pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.12(f). This decision may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT PERSON: Questions regarding this decision should be directed to Kevin Moore, Southwest Zone NEPA Coordinator, Chiloquin Ranger District, 38500 Hwy 97 North, Chiloquin, OR 97624; telephone 541-783-4001.

/s/ Richard Ragan
RICHARD RAGAN
District Ranger
Chiloquin Ranger District
RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

October 18, 2004
Date