

## **Decision Memo**

### **Dungeness Stewardship Road Decommissioning Project**

USDA Forest Service  
Hood Canal Ranger District, Olympic National Forest  
Clallam County, Washington  
T29N, R03W, Sections 19, 30 and T29N, R04W,  
Sections, 21, 23, 24, 28

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Hood Canal Ranger District has identified opportunities to provide habitat benefits to aquatic resources and Roosevelt elk in the McDonald Creek drainage that includes decommission 4.8 miles of road for aquatic and elk habitat enhancement. Forest Service Roads 2870-053, 2870-054, 2870-056, 2870-058, 2870-059, and 2877-040 have a current operational level of Maintenance Level 2 (suitable for high clearance vehicles) and were proposed for closure or decommissioning.

The purpose of and need for this project is to:

- Reduce the potential for road-related sedimentation to important aquatic habitat and to provide more secure habitat for elk in the McDonald Creek drainage.

The project area is located in the McDonald Creek drainage within the McDonald Creek Watershed, in Clallam County. The legal location of the project is: T29N, R03W, Sections 19, 30 and T29N, R04W, Sections 21, 23, 24, and 28.

The Northwest Forest Plan-designated land allocations within the project area are Adaptive Management Area (AMA) and Riparian Reserve. Adaptive Management Areas are landscape units designated 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.

#### **DECISION**

I have decided to decommission Forest Service Roads 2870-053, 2870-054, 2870-056, 2870-058, 2870-059, and 2877-040 as detailed below. While the Forest's 2003 Access and Travel Management Plan proposed to maintain four of these roads in Maintenance Level 2 (See Table 1), these roads were determined by the project team to provide few recreational opportunities or access to any major vegetation management opportunities.

**Table 1. Forest Service roads to be decommissioned.**

Forest Service Road Number	Affected Length (miles)	Road Segment (mileposts)	Current Road Management	2003 Access and Travel Management Recommendation	Project Decision
2870-053	1.5	0.0 to 1.5	Maintenance Level (ML)-2	ML-2	Decommission
2870-054	0.7	0.0 to 0.7	ML-2	ML-2	Decommission
2870-056	0.3	0.0 to 0.3	ML-2	Decommission	Decommission
2870-058	0.5	0.0 to 0.5	ML-2	ML-2	Decommission
2870-059	0.5	0.0 to 0.5	ML-2	ML-2	Decommission
2877-040	1.3	0.0 to 1.3	ML-2	Decommission	Decommission

Treatments will be developed for each road segment with the main objective being to reduce road-related erosion, mass wasting and associated sediment delivery into aquatic systems. These treatments typically include removal of unstable landings and side-cast material, installation of cross ditches in the road bed, removal of culverts, in-sloping and out-sloping of the road bed, and construction of a road entrance barrier. Treatment could also include the subsoiling of the surface and seeding or planting of native forage for elk.

Two roads, the 2875-070 and 2877-090, also proposed for decommissioning in the September 18, 2006 scoping letter are not included in my decision because the funding to decommission these roads are not expected at this time.

**Mitigation Measures**

Aquatic

- Incorporate all conditions of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Hydraulic Project Approval permit.
- Trees felled in no-cut riparian buffers due to yarding operations will be left in stream or riparian area.
- Leave all existing wood in streams, unless designated for removal by a fisheries biologist.
- Any machinery maintenance involving potential contaminants will occur at an approved site or greater than 100 feet from wetlands, waterbodies, or stream channels.
- A watershed specialist or fish biologist shall be consulted prior to modifying any of the project design criteria that could impact aquatic resources.
- Locate post-harvest canopy openings at least 100 feet from floodplains and stream valley floors to maintain conifer trees in the stream-influence zone.

Botany and Invasive Plants

Mitigation measures in this section are based on best management practices and the standards set forth in the record of decision for the Pacific Northwest Region invasive plant program (USDA

2005). When approved, follow the standards in the Olympic National Forest site-specific invasive plant treatment project (USDA 2006).

- The purchaser/permittee shall be responsible for treating and preventing the spread of invasive plants in the project area as stated in the noxious weed/exotic plant prevention and control supplemental clause. The purchaser/permittee shall consult with Forest Service invasive plant specialists to develop and implement a site-specific plan for invasive species prevention and treatment. The plan shall include such measures as treating existing invasive plant infestations before decommissioning roads or initiating ground disturbing activities. Additionally, monitoring and follow-up treatments shall occur as needed for up to three years after the ground disturbing activities are completed.
- Purchaser/permittee shall ensure that off-road equipment to be used outside the limits of the road prism is free of invasive plant material including soil, seeds, vegetative matter, or other debris that could contain or hold seeds (equipment cleaning clause C6.36).
- 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
- Site restoration planning shall include an evaluation of the need to seed a site or use other erosion control measures. When needed, use weed free straw and give priority to seed mixes/plantings with local native species.

