

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Border Field Office
1103 N Fancher Road
Spokane, WA 99212

**DRAFT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**South Fork Crab Creek Riparian and Wetland Enhancement
Environmental Assessment**

DOI-BLM-OR-135-2015-0003-EA

Background

The South Fork Crab Creek Riparian and Wetland Enhancement Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes treatments to improve riparian and watershed conditions in the project area (as described on page 7 of the EA).

The project area is located 12 miles north of Ritzville, Washington in Lincoln County (see EA Figure A-1). The legal description of the lower South Fork of Crab Creek area includes portions of Township 21 N., Range 35 E., Section 23.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed in the EA (DOI-BLM-OR-135-2015-0003) do not constitute a major federal action and that their implementation will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that an Environmental Impact Statement need not be prepared for this project.

Implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1508.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of effects. Significantly as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity.

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.13 and 1508.27, the potential “significance” of all reasonable alternatives was evaluated and I have concluded that there will be no significant effect on the human environment (including the natural and physical environment and the relationship of people with that environment). No significant irreversible or irretrievable resource commitments have been made, and long-term productivity has not been sacrificed in order to meet the project objectives, therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. This determination is based on:



a) Context: This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant:

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions and impacts are limited in context. The proposed action is site-specific in nature and its effects are limited in size. The activities described in the EA would mostly occur within the next 5 years. Therefore, effects are local in nature and are not likely to affect regional or national resources.

b) Intensity: This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action. The following are considered in evaluating intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.

Impacts associated with the proposed action are discussed in affected environment and environmental effects section of the EA (Section 10). The proposed action will result in both beneficial (improved riparian and wetland conditions and improved wildlife habitat in the project area) and negative impacts (temporary compaction of soils, slight reduction in available forage for livestock) to the human environment; however the impact on any resource is not expected to be significant.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed action is not expected to have any negative impacts related to public health or safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project area includes areas defined as wetlands under the Clean Water Act of 1972. The proposed action has been designed to enhance wetlands as described in the EA on page 9 and analyzed on page 17.

The project area includes areas defined as “prime farmland if drained” by NRCS; these include jurisdictional wetlands. No “Prime farmland” or “Farmlands of unique importance” occur in the project area. The proposed action would not preclude future agricultural uses. Therefore, no impacts to Prime and Unique Farmlands are expected. In addition, there are no wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas associated with the project area.

Formal National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultations for projects discussed in the EA were initiated with the Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Colville Confederated Tribes, and the Yakama Indian Nation. The DAHP concurred with the Area of Potential Effect and with a determination of no adverse effect to cultural resources, provided that site protection and archaeological monitoring takes place as recommended. No response was received from the Colville Confederated Tribes or the Yakama Indian Nation.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Any effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Based on interdisciplinary review, the effects of the proposed activities are well understood (see Section 10 of the EA).

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The proposed action does not contain any unique or unknown risks to the human environment (see Section 10 of the EA).

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The proposed action does not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The purpose of the project is to improve riparian and wetland conditions in the project area.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

A review of the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed action and reasonably foreseeable future actions found there would be no significant cumulative effects on the environment. The proposed action's direct and indirect effects on resources in the project area are minor and generally beneficial, with minor exceptions. The incremental contribution of this project's relatively benign effects to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future action is not anticipated to result in any significant cumulative effects.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The proposed action has been designed to curtail effects to cultural resources. Therefore, there would be no adverse impacts to cultural resources identified in the project area. BLM consulted with the DAHP and they concurred with this determination.

9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

Habitat is present for Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), a threatened species. Plant surveys were completed in June 2014. No federally listed endangered or threatened plant species were found in the project area, and no further sites are expected. No records of federally listed endangered or threatened animal species exist for the project area, and none were found during site surveys. No critical habitat for plants or animal species has been designated in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action is not expected to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat.

10. *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action does not threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Lindsey Babcock
Field Manager

Date