
**Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of:
Categorical Exclusion 1.12 – Hazardous Fuels Reduction Activities
Pocum Mechanical Hazardous Fuels Reduction**

**US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Parashant National Monument
Mohave County, Arizona**

Purpose and Need

The Pocum Project is an effort to reduce hazardous fuels and establish fire breaks in a pinyon-juniper/sagebrush woodland by selectively mowing vegetation within the unit. The treatment unit is within the Grand Canyon - Parashant National Monument south of Black Rock Mountain. The intent is to create strips, approximately 24 feet wide, where most standing woody vegetation has been reduced, that would reduce wildfire intensities and provide firefighters with opportunities for suppression actions.

The 933 acre unit (attached map) is best characterized as pinyon, juniper, oak, chaparral, shrubs, forbs, and grasses. The unit contains several large drainages/washes, as well as steep slopes. A small corral and fence is associated with a water trough, supplied by a pipeline, for livestock and wildlife. The unit is crossed by several two-track roads, which are not maintained regularly.

The unit is adjacent to the Paiute Wilderness Area, which contains dense stands of pinyon and juniper and has the potential for a large, stand-replacing wildfire that could threaten the BLM administrative site and communication facility at Black Rock. Black Rock also contains high value crucial mule deer summer habitat, private property, and recreation sites. Suppression actions are somewhat restricted in wilderness.

The treatment unit is just north of BLM Road 101 and west of Road 1051, potential sources of ignition. South of the unit is Mud Mountain and Tweedy Point, where numerous large fire, fueled by non-native cheatgrass, have occurred. By placing fuel breaks in the treatment unit, managers who are attempting to deal with fires that start south of(or along) Road 101 will have more effective options to prevent the spread into the wilderness and, potentially, the high value area on Black Rock.

The primary purpose of the treatment is to reduce hazardous fuels and create fire breaks. The project will also increase biodiversity and promote the establishment of native grasses and forbs to aid in preventing soil erosion and increase wildlife forage.

Project Description

Prior to initiating operations, BLM would conduct surveys and inventories of cultural and biological resources, as necessary. All access would be from existing roads. Preparation activities include flagging and marking of any important wildlife areas, archeological sites, project boundary, and any safety hazards.

BLM would then use chainsaws and/or wheeled or tracked mechanical masticator/mower (bull hog, brush hog) to reduce woody vegetation along strips approximately 24 feet wide. Pinyon and juniper trees would be targeted, while blackbrush, cactus, and cliffrose would be avoided. Important wildlife areas, archaeological sites, steep slopes (>10%), and washes would also be avoided. Treatment during extremely wet soil conditions would not be implemented if soil compaction would occur. Chip bed depth would be restricted to less than three inches. Less than 50 acres within the 933 acre unit would be directly treated.

BLM would rehabilitate surface disturbance after operations are completed. BLM would implement pre-project vegetation monitoring to establish baseline grass/forb conditions. BLM would conduct post-treatment monitoring of treatment effects. Treatment unit will be monitored using photo plots.

If any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection Act are discovered, the operation would cease in the area of discovery. The discovery would be protected and operation would not resume until authorized by the Monument Manager.

All vehicles and equipment used for this project would be power washed to remove any weed seeds or biomass prior to being brought to the project location.

Legal land description

Maps showing project location attached
T38N, R14W Secs. 11, 14

Other agency involvements

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Region II, has been involved in developing the treatment.

Plan Conformance

The Proposed Action is consistent with the 1992 Arizona Strip Resource Management Plan, as amended. The Proposed Action was designed in conformance with all bureau standards and incorporates appropriate guidelines for specific required and desired conditions relevant to project activities.

The proposed action is in conformance with the following decisions as found in the Arizona Strip District RMP Implementation Plan of 1992 (Shivwits):

CL05 Surface disturbing activities on public land will be reviewed for cultural values by a cultural resource specialist or permitted archeologist.

