

Environmental Assessment
for
Magic Lantern Mineral Materials Site
DOI-BLM-OR-P040-2012-0049-EA

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Prineville District
3050 NE Third Street, Prineville OR 97754

2012

This Environmental Assessment (EA) considers the environmental consequences of a proposed action or alternatives to the proposed action to determine if there would be potentially significant impacts. Potentially significant effects would preclude issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and require preparation of an environmental impact statement. "Significance" is defined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and is found in regulation 40 CFR 1508.27. If a FONSI can be issued after this EA, it may be followed by a decision record (with public appeal period) and implementation of the project.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comments on the EA and FONSI, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

In keeping with Bureau of Land Management policy, the Prineville District posts Environmental Assessments, Findings of No Significant Impact, and Decision Records on the district web page under Plans & Projects at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/index.php>. Individuals desiring a paper copy of such documents will be provided one upon request.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to develop a rock quarry within the existing Magic Lantern mineral materials site to produce crushed rock to be used in the resurfacing of adjacent BLM roads such as the South Fork (SF) John Day River Road. An access road of approximately 1500-1700 feet long would be constructed from the SF John Day road to the materials site. The Magic Lantern mineral materials site is 20 miles south of Dayville, Oregon in Grant County.

Need

Crushed rock is needed to properly maintain the adjacent BLM road. Having a rock source near the site where it is to be used would reduce the cost and would increase the opportunity for projects to be completed in a timely fashion.

Purpose

The purpose of the project is to develop a site that would provide local crushed rock for resource protection actions and road maintenance in the SF John Day River area. Having a site for crushed rock for road maintenance close to the SF John Day River area, and specifically the SF John Day River Road, is important because the John Day Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Plan directs the BLM to “improve ditches, culverts, and apply gravel to surface of the SF Road” (USDI BLM 2001)..

Issues for analysis

An issue is a point of disagreement, debate, or dispute with an action based on an anticipated effect. While many issues may be identified during scoping, only some are analyzed in the EA. The BLM analyzes issues in an EA when analysis is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of impacts. To warrant detailed analysis, the issue must also be within the scope of the analysis, be amenable to scientific analysis rather than conjecture, and not have already been decided by law, regulation, or previous decision. Significant effects are those that occur in several contexts (e.g., local and regional) and are intense (e.g., have impacts on public health or unique areas). For more information on significance, see pages 70-74 in the BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1 (USDI BLM 2008).

The BLM interdisciplinary team developed issues that should be considered for this project. Those issues are addressed in this EA in the Issues section and in Alternatives Considered but Eliminated. In many cases, the issues led to the incorporation of project design features into the action alternatives.

Issues considered in detail

The following issues were raised by BLM staff, and are considered in detail in this EA.

How would the proposed action affect the scenic values of the SF John Day WSR and the SF Backcountry Byway?

Issues considered but eliminated from detailed analysis

While a number of other issues were raised during the scoping period, not all of them warranted detailed analysis to make a reasoned choice between alternatives or to determine the significance of impacts.

What would be the effect of the proposed action on fisheries habitat and water quality? The design of the proposed action includes a natural terrain barrier that would stop runoff from the disturbance zones entering any channel that would contribute runoff and sediment to the John Day River. The design of the access road would include water bars and culverts to divert runoff into ditches that would not allow for sedimentation into the river. Implementation of these design features would prevent any potentially significant effects so this issue will not be discussed further in this analysis.

What would be the effects of the proposed action on soil productivity or stability or plant community structure? The proposed action includes design features to stockpile topsoil and stabilize the stockpiles with native grass seeding. The natural terrain barriers designed for runoff control and visual screening would also be seeded with native grasses as needed to stabilize them. Equipment would be inspected for and cleaned of noxious weeds and non-native plants before entering the site. The material site would be inventoried annually for noxious weeds and treated as needed. Implementation of these design features would prevent any potentially significant effects to soil productivity or stability or plant community structure so this issue will not be discussed further in this analysis.

What would be the effect of the proposed action on cultural sites? The proposed action includes design features that would either avoid disturbance of cultural sites or mitigate disturbance prior to implementation. These project design features would prevent any potentially significant effects to cultural resources. As a result of the project design features being part of the proposed action this issue will not be discussed further in this analysis.

