



# Categorical Exclusion Decision

## White River Fire Roadside Danger Tree Abatement

USDA Forest Service  
Barlow Ranger District, Mt. Hood National Forest  
Wasco County, Oregon

### Introduction

The following information describes my decision to approve felling and removal of trees within or immediately adjacent<sup>1</sup> to the White River Fire perimeter that are likely to fail within five years and are within striking distance to National Forest System (NFS) roads. I authorize these actions under 36 CFR 220.6(d)(4), which includes the repair and maintenance of roads. Although this category does not require a Decision Memo (36 CFR 220.6), this documents my decision and consideration of extraordinary circumstances.

### Background

The White River Fire started from a lightning strike on August 17, 2020 and grew to approximately 17,442 acres. The fire killed or damaged trees adjacent to segments of existing NFS roads. Some of these trees pose a safety risk for vehicle traffic and/or pose a risk to the road system. Although some trees were felled and either left in place or removed during fire suppression activities, numerous killed or damaged trees remain adjacent to NFS roads and are likely to fail within the next five years.

The purpose of the project is to provide for long-term public and employee safety and protect NFS roads, particularly in places of frequent and high use for travel. Currently, there is an elevated risk to public and employee safety and road integrity due to numerous fire-killed or damaged trees. Although the purpose of this project is driven by unsafe road conditions created by the White River Fire, other dead and dying trees that pose an unacceptable risk within and immediately adjacent to the fire perimeter will be addressed. Therefore, there is a critical road maintenance need to reduce risks through the felling of these trees.

### Decision

I have decided to implement a portion of the proposed action as described in the scoping letter dated December 4, 2020, which is to maintain approximately 36 miles of NFS roads through the felling and removal of *likely* and *imminent hazards* if they are within one tree-height along specific reaches of NFS roads for public and employee safety. Most of the trees to be felled are fire-killed or damaged by fire. However, my decision also includes some minor, incidental felling of trees that are imminent or likely to fail for other reasons than fire (e.g., insect and disease).

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to Appendix A to see a spatial depiction of the roads included in my decision and their inclusion and adjacency to the White River Fire perimeter.



As described above, I have decided to only remove danger trees if they are within one tree-height of included roads. This is consistent with Filip et al. (2016)<sup>2</sup>, which allows for felling danger trees up to 1.5 times the total tree height depending on local conditions. By limiting this decision to one tree-height, the project will focus on the zone where it is most likely that falling trees would hit the road and therefore removing the danger trees in this area is the most urgent.

In some cases, it may be desirable or necessary to fell danger trees more than one tree-height from roads. Accordingly, I have also decided to begin a separate analysis for access and travel management to evaluate the removal of danger trees farther than one tree-height from the roads through a separate decision. Although it is important to get started on this work soon for the areas within one tree-height, most of the roads may remain closed until separate decision(s) authorize the rest of this important work.

All road segments included in this project are currently closed and have been closed since the White River Fire began. These roads will remain closed until project activities have been completed. It is important that we complete these maintenance activities as soon as possible so that Forest Service employees can initiate and complete many essential projects and fire recovery actions within and adjacent to the White River Fire area. Also, completion of these maintenance activities will allow for safe and immediate response to wildfires and other emergency situations in the vicinity as well as facilitate timely reopening of roads and general area to public use and enjoyment.

This work is unique in its urgency. With each week that passes, hazards to users of these roads increase while options for safely removing them decrease. If we cannot act now to begin removing these hazards, these roads and road segments are likely to remain closed for many years. Road closures for this extended amount of time does not meet management direction for administrative access nor does it allow the public to access or travel within the area.

Reopening routes closed by last year's wildfire as soon as safely possible is broadly supported by forest users. I have heard from a few concerned citizens that view removal of all hazards as too drastic of an action and ask that we only remove some of the hazards, leaving some standing. This request is not viable because after implementation there will still be known hazards adjacent to these roads which would require me to keep them closed.

I do not take this decision lightly nor without clearly recognizing the current state of the fire-affected landscape. The White River Fire burned over a large area, killing many trees, and modifying habitat for many species of wildlife. Though it is a tough decision, I must prioritize the health and safety of employees, partners, stakeholders, and the public who will likely be working, visiting, and recreating in the area accessed by these roads and road segments.

Details about my decision are further described below. Appendix A of this letter includes project maps. My decision also includes project design criteria, which were created specifically for this project by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists to ensure consistency with the *Mt. Hood National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Plan) (USDA 1990), as amended. These project design criteria are listed in Appendix B.

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<sup>2</sup> Filip, G. et al. 2016. Field Guide for Danger Tree Identification and Response along Forest Roads and Work Sites in Washington and Oregon. R6-NR-TP-021-2016. USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, Pacific Northwest Region, Portland, OR.



Only NFS roads located on NFS lands will be treated under this decision. Table 1 shows the approximate number of miles for each road that will be treated. The Maintenance Level (ML) for each road is ML-2, except for Road 4800000 (Road 48) which is ML-5.

**Table 1. Road numbers and approximate miles treated.**

Road number	Miles (approximate)	Road number	Miles (approximate)
2110000	0.5	4850030	0.2
2110035	0.1	4850031	0.1
2110250	2.4	4850032	0.2
2110270	2.7	4850120	1.5
2110272	0.6	4850122	0.2
2110273	0.4	4850123	1.0
2110310	0.2	4850140	0.5
2120000	1.9	4850170	0.2
2120016	0.3	4885000	2.5
2131000	0.7	4885011	0.1
3530000	3.4	4885120	1.0
3530017	0.7	4885121	0.5
4300260	0.7	4885122	0.1
4800000	3.0	4885130	0.7
4800270	1.0	4885140	1.7
4800271	0.5	4885141	0.1
4800272	0.6	4885142	0.3
4800273	0.1	4885143	0.2
4850000	2.6	4885150	0.7
4850017	0.5	4885151	0.1
4850020	0.2	4885160	0.9
4850023	0.3		
<b>Total miles (approximate)</b>			<b>36.2</b>

***Mt. Hood Forest Plan and Northwest Forest Plan Land Use Allocations***

Road segments that will be treated are within several land use allocations described by the Forest Plan. These include A1-Wild and Scenic River (White River), A4-Special Interest Area (Barlow Road), B2-Scenic Viewshed, B10-Deer/Elk Winter Range, and C1-Timber Emphasis. Road segments that will be treated also overlap with land use allocations described by the Northwest Forest Plan including Riparian Reserves, Late-Successional Reserves (LSR) and Matrix. In Riparian Reserves, felled trees within 100’ of water bodies would be left on site; however, slash would be treated as necessary to address fuel loading and road maintenance concerns.

