

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

**Categorical Exclusion
Black Mountain Southeast Transplants**

08/13/14

PREPARING OFFICE

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



Categorical Exclusion

Black Mountain Southeast Transplants

DOI-BLM-CO-FO20–2014–0069–CX

Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Royal Gorge Field Office
Canon City, CO

08/13/14

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A. Background

Trees throughout the Royal Gorge Field Office are encroaching upon the open parks and meadows. The harvesting of transplants, posts, and Christmas trees are forest management actions to reduce tree encroachment into the parks and meadows, thin the young trees where past forests management activities have occurred, and generate income for the Federal government, as well as create jobs for local tree harvesters, nurseries, landscapers that help support the local economy. By removing these trees encroaching on openings or meadows, forage will be improved for both wildlife and cattle.

BLM Office: Royal Gorge Field Office

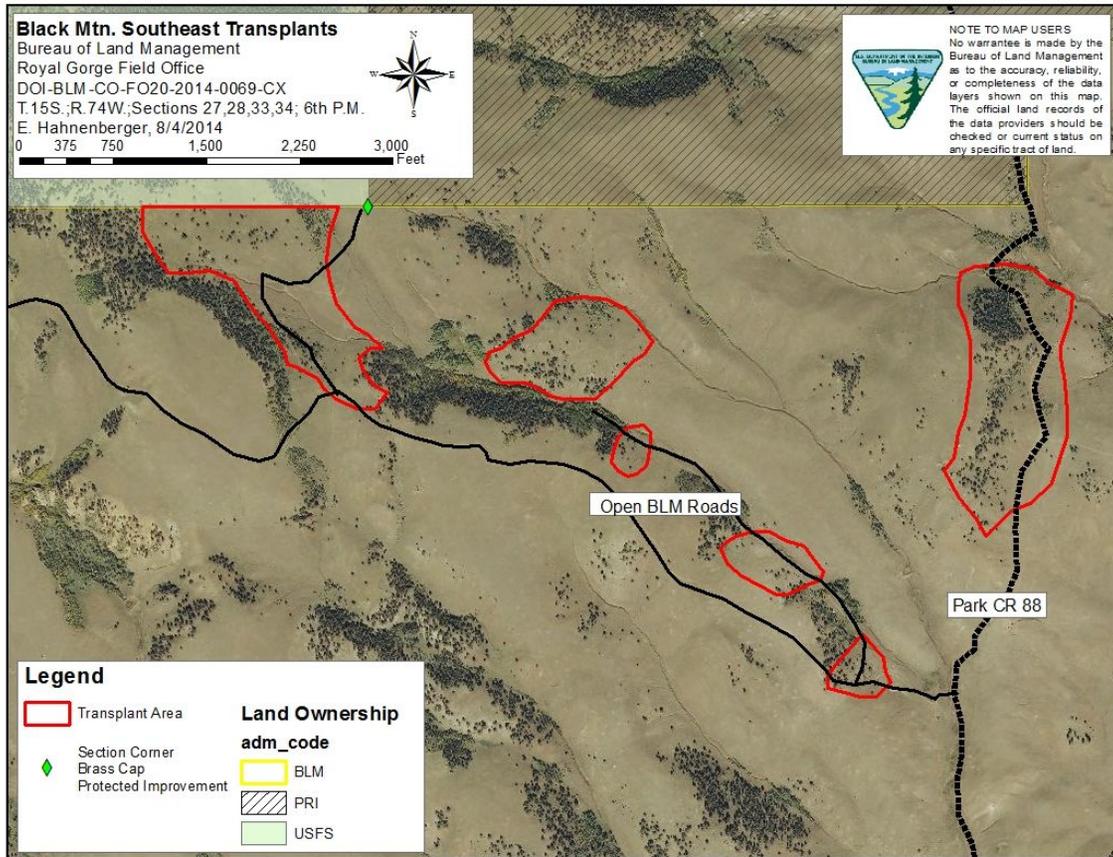
Proposed Action Title/Type: Black Mountain Southeast Transplants

Location of Proposed Action: T.15S.; R.74W.; Sections 27, 28, 33, 34; 6th P.M.

