



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Mt. Hood
National Forest

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File Code: 2670

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Route To:

Subject: Long Prairie Allotment Wildlife BE/BA

To: Daina Bambe

Project Description:

The Long Prairie Grazing Allotment is located on the Mt. Hood National Forest in T.1S, R.10E, Sections 1,2,3, E. ½ Sec.10, 11, 12, 13, 14, E.1/2 Sec. 15, NW ¼ Sec. 23 (Hood River County) and T. 1S, R. 11E, portions of sections 7 and 18 (Wasco County). The allotment is approximately 5700 acres, and has supported livestock grazing since the inception of the Mt. Hood National Forest in 1906. Vegetation includes mixed conifer forests, meadows, and open grassy slopes. Average annual precipitation ranges from 50 inches on the west side to 30 inches on the east side, occurring mostly during the winter months. Elevation ranges from 2,200 to 4,200 feet. The area supports a wide variety of human uses, including recreation, wood products, and grazing. The area is important for fisheries, wildlife, plant, and other natural values. The status of threatened, endangered, and proposed species; USFS Region 6 sensitive species:

Table 1

WILDLIFE SURVEY RESULTS			
Species	Habitat	Surveys	Presence
Threatened, Endangered or Proposed			
Bald eagle (<i>Haliaetus leucocephalus</i>)	N ¹	-	-
Northern spotted owl (<i>Strix occidentalis caurina</i>)	Y ¹	N ²	Y ¹
Canada lynx (<i>Lynx canadensis</i>)	N ¹	Y ¹	N ¹
R6 Sensitive Species			
Oregon Slender salamander (<i>Batrachoseps wrighti</i>)	Y	Y	N
Larch Mountain salamander (<i>Plethodon larselii</i>)	Y	Y	N
Cope's giant salamander (<i>Dicombodon copei</i>)	N	-	-
Cascade torrent salamander (<i>Rhyocotriton cascadae</i>)	N	-	-
Oregon spotted frog (<i>Rana pretiosa</i>)	N	-	-
Painted turtle (<i>Chrysemys picta</i>)	N	-	-
Northwestern pond turtle (<i>Clemmys marmorata marmorata</i>)	N	-	-
Baird's shrew (<i>Sorex bairdii permiliensis</i>)	N	-	-
Pacific fringe-tailed bat (<i>Myotis thysanodes vespertinus</i>)	N	-	-
Wolverine (<i>Gulo gulo luteus</i>)	Y ¹	-	-
Pacific fisher (<i>Martes pennanti</i>)	Y ¹	-	N
Horned grebe (<i>Podiceps auritus</i>)	N	-	-
Bufflehead (<i>Bucephala albeola</i>)	N	-	-
Harlequin duck (<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>)	N	-	-
Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>)	N	-	-
Gray flycatcher (<i>Empidonax righti</i>)	N	-	-
Puget oregonium (<i>Cryptomastix devia</i>)	Y	Y	N
Columbia oregonium (<i>Cryptomastix hendersoni</i>)	Y	Y	N
Dalles sideband (<i>Monadenia fidelis minor</i>)	Y	Y	N
Crater Lake tightcoil (<i>Pristiloma arcticum crateris</i>)	Y	Y	N
Evening fieldslug (<i>Deroceras hesperium</i>)	Y	Y	N

1. See narrative.

2. The last surveys were conducted in 1993. In accordance with the NWFPlan, additional surveys are not needed in this area.

Table 2 - Effects for T,E and S Wildlife Species			
Species	Alt. I	Alt. II	Alt. III
<i>Threatened and Endangered Species</i>			
Bald Eagle	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Northern Spotted Owl	MA-NLTAA	MA-NLTAA	MA-NLTAA
Canada Lynx	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
<i>R6 Sensitive Species</i>			
Larch Mountain Salamander	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Oregon Slender Salamander	No impact	No Impact	No Impact
Wolverine	MII	MII	MII
Pacific fisher	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Crater Lake tightcoil	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Puget oregonium	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Columbia oregonium	No Impact	No Impact	No Impact
Dalles sideband	No Impact	No Impact	No impact
Evening fieldslug	No Impact	No impact	No impact

MEILTAA—May Affect and Is Likely To Adversely Affect

ME-NLTAA—May Affect-Not Likely To Adversely Affect

MII- May Impact Individuals, but are not likely to impact populations, nor contribute to a potential loss of viability of the species

Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive, and Proposed Species

The following threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species are known or suspected to occur on the Hood River Ranger District.

Bald eagle

There is no potential habitat within or adjacent to the allotment area, nor have bald eagles been observed in the area. The closest known eagle nest site is The Dalles, Oregon. There would be **No Effect** to bald eagles with any of the alternatives as habitat is not present.

Northern spotted owl

Base line spotted owl information for the Mt. Hood NF may be found in the Biological Opinion for Habitat Modification 2005-2006 (FWS Reference Number 1-7-05-F-0228).

