

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

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW

A. Background

Project Name: Eugene District Invasive Plant Control; January 2011 – January 2012

Date: October 28, 2010

Categorical Exclusion Number: DOI-BLM-ORE000-2011-0007-CX

Location: The project area is throughout the Eugene District Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Description of Proposed Action:

The Eugene District of the BLM proposes to implement invasive plant control projects throughout the Eugene District. Invasive generally means non-native plants, but may include the brushing of native herbaceous and woody vegetation in limited circumstances (up to 200 acres total/year) such as secondary succession vegetation in upland and wetland prairies where removal will promote identified management goals. The Proposed Action is the manual and mechanical removal of up to a total of 3000 acres per year within the District (Upper Willamette and Siuslaw Resource Area combined). Treatment areas include, but are not limited to, roadsides, young stand plantations, riparian areas and special habitats including: meadows, wetlands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, etc.). Manual and mechanical methods in individual areas may include any of the following (See Descriptions of Treatments, attached):

- Grubbing/Handpulling/Clipping
- Shade cloth
- Solarization
- Carbon addition (sugar)
- Chainsaws
- Tractor mounted rotary devices for brushing/mowing
- Weed whacking
- Post –treatment seeding/mulching

This Categorical Exclusion does not cover invasive plant control efforts within occupied sites of Threatened or Endangered plants or Fender's blue butterfly. It does cover invasive plant control efforts within Bureau Sensitive plant sites and other T&E species habitats.

B. Plan Conformance Review:

The proposed action is in conformance with the Eugene District Resource Management Plan (RMP, 1995).

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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW
Extraordinary Circumstances Checklist

Proposed Action: Categorical Exclusion No. DOI-BLM-ORE000-2011-0007-CX; Eugene District Invasive Plant Control

Review the proposed action against each of the 12 “extraordinary circumstances” listed below. Any action that is normally categorically excluded must be subjected to sufficient environmental review to determine whether it meets any of the extraordinary circumstances, in which case, further analysis and environmental documents must be prepared for the action. If the criterion does not apply, indicate "Not Applicable." Any mitigation measures (such as contract stipulations or terms and conditions on permits) necessary to ensure that the proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion should be identified at the bottom of the page.

Extraordinary Circumstances	YES	NO
<p>1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety. <u>Rationale:</u> All proposed activities follow established Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules concerning health and safety.</p>		X
<p>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); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. <u>Rationale:</u> All proposed activities are designed to improve conditions or to prevent further degradation of these listed resources and other ecologically significant or critical areas. Adverse effects on these resources would have not potential to be significant. This action would comply with relevant protection measures under the Bald Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and associated federal regulations and BLM policies, and would not measurably affect any of the species regulated by those acts.</p>		X
<p>3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]. <u>Rationale:</u> There are no predicted environmental effects from the proposed action which are considered to be highly controversial nor are there unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses.</p>		X
<p>4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. <u>Rationale:</u> There are no predicted effects from the proposed action that are highly uncertain, potentially significant, unique, or unknown risks.</p>		X
<p>5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. <u>Rationale:</u> There is no evidence that this action will establish a precedent or decision for future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.</p>		X

Extraordinary Circumstances	YES	NO
<p>6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. <u>Rationale:</u> Invasive plant control has been conducted in the past and this activity had no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effect. These actions are used to improve the integrity of native plant populations and/or communities and forest conditions occurring on the Eugene District.</p>		X
<p>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. <u>Rationale:</u> No known properties are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places are located within the units of the proposed action.</p>		X
<p>8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, as an Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. <u>Rationale:</u> Treatments may occur within spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat. Timing restrictions will be implemented to mitigate any adverse impacts to these species. See Project Design Features. Project design features ensure no significant impact to listed species or their critical habitat.</p>		X
<p>9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. <u>Rationale:</u> The proposed action conforms to the direction given for the management of public lands in the Eugene District ROD/RMP.</p>		X
<p>10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 2898). <u>Rationale:</u> The control of invasive plant species would not affect low income or minority populations.</p>		X
<p>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). <u>Rationale:</u> No Indian sacred sites have been identified on the Eugene District. See Design Features.</p>		X
<p>12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native 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). <u>Rationale:</u> The action will prevent establishment and spread of invasive plant species.</p>		X

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DECISION RECORD

Decision:

It is my decision to implement this action on BLM lands as described in the categorical exclusion documentation DOI-BLM-ORE000-2011-0007-CX.

Land Use Plan Conformance:

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the 1995 Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (as amended).

Survey and Manage:

Survey and Manage does not apply since these activities do not constitute habitat disturbing activities (Survey and Manage ROD 2001, Standards and Guidelines, p.22).

Decision Rationale:

The proposed action has been reviewed by Resource Area Staff and appropriate project Design Features as specified, will be incorporated into the proposal. Based on the NEPA Categorical Exclusion Review, I have determined that the proposed action involves no significant impact to the human environment and no further analysis is required.

Administrative Remedies

Notice of the decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the District internet website. The action is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR Part 4.

Authorizing Official:

/s/ Virginia Grilley

Virginia Grilley
District Manager
Eugene District Office

2/11/2011

Date:

Project Design Features:

Northern Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet

SIUSLAW RA: No work requiring chainsaws or motorized equipment would be done within 100 yards of 80+ year old forest between 3/1 and 8/5. There will also be daily timing restrictions between 4/1 and 9/15 (no work until 2 hours after sunrise and work stops 2 hours before sunset) – only within 100 yards of stands of stands of 80+ years. The Area Biologist may waive certain restrictions based on specific stand conditions.

