

## **Categorical Exclusion Determination and Decision Record Table Rocks Trail Hardening and Delineation DOI-BLM-OR-M050-2013-0005-CX**

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### **Description of Proposed Action**

The Bureau of Land Management, Butte Falls Resource Area (BLM) is proposing to install fencing, stepping stones, and boardwalk on or along trails on top of Upper and Lower Table Rocks. Sensitive vernal pool habitat on the tops of both Rocks is in need of protection from off-trail hiking impacts.

Visitation of both Rocks has steadily increased since the Table Rocks ACEC was designated in 1986. Annual visitation is currently estimated at 20,000 hikers on the Lower Table Rock trail, and 25,000 hikers on the Upper Table Rock trail. Use is year round, but is heaviest during the spring wildflower season when the vernal pools are at their fullest level. User-created trails have developed over the years on top of both Rocks. Some trail sections pass through or are adjacent to sensitive vernal pool habitat. When the vernal pools are full, hikers walk to the sides of the trails and pools to avoid the water, trampling the vegetation and widening the trails further. Hikers are also attracted to water they see away from the trails, and walk cross-country to investigate and wade into the pools. The plants on the tops of the Table Rocks are mostly fragile annuals that are easily trampled; their persistence depends on blooming and seeding every year. The trail widening, off-trail hiking, and wading in the vernal pools disturbs biological soil crusts, microhabitats of unique lichens and bryophytes, critical habitat for the federal threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*), and sensitive plant populations including the state threatened dwarf wooly meadowfoam (*Limnanthes pumila*).

At Upper Table Rock the BLM proposes to install 700 feet of low buck and pole fencing along the trail and partially around the first vernal pool. Fencing would be less than 2' high and would be installed directly on the trail tread, not on any vegetated areas. Three to four inch diameter treated poles salvaged from a fence replacement project at the trailhead would be used. Although the 10-year old salvaged poles should be sufficiently weathered so that chemicals will not leach into the water, the fence would be constructed to rest on rocks where the trail enters the vernal pool area. Stepping stones would be placed along 400 feet of the wettest part of the trail around the same vernal pool to encourage hikers to stay on the existing trail. The stepping stones would be approximately one to two feet in diameter, and spaced about 3 feet apart, center to center. At Lower Table Rock the BLM proposes to install 100 feet of 4' wide Trex-like boardwalk on a section of trail that passes between two vernal pools that commonly flow together for part of the year. Signing would be installed at the top of both trails and along the fence and boardwalk to educate people about the vernal pools and why it's important to stay on the existing trails.

Materials for the project would be transported to the tops of the trails by a combination of foot, ATV, mechanized toter, and helicopter. Installation and maintenance would be accomplished during the dry season by a combination of BLM staff, volunteers, and contractors. No digging would be needed for installation: fencing, stones, and boardwalk would all sit on top of the ground. Some minor leveling using a shovel would occasionally be needed to stabilize the structures to bear weight safely without shifting. To avoid leaching into the vernal pools, no chemically treated materials would be in contact with the water. Stepping stones would be

natural flat basalt, not manufactured, and the boardwalk framework and the fence would be placed on natural flat basalt stones or native rock where they would typically encounter standing water during the wet season.

Project is located in Township 36S, Range 2W, Sections 1, 2, 4 and 9 in Jackson County, Oregon. Project is located in the Shady Cove/Rogue River and Gold Hill/Rogue River fifth field watersheds.

### **Plan Conformance Review**

The Bureau of Land Management did not scope this proposal and the public was not involved in its development. This proposal is in conformance with objectives, land use allocations, and management direction of the 1995 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) and any plan amendments in effect at the time this document is published.

This project also conforms with the 1994 *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (Northwest Forest Plan)

The proposed action was designed to be consistent with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937, Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Endangered Species Act of 1973, Clean Water Act of 1987, Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (as amended 1986 and 1996), Clean Air Act of 1990 (as amended), and Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.

This proposal is consistent with management direction in the Medford District 1995 ROD/RMP that directs the BLM to

*“Maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important value(s) of areas of critical environmental concern. Provide for recreation uses and environmental education in outstanding natural areas. Manage uses to prevent loss of outstanding values.”* (USDI 1995, p. 56).

This proposal is consistent with direction for the management of lands administered by the Medford District and The Nature Conservancy in the Table Rocks Management Plan, to

*“Preserve or enhance the vernal pool habitat for the recovery of the federally listed fairy shrimp”; and “Design and provide facilities and trails that protect sensitive resources.”*(USDI 2013, p. 56 and 59).

