Pre-Operations Report

Operation Name: South Paw
Tax Code(s): 5600
County (%): Tillamook (100%)
BOF%: 100% **CSL%:** 0%
Elevation: 761 - 2,638 ft
Sale Quarter: Alternate
Legal Description: T1N R8W, Section(s) 7, 8, 17, 18; T1N R9W, Section(s) 13

I. VOLUME AND VALUE SUMMARY

Table 1. Types, Acres, and Value

Unit	Harvest Type	Anticipated Product[c]	Gross Acres	Net Acres	MBF/ Acre[a]	MBF/ Unit[a]	$/MBF[b]	$/Unit
128	CC	DF-S, RA-S	111	84	24.0	2,016	$300	$604,800
129	CC	DF-S, RA-S	65	52	24.0	1,248	$300	$374,400
130	CC	RA-S, DF-S	79	59	21.0	1,239	$300	$371,700
Total		Regeneration	255	194		4,503		
		Partial Cut	0	0		0		
						Gross Value		$1,350,900
						Project Costs		$500,000
						Net Value		$850,900

a. Estimated harvest volume per acre for Unit.
b. Estimated 'price' (excluding Project Costs)
c. Anticipated Product (AA-B-C) – AA) SLI species code of the bid species, B) Size Class (S – small [average DBH < 15], M – medium [average DBH 15 to 23], L – large (average DBH > 23]), C) Special Product (P – Premium, H – Hardwood)

II. CURRENT STAND CONDITION:

Table 2. Stand Inventory Information

Unit	Stand ID	Measured/ Imputed[a]	Species	Age	TPA	DBH	BA	SDI	Net Acres[b]
128	31211	M	DF,RA	52	191	14	206	55%	62
128	31213	I = 30616	RA,DF	52	156	14	172	46%	2
128	31214	I = 31216	DF,RA	52	186	13	168	47%	18
128	32649	M	DF,RA	17	--	--	--	0%	1
129	32302	I = 34259	DF,RA	68	335	12	282	79%	13
129	35131	M	RA,WH	63	192	14	203	54%	4
129	35132	M	DF,RA	68	236	15	272	72%	18
129	35133	I = 30156	DF,RA	68	151	14	159	43%	14
130	35131	M	RA,WH	63	192	14	203	54%	33
130	35132	M	DF,RA	68	236	15	272	72%	8
130	35133	I = 30156	DF,RA	68	151	14	159	43%	4
130	35134	M	DF,RA	60	245	12	182	52%	14

a. Identify the source of stand inventory information. Use the following codes: M = Measured SLI data, I = Imputed SLI data, P = Pre-Cruise Plots, O = other (if other, describe below).
b. Net Acres have been rounded to the nearest whole acre in this table. Stand that comprise less than one acre of a harvest unit are not reported in this table, so the total "Net Acres" per unit in this table may not equal the total "Net Acres" per unit in table 1.

- These stands were planted but have no record of pre-commercial or commercial thinning.

- The stand boundary for 32649 is drawn incorrectly. Unit 128 does not include 17-year-old trees. The 1 acre shown in the table for stand 32649 should be included with stand 31211 and is shown as such in the remainder of this document.

Table 3. Additional Stand Information

Unit	Stand ID	Snags/ Acre[a]	Down Wood/ Acre[b]	Forest Health		
				SNC	Phellinus	Other[c]
128	31211	29	876	Yes	--	--
128	31213	6	53	Yes	--	--
128	31214	13	699	Yes	--	--
129	32302	31	750	Yes	--	--
129	35131	12	89	Yes	--	--
129	35132	20	978	Yes	--	--
129	35133	7	367	Yes	--	--
130	35131	12	89	Yes	--	--
130	35132	20	978	Yes	--	--
130	35133	7	367	Yes	--	--
130	35134	9	130	Yes	--	--

a. Identify the number of hard snags per acre (decay classes 1 and 2)
b. Identify the cubic feet per acre of hard down wood (decay classes 1 and 2)
c. Describe "Other" forest health issue.

III. WILDLIFE AND T&E SPECIES CONSIDERATIONS:

Foresters need to request the Biological Survey Tracking Form (BSTF) from the ODF Wildlife Biologist prior to sale layout in order to ensure all T&E related information is complete and understood.

