

Finding of No Significant Impact
Oregon Badlands Wilderness Management Plan
Environmental Assessment

NEPA Register Number DOI-BLM-OR-P060-2011-0030-EA

US Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management, Prineville District

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Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA), No. DOI-BLM-OR- P060-2011-0030-EA. In addition to analyzing the effects of Alternative 1 (No Action), the EA analyzes the effects of the No Action Alternative and three other action alternatives that protect wilderness values and manage visitor use.

Alternative 1 retains existing management and manages visitor use on 43 miles of designated trail. The Proposed Action (Alternative 2) and Alternative 3 manage visitor use on 43 miles of designated trail, plus an additional 6.7 miles of roads to trails, 1.5 miles of trail re-routes and 2.1 miles of new trail construction, totaling 53 miles. Alternative 4 reduces the designated trail system to 34 miles and proposes no development of any new trails, parking areas or trailheads. The EA also analyzed trail rehabilitation, trailhead modification or removal, trailhead parking, fence removal or construction and wildlife guzzler re-location.

The EA is incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Both are available at the BLM office listed above, and on the internet at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/prineville/plans/index.php>

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 Oregon Badlands Wilderness (OBW) was designated by Congress as Wilderness in 2009. The BLM is required by the Wilderness Act of 1964 to protect Wilderness values. This area has retained its natural character and offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive, unconfined recreation. The OBW also contains geological, cultural and botanical values.

The OBW is a popular area for hiking, horseback riding, big game hunting and exploration. The area receives local and regional destination recreational use. Visitor use occurs year-round, but is more popular during the winter. Almost all use is day-use, as no water is available. Currently there are six access points with limited parking space at desirable locations, which restricts access, particularly visitors with stock animals.

Intensity

I 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: None of the effects are potentially significant. Short term effects to soils and vegetation would result from: visitor use off the designated trail system; restoring old vehicle routes; constructing 2.1 miles of new trails; converting routes to trails; trailhead parking and camping; removing and installing fence; and re-locating wildlife guzzlers outside the OBW. Long-term benefits would result from these actions by having most visitor use on designated trails, designated trailheads and parking areas.

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

Rationale: None of the alternatives would have impacts on the health and safety of visitors. A summary of alternatives and their effects is presented in Table 3 in the EA.

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 areas (ACECs, RNAs, significant caves) (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)? No.

Rationale: The OBW is a designated wilderness area. Alternatives have been designed to protect and enhance wilderness values. There are cultural resource properties and sites in the project area but project design features (p.67-EA) in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would ensure no impacts would occur. There are no park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness study areas, or any other ecologically areas within the OBW.

4. Would any of the alternatives have highly controversial effects (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)? No.

Rationale: While there is controversy regarding proposed actions, no effects are controversial. One commenter disagreed with our assumption that some routes would need active restoration. The level of controversy over this effect is not high.

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 unique, uncertain or unusual risks. Similar actions have been implemented on public lands. All effects are described in Chapter 4 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 are common and would not set a precedent for future actions with significant impacts. There is no evidence that the proposed actions have potentially significant environmental effects. The proposed actions include: rehabilitation of old two track routes; connecting existing designated trails together; converting old two-track routes to trails; increasing the size of trailheads, providing trailhead parking, removal of interior fence, and removal of one functional wildlife guzzler and remnant pieces of another guzzler.

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 proposed in Alternatives 2, 3 and 4 were evaluated by an interdisciplinary team. The cumulative impacts described in Chapter 4 of the EA are low in magnitude and would not be significant.

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 proposed action and alternatives include design features to prevent effects on cultural or historic resources. There are no scientific resources.

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.

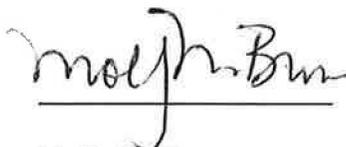
Rationale: There are no threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat within the Oregon Badlands Wilderness.

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 actions or effects that violate any laws.

Finding

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, the consideration of intensity factors described above, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) implementation of the alternatives would not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the ROD Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan EIS; (2) the alternatives are in conformance with the Upper Deschutes 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.

 2/6/14

Molly M. Brown Date
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