

File Code: 1950
Date: March 12, 2010

Dear Interested Party,

The Mt. Hood National Forest is now preparing an Environmental Assessment to thin approximately 1800 acres of second-growth plantations on the Barlow and Hood River Ranger Districts to meet multiple resource objectives. All stands proposed for treatment would be located within the 5th field White River watershed on National Forest System lands.

The action proposed by the Forest Service is to thin and harvest wood fiber from multiple plantations within the 40,000 acre Bear Springs Thinning planning area. The Proposed Action also includes roughly five acres of downed tree removal resulting from ongoing special use ditch maintenance. The plantations proposed for thinning occur in a variety of land allocations including matrix and the dry upland portion of riparian reserves. Variable density thinning would be utilized to enhance stand diversity and to accelerate the development of mature and late-successional conditions.

Roads would be repaired and reconstructed as part of this project to accommodate timber haul while enhancing resource protection and user safety. Old temporary roads would be utilized to access landings where no system roads exist. These existing temporary roads are closed and in some cases have brush and/or trees growing within the road surface that would have to be removed. Upon completion of logging operations these roads would be closed once again.

An analysis of existing roads is scheduled to be conducted during the spring and summer of 2010 within the White River watershed. The Bear Springs Thinning Project falls within this roads analysis area. As road decommissioning opportunities will be analyzed within this broader effort, they will not be assessed as part of the Bear Springs Thinning Project, but included as a reasonably foreseeable action.

The purpose for this proposal is as follows:

- Increases stand health and growth.
- Enhance riparian reserves.
- Improve stand diversity.
- Provide forest products to the local economy.

There is a need for action because:

- These second-growth plantations are experiencing a slowing of growth due to overcrowding and some are experiencing suppression caused mortality. If no action is taken, this overstocked condition would result in stands with reduced vigor and increased mortality. There is a need for forest stands in the matrix that are healthy and vigorous with low levels of premature mortality.
- The current condition of these plantations does not meet the needs of associated aquatic and riparian resources. If no action is taken in these riparian reserves, stands would have reduced capability to provide the elements, including stream shade, standing and downed woody structure, soil stability, and micro-climate conditions, of a fully functional riparian ecosystem. There is a need to thin the stands within riparian areas to improve growth rates and accelerate the



development of mature and late-successional stand conditions for the benefit of riparian-dependent resources (fish, water quality, and wildlife habitat).

- The plantations identified in this project lack certain elements of diversity. They do not have the mix of tree species that were present in the original stand and they are relatively uniform in terms of tree size and spacing. There is a need for greater variability of vertical and horizontal stand structure. There is a need for more sunlight on the forest floor to create greater diversity of ground vegetation and to increase the quantity and palatability of forage plants. The project would include design features such as variable density thinning, skips and gaps. If no action is taken, over time the stands would become increasingly dense resulting in a long period of low structural diversity.
- Providing forest products is consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan goal of maintaining the stability of local and regional economies. This action is needed to supply forest products in a cost-effective manner. There is a need to keep forests healthy and productive to sustainably provide forest products in the matrix in the future. Not only are forest products needed by society, but also the employment created is important to local and regional economies.

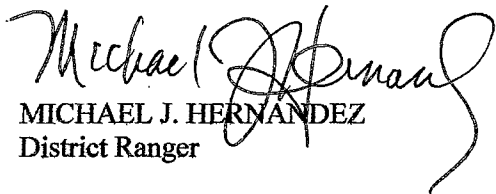
The Mt. Hood National Forest is now seeking comments from individuals, organizations, local and state governments, and other federal agencies that may be interested in or affected by the proposed action. Comments may pertain to the nature and scope of the environmental, social, and economic issues, and possible alternatives to the proposed action. Your comments will help us assess the proposed action, develop alternatives and prepare an Environmental Assessment.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project, available for public inspection, and released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Forest Service would like your scoping comments by March 26, 2010. Please send your written comments to: Andrew Tierney, Barlow Ranger District, 780 NE Court Street, Dufur, OR 97021, Phone 541-467-2291, FAX 541-467-2271. You may also hand-deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours which are 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments may be submitted to comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood-barlow@fs.fed.us in a format such as an e-mail message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc). All those who comment will remain on our mailing list and receive future updates on this proposal.

Electronic maps for the project are available on the Internet at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood/projects/>.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL J. HERNANDEZ
District Ranger

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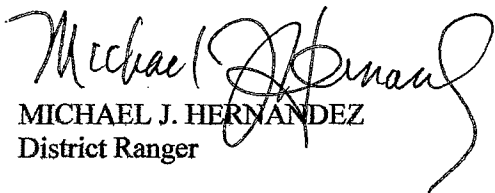
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