



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Region 1

200 East Broadway
P. O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

File 1570 (215)

Date: September 14, 1998

Code:

Route

To:

Subject: Upper Barron Salvage Timber Sale Decision Notice, Libby Ranger District,
Kootenai National Forest, Appeal # 98-01-00-0088

To: Appeal Deciding Officer

This is my recommendation on disposition of the appeal filed by Dana Jensen on behalf of The Ecology Center, The Lands Council, and The Alliance for the Wild Rockies protesting the Upper Barron Salvage Timber Sale Decision Notice (DN) signed by the Libby District Ranger (Kootenai National Forest).

The District Ranger's decision proposes the salvage harvest of 878 MBF of primarily dead or down timber from 313 acres.

My review was conducted pursuant to, and in accordance with, 36 CFR 215.19 to ensure the analysis and decision are in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policy, and orders. The appeal record, including the Appellants' objections and recommended changes, has been thoroughly reviewed.

Appeal Review Findings

The Appellants allege violations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Forest Management Act, and RPA. A telephone conference call was held for informal resolution. No resolution was achieved.

Objection 1: The project violates Forest Plan standards for Open Road Densities (ODR).

Response: Open road densities are displayed in the Environmental Assessment (EA, pp. 3-25 and 3-26). A previously approved Forest Plan amendment allows ORDs to increase to 1.6 miles during non-activity periods and 2.0 miles during activity periods for timber compartment 603 (EA p. 3-26). All alternatives incorporate design criteria and mitigation to minimize open road densities and maintain big game security during harvest (DN, p. 4 and EA, pp. 2-6).

Objection 2: Opening sizes in all action alternatives violate the Regional standards for openings no larger than 40 acres.

Response: All action alternatives include a justification to exceed the 40 acre limit for regeneration harvest. Because of catastrophic conditions of insect infestation and subsequent mortality that precipitated the salvage proposal, authorization to exceed the 40 acre limit is not required from the Regional Forester (DN, p. 5 and p. 13). The decision is consistent with Forest Plan goals, objectives and standards (DN, pp. 7-8).

Objection 3: Snag retention guidelines are not met by the proposed action.



Response: Design criteria were developed to maintain existing snags; all existing western larch, Douglas fir and ponderosa pine snags would be left standing other than those which are necessary to fell for safety reasons. Any snags of these species that would be felled would be left on site (DN, p. 4; EA, pp. 2-3).

Calculations of existing snag levels are provided in the Wildlife Specialist Report, and in the Cavity Habitat document. Supporting analysis and documentation is also provided in the sensitive species analysis. Forest Plan snag levels would be maintained at the minimum recommended level (EA p. 3-23).

Objection 4: The EA fails to meet the Clean Water Act and to adequately consider cumulative effects.

Response: The proposed action eliminates over 2 miles of road in efforts to improve water quality conditions. Additional watershed improvement projects will also be implemented under this proposal. These projects include 1) additional log placement on 2 miles of Barron Creek. Approximately 30 structures would be placed in the mainstem of Barron Creek; 2) log placement, as needed, in seven tributaries to Barron Creek. The alternative is expected to result in an improving trend in watershed condition. Cumulative effects were considered. Additional effects on sedimentation, peak flows and creation of equivalent clearcut acres are provided in the hydrology and fisheries section of the EA (pp. 3-30 to 3-41) and in the hydrology and fisheries specialist reports (Folder 16, Documents 1 through 8). The decision is consistent with the Clean Water Act and maintaining beneficial uses (DN, p. 14).

Objection 5: The project analysis fails to consider effects from salvage harvest authorized under the Forestwide Blowdown EA.

Response: All known areas of blowdown salvage in the vicinity of the project have been disclosed in the Upper Barron EA. Future harvest of blowdown trees, under the Forestwide Blowdown DN, is dependent upon past, present and reasonably foreseeable events and/or conditions and a review of these conditions by resource specialists and the District Ranger. An analysis of cumulative effects would occur at the time of the proposed activity. Any harvest of blowdown timber must meet the criteria developed in the Forestwide Blowdown DN which includes a cumulative effects analysis.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend the District Ranger's decision be affirmed and the Appellants' requested relief be denied.

/s/ J. Doug Glevanik

J. DOUG GLEVANIK
Reviewing Officer