



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

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**Finding of No Significant Impact
Invasive Plant Management
(DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2014-0030-EA)**

One of the primary purposes for preparing an environmental assessment (EA) is to determine whether or not a proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and therefore require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). As defined in 40 CFR 1508.13, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly presents the reasons why a federal agency action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an EIS will therefore not be prepared. The regulations specify that both the context and intensity of effects be considered when determining significance (40 CFR 1508.27).

This document presents the findings of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) concerning the proposed action to use an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to control invasive plant species on public lands administered by the Bishop Field Office in Inyo and Mono Counties, California, as described and analyzed in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2014-0030-EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact and Land Use Plan Conformance Determination

I have reviewed EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2014-0030-EA which includes the identification and explanation of any potentially significant effects on the human environment that would result from implementation of the proposed action to implement an IPM approach to control invasive plant species on public lands administered by the BLM Bishop Field Office in Inyo and Mono Counties, California. Based on my review of the environmental analyses and recommendations from staff, I have determined that implementation of the proposed action as described and analyzed in the EA does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. None of the effects identified, including the direct, indirect and cumulative effects, in the environmental analyses meet the definition of significance either in context or intensity as outlined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an EIS is not required and will not be prepared.

I have also reviewed the *Bishop Resource Management Plan Record of Decision* (Bishop RMP) (BLM 1993) and determined that the proposed action does conform to the terms and conditions of the applicable land use plan as defined at 43 CFR 1601.0-5(b) and as required by 43 CFR 1610.5-3(b).

The proposed action would implement the following Bishop RMP Decision:

“Protect and enhance unique or important vegetation communities and wildlife habitats” (Area-Wide Decisions, p. 17).

The proposed action also conforms to, and is consistent with, the following RMP direction:

“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).

Therefore, I will issue a decision to implement the proposed project as described and analyzed in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2014-0030-EA. The decision record will include a description of administrative remedies and appeal procedures that may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by my decision to implement the project as proposed.

Rationale for Finding of No Significant Impact

My finding is based on consideration of both the context (40 CFR 1508.27(a)) and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27(b)) of the effects identified in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2014-0030-EA as summarized below:

Context

The proposed invasive species treatments would occur at discrete, site-specific locations throughout the Bishop Field Office. Because treatments would target discrete, site-specific invasive plant infestations, project effects are expected to be localized in scale and limited to the extent of treated invasive plant infestations and their immediate vicinity. Some minor temporary effects related to travel to and from the treatment sites, changes in the appearance of vegetation immediately post-treatment, and the loss of solitude when invasive plant infestations in designated wilderness areas are treated could extend beyond the treatment site; however, these effects are expected to be both minor and short-term. None of the effects associated with the proposed action are considered measureable at the regional, state-wide, national, or international scale.

Intensity

I have considered the intensity and severity of potential effects anticipated from implementation of the proposed project on public lands administered by the BLM Bishop Field Office in Inyo and Mono Counties, California. My consideration of the ten “significance” criteria identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b) is summarized below:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA provides a description of both beneficial and adverse effects expected from implementation of the proposed action. The primary beneficial effects would accrue from the eradication and/or control of invasive plant species, which would: 1) improve habitat suitability

for native plant and animal species, including threatened, endangered, and special status species; 2) protect scenic and natural values in designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, areas of critical environmental concern, and eligible wild and scenic river study corridors; and 3) reduce the likelihood that larger-scale, more impactful treatments would be needed in the future to control invasive plant infestations. Potential adverse impacts include: 1) short-term, minor vegetation and soil disturbance from treatment of nearby invasive plant infestations and; 2) temporary disruption to recreational activities, Native American cultural practices, and solitude in designated wilderness.

Overall, the magnitude of both the predicted beneficial effects and the predicted adverse effects of the proposed action are minimal and restricted to the local scale. None of the direct, indirect, or cumulative effects associated with the proposed action are considered significant, either individually or cumulatively, based on the analyses provided in the EA. In addition, none of the predicted adverse effects are considered significant, even when evaluated independent of the beneficial effects that would occur from implementation of the proposed action.

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

No aspect of the proposed project has been identified as having the potential to adversely affect public health or safety because the scope and scale of the project is so limited. The project also includes numerous standard operating procedures and other mitigation measures that minimize the risk of adverse impacts to public health and safety.

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.

The proposed project is designed to avoid impacts to cultural resources and would enhance the overall ecological value of wetlands, eligible wild and scenic river study corridors, and designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and areas of critical environmental concern. There are no parklands or prime farmlands in the project area vicinity. Implementation of the proposed action would have no adverse effect on any historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the surrounding geographic area.

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

None of the anticipated effects identified in the EA are considered 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 is not unique or unusual. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that 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.

Any similar action must be evaluated through an appropriate site-specific environmental review and decision making process consistent with applicable law, regulation, policy, and land use plan guidance. Implementation of the proposed action would not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

No individually significant or cumulatively significant effects are identified in the EA. Implementation of the proposed action would not contribute to significant cumulative effects on the human environment at either the local, regional, state-wide, national, or international scale.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

No districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects currently listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places would be adversely impacted by the proposed action because the scope and scale of the project is so limited and treatments that would adversely affect such sites, areas, or objects would be avoided. The project also includes numerous standard operating procedures and other mitigation measures that minimize the risk of adverse impacts to these places. Implementation of the proposed action would not result in any loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

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.

Implementation of the proposed action would not adversely affect any species listed, or proposed for listing, as either endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, nor would it adversely affect any designated or proposed critical habitat for any such species. The project includes numerous standard operating procedures and other mitigation measures that minimize the risk of adverse impacts to listed species and their habitats. Protected plant and wildlife species are generally more vulnerable to habitat loss and to competition from invasive plant species because their populations are usually small and their habitats are usually limited. Protecting threatened and endangered species populations and their habitats from invasive plant infestations is critical to the long-term conservation and recovery of such species. Early detection and treatment of invasive plant infestations is expected to be highly beneficial and minimally disruptive to protected plant and wildlife species.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The EA included consideration of applicable federal, state, and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, state, local, and tribal interests were consulted and/or considered during the environmental review process and no potential violations or inconsistencies with existing laws or policies were identified or left unresolved.

Implementation of the proposed action does not threaten a violation of any known federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Authorized Official

/s/Steven Nelson

Steven Nelson
Bishop Field Manager

07/24/2015

Date