

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
for
Similkameen Trail Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-OR134-2009-EA-0023**

Prepared by
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BACKGROUND

Although the entire Similkameen River Trail would ultimately encompass approximately 12.5 miles, the BLM's Proposed Action is limited to the 3.5 miles of trail proposed under Phase 1. Of the total 3.5 miles, approximately 1.7 miles are located on BLM managed lands within the Similkameen River gorge. The BLM proposes various trail and facility improvements including, but not limited to, trailbed hardening and trail maintenance, improved signage, emergency access points, wayside benches, and interpretive exhibits. The proposed action would relocate the PNT from the county road to the abandoned railroad grade along the south side of the Similkameen River as a safe-travel non-motorized trail, improving the overall experience for non-motorized recreationists. Additionally, further trail development and maintenance would occur on the remaining 3.5-mile segment as well as developing a trailhead and installing interpretive exhibits and park benches. See the Environmental Assessment (EA) for additional background on the proposed project.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS (FONSI)

Based on the effects discussed in the Similkameen Trail Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the Proposed Action Alternative does not constitute a major federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment either individually or cumulatively when combined with other actions in the general area.

None of the environmental effects identified for this alternative meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on a review of the following Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) criteria, consistent with 40 CFR 1508.27.

Pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.13 and 1508.27, the potential "significance" of all reasonable alternatives has been evaluated. 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. 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 to be limited in context. The Proposed Action and its effects are limited to the immediate trail corridor in a portion of Okanogan County, Washington. Because the project area is limited in size, the proposed construction activities are limited in duration, and the effects are local in nature, this alternative's effects 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 ten factors have been considered in evaluating the intensity of this action:

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 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences Sections of the EA. The project will result in both beneficial and adverse effects to resources in the Project Area. For example, the Proposed Action will increase recreational opportunities in this portion of the county but the trail improvement activities would have short-term adverse effects on local wildlife species. None of the anticipated effects, beneficial or adverse, are 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 related to public health. It will have beneficial impacts to public safety in and adjacent to the analysis area (EA p. 18), however, these impacts are not expected to be significant.

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 natural resource characteristics or ecologically critical areas associated with the project area. The Proposed Action would occur in proximity to historic or cultural resources; however, there would be no adverse impacts these cultural resources (EA pp. 14-15). Consultation with the State Historical Preservation Organization concurs with this determination.

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.

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 direction for the analysis area. The BLM will continue to manage for multiple uses (including grazing, recreation and plant and wildlife habitat) in this 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 benign, with some 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.

There would be no adverse impacts to cultural resources identified in the analysis area (EA pp. 14-15). The State Historical Preservation Organization (SHPO) concurs 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.

The project area does contain suitable or potential habitat for Federally threatened or endangered plant species as well as species protected by the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. However, no sensitive plant species have been identified in the project area and therefore no adverse effects are anticipated to individuals or populations (EA p. 9). To the extent feasible, construction activities would occur in summer and fall to minimize effects to over wintering birds and bald eagles (EA p. 6 and 12). Project construction activities may affect individual eagles if they are present at the time of construction. However, construction activities would occur outside of critical roosting or nesting seasons. Adverse effects to sensitive wildlife species are not expected to be significant.

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.