1. A portion of the operation is within (Check all that apply):
   ☐ TAS ☒ NSO Circle or Home Range, or Baseline or Elevated Baseline Thiessen (BA required)
   ☐ MMMA (BA required) ☐ None
2. Are Surveys for NSO being conducted for any portion of this operation?
   ☐ No ☐ Density Surveys ☐ Operational Surveys ☒ Combination (Density/Operational)
   Notes:
3. Are Surveys for MM being conducted for any portion of this operation?
   ☒ Yes (in progress/completed) ☐ No (Not habitat) ☐ N/A (outside of MM survey zone)
   Notes: Surveys started in 2025 and are continuing in 2026 for Units 128 and 129. These surveys will expire on 04/01/2032.
4. Are there any additional considerations (FPA Resource Sites, Species of Concern sites/Plant?
   ☐ No ☒ Yes, please describe:
   Units 128, 129 and 130 are within the vicinity of a historic fisher observation (*Pekania pennanti*). Meeting or exceeding leave tree and large diameter downed wood requirements in this unit will help support future use if fisher return to the area. District will consult the Wildlife Biologist prior to sale layout.

IV. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION AND PRESCRIPTION:

Table 4. Stand Structure Information

Unit	Stand ID	Current	Desired Future[b]	Net Acres[a]	Inside of HCA Acres
128	31211	UDS	GEN	62	0
128	31213	UDS	GEN	2	0
128	31214	UDS	GEN	18	0
129	32302	UDS	GEN	13	0
129	35131	UDS	GEN	4	0
129	35132	LYR	GEN	18	0
129	35133	UDS	GEN	14	0
130	35131	UDS	OFS	33	33
130	35132	LYR	OFS	8	8
130	35133	UDS	OFS	4	4
130	35134	UDS	OFS	14	14

a. Net Acres have been rounded to the nearest whole acre in this table. Stand that comprise less than one acre of a harvest unit are not reported in this table, so the total "Net Acres" per unit in this table may not equal the total "Net Acres" per unit in table 1.

b. While desired future condition complex (Layered -LYR and Older Forest Structure – OFS) is mapped, targets for Regeneration, Closed Single Canopy and Understory stands are not. These stand types are typically referred to as General (GEN) when discussing desired future condition.

Table 5. Harvest Prescriptions

Unit	Harvest Type	Harvest Species	Residual (Partial Cut & HCA only)			
			Species	TPA	BA	% SDI
128/129	CC	DF, RA	--	--	--	--
130	CC	DF, RA				

- **Prescription Considerations:**
  - Unit 130 is located in a Habitat Conservation area and is predominately a Douglas-fir stand that is infected with Swiss Needle Cast. This stand will be regeneration harvested to remove the majority of the Swiss Needle Cast infested Douglas fir while retaining the largest trees available, those individual Douglas-fir that are growing well, and tree species that are resistant to Swiss needle cast. Red alder will be evaluated during layout and if any sprayed alder is identified it will likely be removed. This area will be replanted with a mix of SNC resistant species and will highlight planting at lower densities to promote complex patches of early seral stage forest resulting in a stand that is positioned for future habitat treatments to grow into habitat for covered species in an accelerated timeframe. Treatments are intended to improve spatial heterogeneity, compositional diversity, understory development, canopy layering, and structural complexity of dominant and subdominant cohorts relative to untreated stands with similar conditions. Field staff and ODF Wildlife biologists will work closely during sale layout to determine legacy components (species, size, location, etc.) when finalizing prescriptions in these areas.

- **Leave Tree Considerations:** Foresters will work with Wildlife Biologist during sale layout. The following should be considered when determining final leave tree arrangements.

- Stand Characteristics: Prioritize larger diameter trees within each unit as part of the retention strategy. In Unit 130 retain trees with layered forest structure.
- Wildlife: For Units 128 & 129, prioritize leave trees within NSO circles and platform trees in the southern portions where MAMU habitat exists.

Table 6. Reforestation

Unit	Planting Species Mix (%)*	TPA*	Considerations (ex. Elevation, SNC, Aspect, Animal Damage)
128	50 WH / 30 DF / 10 GF if available	400	North slope with heavy SNC impact, shallow/rocky soils with cliffs that will be unplantable.
129	30 WH / 70 DF	436	South Aspect, shallow/rocky soils
130	60 DF / 10 GF / 30 WH	436	South Aspect, shallow/rocky soils

*These are estimates for planning purposes and will be adjusted as needed based on site conditions during implementation.

- **Reforestation Considerations:**
  - Unit 128 has a favorable north slope but has numerous cliff bands and steep terrain. This unit could be a challenge for stand establishment since it may be difficult to get many trees in the ground.
  - Unit 129 has a significant south aspect with cliff bands showing as well. If this unit is planted on a drier year it may have an increased risk of interplant and be a challenge to stand establishment.
  - With the stand data showing a large component of RA in this sale the amount of alder slash left in the unit from breakage could also make it difficult to get a good stocking of trees in the ground. The alder load also makes it important to have consideration for and draft a slash management plan for landings. A larger landing than normal may be needed to contain large slash piles that these units will generate.

