



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Northwest Oregon District Office
1717 Fabry Road SE, Salem, Oregon 97306
<http://www.blm.gov>

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Marys Peak Field Office is planning the Aloha Trout Forest Management Project and is requesting your consideration of the proposal. The purpose of the project is to implement management direction in the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan for the Harvest Land Base and Riparian Reserve land use allocations. The BLM proposal includes variable retention harvest, commercial and non-commercial thinning, tree tipping, fuels treatments, snag creation, transportation management actions, and post-harvest planting on approximately 1,800 acres of BLM-administered land in Benton County, Oregon. Additional information is enclosed with this letter.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you an opportunity to share information or concerns about the project. Your input will help an interdisciplinary team of BLM resource specialists further develop the project and identify issues for analysis. Comments may be sent to Matthew Betenson, Marys Peak Field Manager at the address above or submitted by email to BLM_OR_NO_PublicComments_NEPA@blm.gov. Additionally, you may submit comments on the ePlanning website at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2034802/510>. NEPA number: DOI-BLM-ORWA-N020-2025-0001-EA. We would appreciate comments before November 12, 2024.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the address listed above during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the final document. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

We appreciate your interest in the management of public lands and encourage your participation in the development of this project. If you have questions regarding this proposal, you may contact Anthon Weaver, Project Lead, at (503) 315-5980 or at aweaver@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Digitally signed by
MATTHEW BETENSON
Date: 2024.10.10
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Matthew Betenson

Enclosure

INTERIOR REGION 9 • COLUMBIA–PACIFIC NORTHWEST
IDAHO, MONTANA, OREGON*, WASHINGTON
*** PARTIAL**

Project Area Overview

The BLM Marys Peak Field Office is planning the Aloha Trout Forest Management Project on BLM-administered lands in Benton County, approximately three miles east of Alsea, Oregon. The 1,800-acre project area spans six sections of forested stands in the Harvest Land Base-Moderate Intensity Timber Area (HLB-MITA), District-Designated Reserve-Timber Production Capability Classification (DDR-TPCC), and Riparian Reserve land use allocations. See map at the end of this document.

The BLM project includes approximately 1,400 acres of the HLB and approximately 400 acres of Riparian Reserve adjacent to proposed HLB-MITA harvest units. Stands proposed for treatment range from 40-130 years of age; approximately ninety-five percent of these stands are in the 70-year age class and younger.

Stand conditions differ throughout the project area, reflecting a diverse history of varying type and intensity of forest management actions. Stands proposed for treatment have been previously harvested; most stands were clearcut in the 1950s and 1960s. Stands in the 60-year age classes and younger within the project area can be described as even-aged, single-story canopy, closed forest dominated by Douglas-fir. These stands are mostly overstocked, exhibiting short crowns, closed canopies, and are experiencing density mortality in the smallest diameter classes. The dense overstory is limiting the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor, resulting in little to no understory development.

Stands in the 70-year age class and older within the project area can be described in two ways. Stands in the 70-80 age-class are even-aged, single-story, closed canopy stands dominated by Douglas-fir. Stands in the 70-130 age-class are uneven aged, multi-layered, open-canopy stands comprised of multiple species and have a component of older, larger-diameter “legacy” trees. These trees are older than the prevailing stand, and in the case with western redcedar, are succumbing to competition from shade tolerant western hemlock. Legacy trees would be reserved from harvest and would be identified as focal trees for radial thinning, where competitive trees would be removed around the focal tree to limit the loss of lower limb structure and promote epicormic branching.

Preliminary Purpose and Need

The BLM is developing the project consistent with the Northwestern and Coastal Oregon Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP), which provides the following management direction for the Harvest Land Base and Riparian Reserve land use allocations:

Harvest Land Base (ROD/RMP pp. 59-63):

- Conduct silvicultural treatments to contribute timber volume to the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ).
- Conduct silvicultural treatments to enhance timber values and to reduce fire risks and insect and disease outbreaks.
- Conduct regeneration harvest to increase or maintain vegetative species diversity.

- Conduct commercial thinning to promote or enhance the development of stand structural complexity and/or to increase or maintain vegetative species diversity.

Riparian Reserve (ROD/RMP pp. 69-72)

- Thin stands as needed to ensure that stands are able to provide trees that would function as stable wood in the stream. Maintain at least 30 percent canopy cover and 60 trees per acre expressed as an average at the scale of the portion of the harvest unit within the Riparian Reserve.
- Tree tipping: When conducting commercial thinning in any portion of the Outer Zone in a stand in all watershed classes, cut or tip from 0 to 15 square feet of basal area per acre of live trees, averaged across the Riparian Reserve portion of the treated stand. Leave cut or tipped trees on site or yard, deck, and make cut or tipped trees available for fish habitat restoration. The cut or tipped trees can be of any size and come from any zone.