Project design criteria (Appendix B) were designed to ensure consistency with the Forest Plan and Northwest Forest Plan land use allocations. Maps showing roads and land use allocations are included as Appendix A.

***Tree Identification***

Trees identified for felling will include those that are rated as “likely to fail” within five years that also have a “potential-failure zone” intersecting with a NFS road (i.e., within striking distance to a



NFS road). All trees will be evaluated individually by qualified Forest Service personnel. The *Field Guide for Danger-Tree Identification and Response along Forest Roads and Work Sites in Oregon and Washington* (Filip et al. 2016) provides guidance for ratings and potential failure zones. In addition, this project was designed with consideration of Forest Service Region 6 guidance, which was provided to us shortly after the 2020 wildfires. Guidance included but was not limited to *Rapid Assessment Team* recommendations (USDA 2020)<sup>3</sup> and *Guidance on Danger Tree Assessments and Predicting Post-Fire Tree Mortality* (USDA 2020).<sup>4</sup> This section briefly summarizes these criteria used in the design of this project. These criteria will provide the basis for determining which trees represent an unacceptable risk of causing road damage, injuries, or death – and thus must be removed.

### **Likely to fail within five years**

The likelihood of a tree to fail within five years is one criterion used to select trees for felling for this project. This includes trees or parts identified as having a “high probability of failure within *one year*” (also known as “imminent” failure potential) and trees or parts having a “high probability of failure within *three to five years*” (also known as “likely” failure potential) (Filip, et al. 2016, p. 25).

### **Potential failure zone**

Even though the science and agency policy indicate that danger trees can pose a risk if they are within 1.5 to 2 times the total tree height away from people or infrastructure, I have decided to only remove danger trees if they are within one tree-height of included roads.

## **Extraordinary Circumstances**

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I considered resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist, which are discussed below.

### **Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species –**

- **Aquatic species:** There are not any federally listed or proposed aquatic species found within the project area. There are three Region 6 sensitive species in the project area, which include redband rainbow trout, Cope’s giant salamander, and Columbia dusky snail. Project design criteria, such as not allowing ground-based heavy equipment within 100 feet of streams, seeps, springs, or wetlands, minimize potential effects to aquatic species (see Appendix B, Fisheries #27-54). However, because a tree could fall into these species’ habitat and fine sediment or turbidity could be introduced for a limited time, activities may impact individuals or habitat, but are not likely to contribute to a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability to the population or species. Thus, I find the limited impact to aquatic sensitive species does not constitute an extraordinary circumstance within the roadside project area.

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<sup>3</sup> USDA Forest Service 2020. USFS Pacific Northwest Region. Riverside and White River Fires Rapid Assessment Team Report Mt. Hood National Forest - Clackamas River and Barlow Ranger Districts. October 29-30, 2020. (Unpublished).

<sup>4</sup> USDA Forest Service 2020. USFS Pacific Northwest Region. Guidance on Danger Tree Assessments and Predicting Post-Fire Tree Mortality. (Unpublished).



- **Wildlife species:** Although there are no known northern spotted owls<sup>5</sup> detected in surveys from 2016-2019 within the project area, tree abatement activities are within the designated critical habitat unit for the northern spotted owl, referred to as the ‘East Cascades North.’ Project design criteria were developed to protect northern spotted owl and habitat. For example, spotted owls that may possibly disperse into the area would be protected from any noise and smoke-generating activities by implementing seasonal restrictions (Appendix B, Wildlife #55 & 56). Because the area to be treated is a narrow linear strip along roads and no green trees will be included, the biological or physical features of critical habitat remaining post-fire will be maintained. Site-specific surveys for all roads in the White River Fire area reveal that less than half of the total of road miles, as well as limited dead/standing trees per acre of this subset of total roads, will need actual treatment. Therefore, these stands will continue to function in the same way they did before tree felling and removal. For these reasons, tree removal *May affect but Not Likely to Adversely Affect* northern spotted owl critical habitat. Since no noise disturbance would occur during the breeding season, and post-fire habitat for owls will be maintained, the potential impacts to owls is minimal and is not an extraordinary circumstance.

This project is consistent with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service’s programmatic agreement<sup>6</sup> for *Routine Land Management Activities with a Potential to Modify Habitat which are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Federally Listed Species within the Willamette Planning Providence of Oregon*. My staff worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the project was designed to be consistent with the programmatic activity descriptions and analysis.

There are three Region 6 sensitive species in the project area, which include gray wolves, white-headed woodpecker, and Lewis’s woodpecker. Because the area to be treated is a narrow linear strip along roads, these stands will continue to function the same as before tree removal and therefore, proposed activities may impact individuals or habitat but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to white-headed woodpecker or Lewis’s woodpecker populations or species. There are no known wolf dens or rendezvous sites within one mile of the tree removal sites, but if one is found, there will be a seasonal operating restriction from April 1 to July 15 (Appendix B, Wildlife #57). Therefore, proposed activities may impact individuals or habitat but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the gray wolf population or species. For these reasons, I conclude that any potential, minor impacts to wildlife sensitive species within the roadside project area do not constitute an extraordinary circumstance.

- **Botanical species:** There are no federally listed botanical species on the Mt. Hood National Forest. The roadside areas included in this project do not contain any known sites for sensitive botanical species. Additionally, there is low potential for undiscovered individuals to exist along these roads because there is limited habitat for sensitive botanical species within the fire area. Therefore, there will be no impacts to botanical sensitive species.

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<sup>5</sup> Field surveys to determine the presence of northern spotted owl were conducted as part of the Crystal Clear Restoration Environmental Analysis, which overlaps with the roadside tree abatement project area. Surveys did not detect any owls within the project area. Please refer to the Crystal Clear Restoration project record for owl survey data.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, September 7, 2017. Letter of Concurrence and Biological Assessment for Routine Land Management Activities with a Potential to Modify Habitat which are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Federally Listed Species within the Willamette Planning Province of Oregon (Ref # 01E0FW00-2017-I-0667).



**Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds** – There are no jurisdictional floodplains, inventoried or jurisdictional wetlands, or municipal watersheds in the project area.

**Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas** –

- **Wilderness:** There are some road segments adjacent to the White River Wilderness, which was designated as a wilderness area in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. Tree abatement activities would be limited to within 300 feet of these roads and thus will be consistent with setback direction from a wilderness boundary which is necessary for maintaining human-made features, such as roads (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70, Section 73). The area where tree abatement would occur is within the road maintenance corridor and is not expected to directly impact the wilderness area. Equipment, however, may produce some minor dust or noise, which could be noticeable to wilderness users nearby. Since these potential impacts are likely to be very minor and short term, I find that this does not constitute an extraordinary circumstance.
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** This project includes areas within the White River Wild and Scenic River corridor. However, no trees would be felled into this waterway and activities would remain alongside existing roads. Because any potential impacts would be contained within existing roadways, I conclude that tree abatement activities will not negatively affect the White River Wild and Scenic River or its free-flow, water quality, or outstandingly remarkable values. I also find that by removing roadside hazards, we will be able to safely re-open this area to recreational opportunities. Therefore, this project will likely enhance this corridor's outstandingly remarkable recreation value. Lastly, I find that my decision is consistent with the *White River National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan* (USDI & USDA 1994), which anticipated ongoing road maintenance activities within the corridor and that visitors may encounter evidence of wildfires (e.g., p. 10).
- **Other designated areas:** There are no other congressionally designated areas, including wilderness study areas or national recreation areas, within or adjacent to the project area. Additionally, no inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas are within or adjacent to the project area. Also, no research natural areas are within or adjacent to the project area.

**American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites** – Proposed activities are expected to have no, or extremely minor, impacts to American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites due to the location of the treatment areas and project design criteria, such as equipment buffer zones and monitoring of project activities (see Appendix B, #66-71). The planning area is located within the ceded lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. The Forest consulted with the tribe and their representatives throughout the planning efforts of this project and incorporated their input into this decision. Also, see the Cultural Resource Inventory Report (Reference: White River Fire Hazard Tree Abatement Project # 2021-060601-002).

**Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas** – Proposed activities are expected to have no, or extremely minor, impacts to archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas due to the location of the treatment areas and project design criteria (see Appendix B, #66-71). For example, to ensure resource protection, heavy equipment would not be allowed to travel along the Historic Barlow Road. This project complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, under the terms of the 2004 Programmatic Agreement for the State of Oregon (Reference: White River Fire Hazard Tree Abatement Project # 2021-060601-002).



## Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

My staff conducted an analysis to ensure consistency with the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). The proposed action, including project design criteria, were developed to be consistent with NFMA via compliance with the Forest Plan, as amended. A Forest Plan standards checklist is located in the analysis file, which includes documentation of consistency with Forest Plan standards and guidelines, including the *White River National Wild and Scenic River Management Plan* standards and guidelines. Also, this checklist documents consistency with the *Northwest Forest Plan* (USDI & USDA 1994), including the Aquatic Conservation Strategy and Riparian Reserve management objectives.

This project is consistent with the survey protocols outlined in the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (USDA & USDI 2001). Felling and removal of likely and imminent hazards along NFS roads is not considered a habitat disturbing activity for these species as defined in the standards and guidelines of the Survey and Manage Record of Decision (p. 22). This project is not likely to have a significant negative impact on survey and manage habitat, their life cycles, microclimate, and/or life support requirements.

In addition to NFMA, my staff has reviewed this project for consistency with other applicable federal requirements, and was found to be compliant with the following: Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (Executive Order 13186), National Historic Preservation Act, and Executive Order 12898 (regarding environmental justice).

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as “*Repair, and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries*” [36 CFR 220.6(d)(4)]. This category of action(s) is applicable because this project proposes repair and maintenance of NFS roads with the intent of creating a safe and accessible road system post-fire.

## Public Involvement

I began scoping for this project with an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists in October 2020. Although a formal public comment period is not required for this categorical exclusion, the project was posted to the Forest’s website on December 4, 2020 requesting input from the public. Scoping letters were sent to the Wasco County Forest Collaborative, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, and a private landowner on December 4, 2020. Also, I provided regular updates and addressed questions at our monthly meetings with the Wasco County Forest Collaborative group.

Public comments were received from Bark and a private landowner. I considered these comments and discussed them with the interdisciplinary team. Documentation of consideration of public comments received during the designated scoping period is included as Appendix C.

## Administrative Review (Appeal) Opportunities

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement are not subject to an administrative review process.

## Implementation Date

I intend to implement this decision immediately.



## Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Ashley Popham, NEPA Planner at [ashley.popham@usda.gov](mailto:ashley.popham@usda.gov).

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KAMERON C. SAM  
District Ranger

Date

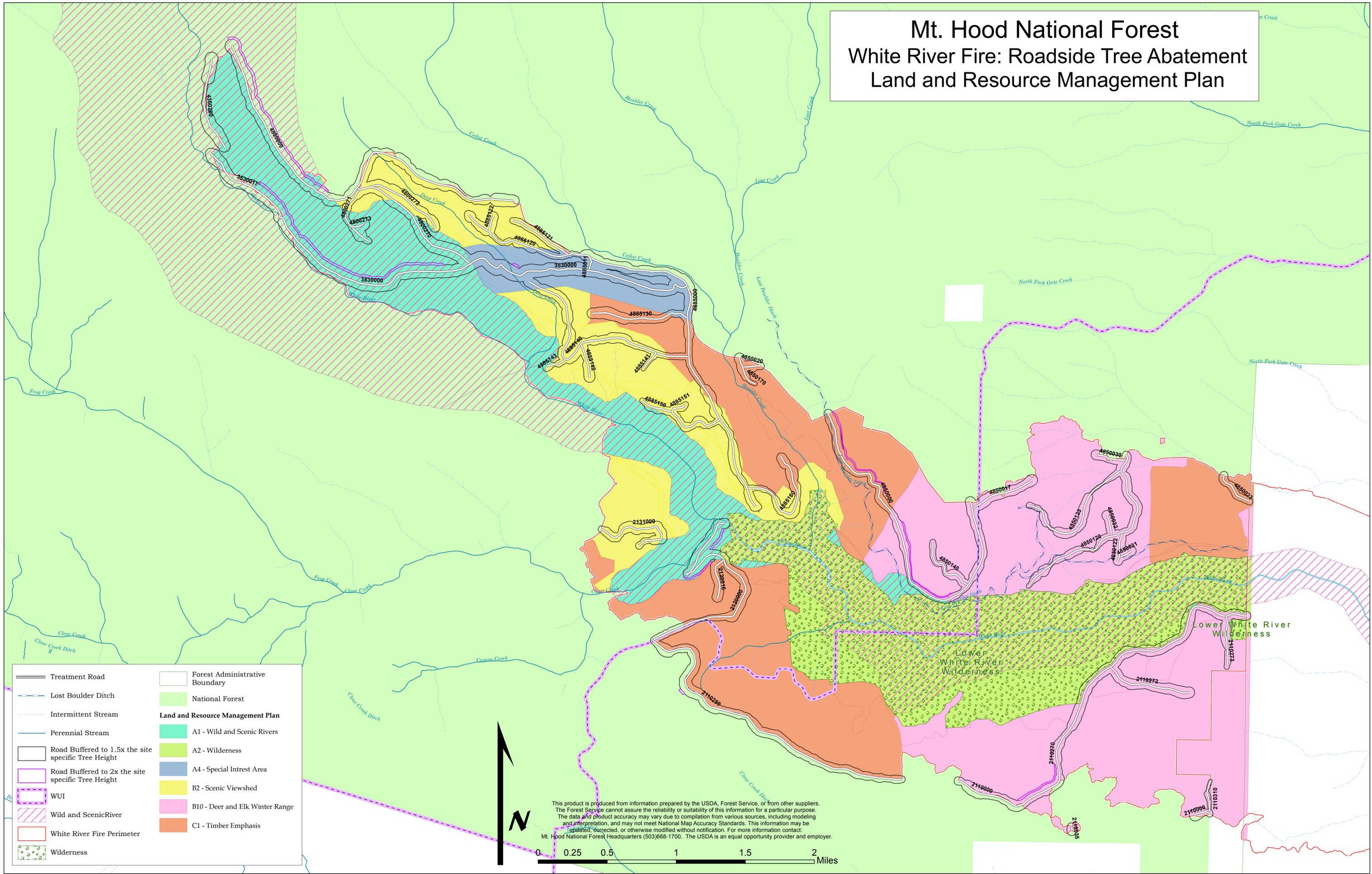
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# Mt. Hood National Forest

