



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mother Lode Field Office

5152 Hillside Circle

El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode

### Indiana Ravine cabin fire protection project (CA-180-10-18) Finding of No Significant Impact March 2010

It is my determination that this decision will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Anticipated impacts are within the range of impacts addressed in the Sierra Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement. The proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on my consideration of CEQ's following criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), regarding the context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA, and based on my understanding of the project:

- 1) *Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* Potential impacts include vegetation removal and temporary noise and dust due to cutting fuels. However, none of these impacts would be significant at the local level or cumulatively because of the small scale of the project.
- 2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No aspects of the project have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. In fact, the project is designed to help protect private property from wildfire; therefore protecting public health and safety.
- 3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The project area does not have any unique characteristics. Soil, vegetation, wildlife, and cultural resources are all typical for the area.
- 4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects.* No anticipated effects have been identified that are scientifically controversial. As a factor for determining within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27(b)(4) whether or not to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, "controversy" is not equated with "the existence of opposition to a use." *Northwest Environmental Defense Center v. Bonneville Power Administration*, 117 F.3d 1520, 1536 (9th Cir. 1997). "The term 'highly controversial' refers to instances in which 'a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.'" *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).
- 5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* The analysis does not show that this action would involve any 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.* Fuels treatment on BLM-administered land is not precedent setting.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* No significant cumulative impacts have been identified. The project is consistent with the actions and impacts anticipated in the Sierra Resource Management Plan and its associated environmental impact statement.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* The project will not affect cultural resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In fact, it will specifically help to protect an old building that is potentially significant.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* No ESA listed species (or their habitat) will be affected by the proposed action.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten such a violation.

---

William S. Haigh  
Field Manager, Mother Lode Field Office

---

Date



# United States Department of the Interior



## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mother Lode Field Office

5152 Hillsdale Circle

El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

[www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode](http://www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode)

**EA Number:** CA-180-10-18

**Proposed Action:** Indiana Ravine cabin fire protection project

**Location:** MDM, T 15 N, R 10 E, Section 10, Placer County, CA (see the project area map attached)

## 1.0 Purpose of and Need for Action

### 1.1 Need for Action

An old one-room building—probable miner’s cabin—is located near Gold Run on public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management’s Mother Lode Field Office (BLM). The building has rock/mortar walls with a wood-framed window openings and wood-framed gable roof covered with corrugated panels. The building is thought to have been built during the 1930s by a miner named Byron Emrick. The building is deteriorating and has been vandalized in recent years. Also, manzanita is growing into the south side of the building. The branches are putting pressure on the building and could eventually cause damage. Leaf fall is accelerating the deterioration of the metal corrugated roof. The manzanita is also a fire danger. Because the building is located on the outskirts of the diggings—an old hydraulic mining area—with less fuels, it is possible that it could survive a wildfire, if one swept through the area. Some brush clearing immediately surrounding the building could be of great benefit to the building in terms of fire protection. The building has never been evaluated to determine whether it is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. There is local public interest and the building appears to have some historic values worth preserving. The building is considered potentially significant, pending a formal evaluation. Therefore, BLM proposes to use a hand crew to reduce fuels on BLM-administered land immediately around the Indiana Ravine cabin to help protect this historic building from wildfire and deterioration.

### 1.2 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plans

The proposed action is consistent with the Sierra Resource Management Plan, approved in February 2008, and the Mother Lode Field Office Fire Management Plan, approved in March 2008. The Sierra Resource Management Plan’s Record of Decision (page 15-16) gives BLM the goal of establishing a cost-efficient fire management program commensurate with threats to life, property, public safety, and environmental resources, including significant at-risk cultural resources like the Indiana Ravine cabin. BLM also has the goal of suppressing wildfire to protect life, property, and environmental resources. BLM’s objectives for meeting these goals are use various kinds of treatments to reduce the risk of wildfire in WUI communities and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire through fuels management. The Fire Management Plan gives BLM various non-fire fuels treatment objectives and strategies for specific lands under BLM’s administration. Specific objectives and strategies for the fire management unit, in which the project area is located, are laid out in the plan.

## **2.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives**

### **2.1 Proposed Action**

The proposed action is to reduce fuels on BLM-administered land immediately adjacent to the Indiana Ravine cabin. A BLM-sponsored AmeriCorps crews would do the fuels reduction work within the project area. The crew would walk into the project area from Garrett Road. The crew would access the the project area on existing roads and trails. The project would be done by hand using chainsaws and other hand-held tools. Fuels that are in close proximity to the mill building (within 100 ft) and pose a wildfire threat would be removed, with the following caveats:

Any dead vegetation less than six inches in diameter would be cut and removed. Live trees with trunks less than 6 inches in diameter as measured six inches above the ground would be cut and removed. Tree trunks would be cut flush with the ground. Ladder fuels (branches) would be removed on the lower third (or up to 8 ft) on trees not cut down. Generally grasses and forbs may be cut with a string trimmer . All cut vegetation would be cut up and scattered on BLM-administered land. No ground disturbing activity is authorized. No new roads or trails would be created or constructed.

Clearing of vegetation by mechanical/motorized vehicles or equipment (i.e., dozers, ATVs, etc.) would not occur. The project area must be access by walking in on existing roads and trails.

The project area is not located on public land with specific land use designations including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness Study Area, Special Recreation Management Areas.

### **2.2 Project Design Features**

There are no project design features.

### **2.3 No Action**

Under the no action alternative, BLM would not conduct fuels reduction at the Indiana Ravine cabin. This potentially significant building would not have protection from wildfire and other deterioration.

