

DECISION MEMO
OREGON SEMAPHORE GRASS CONSERVATION PROJECT

USDA FOREST SERVICE
FREMONT NATIONAL FOREST
Lakeview Ranger District
Lake County, Oregon

I. Decision

It is my decision to proceed with the Proposed Action to establish Oregon semaphore grass, *Pleuropogon oregonus*, populations on up to four acres of Fremont National Forest lands. The project will consist of planting plugs of Oregon semaphore grass on a site or sites on National Forest lands within the Lakeview Ranger District in T. 39 S., R. 22 E., WM., S. ½ Sec. 5; SE1/4 SE ¼ Sec. 6 and SW1/4 SE1/4 Sec. 6. Oregon semaphore grass is one of the rarest native grass species in Oregon. Monitoring will continue for one or more years following implementation to determine other protection needs. The Oregon Department of Agriculture will provide all plant material and labor to implement the project.

- A. This Decision is categorically excluded from an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement under 31.1a (3) Inventories, research activities, and studies, such as resource inventories and routine data collection when such actions are clearly limited in context and intensity, and; 31.2 (6) Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.
- B. There are no extraordinary circumstances associated with this project.
- The Forest Botanist has determined that no federally proposed, endangered, threatened or sensitive (PETS) plant taxa occur on the site and that there will be no effects to proposed, endangered, or threatened plant species as a result of implementing this project. No R6 sensitive plant species currently occur on the proposed re-introduction site. With the exception of Oregon Semaphore grass, no impacts will result to any R6 sensitive plant species with the implementation of this project. A beneficial impact is expected for *Pleuropogon oregonus* by placing and successfully establishing a new population on public lands.
Mitigation: The project sites may be fenced temporarily to exclude livestock if grazing occurs during the period of attempted re-introduction.
 - The South Zone Wildlife Biologist has determined that this project will have no effect on any PETS species or their habitat, as neither is present in the project area.
 - The South Zone Fish Biologist determined that potential habitat or documented occurrences exists in the affected subwatersheds (Deep Creek/ Lower Camas Creek) for R6 sensitive fish species, redband trout. Occupied redband trout habitat exists in

Camas Creek within the project area; planting will occur on the streambanks of Camas Creek.

Mitigation:

- 1) All vehicle travel will be restricted to open roads only,
 - 2) No heavy equipment will be used within RHCAs, and
 - 3) All work will be done by hand.
- This project is in compliance with INFISH.
 - This project will have no effect on any R6 sensitive fish species. This project will have no effect on any proposed, endangered, or threatened fish species or their critical habitat.
 - The Forest Archeologist determined that no prehistoric or historic sites were found during the Cultural Resource Survey conducted within the project area.

Mitigation:

- 1) In the event that cultural resources are discovered during the course of the project, operations will need to be interrupted while measures are developed to allow the mitigation of any adverse effects resulting from project implementation.

II. Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to create new Oregon semaphore grass populations on public lands to prevent the extinction of the species in the event that the few existing populations become extirpated. The establishment of new and self-sustaining populations could be an important factor in precluding future listing of this species under the Endangered Species Act.

III. Public Involvement

On July 9, 2002, a legal notice Request for Comments was published in the Lake County *Examiner* regarding the Proposed Action to out plant Oregon semaphore grass on National Forest lands within the Lakeview Ranger District of the Fremont National Forest. Copies of the Proposed Action and a letter requesting comments on the project were mailed to approximately 128 individuals or organizations identified as interested in Lakeview Ranger District activities. In addition, the full text of the Proposed Action and map were available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/fremont>. Numerous responses were received regarding the project. Persons responding to the project include the following:

Mr. Orval R. Layton

Lynn Ortwein

Jack Brazeal

George Reynolds

Tom Lane

Mark Forbes

USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, OR

IV. Findings

The proposal is consistent with the management goals stated in the Fremont Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, 1989) and later amendments. Specifically:

- To promote cooperation and coordination with individuals, corporate landowners, and state and federal agencies on matters of mutual interest (LRMP, pg 50).
- For endangered, threatened, and sensitive species, maintain or increase the status of populations and habitats (LRMP, pg 109)

III. Implementation

The project will be implemented in the fall of 2002.

IV. Contact

For further information, please contact Margaret David Bailey, Resource Planning Specialist, or Terry H. Sodorff, District Ranger, Lakeview Ranger Station, 18049 Hwy. 395 North, Lakeview, OR 97630. Phone: 541-947-6300.

V. Administrative Appeal

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal under 36 CFR 215.8 (4) as this decision is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement per FSH 1909.15, Sections 31.1a (3) and 31.2 (6).

VI. Signature

The responsible official is Terry H. Sodorff, District Ranger, Lakeview Ranger District, Fremont National Forest.

TERRY H. SODORFF
District Ranger

DATE

cc:

Mr. Orval R. Layton
Lynn Ortwein
Jack Brazeal
George Reynolds
Tom Lane
Mark Forbes
USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, Portland, OR
Steven Gisler, Oregon Dept. of Agriculture