

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BURNS DISTRICT OFFICE

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL

CX Number: DOI-BLM-OR-B060-2013-0036-CX

Date: 05/03/2013

File Code: 4120

(Project/Serial Number): 715483 & 715615

Preparer: Richard Knox

Applicant: BLM/Sandhills Allotment Permittee

Title of Proposed Action: Sandhills Fire Rehabilitation and Sand Dunes Fire Rehabilitation Seedings Re-seeding

Description of Proposed Action and Project Design Elements (if applicable):

The Sandhills Fire Rehabilitation (RIPS #715483) and Sand Dunes Fire Rehabilitation Seedings (RIPS #715615) are located 18 miles southeast of Fields, Oregon on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered land. The Sand Dunes Fire Rehabilitation Seeding was first seeded in 1985 and the Sandhills Fire Rehabilitation was first seeded in 1984 according to BLM records.

The proposed action is to use rangeland drills to re-seed approximately 1,375 acres with blue bunch wheatgrass, basin wildrye, Indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, lewis flax, western yarrow, alfalfa, crested wheatgrass, four wing salt brush, and forage kochia. The purpose and need for this re-seeding maintenance project is to improve forage quality, stabilize soil, prevent invasion by exotic and noxious weeds, and increase diversity and structure within the plant community for wildlife habitat.

The areas within the existing seedings void of brush would be re-seeded using rangeland drills to drill in the seed mix stated above. Seeding would begin as early as October, 2013 and be completed by January, 2014 with two people. The seeding rate would be 10 pounds of seed per acre for the seeding mix stated above. The seed would be applied using rangeland drills with the tubes attached and/or tubes removed (methods with tubes pulled or removed would replicate broad cast seeding). The Sandhills Allotment Permittee will provide labor, fuel, and the tractor under a BLM Cooperative Range Improvement Agreement to assist in treatment, implementation, and cost. The BLM will provide the seed and rangeland drills under the agreement. Archaeological sites found within the area to be re-seeded would be flagged with pink flagging in the field by BLM Archaeologists prior to any ground disturbing activities and these sites would be avoided during project operations. All equipment (tractor and/or rangeland drills) would be cleaned prior to beginning work on these seedings to minimize opportunities for spread of weeds by seeds or other plant parts; work would be completed on each seeding. These seedings will be monitored closely for two years post-clean out for noxious weeds. Any weeds found will be treated using the most appropriate methods.

Legal Description: W.M., T. 41 S., R. 35 E., sec. 13, 24.; W.M., T. 41 S., R. 36 E., sec. 18, 19. (See attached map)

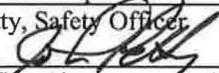
B. Conformance with Land Use Plan (LUP) (name): Andrews Management Unit Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan, **Date Approved/Amended:** August 2005

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): Goal 1 – Maintain, restore or improve the integrity of desirable vegetation communities including perennial, native, and desirable introduced plant species. Provide for their continued existence and normal function in nutrient, water, and energy cycles. Objective 2 - Manage desirable nonnative seedings to meet resource objectives (Page RMP-30).

BLM Categorical Exclusion Reference (516 DM, Chapter 11):

DOI Categorical Exclusion Reference (516 DM 2, Appendix 1): 1.7 "Routine and continuing government business, including such things as maintenance and replacement activities having limited context and intensity (e.g. limited size and magnitude or short term effects).

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 – John Petty, Safety Officer	
Signature and Date:	 5/16/13
Rationale:	No significant impacts 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.

Migratory Birds

Specialist – Andrew Daniels, Wildlife Biologist

Signature and Date: *Andrew Daniels* 5/6/13

Rationale: There would be no direct effects to migratory birds since the reseeding would be completed after most migratory birds would have already moved south. The seeding will only occur in areas within the seeding that are devoid of sagebrush, so there will be no loss of sagebrush habitat. Overall, there would be no effect on migratory birds or their population from this project.

Historic and Cultural Resources

Specialist – Scott Thomas, District Archeologist

Signature and Date: *Scott Thomas* 5/7/13

Rationale: No cultural or historic resources would be affected by this project since they would be flagged and avoided.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern/Research Natural Areas

Specialist – Caryn Meinicke, Natural Resource Specialist (Botany)

Signature and Date: *Caryn Meinicke* 5/6/13

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

Water Resources/Flood Plains

Specialist – Daryl Bingham, Natural Resource Specialists (Riparian and Fisheries)

Signature and Date: *Daryl Bingham* 6 MAY 2013

Rationale: There is no known perennial surface water in the project area. This area is not in a floodplain under the National Flood Insurance Plan. There would likely be no measurable loss should this area flood during spring runoff.