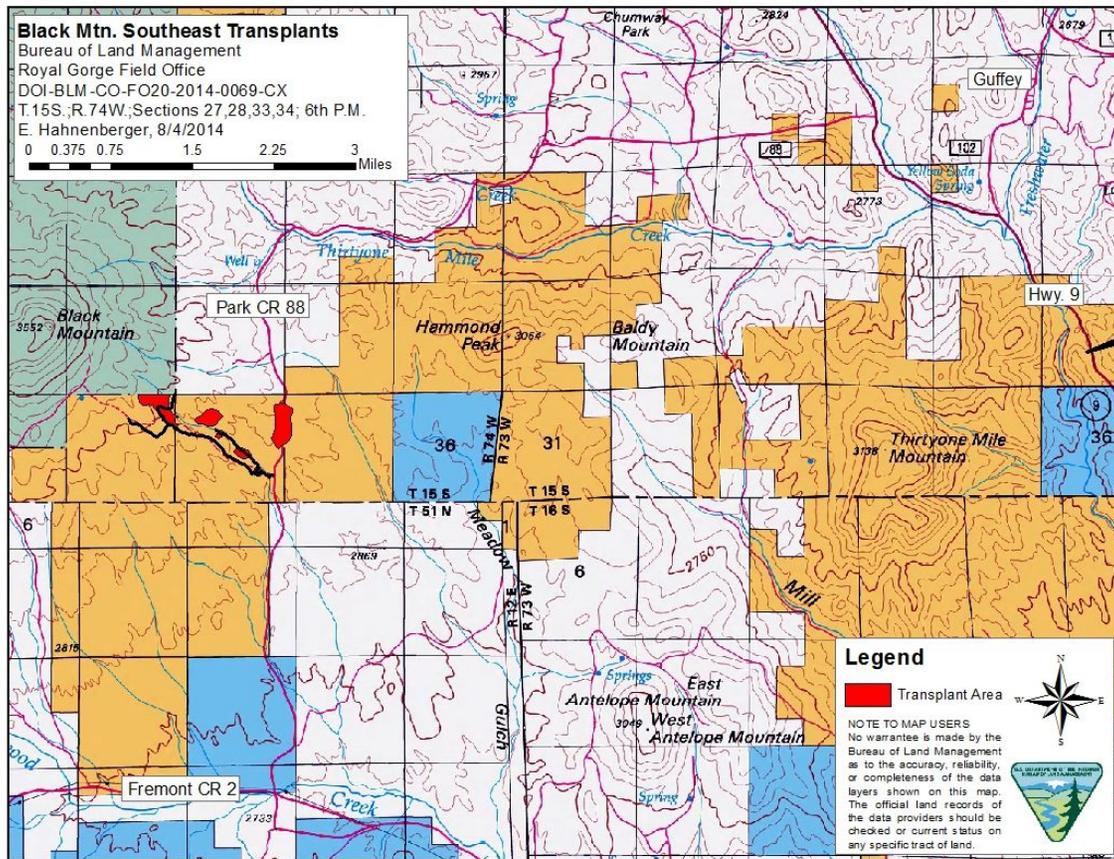
Description of Proposed Action:The Proposed Action is to commercially harvest ponderosa and bristlecone pine saplings that are encroaching on the parks and meadows on 97 acres across 6 units in the Black Mtn. area through special forest product sales. The trees typically harvested as transplants are young, in the 4 to 10 foot range, with good form and full healthy crowns. Transplants are typically dug in the spring and fall when the trees are dormant or near dormancy.

The proposed activity will result in short term ground disturbance associated with off road travel. There would also be short term ground disturbance where the holes from trees are removed and backfilled from surrounding soil. The harvest areas will be monitored and posted to prevent the creation of any new roads. Providing local transplant harvest opportunities will promote native tree planting along the Front Range of Colorado rather than exotics or non-natives.

In the past, roads have been damaged due to hauling and harvesting during wet ground conditions. Transplant, post, or Christmas tree harvesters will be required to cease work during the wet periods. All gates will be closed after entering each area and any fences damaged will be repaired. Harvesting will take place in the selected areas (See project area maps) over the next several years. Existing roads will be repaired if damaged by the activity. All temporary roads created to remove forest products shall be closed to motor vehicles upon completion of the project. Equipment used for the activity includes hand tools or shovels, mechanical tree spades, trailers and pickup trucks.



Map 1.1. Black Mountain Project Map



Map 1.2. Black Mountain Vicinity Map

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name:

Name of Plan: Royal Gorge Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: 05/13/96

Decision Number: 6-1, 6-12, 6-13

Decision Language: Vegetation management will be as follows: vegetation will be managed to accomplish other BLM initiatives i.e., riparian, wildlife, etc.; management of forest lands will be for enhancement of other values. Productive forested lands will be managed for sustained yield. A portion of the forested lands will be available for intensive management.

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 2, Appendix 1, or 516 DM 11.9,

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2 apply.

