

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Farmington District
Farmington Field Office
6251 N College Blvd., Ste. A
Farmington, NM 87402

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Visual Resource Management
Resource Management Plan Amendment
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-NM-FO-2013-0047-EA**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

I have determined that the proposed action, as described in the Environmental Assessment for the Farmington Field Office Visual Resource Management Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment (the EA) will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. Because there would not be any significant impact, an environmental impact statement is not required.

In making this determination, I considered the following factors:

1. The activities described in the proposed action do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)). The EA includes a description of the expected environmental consequences of designating Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes and providing mitigation measures primarily for mineral extraction activities.
2. The activities included in the proposed action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).
3. The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics of the geographic area such as such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)).

The Farmington Field Office does not contain prime and unique farmlands or wild and scenic rivers. Designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, and areas of critical environmental concern were assigned VRM Classes that protect appropriate wilderness or relevant and important values.

Fifty-five thousand acres, 95% of the acres in Cultural Resource ACECs, would be managed to retain their existing visual character, resulting in the preservation of the existing visual setting (VRM Class I and II). The two Cultural ACECs that would be managed as a VRM Class III are Cedar Hill ACEC (2,000 acres) and La Jara ACEC (1,000 acres). These ACECs are managed for their scientific and educational values, so VRM Class III management is not anticipated to impact culturally important landscapes or viewsheds. No Cultural Resource ACECs would be managed in VRM Class IV. As such, there would be no significant impact to cultural resources in the Farmington Field Office.

All lands visible in the foreground/midground from key observation points (KOPs) in Chaco Culture National Historical Park (NHP) would be managed under VRM Class I or II, resulting in the preservation or retention of the visual setting of those lands. Twenty-nine percent of lands visible in the background from KOPs in Chaco Culture NHP would be managed as VRM Class I or II, while 71% would be managed in a VRM Class that would allow for a moderate to high level of change to the visual setting (VRM Class III or

IV). Overall, lands in the foreground/midground would be managed to preserve or retain the visual setting of Chaco Culture NHP. While more than two-thirds of lands in the background could experience a moderate level of change to visual setting, these impacts would be less visible due to their distance from Chaco Culture NHP. As such, there would be no significant impacts to the visual landscape from KOPs in Chaco Culture NHP.

Because a management corridor for the Old Spanish Trail NHT has not been identified pending the completion of the BLM and National Park Service trail management plan, a proxy boundary of the Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area was established where it overlapped with the Congressionally designated line that represents the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT. By using the proxy boundary, 74% of the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT in the Farmington Field Office will be managed under VRM Class II to retain the visual character of these areas; 26% will be managed under VRM Class III. No possible high-potential route segments would be managed as VRM Class IV. Once the trail management plan is completed, BLM will comply with all management for high-potential route segments. As such, there will be no significant impacts to possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT.

4. The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).
5. The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).
6. My decision to implement these activities does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).
7. The effects of the designation of VRM Classes and associated mitigation measures would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)). The EA discloses that there are no other connected or cumulative actions that would cause significant cumulative impacts.
8. I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

The designation of VRM Classes does not specifically authorize any activity that would adversely affect or cause loss or destruction. In addition, 55,000 of the acres in Cultural Resource ACECs, would be managed to retain their existing visual character, resulting in the preservation of the existing visual setting (VRM Class I and II). The visual setting of the remaining 3,000 acres would have more potential to change, as they would be in VRM Class III. The two Cultural ACECs that would be managed as a VRM Class III are Cedar Hill ACEC (2,000 acres) and La Jara ACEC (1,000 acres). These ACECs are managed for their scientific and educational values, so VRM Class III management is not anticipated to impact culturally important landscapes or viewsheds. As such, there would be no significant impact to cultural resources in the Farmington Field Office.

Because a management corridor for the Old Spanish Trail NHT has not been identified pending the completion of the BLM and National Park Service trail management plan, a proxy boundary of the Ephemeral Wash Riparian Area was established where it overlapped with the Congressionally designated line that represents the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT. By using the proxy boundary, 74% of the possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT in the Farmington Field Office will be managed under VRM Class II to retain the visual character of these areas; 26% will be managed under VRM Class III. Once the trail management plan is completed, BLM will comply with all management for high-potential route segments. As such, there will be no significant impacts to possible high-potential route segments of the Old Spanish Trail NHT.

9. The proposed activities are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).

The EA does not propose any changes to existing management for endangered or threatened species. Proposed projects will continue to comply with all Federal regulations for these species.

10. The proposed activities will not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).

Signatures:

Recommended By:



Gary Torres
Farmington District Manager

6/12/2014
Date

Approved By:



Jesse Juen
BLM New Mexico State Director

6/13/14
Date