



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service**



**San Juan Public Lands
Columbine Ranger District/Field Office
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Beaver Meadows-Sauls Creek Landscape Travel Management

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**BLM document #DOI-BLM-CO-S010-2010-0004EA
Forest Service document # 19652**

Location: This project analysis area is located within T. 34-36 N., R. 5-7 W., N.M.P.M. The BLM parcels in the landscape are located in: T35N R7W sections 2 and 3 and T36N R7W, sections 34 and 35.

Project Name: Columbine Ranger District/Field Office, **Beaver Meadows-Sauls Creek Landscape Travel Management and Resource Management Plan Amendment** of OHV Designations in the Travel Management Landscape.

Planning Unit: San Juan Public Lands: Columbine Ranger District/Field Office

Applicant: BLM/FS

Background

The USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USDA Forest Service (FS) propose to implement the *BLM National Strategy for OHV Use on Public Lands, Executive Orders 11644 and 11989*, and the *Forest Service 2005 Travel Management Rule* through the designation of roads, trails and areas open to motor vehicle use by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year within the Beaver Meadows-Sauls Creek Landscape (*36 CFR 212.51, 43 CFR 8342*).

The Bureau of Land Management Columbine Field Office is also preparing to amend the 1985 San Juan/San Miguel Resource Management Plan (RMP). The amendment would change current off highway vehicle (OHV) area designations on BLM lands within the landscape.

The Columbine Ranger District/Field Office has prepared the Beaver Meadows-Sauls Creek Travel Management Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

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The proposed decision (the Blended Alternative) will amend the 1985 RMP, and is in compliance with Forest Service and BLM planning regulations, and with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment; thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (*40 CFR 1508.27*), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The landscape analysis area includes a total of approximately 80,572 acres, of which approximately 797 acres are BLM, and approximately 54,357 acres are FS ownership.

Under the proposed decision (the Blended Alternative), all the current OHV designations would be changed to: **Limited- to designated routes, types of vehicles, and seasons of use.** Under the Blended Alternative, the acreage of OHV designations on public lands includes:

- 0 acres BLM - Open to OHV use
- 797 acres BLM - OHV Limited to Designated Routes. The Blended Alternative would **not** designate a system or network of routes on the BLM lands at this time. The designation of routes, types of vehicles, and seasons of use could occur in the future under additional NEPA analysis.
- 54, 357 acres FS - OHV use restricted to designated roads and trails, types of vehicles and seasons of use.

Intensity:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

Beneficial and adverse impacts were considered (EA Chapter 3). The overall long-term effects will result in a more sustainable ecosystem within the project area. The beneficial effects include elimination of cross-country motorized travel across the landscape, and the designation of motorized roads and trails on Forest Service lands. This should dramatically slow the proliferation of user-created routes and slow the increase in resource impacts and habitat fragmentation occurring in this landscape. Adverse effects include increased motorized use of designated roads and trails (FS lands) that may result in soil compaction as well as the potential crowding of those routes.

2) *Degree of effect on public health and safety.*

Public health and safety will be improved by restricting motorized uses, thus allowing non-motorized users to avoid recreating in those areas, if they so desire. On Forest Service lands, public health and safety will also be improved by eliminating two segments of potential hazardous mixed use on roads. The designation of motorized roads and trails (FS lands)

separates some of the conflicting recreational uses. Signing and maps will clearly define which uses will be allowed on each route, so that users can be informed of the potential safety hazards of using a particular route. Closing and rehabilitating certain routes will remove potentially hazardous routes from the route network (EA p.32-33, 38-42).

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics or ecologically critical areas. Impacts will be reduced to historic or cultural resources (EA p. 77-82), wetlands (EA p. 27-29), and the Piedra Area (EA p. 36). There are no prime or unique farmlands, wilderness, or wild and scenic rivers in the planning area.

4) *Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial, because there is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the project. Public scoping and comment period did not reveal any controversial effects (EA p.8-9).

5) *Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.*

Implementation of Travel Management decisions has been occurring nationwide for many years and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain (EA Chapter 3).

6) *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 action will not establish a precedent for future actions that may have significant effect on the environment. It does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Future Travel Management analyses for other landscapes will require their own NEPA processes.

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

Cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects have been considered and evaluated in addition to the impacts of this project. No significant cumulative impacts were identified (EA Chapter 3).

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

The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA p. 77-82).

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9) *Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.*

The BLM parcels in the landscape do not contain habitat for any federally listed species, therefore there will be *No Effect* to those species or their critical habitats.

The Forest Service portion of the landscape contains habitat for both Canada lynx and the southwestern willow flycatcher. Discountable impacts to lynx habitat will occur from designation of existing motorized trails through habitat, balanced by advantageous impacts from limitation of cross-country travel, resulting in a *May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect* determination for Canada lynx. There will be *No Affect* to southwestern willow flycatcher because no motorized trails are designated in flycatcher habitat. One patch of flycatcher habitat exists adjacent to an existing well-traveled road, and is considered no change from the baseline impact.

The action will not affect any other endangered or threatened species or their habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973 (EA p. 44-49).

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

The action complies with Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Government agencies were consulted on the analysis and no objections were raised to implementing either of the action alternatives.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; and 2) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:

/s/ Matt Janowiak
Matt Janowiak
Columbine District Ranger/Field Office Manager

4/26/10

Date