V. HARVESTING AND ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS:

Table 7. Harvest System and Access Summary

Unit	Harvest System		Slope (%)	Unit Access	Seasonal Access
	% Cable	% Ground			
128	100	0	56	Established	All Weather
129	100	0	49	Established	All Weather
130	100	0	62	Established	All Weather

1. Haul Route: Mutt Peak, Kilchis Lookout, Sam Downs, Kilchis Forest Road.
2. Haul Route Condition: Kilchis Forest Road had a lift of rock placed on it in 2025. Sam Downs and Kilchis Lookout had some rock put down with the Kilchis Saddle Timber Sale in 2023 and will need grading and spot patching. Kilchis Lookout past the Kilchis Saddle Timber Sale will need a lift of rock. Mutt Peak was last maintained in the early 2000's except for brushing and will need spot rock.
3. Are easements required for the haul route? ☐ No ☒ Yes
   - 311.29422 Kilchis Forest Road T1NR3W Sec33

Table 8. Transportation Management Summary (Miles)

Activity	Mainline	Collector	Rocked Spur	Dirt Spur
Construct	0	0	0.95	0
Improve, Rock, and/or Maintain	2.52	7.34	1.45	0
Vacate	0	0	0	0
Stream Crossings: install on existing road (IE)/replace on existing road (R)/install on new construction road (NC)				
Type F - SSBT[a]	0	0	0	0
Type F – Non-SSBT	0	0	0	0
Type N	0	0	0	0

a. Salmon Steelhead and Bull Trout (SSBT)

- Opportunities to vacate or block new or existing roads and/or spurs will be considered during sale layout.

4. Rock Sources for this operation: Crushed-Commercial, Onsite rock, Mutt peak Pit.
5. Are property line surveys required for this operation? ☒ No ☐ Yes
6. Is there planned new road construction planned within RCAs/HCAs? ☒ No ☐ Yes

VI. AQUATIC RESOURCES:

1. Do any streams require additional review for the following?
   - Fish presence: ☒ No ☐ Yes
   - Perennial/Seasonal: ☒ No ☒ Yes
   - H.E.R.: ☐ No ☒ Yes
     - There are streams within the sale that require additional review. Buffers shown on the map indicate where it is believed streams are located. These streams will be located, verified for permanence, and/or type of seasonal stream during sale layout and Geotech review and buffered as required.
2. Is a portion of the operation within an Aquatic Anchor? ☐ No ☒ Yes, name: Middle Kilchis River
   - Within the designated Aquatic Anchor streams will be buffered in accordance with strategies in the draft Habitat Conservation Plan that prioritize salmonid recovery as outlined in the State Forest Division Species of Concern Policy. These additional buffers are already incorporated into the sale buffers and are shown on the map. If additional information on streams is found during sale layout the buffers will be adjusted as required.
3. Are any domestic points of diversion identified in the Oregon Water Resource Department's water rights information search GIS database located downstream within 3,000 feet of the harvest operation?

   ☒ No ☐ Yes, describe protection measures:
4. Are there any unregistered or unknown status domestic points of diversion that have been identified within the harvest operation? ☒ No ☐ Yes, please describe:
5. Is there a Stream Enhancement Project planned? ☒ No ☐ Yes, please describe:

VII. SLOPE STABILITY ISSUES:

Table 9. Summary of Slope Stability Assessment

Unit	Harvest Review Complete	Public Safety Review Complete
128	Y	Y
129	Y	Y
130	Y	Y

- **Geotech Review:** Initial geotechnical reviews have been completed and those findings have been incorporated into No Harvest buffers. Additional consultation with Geotechnical Specialists will be done during sale layout as needed.

VIII.RECREATION RESOURCES:

1. Recreation issues/coordination: ☒ No ☐ Yes, please describe:

IX. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES:

