

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

CX Number: DOI-BLM-OR-B070-2012-0010-CX

Date: 1/30/2012

File Code (Project/Serial Number): 008591

Preparer: Dory Osgood

Applicant: Burns District BLM

Title of Proposed Action: Desert Meadows Emergency Stabilization

Description of Proposed Action and Project Design Elements (if applicable): The Burns District Bureau of Land Management is proposing to implement the Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation (ES & R) Plan for the Desert Meadows Fire. The Desert Meadows Fire burned 2,100 acres within the No Livestock Grazing Area of the Steens Mountain Wilderness (see map). The fire started on a slight slope and then burned up a steep mountain side between Little Blitzen River and Dry Creek. The fire burned in such a manner as to leave a mosaic pattern of live and unburned vegetation within the burn perimeter. Directly under some juniper trees, the fire burned at high intensity resulting in black and white ash covering the soil surface. The fire killed some western juniper and removed above ground portions of sagebrush. Perennial grasses and forbs were also burned to the soil surface. The Desert Meadows Fire was contained and controlled on September 15, 2011.

BLM employees would hand broadcast a seeding mixture comprised of native grasses and forbs within burned areas of the fire perimeter. The seeding mixture would not be broadcasted within the riparian area. The BLM would concentrate seeding in deeper soils and under heavily burned juniper trees. The BLM would broadcast the seed between February and April depending on the weather.

Table 1. Drill Seeding Seed Mix

Desert Meadow Fire	
Species	Lbs./acre
Yarrow	.25
bluebunch wheatgrass	4
Balsamroot arrowleaf	0.5
Idaho fescue	4
Basin wildrye	2
Total	11.5

The BLM would inventory and treat weeds within the burned area for three years after the burn. Where herbicide application is determined to be the most appropriate treatment for noxious weeds, use of herbicides would be in conformance with the label instructions. Only treatments allowable on Oregon BLM lands in conformance with Burns BLM authorized procedures would be used. The BLM would apply herbicides using ground-based sprayers.

Implementation and effectiveness monitoring would occur.

Implementation Monitoring: This monitoring is the responsibility of the Burns BLM District ESR Lead. Monitoring of implementation would be accomplished by determining whether or not specific activities identified in this plan were actually implemented as planned. Items to be monitored include, but are not limited to, dates of actual treatment, seed utilized, GPS data gathering of actual treatment unit perimeters and documenting any deviations from planned activities including a justification for the deviation.

Effectiveness Monitoring: This monitoring is the responsibility of the Burns BLM District. Effectiveness monitoring would use a variety of methods including but not limited to vegetative monitoring protocols.

Legal Description (attach Location Map):

B. Conformance with Land Use Plan (LUP) (name):

Date Approved/Amended: The proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the Cooperative Management and Protection Area Resource Management Plan (CMPA RMP), August 2005, even though they are not specifically provided for, because they are clearly consistent with the following RMP decisions:

Wilderness:

Objective #4- To ensure the conservation, protection, and improved management of the ecological, social, and economic environment of the CMPA, including geological, biological, wildlife, riparian, and scenic resources., Page 11.

Goal #1- To provide for long-term protection and preservation of the area's wilderness character under a principle of nondegradation. The area's natural condition, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and any ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value present will be managed so they will remain unimpaired., Page 11.

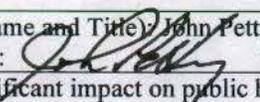
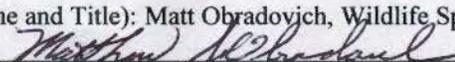
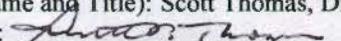
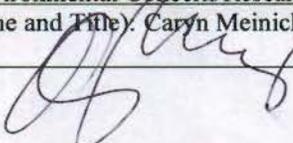
Vegetation:

Objective- Maintain or restore native vegetation communities through sound landscape management practices. Increase species and structural diversity at the plant community and landscape levels in the big sagebrush communities. Provide multiple successional stages within the landscape. Page 35.