## White River Fire: Roadside Tree Abatement

### Land and Resource Management Plan



	Treatment Road		Forest Administrative Boundary
	Lost Boulder Ditch		National Forest
	Intermittent Stream	<b>Land and Resource Management Plan</b>	
	Perennial Stream		A1 - Wild and Scenic Rivers
	Road Buffered to 1.5x the site specific Tree Height		A2 - Wilderness
	Road Buffered to 2x the site specific Tree Height		A4 - Special Interest Area
	WUI		B2 - Scenic Viewshed
	Wild and Scenic River		B10 - Deer and Elk Winter Range
	White River Fire Perimeter		C1 - Timber Emphasis
	Wilderness		

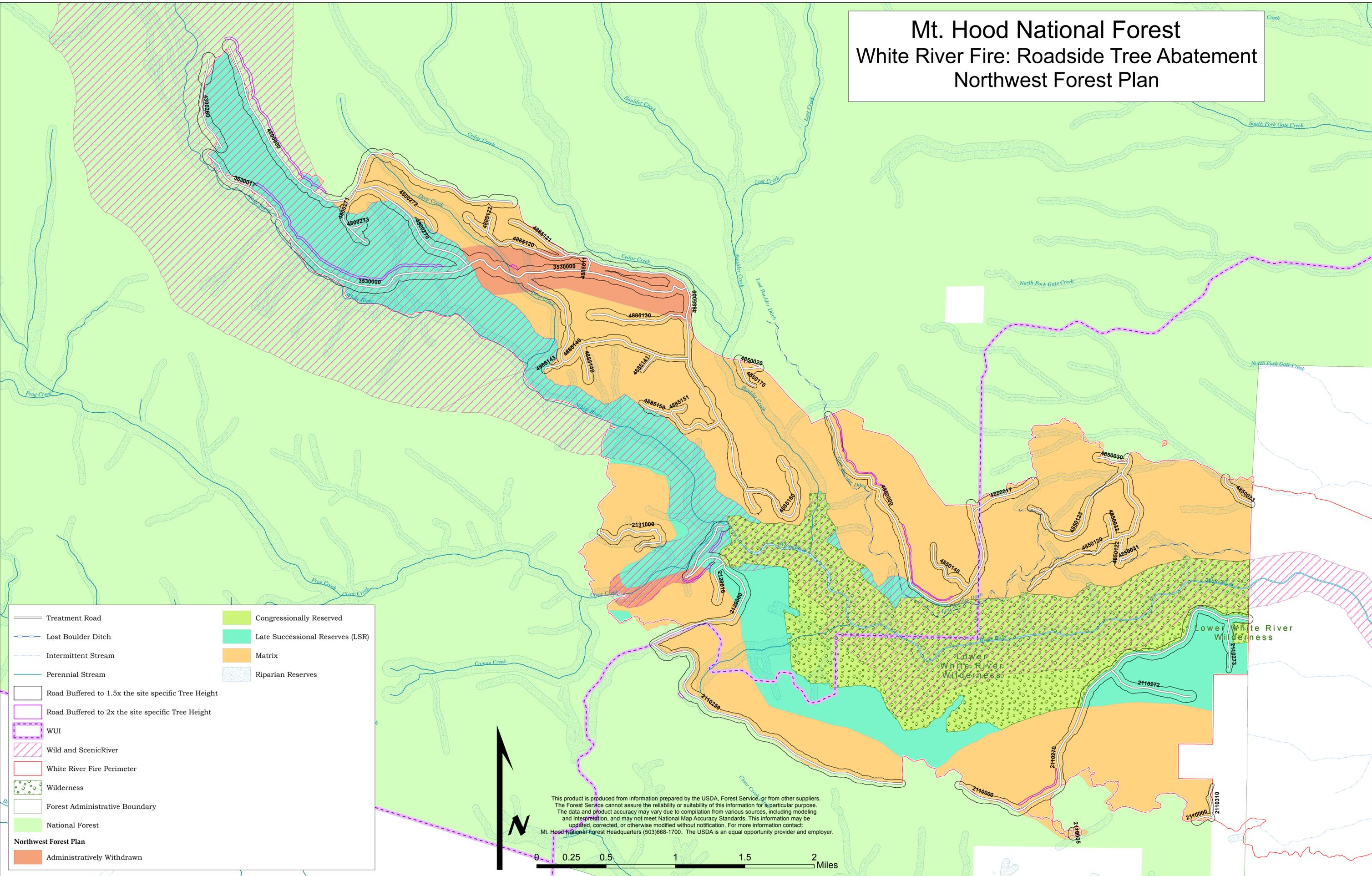


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# Mt. Hood National Forest

## White River Fire: Roadside Tree Abatement

### Northwest Forest Plan



- Treatment Road
- Lost Boulder Ditch
- Intermittent Stream
- Perennial Stream
- Road Buffered to 1.5x the site specific Tree Height
- Road Buffered to 2x the site specific Tree Height
- WUI
- Wild and Scenic River
- White River Fire Perimeter
- Wilderness
- Forest Administrative Boundary
- National Forest
- Northwest Forest Plan
- Administratively Withdrawn
- Congressionally Reserved
- Late Successional Reserves (LSR)
- Matrix
- Riparian Reserves



0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

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Lower White River Wilderness

Lower White River Wilderness

# Appendix B: Project Design Criteria

## White River Fire Roadside Tree Abatement Project

The National Environmental Policy Act defines “mitigation” as avoiding, minimizing, rectifying, reducing, eliminating or compensating project impacts. The following design criteria would be carried out if the project is implemented under the Proposed Action.