Proposed Actions

The BLM is proposing to conduct variable retention harvest, commercial and non-commercial thinning, and tree tipping within the project area. Additional related management activities include transportation management actions, post-harvest fuel reduction treatments, and snag creation.

Harvest Land Base-MITA: The BLM is considering variable retention harvest and commercial thinning using ground-based and skyline yarding methods. The project would contribute to the Salem sustained yield unit ASQ for several fiscal years, beginning as early as 2025. Within the HLB-MITA, the BLM would retain 5-15 percent of the pre-harvest basal area in live trees.

Riparian Reserve: The project area is within Class 1 subwatersheds and primarily within the Lower North Fork Alsea subwatershed (ROD/RMP pp. 71-72). The BLM is considering commercial and non-commercial silvicultural treatments within overstocked, homogenous conifer stands in a portion of the Riparian Reserve outer zone adjacent to HLB-MITA harvest units. Treatments would focus on radial thinning around dominant, codominant conifers, and hardwood trees to accelerate diameter and height growth, ensuring that stands are able to provide trees that would function as stable wood in the stream.

DDR-TPCC: The BLM is not proposing any harvest within the DDR-TPCC; however, transportation management actions and yarding corridors would be allowed.

Transportation management actions: The BLM proposes new road construction and renovation and improvement of existing roads to facilitate safe and efficient timber harvest operation and to reduce sediment delivery from roads that are deteriorating. The BLM proposes approximately 7 miles of new road construction.

Snag creation: The BLM would create snags consistent with management direction for the HLB-MITA and Riparian Reserve (ROD/RMP pp. 62, 73).

Post-harvest fuel reduction: Surveys would occur upon the completion of harvest activities to determine the need to reduce fuel loading and fire risk and for planting preparation. Mastication, hand, machine, and landing pile construction, pyrolysis and burning would be considered.

Field Data

The BLM has conducted several resource surveys, including but not limited to, fish presence, stream identification, stand exams, and botanical surveys. Other resource surveys, including northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and cultural/archaeological, are planned or ongoing. Initial survey results are summarized below. Additional information will be included in the environmental assessment.

Botanical Species: The BLM conducted GIS data searches and field surveys during 2022 and 2023. No known sites of Threatened and Endangered or Bureau Special Status (BSS) botanical species are within the project area. The BLM conducted roadside invasive plant inventory surveys along all BLM-controlled roads within the project area and is actively implementing Invasive Plant Management in the area.

Fish Species: The BLM conducted fish presence surveys (upper limit fish surveys, spawning surveys, environmental DNA surveys) throughout the project area. Endangered Species Act – listed Oregon Coast (OC) Coho salmon, OC Chinook salmon (petitioned for listing), Bureau Sensitive OC steelhead and Pacific lamprey are found to occur within the project area, within Honey Grove Creek, Seeley Creek, and an unnamed tributary to Honey Grove Creek. In addition, upper limits of resident species have been determined for streams within the project area (e.g., cutthroat trout, brook lamprey).

Recreation: The BLM has identified several user-created trails throughout the project area. Trails appear to be used primarily for mountain biking. These trails have not been authorized by the BLM and are not part of the BLM trail network. The project area is not within a Recreation Management Area (RMA). The BLM Northwest Oregon District does not actively manage for recreation outside of RMAs.

Wildlife:

Marbled murrelet: Stands in the project area that contain potential habitat for marbled murrelet were surveyed from 2020-2022 and had no marbled murrelet detections. These stands would be resurveyed in 2024-2025. There are 45 acres of designated critical habitat for marbled murrelet within the project area.

Northern spotted owl (NSO): The BLM has conducted surveys for the NSO in this project area since 2020. Five historical NSO sites are within 1.5 miles of the project area; none are known to be active at this time. Consistent with BLM policy, the BLM would continue to survey for residency to determine whether NSO are found to be resident within 1.5 miles of the project units. The project area does not contain designated critical habitat for NSO.

Cultural Resources: The BLM has conducted several cultural resource inventories within the project area. However, none of these surveys meet the standards for previous adequate inventory outlined within section IV.B(3) of Oregon State Protocol Agreement (2015). As a result, the previously inventoried areas will be included in post-harvest survey efforts following the conclusion of the proposed timber harvest activities as per Appendix D of the Oregon State Protocol Agreement (2015).