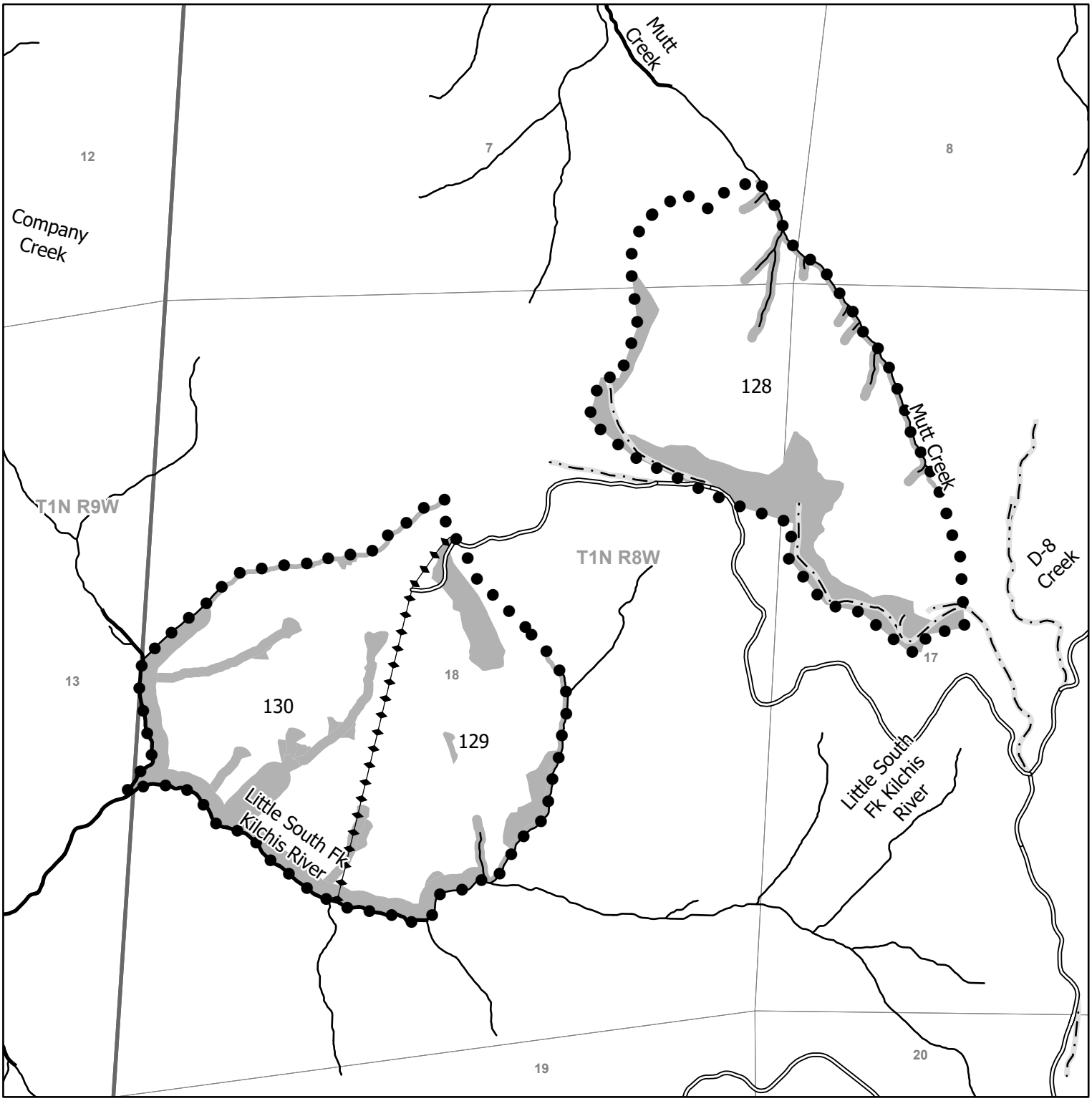
1. Has the sale been reviewed by a qualified archaeologist for potential historic or cultural resource presence? ☐ No ☒Yes

X. SCENIC RESOURCES:

1. Are there scenic resources in the vicinity of this operation that need additional consideration?
   ☒ No ☐ Yes, please describe:

XI. OTHER RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Has a review of the FLMCS layer determined that any resources not mentioned in the report above need additional planning? ☒ No ☐ Yes, please describe:
2. Are there any other resources present that need additional consideration? ☒ No ☐ Yes, please describe:



Legend

- Unit Boundary
- Sale Boundary
- Surfaced
- Ownership Boundary
- Perennial Fish
- Perennial Non-Fish
- New Road Construction
- No Harvest Area
- No Harvest - Existing Road; New Construction

FY 2027 - Tillamook District
South Paw
Portions of Section(s) 7, 8, 17, 18, T1N, R8W, & 13, T1N, R9W, W.M.
Tillamook County

State Forest Division
1/7/2026

This product is for informational use and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering or survey purposes. Variations may exist between and among data sets in use by the Department of Forestry. This map was developed using the Statewide Flow Line layer layer.

