

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COEUR D'ALENE DISTRICT, IDAHO**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Project Name: Mullan Forest Health Collaborative Project
BLM Office: Coeur d'Alene Field Office, Idaho
NEPA Register No: DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2011-0007-EA
Project Location: Mullan, Idaho
Contact: Larry Kaiser, Supervisory Forester, (208) 769-5023

The attached environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). I have determined the proposed Mullan Forest Health Collaborative Project is not a major federal action that may have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. As described and analyzed in the EA, no environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined by regulations to implement NEPA found at 40 CFR 1508.27. This finding is based on my consideration of both the context and intensity of the project, as described below.

Context. This requirement means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the local rather than in the world as a whole. Both short-and-long-term effects are relevant.

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The project area is limited in size and the activities limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and are not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

Intensity. This requirement refers to the severity of impact. The following factors are considered in evaluating intensity.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Impacts associated with the project are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA. These include short-term and long-term effects as well as beneficial and adverse effects. The proposed actions would not have significant impacts on resources identified and described in Chapter 3.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed activities would not significantly affect public health and safety. The project is designed to reduce the public health and safety risks associated with a wildfire in the Mullan, ID area. Forest health and fuel reduction activities would be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public (EA, Chapter 2). Similar actions have not significantly affected public health and safety.

The proposed project includes the use of prescribed fire which could affect public health and safety. The risk of an escaped fire would be low due in part to the design of the project, including construction of fire lines and fuel breaks; reduced fuels along the BLM/private land boundary; fire management expertise and use of experienced crews; and the availability of the necessary fire suppression resources. Extensive agency experience with similar local projects and conditions show the risk of an escaped fire is low. Appropriate warning signs and public announcements would be used to notify recreationists and other

public land users of logging and burning activities. No degradation of water quality is expected as a result of these proposed activities (EA, Chapter 3). A short-term minor impact may occur to local air quality from the prescribed burning/underburning treatments and the burning of logging slash. However, burning would be done in accordance with State air quality standards and within burning periods approved by the State of Idaho (EA, Chapters 2 and 3).

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

There would be no adverse effects to historic places or loss of scientific, cultural, historical, or other unique resources (EA, Chapter 3). This project is in compliance with the agreement between the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

An analysis of the proposed action and alternative has been conducted using the best information available and the latest methods of analyzing data by professionals in their respected disciplines. Throughout the analysis process, public comments varied in their recommendations on ways to best manage resources within the project area. However, the effects of the proposed alternatives on the various resources (EA, Chapter 3) are not considered to be highly controversial by professionals, specialists and scientists from associated fields of forestry, wildlife biology and management, fisheries, and hydrology. While the selected alternative may be minimally controversial to some, I do not believe that there is significant controversy over the effects of this action.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Scoping did not identify highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks. The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for determining the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, past experience, knowledge of the area, and professional judgment. Impacts are within the limits that are considered thresholds of concern. Therefore, I conclude that there are no highly uncertain, 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.

Many similar projects have been conducted and are planned for our area of jurisdiction. The forest health conditions of today require active management. This project is not precedent setting for future actions and is not expected to have any significant effects. This action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

This project is similar to activities that have or are taking place on adjacent National Forest System lands. Timber harvest activities on adjacent private lands have occurred and can be expected to continue for economic reasons as well as for reducing fire hazard. The EA includes descriptions of all connected, cumulative, and similar actions in the scope of the analysis. The cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are considered and disclosed in the EA, Chapter 3.

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

There are no features in the area affected that are listed or are being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A cultural resource inventory has been completed in the area, no cultural resources were located (EA, Chapter 3).

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat that has been determined under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

The proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed or candidate species.

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

The action does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or permits imposed for the protection of the environment.

Conclusion

Based upon review of the EA, I have determined that the Mullan Forest Health Collaborative Project will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.

 /s/ Kurt Pavlat
Kurt Pavlat, Field Manager

 August 6, 2012
Date