BLM Categorical Exclusion Reference (516 DM, Chapter 11): I. Emergency Stabilization

DOI Categorical Exclusion Reference (516 DM 2, Appendix 1):

Screening for Exceptions: The following extraordinary circumstances (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) may apply to individual actions within the categorical exceptions. The indicated specialist recommends the proposed action does *not*:

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION	
2.1	Have significant impacts on public health or safety.
Specialist (Print Name and Title):	John Petty, Health and Safety Specialist
Signature and Date:	 2/10/12
Rationale:	No significant impact on public health or safety.
2.2	Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); flood plains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.
<u>Migratory Birds</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title):	Matt Obradovjch, Wildlife Specialist
Signature and Date:	 02/10/2012
Rationale:	The proposed action should reduce the probability of the burned areas converting to annual grass dominance (medusahead rye and cheatgrass) while maintaining or enhancing migratory bird habitat. Grassland species of migratory birds would probably use the reseeded areas the most in the short term but species diversity would still be high in the surrounding areas that were not burned.
<u>Historic and Cultural Resources</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title):	Scott Thomas, District Archaeologist
Signature and Date:	 2/10/12
Rationale:	No historic or cultural resources would be affected by this project.
<u>Areas of Critical Environmental Concern/Research Natural Areas</u>	
Specialist (Print Name and Title):	Caryn Meinicke, NRS-Botany
Signature and Date:	 2-13-12

Rationale: There are no ACEC/RNAs within the proposed project area.

Water Resources/Flood Plains

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Daryl Bingham, Fisheries Biologist

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 10 FEB 2012

Rationale: The proposed action would not affect water resources and the proposed action is not in a floodplain.

Soils, Biological Soil Crust, Prime Farmlands

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Caryn Meinicke, NRS-Botany

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2-13-12

Rationale: Impacts to the soils and BSCs will be negligible due to hand seeding. Any disturbance to soils or biological soil crusts will be short term, 1-2 growing seasons as vegetation re-establishes. There are no prime farmlands within in the proposed seeding area.

Recreation/ Visual Resources

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Michael Kelly, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2-10-2012

Rationale: The Emergency Stabilization Project is not anticipated to have an effect to recreation.

Visual Resource: The VRM Class for this project area is VRM 1 and the intention is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. The broadcast planting of native grasses and forbs would retain and improve the character of the landscape over time as native species re-vegetate. No effects are anticipated to the visual resource.

Wilderness/Wild and Scenic River Resources

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Eric Haakenson, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2-10-2012

Rationale: The proposed action would ensure native vegetation is reestablished in the burn area. This action would ensure a historic fire cycle and would provide adequate vegetation cover and feed for wildlife. The rehabilitation treatments do not result in an intensity of impact (i.e., major ground disturbance, etc.) that would cumulatively constitute a significant impact on the quality of the environment within the Wilderness/Wild and Scenic River Resources.

2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2) (E)].

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2/13/12

Rationale: There are no known highly controversial environmental effects or unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects.

2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2/13/12

Rationale: There are no known highly uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks associated with implementation. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects.

2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2/13/12

Rationale: Implementation would not establish precedence for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental risks. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental effects.

2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist

Signature and Date:

[Signature] 2/13/12

Rationale: Implementation would not have any known direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant effects. The BLM routinely seeds areas burned by wildfire to reduce soil erosion and invasion by annual grasses such as cheatgrass. Other wildfire rehabilitation Environment Assessments have shown no significant environmental