### Vegetation

- 1) Reforestation activities would occur within treated areas where stocking is below standards 5 years post treatment.

### Fuels

- 2) Mechanical slash piling would be done with equipment capable of picking up (grasping) slash material and piling (as opposed to pushing/dozing). Mechanical piles need to be 8 feet wide at base, 6 feet high as a minimum.
- 3) Chipped material will have to be spread to a depth of no more than 6 inches and ripped after spread along skid trails and landings. Piled slash will be kept separate from chip material.
- 4) All slash needs to be piled and managed, or removed, within 2 years of contract completion.
- 5) Hand piles need to be 6 feet wide at base and 6 feet high as a minimum. Hand piles will be covered. Hand piles would be constructed with enough fine fuels to allow for ignition during fall and winter months.
- 6) Piles should be as compact and free of dirt as possible.
- 7) Piles should be kept compact and free of soil and noncombustible material, with no long extensions. Do not construct piles on stumps or on sections of large down logs.
- 8) Pile size and location should be such to minimize damage to residual trees. Piles should be located at least 20 feet inside the unit boundary. Piles should not be placed on or in the following areas: pavement, road surface, ditch lines, the bottom of ephemeral channels, or within perennial or intermittent stream protection buffers.

### Roads

- 9) Avoid falling trees into culvert inlets, catch basins and roadway drainage structures. All slash and material resulting from trees cut near road travel way, drainage structures and culverts will be removed from road travel way, drainage structure as well as culvert inlets and outlets. Material shall be scattered outside of road clearing limits or disposed of in a manner that meets appropriate disposal methods for this project.
- 10) All signing requirements on roads that are open for public use within the Mt. Hood National Forest would meet applicable standards as set forth by the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Some roads accessing State and County highways would require additional signing to warn traffic of trucks entering onto or across the highway.
- 11) National Forest System roads which are designated for ‘project use only’ would be closed to public use. The purchaser should sign the entrance to such roads with “Logging Use Only” signs and make every reasonable effort to warn the public of the hazard and to prevent any unauthorized use of the road.
- 12) The use of steel-tracked equipment on asphalt or bituminous surfaced roads is strongly discouraged. If a suitable site for the loading and unloading of equipment and materials is not available, then use of a paved surface may be permitted provided that the purchaser uses approved matting materials (such as wood chip or crushed rock) to protect the road surface. Purchaser is responsible for restoring roads to existing condition.
- 13) Landings located on or intersecting National Forest System roads that are asphalt or bituminous surfaced would have 3-inch minus or finer dense graded aggregate placed at the approach to

prevent surface damage. The purchaser should work with a Forest Service representative to purchase certified weed-free material from a commercial source and place the material so that the approach flares are wide enough to accommodate the off-tracking of vehicles entering onto or leaving the site.

- 14) Landings would not obstruct ditch lines. Landings that obstruct ditch lines or drainage ways should be improved by the purchaser, prior to commencing operations, with temporary culverts, french drains, drivable dips, or measures that provide effective drainage and prevent erosion.
- 15) On aggregate surfaced roads, mineral soil contamination degrades and reduces the load bearing capacity of the existing road surface. All appropriate measures would be taken to prevent or reduce such contamination. If contamination occurs, the purchaser should repair contaminated areas with specified aggregate surfacing.
- 16) Landings would be scarified before the unit is released. Culverts should be removed and cross-drain ditches or water bars shall be installed as needed. Disturbed ground shall be seeded and mulched (certified weed-free) and available logging slash, logs, or root wads should be placed across the road or landing surface. Post-harvest motorized access would be prevented through the construction of a berm, placement of large boulders, or other approved techniques.
- 17) Pit run rock (certified weed-free) may be used when necessary to reduce erosion, ponding, rutting, and compaction on temporary roads and landings. To provide an efficient substrate for vegetative growth and water infiltration, rock would be removed or incorporated into the soil by decompacting to a depth of 24" or scarifying the roadbed following harvest activities.
- 18) Unsuitable excavation (any excavated soil that is silty, sandy, saturated, frozen, or contains clay, organics, or other deleterious material, or is otherwise unsuitable for use in road construction and maintenance work) derived from road maintenance or construction operations would be disposed of only at Forest Service approved sites outside of 60' from nearest stream bank. Material disposed of should be spread evenly over an appropriate area in non-conical shaped piles with a maximum layer thickness of 4 feet. All disposals should be seeded and mulched at the completion of operations, and prior to the wet season. The wet season is the time of year with light to heavy amounts of precipitation occurring regularly characterized by saturated soils and higher stream flows; includes all days of the year not considered to be the dry season.
- 19) Stockpiles of aggregate intended for use on the project would be staged only at Forest Service approved sites. Materials should be placed in non-conical shaped piles with a maximum layer thickness of 3-feet. Stockpiles should be covered with weighted plastic sheeting when inclement weather is expected to protect it from precipitation and to prevent water quality degradation from runoff.
- 20) Existing vegetation in ditch lines hydrologically connected to streams (as defined in NWFP) must not be removed unless a sediment control feature such as biodegradable check dams constructed of bio-bags, straw bales, or other materials are installed. Sediment control features would be maintained until the sale is released and left in place.
- 21) Scheduled soil disturbing road maintenance or reconstruction should occur during the dry season, unless a waiver is obtained. Dry season is the time of year with light to moderate amounts of precipitation occurring sporadically, characterized by dry soils and lower stream flows; generally June 1 through October 31, but variable from year to year.
- 22) Native Surfaced Roads - Haul would not occur on native surfaced roads during wet conditions unless hardened with crushed aggregate or other rock, and drainage structures or other erosion control measures are installed to prevent sediment delivery to streams and protect the road surface.
- 23) Haul routes would be inspected weekly, or more frequently if weather conditions warrant. Inspections would focus on road surface condition, drainage maintenance, and sources of soil erosion and sediment delivery to streams. If sediment traps are used, they would be inspected weekly during wet conditions and entrained soil would be removed when the traps have filled to

