

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

Background

BLM Office: Prineville District, 3050 NE Third St., Prineville, OR 97754

Proposed Action Title: Millican Road Juniper Thinning Project

NEPA Log #: DOI-BLM-OR-P060-2010-0047-CX

Location of Proposed Action: The Millican Road Juniper Thinning Project is located Approximately 10 to 15 miles south of Prineville on both sides of the George Millican Road in T.16S., R.15E., and T.17S., R.15E., W.M. (see attached Proposed Millican Road Juniper Project Map). The project begins at Mile Post 9 and extends south for approximately 7 miles to the junction of George Millican Road and Reservoir Road. The proposed project is located within the Millican Plateau portion of the Millican Valley OHV Trail System.

Description of Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to thin (cut) 2,000 acres of juniper woodland in scattered units within the planning area. Only young juniper trees, those greater than two feet in height and less than 18 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH), would be thinned. All larger trees and old-growth trees would be retained, including trees smaller than 18 inches DBH exhibiting old-growth characteristics. Thinning would be done by hand using chainsaws. To reduce heavy fuels, cut trees 4 inches in diameter or greater would be removed for firewood and fence posts/rails. No new road construction would occur with this project. Two-track trails for wood bole removal would be closed/disguised upon completion of the project. Remaining fuels concentrations (branches and tops) would be treated by a combination of lop and scatter and prescribed jackpot burning with hand crews. Jackpot burning is a prescribed burning technique that targets concentrations of fuel/debris and leaves other areas, with sparse fuel loading, unburned. Prescribed burning is authorized under a separate NEPA document (High Desert Prescribed Burn Project, OR-050-98-005).

The following specific Project Design Features would be incorporated into the Proposed Action:

1. Existing snags and down logs would not be cut or removed.
2. Trees with cavities or stick nests would be left uncut.
3. Trees with blazes, red, yellow or orange paint, or with any other signs or marks indicating a tree with survey, monitoring/research study, or cultural significance would not be cut.
4. Leave trees, snags, and down logs would be protected from prescribed jackpot burning.
5. Approximately one young juniper tree per 10 acres (12-18 inches DBH) would be burned or girdled to create snags for wildlife.
6. Between 30 and 50 percent of thinned areas would be left unburned to retain organic matter, small mammal habitat, and patches of mature sagebrush.
7. Prescribed fire would be done in winter/spring to limit spread of invasive annuals and minimize fire effects to soils, leave trees, and desirable native understory vegetation.

8. Thinning debris would be used to close user-created roads and trails. Existing roads identified as “interim roads” on UDRMP maps would not be closed.
9. Rocks, cut trees, and woody debris would be placed to help direct OHV riders to stay on designated trails.
10. Grazing deferment or rest would be considered at a later date in certain pastures/treatment units for up to two growing seasons following treatment to further improve understory plant response.
11. Unit design techniques such as screens, sinuous boundaries, leave islands, and variable density thinning would be incorporated for increased habitat diversity and to reduce visual impacts. Project design will be consistent with VRM III management objectives.
12. Buffer areas may be left next to designated OHV trails as directed by the recreation specialist.
13. Surveys for cultural sites, Threatened and Endangered plants and wildlife, raptor nests, and any other unique habitats would be conducted prior to implementation. Measures would be taken to avoid or mitigate newly discovered sites and habitats.

Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan Date Approved: 2005

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

Old-Growth Juniper Woodlands – Objective V-1b: Maintain, promote, and restore the health and integrity of old-growth juniper woodlands/savanna throughout its historic range where practicable (p. 31).

Fire/Fuels Management – Objective FF-3: Restore and maintain ecosystems consistent with land uses and historic fire regimes through wildland fire use, prescribed fire, and other methods. Reduce areas of high fuel loading that may contribute to extreme fire behavior (p. 61).

Wildlife – W-4: Maintain or improve habitats to support healthy, productive and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including species of local importance) appropriate to soil, climate and landform. Where consistent with habitat capabilities, meet ODFW management objective numbers for deer, elk, and pronghorn (p. 51).

Public Health and Safety – PHS-7: Protect public health and safety, maintain appropriate recreation opportunities, and reduce the risk of wildfire associated with high use, habitual problem areas and/or special management considerations (p. 153).

Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 4, C.1. Forestry: “Pre-commercial thinning and brush control using small mechanical devices.”

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment as documented in the following table. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM2 apply.

CX EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION		YES	NO
The proposed categorical exclusion action will:			
2.1	Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		x
Rationale: There are no impacts on public health and safety other than the intended effects that would contribute to achieving Objective PHS-7.			
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); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		x
Rationale: The project would not have any significant impacts to any of these resources. Cultural sites have been identified and documented and will be avoided. No wilderness characteristics were found on public lands within the project area.			
2.3	Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		x
Rationale: There are no known controversial effects or unresolved conflicts in the project area.			
2.4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		x
Rationale: This project does not involve significant effects or unique risks. There are no known environmental risks.			
2.5	Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		x
Rationale: This project is independent of others and the decision on this project would not set a precedent for future action. The only activities implemented would be those described in this Proposed Action. The manager will make decisions on each individual project.			
2.6	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant		x

but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		
Rationale: Similar actions have not had significant impacts and cumulative impacts are not expected to be significant.		
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.		x
Rationale: The project does not contain properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.		
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.		x
Rationale: A staff Wildlife Biologist has surveyed the project area. There are no known Endangered or Threatened Species or designated Critical Habitat for these species.		
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		x
Rationale: The project conforms with the UDRMP and would not violate any applicable Federal, State, local, and tribal laws.		
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		x
Rationale: The project has no effect on low income or minority populations		
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).		x
Rationale: There are no known sacred sites in the project area.		
2.12 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).		x
Rationale: Noxious weeds have not been identified in the project area. Hand cutting and prescribed fire under cool burning conditions would help limit the introduction/spread of invasive annual species such as cheatgrass and tumble mustard.		