What would be the effects of the proposed action on wintering mule deer winter? The proposed project area is within the Murderers Creek Mule Deer Winter range. The development and use of the proposed site would not occur within the established winter closure time period. This design feature would prevent any potentially significant effects to wintering mule deer. As a result of the project design features being part of the proposed action this issue will not be discussed further in this analysis.

What would be the effects of the proposed action on recreation opportunities? The proposed action would provide materials for maintenance of the SF John Day River road, which is the major access route for recreational use of the area and is designated as the SF Backcountry Byway. Maintaining the road would allow for the continued recreation access to the area. There is a small materials excavation at the site currently which does not affect recreation and the proposed development would not contribute any potentially significant effects to recreational opportunities. As a result this issue will not be discussed further in this analysis.

What would be the effects of the proposed action on botanical species that are federally listed threatened, endangered or proposed species or habitat designated "critical" or "essential"? There are no botanical species that are federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed species or habitat

designated “critical” or “essential” within the project area. Inventories have been conducted and no sensitive plants were found within the project area. Despite there being no botanical species that are federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed species or habitat designated “critical” or “essential” within the project area, if any botanical species that are federally listed threatened, endangered, or proposed species are found they would be avoided or mitigated. Mitigation would include transplanting the specimens to appropriate undisturbed areas nearby. These project design features would prevent any potentially significant effects to botanical resources and will not be discussed further in this analysis.

What would be the effects of the proposed action on areas within the project boundary that possess wilderness character? The public lands within the proposed project area lack wilderness characteristics because they do not possess naturalness, or outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation (Wilderness Inventory File OR-054-032 Wylie Gulch Inventory Unit). Because there are no areas with wilderness characteristics in the project area, this issue will not be discussed further in this analysis.

Chapter 2 Alternatives

This chapter describes a no action alternative that would continue existing management, and one action alternatives designed to meet the purpose and need described in Chapter 1. The alternatives are summarized in Table 1.

Alternative 1, No Action

The No Action Alternative provides a baseline for the comparison of alternatives. The development of a minerals material site or access road construction would not occur under Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative.

Alternative 2, Proposed Action

A rock quarry would be developed within the existing 40 acre Magic Lantern minerals material site. See map # 1.