- $\frac{3}{4}$  capacity. Removed materials would be deposited in a stable site that is not hydrologically connected to a stream.
- 24) Log and rock haul on unpaved system roads would be prohibited at any time there is 1.5 inches of precipitation within any given 24-hour period as measured at the Wamic Mill RAWS site (<https://raws.dri.edu/cgi-bin/rawMAIN.pl?orOWAM>), or if the roads begin to show signs of damage from haul activities. To measure precipitation, the purchaser may install a temporary rain gauge on NFS land near or adjacent to the lowest elevation along the haul route as agreed upon; otherwise, precipitation would be measured according to the Wamic Mill RAWS site (<https://raws.dri.edu/cgi-bin/rawMAIN.pl?orOWAM>).
  - 25) Aggregate Roads – Haul may occur during wet conditions on aggregate roads. Haul would be stopped immediately if road use is causing rutting of the road surface, ponding of water on the road, failure of any drainage structure, or any other action occurs which increases the sediment delivery to a stream. On some roads, depending on haul volume, this would likely occur when there is more than one inch of rain in a 24-hour period or more than two inches of rain in 48 hours.
  - 26) If work occurs in stream channels, follow the appropriate Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) guidelines for timing of in-water work (in this watershed the in-water work window is July 1 to October 31. Exceptions to the ODFW in-water work windows must be requested by the Forest or its contractors, and subsequently approved by ODFW, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Oregon Division of State Lands.

## Hydro/Fisheries/Soils

- 27) Water sources available for dust abatement or road construction include:
  - a. an unnamed tributary to White River on the northeast side of the Forest Road 43 bridge crossing
  - b. Cedar Creek at Forest Road 4800-260
  - c. Frog Creek at Forest Road 2130
  - d. Clear Creek at Forest Road 2130
- 28) Water drafting sites for all activities would be identified by sale administrator or fire/fuels personnel with support from fish biologist or hydrologist. The location would minimize adverse effects on stream channel stability, sedimentation, and in-stream flows needed to maintain riparian resources, channel conditions, and fish habitat. Use of screen material with either of the following maximum openings would be required: 1.75 millimeter opening for woven wire or 3/32 inch opening for perforated plate. Limit withdrawal to 50 percent or less of the stream flow (visually estimated).
- 29) Trees will be directionally felled away from Lost-Boulder and Clear Creek ditch.
- 30) Do not withdraw any water from the Lost-Boulder or Clear Creek ditch and any associated stream channels where water from the ditches is conveyed except to support emergency firefighting actions, unless permissions by the District Ranger have been granted.
- 31) Do not cross heavy equipment over the Lost-Boulder or Clear Creek ditch except at road crossings.
- 32) Leave on site any cull logs that may have fallen or been felled to the ground.
- 33) Skid trails and landings would be designated and approved prior to logging by the contract administrator and located on already disturbed areas wherever feasible (including but not limited to old landings, spur roads, and skid trails).
- 34) Ground-based, mechanical harvest systems would not be used on slopes greater than 40 percent.

- 35) Spacing of primary skidding or forwarder trails would be at least 65 feet, except where terrain limitations dictate otherwise. To the extent possible, slash mats would be deposited over primary mechanized trails during cutting operations.
- 36) Convey to all equipment operators the need to limit ground disturbance as much as is feasible. Avoid travelling over undisturbed ground unless necessary.
- 37) Avoid repetitive passes by heavy equipment except over their designated primary routes (i.e., roads, or skid trails). Restrict travel of heavy equipment off designated primary routes to two passes or fewer.
- 38) Limit, as feasible, heavy equipment, particularly tracked machinery from pivoting or unnecessary side-hill travel on slopes greater than 15 percent. Travel would mostly be down the fall-line and perpendicular to the contour of the slope.
- 39) Heavy equipment would avoid using the bottom of ephemeral draws or dry swales as primary travel routes. If needed, crossings would be perpendicular to ephemeral draws and swales as is feasible.
- 40) Protect existing wet meadows by not allowing landings or ground-based equipment.
- 41) Within Riparian Reserves, the following conditions should be met:
  - a. No ground based heavy equipment should operate within 100 feet of streams, seeps, springs, or wetlands. Where pre-existing landings exist they may be utilized as long as they do not intersect any stream, spring or wetland and are not hydrologically connected to these features.
  - b. Trees felled within 100' of streams, seeps, springs, or wetlands will be left in place (drop and leave).
  - c. Hand treatment may occur up to the edge of the stream bank (defined as the bank full width of stream).
  - d. Slash will be piled and burned at least 30 feet from streams.
- 42) Landings and primary skidding and forwarder trails would be waterbarred immediately after harvest activities on slopes 10 percent or greater. Spacing of water bars would be more frequent as the pitch of the slope becomes steeper.
- 43) Landings and primary skidding and forwarder trails would be mulched with available logging slash, logs, root wads, or acceptable ground cover as erosion control following fuels or reforestation treatments.
- 44) The contract administrator and soils/hydro resource specialist would coordinate to monitor and evaluate soil conditions to determine when they are suitable (e.g. dry enough) for operations.
  - a. Start of operations would be approved on a unit-by unit-basis due to differing soil types in the area since some soils may be more prone to detrimental damage than others.
  - b. Monitoring would be conducted to determine when soil conditions are beginning to become too wet for operations, or dry enough to begin work.
- 45) Ground-based operations would be suspended during wet periods when soil moisture is high and off-trail heavy equipment tracks sink deeper than 6 inches below the soil surface with one or two passes (or if tracks in primary skid trails sink deeper than 12 inches); particularly during spring, after heavy or prolonged rain, or in late fall.
  - a. Rainfall guidelines for when to temporarily defer or cease ground-based operations:
    - i. If it rains at least 0.3 inches per 4-hour period.
    - ii. When precipitation for the prior 24- hour period (1:00 A.M. – 12:00 A.M.) as recorded at the Wamic Mill RAWS site (<https://raws.dri.edu/cgi-bin/rawMAIN.pl?orOWAM>) is 0.75 inches or greater.
- 46) Post-harvest motorized access to primary skid trails and landings would be prevented through the construction of a berm, placement of large boulders, or other approved techniques.

