

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Decision
Categorical Exclusion Pursuant to 516 DM 11.9
DOI-BLM-CO-S070-2013-0035-CX**

June, 2013

Anasazi Heritage Center WUI Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Location: 27501 Highway 184, Dolores, CO, 81323

Applicant/Address: *USDI BLM, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument*

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument
27501 Highway 184
Dolores, CO, 81323
970-882-5600



DECISION
DOI-BLM-CO-S070-2013-0035-CX
Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

I have reviewed the proposed action as described in the Categorical Exclusion (DOI-BLM-CO-S070-2013-0035-CX) for the Anasazi Heritage Center WUI Hazardous Fuels Reduction project.

It is my decision to implement the hazardous fuels reductions and brush control around the Anasazi Heritage Center on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. Vegetation around the heritage center, powerline, and pavilions will be hand-thinned with chainsaws and piled. The piles will later be burned. Additional fuels reduction will occur behind a hilltop ruin and popular visitor attraction to create defensible space and an anchor point for firefighters in the event of an unplanned wildland fire. The proposed action is a re-treatment of a fuels reduction project from 2002-2004, and overlaps completely within the previously treated area. The proposed action is within Categorical Exclusion 516 DM 11.9 C. 4 (see BLM NEPA Handbook H-1790-1).

Authorities: The authority for this decision is contained in: Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 USC 1701 et seq); Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-514) Section 14 (b); Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations; a) Sections 4120.3-1-Conditions for Range Improvement; b) Section 4180.1- Fundamentals of Rangeland Health; c) Section 4190.1 Effects of Wildfire Management Decisions; and d) Section 5003.1 – Forest Management Decisions.

Compliance and Monitoring: Cultural resources will be avoided by the design of the project. An archaeologist will assist with the setup of units identified to avoid any impacts to cultural resources.

The BLM will implement post-treatment monitoring and treatment of invasive species in pile burn scars. Pile burn scars will be reseeded and scarified in the growing season after prescribed fire.

The BLM will also restrict implementation during the primary migratory bird nesting season from May 15-July 15, unless a clearance survey is conducted by a wildlife biologist.

The BLM will post signs around the project area notifying visitors to the Anasazi Heritage Center of the project, as well as complete a prescribed fire burn plan and obtain a Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment smoke permit prior to prescribed fire.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

The proposed action has been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the following BLM Land Use Plans and the associated decision(s):

Land Use Plan: Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Resource Management Plan

Date Approved/Amended: June, 2010

The proposed action is in conformance with the RMP because it is clearly consistent with the following RMP decisions:

Facilities and Infrastructure:

Maintain existing facilities, subject to compliance with current policies and practices, provided that Monument resources are protected.

Implement facility and infrastructure BMPs, as determined appropriate.

Fire and Fuels Management:

Apply fuels and vegetation management treatments in a manner that reduces the likelihood of resource damage due to wildfires, improves firefighter and public safety, and achieves vegetation management objectives.

Reduce hazardous fuels in and around sensitive cultural resources, critical infrastructure, and designated wildland-urban interface (WUI) boundary areas.

Use prescribed burn treatment methods in a manner that improves vegetation conditions in fire-adapted ecosystems. Assess fuel loads within the treatment area(s) for expected fire behavior. Mitigate for heavy concentrations (hazardous fuels) prior to prescribed burn ignition.

Rationale for Decision: The decision meets the purpose and need action, the purpose of the Anasazi Heritage Center WUI hazardous Fuels reduction is to reduce the risk of damage from wildland fire to improvements on agency land; specifically, the Anasazi Heritage Center, associated outbuildings and infrastructure, and fleet parking lot. The need for the proposed action is identified in the Canyons of the Ancients Resource Management Plan (RMP), as well as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 USC 1701 et seq).

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment.

Facility maintenance and fuels reduction on the Anasazi Heritage Center grounds has no potential for significant effects because the proposed action overlays with a previous fuels treatment between 2002 and 2004, and is a smaller re-treatment of that project.

It is my decision to authorize the implementation of the proposed action with the following design features:

Cultural Resources

- The project area has been intensively inventoried for cultural resources
- All cultural resources are avoided by the design of the proposed action
- An archaeologist will assist with the setup of the units as identified in Attachment A to avoid any impact to cultural resources.

Migratory Birds

- Restrict treatments during the primary migratory bird nesting season from May 15 – July 15. Should treatment need to occur during that time frame, a wildlife biologist will conduct a clearance survey.

Invasive Species

- Post treatment monitoring of pile burn scars for invasive species will be completed in the growing season after prescribed fire. If monitoring shows that invasive species are present, treatment is required.
- Pile burn scars would be reseeded and scarified in the growing season after prescribed fire.