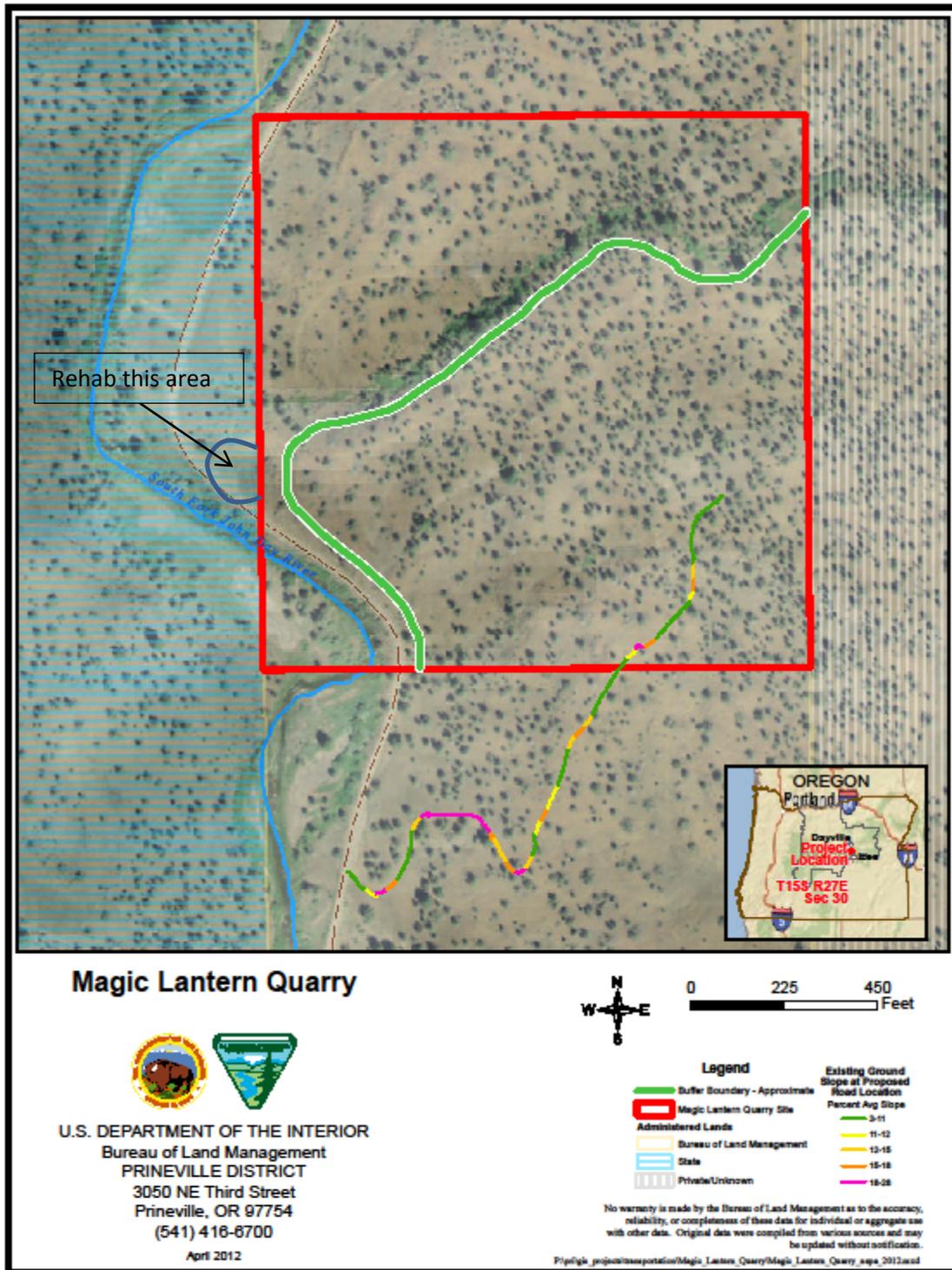
Magic Lantern Quarry Development Actions –

- The area south east (SE) of the internal buffer boundary will be mined for basalt rock and then reclaimed. The actual life stages of the quarry development will begin near the SE corner of the quarry and material will be developed and removed in strips running south to north along the east boundary. As more of the quarry is developed, it will expand toward the western internal buffer boundary. The actual amount of rock developed in this quarry will be dependent upon need and the availability of suitable material.
- Development and operation of the quarry would occur annually from April 16 to January 31 . During initial development and in years where major road resurfacing is occurring along the SF John Day River Road the rock quarry would be in operation for five months. In other years there would be little to no activity.

- During development and operation typical activities would include one week of drilling holes for blasting, two weeks of blasting rock, and three months of crushing the rock. Noise levels in the quarry within 100 feet of equipment would reach the following decibel levels: trucks (90 dBA); crushing and drilling equipment (115 dBA), and blasting (134 dBA). Noise levels would drop as distance away from the activities increases.
- Explosives would first be used to fracture the rock in situ and then heavy construction equipment would excavate the rock. The rock would be placed in a crusher that would break the rock into smaller pieces until it meets the rock size desired. Initially an area adjacent to the blast area (west side) would be leveled to provide an area to set up the crusher and stockpile the crushed aggregate. Eventually the crusher and stockpiles would be moved to the quarry floor, as space allows.
- The quarry floor would be in sloped at two percent to trap water in the quarry to prevent runoff from the quarry to the SF John Day River.
- When a new area within the quarry is opened to development the previous area excavated would be reclaimed. Reclamation activities would include spreading and re-contouring the removed rocks and soil in the disturbed areas. Materials (rock and soil) that are cleaned up during road maintenance activities along the SF John Day Road would also be utilized in reclamation activities within the quarry.
- The portion of the quarry, on State Lands, that has already been developed would be reclaimed. Reclamation of the already developed quarry on State Lands would involve placing soil from road maintenance and quarry development and operation on the already disturbed area. The placed soil would be contoured similar to the natural landscape within a half mile in either direction of the site. Once recountoured and covered with topsoil, disturbed areas would be seeded with native plant species.
- A single lane road 1700 feet long with intervisible turn-outs from a primitive road off the SF John Day Road would be constructed for quarry development and hauling material. The road would not to exceed a 15 percent grade and would be varying widths (Appendix 1). Turn-outs would be 10 feet wide by 200 feet long. Road construction would consist of removing vegetation, topsoil and soil. The road surface would be out sloped to four percent. The road would have an aggregate surface and would be water barred and gated when the quarry is inactive. Additionally, the road would have the following project design features: trees would not be removed, unless it was necessary for road construction; cut slopes would be colored as needed to mimic the color of native weathered rock; native grasses and shrubs would be planted on the fill slopes; and the design of the access road would include water bars and culverts to divert runoff into ditches that would not allow for sedimentation into the river.