FW01 Maintain healthy, viable and biologically diverse forest ecosystem that will meet the needs of wildlife, recreation, livestock, watershed and other resource.

FW04 In forest management activities ensure protection of natural aesthetics, recreation, special status species, cultural resources, and other multiple-use values.

RR11 Restore and/or maintain the generally natural "remote" setting that exist throughout the resource area through mitigation of new projects and implementation restoration as necessary.

WS01 Manage vegetation cover towards ecological stability and sound long-term protective soil cover using mechanical, chemical, biological and or fire as tools for accomplishments.

The proposal is not inconsistent with the Proclamation for the Grand Canyon - Parashant National Monument (2000), which is silent on the issue of fuel breaks, but does direct the BLM to manage the Monument to protect Monument objects, which includes vegetation communities that are at risk from catastrophic wildfires and other threats.

Grand Canyon – Parashant National Monument

Presidential Proclamation of January 11, 2000: "The Grand Canyon - Parashant National Monument is a vast, biologically diverse, impressive landscape encompassing an array of scientific and historic objects. This remote area of open, undeveloped spaces and engaging scenery is located on the edge of one of the most beautiful places on the earth, the Grand Canyon. Despite the hardships created by rugged isolation and lack of natural waters, the monument has a long and rich human history spanning more than 11000 years, and an equally rich geologic history spanning almost 2 billion years. Full of natural splendor and sense of solitude, this area remains remote and unspoiled, qualities that are essential to the protection of the scientific and historic resources it contains."

Interim Management for the Grand Canyon - Parashant National Monument was developed from the Monument Proclamation and Bureau policy and includes the statement: "In general, actions that are not precluded by the Proclamation or legislation and which do not conflict with established purpose of the monument or national conservation area may continue. Allowed activities can be restricted only where (1) the BLM, through process required by existing law, identifies places where such uses ought to be restricted or prohibited as necessary to protect the federal lands and resources, including the objects protected by the monument or national conservation designation; or (2) where the BLM finds a clear threat from such a use to federal lands and resources, including the

objects protected by the national conservation area or monument designation and the circumstances call for swift protective action.”

(Instruction Memorandum No 2002-008 Interim Management Policy for Bureau of Land Management National Monuments and National Conservation Areas).

While not specifically mentioned in the Proclamation or Interim Management Guidance, this project is constant with the goals and objectives.

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.12, because the project is outside wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), does not include any herbicide or pesticide use, requires no permanent road construction and the sale of vegetative material is not the primary purpose. The area is in Fire Regime Condition Class 3. The proposed project involves 933 acres of hazardous fuels reduction.

The application of this categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment. These extraordinary circumstances are contained in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, and will be addressed below in the Exceptions Review.

Persons and Agencies Consulted

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Region II; grazing permittees were consulted.

Decision and Rationale on Action

It is my decision to implement the proposal to inventory, prepare, treat, and rehabilitate the Pocum treatment unit. BLM will also monitor the project to determine if objectives have been met.

Inventory activities include surveys for cultural and biological resources, and pre-treatment vegetation monitoring. There are no listed, proposed, or candidate species present that would be affected by implementation of the proposed action. Access to the unit will be from existing roads. Preparation activities include flagging and marking of any important wildlife areas, archeological sites, project boundary, and any safety hazards.

Treatment includes the use chainsaws and/or wheeled or tracked mechanical masticator/mower (Bullhog, Brushhog) to reduce woody vegetation along strips approximately 24 feet wide. Pinyon and juniper trees are to be targeted, while blackbrush, cactus, and cliffrose would be avoided. Important wildlife areas, archaeological sites, steep slopes (>10%), and washes are to be avoided. Treatment is not to occur during extremely wet soil conditions if soil compaction would occur. Chip bed depth will be restricted to less than three inches. Following treatment of the unit, staging areas and other surface disturbance is to be rehabilitated, tracks obliterated to the extent practicable.

