

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

Twin Falls District
Shoshone Field Office
400 West F Street
Shoshone, ID 83352

Finding of No Significant Impact

**West Camas Forest Restoration and Timber Sale
NEPA No. ID-230-2010-EA-3913**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

I have determined that the proposed action and alternatives, as described in the EA, will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. In making this determination, I considered the following factors within the scope of context and intensity:

Context: This requirement 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 15.27).

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The planning area is limited in size and the activities limited in potential. The proposed action and alternatives described within the EA focus on a small portion of the landscape. The implementation of these actions would result in harvesting trees on 300 acres plus non-commercial removal of conifers from small isolated aspen stands next to harvested areas. Effects from these treatments will be local and would not result in regional or national significance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, acts, regulations and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. The activities described in the proposed action and alternatives 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 harvesting trees through thinning and regeneration/sanitation treatments; activities associated with harvesting (i.e. road improvement, slash burning, and replanting); removing non-commercial conifers from aspen stands; and rerouting recreation access trails. None of the effects are considered to reach the level of significance. The following impacts are discussed within the EA:

- 1) The changes to forest structure and forest health;
- 2) The temporary release of smoke into the airshed;
- 3) The temporary increases in the potential for noxious weed establishment;
- 4) The impacts to fish bearing streams, riparian habitats, and water quality;
- 5) Temporary wildlife displacement during harvesting operations, and the changes in wildlife habitats;
- 6) The reduction of recreation opportunities during treatment operations and the changes in access to the area north of Ear Creek after operations area completed;
- 7) The role disturbances to soils will have on compaction and erosion potential;
- 8) The impact that the project will have on livestock operations;
- 9) The impacts to Forest Service right of way grants;
- 10) The changing of fuel characteristics and loadings and how these changes will result in impacts to fire behavior and influence fire management options.

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 and alternatives will be implemented in a remote localized area with relatively little traffic in and through the area. Additionally, Project Design Features have been identified within the EA that will limit hazards to visiting public by limiting the time that the area is open to recreation and providing communication of when and where recreation activities can safely take place.

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 West Camas project area does not contain any of these unique characteristics.

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 actions described within the proposed action and alternatives are related to harvesting trees as part of forest health treatments and the impacts have are not highly controversial. These actions include cutting and removing trees, improving roads, constructing temporary roads, hauling logging equipment and logs, burning slash, decommissioning roads, and re-vegetating disturbed areas. All of these actions area

common practices within actively managed forests and currently occur throughout the nation on private and public lands. Since these are practices that occur regularly, there are established Best Management Practices (BMPs), policies, and laws to limit actions that would result in undesirable outcomes. Within the EA it is identified that all actions will conform to existing BMPs and policies and will abide by all applicable laws.

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)).

As discussed in intensity section 4, the actions described within the proposed action and alternatives are not uncommon to the BLM or any other entity that manages forest ecosystems and therefore the policies, laws, best management practices that have been established remove unknown risks.

6. A 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 West Camas project represents a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any proposed future projects must be evaluated on their own merits and effects.

7. The effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives 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.

The Project Design Features identified within the EA are incorporated to insure that the general actions of harvesting trees and all actions that are a part of that process follow sideboards that will keep impacts within acceptable limits. The impacts of these actions, with consideration for the Project Design Features, are discussed within the EA in chapter 4. Additionally, in chapter 4 cumulative impacts of other actions are considered and an additive analysis is given where the West Camas project and other actions have an impact on the same resource or issue. This analysis does not identify impacts of any single action or the combination of actions beyond the threshold of significance or beyond impacts that have been previously identified within the Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment (2008).

8. I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction to 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)).

Cultural resource surveys were completed in areas that have been identified to incur ground disturbing activities and no cultural resources were discovered. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office was completed on November 5, 2010

9. The proposed activities are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).

The gray wolf (*canus lupus*) was the only species listed by the Endangered Species Act to be known to have habitat in or frequent the project area. A determination of “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect” and is not likely to “jeopardize” has been identified for the proposed action and action alternatives. The rationale for this determination is documented in a Biological Assessment (BA) within the project file. The BA identifies limited, short-term potential for disturbance and potential for improving habitat as the bases for the determination.

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)).

Page 2 within the EA describes how the proposed actions and alternatives are within the conformance of the existing land use plan. Additionally, pages 4 through 7 of the EA identify Project Design Features that are in place to ensure the actions follow applicable policies, regulations, and state and federal laws.

APPROVED:

/s/ Ruth A. Miller

1/24/2012

Ruth A. Miller
Shoshone Field Manager
Shoshone Field Office

Date