



Letter to the File

Tethered Logging Systems Authorization

For the Schooner Rock Restoration Project EA Area

December 2019

**USDA Forest Service
Siuslaw National Forest,
Hebo Ranger District
Tillamook County, Oregon**

Responsible official:

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Hebo Ranger District
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For More Information Contact:

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Project Conditions

The Action & Description – This Letter to the File describes actions and or adjustments being taken, in this case authorizing the use of tethered logging systems, in the Schooner Rock Restoration Project analysis area. These may differ from original proposed actions but do not appreciably differ from the intended and expected analyzed context, duration and intensity of the analyzed impacts of the original effects of the proposed actions and thus do not require a more extensive analysis or new decision. The use of this system is based upon a specialist review of appropriate feasibility and suitability for use based on soils, hydrology, vegetation, etc.

Tethered logging systems (winch-assisted, cable-assisted, traction-assisted, etc.) can enable ground-based timber harvesting machines (feller bunchers, harvesters, loaders, shovels, etc.) to operate on slopes greater than 30%. The cable system allows the equipment to operate on slopes that would normally be considered unsafe for equipment or damaging to soils. The use of tethered assistance enables enhanced equipment stability on steep or adverse soil conditions, while also enhancing traction on more gentle grades.

Tethered systems consist of a cable winch mounted on a piece of equipment. The winch system either mounts to the working equipment or it is mounted to another piece of equipment, like a dozer, that also acts as the anchor. When mounted to the working equipment, the winch line is anchored to an anchor point, such as a stump or the base of a standing tree, somewhere on the slope. The mechanical influence of the winch is used for enhanced traction and mobility on steep slopes (often called “traction assist”) or for safety on steep slopes (preventing machine sliding and overturning).

Utilization of a tethered logging system can greatly improve safety of forest operations personnel, have less impact on soils in the appropriate settings, scatter forest biomass to reduce fuel loading, and increase the efficiencies of forest vegetation restoration.

Additional tethered system information can be found at the following link or perform an internet search for ‘tethered logging’:

<https://www.fs.fed.us/forestmanagement/equipment-catalog/tethered.shtml>

The Affected Area – The Schooner Rock Restoration Project area encompasses the entire 6th field Schooner Creek sub-watershed and the majority of the 6th field Rock Creek/Devils Lake – Frontal Pacific Ocean sub-watershed. The Project area encompasses approximately 22,600-acres and is in portions of Townships 6 and 7 South, Ranges 10 and 11 West; Willamette Meridian; Lincoln County, Oregon.

There are approximately 2,400 acres of Forest Service timber stands included in the environmental analysis that was completed April 2017. These 2,400 acres were assessed for timber thinning and vegetation treatments. This authorization to use tethered logging systems applies to those timber stands.



All management framework documents (Siuslaw Forest Plan, Forest Plan Amendments, ESA consultation) and Project Design Criteria identified in the Schooner Rock project are applicable to the application of tethered logging systems.

The Schooner Rock Restoration Project document, along with maps and the Decision Notice may be found on the Siuslaw National Forest Projects website at the following link:

Schooner Rock Restoration Project - <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=44852>

The Intent & Implementation – Utilize new advancements in technology, seek opportunities to improve soil conditions by reducing disturbance, improve the delivery of fine materials to the organic soil layer, reduce fuel loading by improved slash scattering capabilities, increase opportunities to improve specific habitats for small mammals and invertebrates within restoration units by placing or stacking downed wood, improve the safety of forestry personnel by reducing exposure, and improving the efficiency of operations.

Tethered systems may be used in the project area after the Forest Service has received a request to utilize the equipment and approved of its use. All use is subject to review and approval/refusal by the Forest Service prior to tethered work being initiated. The Forest Service reserves the right to cease all tethered work at any time if necessary.

Upon receipt of a request to utilize tethered systems, the Forest Service will assess the equipment system and the project area to determine the feasibility and suitability for use. This includes review of the soils, hydrology, vegetation, and habitat of the areas being requested. Specific contract requirements and implementation criteria may be developed to protect site specific areas.

The impacts and effects of utilizing tethered logging systems is expected to be less than or equal to the conventional (ground based and cable/skyline) logging systems that were assessed for the Schooner Rock Restoration Project area. Monitoring to assess the effects of tethered systems will be done to ensure natural resource protection and adapt implementation.