1:12,000

1,000 500 0 1,000 Feet

Unit 128	84	Acres (CC)
Unit 129	52	Acres (CC)
Unit 130	59	Acres (CC

Total 194 Acres

N

Oregon
Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Forestry
State Forester's Office
2600 State Street
Salem, OR 97310-0340
503-945-7200
FAX 503-945-7212
www.oregon.gov/ODF

"STEWARDSHIP IN FORESTRY"

TO: Kate Skinner, District Forester, Tillamook District

FROM: Mike Davis, Wildlife Biologist

SUBJECT: Draft Preliminary Biological Assessment for the South Paw Timber Sale

DATE: March 12, 2026

Executive Summary

South Paw is a proposed primary sale in the 2027 Annual Operations Plan (AOP) of the Tillamook District (Figure 1). This planned sale would harvest 105 acres within the provincial home range of the Whitney Ridge (formerly Nameless Peak) northern spotted owl site, and 42 acres from the Schmitz Ridge northern spotted owl site.

Of the 105 acres of planned harvest within the Whitney Ridge northern spotted owl site, all acres are considered unsuitable habitat for northern spotted owls. There will not be any harvest within the 0.7-mile inner circle. The closest sale unit to the Whitney Ridge activity center is located approximately 1 mile east of the AC.

After harvest of the sale, approximately 477 acres (48%) and 2,225 acres (49%) of suitable habitat will remain within the Whitney Ridge 0.7- and 1.5-mile circles, respectively. The amount of suitable habitat in the 1.5-mile circle exceeds ODF policy standards (40% minimum); however, the amount of suitable habitat in the 0.7-mile circle is less than the ODF standard of 500 acres by approximately 23 acres. The sale is located outside of this 0.7-mile circle and the amount of habitat therein will remain unchanged post-harvest.

Of the 42 acres of planned harvest within the Schmitz Ridge northern spotted owl site, 39 acres are considered habitat for northern spotted owls. There will not be any harvest within the 0.7-mile inner circle. The closest portion of the sale unit to the Schmitz Ridge activity center is located approximately 1.4 miles west of the AC.

After harvest of the sale, approximately 946 acres (96%) and 4,000 acres (88%) of suitable habitat will remain within the Schmitz Ridge 0.7- and 1.5-mile circles, respectively. The amount of suitable habitat in the 0.7-mile and 1.5-mile circles exceeds ODF policy standards. The sale is outside of this 0.7-mile circle, and the amount of habitat therein will remain unchanged post-harvest.

No spotted owls have been observed within the sale areas since the establishment of the Schmitz Ridge spotted owl site in 2011 and the Whitney Ridge spotted owl site in 2012. As currently proposed, the South Paw sale is expected to have a **low** risk of negatively affecting the occupancy and productivity of the Whitney Ridge and Schmitz Ridge northern spotted owl sites.

Introduction

Purpose

The South Paw timber sale is partially located within the 1.5-mile provincial home range (USFWS 2012) of the Whitney Ridge (formerly Nameless Peak) and Schmitz Ridge spotted owl activity centers (AC). The purpose of this Biological Assessment (BA) is to assess current habitat conditions within the Whitney Ridge and Schmitz Ridge owl circles and evaluate the potential risk of the timber sale to the spotted owl sites.

Policy Direction: *Northern Spotted Owls*

On the Tillamook District, the current standard for protection of northern spotted owls is to apply the standards identified in the ODF Northern Spotted Owl Policy (ODF 2017). According to the Policy, the best available habitat is identified for a 250-acre core area; at least 500 acres of suitable habitat should be maintained within the 0.7-mile radius, and within the home range circle (in this case 1.5 miles), approximately 40% suitable habitat (1,810 acres) should be maintained. Additional factors to be considered and documented in this BA include proximity of the operation to an AC, the prescription proposed, the size of the operation, the history of harvest and surveys near the AC, stand conditions, and other relevant factors.

Background

Survey History and Site Information

From Turnstone Environmental Consultants Inc. 2025:

Whitney Ridge (formerly Nameless Peak) 1795 (Est. 2012; Resident Single 2012)