- 47) Access to primary mechanized trails and landings would not obstruct roadside ditch lines. If roadside ditch lines cannot be avoided, drainage features would need to be installed to prevent erosion prior to and during implementation.
- 48) Riparian Reserves shall be measured as 2x the site potential tree height along fish bearing streams, 1x the site potential tree height along any non-fish bearing perennial streams, ephemeral streams, seeps, ponds, and wetlands.
- 49) Refuel mechanized equipment at least 150 feet from water bodies. Parking of mechanized equipment overnight or for longer periods of time would be at least 150 feet from water bodies or as far as possible from the water body where local site conditions do not allow a 150-foot setback. Absorbent pads would be required under all stationary equipment and fuel storage containers. A Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan would be prepared by the contractor as required under EPA requirements (40 CFR 112).
- 50) Winter Operations would only occur when the ground is frozen on the surface and to a depth of at least 6 inches, and when the snowpack is at least 24" deep and firm. Temperatures would remain below freezing for at least 8 hours in a day. Winter operations should be considered on a unit by unit basis because of the different soil types in the area.
  - a. Guidelines for when conditions are no longer favorable for ground-based operations over the snow:
    - i. When rain-on-snow softens the snowpack.
    - ii. When the temperature is above freezing for more than 8 hours per day and the snowpack becomes soft.
    - iii. When heavy equipment ruts in the snowpack have become mixed with mud.
- 51) Mechanical piling of post-activity fuels would be limited, as is feasible, to existing primary mechanized trails. Restrict travel of heavy equipment off designated primary routes to two passes or fewer.
- 52) Machine piling of slash during treatments would generally be avoided on slopes over 30 percent. Minimize impacts of machine piling by piling no more than needed to break up fuel continuity.
- 53) Leave in place 10,000-hour fuels ( $\geq 8"$  diam at large end).
- 54) Maintain effective ground cover and organics, retain  $>50\%$  of litter/duff depth wherever it exists.

## Wildlife

- 55) Northern spotted owl nest sites would be protected through the implementation of a seasonal operation restriction. A seasonal operating restriction from March 1 thru July 15 would be implemented for activities that are within the 65 yards of a nest patch or within 65 yards of green tree potential nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat. Exceptions for this noise disturbance include chainsaw and heavy equipment noise activities that occur with a duration of less than one day.
- 56) No burning activities may take place within 0.25 miles of a spotted owl nest patch between March 1 and July 15.
- 57) All activities associated with the proposed action including noise and smoke-generating activities will be restricted within one mile of a wolf den or known rendezvous site from April 1 through July 15.
- 58) If a raptor nesting area is found, it would be protected according to forest plan standards by minimizing activities within the defined protection zones (FW-246) during the nesting season of March 1 – May 30.
- 59) No activities would take place in B10 Deer/Elk Winter Range between December 1 and April 1. A seasonal restriction for hauling would be in place for roads in this land use allocation.

## Invasive

- 60) Coordination for landing location and skid trails would occur with botanical staff to avoid areas that have high concentrations of invasive species.
- 61) Coordinate with botanist to schedule the implementation of work from infestation-free areas into infested areas to avoid spreading invasive weeds. Operations should begin on the north side of White River before moving south of the river. Maps of known infestations to avoid will be provided. Equipment cleaning is required before entering and prior to leaving units that have an existing presence of invasive weeds.
- 62) In order to prevent the spread of invasive plants, all equipment would be cleaned of dirt and weeds before entering National Forest System lands. This practice would not apply to service vehicles traveling frequently in and out of the project area that would remain on the roadway.
- 63) If the need for restoration/revegetation of skid trails and landings is identified, the use of native plant materials are the first choice for meeting this objective where timely natural regeneration of the native plant community is not likely to occur. Non-native, non-invasive plant species may be used in any of the following situations: 1) when needed in emergency conditions to protect basic resource values (e.g., soil stability, water quality and to help prevent the establishment of invasive species), 2) as an interim, non-persistent measure designed to aid in the re-establishment of native plants, 3) if native plant materials are not available, or 4) in permanently altered plant communities.
- 64) If using straw, hay or mulch for restoration/revegetation in any areas, use only certified, weed-free materials.
- 65) Inspect active gravel, fill, sand stockpiles, quarry sites, and borrow material for invasive plants before use and transport. Treat or require treatment of infested sources before any use of pit material. Use only gravel, fill, sand, and rock that is judged to be weed free by District or Forest weed specialists.

## Heritage

- 66) All designated cultural resource sites (excepting those related to culturally-modified trees) and unsurveyed areas identified as “High Probability” for containing cultural resources will have a 100-foot buffer zone where heavy machinery would be excluded. Feller bunchers and processors may reach into sites were possible. Non-ground disturbing, full suspension is permitted. Treatment of vegetation by hand could still occur as necessary. Trees that need to be felled within the buffer zone and cannot be lifted out will be left in place and not removed. A map will be provided to the project implementation lead with buffered site boundaries labeled as “*Sensitive Resource Area to Protect*”.
- 67) A Specialist shall monitor activity within 100 feet of cultural resources sites and unsurveyed areas identified as “High Probability” that have the potential to be affected by project activity to ensure that protection measures are followed.
- 68) Piling or skidding may not occur within the flagged buffer zones. The project implementation lead will consult with the Zone Archaeologist on proposed equipment staging locations, landings, and temporary access routes.
- 69) In the event that a Culturally Modified Tree (CMT) poses a safety concern, the tree shall be high stumped or topped above the most prominent scar face. A metal datum tag will be fixed to the lower part of the stump with the site and CMT number to allow for subsequent data recovery.
- 70) Where the IDT determines that high stumping may negatively impact the surrounding visuals of the Wild and Scenic River corridor, a 3” to 4” high cross section of the CMT may be retained instead. Cross sections will be maintained by the archaeological monitor. A metal datum tag will be fixed to the cross section with the site and CMT number to allow for subsequent data recovery.

- 71) Barlow Road protections: No landings or skid trails will be created along or within 300 feet of the Forest Service Road 3530. Heavy equipment is restricted from travel along the Barlow Road/FS Road 3530; however, crossing FS Road 3530 on another designated Forest Service road is permitted.
- 72) If during project activities cultural material is encountered, all work will cease immediately, and the Zone Archaeologist will be contacted to evaluate the inadvertent discovery. A mitigation plan, if needed, will be developed in consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and when appropriate, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO).
- 73) A Specialist shall conduct post-implementation inspection of eligible and unevaluated cultural resources sites to ensure that protective measures were effective. A report documenting survey, monitoring, and inspection results will be prepared and provided to SHPO and affected Tribes within 90 days of conclusion of fieldwork.