### Wildlife

- Project activities creating noise above ambient levels will not occur within the harassment distance of specified equipment from March 1 to August 5.
- Activities producing noise above ambient levels will start no earlier than 2 hours after sunrise and shall cease 2 hours before sunset from April 1 to September 15.
- Danger trees greater than 21" dbh within suitable habitat for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet will be reviewed by wildlife biologist prior to being cut.
- Any active raptor nest located during thinning operations will have appropriate conservation measures applied (species specific).
- A wildlife biologist shall be consulted prior to modifying any of the project design criteria that could impact wildlife resources.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment as under the Forest Service Handbook Title 1909.15 Chapter 30, Section 31.2 (6) for timber 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. The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment, and it does not, individually or cumulatively, have a significant effect (40 CFR 1508.27) on the quality of the human environment.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

This project was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions since October 1, 2005. Scoping letters to the public were mailed on September 18, 2006. In addition, the Jamestown S’Klallam Indian Tribe and Point No Point Tribe were consulted with on this project and have representation on the Collaborative Group. Four comments were received regarding this project; three responses indicated that they were in favor of the project. One commenter favored clearcut harvesting a nearby area proposed for thinning and no other action. Because no reasons were given for why the proposed roads shouldn’t be decommissioned and because the comment did not meet the Purpose and Need for this project, it was dropped from further consideration.

This project will be implemented under the Stewardship Contracting Authority, Public Law 108-7, which allows the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management the authority to enter into stewardship contracts with the public to achieve land management goals for national forests and public lands that meet local and rural community needs. A Collaborative Stewardship group has been formed for this project, and includes representatives from local tribes, state agencies, conservation organizations, and citizens. The proposed actions were developed in coordination with the Dungeness Collaborative Group.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS**

As required by the National Forest Management Act, this decision is consistent with the Olympic National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1990) as amended by the 1994 Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, and its amendments, as well as its attached Standards and Guidelines.

### Threatened and Endangered Species.

Currently there are three species of fish listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act within the Dungeness watershed- Chinook salmon, summer chum salmon, and bull trout. The planning area directly affects Chinook and bull trout spawning and rearing habitat. The National Marine Fisheries Services has designated all anadromous habitat accessible to Chinook as critical habitat, which extends up the Dungeness up to river mile (RM) 18.7. The watershed also provides habitat for northern spotted owls, marbled murrelets, and bald eagles which are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The proposed action was assessed and found to be consistent with the 2003 – 2008 Programmatic Biological Assessment for Selected Forest Management Activities, Olympic National Forest, which addressed potential effects of projects on Federally listed threatened and endangered species. It was determined that this proposed project “May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect” northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet, and designated critical habitat for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. This proposed project would have “No Effect” on bull trout, Puget Sound Chinook salmon, Hood Canal summer chum salmon, Puget Sound steelhead trout and bald eagle.

Survey and Manage Species. Survey and Manage species were assessed for this project as it related to the October 2006 court modification to the January 2006 injunction of the 2004 Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl. The court modification exempts culvert removal for roads to be decommissioned from survey and regulatory requirements under the 2001 Record of Decision. For those exempted activities, the 2004 Record of Decision applies.

Surveys were not required for this project due to the age of vegetation proposed to be thinned, and species were evaluated as sensitive species where designated under the 2004 Record of Decision. A review of the most recent database for occurrences of Survey and Manage species, however, indicated that there were no known sites of Survey and Manage species in the project area. The project is determined to have “No Impacts” to Hoko vertigo (snail), Malone’s jumping slug, and “May Impact” individual Burrington’s jumping slug, warty jumping slug, bluegray tailed slug, and Puget Oregonian snail, but is not likely to contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.

Sensitive Species. Potential effects of the proposed project on Regional Forester’s Sensitive plant and animal species were evaluated. Surveys were not conducted for sensitive wildlife species since the proposed project will be occurring in the road prism and involve the removal of culverts it is unlikely that any sensitive wildlife species will be affected. The project area was reviewed for likelihood of habitat of sensitive wildlife species and was determined that the project will have “No Impacts” to common loon, American peregrine falcon, and Mazama pocket gopher. The project “May Impact” individual Van Dyke’s Salamander, Cope’s giant salamander, and Olympic torrent salamander, Townsend’s big-eared bat, and Pacific fisher but is not likely to contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.

Surveys for sensitive plants were conducted to determine if there were any special status plant, bryophyte, lichen or fungi species documented in the project area. Existing field records in addition to field surveys determined that there were no new occurrences. Therefore, there are no anticipated adverse effects to any of the listed sensitive amphibians, birds, mammals or plants.

Invasive Plants. Noxious weeds and other invasive plants may pose a serious threat to the health of National Forests. Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species (Feb. 1999), provides direction that “Federal agencies shall: (1) prevent the introduction of invasive species; (2) detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner; (3) monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; (4) provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded.” Eight species of invasive plants have been documented along the proposed decommissioned roads.

Cultural Resources. A cultural resource effects determination was prepared and submitted to the Washington State Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation on March 9, 2007. Field surveys were conducted for the thinning area. No cultural resources were identified, and therefore, it was determined that there would be no impacts to cultural resources.

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

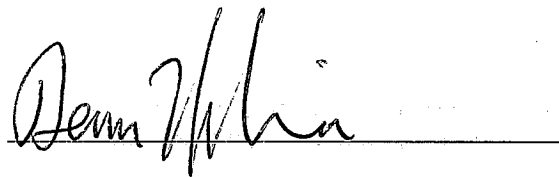
This project will be implemented on or after August 6, 2007.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES**

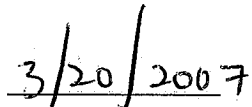
This decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

**CONTACT PERSON**

For further information concerning this project or decision, contact Susan Piper, Wildlife Program Manager, Olympic National Forest, 1835 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Suite A, Olympia, WA 98512, ph: 360-956-2435.



Dean Yoshina  
Hood Canal District Ranger



Date

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