In 2011, a female spotted owl was heard and seen on one occasion during the day, but there were no more responses on the five following visits to the area. Since this was the first visit to the area, status was designated Unknown. In 2012, a female spotted owl was heard on the second night visit and again during the day on the third visit. Kingfisher surveyors heard an unknown *Strix* on the fifth visit, and an ODF employee also heard an unknown *Strix* in the area. Status was changed to Resident Single, and the AC was placed at the May 11th, 2012 response location. In 2013, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no responses. However, a female spotted owl was heard at night on the third visit and on the follow-up, but surveyors were unable to visually locate her. A female spotted owl and an unknown *Strix* were also seen on a sunset hike, but there was not enough daylight left to collect more information, and there were no responses on the follow-up. The AC was moved to the 2011 daytime location. In 2014, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no responses. However, a female spotted owl was heard during a day hike on the sixth visit. In 2015, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no responses. However, a female spotted owl was heard on the first night visit and on the follow-up. In 2016, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no responses. However, a female spotted owl was heard on the third and fourth night visits to the site. An unknown *Strix*, which could have been the female, was also seen on the third visit to the site. In 2017, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses, and there were no responses during night surveys. In 2018, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses. However, a spotted owl of unknown sex was heard on the second visit. In 2019 and 2020, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses. However, an unknown *Strix* owl of unknown sex was seen on the second visit in 2019. In 2021 through 2025, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses, and there were no responses during night surveys. In 2024 and 2025, the site was surveyed using a combination of 6-visit call back and bioacoustic surveys. Barred owls were detected in the area in 2013, 2014, and from 2016 through 2025.

Schmitz Ridge 0073 (Est. 2011; Resident Single 2011)

In 2011, a female spotted owl was found at this site on three occasions. She was “moused” on two occasions with no signs of young. The AC was placed in the best available habitat near the center of the three response locations. In 2012, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no responses. However, a female spotted owl was found twice at this site during standard surveys and determined to be non-nesting. In 2013, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses, and there were no responses during night surveys. In 2014, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses. However, a female spotted owl was heard at night on the first and fourth visits south of the 1.5-mile buffer. In 2015, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses, and there were no responses during night surveys. However, an ODF employee reported detecting an unknown *Strix* in the area. There were no spotted owl responses in 2016. In 2017, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses, and there were no responses during night surveys. In 2018, a daytime AC search was conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses. However, a spotted owl of unknown sex was moused on the fourth visit, and a female spotted owl was banded (green w/ white pyramids-left) on the sixth visit. Based on location and behavior, this was likely the same bird moused on the fourth visit. In 2019 through 2024, a daytime AC search and six-night visits were conducted at this site with no spotted owl responses. In 2024, an unknown *Strix* was briefly observed in the same area as numerous barred owl observations. In 2025, a daytime AC search was conducted with no spotted owl responses. In 2024 and 2025 the site was surveyed using a combination of 6-visit call back and bioacoustic surveys. In 2025, an unknown *Strix* was heard once during a night visit. There were no owl responses on the

follow up. Barred owls were detected in the area in 2011, and 2013 through 2025.

Sale Prescription

The South Paw timber sale is in the 2027 Annual Operations Plan of the Tillamook District and consists of three sale units totaling 194 net acres of regeneration harvest (Figure 1). Portions of Units 128 and 129 are located outside of both spotted owl sites and are not discussed in this assessment, leaving 144 combined acres of harvest within the Whitney Ridge and Schmitz Ridge owl sites. The following information pertains to the harvestable acres of sale Unit 128 (partial unit) located within the southwestern portion between the 0.7- and 1.5-mile radius circles of the Schmitz Ridge owl site as well as Units 129 (partial unit) and 130 (full unit) located within the eastern portion between the 0.7- and 1.5-mile radius circles of the Whitney Ridge owl site.

The sale prescription will utilize regeneration harvest techniques that will retain and create snags at a density of at least 2 per acre as well as retain 5 live trees per acre. Both minor species and legacy snags will be retained. The live trees will be scattered and clumped in the unit as well in the riparian management areas inside and adjacent to the units. Anticipated downed wood targets will retain on average at least 600 cubic feet of hard conifer logs per acre.

Stand Information

This sale area was burned during the 1933 Tillamook fire and in the 1939 Saddle Mountain fire according to Oregon Department of Forestry Stand Level Inventory (SLI; ODF 2017). The proposed 42-acre harvestable area of Unit 128 within the 1.5 provincial radius of the owl circle comprises of 52-year-old Douglas-fir and red alder based on measured and imputed data. The average DBH range is 13–14 inches, 156–186 TPA, and a basal area of 168–206 ft^2/acre. The proposed 46-acre harvestable portion of Unit 129 has an average age range of 63–68 years and consists of primarily Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and red alder (*Alnus rubra*). Stand level inventory for this unit includes both measured and imputed data. The average diameter at breast height (DBH) range of 12–15 inches, 151–335 trees per acre (TPA) and a basal area of 159–282 ft^2/acre. The proposed 59-acre harvestable area of Unit 130 within the 1.5 provincial radius of the owl circle comprises of 63–68-year-old Douglas-fir and red alder based on measured and imputed data. The average DBH range is 12–15 inches, 151–245 TPA, and a basal area of 159–272 ft^2/acre.

