

4-O Wildlife Area: Mountain View Forest Restoration Project

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Summary Sheet

Meeting dates: April 20, 2018

Agenda item: 4-O Wildlife Area, Asotin County, Mountain View Forest Restoration Project

Presenter(s): Richard Tveten, Forest Management Team Lead, Lands Division

Background summary:

The Mountain View Forest Restoration Project is an effort to restore forest habitat health, reduce severe wildfire risk, increase forest resilience to climate change and improve habitat quality for deer and elk. Approximately 400 acres of mature mixed conifer stands and 250 acres of young pine plantations will be thinned in two sales. Hazard trees will also be removed from along the county road within the Wildlife Area. Products removed would include an estimated 1 to 1.5 million board feet of sawlogs, chip and saw, and pulpwood.

The prescription is designed to restore relatively open forests with a diverse mosaic structure characteristic of the historic dry pine savannah, larch savannah, and dry mixed conifer forests. The retention target is 20-40 large trees per acre, lower on sites naturally dominated by pines, and higher in sites dominated by Douglas fir and western larch. Trees with dwarf mistletoe, root rot, or other disease will be reduced to improve future species composition.

Leave Tree Prescription:

1. Generally remove smaller, less vigorous, or suppressed trees and leave healthier green trees of fire and disease-resilient species. In plantations, retain trees greater than 16" DBH (diameter at breast height) where found.
2. Leave tree species preference will follow this order: Larch, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, grand fir.
3. Retain trees in clumps as well as create gaps to create structural and spatial diversity.
4. Snags will not be cut or damaged as much as possible. If any snags must be felled due to a safety or operational concerns, they will be left in place.
5. Some malformed trees, e.g. trees with double or broken tops, curved growth form, basal scars, diseased, etc. would be left for structural diversity and wildlife habitat.

An existing road will be used for the sale but short, temporary spurs may be created. Existing road erosion problems will be fixed prior to the project and the improved road quality will be maintained.

Logging equipment will be ground based, likely feller-bunchers and rubber tired skidders. The contract for logging is expected to last 1-2 summers. Logging will occur primarily during dry summer months. Logging will be limited during seasonal fire restrictions as well as during times of high recreational use including deer and elk rifle season. Logging slash may be burned with prescribed fire or will be piled and burned. All streams and wetlands shall be protected according to Forest Practices standards, and no harvesting will occur in buffers.

Staff recommendation:

Approval of the proposed commercial thinning projects.

Policy issue(s) and expected outcome:

The project is designed to meet the following management objective, per Policy 5309: WDFW shall manage its forests to establish and maintain the historic range of forest structure, tree species composition, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Fiscal impacts of agency implementation:

No fiscal impacts beyond the status quo.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

WDFW will follow the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) public review process.

Action requested and/or proposed next steps:

Approve the proposed timber harvest as presented.

Draft motion language:

Motion: I move to approve the proposed timber harvest as presented.

Is there a "second"?

If so, then motion maker discusses basis for motion; other Commissioners discuss views on motion; amendments, if any, proposed and addressed.

Post decision communications plan:

Wildlife Area staff will notify the public regarding temporary access impacts.

Form revised 2-15-18

Figure 1. An overlook of the Mountain View Restoration Project area. The dense, continuous forest should be an open mosaic



Figure 2. Commercial thinning areas example: A dense ponderosa pine stand.



Figure 3. Pre-commercial thinning area example: Thickets of ponderosa pine in an old field