Monitoring & Adaptive Management – The Forest Service will utilize the *Soil-Disturbance Field Guide* (USDA, Forest Service. National Technology & Development Program. 0819 1814 – SDTDC. 1940 Inventory & Monitoring, August 2009) for a monitoring and assessment protocol to inform the impacts and effects of the tethered systems use.

Applicable Reference Materials –

- *Soil-Disturbance Field Guide* (USDA, Forest Service. National Technology & Development Program. 0819 1814 – SDTDC. 1940 Inventory & Monitoring, August 2009) - <https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/pdf/08191815.pdf>



- Schooner Rock Restoration Project -
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=44852>
- Forest Planning Documents -
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/siuslaw/landmanagement/planning>

Contact the Hebo Ranger District for additional information.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize the use of Tethered Logging Systems within the Schooner Rock Restoration Project analysis area.

Implementation Date

(Insert Date) _____

Contact

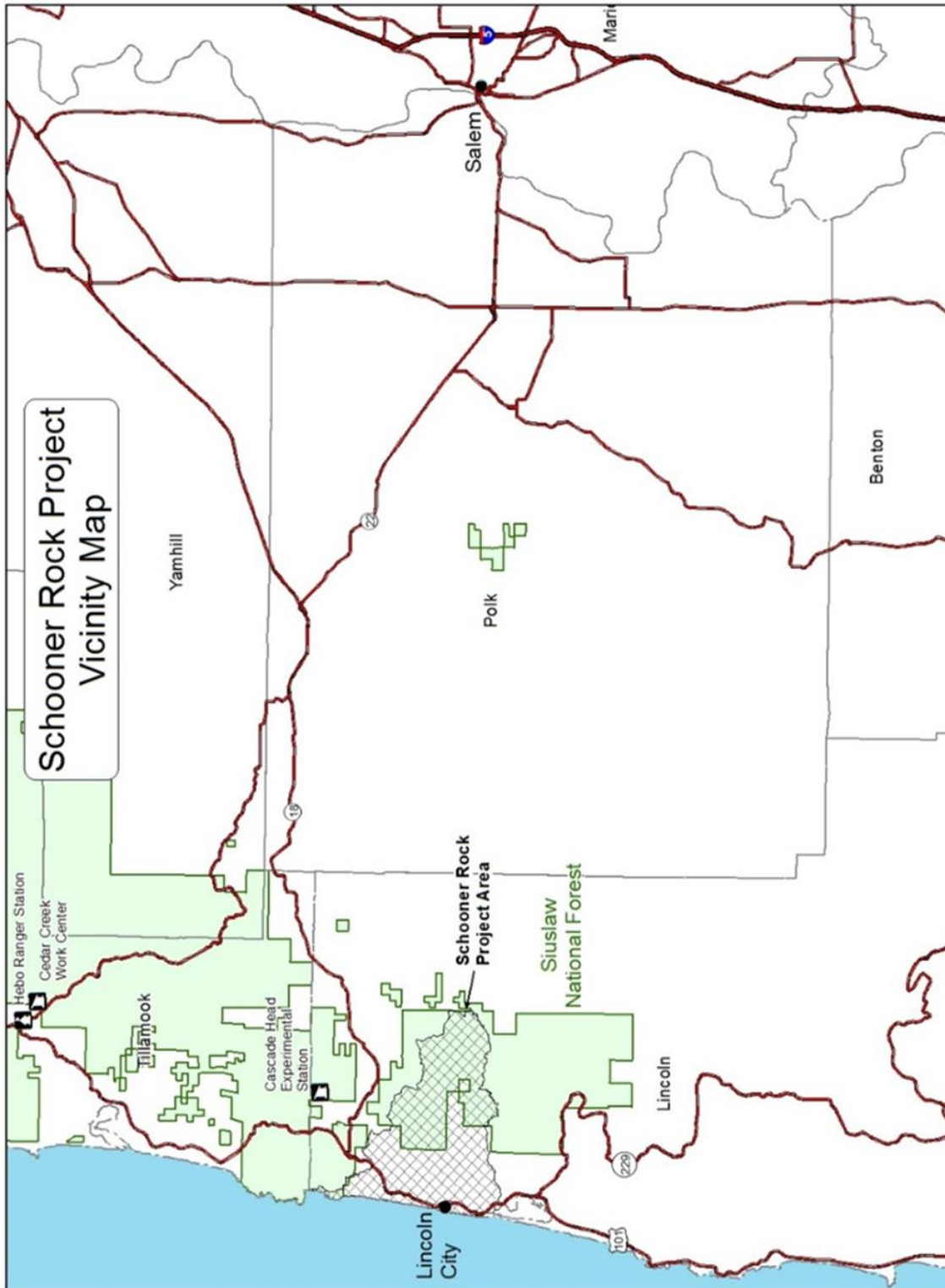
For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Deb Wilkins, District Ranger, Hebo Ranger District, Siuslaw National Forest.