Fuels and Fire Management

- A burn plan and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment smoke permit are required prior to prescribed fire.
- Signs are required to be posted at the AHC and along the trail notifying visitors of the project when crews are working.

Protest/Appeal Language: This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer, Marietta Eaton, in accordance with 43 CFR 5003.1 (b) and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay (43 CFR 2801.10(b)). Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4.

Within 30 days of the decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at the Anasazi Heritage Center, 27501 Highway 184, Dolores, CO, 81323. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals; U.S Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer. Within 30 days, the public has the right of appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.4.00. Appeal and stay procedures are outlined in Form CO-050-1840-191.



6.13.13

Marietta Eaton
Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Manager

Date

Attachments: Categorical Exclusion

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Categorical Exclusion Pursuant to and 516 DM 11.9
DOI-BLM-CO-S070-2013-0035-CX**

June, 2013

Anasazi Heritage Center WUI Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Location: 27501 Highway 184, Dolores, CO, 81323

Applicant/Address: *USDI BLM, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument*

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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION NOT ESTABLISHED BY STATUTE

A. Background

BLM Office: Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Lease/Serial/Case File No: DOI-BLM-CO-S070-2013-0035-CX

Proposed Action Title/Type: The BLM proposes to re-treat hazardous fuels on up to 7 acres surrounding the Anasazi Heritage Center and associated infrastructure with a combination of hand thinning, piling, and prescribed fire. The purpose of the Anasazi Heritage Center WUI hazardous Fuels reduction is to reduce the risk of damage from wildland fire to improvements on agency land; specifically, the Anasazi Heritage Center, associated outbuildings and infrastructure, and fleet parking lot. The need for the proposed action is identified in the Canyons of the Ancients Resource Management Plan (RMP), as well as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

Location of Proposed Action: The proposed action is entirely on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument land at the Anasazi Heritage Center (AHC) and Monument headquarters located at 27501 Highway 184, Dolores, Colorado, 81323. The legal location of the proposed action is Township 37 North, Range 15 West, section 7.

Description of Proposed Action: The proposed action would include hand thinning with chainsaws of up to seven acres surrounding the Anasazi Heritage Center, powerline, hilltop ruin, and pavilions along a recreational trail (Attachment A, Project Map). The cut vegetation would be stacked in to piles, which would be burned when adequate snow cover and environmental conditions allow. This same treatment was accomplished on a larger area around the AHC than the current proposed action between 2002 and 2004. The proposed action seeks to reduce brush that has grown since the last treatment.

The proposed action would remove all mountain shrub species within fifty feet of the identified improvements. Pinon and Juniper trees within twenty five feet of the identified improvements would be removed. Seventy five percent of all mountain shrub species between fifty and two hundred feet of the AHC would be removed. The powerline would be cleared for twenty five feet on either side of all vegetation above two feet. All vegetation removed mechanically would be piled and later burned to reduce fuel loads and control brush.

The objectives of the proposed action include:

- Reduce the threat of wildland fire to structures and improvements on Anasazi Heritage Center grounds.
- Create a fuel break to the north of a heavily visited cultural site which will also serve as an anchor point for firefighters in the event of a wildland fire.
- Protect archaeological resources.
- Protect adjacent private land, residences, and improvements from wildland fire.

The proposed action would take place starting in summer of 2013, and possibly continue into 2014.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Resource Management Plan
Date Approved/Amended: June, 2010

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

From page 75, “Maintain existing facilities, subject to compliance with current policies and practices, provided that Monument resources are protected.”

From page 76, “Implement facility and infrastructure BMPs, as determined appropriate.”

From page 68, Goal B, “Apply fuels and vegetation management treatments in a manner that reduces the likelihood of resource damage due to wildfires, improves firefighter and public safety, and achieves vegetation management objectives.”

Additionally, under Objectives, the RMP states, “1. Reduce hazardous fuels in and around sensitive cultural resources, critical infrastructure, and designated wildland-urban interface (WUI) boundary areas. 2. Use prescribed burn treatment methods in a manner that improves vegetation conditions in fire-adapted ecosystems.”

The proposed action specifically addresses a wildfire hazard assessment created for the AHC as recommended in the RMP. The proposed action would achieve all of the goals and objectives of the CANM RMP related to fuels management around the Anasazi Heritage Center.

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with DM 11.9 (C) 4 which states, “Pre-commercial thinning and brush control using small mechanical devices,” are categorically excluded from further analysis. The proposed action seeks to maintain a defensible space around AHC facilities and infrastructure using small mechanical devices (chainsaws). The small piles generated from the proposed action would later be burned.

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 43 CFR Part 46.215 apply (see attached).