- An access road within the quarry would be constructed along the south boundary of the quarry to access the SE corner of the quarry. This road would meet the same design criteria as listed above, except the road may be crowned instead of out sloped.
- Corrugated metal pipes (cmp) would be installed under the road, where needed for drainage. Installation of the CMPs may require soil and rocks from Ellingson Mill, approximately five miles south of the proposed quarry site, if there is not enough excess soil and rocks from the development of the proposed quarry.
- The existing trees along the western edge of the project would be retained as a visual screen.
- An internal buffer will be left in place adjacent to Magic Lantern Creek and the SF John Day Road as well as a buffer along the south and east quarry boundaries. These natural terrain buffers will be a minimum of 15 feet wide at the top and have a 2:1 (horizontal to vertical) slope into the quarry floor.
- Trees, vegetation, topsoil and unused excavated soil and rock would be removed from the immediate area that is being developed. Topsoil and unused excavated soil and rock would be stock piled separately on the edges of the Magic Lantern materials site. This stock piled soil and rock would be seeded with native grasses until it is utilized in quarry reclamation activities.
- Equipment would be inspected for and cleaned of noxious weeds and non-native plants before entering the site. The material site would be inventoried annually for noxious weeds and treated as needed.
- Cultural sites within the project area would either be avoided or mitigated prior to implementation.

Map 1



Conformance

John Day Resource Management Plan (1985)

Alternative 2 would be in conformance with the John Day Resource Management Plan (USDI BLM 1985).

Page 24, "Areas not specifically withdrawn from mineral entry will continue to be managed through the 43 CFR 3809 regulations and the mining laws to help meet demand for minerals while preventing unnecessary or undue degradation of other resource values."

John Day River Management Plan, Two Rivers, John Day, and Baker Resource Management Plan Amendments (2001)

Alternative 2 would be in conformance with the John Day River management Plan, Two Rivers, John Day, and Baker Resource Management Plan Amendments (USDI BLM 2001) by conforming to the decision on Page 14: "We have decided to manage lands adjacent to the river to meet state water quality requirements, satisfy obligations of the Clean Water Act, and to protect and enhance outstandingly remarkable values, especially anadromous salmonids." Due to the proposed actions being proposed in an existing salable minerals site, even though the proposed action falls within the River corridor, the actions would conform to the decision on page 22: "To protect river values we have decided not to permit new sites for production of salable minerals on public lands within the River corridor."

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD)

In addition to BLM approval, the proposed rock quarry and road also has to be approved by the OPRD, due to the proposal's location. The proposal would conform to the following OPRD rules for management (OAR 736-040-0035 - Rules of Land Management) of the state waterway:

(5) Prospecting, Mining, Dredging, and Quarrying:

(a) All prospecting, mining, dredging, and quarrying operations, including removal or movement of gravel, rocks and sand within related adjacent lands, require notification to the Commission as prescribed herein;

(b) Such notification shall include plans to ensure that debris, silt, chemicals or other materials, will not be discharged into or allowed to reach the waters within a scenic waterway and that the natural beauty of the scenic waterway will not be impaired substantially.

Chapter 3 Affected Environment

Introduction

The affected environment describes the present condition and trend of issue-related elements of the human environment that may be affected by implementing the proposed action or an alternative. It describes past and ongoing actions that contribute to present conditions, and provides a baseline for analyzing cumulative effects.

