



**United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Bishop Field Office
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Decision Record

Indian Spring Headcut Stabilization and Riparian Habitat Improvement Project (DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0018-EA)

Introduction and Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Bishop Field Office intends to implement measures to stabilize headcuts along an approximately 200 m section of the Indian Spring outflow channel located southeast of Mono Lake in Mono County, California. Headcuts would be stabilized using a combination of grade control structures including gabions, log v-weir dams, log beams and loose rock check dams. All work would be done using hand tools. Access to the project site would be via existing vehicle routes, then on foot.

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve hydrologic function and streamside riparian/wet meadow habitat conditions by stabilizing historic and active headcuts along the upper reach of the outflow channel of Indian Spring. The channel in this reach is incised in several areas due to historic and active headcutting and associated gully erosion. Meadows are at risk of continued downcutting that would further compromise hydrologic function. Without action, active headcutting and incision will continue, leading to additional loss of important riparian meadow habitat.

Decision and Rationale

Based on the information and analyses provided in environmental assessment DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-18-EA and the associated finding of no significant impact, I have determined that implementation of the proposed action as designed would not result in any significant adverse effects on the human environment and therefore an environmental impact statement is not required. I have also determined that the proposed action conforms to, and is consistent with, the overall guidance and management direction provided by the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved March 25, 1993. The Bishop RMP has been reviewed, and the proposed action conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as defined at 43 CFR 1601.0-5(b) and as required by 43 CFR 1610.5-3(b).

The proposed action implements the following Bishop RMP Decisions:

1. Protect and enhance unique or important vegetation communities and wildlife habitats (Area-Wide Decisions, p. 17).
2. Meet Desired Plant Community (DPC) goals on 8 acres (75%) of riparian habitat to increase wildlife habitat diversity, provide high quality fish habitat and control erosion (Granite Mountain Management Area Decision, p. 36).
3. Meet Desired Plant Community (DPC) goals on 100% of the area's wet meadows to increase habitat diversity and reduce erosion (Granite Mountain Management Area Decision, p. 36).

Additional RMP direction that supports implementation of the proposed action includes:

1. Vegetation will be a key element in the plan and management will be directed toward the achievement of desired plant community goals (Area Manager's Guidelines, p. 9).
2. Rehabilitation of riparian areas will receive high priority for project implementation. Efforts will be made to return all watersheds in declining condition to equilibrium (Area Manager's Guidelines, p. 9).

Implementation of this project will restore the stability of the spring outflow channel, preventing further erosion. Hydrologic function and associated water quality and riparian/meadow habitat conditions will also be improved. The project will benefit the Bi-state distinct population segment (DPS) of greater sage-grouse, a BLM designated sensitive wildlife species currently proposed for listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, by improving the quality and availability of important late brood/summer habitat. Implementation of this project will also benefit other riparian/meadow dependent wildlife and plant species within the project vicinity.

The project will have negligible short-term adverse effects on air quality, global climate change, soils and visual resources.

There will be no adverse effect to any cultural resources as a result of this undertaking.

The project will have no effect on any threatened or endangered species, nor will it result in the destruction or adverse modification of any designated critical habitat.

The project will have a wholly beneficial effect on proposed critical habitat for the Bi-State DPS of greater sage-grouse.

Therefore, it is my decision to implement the proposed action as designed, and subject to, the following project implementation stipulations as outlined in the environmental assessment:

1. Project area vehicle access is limited to existing roads. All project work shall be conducted by hand crews working on foot.
2. No toxic materials or fluids may be used or disposed at the site.
3. To minimize the importation or spread of invasive non-native species, all tools, equipment and materials from outside the project area shall be inspected and washed prior to transport to the project site. The project area will be monitored for non-native invasive species for 3 years following project completion.
4. To protect breeding and nesting birds including greater sage-grouse, no project work may occur between March 1 and August 15.
5. To protect cultural resources (sites), field surveys will be conducted to identify previously unrecorded sites to ensure their protection during project implementation. No digging or rock collection may occur in any area that has not received a site specific cultural resource survey. Project design will incorporate Standard Resource Protection Measures (SRPMs) for cultural sites by creating exclusion areas, and monitoring the adequacy of SRPMs during project construction.
6. A BLM Archaeologist must be on site during the final selection of stabilization structure locations.
7. All cultural resources located within the project area shall be shown to the project lead and flagged for avoidance where necessary to ensure protection throughout all phases of project implementation.
8. All borrow material locations for headcut repair will be identified by the project lead and surveyed by the archaeologist prior to project implementation.
9. If previously undiscovered cultural resources are encountered during project implementation, operations shall be immediately stopped and the Bishop Field Office manager and archaeologist notified. The project will be modified to avoid impacts to any late discoveries of archaeological resources prior to the resumption of work.

Alternatives Considered but not Selected

The No Action alternative would allow downcutting to continue, with negative impacts to riparian and meadow soils, vegetation, water quality and wildlife habitat.

Tribal Consultation

The Bishop Field Office conducted tribal consultation with representatives of the Mono Lake Kutzadikaä Tribe by sending consultation letters to the Tribal Council Chairperson and the Mono Lake Kutzadikaä Indian Community President on May 21, 2013; and by conducting a tribal consultation field trip on June 14, 2013 in which the Indian Community President, Tribal Council Vice-Chair, and a Tribal Council member participated. No written comments were provided to me, and the field trip concluded in tribal support for the proposed project.

Administrative Remedies

Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825.

Project Contact

For additional information about this decision and project implementation, please contact Dale Johnson, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist, at 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100, Bishop, CA 93514, phone 760-872-5055; or myself, Steven Nelson, Bishop Field Manager, at 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100, Bishop, CA 93514, phone: 760-872-5011.

/s/Steven Nelson

7/11/2014

Steven Nelson
Bishop Field Manager

Date