I considered the potential effects to cultural resources, migratory birds, invasive species, and fuels and fire management. To address any potential effects, I am implementing the following design features to the proposed action.

Cultural Resources

- The project area has been intensively inventoried for cultural resources
- All cultural resources are avoided by the design of the proposed action
- An archaeologist will assist with the setup of the units as identified in Attachment A to avoid any impact to cultural resources.

Migratory Birds

- Restrict treatments during the primary migratory bird nesting season from May 15 – July 15. Should treatment need to occur during that time frame, a wildlife biologist will conduct a clearance survey.

Invasive Species

- Post treatment monitoring of pile burn scars for invasive species will be completed in the growing season after prescribed fire. If monitoring shows that invasive species are present, treatment is required.
- Pile burn scars would be reseeded and scarified in the growing season after prescribed fire.

Fuels and Fire Management

- A burn plan and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment smoke permit are required prior to prescribed fire.
- Signs are required to be posted at the AHC and along the trail notifying visitors of the project when crews are working.

D: Signature

Authorizing Official:



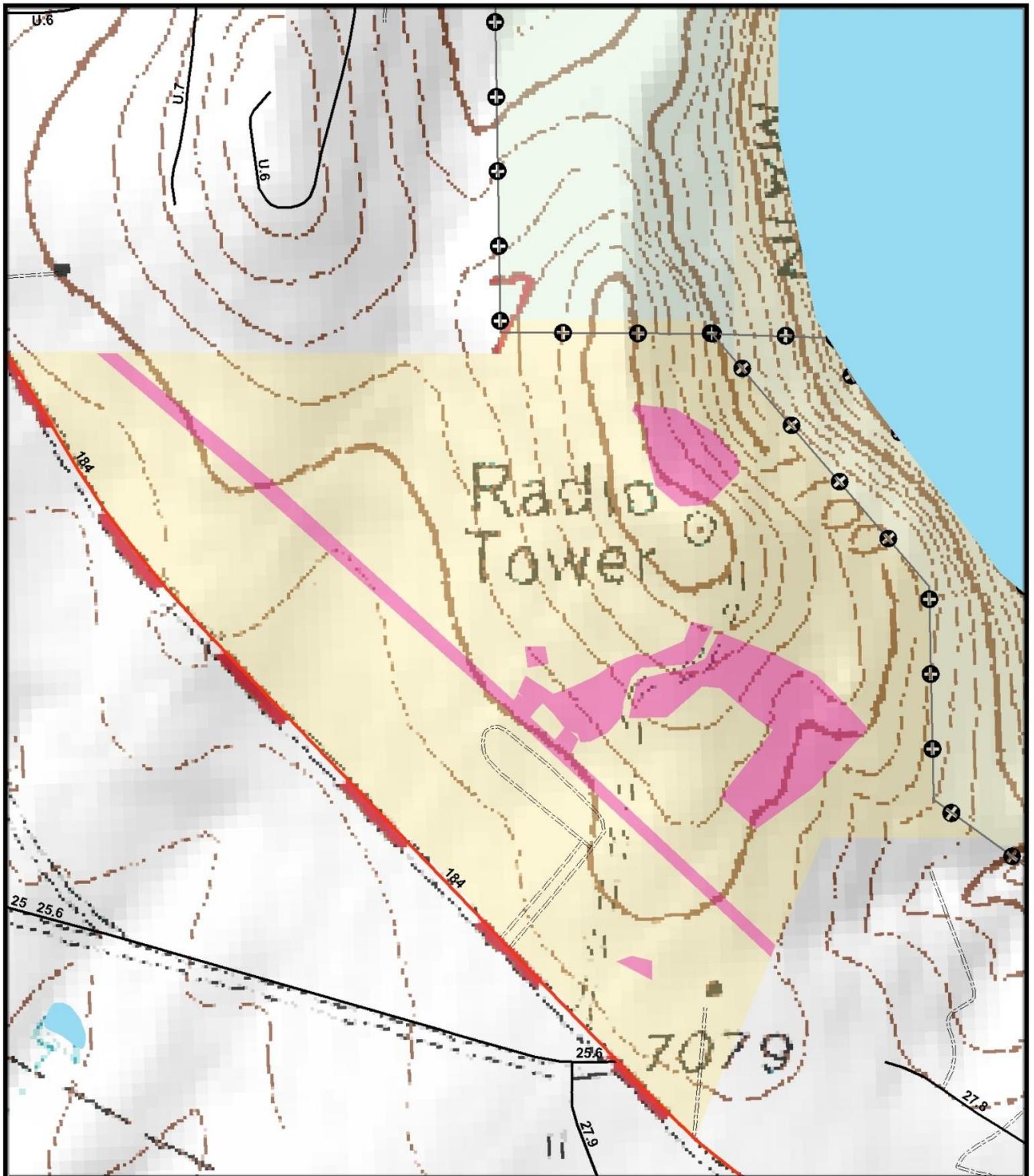
Date: 6.13.13

*Marietta Eaton**Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Manager***Contact Person**