Scenic Values

The ORV for scenery identified for the SF John Day WSR was described in the 1991 BLM WSR Resource Assessment as striking and unique scenery with a wide variety of vegetation, color, and interesting landforms. Scattered ponderosa pine and an occasional Douglas or white fir intermix with juniper, sagebrush, and native bunchgrasses creating a distinct vegetative pattern on the steep canyon slopes. Lined with a flourishing assortment of streamside vegetation, the river's edge makes a picturesque centerpiece to the rugged canyon scene. The river corridor is mostly natural in character despite the road, which has been designated as a Backcountry Byway to highlight the opportunity it offers for viewing this scenery.

The BLM uses the Visual Resource Management (VRM) system to classify scenery and provide a framework for managing visual impacts of activities occurring on BLM-administered lands. As directed by BLM's Visual Resource Management (VRM) policy (USDI BLM, 1984) VRM inventories were completed for the SF John Day River and resulted in VRM classifications, which were documented in the John Day River Management Plan, Two Rivers, John Day, and Baker Resource Management Plan Amendments (USDI BLM, 2001).

The RMP identified the visual management objectives for the public lands within the SF John Day River canyon as VRM Class II, which BLM's VRM policy defines as:

"Class II Objective. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape." (BLM Manual H-8431-1, 1986)

According to BLM's VRM policy, visual design considerations are to be incorporated into all surface-disturbing projects regardless of size or potential impact. The Visual Resource Contrast Rating process (USDI BLM, 1986) is used by the BLM as a visual design tool in project design and as a project assessment tool during environmental review. It is a systematic process used to analyze potential visual impacts of proposed projects and activities. The degree to which a management activity affects the visual quality of a landscape depends on the visual contrast created between a project and the existing landscape. The contrast rating system is a means for determining whether the proposed project conforms with the approved VRM objectives and provides a means to identify mitigating measures that can be taken to minimize adverse visual impacts. Contrast ratings are required for proposed projects in highly sensitive areas or high impact projects.

Classification for the SF John Day River State Scenic Waterway: The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) classified this segment as an Accessible Natural River Area.

Chapter 4 Environmental Effects

Introduction

The effects are the known and predicted effects from implementation of the actions, limited to the identified issues. Direct effects are those caused by the action and occurring at the same time and place. Indirect effects are those caused by the action but occurring later or in a different location. Cumulative effects result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The cumulative effects analysis includes other BLM actions, other Federal actions, and non-Federal (including private) actions. Reasonably foreseeable future actions are those for which there are existing decisions, funding, formal proposals, or which are highly probable, based on known opportunities or trends.

Scenic Values

Alternative 1, No Action. Under the no action alternative the current scenic values would be unchanged.

Alternative 2, the Proposed Action. The majority of the proposed actions would not be visible from the river or the access road along the river due to the shape of the landscape and the juniper trees along the lower slopes. The natural terrain barriers, seeding, and planting of shrubs would further screen the site activities from view of the river.

To ensure that the scenic values of both the WSR and the Byway would be protected through planned designed features, the BLM completed a contrast rating to analyze the anticipated effects of the proposed project as viewed from a key observation point (KOP) located along the WSR and Byway. This KOP was selected because it is the point where the project would be most visible to a driver traveling the Byway in either direction. The KOP is also located adjacent to the river, allowing an analysis of the project as viewed from the WSR as well. Since no recreational use of the WSR has been documented nor observed, the BLM determined that the KOP selected would provide the most likely viewing point from both the river and the road.

The analysis determined that the quarry itself would be almost completely screened by topography when viewed from the WSR and the Byway. The access road to the quarry would be visible from the WSR and to drivers traveling south along the Byway. Project design features will help reduce effects to scenic quality including maintaining as many existing trees as possible for screening along the access road, reducing cut and fill slopes to the minimum necessary, treating cut slopes as needed to mimic the color of native weathered rock, and planting native grasses and shrubs on fill slopes. With the incorporation of these design features, VRM Class II objectives would be met in the long term (more than 5 years), after the grasses and shrubs planted for visual screening become well established. In the short term (less than 5 years), until the grasses and shrubs become well established, VRM Class II objectives would not be met.

A copy of the visual analysis is on file in the administrative record, available in the Prineville District Office.