South Paw will be the third harvest activity within the home range of the Whitney Ridge northern spotted owl site. The first sale within the home range of the Whitney Ridge northern spotted owl site was Star White, which was sold in 2014 and located on the northwest edge of the 1.5 radius circle. The Star White sale assessed harvest of 42 acres of suitable habitat; however, the final harvest of Star White removed only 22 acres of suitable habitat. The second harvest was a portion of Kilchis Saddle from the 2020 AOP, which harvested 22 acres of suitable habitat and 11 acres of non-suitable habitat from the southeast edge of the 1.5 radius circle. The planned South Paw timber sale will not remove any suitable habitat within the Whitney Ridge northern spotted owl site.

South Paw will be the fourth harvest activity within the home range of the Schmitz Ridge northern spotted owl site. The first sale was Knot Berry, part of the 2017 AOP that harvested approximately 5 acres of suitable habitat 1 mile south of the activity center. The second harvest was a portion of the Old Bungee timber sale from the 2020 AOP that harvested less than 4 acres of suitable habitat in the outer northeastern edge of the Schmitz Ridge circle. The third sale was the Sam Downs timber sale (sold) in the 2024 AOP that will harvest 88 acres of suitable habitat from the southern portion between the 0.5-mile and 1.5-mile radius circles. The South Paw timber sale will remove approximately 39 acres of habitat and 3 acres of non-habitat from the southwestern edge of the 1.5-mile radius circle.

Assumptions

Defining the Home Range

According to “Procedures leading to Endangered Species Act compliance for the northern spotted owl” (USFWS 1990), the median home range size (based on 95% minimum convex polygon) for spotted owl pairs in the Oregon Coast Range is 4,766 acres, or the approximate equivalent of the area encompassed by a circle with a radius of 1.5 miles. Although spotted owls generally do not have circular home ranges, in the absence of more specific information about the home ranges of this site, I assumed that a 1.5-mile radius circle around the nest or activity center approximates the home range of this site. All stands for this analysis were digitized and circle radii/acreages were calculated using ArcMap 10.1 software.

Defining Suitable Habitat

Documentation provided with the "Procedures Leading to Endangered Species Compliance for the Northern Spotted Owl" (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 1990) describes suitable habitat for spotted owls as stands that exhibit "…moderate to high canopy closure; a multilayered, multispecies canopy dominated by large over story trees; a high incidence of large trees with large cavities, broken tops, and other indications of decadence; numerous large snags; heavy accumulations of logs and other woody debris on the forest floor; and considerable open space within and beneath the canopy. These attributes are usually found in old growth, but they are sometimes found in younger forests, especially those that contain remnant large trees or patches of large trees from earlier stand…It is important to note that the age of forests is not as important a factor in determining habitat suitability as are vegetational and structural components…"

Most stands used by spotted owls on ODF ownership do not meet the above definition of suitable habitat. However, there are data that identify important habitat features or characteristics for spotted owl occupancy in young forests. Islam et al. (1997) found that owl occupancy increased with increasing acreage of stands with average DBH of 18" or greater (DBH was determined by ODF OSCUR timber inventory database) in plots within ¼ and ½ mile of the owl site activity center. In addition, many owls were detected in stands with average DBH of 11-17", although this relationship was not significant. A radio-telemetry study of several owls on the Clatsop State Forest (Glenn and Anthony et al. 2000) found many spotted owl foraging locations in smaller diameter stands averaging 12-17 inches and greater. The telemetry study and a concurrent study of habitat in areas where owls were located (Tappeiner et al. 2000) have found that hardwood's, especially hardwood/conifer edges, are an important component of spotted owl foraging habitat in both the Clatsop and Elliott State Forests. The habitat study also found that spotted owl nesting and foraging sites had larger average DBH and fewer trees per acre than non-use areas. Other factors that contribute to spotted owl habitat quality include stand age, snags, downed wood, and horizontal diversity.

Habitat Assessment

Habitat was assessed for the Whitney Ridge spotted owl site during development of the Star White timber sale using (SLI) data, 2007 lidar data, 2012 orthoimagery, and field verification in 2013 (Martens 2014). A review of 2016 orthoimagery revealed that 22 acres of suitable habitat that was removed from the edge of the 1.5-mile radius circle for the Star White timber sale. Habitat was also assessed for this BA after the completion of the Kilchis Saddle sale using 2024 ortho imagery, and 22 acres were removed. These areas are not expected to return to suitable habitat for several decades.

