

**Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of:
Categorical Exclusion 1.13
Hornet Creek Fuels Management Project
ID-110-2007-CE-3476**

**US Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Four Rivers Field Office
Ada County, Idaho**

Description of the Proposed Action and the Purpose and Need for the Action

The **purpose** for the proposed action is to reduce hazardous fuels in Hornet Creek WUI area identified in the 2006, Adams County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan pp 17 (Map 1). The **need** for the proposed action is to reduce the risk of wildland fires crossing from BLM onto private land, and vice versa, and threatening life, property, and resources. The proposed action will be achieved with an objective to thin small-diameter trees on at least 80% of the area within the project boundary.

The **proposed action** is to hand-cut approximately 80 acres of small-diameter trees that are considered as hazardous fuels and are within the Hornet Creek Watershed, a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) (Map 1). The resulting slash will be hand-piled and burned when there is minimal risk of fire escape, or may transported off-site to be used for firewood or other purposes.

The project area is in T.17N., R1W., section 31, NW ¼ of the Four Rivers Field Office. This area lies approximately 5 miles northwest of Council, Idaho, in the Hornet Creek drainage of Big Game Management Unit 39. The land ownership consists of 80 acres of public land surrounded by private land (Map 1).

The following design features will be incorporated into the Project, in order to avoid any negative effects to *Ceanothus prostratus* (common name: Squawcarpet).

Two weeks prior to implementation, areas with *Ceanothus prostratus* that are within the project area boundaries will be marked on the ground, using flagging of a designated color. Individual plants will be flagged; if large areas of plants are found, the perimeter of the entire area containing the plants will be flagged. At the same time, areas which do not contain individual plants or groups of plants and are large enough to stack and burn slash in piles no greater than 6 feet in diameter and 4 feet high will be marked with flagging of a differing designated color.

Crews involved with flagging will be briefed in the identification of *Ceanothus prostratus*, and will be supervised directly by the District Botanist or an individual designated by the District Botanist. Prior to implantation, all field workers involved with the project will be briefed in the identification of the plant.

During implementation, care will be taken to reduce disturbance to areas that contain *Ceanothus prostratus* using the following additional design features:

- Travel and foot traffic in areas that contain *Ceanothus prostratus* will be minimized.
- Trees that are cut will be limbed and the top of the tree will be removed down to a 2-inch diameter. The remainder of the bole of the trees will be left on the ground.
- Where possible, slash will be hand-carried, rather than dragged along the ground.

Slash will only be piled in areas that are determined to be free of *Ceanothus prostratus*, and have been flagged as described earlier.

Conformance with Land Use Plans, Laws, Regulations, and Guidance

The Proposed Action is consistent with the 1987 Cascade Resource Management Plan (see page 30, Forest Resources) and Record of Decision. 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 consistent and in conformance with the following authorities and laws:

- 516 DM 2.3A(2): Departmental Categorical Exclusions, specifically 1.12, hazardous fuels reduction activities
- Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI)
- National Historic and Preservation Act
- Endangered Species Act
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)
- 1987 Cascade Resource Management Plan's (RMP) Management Actions to achieve the objectives (Preferred Alternative, page 30) and the RMP Record of Decision (page 3).
- National Fire Plan's 2002 Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People & Sustaining Resources which includes: (1) The Ten-Year Comprehensive Strategy (pages 5, 6, 12, 14); (2) The Amended 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review (pages ii, 2, 3, 5-11, 19, 21, 23, 25-26, 39, 43, 47, 49-52); and (3) Presidential Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI – pages 1-2, 4, 6, 9)
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) Finding and Subsequent Idaho BLM Instructional Memorandum (IM) No. ID-2002-031
- 2006, Adams County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan pp 17
- The Boise District Fire Management Plan

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 which states the following:

“Hazardous fuels reduction activities using prescribed fire not to exceed 4,500 acres, and mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing, not to exceed 1,000 acres. Such activities: Shall be limited to areas (1) in wildland-urban interface and (2) Condition Classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III, outside the wildland-urban interface; Shall be identified through a collaborative framework as described in “A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan;” Shall be conducted consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land and resource management plans; Shall not be conducted in wilderness areas or impair the suitability of wilderness study areas for preservation as wilderness; Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure; and may include the sale of vegetative material if the primary purpose of the activity is hazardous fuels reduction.”