If any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection Act are discovered, the operation would cease in the area of discovery. The discovery would be protected and operation would not resume until authorized by the Monument Manager.

All vehicles and equipment used for this project would be power washed to remove any weed seeds or biomass prior to being brought to the project location.

There are no anticipated significant impacts to any resource. In addition, I have reviewed the Plan conformance Statement and have determined that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

The action is necessary to attempt to reduce hazardous fuels, to protect Monument objects from the risk of catastrophic fire, and to increase biodiversity and promote the establishment of native grasses and forbs to aid in preventing soil erosion and increase wildlife forage.

Compliance and Monitoring

Measures will be taken to avoid impacts to cultural properties, special status species, wilderness, and visual resources. A qualified individual will be on site during all surface-disturbing activities to monitor compliance. Project personnel will adhere to condor conservation measures (attached) at all times.

No work will be started before a cultural resource inventory has been completed and any sites found evaluated and a suitable mitigative treatment applied to minimize impact to any cultural resource. No treatment will be allowed on archaeological (historic or prehistoric) sites. If, in connection with this work, any human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony as defined in the Native American Graves Protection Act are discovered, the operation would cease in the area of the discovery. The discovery would be protected and operations would not resume until authorized by the Monument Manager.

If a listed species is observed, all work in the area would stop and would not be allowed to resume if there was any possibility that activities could adversely affect the species. If it is determined that the project would affect any listed species, the project would halt until consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service could occur.

Prior to initiation of operations, BLM prescribed fire managers will contact Arizona Game and Fish Department Region II and schedule treatments to avoid conflicts with hunting (treatment is not prohibited during a hunting season, but should be avoided if practicable).

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented on or after July 1st, 2007.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

The decision is subject to administrative appeal to the IBLA (see 43 CFR 4 for appeal rules and information).

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision, contact Tim Duck, Fuels Program Manager, Arizona Strip Field Office, 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, Utah 84790, (435) 688-3238.

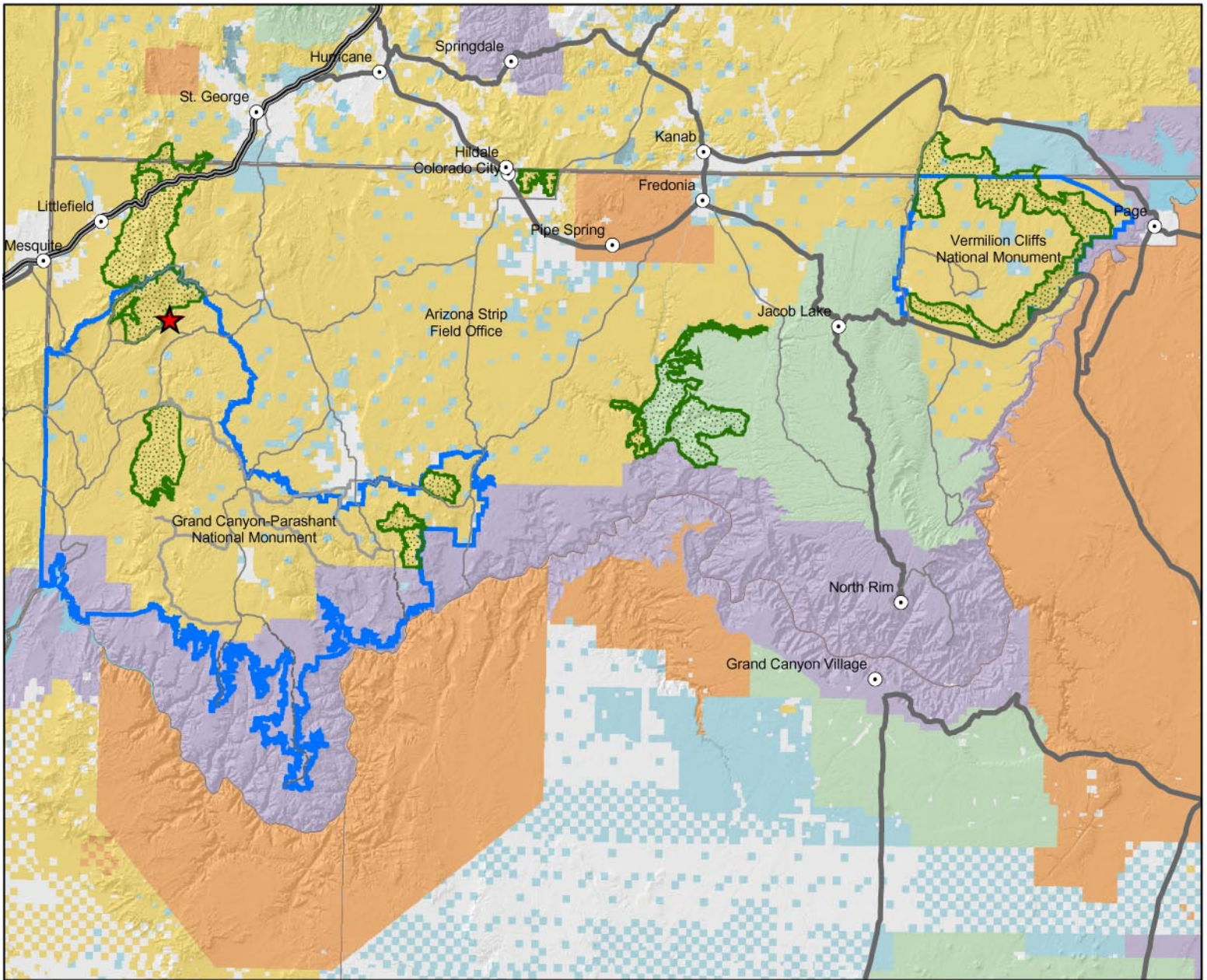
Dennis Curtis
Monument Manager
Grand Canyon - Parashant National Monument

