

Finding of No Significant Impact
North Huckleberry Pile Burn
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District
Border Field Office
1103 North Fancher Road
Spokane Valley, WA 99212

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Border Field Office prepared the North Huckleberry Pile Burn Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-OR-135-2014-0001-EA) to consider whether to treat slash piles and reduce fuel loading in an area of Stevens County approximately 10 air miles southwest of Chewelah, WA. The proposed action consists of burning hand piles and landing piles created during the harvest and understory fuels treatment of four forest health projects: Red Quarry, Red Marble, Lane Mountain, and Carr's Corner. The proposed action includes burning landing piles in all four project areas. In addition, hand piles would be burned in the Carr's Corner project area. The North Huckleberry Pile Burn project area is located within the Northeast Management Area of the Spokane District's Border Field Office.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-OR-135-2014-0001-EA. I have determined that the proposed pile burning treatments as analyzed in this Environmental Assessment will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

In reaching this conclusion, I considered the implementing regulations for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1508.27) that provide criteria for determining the significance of effects. Significantly, as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity. The text below cites 40 CFR 1508.27, with an explanation following each, stating why the proposed action would not have significant impacts.

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 are limited in context. The project area is limited in size and the activities are limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly 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 project are discussed in the Environmental Consequences Section of the EA. These impacts are within the range of those identified in the RMP. While the overall impacts of this proposal are expected to be beneficial to some resources and negative for others, 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 impacts on public health. The effects of burning piles would be within the permissible PM_{2.5} criteria and short-term in duration (2-5 days). Smoke is expected to remain at nuisance or negligible levels rather than at levels that could impair human health. Some impaired visibility from may be present in the immediate area while fires are burning; this is not expected to affect public 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.

There are no unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas associated with the project area.

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

The degree of the effects to the human environment is not highly controversial. BLM routinely conducts prescribed fire activities, such as burning slash piles as proposed here. The effects of prescribed burning are well understood; the proposed action (see EA, pp. 2-3) includes design features to minimize any environmental effects.

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.

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 or alter existing management for the analysis 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 careful 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.

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.*

There would be no adverse impacts to cultural resources identified in the North Huckleberry Pile Burn area. Consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation was completed in November 2014.

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.*

Analysis of the impacts of the Proposed Action found there was not likely to be adverse impacts to listed species or their habitat. There are no threatened or endangered species that are known to occur in the project area.

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 violate any Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed for the North Huckleberry Pile Burn project do not constitute a major federal action and that its 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.

/s/ Lindsey Babcock

9/30/2105

Lindsey Babcock
Field Manager

Date