

# Categorical Exclusion Documentation

## A. Background

BLM Office: Arizona Strip Field Office, St. George, UT

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: DOI-BLM-AZ-A030-2010-0001-CX

Proposed Action Title/Type: **Mojave Desert “Seeds of Success” Seed Collection**

Location of Proposed Action: Virgin and Beaver Dam Slopes

Description of Proposed Action: The purpose of this project is to expand the availability of Mojave Desert native plants for use in restoring burned areas in the Mojave Desert Ecosystem. After disturbance events, including large catastrophic fires, land managers rely on native plant seed sources for revegetation. Seeds are often needed in large quantities, either for direct seeding or for propagation of plants used for out planting. This proposed action would lead to such a seed source.

Wild native seed would also be collected in other regions of the Mojave Desert (in California and Nevada) to provide seeds to researchers for common garden studies and other native plant materials development projects. (See Figure 1.) Between ten and twenty collections of a single species, across its range, are needed to develop genetically appropriate ecotypes. (See Table 1. for a list of species targeted for collection.) An “ideal” collection would be from a large number of individual plants (between 100 and 500) and would contain more than 25,000 viable seeds. (See Figure 2.) Seed would be collected starting in mid-March and continue through late August/September of 2010. (See Appendix A.)

A crew leader/botanist would organize and mentor seven Chicago Botanic Garden interns. Collection crews would include 3 people. They would use 4WD vehicles on established routes and then hike to collection sites. All collections would be by hand. Other than the disturbance caused by 3 people walking, no temporary access routes would be created. The crews would start in the southern-most, and lower elevations, and then work north and higher as the season progresses. The crew leader would be spending much of January and February locating the collection areas and routes for the crew.

No collections would be made in designated wilderness or in the Grand Canyon – Parashant National Monument (Pakoon Basin). Seeds would not be collected from any federally listed or candidate species. Seed collection could occur in the Beaver Dam Slope and Virgin Slope ACECs.

The following measures would be implemented, as part of the project design:

- a. Prior to moving a vehicle, personnel will inspect under the vehicle for tortoises. If a tortoise is found under the vehicle, the tortoise will be allowed to move away from the vehicle on its own accord, if possible.
- b. Motorized vehicles will be restricted to existing routes and must not park in undisturbed areas.
- c. Motorized vehicles traveling on unpaved roads in desert tortoise habitat shall not exceed speed limits established by the Bureau to protect desert tortoises. These speed limits will generally not exceed 20 mph between March 15 and October 15, and not to exceed 40 mph between October 15 and March 15.
- d. Where California condors visit a worksite while activities are underway, the onsite supervisor will notify the BLM wildlife team lead (435) 688-3239. Project workers and supervisors will be

instructed to avoid interactions with condors. Project activities will be modified or delayed if those activities have adverse effects on condors. Operations will cease until the bird leaves on its own, or until techniques are employed by permitted personnel that results in the individual condor leaving the area.

- e. Tortoise or clutch of tortoise eggs found during project activities shall be avoided. The authorized biologist shall maintain a record of all desert tortoises encountered during the project.
- f. At no time shall vehicle or equipment fluids be dumped on federal lands. All accidental spills must be reported to the Bureau and cleaned up immediately, using the best available practices according to the requirements of the law. All spills of federally or State-listed hazardous materials that exceed reportable quantities shall be promptly reported to the appropriate State agency and the Bureau.
- g. To reduce attraction of potential desert tortoise predators, project sites in desert tortoise habitat shall be maintained in a sanitary condition at all times; waste materials at those sites shall be placed in covered receptacles and disposed of promptly at an appropriate waste disposal site. "Waste" refers to all discarded matter, including, but not limited to human waste, trash, garbage, refuse, oil drums, petroleum products, ashes, and equipment.
- h. Unleashed dogs shall be prohibited in project areas.
- i. No hazing or feeding of wildlife will be allowed.
- j. Avoid collecting seed in the burn areas located within the Virgin and Beaver Dam Slopes.