Cumulative Effects

There are no reasonably foreseeable actions that would have a cumulative effect to the scenic values of the area.

Summary of effects

	Alt 1 No Action	Alt 2 Proposed Action
Scenic Values	No Change	The area would be not meet VRM Class II objectives for less than 5 years. After 5 years VRM Class II objectives would be met.

Chapter 5 Public and other involvement

Tribes, individuals, organizations, or agencies consulted

Confed. Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation

Burns Paiute Tribe

Confed. Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Grant County Road Department

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Claudia Campbell- Geographic information systems

John Zancanella- Cultural resources and paleontology

Other

Dan Tippy- Contracted by BLM to for writer editor.

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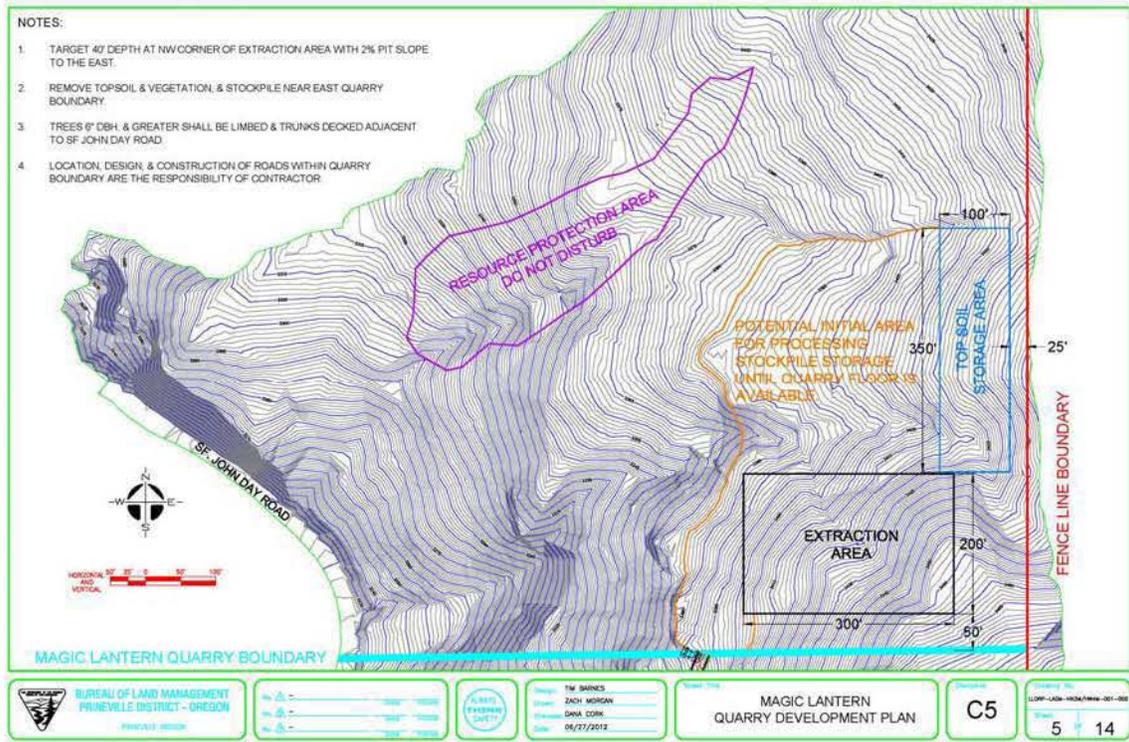
US Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management, 1986. Manual Handbook 8431-1, Visual Resource Contrast Rating.

