

Decision Memorandum on Action for Application of Departmental Categorical Exclusion

1.13

Razorback Fire Burned Area Rehabilitation Drill Seeding

NEPA Log #: DOI - BLM - OR - P060 - 2012 - 0045 - CX

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Prineville District Office
Wasco County, Oregon**

Description of the Proposed Action and the Purpose and Need for the Action

The project is located 8 miles south of Maupin, Oregon and 4 miles northwest of the Criterion North Trailhead. The project area lies to the west of The Dalles-California Highway 197 and east of the Deschutes River. The 61-acre treatment area is located in Township 6S Range 14E Sections 8 and 17.

The purpose of the action is to re-establish populations of perennial grasses on BLM administered lands within the Razorback Fire area. The need for this action is derived from field observations of post-fire colonizer species of noxious and invasive weeds including Medusahead rye (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) currently dominating 61 acres of BLM administered land located within the fire area (see attached map). This area is topographically suitable for drill seeding based on slope and aspect, and has been identified as being in poor ecological site condition.

The treatment area would be seeded with Crested wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, Idaho fescue, and squirreltail (see attached seed mix reference chart) using a rangeland drill. Existing roads would be used to access the proposed treatment area. Treatment areas would be focused where expansion of invasive species into native plant communities is likely due to disturbance caused by the fire.

Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Two Rivers RMP
Date approved (ROD): 1986.

The proposed action is in conformance with the above plan, based on the following land use plan decisions, objectives, terms, or conditions:

Pg. 11: "Vegetation will be managed through grazing management and range/wildlife habitat development to provide maximum wildlife habitat diversity (ecological condition of high mid seral

to low late seral stage) and to provide sufficient forage to meet big game management objectives of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.”

Drill seeding is not mentioned specifically within the decision portion of the Two Rivers RMP, but is addressed in Appendix B – Design Standards and Standard Operating Procedures for Range Developments (RMP pg. 40):

“Seeding is done with a rangeland drill. The planting mix is generally crested wheatgrass. Burning prepares land for seeding. Species composition after seeding would vary according to the success of the brush control, the survival of other species in the seed mixture, and the amount of precipitation in the year after seeding.”

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2 (June, 2005), Appendix 3, 1.13.

“Post-fire rehabilitation activities not to exceed 4,200 acres (such as tree planting, fence replacement, habitat restoration, heritage site restoration, repair of roads and trails, and repair of damage to minor facilities such as campgrounds) to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management approved condition from wildland fire damage, or to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire. Such activities: Shall be conducted consistent with agency and Departmental procedures and applicable land and resource management plans; shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure; and Shall be completed within three years following a wildland fire. (Refer to the Environmental Statement Memoranda Series for additional, required guidance.)”

This categorical exclusion is appropriate to the proposed action because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having impacts that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 Appendix 2 apply. See attached CX Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation checklist.

I considered that the proposed treatment area is located within a Special Management Area designated as having Wilderness Characteristics. Potentially significant effects to Wilderness Characteristics would be eliminated in using only existing roads to access the project area under environmental conditions that would not result in ground disturbance beyond what would be inherent in the use of a rangeland drill.

Persons and Agencies Consulted

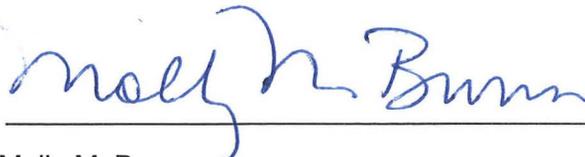
Internal specialists and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs were consulted regarding the development of the proposed action.

Decision and Rationale on Action

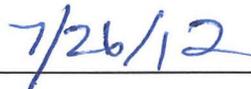
I have decided to implement the proposed action. This action meets the need for action. In addition, I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required.

Implementation Date

This project will be implemented late summer or early fall of 2012.



Molly M. Brown
Field Manager, Deschutes Resource Area



Date

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations contained in 43 CFR 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed with the Deschutes Resource Area Field Manager, Prineville District Office, 3050 NE Third Street, Prineville, Oregon 97754.

Any person whose interest is adversely affected by a final decision may appeal the decision for the purpose of a hearing before an administrative law judge, following the requirements in 43 CFR 4.411. You are allowed thirty (30) days from the date the final decision becomes effective to file such an appeal with me at the above address (43 CFR 411). Any appeal must state clearly and concisely why you think this decision is in error.

Should you wish to file a motion for stay pending the outcome of an appeal of this decision, you must show sufficient justification based on the following standards under 43 CFR 4.21:

- The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
- Whether or not the public interest favors granting the stay.

As noted above, the motion for stay must be filed in the office of the authorized officer.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this review, contact: Amanda Stamper, Natural Resource Specialist, Prineville Field Office, 3050 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, OR 97754, telephone (541) 416-6898, email: astamper@blm.gov

Attachments

1. Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation

CX EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
Rationale: Operators would be qualified to use equipment for drill seeding, and safety plans would be followed to eliminate the potential for significant impacts to public health or safety.		
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: No natural resources or unique geographic characteristics would be significantly impacted by the proposed action.		
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X
Rationale: The proposed project would have no highly controversial environmental effects and would 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: The proposed project would have no highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects and would not involve 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: This proposed categorical exclusion action is for a discrete project within a discrete geographic location and would not set a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions.		

<p>2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: While several actions are being taken in the project area as part of the <u>Razorback Fire Complex Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation 2011 Plan</u>, the cumulative environmental effects of this proposed action with the other actions would not be potentially significant.</p>		
<p>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.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed treatment area has been surveyed, and no properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places are located within the proposed treatment area.</p>		
<p>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.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed action will not have a potentially significant effect on listed species or critical habitat.</p>		
<p>2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed action conforms to the all Federal, State, local, and tribal laws.</p>		
<p>2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed action would have no effect on low income or minority populations.</p>		
<p>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).</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed action would not limit access or ceremonial use for anybody and would not affect the physical integrity of any sacred sites.</p>		
<p>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).</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The proposed project would prevent and reduce noxious weeds and non-native invasive species known to occur in the project area.</p>		

2. Seed Reference Charts

Drill Seeding 61 acres Poor Condition Pre-Fire		
<i>Species</i>	<i>Variety</i>	<i>Lbs / Acre</i>
Crested wheatgrass <i>Agropyron cristatum x A. desertorum</i>	Hycrest	2.4
Bluebunch Wheatgrass	Anatone	3.6
Idaho Fescue	Joseph	1.0
Sandberg Bluegrass	Mountain Home	0.5
Squirreiltail	Bottlebrush	0.1
<i>Totals/Avg.</i>		7.6

3. Map

NOID: W2011FWS/ESR_NOIDx012_BAR_Rainland_Drill Seeding and
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Proposed Drill Seeding Razorback Fire

