

Finding of No Significant Impact
Macks Canyon Boat Ramp Improvements
DOI-BLM-OR-P060-2012-0013-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-P060-2012-0013-EA that analyzes the effects of an action alternative to construct a new boat ramp for motorized use, designate an existing boat ramp for non-motorized use, close a user-created launch area, redesign a parking area, convert a group day-use site to additional parking and add facilities to meet accessible design standards at the BLM Macks Canyon Recreation Site on the Lower Deschutes River. 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 Macks Canyon Recreation Site is located in a stretch of the Lower Deschutes River designated Wild & Scenic for values including recreation, scenery, fish and wildlife. The BLM is obligated to protect these “outstandingly remarkable values” (ORVs).

The recreation site is popular for recreation activities including both motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing and camping. Scenery or visual resource values are an important part of the quality recreational experience in the area.

Due to natural changes in the river channel, the motorized boat access provided by the BLM at Macks Canyon Recreation Site is no longer functioning well for recreation users. The water depth at the toe of motorized boat ramp is too shallow and does not meet Oregon State Marine Board design standards.

The existing parking lot at the Macks Canyon boat launch area is often congested on popular use days, and does not provide enough parking spaces to accommodate current use levels. Access to parking and to the existing vault toilets does not meet current requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The area is important for fish and wildlife. Engine turbulence from motorized boat launching and landing is causing disturbance to a fish spawning area. Concentrated human activity at a user-created launch area is impacting riparian vegetation important to neo-tropical birds.

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. Benefits of the proposed action (Alternative 3 effects analysis, Chapter 3 of EA) include increased recreation opportunities (a safer boat ramp for motorized use, parking to accommodate current use levels, improved ADA access to recreation facilities); less boat engine turbulence at fish spawning areas; and improved neo-tropical bird habitat.

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

Rationale: The only potential impact on public health and safety is from inadequate water depth at the toe of the motorized boat ramp which requires a user to back their boat trailer out into the active river channel to launch a motorized boat. The adverse impact is greatest in Alternative 1, which does not include constructing a motorized boat new ramp in a safer location. Even in this alternative, the effects are not expected to be significant. A summary of Alternatives is presented in Table 1 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 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. The area includes no prime or unique farmlands. 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 alternative.

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

Rationale: The effects of constructing a new boat ramp for motorized use, and making other recreation improvements is not 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 constructing a new boat ramp for motorized use, designating an existing boat ramp for non-motorized use, closing a user-created launch area, redesigning a parking area, converting a group day-use site to additional parking and adding facilities to meet accessible design standards, and the no action alternative 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: Neither alternative is related to other actions. There are no potentially significant cumulative impacts, as described in Chapter 3 of 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)?**

Rationale: There are cultural resources located in the general project area, but the proposed project itself is not located within any cultural sites. The proposed action and alternatives do not have effects on these resources as described in Issues considered but not analyzed in detail, in Chapter 3 of the EA. There are no scientific or historic resources therefore there are not effects on them.

- 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)?**

Rationale: The proposed action would have a positive effect on threatened or endangered species, by moving motorized boat launching activities away from a fish spawning area, as described in Chapter 3 of the EA.

- 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: Neither alternative 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, 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 Lower Deschutes River Management Plan; (2) the alternatives are in conformance with the Lower Deschutes River Management Plan; and (3) neither alternative 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.

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An unsigned FONSI is issued during the EA comment period.

The FONSI will be signed after the EA comment period and issued with the Decision Record.