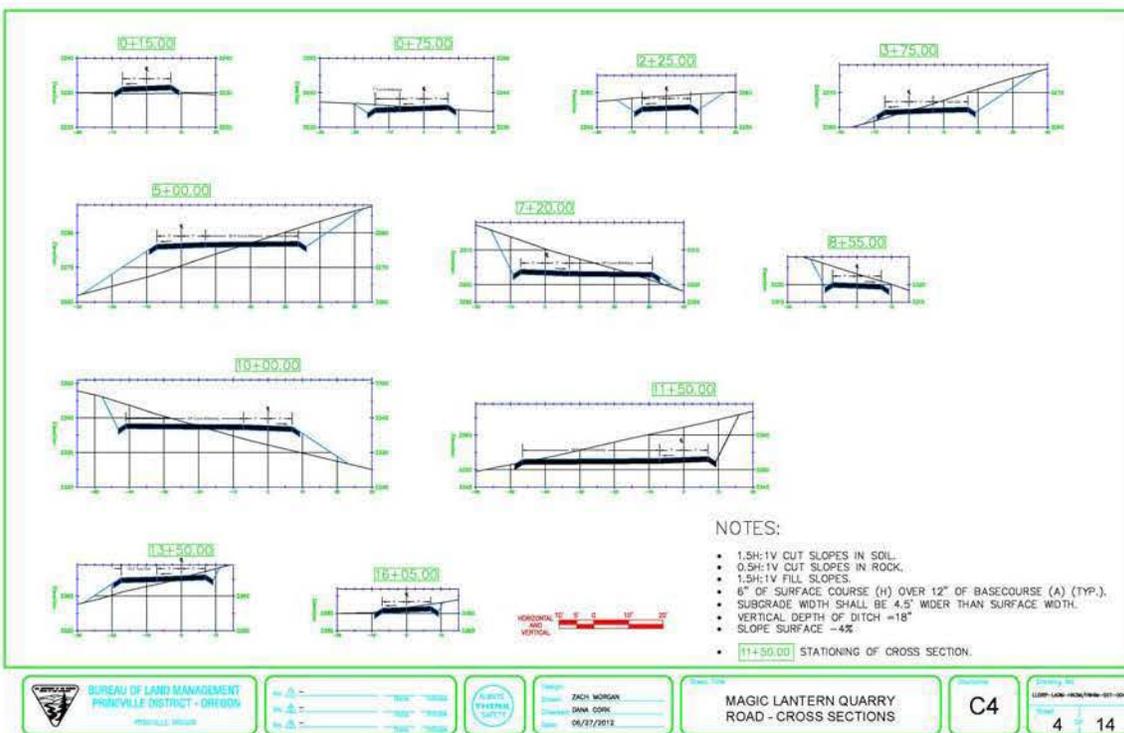
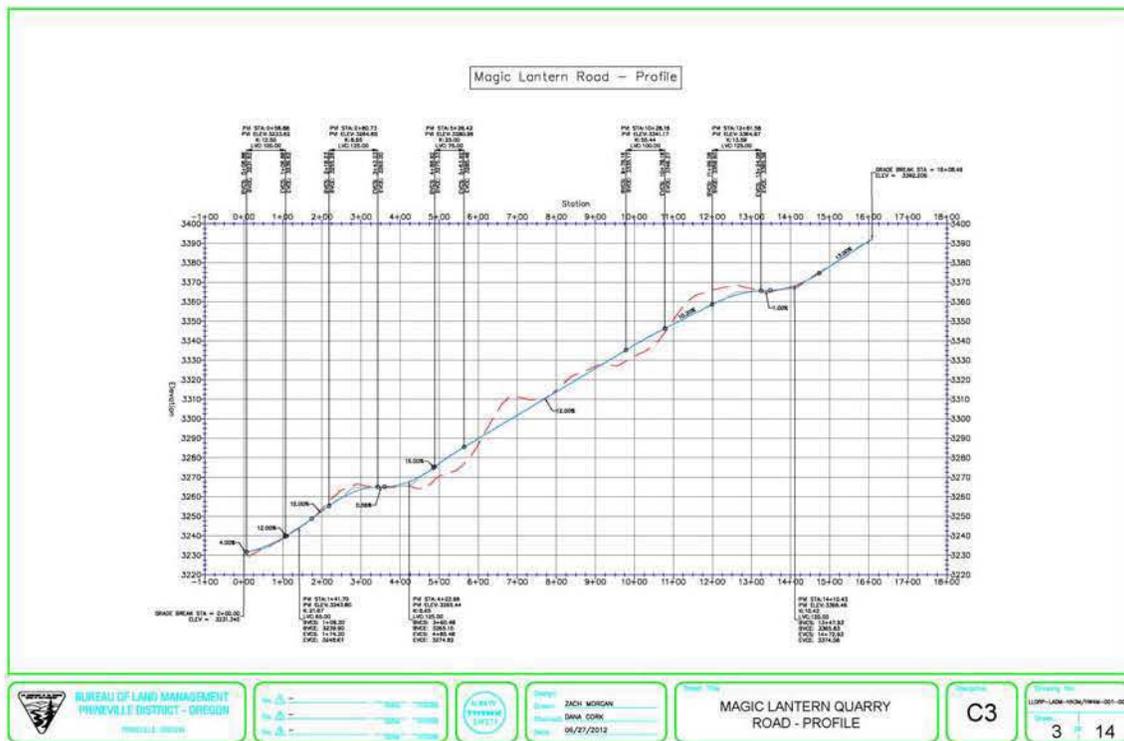
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US Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management, Prineville District. 2001. Record of Decision, John Day River Management Plan, Two Rivers, John Day, and Baker Resource Management Plan Amendments.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Maps of Materials Site and Access Road