There are no spotted owl activity centers within the Long Prairie Allotment area. Nesting, roosting and foraging habitat (NRF) plus dispersal habitat exists within the allotment area. The Long Prairie Allotment area has not being surveyed for spotted owls within the last three years thus presence is assumed. The western portion of the allotment area falls within the Surveyor's Ridge LSR. Cattle are not using the majority of the LSR area within the allotment because of the steepness of topography.

The Long Prairie Allotment area is not part of any designated critical habitat. Grazing does not affect habitat but harassment from fence maintenance, construction and people presence can affect spotted owls.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

The elimination of cattle grazing would eliminate disturbance to spotted owls from any grazing associated activities.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative 2 – Current Management

The noise related to fence building and maintenance may disturb spotted owls when done within .25 miles of spotted owl habitat (between March 1-September 30). No habitat modification is associated with these activities.

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative 3 – Proposed Action

The noise related to fence building and maintenance may disturb spotted owls when done within .25 miles of spotted owl habitat (between March 1-September 30). No habitat modification is associated with these activities.

Actions Common to Both Action Alternatives

The noise related activities for grazing were consulted on and fall under the *Miscellaneous special uses (low intensity)* category in *Biological Opinion and Letter of Concurrence for Effects to Bald Eagles and Northern Spotted Owls for fiscal year 2004-2005 disturbance activities within the Willamette Province* (FWS Reference Number 1-7-04-F-0184). Those noise related activities that occur between March 1-September 30 have an effect determination of **May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect** for spotted owls.

Terms and Conditions from this BO related to this allotment:

- 1) Disturbance activities in occupied or unsurveyed suitable spotted owl habitat between March 1 and July 16 should be scheduled as late in spotted owl nesting season as is operationally feasible.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects analysis area is the Allotment area boundary. There would be no measureable change in cumulative effects with or without grazing. Disturbance related activities such as horseback riding, mountain biking, atvs, hiking, hunting, driving would continue and most likely increase over time. The *Status and trends in Demography of Northern Spotted Owls* (Foresman et al., 2004) states that the spotted owl numbers have fallen by roughly half over the past decade in parts of Washington and Oregon's Warm Springs Reservation, and they have dwindled by nearly a quarter in sections of Oregon's Coast and cascade ranges. In only a few areas are owls holding their own. Disturbance to spotted owls was not mentioned as a reason for the decline in populations. This report does not add any new information or suggest that grazing would have a detrimental effect on spotted owls.

Lynx

Existing Condition Canada lynx:

On July 8, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a proposed rule to list Canada lynx (lynx) under the Endangered Species Act (Federal Register Volume 63, No. 130). The final rule listing the lynx as "Threatened" was published on March 24, 2000. In the listing

the USFWS considered lynx to have been historically resident within 14 states including Oregon. More recently the USFWS has stated that there is no evidence that a resident lynx population ever occurred in Oregon (Federal Register Volume 68, 40076, 40089-90, July 3, 2003).

Winter snow track surveys were conducted on the Mt. Hood NF in 1994-96 with no evidence of lynx being found. Preliminary results of a hair sample survey completed in 1998 suggested the presence of lynx in the Cascade Range in Oregon (Weaver and Amato 1999). Review of Weaver and Amato's 1999 preliminary results determined the samples were contaminated and did not indicate lynx presence (Weaver et al, 2001). Three more years (1999-2001) of hair sample surveys have been conducted on the Mt. Hood NF and all results have been negative. There is no evidence of lynx presence on the Mt. Hood National Forest.

In January 2001, Standards and Guidelines for the management of lynx were addressed in the FSEIS and *Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*. This FSEIS and Record of Decision amended the Northwest Forest Plan and therefore the Mt Hood Forest Plan. These Standards and Guidelines direct that the Lynx Conservation and Assessment Agreement (LCAS) will be used and referenced in all determinations of effect for Canada lynx. These same Standards and Guidelines for Canada lynx were retained in the March 2004 *Record of Decision To Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines*.

Lynx habitat as described in the LCAS and subsequent interpretation is not expected to occur on the Mt. Hood National Forest. The LCAS identified subalpine fir plant associations as the primary vegetation component from which lynx habitat and lynx analysis units would be delineated. The LCAS identified a need for at least 10 square miles (6400 acres) of primary vegetation to warrant delineation of a lynx analysis unit. *“Based on studies at the southern part of the lynx range in western U.S., it appears that at least 10 mi² of primary vegetation should be present within each LAU to support survival and reproduction” (page 7-4)*. The Forest ran an analysis based on our plant association groups and identified only 1270 acres of subalpine fir plant associations primarily on the east side of the Forest. There are no subalpine fir plant associations in the Long Prairie Allotment area.

Based on our analysis the Mt. Hood NF does not have the minimum criteria to develop a lynx analysis unit. There is no mapped lynx habitat on the Forest or any lynx analysis units within which to apply the LCAS habitat objectives. Lynx are not considered to be present on the Mt. Hood National Forest (see December 3, 2003 letter, attached).