effects.
2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Scott Thomas, District Archaeologist Signature and Date: <i>Scott Thomas</i> 2-10-12
Rationale: No National Register listed or eligible properties would be affected by this project.
2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Fauna</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Matthew J. Obriadovich, Wildlife Biologist Signature and Date: <i>Matthew Obriadovich</i> 02/10/2012
Rationale: There are no known federally listed Endangered or Threatened species, species proposed to be listed, or designated Critical Habitat in this project area. Therefore there would be no effects to TEPS species or any critical habitat.
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Aquatic</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Daryl Bingham, Fisheries Biologist Signature and Date: <i>Daryl Bingham</i> 10 FEB 2012
Rationale: There are no Threatened or Endangered Aquatic species known in the project area.
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Flora</u> Specialist (Print Name and Title): Caryn Meinicke, NRS-Botany Signature and Date: <i>Caryn Meinicke</i> 2-13-12
Rationale: There are no documented T&E or special status species or critical habitat within the project area.
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist Signature and Date: <i>Rhonda Karges</i> 2/13/12
Rationale: Implementation would not violate any known law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist Signature and Date: <i>Rhonda Karges</i> 2/13/12
Rationale: Implementation would not have a disproportionately high or adverse effect on low income or minority populations as such populations do not exist within the project area.
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Scott Thomas, District Archaeologist Signature and Date: <i>Scott Thomas</i> 2-10-12
Rationale: Access to or integrity of Indian sacred sites would not be affected by this project.
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).
Specialist (Print Name and Title): Lesley Richman, Weed Specialist Signature and Date: <i>Lesley Richman</i> 2/13/2012
Rationale: Noxious weeds are known to occur in limited numbers in this area. Treatments are on-going. The area burned in the fire will be monitored for noxious weeds for at least 2 years. Any weeds found will be treated using the most appropriate methods.

Additional review (As determined by the Authorized Officer):

RMP conformance and CX review confirmation:

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Rhonda Karges, Environmental Specialist

Signature: *Rhonda Karges*

Date: *2/13/12*

Management Determination: Based upon review of this proposal, I have determined the Proposed Action is in conformance with

the LUP, qualifies as a categorical exclusion and does not require further NEPA analysis.

Authorized Officer (Print Name and Title): Joan M. Suther, Andrews/Steens Field Manager

Signature: Joan M. Suther

Date: 2/14/12

Authority

Authority for this decision is found under 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 4190.1 (a), "...when BLM determines that vegetation, soil, or other resources on the public lands are ... at immediate risk of erosion or other damage due to wildlife, BLM may make a rangeland wildfire management decision effective immediately or on a date established in the decision Effective date is date of authorized officer's signature. Wildfire management includes but is not limited to: ... (2) Projects to stabilize and rehabilitate lands affected by wildfire."

Appeal Procedures

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and Form 1842-1. If an appeal is filed, your notice of appeal should be received by the Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738, within 30 days of receipt of the decision but no later than December 1, 2011. The appellant has the burden of showing the decision appealed is in error.

A copy of the appeal, statement of reasons, and all other supporting documents should also be sent to the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Northwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 805 SW Broadway, Portland, Oregon 97205. If the notice of appeal did not include a statement of reasons for the appeal, it must be sent to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 801 North Quincy Street, Arlington, Virginia 22203. It is suggested appeals be sent certified mail, return receipt requested.

