

REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM OFFICE

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 9, 2014
TO: Max Yeager, Swiftwater Resource Area/Manager, Roseburg District BLM
FROM: George McFadden, REO Representative to the REIC
SUBJECT: Regional Ecosystem Office Review of the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project, Roseburg BLM District

Summary: The Regional Ecosystem Office (REO) interagency Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Work Group has concluded its review of the documents provided by the District regarding proposed activities in LSRs within the anticipated action of the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project within LSRs 266 and 267, Swiftwater Field Office, Roseburg BLM. The REO, based upon review by the LSR Work Group, concurs with the District in its finding of consistency with the Standards and Guidelines (S&G) under the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) for the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project.

Basis for the Review: Silviculture treatments in LSRs are subject to REO review under the NWFP S&G (C-12) if they do not meet existing criteria in the LSR Assessment or the exemption criteria for commercial thinning in the REO Memorandum #694 "Criteria to Exempt Specific Silvicultural Activities in Late-Successional Reserves and Managed Late-Successional Areas from Regional Ecosystem Office Review" dated July 9, 1996. As required by the NWFP S&G (C-11), the District prepared a Late-Successional Reserve Assessment (LSR assessment). The 1996 Oregon Coast Province-Southern Portion and the 1998 South Coast-Northern Klamath LSR Assessments (LSRAs), which encompasses the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project, was reviewed and found to be consistent under the NWFP standards and guidelines (C-11). Although the LSRAs support the thinning, the project came before the LSR Workgroup for review because certain recommendations in the LSR Assessment and Exemption Criteria cannot be met and still meet objectives for within stand and landscape variability.

Background and Project Description: The Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project planning area is located on the Swiftwater Resource Area of the Roseburg BLM. The project is located within the Upper Smith River watershed. The project consists of young-stand thinning on approximately 1200 acres, of which about 320 acres are in LSRs. The proposed units originated from clear-cut timber harvesting in the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in stands 50 to 60 years-old that are even-aged with a single-story structure. A few remnants of an older age class are present in some areas.

Silvicultural treatments proposed for the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project are consistent with pertinent S&Gs in the ROD (C-12), and with LSRA treatment criteria for density management in stands less than 80 years of age but vary from existing review exemption criteria (REO Memorandum #694 dated July 9, 1996 and REO Memorandum #801 dated September 30), by proposing gaps up to 1 ¼-acre in size, and a higher proportion (>10%) of 2 stands in heavy thin and gaps.

One small unit (7C – 17 acres) would have 33% of the unit heavily thinned or in gaps. Another unit (17A – 142 acres) would have 16% of the unit heavily thinned or in gaps. Across all units only 9% would be heavily thinned or in gaps.

The suitable spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat surrounding the treatment units currently provide only dispersal habitat for spotted owls. The objective is to increase within stand and landscape variability and to create better spotted owl prey habitat short-term and higher quality nesting habitat long-term. These stands are high productivity (Site 1 and 2) and smaller gaps close in quickly. New studies since the issuance of the 1996 exemption criteria indicate a need for more variable density management and larger gap sizes. BLM silviculturists used work by Andrews et al. (2005) for silvicultural approaches to developing future owl nest sites.

Andrews, Lawrence S., John P. Perkins, James A. Thraikill, Nathan J. Poage, and John C. Tappeiner II. 2005. Silvicultural approaches to develop northern spotted owl nesting sites, Central Coast Ranges, Oregon. *Western Journal of Applied Forestry* 20(1): 13-27.

Review of the Project: The LSR Work Group reviewed the proposed action for the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project. Members of the LSR Work Group also met with District staff on August 6, 2014 via conference call. The Work Group's review was based on discussions during the call and review of the document "20140621_Half_and_Half_LSRA REO_Exemption_V.XIII", dated August 1, 2014.

Conclusion: Based on the interagency REO LSR Work Group's review and conclusions, the REO concurs with the Roseburg BLM's conclusion that the Half N Half Thinning and Density Management Project on the Swiftwater Resource Area is consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan.

If you have questions regarding this review, please contact Kim Mellen-McLean at 503-808-2677.



George McFadden

BLM REO Representative to the REIC

cc: Craig Kintop, Roseburg BLM
Kim Mellen-McLean, LSR Workgroup, FS

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