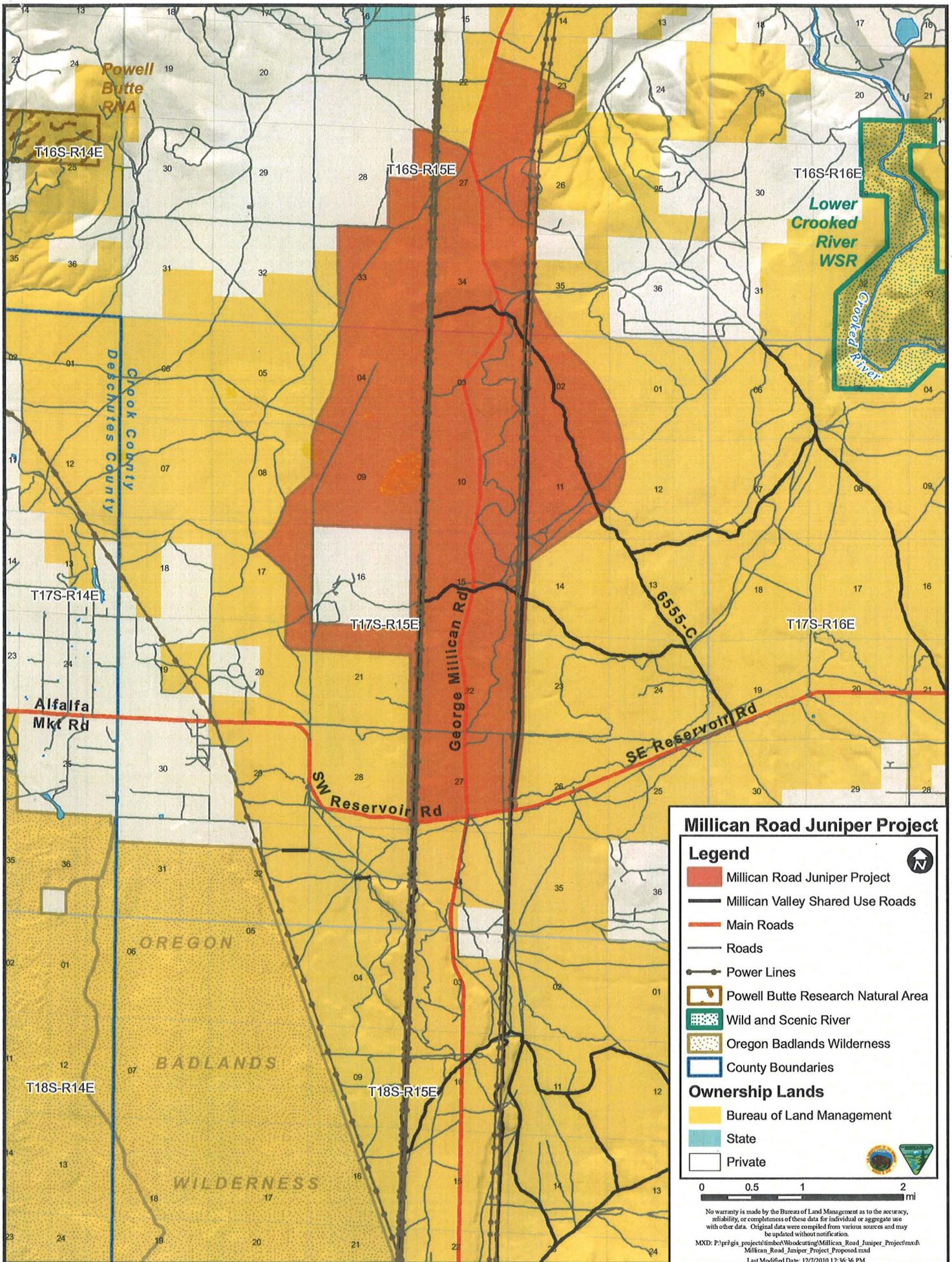
I considered all the relevant environmental and social effects of this proposed action. This action, with associated project design features, is expected to fully or substantially achieve the project objectives. This type of action has been implemented on various projects on similar sites in the past. Experience has shown this treatment to yield favorable results in terms of achieving desired objectives and minimizing unwanted environmental impacts. There are no potentially significant impacts from the implementation of this proposed action.

Signature

Authorizing Official:  Date: 1-19-11
Steve Robertson
Acting Field Manager
Deschutes Resource Area

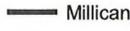
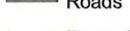
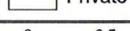
Contact Person

For additional information concerning this document review, contact Steve Castillo, Forester, Prineville District, 3050 NE Third St., Prineville, OR 97754, 541-416-6765, steve_castillo@blm.gov



Millican Road Juniper Project

Legend

-  Millican Road Juniper Project
 -  Millican Valley Shared Use Roads
 -  Main Roads
 -  Roads
 -  Power Lines
 -  Powell Butte Research Natural Area
 -  Wild and Scenic River
 -  Oregon Badlands Wilderness
 -  County Boundaries
- Ownership Lands**
-  Bureau of Land Management
 -  State
 -  Private



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