There is **No Effect** to lynx or their habitat because of this allotment management plan for any of these alternatives. There is no evidence of Canada lynx or their habitat on the Mt. Hood National Forest (Lynx Effects Determination letter to Wildlife Biologists, Mt. Hood National Forest, December 3, 2003). This project is in compliance with the standard and guideline presented 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, Attachment 1 (pages 35 and 36), January 2001". Without the presence of lynx and without lynx habitat, consultation under section 7(a) (2) of the Endangered Species Act would properly be concluded with a determination of no effect. There will be continued efforts to determine if lynx are present on the Mt. Hood National Forest. If lynx are confirmed on the Forest, they will receive full protection under the Endangered Species Act and consultation with the USFWS will commence if necessary.

Sensitive Species

Wolverine

Wolverine may move through the area while foraging or dispersing, but no denning habitat is present within or adjacent to the allotment area.

Wolverines mainly prey upon deer and elk, and often take advantage of carrion. They do not seem to be limited as much by foraging opportunities as by human disturbance. Wolverines tend to avoid places of high human disturbance (Verts, 1998). The allotment area is not suitable wolverine habitat. It is possible that wolverine will try to cross through the area, but they would not stay in the immediate area. Wolverines are not likely to utilize the area because of recreational traffic through the year.

Effects to Wolverines

Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternative 1 – No Grazing

Human disturbance would continue from recreational and administrative uses. This alternative would reduce human disturbance but would not be enough to attract wolverines. This alternative **may impact individuals, but are not likely to impact populations, nor contribute to a potential loss of viability of this species.**

Direct and Indirect Effects of Action Alternatives

There would be no change in the use patterns of wolverines with either action alternative from what is currently occurring. Wolverines are not likely utilizing the area because of the recreational uses throughout the year. This alternative **may impact individuals, but are not likely to impact populations, nor contribute to a potential loss of viability of this species.**

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects area of consideration is the Long Prairie Allotment area. The past, present and future activities described above were considered in this cumulative effects analysis. There would be no measurable change in cumulative effects since wolverines are not likely utilizing the area because of the recreational uses throughout the year.

Pacific fisher

Fisher habitat from a variety of localities within its geographical range commonly is described as widespread, continuous-canopy forests at relatively low elevations (Verts, 1998). Only three specimens of fishers from Oregon have been collected, two from Lane County and one from

Douglas County. Fishers have been re-introduced to southern Oregon and small populations established. Fishers are primarily carnivorous. Small and medium-sized forest mammals are the primary prey; porcupines, snowshoe hares, tree squirrels, mice and voles are among the most common preyed upon.

The presence of fisher on the Mt. Hood National Forest has not been confirmed. Winter snow track surveys, camera bait stations and smoke track plates have been utilized in the past decade to determine carnivore and mustelid presence. No fishers were found using these survey techniques.

There would be **no impact** to fishers with any of the alternatives since presence has not been confirmed.

Crater Lake Tightcoil (*Pristiloma articum crateris*)

This terrestrial mollusk is associated with riparian and spring habitat and grazing may impact this species. The allotment area has been surveyed for the presence of this terrestrial mollusk.

Effects – Including Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

There would be no direct, indirect or cumulative effects as no individuals were found during the surveys. There would be **no impact** to this species.

Larch Mountain salamander

The Larch Mountain salamander is listed as a R6 sensitive species in 2000. Until recently, Larch Mountain salamander habitat has been considered to be shaded talus, usually with a litter and duff covering which is not present in the allotment area, therefore no surveys had been conducted in the allotment area before the fall of 2000. However, surveys north of the Columbia River have found this species within conifer habitat where litter, duff, and moisture conditions are sufficient. The surveyors indicated that even in those conditions, the substrate beneath the litter/duff tended to be an open, porous rocky material with talus like characteristics. These conditions do not occur within any of the allotment area. Soil conditions are relatively tight with virtually no interstitial spaces suitable for salamanders to descend into as the summer heats and dries. Suitable moisture conditions in late summer for any salamander species will most likely be associated with large, decayed, down woody material.

Surveys were conducted in the spring of 2001 in accordance with the October 1999 protocol. No Larch Mountain salamanders were found.

There would be **no impact** to this species as no salamanders were located during the surveys and grazing does not impact habitat.

Oregon slender salamander

The Oregon slender salamander was listed as a R6 sensitive species in 2000. Oregon slender salamander habitat has variously been described as evergreen forests, older second-growth, and old growth Douglas fir with large numbers of large logs and stumps. It is also characterized as a species mostly associated with the west side of the Cascade Mountains of Oregon, (Amphibians

of Washington and Oregon, Leonard, et al 1993 and Amphibians of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, Corkran and Thoms 1996).

There would be **no impact** to this species as no salamanders were located during the surveys and grazing does not impact habitat.

Richard Thurman

District Wildlife Biologist

Barlow/Hood River Ranger Districts

Mt. Hood NF