### **2.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis**

BLM did not consider any other alternatives in detailed analysis.

## **3.0 Affected Environment**

The project area is located at about 2700 ft above sea level, near Gold Run, in the central Sierra Nevada foothills, on the divide between the North Fork of the American River and the Bear River. Specifically, the project area is within the North Fork American Wild and Scenic River corridor. It is just outside BLM's Dutch Flat/Indiana Hill Research Natural Area (RNA), designated to protect petrified wood in Tertiary river gravels exposed by placer mining during the 1850s-80s. Access to the project area would be on existing roads within the "Indiana Hill unit" of this RNA. The project area is located along perennial Indiana Ravine, on the outskirts of a large hydraulic mining area. The project area is relatively open and south-facing location on the rim of the river canyon. The vegetation here consists of ponderosa pine/black oak forest with a moderately dense understory consisting mainly of manzanita and poison oak. There are some riparian species along Indiana Ravine. Wildlife is typical for this elevation in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

The gold-bearing gravel deposits at Gold Run, including those near the project area, were first discovered and worked in the spring of 1850. The first hydraulic mining was conducted in 1857 at Indiana Hill. In addition to hydraulic mining, underground mining of cemented bottom gravels was

conducted at Indiana Hill beginning in 1864. There were also “tailings” claims in Indiana Ravine where miners worked materials that were carried downstream from the hydraulic claims. Not much is currently known about the Indiana Ravine cabin—the subject of the proposed action. Local resident and amateur historian Russell Towel told BLM that the cabin was built in the 1930s by Byron Emrick.

Recreational use of BLM-administered land in the area is considered to be very low, even though the area is included in BLM’s North Fork American River Special Recreation Management Area. Recreationists visit this area infrequently. BLM manages this area in accordance with class I visual resource management (VRM) standards. BLM’s objective for class I is to retain the existing character of the landscape.

#### **4.0 Environmental Effects**

The following critical elements have been considered in this environmental assessment, and unless specifically mentioned later in this EA, have been determined to be unaffected by the proposal: areas of critical environmental concern, prime/unique farmlands, floodplains, wetlands and riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, and environmental justice.

##### **4.1 Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**

The proposed action would not impact atmospheric, water, or soil resources. The area that would be treated is relatively small in size. The use of hand tools within this area is expected to cause little, if no, soil disturbance. Cut brush and other fuels would be cut up and dispersed for biomass. Cutting of fuels, as proposed, could create some dust, but not enough to affect air quality.

The BLM botanist analyzed the impacts of the project on botanical resources, especially special status plants. The analysis was designed to help BLM meet its obligations under the Endangered Species Act. He did not find any special status plants affected by the proposed action. The botanist recommended that the proposed action would not affect threatened and endangered plants or other BLM special status plants. Vegetation that would be treated within the variance area would grow back within a few years.

The BLM wildlife biologist analyzed the impacts of the project on wildlife, especially on special status wildlife. Her analysis was designed to help BLM meet its obligations under the Endangered Species Act. The biologist recommended that the project would have negligible short-term impacts on wildlife due to temporary noise and dust when fuels are cut and masticated. There would be no impacts on threatened and endangered wildlife or other BLM special status wildlife.

The BLM archaeologist conducted a cultural resource study of the project area to determine whether significant cultural resources could be affected by the proposed action. The study was designed to help BLM meet its obligations under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act. The BLM archaeologist found that no significant cultural resources would be affected by the project. In fact, the project would help protect a potentially significant cultural resource—the Indiana Ravine cabin. No places of traditional religious and cultural significance to Native Americans would be affected.

The proposed action would not negatively impact recreational use. Recreational use is uncommon in the area affected by the proposed action. Recreation could be impacted, temporarily, during project implementation.

The proposed project would have a negligible temporary impact on visual resources. BLM manages the area in accordance with VRM class I standards, and the proposed action is in line with the management objective for this class, which is to retain the existing character of the landscape.

The proposed project would not have negative impacts on Wild and Scenic River values or RNA values.

#### **4.2 Impacts of the No Action Alternative**

Under the no action alternative, the Indiana Ravine cabin—a potentially significant cultural resource—would continue to deteriorate.

#### **4.3 Cumulative Impacts**

Negative cumulative impacts are not anticipated. The proposed action would not negatively impact significant biological and cultural resources. The proposed action would not impact atmospheric, water, and soil resources. The proposed action would have negligible short-term impacts on commonplace plants and wildlife. The vegetation would grow back in time and wildlife would return to the area once project work has ceased. The proposed action is expected to have beneficial cumulative impact on remote historic cabins.

### **5.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted**

No outside agencies were consulted.

#### **5.1 Authors**

James Barnes, BLM NEPA coordinator/Archaeologist

## 5.2 BLM Interdisciplinary Team/Reviewers:

*/s/ James Barnes* 3/1/10

---

NEPA coordinator/Archaeologist Date

*/s/ Brian Mulhollen*

---

Fuels specialist Date

*/s/ Albert Franklin* 2/25/10

---

Botany Date

*/s/ Peggy Cranston* 2/25/10

---

Wildlife/fisheries Date

*/s/ Jeff Horn* 2/25/10

---

Recreation Date

## 5.3 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

This EA will be posted on Mother Lode Field Office's website ([www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode](http://www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode)) under NEPA and would be available for a 15-day public review period. The EA is also available by mail upon request during this 15-day public review period. Comments should be sent to James Barnes at Bureau of Land Management, Mother Lode Field Office, 5152 Hillsdale Circle, El Dorado, CA, 95762, or emailed to [jjbarnes@blm.gov](mailto:jjbarnes@blm.gov).