Soils, Biological Soil Crust, Prime Farmlands

Specialist – Caryn Meinicke, Natural Resource Specialist (Botany)

Signature and Date: *Caryn Meinicke* 5-6-13

Rationale: Soils in the project area are predominately of the Spangenburg-Enko-Catlow series and have a moderate risk of wind erosion. Re-seeding the area could disturb the soils and create soil loss through the creation of dust while seeding; however, overall impacts will be negligible with soil stability improving when the seeding is fully established. Tracks from vehicles could be present for 1-3 years depending on how quickly vegetation establishes and to what extent the top soil moves via wind or water. There are no prime farmlands within the proposed project area.

Recreation/ Visual Resources

Specialist – John Bethea, Outdoor Recreation Specialist

Signature and Date: *John Bethea* 5-6-13

Rationale: Recreation: There may be a short term disturbance to recreation during the seeding treatment. However this is expected to be short term (Approximately one month). This action will be occurring during a slow time for recreation use in the area. Overall no long term impacts are anticipated for recreation uses.

Visual Management: The area where the work would occur is in a VRM 3, and the intention of VRM 3 is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. With the mosaic pattern that will be used and the anticipated benefits to the landscape from reseeding, the existing landscape will not be noticeably altered.

Wilderness/Wild and Scenic River Resources

Specialist – Tom Wilcox, Wilderness Specialist

Signature and Date: *Tom Wilcox* 5/6/2013

Rationale: The proposed project does not occur within a wilderness, WSA, WSR or Lands with Wilderness Characteristics.

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

Specialist – Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Signature and Date: *Holly Orr* 05/03/2013

Rationale: There are no known highly controversial environmental effects or unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. The seedings has existing on the landscape since 1984 and 1985. Implementation is to perform routine and continuing maintenance of existing seedings.

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

Specialist – Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Signature and Date: *Holly Orr* 05/03/2013

Rationale: There are no known highly uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks. The seedings has existing on the landscape since 1984 and 1985. The action is to perform routine and continuing maintenance of this existing seedings.

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

Specialist – Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Signature and Date: *Holly Orr* 05/03/2013

Rationale: Implementation would not set precedence for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. The BLM routinely performs seeding maintenance and these seedings currently exist on the landscape and have been there since 1984 and 1985.
2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
Specialist – Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator Signature and Date: <i>Holly Orr</i> 05/03/2013
Rationale: Implementation would not have any known direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant environmental effects. The seedings have existed on the landscape since 1984 and 1985. The action is to perform routine and continuing maintenance of this existing seedings.
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 – Scott Thomas, District Archeologist Signature and Date: <i>Scott Thomas</i> 5/7/13
Rationale: No National Register eligible or listed 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 – Andrew Daniels, Wildlife Biologist Signature and Date: <i>Andrew Daniels</i> 5/6/13
Rationale: There are no known federally listed endangered or threatened fauna species in the location of this project. There is no designated critical habitat for any listed species in this area that would be affected by the proposed project.
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Aquatic</u> Specialist – Daryl Bingham, Natural Resource Specialists (Riparian and Fisheries) Signature and Date: <i>Daryl Bingham</i> 6 MAY 2013
Rationale: There are no Endangered or Threatened Aquatic Species Present in the Project Area.
<u>Endangered or Threatened Species-Flora</u> Specialist – Caryn Meinicke, Natural Resource Specialist (Botany) Signature and Date: <i>Caryn Meinicke</i> 5/6/13
Rationale: There are no documented T & E or Special Status plant species or critical habitat within the proposed 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 – Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator Signature and Date: <i>Holly Orr</i> 05/03/2013
Rationale: Implementation would not violate any known law or regulation imposed for the protection of the environment. The seedings are existing features on the landscape since 1984 and 1985. The action is to perform routine and continuing maintenance on existing seedings.
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).
Specialist – Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator Signature and Date: <i>Holly Orr</i> 05/03/2013
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 – Scott Thomas, District Archeologist Signature and Date: <i>Scott Thomas</i> 5/7/13
Rationale: Access and physical 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 – Lesley Richman, Natural Resource Specialist (Weeds) Signature and Date: <i>Lesley Richman</i> 5/6/2013
Rationale: Noxious weeds are known to be present in or in close proximity to this area. They are not present in sufficient quantity to be considered a significant impact at this time. The equipment used will be cleaned prior to work and the seedings will be monitored for 2 years.

Additional review (As determined by the Authorized Officer): None

RMP conformance and CX review confirmation:

Specialist (Print Name and Title): Holly Orr, District Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Signature: Holly Orr Date: 5/6/13

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): Rhonda Karges, Andrews/Steens Resource Area Manager

Signature: Rhonda Karges Date: 5/7/13

Decision: It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action with Project Design Elements (if applicable) as described above.