### **Project Design Features**

- If during project implementation any objects or sites of cultural value on federal lands, such as historical or pre-historical ruins, graves, grave markers, or artifacts, are encountered, operations shall immediately be suspended in the vicinity of the cultural value and the BLM archaeologist notified so the site can be evaluated.
- All equipment shall be cleaned and inspected prior to arriving on site.
- All imported materials shall be weed free (free of dirt, weeds, or other weed parts).
- Storing and staging areas for materials shall be preapproved.

- Use appropriate traffic control signs and devices for public safety while work is in progress.
- Activities shall occur in the dry season when soils are not saturated (less than 20 to 25 percent soil moisture, generally from May 15 through October 15) and no ponding is present.
- Mechanized vehicles and equipment would be restricted to the existing trails.
- No chemically treated materials would be in contact with water or areas commonly under water during wet periods.
- Helicopter activity on Lower Table Rock prior to July 15 must access the project area from the north and stay away from the east cliff face, due to wildlife restrictions.

### **Categorical Exclusion Determination**

This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion as provided in United States Department of the Interior Departmental Manual 516 DM 11.9 G(2), (4), and J(9). These sections allow for “Installation of routine signs, markers, culverts, ditches, waterbars, gates, or cattleguards on/or adjacent to roads and trails identified in any land use or transportation plan, or eligible for incorporation in such plan; Placement of recreational, special designation, or information signs, visitor registers, kiosks, and portable sanitation devices; and Construction of small protective enclosures, including those to protect reservoirs and springs and those to protect small study areas.”

Before any action described in the list of categorical exclusions may be used, the “extraordinary circumstances,” included in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 43 CFR 46.205(c) must be reviewed for applicability. After review, the BLM determined no extraordinary circumstances exist that would cause the proposed action to have a significant environmental effect. The action will not require additional analysis.

### **Contact Person**

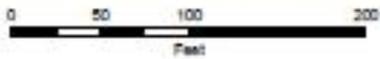
For additional information concerning this project, contact Trish Lindaman, Project Leader, at (541) 618-2266.

### Map 1: Boardwalk location on Lower Table Rock

R2W



USDA, BLM and FS personnel



#### Legend

 Boardwalk



#### Lower Table Rock



Medford District  
February 2013

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 were compiled from various sources. This information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This product was developed through digital means and may be updated without notification.

### Map 2: Fence and Stepping Stone locations on Upper Table Rock

R2W



T  
36  
S



#### Legend

- ++ Fence
- Stepping Stones



#### Upper Table Rock



Medford District  
February 2013

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## NEPA Categorical Exclusion Review

### Proposed Action:

The BLM proposes to protect vernal pool habitat on the tops of Upper and Lower Table Rocks by installing fencing, stepping stones, and boardwalks along hiking trails.

The Code of Federal Regulations at 43 CFR 46.205(c) requires that “any action that is normally categorically excluded must be evaluated to determine whether it meets any of the extraordinary circumstances in section 46.215” (listed below). Additional analysis and environmental documents must be completed for any normally categorically excluded action which may

1. *Have significant impacts on public health or safety.*

Yes  No

Initial JW Remarks:

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.*

Yes  No

Initial JW Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial JW Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial JW Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial JW Remarks:

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

Yes  No

Initial SL Remarks:

7. *Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.*

Yes  No  
Initial YR Remarks:

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.*

Plants  Yes  No Initial mw Remarks:

Animals  Yes  No Initial YR Remarks:

Fish  Yes  No Initial JS Remarks:

9. *Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.*

Yes  No  
Initial JS Remarks:

10. *Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).*

Yes  No  
Initial JS Remarks:

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).*

Yes  No  
Initial JS Remarks:

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).*

Yes  No  
Initial mw Remarks:

June 5, 2013

## Decision

It is my decision to protect vernal pool habitat on Upper and Lower Table Rock trails by installing protective fencing, stepping stones, and boardwalks as described in the Proposed Action.

## Decision Rationale

The proposed action has been reviewed by Butte Falls Resource Area staff and appropriate Project Design Features, as specified above, will be incorporated into the proposal. Based on the attached NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) Categorical Exclusion Review, I have determined the proposed action involves no significant impact to the human environment and no further environmental analysis is required.



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Jon K. Raby  
Field Manager  
Butte Falls Resource Area

6/12/13  
Date

## Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

Notice of the decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the Medford District internet website. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR part 4.

**Categorical Exclusion Reviewers:**

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Jean Williams	NEPA Coordinator	6/11/13	JW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	6/6/13	mw
Dave Roelofs	Wildlife Biologist	6/11/13	DR
Jen Smith	Fisheries Biologist	6/11/13	JS
Amy Meredith	Soil Scientist	6/6/13	AM
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	6/10/13	SS
Al Mason	Fire/Fuels Specialist	6/5/13	APM
Lisa Rice	Archaeologist	6/10/13	LR
Jeff Brown <i>AL</i>	Engineer <i>LED KALUELS</i>	6-11-13	LK
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/5/13	TL