

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Twin Falls District  
Burley Field Office  
15 East 200 South  
Burley, ID 83318

**Finding of No Significant Impact  
Milner Wiland Urban Interface Project  
NEPA No. ID-220-2009-EA-3591**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:**

I have determined that the proposed action, as described in the EA will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. Because there would not be any significant impact, an environmental impact statement is not required.

In making this determination, I considered the following factors:

**Context:** The Milner Recreation area is a relatively large isolated public land tract (approximately 1,900 acres) that is bound by the Snake River on the north and private agricultural lands on the east, west and south (see map). The tract is used heavily by the public due to its close proximity to many communities in the Mini-Cassia and Magic Valley area. It provides access to the Snake River, including boat ramps and offers public camping areas along the Snake River. There are approximately six and half miles of roads within the recreation area. They are mostly graveled surface one-lane roads. Approximately, four miles of the Eastern Idaho Rail Road (EIRR) bisects the area. The ingress and egress into the area on the east side of the project is under the railroad grade and is extremely narrow with continuous fuels on either side. In addition, the Burley Trap Club is located within the confines of the Milner Recreation area.

In a study of recreation activity near Milner Dam by Idaho Power Company, they found that there was approximately 82,000 hours of recreational use in this area. Approximately 75% of the use occurred in the months of July, August and September. This heavy use period also corresponds with the period of highest fire danger. Fire danger is classified by the Burn Index (BI). The BI is a number related to the difficulty of controlling a wildfire. It is a function of the spread component and energy release component. For south central Idaho, the BI was rated as high 85% of the time and very high 73% of the time during July, August and September. The fuel/vegetation within the Milner Recreation is characterized by a dense sagebrush overstory with a continuous understory of Sandberg's bluegrass and cheatgrass.

There are 11 BLM camping sites with an additional 24 dispersed sites within the recreation area. Since 1982, the BLM wildfire database shows that there have been 22

starts within the recreation area and have been burned approximately 700 acres since 1982 within the 3,100-acre project area. The project area is comprised of approximately 1,900 acres of public land, and 1,200 acres of private land of which approximately 800 acres is in developed agriculture (see map 1).

**Intensity:**

**1. *The activities described in the proposed action do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)).*** The EA includes a description of the expected environmental consequences of removing 53 acres of existing vegetation and replacing it with Forage Kochia. The EA discloses there would be short-term adverse effects from clearing vegetation; however, these effects are expected to last for less than 1 year. The EA also discloses that creating fuel breaks would have beneficial effects by reducing wildfire behavior and promoting development of shrubs over time.

**2. *The activities included in the proposed action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).*** The proposed action would result in an increase in public health and safety by reducing the risk of large repeated wildland fires. Implementation of the components of the proposed action would not result in potentially substantial or adverse effects to public health and safety.

**3. *The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern.*** The project area does not contain any prime or unique farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, or areas of critical environmental concern.

**4. *The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).*** The effects of creating fuel breaks are not likely to be highly controversial. The Twin Falls District has a long history of implementing mechanical projects that alter vegetation. The effects of mechanical hazardous fuels reduction are well understood and documented in the Burley Field Office area. In addition, Forage kochia has been extensively studied and and it was determined that the use of Forage kochia as a fuel break would be successful.

**5. *The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).*** The effects of the proposed action identified in the EA are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

**6. *My decision to implement these activities does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).*** The Milner WUI Project represents a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. Any similarly proposed future projects must be individually evaluated on its own merits.

**7. *The effects of the Minidoka Wildfire Fuel Breaks project would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).*** The EA discloses that there are no other connected or cumulative actions that would cause significant cumulative impacts. Design features in the proposed action are sufficient to lessen environmental impacts of the proposed action. An analysis of cumulative effects was conducted in the EA and no significant cumulative impacts were identified.

**8. *I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).*** The project has been clear by the State Historic Preservation Officer and no districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places were identified. In addition, design features in the proposed action have been incorporated to ensure that all cultural resources would be protected.

**9. *The proposed activities are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).*** The EA and specialist reports disclosed that there are no effects to Threatened or Endangered Species in the project area.

**10. *The proposed activities will not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).*** The proposed action is in conformance with land use plan as stated on page one of the Milner WUI EA.

**APPROVED:**

/s/ MC Courtney  
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Michael Courtney  
Field Manager  
Burley Field Office

July 1, 2009  
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Date