Date

Attachments:

- Location Maps
- Condor Mitigation

Exceptions Review		
List of Exceptions	Specialist Signature/Date	Comments/Explanation
1. Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.	Klein	
2. Have adverse effects on unique geographic characteristics, historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of Natural Landmarks.	Spotts Herron	
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects.	Spotts	
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	Spotts	
5. Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	Spotts	
6. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	Spotts	
7. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.	Herron	
8. Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated critical habitat for these species.	Herder Hughes-Plants	No affect on listed or special status plants
9. Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. Will not have adverse effects on impaired waters.	Herder	
10. Threaten to violate a Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	Spotts Benson	
11. Project was identified through a collaborative framework as described in the 10 year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan.	Duck	
12. Project will not involve the construction of new permanent roads or other infrastructure, or have adverse effects on inventoried roadless areas.	Folks	
13. Project will not include sales of vegetative material that do not have hazardous fuels reduction as their primary purpose, or require the use of herbicides or pesticides.	Duck	
14. Project will not exceed 1,000 acres for mechanical hazardous fuels reduction activities and will not exceed 4,500 acres for hazardous fuels reduction activities using fire.	Duck	



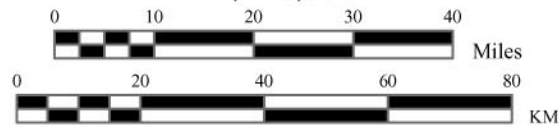
Legend

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Area of NEPA Project | Bureau of Land Management | National Park Service | Interstate |
| Designated Wilderness | State Lands | Indian Lands | Primary Routes |
| Monuments | Private Lands | National Forest | Secondary Routes |
| | | | Light Duty Routes |
| | | | 4WD Routes |

Location Map



1:1,220,000



CAUTION:

Land ownership data is derived from less accurate data than the 1:24000 scale base map. Therefore, land ownership may not be shown for parcels smaller than 40 acres, and land ownership lines may have plotting errors due to source data.

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for the use of the data for purposes not intended by the BLM.

