

**Decision Memorandum on Action and for Application of:  
516 DM 2, Appendix 1  
Departmental Categorical Exclusion 1.12**

**US Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office**

**Field Office NEPA Reference:** CA-660-05-55

**Project:** Snow Creek Fuel Reduction

**Location:** Community of Snow Creek, Riverside County, California  
T3S, R3E, Sections 20 and 21, SBBM

**Description of Proposed Action and Purpose and Need for the Action:** The BLM proposes to reduce hazardous fuels/vegetation on public lands around the community of Snow Creek. The community of Snow Creek is adjacent to public lands within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. The purpose for the fuel reduction would be to protect the community from the threat of wildfire. The invasion of nonnative grasses and herbaceous plants in and near the community has resulted in an unnatural fuel accumulation that would facilitate the spread of wildfire in the desert plant community. Numerous fires have burned in the area in recent years. The fuel reduction would create defensible space around the community thus creating a safe area from which to conduct fire suppression operations on future incidents. By permitting the fuel reduction in the planned location, the threat of wildfire to the community of Snow Creek would be reduced.

The fuel reduction project would be located along the west side of Snow Creek Road, from the intersection with Falls Creek Road southwest for approximately 1500 feet. Fuels would be reduced in an area approximately 1500 feet long and varying from 80 feet to approximately 250 feet in width, creating a fuel break adjacent to the existing road system (see maps). The project would cover no more than 5.2 acres on public lands. Much of the area is previously disturbed and the predominant vegetation is Creosote Scrub. The fuels to be removed are the non-native annual grasses and herbaceous plants, principally Sahara mustard and Schismus grass. These light fuels typically propagate the spread of wildfire in this desert plant community. Creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), Brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), Cheesebush (*Hymenoclea salsola*), and other native shrub species would not be removed.

Vegetation would be removed by cutting with rakes and weed eater type equipment by volunteers from the community and local area. A BLM representative would be on site during implementation to monitor the project. Raking will be prohibited in designated sensitive areas so as not to disturb the ground surface. The project would occur on or after May 21, 2005, when scheduling of volunteers and BLM allows.

**Plan Conformance:** In compliance with 43 CFR 1610.5-3 and BLM MS1617.3, the proposed action is in conformance with the *California Desert Conservation Area Plan (1980 as amended)* and *Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Management Plan (2003)*.

**Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act:** The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act

Deleted:

(NEPA) is accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.12. 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.

516 DM 2, Appendix 1, 1.12, Hazardous Fuel Reduction Actions - Activities using mechanical methods for crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, and mowing can be categorically excluded if they do not include more than 1,000 acres. Such activities:

- Shall be limited to areas in the wildland-urban interface or to areas in 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 consistent with agency and departmental procedures and applicable resource management plans.
- Shall not be 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, but may include the sale of vegetative material if the primary purpose of the activity is to reduce hazardous fuel.

**Screening for Exceptions:** The following exceptions apply to individual actions within categorical exclusions (516 DM, Appendix 2). The preparer and/or indicated specialist must verify that the Proposed Action does not:

2.1	Have significant adverse effects of public health or safety?	No
2.2	Have adverse effects on such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farm lands, wet lands, flood plains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of National Landmarks?	No
2.3	Have highly controversial environmental effects?	No
2.4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	No
2.5	Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	No
2.6	Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?	No

2.7	Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?	No
2.8	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?	No
2.9	Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?	No
2.10	Threaten to violate a Federal, State, or local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	No

I considered all pertinent situations during the design of the project and found that there is no potential for significant effects to the human or natural components of the environment.

**Persons and Agencies Consulted:**

James Gannon, BLM Fuels Module Leader  
 Tracy Albrecht, BLM Interpretive Specialist  
 Wanda Raschkow, BLM Archaeologist  
 Kevin Doran, BLM Natural Resources Specialist  
 Greg Hill, Planning and Environmental Coordinator  
 Snow Creek Homeowners Association

This project was initiated and requested by;  
 Connie Reeder, Snow Creek Village, California 92282,

Deleted: the Snow Creek Homeowners Association¶  
 (Address  
 Deleted: )  
 Deleted: ¶

**Decision and Rationale on Action:**

I have decided to implement the Snow Creek Fuel Reduction Project, including mitigation measures listed in the proposed action. These actions meet the 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 that no further environmental analysis is required.

**Implementation Date:**

This project will be implemented on or after May 21, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Field Manager  
 Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office  
 Bureau of Land Management  
 U.S. Department of the Interior  
 690 W. Garnet Avenue; P.O. Box 581260  
 North Palm Springs, CA 92258-1260

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

## **Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4, and the information provided in Form 1842-1 (enclosed). If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 690 West Garnet Avenue, P.O. Box 581260, North Palm Springs, California 92258, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, pursuant to Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4, Subpart E, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

### Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) the relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) the likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) the likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

### **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision, contact:

Danella George  
Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Manager  
PO Box 581260  
North Palm Springs, CA 92258  
(760) 251-4800