

REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM OFFICE

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 1, 2016

TO: Bill Mulholland, North Umpqua Ranger District Ranger, Umpqua National Forest

FROM: Jessica Rubado, REO Representative to the REIC

SUBJECT: Regional Ecosystem Office Review of the Lemon Butte Project, North Umpqua Ranger District, Umpqua National Forest

Summary: The Regional Ecosystem Office (REO) interagency Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) Work Group has concluded its review of the documents provided by the Forest regarding proposed activities in LSRs within the anticipated action of Lemon Butte Project within LSR RO-222, North Umpqua Ranger District, Umpqua National Forest. The REO, based upon review by the LSR Work Group, concurs with the Forest in its finding that the Lemon Butte Project is consistent with the Ecological Principles for Management of Late-Successional Forests under the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP).

Basis for the Review: Silviculture treatments in LSRs are subject to REO review under the NWFP S&G (C-12) if they do not meet existing criteria in the LSR Assessment or the exemption criteria for commercial thinning in the REO Memorandum #694 "Criteria to Exempt Specific Silvicultural Activities in Late-Successional Reserves and Managed Late-Successional Areas from Regional Ecosystem Office Review" dated July 9, 1996. As required by the NWFP S&G (C-11), the Forest prepared a Late-Successional Reserve Assessment (LSR assessment). The 1998 South Cascades LSR Assessment (SCLSRA), which encompasses the Lemon Butte Project, was reviewed and found to be consistent under the NWFP standards and guidelines (C-11). Although the South Cascades LSR assessment supports the thinning, the projects came before the LSR Workgroup for review because certain recommendations in the LSR Assessment and Exemption Criteria cannot be met and promote successful restoration of native tree species diversity, especially sugar pine.

Background and Project Description: The Lemon Butte Project planning area is located on the North Umpqua Ranger District of the Umpqua National Forest (UNF) within the Steamboat 5th-field watershed, approximately 25 miles east of Roseburg, Oregon in Townships 23, 24 and 25 South, Ranges 1 and 2 East, Willamette Meridian, Douglas County, Oregon. The Lemon Butte planning area is located entirely within the Western Cascades physiographic province of LSR RO-222. The planning area encompasses approximately 64,882 acres, with commercial thinning to occur on approximately 603 acres.

Silvicultural treatments proposed for the Lemon Butte project are consistent with pertinent S&Gs in the ROD (C-12), and with SCLSRA treatment criteria for density management in stands less than 80 years of age but vary from existing review exemption criteria (REO Memorandum #694 dated July 9, 1996 and REO Memorandum #801 dated September 30), by proposing gaps larger than ¼-acre in extent to promote successful restoration of native tree species, particularly relatively shade-intolerant native pine species.

The purpose of the Lemon Butte project is to promote the development and maintenance of late-successional forest conditions in existing even-aged stands in LSR (USDA & USDI, 1994b, C-12). Proposed project activities include silviculture activities (commercial thinning, non-commercial thinning, and fuels treatments) designed to develop structurally complex stand and landscape structure and species composition within second-growth stands that originated following even-aged management and subsequent planting in the 1950s through the 1970s.

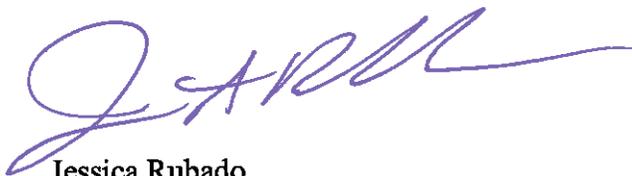
Previous clearcutting and subsequent planting of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) in the Steamboat Creek watershed, along with fire exclusion over the last several decades has created dense, even-aged stands in both uplands and riparian areas that are now in the stem exclusion stage of structural development (Oliver and Larson, 1996). These second-growth stands lack the structural and species diversity they would otherwise have if exposed to natural successional pathways, such as fires (Zenner, 2005). Historically, sugar pine trees were naturally abundant in the planning area on south through west aspects and were maintained by the historical fire regime. Today, sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*) is underrepresented within the planning area landscape and is declining due to competition related to dense planting of Douglas-fir, fire exclusion, and occurrence of white pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*). Dense stand stocking also leads to heavy inter-tree competition, resulting in decreased tree and stand vigor, low growth rates, and potentially restricted development of some desired riparian habitat characteristics, such as large-diameter trees that may ultimately be recruited as large down wood to streams. Additionally, dense stocking reduces stand resistance to wind and fire damage (Poage and Tappeiner, 2002).

The proposed action includes creation of ½-acre and 1-acre gaps for 3-10% of each timber sale unit's individual area within treatment units to increase structural complexity and to facilitate understory development and planting of native species, including sugar pine, incense cedar, and western redcedar.

Review of the Project: The LSR Work Group reviewed the proposed action for the Lemon Butte Project. Members of the LSR Work Group also met with District staff on May 23, 2015 via conference call. The Work Group's review was based on discussions during the call and review of the document "Regional Ecosystem Office Late-successional Reserve Project Consistency Review: Lemon Butte Project", dated December 8, 2015 and updated January 21, 2016.

Conclusion: Based on the interagency REO LSR Work Group's review and conclusions, the REO concurs with the North Umpqua Ranger District's conclusion that the Lemon Butte Project on the North Umpqua Ranger District is consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan.

If you have questions regarding this review, please contact Kim Mellen-McLean at 503-808-2677.



Jessica Rubado
REO Representative to the REIC

cc: Sally Christensen, North Umpqua RD
Kim Mellen-McLean, LSR Workgroup, FS