## **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Record of Decision (ROD) and RMP; Arizona Strip Field Office (ASFO)

Date Approved: February 2008

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable RMP because it is specifically provided for in the following RMP decisions:

**MA-VM-10** The sale, collection, or use of vegetative materials (e.g. native seed, medicinal, landscape mulch, posts, fuel wood, Christmas trees, etc.) will require a permit. Permits will be authorized only for those areas where resource management objectives have been developed. Interested parties will need to check with the BLM office concerning specific locations, stipulations, fees, and other requirements.

Collection of vegetative materials in ACECs will be restricted unless it meets specific resource management objectives.

Specific resource management vegetation objectives have been developed for the Beaver Dam Slope, Mesquite Community and Littlefield Community Grazing Allotments, which cover the entire proposed project area. The resource management objectives for this project are to expand the availability of Mojave Desert native plants for use in restoring burned areas in the Mojave Desert Ecosystem. Thus, the collection of vegetative materials as proposed would be in conformance with this RMP decision.

**Non-specific Decisions**

The proposed action is in conformance with the RMP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following RMP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

**DFC-SR-01** Approved scientific research will contribute to management of natural and cultural resources and achieving Desired Future Conditions.

**MA-SR-01** Permits will be required for approved scientific research to insure compatibility and reporting of results.

**MA-VM-07** Collection of listed, proposed, or candidate plant species will not be authorized.

In addition, the proposed action does not conflict with other decisions contained within this plan.

**C: Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, Appendix 4, Section C.5 – “Disposal of small amounts of miscellaneous vegetation products outside established harvest areas, such as Christmas trees, wildings, floral products (ferns, boughs, etc.), cones, seeds, and personal use firewood.”

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

**D: Signature**

Authorizing Official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Name: Lorraine M. Christian  
Title: Arizona Strip Field Office Manager

**Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact

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## **Attachment 1. EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES REVIEW AND CHECKLIST**

<b>IMPORTANT:</b> Appropriate staff should review the circumstances listed below, and comment for concurrence. Rationale supporting the concurrence should be included where appropriate.		
<b>EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES</b>	<b>YES/NO &amp; RATIONALE (If Appropriate)</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
Does the proposed action...		
1. Have significant impacts on public health and safety?	No. There would be no impact on public health and safety.	Harcksen
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness or wilderness study areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas?	No wild and scenic river would be affected. No collection would occur in designated wilderness.  Minimal or no impacts would occur to recreational users in the areas of collection.	Hawks  Jensen
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]?	No. There would be no controversial environmental effects or conflicts.	Harcksen
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	No. There would be no unique or unknown environmental risks.	Harcksen
5. Establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects?	No. This project is part of an ongoing national program.	Harcksen
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?	No. There would be no relationship to any other environment effects.	Harcksen
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or office?	No. There would be no impact on properties listed or eligible.	Herron

<p>8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?</p>	<p>No. Desert Tortoise Terms and Conditions from the Biological Opinion for the Arizona Strip RMP have been incorporated into the design of the proposed action. When implemented, these Terms and Conditions would ensure no impacts to this species.</p> <p>According to all inventories, the project area has no special status plant species nor habitat.</p>	<p>Hughes Jensen</p>
<p>9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?</p>	<p>No. No laws would be violated.</p>	<p>Harcksen</p>
<p>10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?</p>	<p>No. There would be no impact on low income or minority populations.</p>	<p>Harcksen</p>
<p>11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners, or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?</p>	<p>No. There would be no impact on ceremonial or sacred lands.</p>	<p>Herron</p>
<p>12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?</p>	<p>No. There would be no impact on noxious or non-native invasive weeds.</p>	<p>Harcksen Bunting</p>

**Table 1. Mojave “Seeds Of Success” Species List**

Target Grass Species

*Achnatherum hymenoides	Indian ricegrass
Achnatherum parishii	Parish's neettlegrass
*Achnatherum speciosum	Desert needlegrass
Aristida purpurea	Purple three-awn
Elymus elymoides	Bottlebrush squirrel tail
Hesperostipa comata	Needle and thread grass
*Muhlenbergia porteri	bush muhly
Pleuraphis jamesii	James galleta
Pleuraphis rigida	Big galleta
Sporobolus cryptandrus	Sand dropseed
Vulpia octoflora	sixweeks fescue