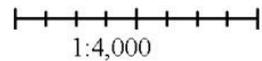
For additional information concerning this CX review, contact

Brad Pietruszka
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29211 Highway 184, Dolores, CO, 81323
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970-882-6820

Attachments**A: Project Map**



0 0.02 0.04 0.08 Miles



1:4,000

Prepared by: bpietruszka
Current Date: 06/10/2013 1403



AHC WUI Hazardous Fuels Reduction

DOI-BLM-CO-S054-2013-0035-CX

Proposed Action Area



Legend

- Proposed Action
- BLM
- USFS
- BOR
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- County
- Other

Categorical Exclusion Review Record

Resource	Yes/No*	Assigned Specialist Signature	Date
Air Quality	N/A		
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	No	/s/ Jeff Christenson	6/12/2013
Cultural Resources	No	/s/ Vince MacMillan	6/10/2013
Environmental Justice	N/A		
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	N/A		
Floodplains	No	/s/ Shauna Jensen	6/10/2013
Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds	No	/s/ Mike Jensen	6/12/2013
Migratory Birds	No	/s/ Nate West	6/11/2013
Native American Religious Concerns	No	/s/ Marietta Eaton	6/12/2013
Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate Species	No	/s/ Nate West	6/11/2013
Wastes (hazardous or solid)	N/A		
Water Quality (drinking or ground)	No	/s/ Shauna Jensen	6/12/2013
Wetlands / Riparian Zones	No	/s/ Shauna Jensen	6/12/2013
Wild and Scenic Rivers	N/A		
Wilderness	N/A		
Other: Fuels and Fire Management	No	/s/ Brad Pietruszka	6/10/2013

*Extraordinary Circumstances apply.

Environmental Coordinator: /s/ Gina Jones

Date: 6/13/2013

Extraordinary Circumstance to Categorical Exclusions

Exceptions to Categorical Exclusion Documentation

The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:

Extraordinary Circumstances		
1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: The proposed action would not have significant impacts on public health and safety. Signs are to be posted at the AHC and along the trail leading to the ruin to inform visitors of the project.
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: The proposed action is on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument land; however, it is not a unique action to this part of the monument. A larger fuels reduction project occurred between 2002 and 2004 on the same area. This project seeks to control brush that has grown since the last treatment.
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102 (2) (E)].		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: There are no controversial environmental effects or unresolved conflicts concerning the proposed action. The impacts of brush removal on wildland urban interface structure defensible space are understood and well documented. Prescribed fire, in relation to piles, is an effective way to reduce fuel loading and fire risk to wildlands and improvements.
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: There are no unique or unknown environmental risks from the proposed action. The previous treatment from 2002 to 2004 resulted in a lower wildland fire risk to the AHC and improvements. The proposed action will also lower the risk to structures and improvements from wildland fire.
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rationale: The proposed action is not connected to any other actions that would require further environmental analysis. Since the AHC has been treated before, the proposed action only seeks to re-treat. Any new projects on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument would still need to go through all NEPA requirements.

Extraordinary Circumstances

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

Yes	No X	Rationale: There are no other actions with which the proposed action would create cumulative effects.
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7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.

Yes	No X	Rationale: Intensive cultural inventories have been completed for the entire AHC, and all sites were avoided during project layout. An archaeologist will assist with unit layout to insure that no sites are impacted by the proposed action.
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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.

Yes	No X	Rationale: There is no habitat for Threatened, Endangered, or BLM sensitive species in the project area. Therefore, there will be no effect to these species.
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9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Yes	No X	Rationale: The proposed action will not violate any Federal, State, local, or tribal laws imposed for the protection of the environment. A timing restriction to protect Migratory Birds is a part of the proposed action.
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10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

Yes	No X	Rationale: No such populations are present within the project area. Because of this, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects. No health or environmental statues would be compromised. A Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment smoke permit is required prior to prescribed fire.
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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 (Executive Order 13007).

Yes	No X	Rationale: The proposed action would not limit any access to or ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands. The proposed action would not adversely affect the physical integrity of any sites identified during cultural surveys.
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Extraordinary Circumstances

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 (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

Yes	No X	Rationale: Invasive species already exist within the project area. The proposed action would not contribute to the spread of noxious weeds with the design features identified, such as post-treatment monitoring and treatment, and post prescribed fire seeding of pile scars.
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