## **Recreation**

- 74) Developed recreation sites should not be used as landings or for equipment staging and any developed recreation sites impacted should be rehabilitated when treatment is complete.
- 75) Recreation specialist will develop public information materials and outreach plan using a combination of key entry/exit portals, visitor information boards and outreach via websites and other information sources.
- 76) Implement appropriate temporary closures as necessary to provide for public safety. Post closures at all temporary road access points, and access portals during treatment period(s).
- 77) A 300' setback distance will be applied along road segments which are adjacent to Wilderness. There will be no mechanized or motorized equipment operation within Wilderness, and any portions of trees which fell across the boundary would not be yarded out.

## **Visuals**

- 78) Revegetation of landings should begin within one year of contract termination.
- 79) Tree stumps should be cut at heights of 6 inches or less.
- 80) When marking trees to be left, trees within 75 feet or less need to be marked on the side facing away from the roadway.
- 81) Boundary tags, flagging, and markers would be removed from visual foreground areas in treatment units after completion of activities.

## **Range**

- 82) Protect existing range improvements.
- 83) Fall trees away from existing corrals, water developments and range fencing.

## Appendix C: Scoping Comment Consideration

### White River Fire Roadside Tree Abatement Project

Comment ID	Commenter	Comment	FS Consideration of Comment
D1	Richard Dodge	We need our timber to be logged as time is of the essence for this project. The logging needs to be done before spring and before the temperatures reach 65-degree Fahrenheit, otherwise the bugs will invade the wood and spread to the live trees, and blue fungus will invade the pine turn it off color.	Our goal is to move as quickly as possible on this project.
B1	Bark	The agency should consider its Travel Analysis Report (TAR) for the Barlow District and identify the Minimum Road System (MRS). The roads identified for tree abatement activities should reflect this MRS – meaning roads that are not part of this MRS should ideally not receive treatment other than closure.	The intent of the project is to manage National Forest System road access as it was before the White River Fire. The categorical exclusion being used for this project covers road maintenance but does not allow for road closures, road decommissioning, or changes to road maintenance levels. Therefore, making overall changes to the transportation system are outside the scope of this project.
B2	Bark	To identify the minimum road system, the FS must consider whether each road segment the agency decides to maintain on the system is needed to meet certain factors outlined in the agency’s own regulation. Here, the FS should consider whether each segment of the road system within the project area is needed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet resource and other management objectives adopted in the relevant land and resource management plan;</li> <li>• Meet applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;</li> <li>• Reflect long-term funding expectations; and</li> <li>• Ensure that the identified system minimizes adverse environmental impacts associated with road construction, reconstruction, decommissioning, and maintenance.</li> </ul>	See response to B1. Also, the project was found to be consistent with the management direction outlined in the Forest Plan.
B3	Bark	In assessing specific road segments, the FS should also consider the risks and benefits of each road as analyzed in the TAR, and whether the proposed road management measures are consistent with the recommendations from the travel analysis report. To the extent that the final decision in this project differs from what is recommended in the travel analysis report, the FS must explain that inconsistency.	Some roads to be treated by project activities are listed in the 2015 Travel Analysis Report (TAR) as Operational Maintenance Level (ML) 2 and Objective ML1. All of these roads are identified as “likely needed” in the TAR. See response to B1. Changing operational maintenance levels to match objective maintenance levels is outside of the scope of this project. The Forest is obligated to manage the

Comment ID	Commenter	Comment	FS Consideration of Comment
			existing road system. Future projects involving implementation of TAR recommendations, such as closing roads which are currently open to the public, would utilize NEPA processes including a roads analysis and public scoping effort.
B4	Bark	Focus hazard tree removal on imminent hazard trees located within 150 feet of high use areas, such as developed sites, parking lots, and paved roads.	The intent of the project is to fell trees that are likely to fail within 5 years that are within striking distance to Forest Service System Roads (ML 2, 3, 4, and 5), including paved and unpaved roads. This may include trees that are less than or more than 150 feet from roads depending on whether they are within “striking distance” of the road. This is discussed further in the decision document.
B5	Bark	Use hazard trees for restoration of streams and placement in nearby stands that lack large wood.	If it is determined that some trees should be used for instream restoration, the Forest-wide Instream and Floodplain Restoration Programmatic completed in 2018 authorizes project activities. Also, trees felled within 100’ of streams, seeps, springs, or wetlands will be left in place (drop and leave).
B6	Bark	Avoid cutting live, green trees, since all surviving trees are helping to rebuild the below-ground ecosystem and serve a valuable role as legacy structure and a recruitment pool for future large trees and snags. All trees presumed to be dying should be treated as live until they are dead, because we do not want to lose the ecological benefits of those trees that may unexpectedly survive.	Trees will only be cut if they are rated as likely to fail within 5 years and located within striking distance from roads. Guidance is explained and referenced in the decision document.
B7	Bark	Roads which are currently closed should not be considered for treatment.	Roads that are operational ML1 are not being considered for treatment.
B8	Bark	In the final decision for this project, include roads which are to be treated. Identify the number of continuous or discontinuous acres treated, and miles of road maintained.	The final decision document discloses roads to be treated and mileage for each road to be treated. Distance from roads to be treated is discussed in the decision document.
B9	Bark	If trees are felled within 70 feet of streams, springs, or seeps, leave the trees on the ground and fell them away from and parallel to the stream protection buffers.	See the list of project design criteria in the decision document which address riparian reserves and specify that trees felled within 100’ of

Comment ID	Commenter	Comment	FS Consideration of Comment
			streams, seeps, springs, or wetlands will be left in place (drop and leave).
B10	Bark	Keep ground-based equipment on the existing road prism.	Ground-based equipment will operate off of road prisms unless restricted or limited by project design criteria.
B11	Bark	Use residual trees or slash deemed safe to leave on site (i.e., not burned) to block and cover any unauthorized OHV trails created by users in the area.	This is a road maintenance project; therefore, blocking unauthorized trails is outside the scope of this project. However, suggested work to address this concern is discussed in the <a href="#">Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Management Plan (2010)</a> .
B12	Bark	In the final decision for this project, address consultation and seasonal restrictions (i.e., northern spotted owl).	The proposed action was consulted on under the “Routine Land Management Activities within the Willamette Planning Province of Oregon with a Potential to Modify Habitat, which are not Likely to Adversely Affect Federally Listed Species” (USFWS 2018, Ref # 01EOFW00-2017-I-0667). Please see project design criteria which specify seasonal restrictions.
B13	Bark	If any trees are cut in Late Successional Reserves are to be sold commercially, an analysis on impacts to dead wood is required by the Northwest Forest Plan.	When measured at the stand or watershed scale, the number of snags and down wood per acre remains unchanged.