I considered:

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: This proposed action is listed as a Categorical Exclusion in DOI Departmental Manual Part 516 Chapter 11.9(C.5). None of the following exceptions in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Table 1.1. Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion Criteria	YES	NO
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; lands with wilderness characteristics; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.		X
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		X
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		X

Table 1.2. Interdisciplinary Team Review

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW			
NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Matt Rustand	Wildlife Biologist	Terrestrial Wildlife, T&E, Migratory Birds	MR, 8/19/2014
Jeff Williams	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	JW, 9/29/14

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM REVIEW			
NAME	TITLE	AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY	Initials/date
Chris Cloninger	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland	N/A
John Lamman	Range Management Spec.	Range, Vegetation, Farmland, Weeds	JL, 9/29/2014
Dave Gilbert	Fisheries Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife, Riparian/Wetlands	DG, 8/14/14
Stephanie Carter	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology, Waste Hazardous or Solid	SSC, 9/23/14
Melissa Smeins	Geologist	Minerals, Paleontology	N/A
John Smeins	Hydrologist	Hydrology, Water Quality/Rights, Soils	JS, 8/21/14
Ty Webb	Fire Management Officer	Air Quality	TW, 9/24/14
Jeff Covington	Cadastral Surveyor	Cadastral Survey	
Kalem Lenard	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers,	KL, 8/15/2014
John Nahomenuk	River Manager	Recreation, Wilderness, LWCs, Visual, ACEC, W&S Rivers	N/A
Ken Reed	Forester	Forestry	8/11/14
Monica Weimer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	N/A
Michael Troyer	Archaeologist	Cultural, Native American	MDT 9/23/14
Greg Valladares	Realty Specialist	Realty	GDV 09/25/14
Steve Cunningham	Law Enforcement Ranger	Law Enforcement	N/A
Ty Webb	Fire Management Officer	Fire	TW, 9/23/14

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: Although cultural resources were found within the area of potential effect [see report CR-RG-15-029 (P)], no sites determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were found. Therefore, the proposed project will have no impact on any historic properties (those eligible for the NRHP).

Native American Religious Concerns: No possible traditional cultural properties were located during the cultural resources inventory (see above). There is no other known evidence that suggests the project area holds special significance for Native Americans.

Threatened and Endangered Species: There are no records of any federally listed or BLM sensitive species within or near the project area. The Proposed Action will not result in impacts to TES species.

Migratory Birds: To be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Memorandum of Understanding between BLM and USFWS required by Executive Order 13186, BLM must avoid actions, where possible, that result in a “take” of migratory birds. Pursuant to BLM Instruction Memorandum 2008-050, to reduce impacts to Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), no habitat disturbance (removal of vegetation such as timber, brush, or grass) is allowed during the periods of May 15 - July 15, the breeding and brood rearing season for most Colorado migratory birds. The provision will not apply to completion activities in disturbed areas that were initiated prior to May 15 and continue into the 60-day period.

Wastes, Solid or Hazardous: If the project involves oil or fuel usage, transfer or storage, an adequate spill kit and shovels are required to be onsite during project implementation. The project proponent will be responsible for adhering to all applicable local, State and Federal

regulations in the event of a spill, which includes following the proper notification procedures in BLM's Spill Contingency Plan.

An exception to this timing limitation will be granted if nesting surveys conducted no more than one week prior to vegetation-disturbing activities indicate no nesting within 30 meters (100 feet) of the area to be disturbed. Surveys shall be conducted by a qualified breeding bird surveyor between sunrise and 10:00 a.m. under favorable conditions.

Required Transplant Harvesting Stipulations:

- Harvesters are required to have their permit on their person while digging or transporting trees.
- Harvesters are required to fill the hole to a minimum of 4 inches of the natural terrain surface with surrounding soil or rocks after the tree has been dug.
- Harvesters are required to remove all trash or refuse they brought onto public lands.
- No hauling or digging is permitted when weather or ground conditions are such that damage to the roads and ground will occur.
- Harvesters will respect other forest user's rights and will not block public roads with equipment, or hinder other potential on-going contracts.
- Harvesters will protect fences, open and close gates when entering and leaving transplant areas.
- The permit is only good for lands administered by the Royal Gorge Field Office. The contractor is responsible for knowing BLM/private land boundaries and is responsible for any tree removal or damage to private lands.
- Harvesters will inspect each tree for bird nests or wildlife use and leave the tree as a reserve if wildlife use is discovered.
- Avoid damaging reserve trees or trees not being harvested.

D. Approval and Contact Information

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional):

NAME OF PREPARER: Ken Reed

SUPERVISORY REVIEW: Melissa K.S. Garcia

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: /s/ Martin Weimer

DATE: 10/1/14

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this Categorical Exclusion and have decided to implement the Proposed Action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 10 criteria listed above and have determined that it does

not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

/s/ Jay Raiford for

Keith E. Berger, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 10/3/14