



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS (FONSI)

for

EA CA 170-08-16

10 Year Grazing Authorization on the Hammil Valley (6024), Marble Creek (6025), Mathieu (6026), Adobe Valley (6027), Bramlette (6038), Lone Tree (6053), and Blind Springs (6080) allotments

Introduction:

One of the primary purposes for conducting an environmental assessment (EA) is to determine whether or not a proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and therefore will require the preparation of an EIS. As defined in 40 CFR 1508.13, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly presents the reasons why an action will not have significant effect on the human environment. The regulations further define the term “significantly” in 40 CFR 1508.27 and require that the context and intensity of impacts be considered in analyzing significance. Context 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.” 40 CFR 1508.26(a) Intensity “refers to the severity of the impact.” 40 CFR 1508.26(b) The analysis to make a determination whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is based on the following criteria.

Rationale for Finding of No Significant Impact:

I have reviewed the environmental assessment (EA) CA 170-08-16 regarding the Hammil Valley (6024), Marble Creek (6025), Mathieu (6026), Adobe Valley (6027), Bramlette (6038), Lone Tree (6053), and Blind Springs (6080) allotments, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. The EA details the effects of the project and provides the basis for the conclusions in this FONSI. None of the effects identified including direct, indirect, and cumulative effects, are considered significant based on seasonal use of the allotments, and minimal impacts to the native vegetative community. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

Intensity: This issue is addressed through the ten “significance” criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27, and discussed below:

1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Rangeland Health Assessments conducted, indicate that there are no significant environmental impacts from current use and the allotments all meet Rangeland Health Standards. Authorizing grazing with revised, allotment specific terms and conditions would not create negative impacts to livestock

operations. The terms and conditions are designed to help protect and sustain rangeland health and to keep the ecosystem functioning properly.

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

Public health and safety was not identified as an issue.

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.

Based on the EA, the Adobe Valley allotment contains extensive wetlands to include the following plant communities: Transmontane Freshwater Marsh (permanently flooded), Freshwater Seep, Transmontane Alkali Marsh (seasonally flooded), Alkali Seeps, and Alkali Meadow (saturated soils). The wetland community types integrate following a gradient of moisture and alkalinity. Grazing under the proposed action should reduce soil compaction and increase the overall ecological function of these plant communities. The proposed action will not result in loss or modification of wetlands on the Adobe Valley allotment.

Based on the EA, the Hammil Valley, Marble Creek, Mathieu, Adobe Valley, Bramlette, Lone Tree, and Blind Springs allotments do not occur within any designated Wilderness Area. In addition, the Marble Creek, Mathieu, Adobe Valley, Bramlette, Lone Tree, and Blind Springs allotments do not occur within any designated Wilderness Study Area. However, approximately 63% (13,246 acres) of the Chidago Canyon WSA (CA-010-079) occurs within the Hammil Valley allotment. Wilderness values are described in the 1979 Final Wilderness Intensive Inventory Report while the WSA's existing range and other improvements are identified in the 1990 California Statewide Wilderness Study Report. The Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review (IMP) provides direction for grazing management in WSAs until they are designated wilderness or released from the wilderness review process. Grazing existed on the Hammil Valley allotments at the time the WSA was designated by BLM in the 1980's and is a use grandfathered by Section 603(c) of FLPMA. Grazing may continue to the same manner and degree as took place in 1976. Continuance of proposed grazing in the Chidago Canyon WSA would conform with the BLM IMP and would not impair Congress's ability to designate the WSA as Wilderness.

Lastly, there are no park lands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas within these seven allotments.

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

No effects that may occur as a result of the approval of this proposed action were identified in the Environmental Assessment that are likely to be 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 is not unique or unusual. The environmental effects to the human environment were analyzed in the Environmental Assessment. There are no predicted effects on the human environment, which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

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 that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposed action continues a traditional use of public lands with consideration for sensitive species and the native plant communities. Any future grazing permit renewals will be evaluated through the National Environmental Policy Act process, consistent with current laws and regulations.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The proposed action was evaluated in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. These cumulative effects are identified in the EA. Significant cumulative effects were not identified from the proposed action, based on grazing permit issuance that would occur as a result of the decision herein.

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.

Based on the EA for the Hammil Valley, Marble Creek, Mathieu, Adobe Valley, Bramlette, Lone Tree, and Blind Springs allotments, the proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Impacts to cultural properties are predicted to be minimal as a result of the proposed action and proposed mitigation measures. Mitigation measures include:

- a) Conduct cultural resource evaluations at trough locations that have been decommissioned or that are no longer in use prior to re-commissioning.
- b) To curtail impacts at two previously recorded sites, MNO-205/174, an enclosure fence was constructed in 2003 to protect the site(s) from further degradation resulting from the cumulative impacts of cattle and wild horse use of the area.
- c) The trough, located on the southwest portion of the Antelope spring protective fence, may be relocated at a remote location to reduce cattle and wild horse congregation near the spring and the site(s). Grazing activities may be removed from this area of the allotment, if impacts cannot be otherwise mitigated.
- d) The site(s) at Antelope Spring could be tested to determine eligibility and a data recovery program instituted if found to be eligible for listing on the NRHP.
- e) Cattle use at the Yellow Jacket, Chalfant, and Red Canyon Petroglyph sites, within the Hammil Valley allotment, may be reduced or eliminated to avoid resource degradation at these sites. Cattle use in the area of these sites will be monitored and cattle moved from site locations when identified.

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.*

There will be no effect on threatened or endangered species as a result of the action. There is no designated critical habitat for any federally listed species on the Hammil Valley, Marble Creek, Mathieu, Adobe Valley, Bramlette, Lone Tree, and Blind Springs allotments and no federally listed species are known to occupy these allotments.

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

The approved action does not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The EA contains discussion pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). State, local, and tribal interests were consulted during the environmental analysis process. No violations or inconsistencies of these interests were noted or left unresolved. Furthermore, the approved proposed action is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan approved on March 23, 1993, as amended by the Central California Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing approved on July, 13, 2000. This plan has been reviewed, and the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I find that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and an environmental impact statement is not needed.

Therefore, it is my decision to implement the proposed action from EA CA 170-08-16 for the Hammil Valley (6024), Marble Creek (6025), Mathieu (6026), Adobe Valley (6027), Bramlette (6038), Lone Tree (6053), and Blind Springs (6080) allotments and authorize livestock grazing for 10-years with revised, allotment specific terms and conditions to the grazing operators.

Authorized Official:

/s/ Bill Dunkelberger

Field Manager, Bishop Field Office

Date: /s/ September 30, 2008