



File Code: 1950

Date: November 14, 2008

Dear Interested Party,

The Olympic National Forest is proposing a combination of salvage and commercial thinning on 69 acres of second-growth stands to achieve desired conditions identified by the Forest Plan. This proposal includes salvaging up to 44 acres of windthrown trees and commercial thinning of up to 25 acres. The land allocations of the stands proposed for treatment include Adaptive Management Area (AMA) and Riparian Reserves. This action would occur in the Newbury Creek drainage within the Humptulips Watershed, in Grays Harbor County, (see attached map). The legal location of the stands proposed for salvage and thinning is T21N, R9W, Sections 5 & 6.

Forest Service personnel are preparing to conduct an environmental review for the proposed salvage and thinning as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is expected that this project will fall within a category of actions listed in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and has no extraordinary circumstances that would preclude use of the categorical exclusions. (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 31).

YOUR INVOLVEMENT

The purpose of this letter is to invite your participation in the NEPA analysis during our 30-day public notice and comment period. Comments in support or in opposition are welcome. In particular, if you have information you feel the Forest Service may not be aware of, or feel you have issues (points of dispute, debate, or disagreement) regarding potential effects of this proposed action, please send those issues in writing to the project leader (Mark Senger, 1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Suite A, Olympia, WA 98512), or e-mail: comments-pacificnorthwest-olympic-pacific@fs.fed.us

Comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following publication of a notice in The Olympian. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this proposal. Those who provide timely and substantive comments will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

All comments received will become part of the public record and copies of comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, may be released for public inspection. Requests by individual respondents to have their home addresses withheld from the public record will be honored to the extent allowable by law. Such requests to withhold names and/or addresses must be stated prominently at the beginning of the comments. Anonymous comments will not be considered. Submissions from organizations or businesses, and from



individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

This comment period is being provided pursuant to the September 16, 2005 order issued by the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Storms of 2007 have blown down and damaged approximately 84 acres of stands in the Newbury Creek drainage. In these stands, over 90% of the trees were blown down or snapped off during the windstorms, leaving less than 40% canopy cover. Affected stands included approximately 76 acres of second-growth stands and 8 acres of an old growth stand. The remaining undamaged portions of the second-growth stands are characterized by a single story that is experiencing slowing growth due to overcrowding. Given these forest conditions there may be opportunities to help meet the Forest Plan desired future conditions in the area by implementing silvicultural practices (salvage and commercial thinning).

The purposes of this action are to:

- Increase structural diversity of forest stands, develop a multi-layered canopy, and enhance growth and coverage of herbaceous plants on the forest floor.
- Achieve economic objectives through the salvage of windthrown timber.

The Northwest Forest Plan designated land allocations within the project area are Adaptive Management and Riparian Reserve. The Adaptive Management Area under the Northwest Forest Plan, is designed to encourage the development and testing of technical and social approaches to achieving desired ecological, economic, and other social objectives. Riparian Reserves, overlaying other Northwest Forest Plan land allocations, are intended to protect the health of the riparian and aquatic system.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Pacific Ranger District of the Olympic National Forest proposes a combination of salvage and commercial thinning on 69 acres of second-growth stands. The wind-damaged old growth stand would not be salvaged. The proposal includes the salvage windthrown trees on a total of approximately 44 acres, and a "thinning from below" silvicultural treatment on approximately 25 acres. Salvage and thinning in the second-growth stands would be done within the guidelines given for the Adaptive Management Area (AMA) and Riparian Reserves land allocations. The proposed units would be yarded utilizing a combination of ground-based and skyline systems, and the project would remove an estimated 2.5 MMBF of timber.

Salvage of windthrown trees would provide economic benefits while maintaining sufficient coarse woody debris to meet ecological needs. The proposed salvage would occur in pockets of three to fifteen acres in two adjacent second-growth stands which were 58 and 97 years of age in 2007. Removal of some of the material would provide important gaps within the stand for increased forage and species diversity.

A “thinning from below” silvicultural treatment on approximately 24 acres of a 59 year old stand which would remove suppressed, intermediate and some co-dominant trees (i.e., the smaller trees). The stand would be thinned to approximately 110 to 130 trees per acre and favor retention of less common species in order to increase diversity. The reduction in trees per acre would result in increased diameter growth and crown expansion by the remaining trees, while still leaving options for future stand management. The proposed thinning would accelerate development of the stand to become fully functioning late successional old-growth forest. The thinning would also open the stand to allow more light to reach the forest floor, promoting the natural regeneration of trees, shrubs and forbs and increase forage for deer and elk.

Thinning in Riparian Reserves within the proposed units would provide more space for the remaining trees to accelerate diameter growth. The objective is to provide large diameter coniferous trees adjacent to streams to serve as future recruitment for large organic debris. Additionally, prescriptions would be adjusted for unstable or potentially unstable areas within Riparian Reserves.

Buffers (areas with no treatment) would be established along streams to protect aquatic resources, with some activities occurring in the outer portion of the Riparian Reserves, including approximately 2 acres of commercial thinning and 8 acres of salvage.

Approximately 0.47 miles of temporary road would be constructed which would not cross any streams. Of the total, approximately 0.19 miles would be constructed on Rayonier Forest Resources L. P. land for access, and the remaining 0.28 miles would be constructed on Forest Service land. Approximately 0.02 miles of the temporary road construction and one landing would be located in the outer portion of the Riparian Reserves. The entire length of temporary road would be decommissioned following the salvage and thinning treatments.

DECISION TO BE MADE

The responsible official (Forest Supervisor) will decide what level of thinning and salvage is appropriate in the project area and what management requirements and mitigation measures are included in the project.

Sincerely,



SUSAN PIPER

Acting District Ranger

Newbury Creek Salvage & Thinning