The application of this categorical exclusion to the Hornet Creek Fuels Management Project is appropriate because the proposed action meets all the criteria for categorical exclusion listed in the previous paragraph, specifically:

- size of the proposed action (80 acres) is within required limits
- project is located within the wildland-urban interface and is characterized by Condition Class 2 and Fire Regime Groups II and III
- project was developed collaboratively with publics
- project is not within a wilderness area or wilderness study areas
- project will not include use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other permanent facilities

Preliminary consultation with various resource specialists resulted in determining that there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment as contained in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2. If subsequent further analysis shows that any of the 12 extraordinary circumstances apply, an Environmental Assessment will be required. The review and assessment of the potential extraordinary circumstances will be filed in the Decision File for this project.

Persons and Agencies Consulted

In July 2007, the idea for the Hornet Creek Fuels Management Project was presented to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes and cultural clearance reports for the area were discussed. Formal

consultation with the Tribes is on-going for this project.

Scoping consisted of publication of the proposed action on the BLM Idaho NEPA Database webpage in mid-June 2007. No public comments or concerns were received regarding the project. The permittee that uses the area (JHarrington Individual Allotment) was notified of the proposed action via telephone. Internal scoping consisted of a field visit to the site on July 2 2007, by the District Botanist, Riparian Ecologist, and Fuels Specialist. The BLM sensitive plant species *Ceanothus prostratus* was found on the site. Design features were discussed that would avoid negative effects to the plants. The Four Rivers Field Manager determined that if these design features were successfully implemented, there would be no potential extraordinary circumstances as contained in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2.

Decision and Rationale on Action

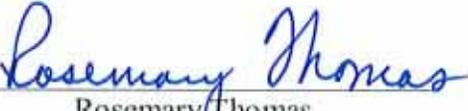
My decision is to implement the Hornet Creek Fuels Management Project as described above and shown on Map 1, in accordance with 516 DM 2.3A(2): Departmental Categorical Exclusions.

The project will meet the need for reducing hazardous fuels, and reduce fire hazard in the Wildland Urban Interface as outlined in the Adams County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan and the Boise District Fire Management Plan.

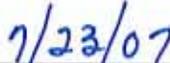
I have determined that these actions meet the purpose and need for action. In addition, I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the approved land use plan and other laws and regulations, and that no further environmental analysis is required. I have determined that there is no potential for significant effects.

Implementation Date

Hand-cutting treatments and slash piling will be implemented during the fall of 2007 and the spring and summer of 2008. The piles will be burned sometime in the fall of 2007 and the fall of 2008.



Rosemary Thomas
Four Rivers Field Manager



Date

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

Any party to a case who is adversely affected by a decision of an officer of the Bureau of Land Management shall have a right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals following the process detailed in 43 CFR part 4, subpart E. A person who wishes to appeal to the Board must file a notice of appeal in the office of the officer who made the decision, within 30 days following receipt of the decision. The appeal may be accompanied by a petition for a stay of the decision pending appeal in accordance with 43 CFR 4.21. The appeal may include a statement of reasons for the appeal and any arguments the appellant wishes to make (43 CFR 4.411). If the notice of appeal did not include a statement of the reasons for the appeal, the appellant shall file such a statement with the Board (address: Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 801 North Quincy Street, Arlington, VA 22203) within 30 days after the notice of appeal was filed. The appellant must also serve a copy of the notice of appeal and any statement of reasons on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken and on the Office of the Solicitor (address: Field Solicitor, U.S. Department of the Interior, Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, 550 West Fort Street MSC 020, Boise Idaho 83724).

