

# Categorical Exclusion Documentation

## A. Background

**BLM Office:** Prineville Field Office

**NEPA Log #:** DOI - BLM - OR – P040 - 2013 - 0013 - CX

**Project/Lease/Serial/Case File #:**

**Proposed Action Title:** 4-Mile Canyon Washington ground squirrel  
Population Augmentation

**Location:** The proposed project is approximately 10 miles SE of Arlington Oregon. The area is in a 1080 acre block of public land in the 4-Mile Canyon area near the Horn Butte ACEC (T02N,R22E, Sections 16,27,34 and 35). There are seven possible relocation sites within this block of land (See project map).

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The proposed action is to supplement the Washington ground squirrel (*Spermophilus washingtoni*) population by releasing approximately 60 to 140 ground squirrels in suitable habitat located on BLM administrated lands. The ground squirrels would be released at up to seven different locations within the project area. The number of ground squirrels released and the number of release sites depends on trapping success. Three to seven temporary circular enclosures (25 feet in diameter and two feet tall made of ½ inch wire mesh) would be anchored by 4 metal fence posts at release sites to hold ground squirrels. Additionally a weed mat would be placed around the inside edges.

The enclosures would be placed in areas with existing burrows previously used by Washington ground squirrels or other burrowing wildlife. Fifteen to twenty artificial burrows would be constructed in the vicinity of the enclosure. The ground squirrels would be confined to allow them to adopt burrows within the enclosure. After approximately three days the enclosure would be removed so the ground squirrels could disperse.

Access would be made by walking from existing roads (see project map) on three occasions by up to 10 people who would carry materials to assemble and disassemble enclosures and to bring in about 20 ground squirrels to each selected site.

## B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Two Rivers RMP      Date approved (ROD): June 6, 1986

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 land use plan objective #8 "To maintain or improve other unique wildlife or ecological values."

### 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 (June 21, 2005):

- A (5) Routine augmentations, such as fish stocking, providing no new species are introduced.
- J (9) Construction of small protective enclosures, including those to protect reservoirs and springs and those to protect small study areas.

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.

### D. Signature

I have determined that the proposed action; the augmentation of Washington ground squirrels a Candidate Species under the Endangered Species Act and construction of temporary enclosures will have no significant impacts and that no further analysis is needed.

Authorizing official: H. F. "Chip" Faver 8 Feb 13  
H. F. "Chip" Faver, Date  
Field Manager, Central Oregon Resource Area

### Contact Person

For additional information concerning this review, contact: Rick Demmer, Wildlife Biologist  
Prineville Field Office, 3050 NE 3rd Street, Prineville, OR 97754, telephone (541) 416-6738,  
[rdemmer@blm.gov](mailto:rdemmer@blm.gov)

<b>CX EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENTATION</b>			
The proposed categorical exclusion action would:		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
2.1	Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
Rationale: The Washington ground squirrel augmentation would have no significant impacts on 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: Surface disturbance is confined to up to 28 metal fence posts that would be removed in three days. The Washington ground squirrel is native to this area and as such is part of the natural resource in the area and would therefore there would be no impact of augmenting the population. While the historic Oregon trail passes nearby no enclosures would affect the trail. There are no park, recreation or refuge lands near the project location. The action would occur on public lands that have no wilderness characteristics and there are no wild or scenic rivers near the project. There are no national natural landmarks in or near the project area. The action would not disturb subsurface resources such as a sole or principal drinking water aquifer. The action does not occur on prime farmlands or wetlands (Executive Order 11990); the nearby floodplain for 4-Mile Canyon Creek would not be within the project area and would not be affected (Executive Order 11988); There is no national monument near the project area. Since the Washington ground squirrel is part of the native fauna in the area it would have no ecologically significant effects on other species such as birds or plants native to the same habitat. There are no other critical areas that could be affected by the 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: This population augmentation is within the natural range of the species and in habitat that is or has been occupied by Washington ground squirrels and would have no controversial environmental effects or 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: Augmentations of other species such as California big horn sheep have occurred in this region without significant impact. Likewise species augmentations have occurred around the western United States and where these augmentations have occurred there have been few documented risks and none that would apply to the Washington ground squirrel.			
2.5	Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
Rationale: Wildlife species augmentations are undertaken with an analysis of the particular set			

of circumstances of the species and location and would not set a precedence for future action or represent a decision in principle for future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		
2.6	Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	X
Rationale: The Washington ground squirrel is native to this habitat and already present in the area. There would be no effects other than to supplement an existing population. Therefore, the proposed augmentation would not contribute to a cumulative effect when combined with other actions to have significant environmental effects.		
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: Though this project is within a mile of the Oregon Trail, the Washington ground squirrel has been present throughout the history of the Oregon Trail and is native to the region and therefore would not 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.		
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: The action would only move Washington ground squirrels (Candidate species under the Endangered Species Act) from private land being developed to habitat they previously occupied on public land within the range of and on habitat appropriate for and previously occupied by the 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 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as well as the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service are cooperators in this project. Appropriate permits have been obtained and laws have been reviewed to insure that the project would not violate a federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		
2.10	Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	X
Rationale: Since the Washington ground squirrel is native and since there are no commercial or economic issues this project would have no effects on local populations or have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		
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: This project is limited in scale both spatially and temporally, is not in Indian ceremonial or sacred sites and therefore would not 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).		
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	X

promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		
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Rationale: Care would be taken to insure that the project does not bring in new noxious weeds or exotic species; where such species already exist the project would not contribute to their continued existence, or spread (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).
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# Washington Ground Squirrel Augmentation

