

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

DECISION RECORD and FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
West Eugene Wetlands Project, Oxbow West Management Unit
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-02-20

FONSI

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (June 1995) with which this EA is in conformance, and does not, in and of itself, constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

DECISION

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment (EA) OR090-02-20 and the Finding of No Significant Impact it is my decision to select the actions within Alternative A, with the exclusion of the proposed soil scraping of approximately a quarter-acre to control and eliminate non-native reed canary grass, blackberry, Scotch broom, and teasel at the southeast end of the Oxbow West site.

The selected Alternative A will implement a variety of land management activities at Oxbow West, with an emphasis on wet prairie enhancement and rare species monitoring, protection, and enhancement. The associated uplands will be managed to complement the wet prairie and enhance native upland plant communities.

The management actions will include removal of invasive woody species, such as Douglas' hawthorne (*Crataegus douglasii*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*), and female ash trees (*Fraxinus latifolia*) from areas where they are encroaching on native prairie communities, as well as control and removal of invasive herbaceous species such as reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinaceae*), pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*), and teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), using mechanical means, such as chainsaws, weed whackers and other hand tools; mowing; prescribed burning; and solarization. All areas receiving mechanical or other vegetation management treatments will be seeded or planted with native species where invasive species are removed.

Contour adjustment, excavation, and fill removal will occur on approximately a third of an acre at the extreme southeast end of the site, where fill was placed during the construction of Terry Street. This fill material is contributing to invasive species problems at the south end of the site. The slope adjacent to Terry Street will be lowered and made more gradual, which will also facilitate the planting of native species and provide a more effective buffer against weed sources. Material will be removed using an excavator working off of the levee, off of the small fill area at the levee gate, or off of the street, and would be loaded into trucks for disposal at a previously approved, non-wetland disposal site.

In addition, an existing north-south ditch, located at the southwest portion of the site, will be converted into a shallow swale. Its purpose would not change; it would drain high flows to the south end of the site and into the Amazon Channel. The drainage is necessary to intercept increased stormwater flows once the adjacent property to the west achieves full build-out (sheet flow is from west to east in this area.) Conversion will require lowering the slope of the ditch banks using an excavator, but not

lowering the bottom elevation of the ditch. Work will start at the north end of the ditch, then move back toward Terry Street.

Two hydrology control structures will be installed along the Amazon Channel to allow for regulation of surface flow if needed. These structures will facilitate invasive species control by allowing access to infested areas with small equipment or for solarization. They will also ensure that water levels can be adjusted if sheet flows increase and become detrimental to native plant communities when full build-out occurs on the privately-owned parcel adjacent to the west of the site.

Trash removal will occur as necessary, and is expected to occur mostly along the bike path.

All the project design features identified in the EA will be implemented to mitigate any impacts to existing habitat and resources.

DECISION RATIONALE

On March 23, 1993 the Bureau of Land Management, Eugene District, officially adopted the West Eugene Wetlands Special Area Study Plan as the land management plan for those lands acquired with Land and Water Conservation Funds for the West Eugene Wetlands Project on March 23, 1993. This plan was revised, and formal adoption of the Revised West Eugene Wetlands Plan occurred on September 17, 2001 (City of Eugene, 2000). The proposed action is consistent with the adopted plan.

The proposed management actions within Alternative A, were selected because they best meet the purpose and need, as stated in the EA, while minimizing adverse affects to resources. The proposed management actions of Alternative A will restore and enhance wetland prairie habitat within the Oxbow West site of the West Eugene Wetlands and will monitor, protect, and enhance rare species that are present.