Finding of No Significant Impact

Magic Lantern Mineral Materials Site Environmental Assessment

NEPA Register Number DOI-BLM-OR-P040-2012-0049-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-P000-2012-0049-EA) that analyzes the effects of the proposed action to develop a rock quarry within the existing Magic Lantern mineral materials site to produce crushed rock to be used in the resurfacing of adjacent BLM roads such as the South Fork (SF) John Day River Road. An access road of approximately 1500-1700 feet long would be constructed from the SF John Day road to the materials site. The Magic Lantern mineral materials site is 20 miles south of Dayville, Oregon in Grant County. 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 would occur on BLM managed lands along the SF John Day River and would have local impacts on affected interests, lands, and resources similar to and within the scope of those described and considered in the following Resource Management Plans (RMP): John Day Resource Management Plan, Record of Decision, August 1985 and the Record of Decision, John Day River Management Plan and John Day RMP Amendments, February 2001.

The 40 acre material site, OR037134, was designated for a minerals material site in 1979-80 and noted in the master title plats. The SF John Day River road requires normal and routine maintenance, including resurfacing the road with rock. The road provides access to the SF John Day Wild and Scenic River, SF John Day State Scenic Waterway, and the SF John Day Backcountry Byway, along with providing access to several private residences. Maintenance of the SF Road was provided for in the Record of Decision, John Day River Management Plan and John Day RMP Amendments, February 2001. Maintenance was to provide for continued safe access and resource protection.

The actions described represent anticipated program implementation within the scope and context of the RMPs. The materials site development and access road would not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance not previously considered in the NEPA analysis for these RMPs.

Intensity

We 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 have impacts as described in the EA. Mitigations to reduce impacts were incorporated in the design of the proposed action. These project design features are outlined in Chapter 2 Alternatives 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 RMPs.

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

Rationale: The proposed action is designed to provide materials that will be used to reduce potential public safety concerns off site. There are no known effects to public health or safety of the project.

- 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: The project area is in a Wild and Scenic River corridor and a State Scenic Waterway; the alternatives have been designed to protect and enhance these river values. There is a potential cultural resource site in the vicinity of the project, but the project includes design features (Chapter 2 of EA) that ensure no impacts to the site. There are no wetlands, wilderness, wilderness study areas, or ecologically critical areas within or near the project area that would be affected by the proposed action or any other alternative.

- 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 uncertain effects or unique or unknown risks associated with this project. All effects are described in Chapter 3 of the EA..

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

Rationale: The proposed actions (including the development of a mineral material site and construction of an access road) and actions in other alternatives are common on public land, and would not set a precedent for future actions with significant impacts.

- 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 considered 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)? No.**

Rationale: The project will not adversely affect scientific, cultural, or historic resources, including those eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An analysis of the effects of alternatives is described in the EA.

- 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)? No.**

Rationale: The proposed action and alternatives would have no effect on threatened or endangered species.

- 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)(10)? No.**

Rationale: None of the alternatives would have effects that threaten to violate any laws.

Finding

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, the consideration of intensity factors described above, all other information available to us, it is our determination that: (1) implementation of the alternatives would not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the John Day RMPs; (2) the alternatives are in conformance with the John Day Resource Management Plan; and (3) none of the alternatives 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.