Habitat was recently assessed for the Schmitz Ridge spotted owl site for the Sam Downs BA with ODF Stand Level Inventory data from 2021, and 2020 lidar canopy layers. Habitat was also assessed for this BA after the completion of the Old Bungee sale and future completion of the planned Sam Downs sale using 2024 ortho imagery, and planned sale layout, where 92 acres were removed.

The South Paw timber sale is in the eastern portion of the Whitney Ridge and southwestern portion of the Schmitz Ridge owl site, both on the edge of the 1.5-mile radius circles. Based on the harvest prescription for this sale, 105 total acres of un-suitable habitat will be modified inside the Whitney Ridge 1.5-mile radius circle, leaving approximately 2,225 acres, (49%) of the 1.5-mile radius area as suitable habitat. There will be 39 total acres of suitable habitat and 3 acres of non-suitable habitat modified in the Schmitz Ridge 1.5-mile radius circle leaving approximately 4,000 acres (88%) of the 1.5-mile radius area as suitable habitat.

Impact Assessment and Discussion

The Whitney Ridge designation is based upon spotted owl responses from surveys conducted from 2011 through 2025. It is currently a resident single status site, and a spotted owl (unknown sex) was last observed in 2018 near the AC (Table 1). Barred owls have been detected at this site in 2013, 2014, and 2016–2025. The closest spotted owl observation within the provincial radius of the activity center was a female approximately 0.68 miles southwest of Unit 130 (Figure 1) in 2013.

The Schmitz Ridge designation is based upon spotted owl responses from surveys conducted from 2011 through 2025. It is currently a resident single status site, and a spotted owl (female) was detected 1.1 miles away from the AC on two separate observations in April and June of that year (Table 2). Additionally, there were two observations located outside the 1.5-mile provincial radius at approximately 1.6 and 1.95 miles south of the activity center. Those observations were attributed to the Schmitz Ridge site (Figure 2).

If there are future responses that result in moving the Whitney Ridge or Schmitz Ridge Activity Centers (e.g., new nest location or if a pair is observed at a new location within the circle) or if responses result in the establishment of a new site in the vicinity of the sale areas; then a new BA and risk assessment will be required.

Agency Consultation

This preliminary biological assessment will be shared with both the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the public comment process. Comments and input from these agencies will be incorporated into the final version of this biological assessment.

Compliance with Policy

After completion of harvest operations associated with the South Paw timber sale, the remaining suitable habitat within the Whitney Ridge owl circle will not change. It currently exceeds the minimum 40% suitable habitat standard (ODF 2017) by 9%.

The remaining suitable habitat within the 0.7-mile radius of the Schmitz Ridge owl circle will exceed the minimum 500-acre suitable habitat standard (ODF 2017) by 446 acres (96% habitat remaining). The remaining suitable habitat within the overall 1.5-mile radius of the Schmitz Ridge owl circle will be 4,000 acres or 88% suitable habitat remaining. By meeting this policy habitat standard and an assessment of other relevant factors, including survey response data, indicates that this sale should pose a **low risk** of negatively impacting this owl site.

Conclusions and Risk Assessment

Biological Risk

As a result of the Tillamook Burn and moderate and severe Swiss needle cast in the area, the amount of suitable habitat within Whitney Ridge 0.7-mile radius circle falls below ODF policy standards by 23 acres, (477 acres are suitable, but 500 are required by policy); however, the overall amount of suitable habitat within the Whitney Ridge spotted owl circle is 9% above the minimum policy standard. This sale is located on the outer edge of the 1.5-mile radius circle and will not result in increased fragmentation in the circle.

For the Schmitz Ridge site, the amount of suitable habitat within the 0.7-mile radius circle exceeds ODF policy standards by 446 acres (946 acres are suitable, but 500 are required by policy).

The removal of 39 acres of habitat with this proposed South Paw timber sale will still maintain approximately 88% suitable habitat within the 1.5 radius circle.

Therefore, the South Paw timber sale is expected to have a **low risk** of negatively affecting the occupancy and productivity of the Whitney Ridge and Schmitz Ridge owl sites.

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For sales within a known northern spotted owl home range or provincial circle, or within a Marbled Murrelet Management Area, signatures indicate review of the Biological Assessment and approval. The DF is responsible for initiating the review of the BA by the AD and DDC via a meeting, conference call or email.

District Forester:_____ Date:_____

Area Director:_____ Date:_____

Deputy Chief:_____ Date:_____

cc:
Nick Palazzotto, ODF Deputy Division Chief, Salem
Corey Grinnell, ODF Biological Support Manager, Salem
Colleen Kiser, ODF Planning Unit Manager, Salem
Nick Stumpf, ODF Operations Coordinator (interim), Tillamook
Vanessa Petro, ODF Lead Wildlife Biologist, Salem