Vegetation succession is presently occurring on the Oxbow West site to a forested and scrub-shrub site, dominated by trees and shrubs of hawthorne, Himalayan blackberry, and ash trees resulting in the loss of a remnant wet prairie, and in an increase in forested acreage in the south Willamette Valley. This natural transition of prairie to forest in the absence of disturbance, such as fire, will lead to the eventual loss of prairie habitat unless prairie is actively managed. Exotic and invasive species, such as reed canary grass, pennyroyal, and teasel, are continuing to spread through the native prairie communities, and it is expected that they will out-compete many of the native herbaceous species prior to woody succession. The proposed vegetation management actions and prescribed burning, combined with planting of native species, are anticipated to suppress the spread of woody and non-native vegetation within the Oxbow West site.

The installation of the water control structures and the conversion of the existing north-south ditch located at the southwest portion of the site into a shallow swale will allow for maintaining baseline water depths to protect listed species from a change in surface flow from the adjacent property at full build-out. This will indirectly benefit the listed species, as well as the rest of the native plant community at the Oxbow West site.

The contour adjustment, excavation, and fill removal at the extreme southeast end of the site will reduce the invasive species problem related to the current fill material present. This action, combined with the planting of native species, will provide a more effective buffer against weed sources.

The proposed soil scraping method to control and eliminate exotic and invasive species on approximately a quarter-acre area within the project area is excluded from the selected Alternative A with this decision because we cannot predict its environmental consequences in this location. Soil scraping could create positive change in the make up of the vegetation community. However, soil scraping could also result in an irretrievable loss of soil resources, both quantity and productivity.

All the project design features identified in the EA will be implemented to mitigate any impacts to existing habitat and resources. These design features also include precautionary measures to lessen

potential short term impacts to T&E species and species of concern that may be present. In addition, all required mitigation measures in the Biological Opinion, dated October 1, 2002 from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will be implemented.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A biological assessment was submitted on July 30th 2002 to the USFWS regarding the proximity of Willamette daisy, Kincaid's lupine, and Fender's blue butterfly populations to the proposed restoration activities at Oxbow West. According to the Biological Assessment submitted to the USFWS, the Oxbow West restoration activities would have the following effects to federally listed species:

- ▶ The proposed action would "May Affect, and Is Likely to Adversely Affect" the federally-listed as endangered Willamette daisy and Fender's blue butterfly.
- ▶ The proposed action would "May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect" the federally-listed as threatened Kincaid's lupine.

All proposed work was reviewed by the USFWS during formal consultation as required under the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS issued its Biological Opinion on October 1, 2002, concurring with the above affects in the short term. Past monitoring efforts of similar vegetation management actions and prescribed burning actions to restore wetland prairie habitat similar to Alternative A, have proved beneficial to the Willamette daisy, Fender's blue butterfly and Kincaid's lupine in the long term.

The USFWS, after reviewing the current status of the species, the environmental baseline for the action areas, the effects of the proposed monitoring and restoration activities, and the cumulative effects, concurred with BLM's findings that the projects, as proposed, are not likely to jeopardize Fender's blue butterfly or Willamette daisy. The proposed actions are expected to assist in the recovery of the species.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Both the EA and preliminary FONSI were advertised on September 18, 2002, as available for a 30 day public review period in the Eugene Register-Guard. Copies of the EA and preliminary FONSI were mailed to interested individuals on our mailing list. The above EA was also made available for review at the Eugene District Office and the internet at <http://www.or.blm.gov/>. No comments were received from the public.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The decision to implement the West Eugene Wetlands Project of the Oxbow West Management Unit may be appealed to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. If an appeal is taken, the notice of appeal must be filed in this office within thirty (30) days of the first publication of the notice of this decision in the Eugene Register-Guard on January 29, 2003, for transmittal to the Board. A copy of the notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs, must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Northwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 607, Portland, Oregon 97323, within the same time frame. In taking an appeal, there must be strict compliance with the regulations. In accordance with 43 CFR 4.21, an appellant has the right to petition the Office of Hearing and Appeals to stay the implementation of the decision; however, an appellant must show standing and present reasons for requesting a stay of the decision. The petition for stay must be filed together with a timely notice of appeal. 43 CFR 4.21(a)(2).

for Steve Calish
Steve Calish, Field Manager

28 Jan, 2003
Date