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations contained in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4 and Form 1842-1. If an appeal is filed, your notice of appeal should be mailed to the Burns District Office, 28910 Highway 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738, within 30 days of receipt of the decision. 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, Suite 600, 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

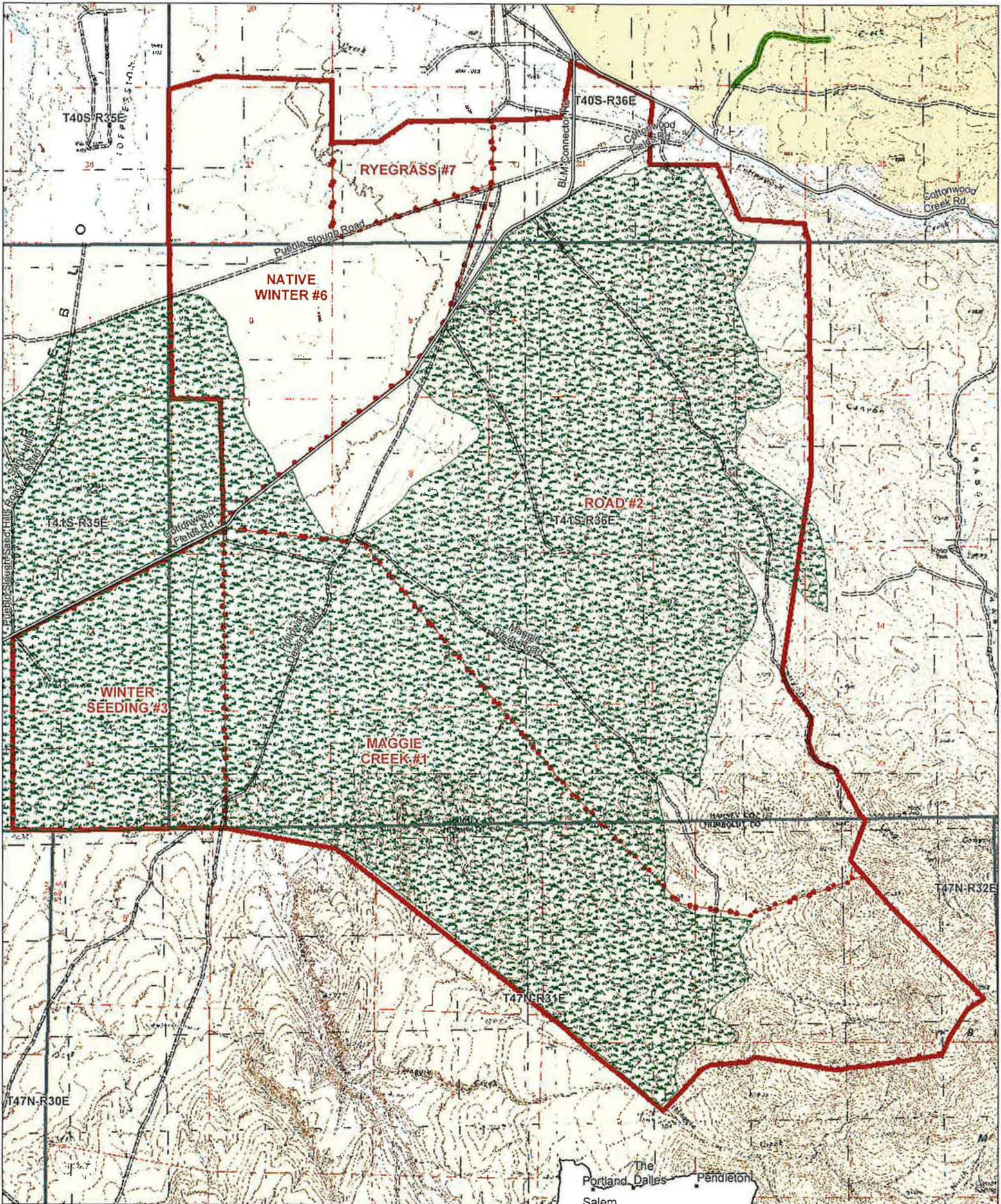
Should you wish to file a motion for stay pending the outcome of an appeal of this decision, you must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CFR 4.21:

- 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.

Rhonda Karges
Rhonda Karges, Andrews/Steens Resource Area Manager

5/7/13
Date



Sandhills Seeding Re-Seed

- | | | | |
|--|------------------|---|---------------------------|
|  | Range Seeding |  | Land Status |
|  | Project Boundary |  | Bureau of Land Management |
|  | Allotments |  | Private/Unknown |



0.5 Miles



US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Burns District, Oregon

Note: No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, 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.

4/2/2013 slenton