

Finding of No Significant Impact
Multiple Grazing Permit and Lease Renewals
DOI-BLM-OR-P000-2013-0006-EA

US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management
Prineville District Office, Oregon

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA), No. DOI-BLM-OR-P000-2013-0006-EA that analyzes the effects of four action alternatives that consider, to varying degrees, the re-issuance of livestock grazing permits or leases and maintenance, construction, and/or removal of range developments for 29 allotments throughout the Prineville BLM District.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) incorporates EA, NEPA Register Number DOI-BLM-OR-P000-2013-0006-EA, by reference.

Significance Determination

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). If the proposed action is found to have significant effects as defined by CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.27) the BLM would need to create an Environmental Impact Statement before signing a decision.

Context

I have considered the potential context and scale of the impacts from the anticipated implementation of a decision on the EA and found that the effects of the actions discussed in the EA are limited in context. The effects of the actions are limited because none of the alternatives would affect the majority of any one resource. The alternatives have varying degrees of effects to vegetation, local economies, hydrology related resources, fisheries, and wildlife, but no alternative would affect the local majorities of any one of those resources.

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: Each alternative included tradeoffs between beneficial and adverse impacts. None of the effects are potentially significant. Effects of the alternatives are presented in Chapter 3 of the EA. Beneficial impacts that would occur under any one of the action alternatives include: reduced grazing pressure during the critical growing season to upland vegetation; decreased potential for adverse effects to Peck's longbeard mariposa lily habitat; increased amounts of native riparian-wetland vegetation; improvements in water quality; an upward trend in the condition of fish habitat; increases in the condition of the habitat for ungulates, ground nesting resident neotropical migrant birds, Western bumblebees, and sage-grouse. Adverse impacts include an increased potential for adverse effects to arrowleaf thelypody in Alternatives 3 and 4 and a decrease in revenue to permittees and local economies under Alternative 2.

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 any effect on human health or safety because none of the actions have a dangerous or hazardous aspect. The only potentially dangerous aspect is to those actually performing the work related to range developments, and they would be instructed in safety precautions.

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: Per the cultural project design feature, prior to implementation of any ground disturbing activity, field inventory and reporting would be completed by BLM in consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office to meet Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Through project design, ground disturbing actions would avoid cultural resources and paleontological localities thus removing any impact or effect to these resources.

The alternatives would not affect park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wild and scenic rivers or designated wilderness because there are no actions being proposed in any park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wild and scenic rivers or designated wilderness.

While there are wetlands within allotments tied to permits or leases being considered for re-issuance, the alternatives would not affect wetlands because both the re-issuance of the grazing permits and the actions associated with range developments include all practicable measures to minimize effects to wetlands, thus ensuring that there would not be significant effects, per Chapter 3 of the EA.

The alternatives would not affect wilderness study areas because there are no actions in any of the alternatives that would affect the wilderness values of the only wilderness study

area (i.e. the Lower John Day wilderness study area in the Bull Canyon allotment) in the project area.

The alternatives would not measurably affect ecologically critical areas because, per Appendix A: Issues Considered but Eliminated of the EA, the only ecologically critical area found in the project area, the Desert Spring allotment's Peck's Milkvetch ACEC, contains such a small percentage of *Astragalus peckii*'s habitat such that none of the alternatives for the Desert Springs ACEC would not have a measurable effect to the *Astragalus peckii*'s habitat or the ACEC.

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

Rationale: Livestock grazing and range development related actions found in the alternatives in Chapter 2 are not new or unstudied actions, and thus the effects in Chapter 3 are effects that are well understood and agreed upon.

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 are unique or unknown risks associated with this project. All effects are described in Chapter 3 and Appendix A 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 not uncommon on public land and would not set a precedent for future actions. Any unforeseeable future actions in any of the allotments would undergo another separate review process.

7. Are any of the alternatives related to other actions with potentially significant cumulative impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)? No.

Rationale: The BLM considered other actions that would combine with those proposed in the alternatives. In most cases, there were no other actions that would have any effect. For a few instances, there would be cumulative effects, but in no instance would effects combine to produce a significant effect.

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: There would be no effect to cultural or historic resources because, per Chapter 2 of the EA, sensitive areas would be avoided through project design features.

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: Only the Morgart allotment contains habitat for a species that is listed as threatened (i.e. Oregon spotted frog) or endangered; however, the Oregon spotted frog habitat in the Morgart allotment would not be affected by any of the actions in any of the alternatives because the current grazing is light enough that it does not impact Oregon spotted frog habitat and no alternative contains proposals that would increase the amount of grazing pressure on Oregon spotted frog habitat. Additionally, effects to Greater sage-grouse (not yet listed) from the action alternatives are described in detail in the EA, and are expected to be positive.

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, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the alternatives are in conformance with the Brothers/La Pine, Upper Deschutes, Two Rivers, and John Day Resource Management Plans; and (2) 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.

Signed,

H.F. "Chip" Faver
Field Manager, Central Oregon Resource Area

Date

Lenore Heppler
Field Manager, Deschutes Resource Area

Date

***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.***