Should you wish to file a petition for a stay, see 43 CFR 4.21. In accordance with 43 CFR 4.21(b), a petition for a stay must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (i) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (ii) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (iii) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (iv) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

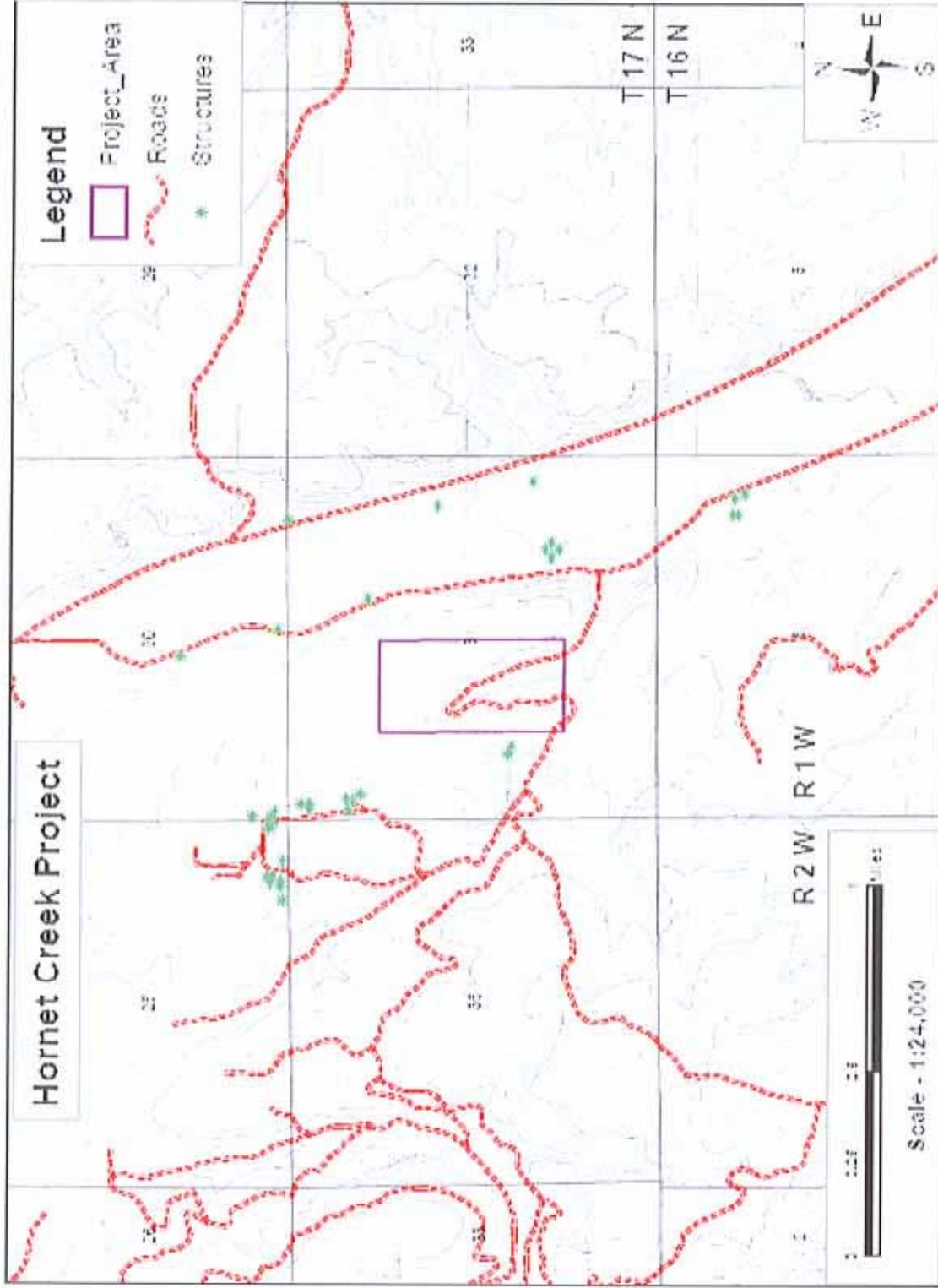
Contact Person

For additional information regarding this decision please contact Irene Saphra or Rosemary Thomas at the Four Rivers Field Office:

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Map 1. Hornet Creek Project Area