

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Cold Springs Herd Management Area Wild Horse
Gather Plan**

Environmental Assessment V040-2010-025-EA

**Malheur Resource Area
100 Oregon Street
Vale, Oregon 97918
June, 2010**



Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

Background

The FONSI is a document that explains the reasons why an action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and, why, therefore, an EIS will not be required (40 CFR 1508.13). This FONSI is a stand-alone document but is attached to the Environmental Assessment (EA) and incorporates the EA by reference. The FONSI does not constitute the authorizing document: the decision record is the authorizing document.

Significance

“Significance” as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27).

Context

For context, significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, for a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. For this proposed action, the effects are confined to the Cold Springs Herd Management Area where vegetation and riparian resources would experience decreases in use from wild horse activity after the gather. Other very confined effects would occur at individual trap sites, and these would be of short duration as defined in the EA analysis. For these reasons, the analysis of effects is in the context of the geographic description of the HMA. These effects are described and analyzed in the EA.

Intensity

Intensity refers to the severity of effect. The BLM would implement the gather described in the proposed action using the Standard Operating Procedures described in Appendix I. These procedures are referenced in the EA and limit the adverse effects to horses being gathered, and at the same time help contribute to achievement and maintenance of a natural ecological balance.

Controversy

Controversy in this context means disagreement about the nature of the effects, not expressions of opposition to the proposed action or preference among the alternatives. There will always be some disagreement about the nature of the effects for land management actions, and the decision-maker must exercise some judgment in evaluating the degree to which the effects are likely to be highly controversial. Substantial dispute within the scientific community about the effects of the proposed action would indicate that the effects are likely to be highly controversial.

The action being proposed is to gather and remove wild horses down to appropriate management levels to maintain a thriving natural ecological balance which protects public land resources from deterioration in the Cold Springs HMA. The NEPA process is

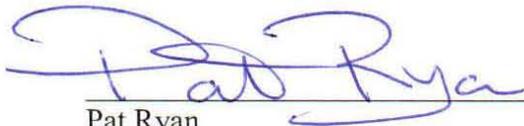
intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences and take actions that protect, restore and enhance the environment (43 CFR 1500.1(c)).

Any land management action involving ground disturbance invariably, and by definition, entails environmental effects. I have determined, based upon the analysis of environmental impacts contained in the referenced EA (V040-2010-025), that the potential impacts resulting from the proposed action would not be significant and that, therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and all other available information, I have determined that Alternatives #1, #2, #3, and #4 do not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Adoption of the No Action alternative could result in significant impacts. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based in the following factors:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Vale District, Malheur Resource Area, and adjacent land. The reason for this determination is because removal of excess wild horses would comply with land use plan objectives to achieve a thriving natural ecological balance of the ecosystem.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted and is safeguarded by following the Standard Operating Procedures delineated in the EA. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no adverse impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplains, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) because none have been identified in this area.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment. There were no comments received during the EA's public comment period.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of similar nature within this HMA and within other HMAs.

6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State, or local natural resource-related plans, policies or programs.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant adverse impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural resource surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no adverse impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. All trap locations will be surveyed for cultural resources. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and adversely affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice policy.
9. No adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat, that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act, were identified. There are sage grouse leks identified within the HMA, but analysis determined that removing excess wild horses within the HMA will benefit the resident sage grouse population and habitat.
10. This proposed action is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.



Pat Ryan
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Malheur Resource Area

6/11/2010

Date