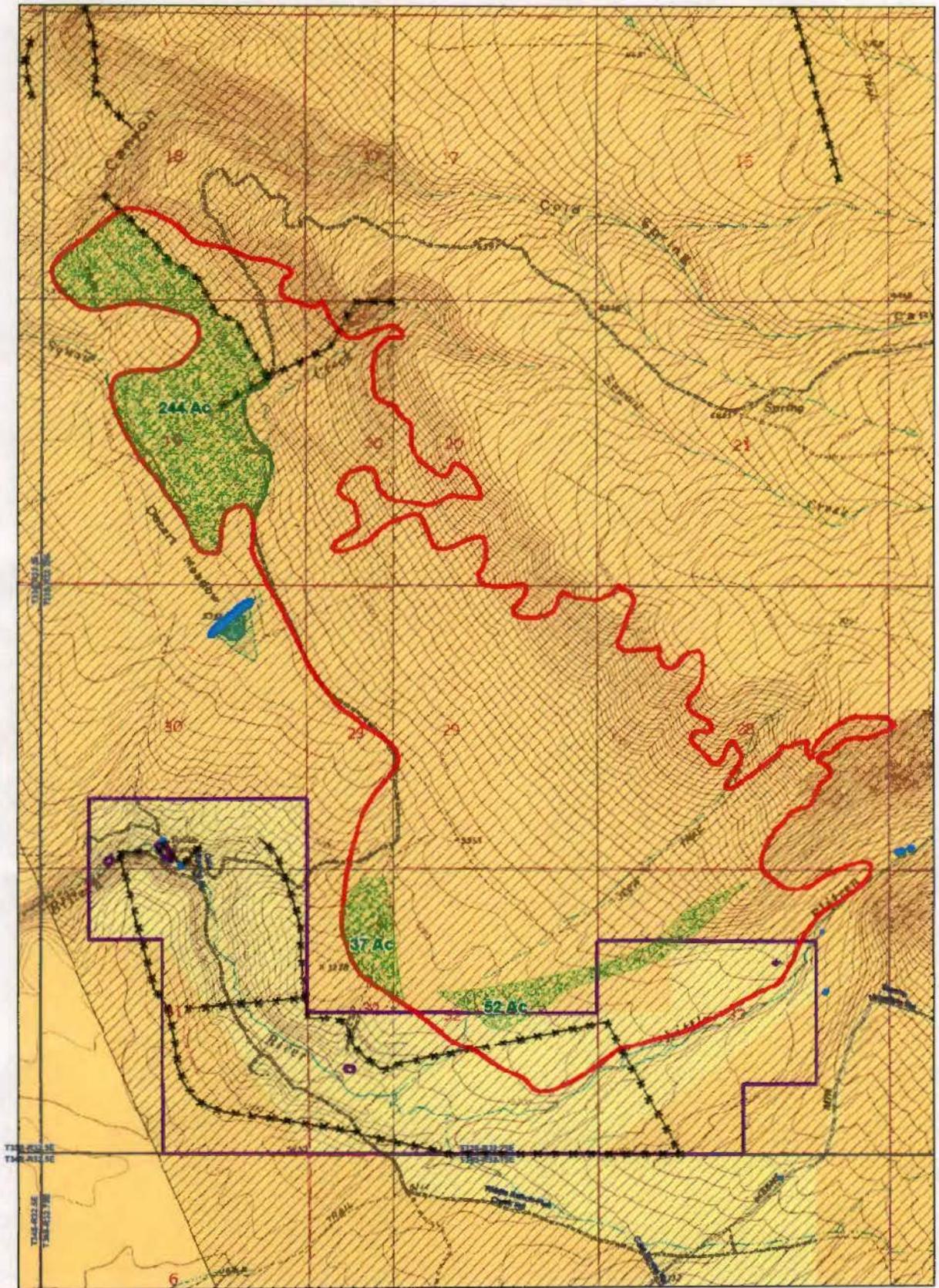
Request for Stay

Should you wish to file a motion for stay pending the outcome of an appeal of this decision, you must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CFR 4.21:

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

As noted above, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

Joan M. Suther, Field Manager Date 2/14/12
Title and Signature of Authorized Officer



Desert Meadows Fire Seeding

- Proposed Range Seeding
- Low Density Sage-grouse Habitat
- Natural/Unknown Road Surface
- Fire Perimeter
- Wood Sites
- Riddle Bros. Ranch
- Fence
- Bureau of Land Management
- Steens Mtn Wilderness

0.5 Miles



US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 Bureau of Land Management
 Salem, Oregon

Note: We warrant the accuracy of the information of land management use to the best of our knowledge, reliability or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data was compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

10/2010 dlm
 ProjectNo. 000001000000000000000000