

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

A. Background

BLM Office: Prineville Field Office

NEPA Log #: DOI - BLM - OR – P060 - 2011- 0061 - CX

Proposed Action Title: Issuance of Guided Rock Climbing SRPs

Location: The location of the proposed action is at the “Marsupial Crag” area of the Smith Rock block adjacent to Smith Rock State Park, 3 air miles northeast of Terrebonne, Oregon. T14S, R13 & 14E.

Description of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is to approve Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) for guided rock climbing. The permits would allow for qualified companies to guide rock climbing at the Marsupial Crag located on BLM lands just outside of the Smith Rock State Park boundary. The applying companies have a long history of guiding climbs at the State Park itself have requested the unique climbing opportunity that the Marsupial area provides. The unique formations and less crowded climbing atmosphere are not available on private land or the adjacent Smith Rock State Park and therefore are being requested by the public and outfitters.

The SRPs would allow for guided rock climbing groups of no more than twelve individuals including guides; however it is expected that most groups would fall well below this threshold.

The area will be capped at 400 commercial user days and a maximum of 4 permitted guide companies. A user day is defined as any day, or portion thereof, which a permittee, guide, activity leader or client spends on BLM public land. At the time of writing two companies are applying, they would each start with 100 user days per year. If they use their allotment of 100 user days they may contact the Upland SRP permit administrator to request another 50 user days. They would only be issued another 50 user days if only one or no other companies have successfully applied for a permit. These additional 50 passes would be first come, first serve and available until the maximum 400 user days have been issued.

Minimum use for each permit would be set at five user days per year to ensure that permittees use is significant enough for BLM to administer the permit. The groups would access the Marsupial area from Smith Rock State Park. No overnight use would be authorized by the Special Recreation Permit. The staging area would be the base of the rock currently being climbed, totaling less than one acre. All ropes, rigging and waste would be packed in and packed out; no material would be allowed to be cached for subsequent climbs. Permittees would be required to carry and use a sanitary human waste disposal system such as a Wag Bag or portable toilet system for solid human waste.

All guides would be certified by the American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) and registered with the Oregon State Marine Board Guide and Outfitter Program, which ensures they are current in First Aid and CPR.

Several companies already offer commercial climbing opportunities within the State Park, including those companies that applied for SRPs with the BLM this year. The State Park is aware of and allows this commercial climbing activity, but does not currently regulate or charge fees for the use. The State Park has said that it does not have a concern with BLM issuing permits for commercial use on public land at the Marsupial Crag, even if that use requires access across state land. If the State Park changes its policy regarding commercial guiding use on or access across state land (e.g., issues permits, charges fees or restricts use), the BLM would review its SRP activity in the area and coordinate with the State Park regarding a consistent policy.

If the general public is climbing a route before an SRP holder arrives the permittee would allow the public to continue and not interfere with their climb. The proposed activity area currently experiences moderate recreation use and has a user created trail network. It is expected that the permitted companies would be valuable monitors of trail condition, wildlife concerns, watchdogs for violations of area rules and regulations, and offer volunteer assistance in trail maintenance and closure of unnecessary user created trails. Participants would be required to use the most well established access trails, creation of new trails would not be permitted. No new climbing routes would be established during guided climbs, all permitted climbs would remain on existing, established routes. No vegetation would be damaged or removed, including cleaning moss or lichens, as a part of guided climbing activity. To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, permittees would require participants to check and clean footwear and clothing of seeds and plant material before and after each activity. Should any seasonal wildlife restrictions occur permittees would strictly adhere to closure guidelines.

By no means would climbing permits imply access of permittees and/or clients to the Bureau of Reclamation's North Unit Main Canal or the associated right of way.

Each new approved permit would be issued for one year only. If the SRP is found to be in good standing after a one year performance evaluation the permit may be granted for a three year period and reissued every three years, as long as the permit remains in good standing and at management's discretion.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan

Date approved (ROD): September, 2005

The proposed action is in conformance with the above plan, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following land use plan decisions, objectives, terms, or conditions:

- *Provide for projects, programs, and permits that promote a diverse range of recreation opportunities. Provide for individual, group, and competitive event recreational use that could not be reasonably accommodated on private land. (Page 109)*

C. 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 1, Effective Date June 21, 2005., H. Recreation Management., (1) Issuance of special Recreation Permits for day use or overnight use up to 14 consecutive nights; that impacts no more than 3 staging area acres; and/or for recreational travel along roads, trails or in areas authorized in a land use plan. This CX cannot be used for commercial boating permits along Wild and Scenic Rivers. This CX cannot be used for the establishment or issuance of Special Recreation Permits for “Special Area” management (43 CFR 2932.5)

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply. See attached CX Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation checklist. The cultural, T&E plant and T&E animal specialists have indicated they expect no unacceptable impacts to resources.