Common name

Target forb species

Allionia incarnata	windmills
Amsinckia tessellata	bristly fiddleneck
Astragalus spp.	milkvetch spp.
Calochortus flexuosus	winding mariposa lily
*Camissonia brevipes	browneyed primrose
*Camissonia claviformis	suncups (yellow cups)
*Camissonia spp.	
Chamaesyce albomarginata	whitemargin sandmat
Delphinium parishii	Parish Larkspur
Dithyrea californica	spectacle pod
Eremalche rotundifolia	desert five spot
Erigeron concinnus	tidy fleabane
Eriogonum inflatum	desert trumpet
Glandularia (Verbena) goodingii	Gooding verbena
Heliomeris multiflora var. nevadensis	Nevada goldeneye
Layia glandulosa	white tidy tips
Leptosiphon (Linanthus) aureus	golden linanthus
Lotus humistratus	foothill deervetch
*Lotus rigidus	desert deerweed
Lotus salsuginosus	coastal bird's foot trefoil
Lotus strigosus	hairy lotus
*Lupinus arizonicus	arizona lupine
Lupinus concinnus	bajada lupine
Lupinus spp.	lupine spp.
Malacothrix glabrata	smooth desert dandelion
Mimulus bigelovii	monkey flower
Mirabilis (bigelovii) laevis	wishbone bush
Nama demissum	purple mat
Oenothera spp.	evening primroses
Palafoxia arida	desert needles
Phacelia campanularia	canterbury bell
Phacelia crenulata	notched leaf phavelia
Plantago spp.	plantain

<i>Prenanthes exigu</i>	brightwhite
<i>Rafesquia neomexicana</i>	desert chickory
<i>Salvia columbariae</i>	chia
* <i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	desert globemallow
<i>Stephanomeria exigu</i>	small wirelettuce
* <i>Tequila plicata</i>	

Target Shrub species

<i>Acacia greggi</i>	catclaw
<i>Acamptopappus shockleyi</i>	Shockley's goldenhead
<i>Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus</i>	rayless goldenhead
<i>Adenophyllum cooperi</i>	Cooper's dogweed
* <i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>	white bursage
<i>Ambrosia eriocentra</i>	wooly bursage
* <i>Atriplex canescens</i>	fourwing
<i>Atriplex confertifolia</i>	shadscale saltbush
<i>Atriplex</i> spp. (natives)	saltbushes
<i>Bebbia juncea</i>	sweetbush
<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>	desert willow
* <i>Coleogyne ramosissima</i>	blackbrush
<i>Encelia frutescens</i>	button brittle bush
<i>Encelia virginensis</i>	Virgin river brittlebush
	green ephedra (Mormon tea)
* <i>Ephedra viridis</i>	
* <i>Ephedra fasciculata</i>	Mojave ephedra
<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	Nevada ephedra
<i>Grayia spinosa</i>	spiny hopsage
<i>Krameria erecta</i>	littleleaf ratany
<i>Kraschenninikovia lanata</i>	winter fat
<i>Lycium palladium</i>	pale desert thorn
<i>Lycium torreyi</i>	Torrey's wolfberry
<i>Mortonia utahensis</i> (scabrella)	Mortonia
<i>Pentalonyx parryi</i>	sandpaper bush
<i>Prosopis glandulosa</i>	mesquite
<i>Prunus fasciculatus</i>	desert peach
* <i>Psilostrophe cooperi</i>	paperflower
<i>Psoralea fremontii</i>	indigo bush
<i>Salazaria mexicana</i>	Mexican bladdersage
<i>Salvia dorii</i>	purple sage
* <i>Suaeda</i> spp. natives	seepweed
<i>Thamnosma montana</i>	Desert rue

\*Denotes focus species (highest priority for collection)