UPPER WILLAMETTE RA: No work requiring chainsaws or motorized equipment would be done with 65 yards of 80+ year old forest between the dates of 3/1 and 7/15 except with campgrounds and within the road prism of well-traveled roads. Campgrounds and the road prism of well-traveled roads have no seasonal restrictions for spotted owls. Seasonal restrictions may be waived by a BLM wildlife biologist if they determine the action would not adversely affect spotted owls.

Other Special Status Wildlife

In areas other than campgrounds or roads, area wildlife biologists will review projects where ground-disturbing activities are planned or where power equipment will be used to ensure compliance with the Bald Eagle Protection Act and BLM Special Status Species and/or Migratory Bird policies. Habitat modification at known sites will be designed to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts. Additionally, project activities using power equipment in locations with the potential for noise disruption (other than campgrounds and roads as indicated above) will be seasonally restricted during an appropriate portion of the breeding season (January 1 to September 30).

Special Status Plants

Botanists will review project areas to avoid any inadvertent damage to known Special Status plants. Apply treatments within and around Bureau Sensitive plant populations generally after plant populations have senesced for the season and before plant growth starts (September – February). In any season, plants will be well-marked on the ground (flagging, flag-pins) so that they would not be damaged by crews and/or equipment, and a qualified specialist would be present to monitor implementation of the project.

Aquatic Resources

Deposition of any noxious/invasive plant material that is removed will not be allowed to enter any nearby waterways. Ditches that lead into waterways should be kept free of noxious/invasive plant propagules that could result in establishment of new infestations downstream. Use of any carbon material will not be used in areas where it could be transported or applied within a waterway.

Equipment Washing

Equipment shall also be washed prior to moving between project sites where directed by the authorized officer. The cutter heads, track or wheel systems, undercarriage, and other external components shall be thoroughly flushed. Washing shall occur at designated washing sites approved by the Government. All petroleum product residues shall be contained at wash sites and dealt with in accordance with DEQ standards.

Cultural Resources

Cultural reviews will be completed for ground-disturbing activities associated with invasive plant control as directed by in the following circumstances. Project leads must provide a map of the location for the archeological review:

- In the Siuslaw RA where any grubbing on sites that are 10% slope or less, in meadows or river terraces.
- In the Upper Willamette RA any grubbing on sites that are 20% slope or less and in meadows and river terraces

If during any invasive control efforts, archaeological materials are found, the ground-disturbing work needs to stop and will be reported to the District Archeologist.

Any invasive plant treatments within the prism (from the top of the cut to the toe of the fill) of an existing road are exempt from cultural reviews.

Descriptions of Treatments

1. **Grubbing/Handpulling/Clipping** – Hand tools such as weed wrenches, hoes, clippers are used to grub or cut a variety of invasive plant species.
2. **Shade cloth** - Placement of dark cloth over areas invaded by weeds and fastened to the ground with wooden stakes to control monotypic weed species. The shade cloth remains in place for 2 years. Over this period, sunlight does not penetrate the cloth, causing weed dieback from a lack of photosynthetic capability. After two years, the cloth is removed, and the area is seeded to native vegetation.
3. **Solarization** - Used to kill monotypic weed patches. It includes tilling and then covering areas less than 5,000 square feet with clear plastic during the subsequent growing season. The plastic remains onsite for at least three months so that elevated temperatures within the plastic kill the majority of the target species. Once the plastic is removed, follow-up hand weeding may be necessary. Finally, treated areas will be seeded with native species.
4. **Carbon addition** – Carbon application (often in the form of sawdust, wood chips or sugar) to immobilize nitrogen in the soil. Carbon addition creates a nitrogen poor soil, which is favored by some native species and inhibits some invasive plant species. This would be applied in very site specific areas such as Special Areas.
5. **Chainsaws** – Chainsaws may be used to cut down species such as Scot's broom and other woody invasive plants.
6. **Tractor mounted rotary devices for brushing/mowing** – Involves a small tractor pulling a rotary motor to treat heavier infestations where the ground is flat enough, generally along roadsides.
7. **Weed whacking** - The physical cutting of herbaceous and woody vegetation with a hand-held tool capable of cutting vegetation with a sharpened blade or plastic string on a pole that is held by the operator.
8. **Planting/Seeding** - Establishment of native vegetation onsite through seeding or planting of other vegetative material. Plugs, cuttings, and bare root stock are transplanted at the restoration site following grow-out in the nursery. Seeds are dispersed by broadcast seeders or no-till seed drills. Seeds, plugs, cuttings, and bare roots for restoration projects are obtained from local native sources.
9. **Mulching** - Post-treatment native plant mulching may occur to both encourage establishment of native vegetation within the project site and to discourage potential spread and establishment of exotic and invasive woody and herbaceous species. Mulching can also be a treatment in itself. Mulching material must be native and certified weed free or approved by the Native Plant Coordinator as a weed free product. Products may include native grass straw, woodchips and Woodstraw.

Disposal of Plant Material

1. **Disposal of Plant Material** – Disposal of plant material is accomplished in a variety of ways depending on the species. Plant material when brushed or mowed is left on site to decompose. Other plant debris may be piled and hauled off to a landfill. No plant material is left where it can be transported inadvertently outside of the project area.