

Finding of No Significant Impact

Brown Road, Razorback, and Hancock Complex Post-Fire Herbicide EA

DOI-BLM-OR-P000-2012-0011-EA

US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Prineville Field Office, Oregon

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA), No. DOI-BLM-OR-P000-2012-0011-EA that analyzes the effects of one action alternative proposing to apply the herbicide imazapic to control the noxious and invasive annual grasses Medusahead rye (*Taeniatherum kaput-medusae*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), and North Africa grass (*Ventenata dubia*) on 32,714 acres affected by the Brown Road, Razorback, and Hancock Complex Fires of 2011. The EA is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations state that the significance of impacts must be determined in terms of both context and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27).

Context

The proposed action is set within the context of a comprehensive post-fire emergency stabilization and rehabilitation plan. Actions that are already taking place in the project area are drill and aerial seeding of native and non-invasive perennial grasses and forbs; grazing rest and deferment; fence and sign replacement; camouflaging of cultural sites; and application of glyphosate, 2, 4-D, dicamba, and picloram to control Medusahead rye and broadleaf noxious weeds such as thistles. Glyphosate can be used to control Medusahead rye under the existing Prineville District Integrated Weed Management Plan (USDI 1994), however, it does not reduce the seedbank and is non-selective, thereby removing native shrubs and forbs needed to revegetate proposed treatment areas (USDI 2010). Cheatgrass and North Africa grass are invasive weeds that are not included on any county, state, or federal noxious weed list, and therefore could not be treated using glyphosate under the existing Prineville District Integrated Weed Management Plan (USDI 1994). This was due to a 1984 U.S. District Court injunction issued in *Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, et al. v. Block, et al* (Civ. No. 82-6273-E) which only allowed for the use of glyphosate, 2, 4-D, dicamba and picloram to control officially listed noxious weeds.

Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity and severity of the impacts anticipated from implementation of a Decision on this EA relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

- 1. Would any of the alternatives have significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1))? No.**

Rationale:

The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. Mitigations to reduce impacts to the ground were incorporated in the design of the proposed action. These project design features are outlined in Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects and Appendix B of the EA. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the 2010 Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD), 1986 FEIS for the Two Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the 2000 FEIS for the John Day River Management Plan

- 2. Would any of the alternatives have significant adverse impacts on public health and safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2))? No.**

Rationale:

No significant adverse impacts on public health and safety would result from the alternatives due to standard operating procedures and project design features as outlined in Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects and Appendix B.

- 3. Would any of the alternatives have significant adverse impacts on unique geographic characteristics (cultural or historic resources, park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness or wilderness study areas, or ecologically critical areas (ACECs, RNAs, significant caves)) (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3))? No.**

Rationale:

Any resource of concern identified to be at risk from the project activities will be protected from damage or disturbance. There are no effects on park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas

- 4. Would any of the alternatives have highly controversial effects (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4))? No.**

Rationale:

There are no effects which are expected to be highly controversial.

5. **Would any of the alternatives have highly uncertain effects or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)? No.**

Rationale:

There are no unique or unusual risks. The BLM has implemented similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6. **Would any of the alternatives establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)? No.**

Rationale:

Use of imazapic to control invasive annual grasses and noxious weeds has occurred numerous times throughout BLM. There is no evidence that this action has potentially significant environmental effects. This management activity does not commit the BLM to pursuing further actions, and as such would not establish a precedent or decision for future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

7. **Are any of the alternatives related to other actions with potentially significant cumulative impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)? No.**

Rationale:

The actions considered in the proposed action were evaluated by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. An analysis of the effects of the proposed action is described in the EA.

8. **Would any of the alternatives have significant adverse impacts on scientific, cultural, or historic resources, including those listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Resources (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)?**

Rationale:

The project will not adversely affect scientific, cultural, or historic resources, including those eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

9. **Would any of the alternatives have significant adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)?**

Rationale:

Mitigations to reduce impacts to special status species have been incorporated into the design of the proposed action. These project design features are outlined in Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects and Appendix B of the EA.

10. Would any of the alternatives have effects that threaten to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(IO)? No.

Rationale:

The project does not violate any known Federal, State, Local or Tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process.

Finding

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, the consideration of intensity factors described above, all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) implementation of the alternatives would not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the 2010 Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon FEIS and ROD, 1986 FEIS for the Two Rivers RMP and the 2000 FEIS for the John Day River Management Plan; (2) the alternatives are in conformance with the 2010 Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in Oregon FEIS and ROD, 1986 FEIS for the Two Rivers RMP and the 2000 FEIS for the John Day River Management Plan; and (3) neither alternative would constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an EIS or a supplement to the existing EIS is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Molly M. Brown
Field Manager, Deschutes Resource Area

Date

H.F. "Chip" Faver
Field Manager, Central Oregon Resource Area

Date