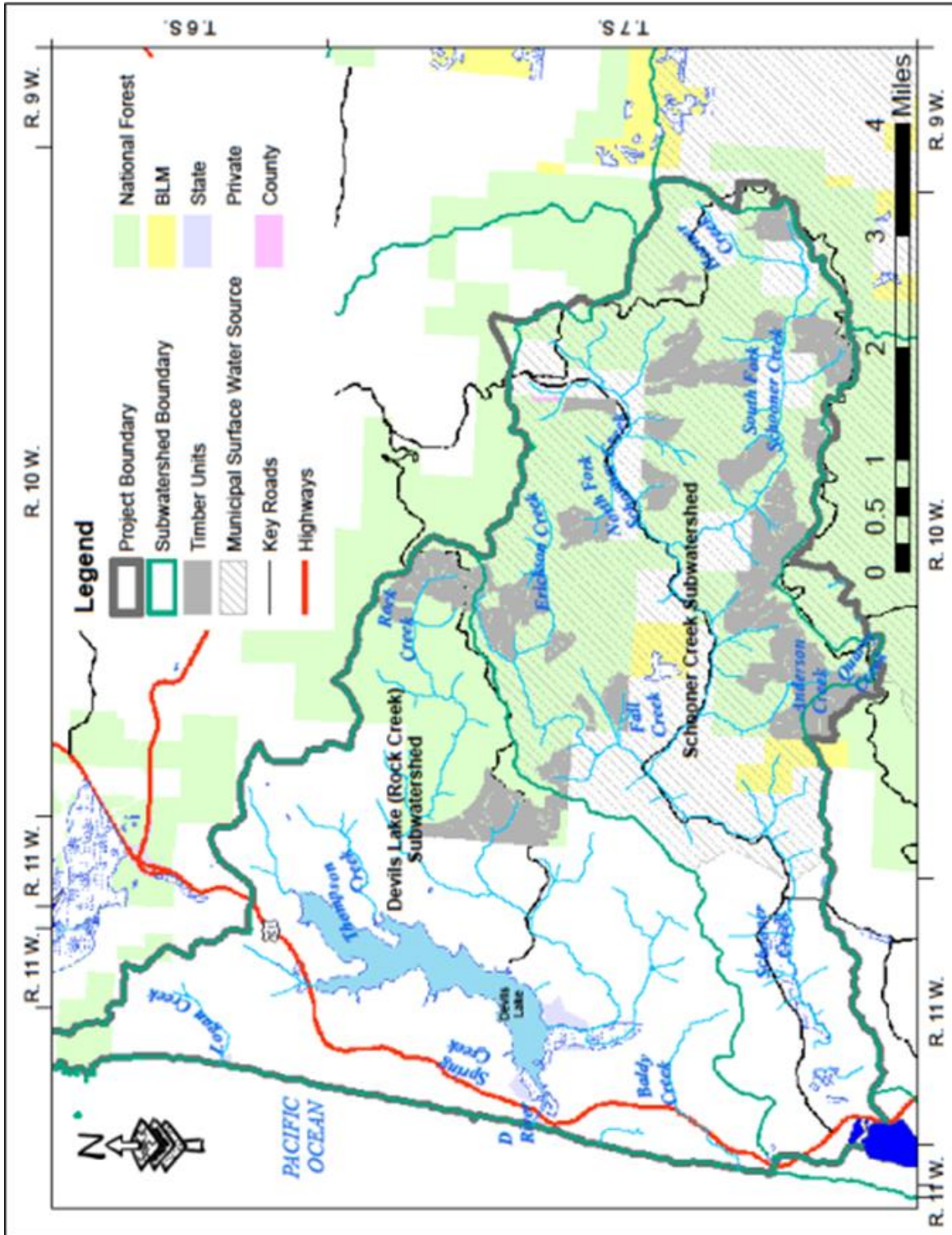
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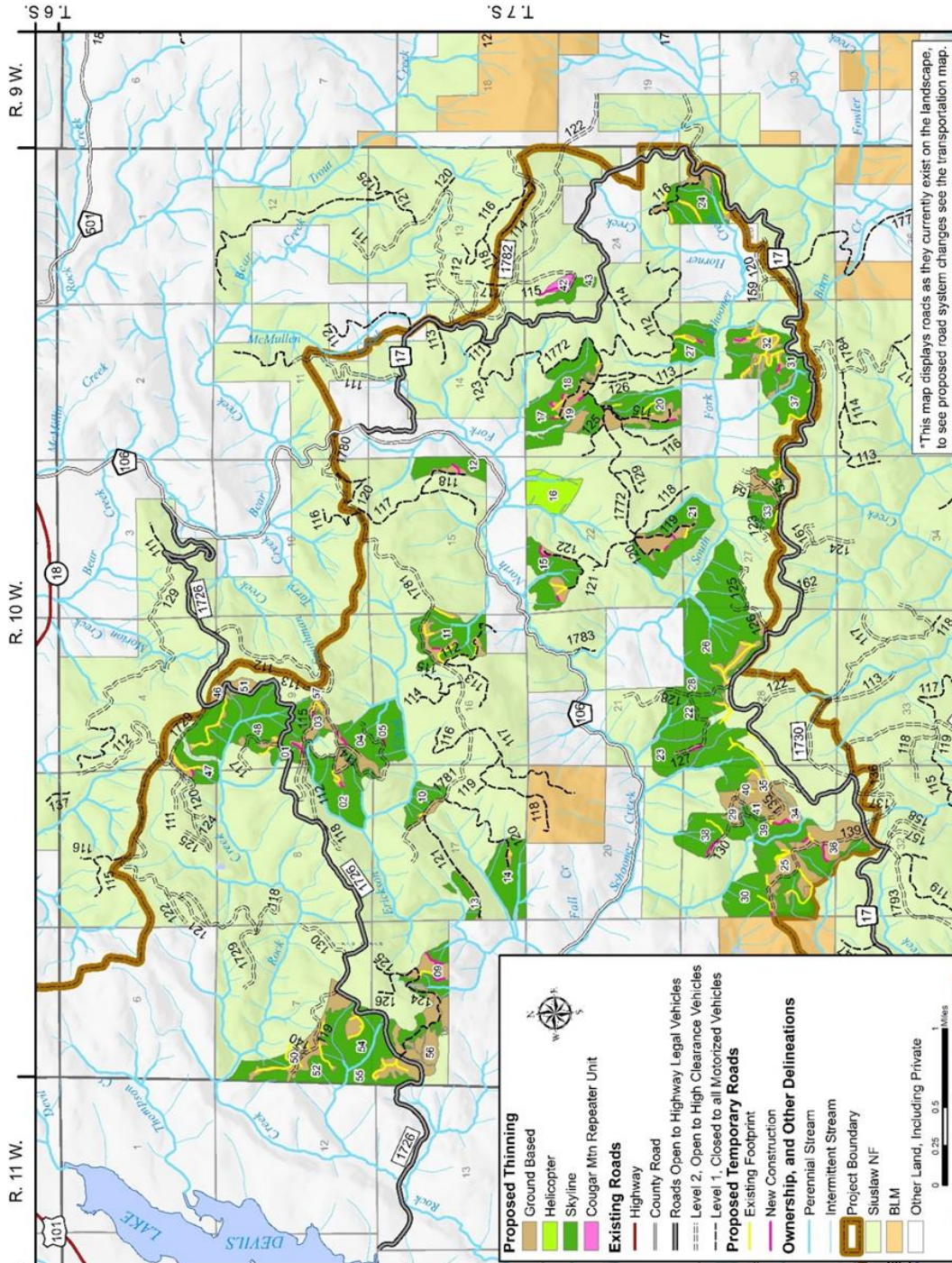
Deborah Wilkins
Hebo Ranger District, District Ranger

Date

Reference Maps:







Areas depicted in dark green (Legend – Skyline) are the general areas where tethered logging systems may be used. Use of tethered systems in these areas will be reviewed by resource specialists prior to any authorization to perform work to ensure the use is feasible and appropriate for the specific site conditions and characteristics