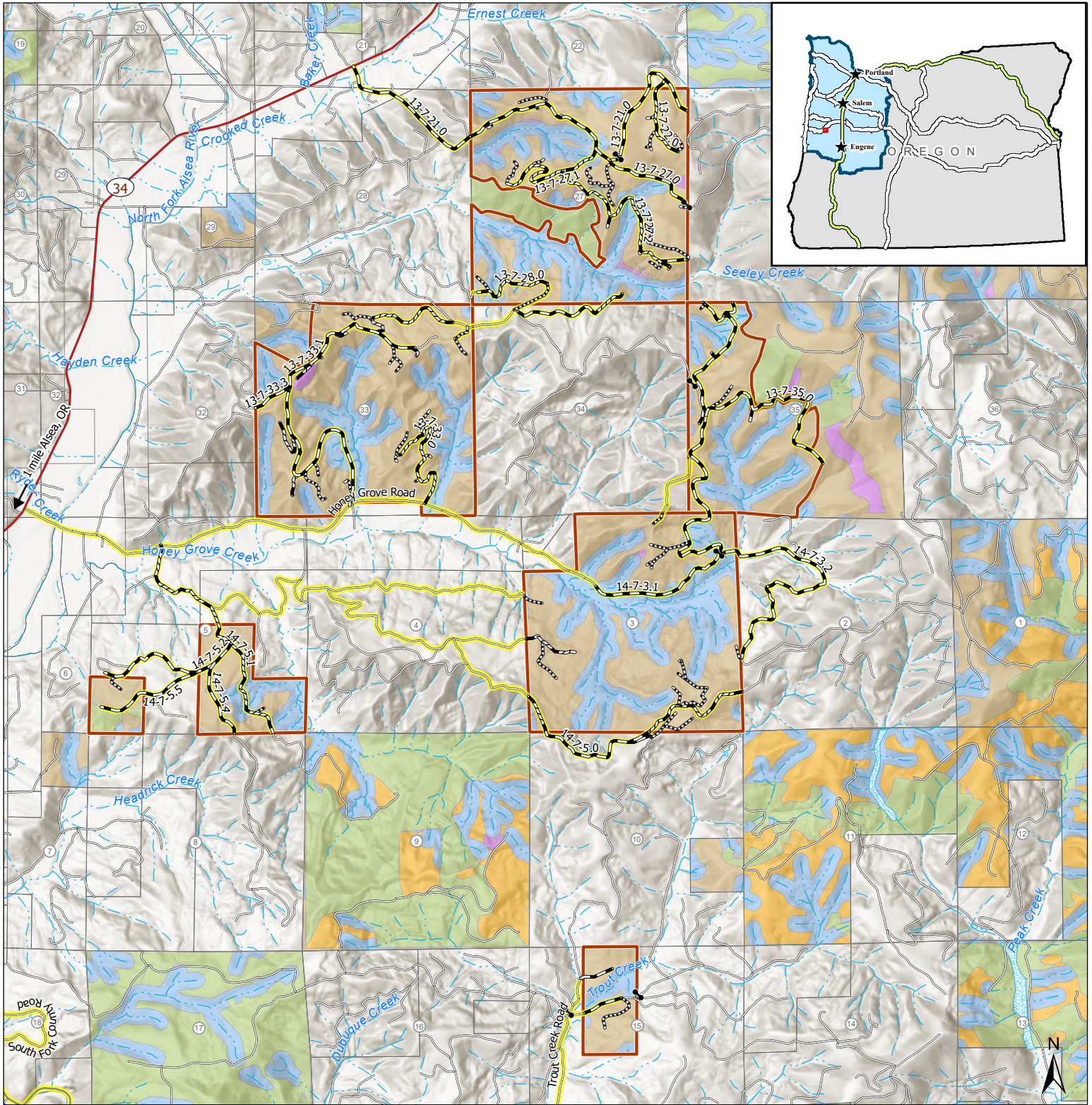


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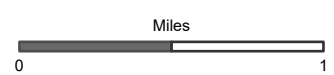


ALOHA TROUT FOREST MANAGEMENT SCOPING MAP

T. 13 S. - R. 07 W., Sections 27, 33, 35; T. 14 S. - R. 07 W., Sections 3, 5, 15 W.M.



- Road to be Constructed
- Existing Road
- Road to be Improved
- Road to be Renovated
- Haul Route
- Streams
- Waterbody
- Existing Gate
- District Designated Reserve Timber Production Capability Classification
- Late Successional Reserve
- Riparian Reserve
- Harvest Land Base Low Intensity Timber Area
- Harvest Land Base Moderate Intensity Timber Area
- Project Boundary



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