D. Signature

I considered many social and environmental effects to the land and social experience by allowing this Special Recreation Permit activity. The following mitigation measures discussed in the proposed action must be followed to minimize any effects:

- **Route Crowding:** The Marsupials are off the beaten path and take an effort to access. By monitoring permits and carefully considering additional requests, I do not expect crowding to be an issue. Any SRP would include a stipulation that if the general public is on a route before a SRP holder arrives the permit holder would allow the public to continue and not interfere with their climb.
- **Noxious Weeds:** This would be mitigated by requiring the SRP holder to have participants check and clean footwear and clothing of seeds and plant material before and after each activity.
- **Wildlife Disturbance:** This would be mitigated by requiring the SRP holder to ensure that participants strictly adhere to seasonal wildlife closures on affected routes and trails. SRP holder would be required to report any new eagle nesting activity in the area to District wildlife staff.
- **Sanitation:** All ropes, rigging, supplies, garbage, and human waste would be packed out. SRP holders would be required to carry and use, when necessary, a sanitary human waste disposal system, such as a Wag Bag. SRP holders would notify BLM of violations or safety concerns in the area.
- **Trails:** Permittees would be required to use the most well established access trails to and from the climbing area. Creation of new trails would not be permitted.
- **Route Creation:** No new routes would be established during guided climbs and all guided climbs would be on existing, established routes. SRP holders would inform BLM of unsafe or inappropriate routes.

- **Vegetation:** No vegetation would be damaged or removed including cleaning moss, lichens, or other plant material from rock faces.
- **Trespass:** No access to the North Unit Main Canal or the associated right of way would be implied by issuing permits.

Authorizing official: Molly Brown
 Molly Brown, Deschutes Resource Area Field Manager

1/4/12
 Date

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this review, contact: Jim Beaupre, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Prineville Field Office, 3050 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, OR 97754, (541) 416-6776, jbeaupre@blm.gov.

CX EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION			
The proposed categorical exclusion action will:		YES	NO
2.1	Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		x
Rationale: There are no significant impacts on public health or safety. The main recreational draw in the Smith Rock area is rock climbing. No increase in use is expected by authorizing this permit. Additionally, all guides will be certified by the American Mountain Guides Association. Having well trained guides will only increase the safety presence in the area for the general public.			
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 climbing area is located in an area where no wilderness values have been identified. Historic and Cultural values have been evaluated on 12/9/10 by Archaeologist, Theresa Holtzapple. No resources were located or expected in the steep terrain or mid slope rock features. The location is not within any Special Areas. Migratory bird activity and other wildlife will be monitored and if any closures are instated, permittees would be required to follow the closure guidelines.			
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 environmental effects and this action does not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.			
2.4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		x
Rationale: There is no evidence that this action has potentially significant environmental effects.			

The action does not include any unique or unknown 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: Authorizing a Special Recreation Permit does not set any precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. Special Recreation Permits are issued at the manager's discretion and could be revoked for violations of the permit.		
2.6	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	x
Rationale: Similar past activities had no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effect.		
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 area does not include any property listed or eligible for 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: Consultation with a district wildlife biologist has occurred on this project. The scope of the proposed action would not affect any Endangered or Threatened Species or have significant impacts or result in the loss of critical habitat.		
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 proposed action conforms to the direction given for the management of public lands in the Prineville District which complies with all applicable laws, such as the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and others.		
2.10	Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	x
Rationale: The proposed action has no adverse effect on any low income or minority population.		
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: No sacred sites exist on the routes or access trails.		
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: The proposed activity would not measurably change the rate of introduction, continued existence or spread of noxious weeds or invasive species. Participants would be on established trails or rock faces, additionally, participants would be asked to inspect footwear and clothing for traveling seeds and clean them before and after the activity.		

Marsupial Crags Guided Rock Climbing CX

DOI-BLM-OR-P060-2011-0061-CX

Legend

 Marsupial Crags Guided Rock Climbing Area

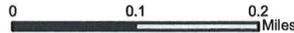
Administered Lands

-  Bureau of Land Management
-  State
-  Private/Unknown

November 2011



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
PRINEVILLE DISTRICT
3050 NE Third Street
Prineville, OR 97754
(541) 416-6700



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 and may be updated without notification.

