

**Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI)  
for the  
Wallace South Hill Project Environmental Assessment  
EA No. ID-410-2006-EA-1050**

**BLM – Coeur d’Alene Field Office**

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed activities documented in Chapter 5 of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Wallace South Hill Project. I have also reviewed the project record for this analysis. Implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1598.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of effects. Significant, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both context and intensity.

**(a) Context. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27):**

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The project area is limited in size and the activities limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

**(b) Intensity. This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity (40 CFR 1508.27):**

*(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.*

Impacts associated with the project are discussed in Chapter 5 of the EA. These include short-term and long-term effects as well as beneficial and adverse effects. The proposed actions would not have significant impacts on resources identified and described in Chapter 4.

*(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

The proposed activities would not significantly affect public health and safety. The project is designed to reduce the public health and safety risks associated with a wildfire in this area. Forest health and fuel reduction activities would be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public (EA, Chapter 2). Similar actions have not significantly affected public health and safety.

The proposed project includes the use of prescribed fire which could affect public health and safety. The risk of an escaped fire would be low due in part to the design of the project, including construction of fire lines and fuel breaks; reduced fuels along the BLM/private land

boundary; fire management expertise and use of experienced crews; and the availability of the necessary fire suppression resources. Extensive agency experience with similar local projects and conditions show the risk of an escaped fire is low. Appropriate warning signs and public announcements would be used to notify recreationists and other public land users of logging and burning activities. No degradation of water quality is expected as a result of these proposed activities (EA, page 44). A short-term minor impact may occur to local air quality from the prescribed burning/underburning treatments and the burning of logging slash. However, burning would be done in accordance with State air quality standards and within burning periods approved by the State of Idaho (EA, page 33).

*(3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

There would be no adverse effects to historic places or loss of scientific, cultural, historical, or other unique resources (EA page 25). This project is in compliance with the agreement between the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

There are no parklands, prime or unique farmlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the affected area.

*(4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

An analysis of the proposed action and alternatives have been conducted using the best information available and the latest methods of analyzing data by professionals in their respected disciplines. Throughout the analysis process, public comments varied in their recommendations on ways to best manage resources within the project area. However, the effects of the proposed alternatives on the various resources (EA, Chapter 5) are not considered to be highly controversial by professionals, specialists and scientists from associated fields of forestry, wildlife biology and management, fisheries, and hydrology. While the selected alternative may be controversial, I do not believe that there is significant controversy over the effects of this action.

*(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

Scoping did not identify highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks. The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for determining the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, past experience, knowledge of the area, and professional judgment. Impacts are within the limits that are considered thresholds of concern. Therefore, I conclude that there are no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks.

*(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

Many similar projects have been conducted and are planned for our area of jurisdiction. The forest health conditions of today require active management. This project is not precedent

setting for future actions and is not expect to have any significant effects. This action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

*(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.*

This project is similar to activities that have or are taking place on adjacent Forest Service land. Timber harvest activities on adjacent private land have occurred and can be expected to continue and may be for economic reasons as well as reducing fire hazard. The EA includes descriptions of all connected, cumulative, and similar actions in the scope of the analysis. The cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions are considered and disclosed in the EA, Chapter 5.

*(8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

There are no features in the area affected that are listed or are being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A cultural resource inventory has been completed in the area, no cultural resources were located (EA, Chapter 4).

*(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

The proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of gray wolves south of Interstate 90, therefore the BLM will not confer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the proposed action .

There would be no effect to water howellia (EA, page 39) because there is no potential habitat in the project area. There would be no effect to Spalding's catchfly (EA, page 39) because no habitat exists within the project area. There may be effects to individual Constance's bittercress and clustered lady's-slipper plants, but overall populations would survive. Buffering areas where the populations exist, the use of biological control agents and monitoring during prescribed burning and weed control actions would minimize adverse affects to the plants. When the project is completed, the populations would be monitored to make certain the plant populations were not adversely affected.

*(10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The action does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or permits imposed for the protection of the environment.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed for the Wallace South Hill Project is not a major federal action and that its implementation will not significantly affect the quality of the human

environment. Accordingly, I have determined that an Environmental Impact Statement need not be prepared for this project.

/s/ Eric R. Thomson  
Eric Thomson  
Field Manager

March 5, 2009  
Date