

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)**

Twin Falls District
2536 Kimberly Road
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

**Twin Falls District (TFD) Programmatic Emergency Stabilization and
Rehabilitation Plan (PESRP) Environmental Assessment (EA)**

NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T000-2011-0001-EA

I have determined the Proposed Action in the PESRP EA (incorporated by reference) will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. In making this determination, I considered the context of the environmental impacts and the ten intensity factors.

The context of the environmental impacts from implementing the Proposed Action in the PESRP EA would not have national, regional, or statewide consequences. The analysis demonstrates that emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR) activities would be localized within areas burned by wildfire. Proposed ESR activities are designed to meet goals and objectives in applicable land use plans by stabilizing and rehabilitating burned areas.

1. The Proposed ESR actions would not cause significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)). The PESRP EA discloses expected effects from post-fire treatments (EA, pp.78 - 149). Treatments analyzed in the PESRP EA include: perennial grass, forb, and shrub seedings; invasive plant and noxious weed control; watershed stabilization and erosion control treatments; closures; facility repair and replacement; cultural resource stabilization and protection actions; and design features. Design features reduce or eliminate potential impacts caused by ESR treatments. Proposed ESR actions would stabilize soils, repair physical improvements, and restore perennial plant communities.

2. The Proposed Action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)). ESR treatments enhance public health and safety by promoting soil stabilization and vegetation recovery. Risks such as hazardous erosion events, repeated wildfires, wildfire suppression hazards, and smoke-related health issues would be minimized. Fires would be fewer and/or smaller due to increased fire resiliency. For example, perennial plants restored through ESR treatments are expected to control post-fire invasive plant establishment (i.e., cheatgrass). Controlling invasive plants would reduce fire frequency and decrease the number of acres burned by wildfire.

3. Proposed ESR actions would not cause significant effects to unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)). ESR treatments stabilize soils and restore perennial vegetation after a wildfire. Unique characteristics such as wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, wilderness study areas, and areas

of critical environmental concern would benefit from restored areas. Design features reduce or eliminate any impacts to these resources caused by ESR treatments.

4. Proposed ESR actions do not cause highly controversial effects on the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)). Proposals are highly controversial when there is disagreement over the size or nature of effects of a major Federal action. Opposition to a project does not necessarily make it controversial. Proposed treatments are either the same or very similar to those being done now. Treatments currently being done have been analyzed in a Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan EA.

Some public comments disagreed with not setting a time period that a livestock closure is in effect. In the past, most seeded areas were closed to livestock grazing for two growing seasons. Recent events such as increased fire frequency and size, the expansion of invasive plants (e.g. cheatgrass and medusahead wildrye) and noxious weeds, new plant varieties, and seeding methods have added to the complexities of post-fire recovery. These factors combined with individual site characteristics (e.g. soil type, preburned vegetation) of a burned area make it difficult to apply a predetermined closure across a burned landscape. Therefore, the decision of when to resume livestock grazing would be based on achieving site-specific ESR objectives. ESR objectives would promote site stabilization, seeding treatment establishment, and natural vegetation recovery (EA, pp. 22 - 23).

5. Proposed ESR actions do not cause effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)). The three field offices in the TFD have been implementing ESR treatments for more than 40 years. During this time treatment techniques have evolved as needed to meet land use plan resource objectives and have been applied over a broad landscape under a variety of conditions. Based on this experience these treatments and their results, including seeding failures, are familiar and the risks associated with these treatments are neither unique nor unknown.

6. The Proposed Action neither sets a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)). Post-fire ESR plans identify specific treatments that will be applied to a burned area. A Determination of National Environmental Policy Act Adequacy is completed to determine if the treatments have been sufficiently analyzed in the PESRP EA or another NEPA document. If so, no further analysis is needed. If not, BLM will forego the ESR treatment(s) or complete a separate NEPA analysis.

7. The effects from ESR actions would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)). The cumulative effects analysis in the PESRP EA did not identify any significant impacts as a result of implementing proposed ESR actions.

8. Proposed ESR actions would 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 PESRP EA lists ESR actions that could occur after a wildfire. Cultural resource surveys would be completed prior to implementing an ESR treatment. Cultural resource sites found during the inventory would be recorded, marked, and

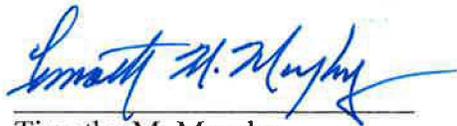
avoided when completing the treatment (EA, pp. 39). National Historic Trails would be avoided and buffered (EA, pp. 37 - 38). These actions would be documented in post-fire ESR plans.

9. Proposed ESR actions are not likely to adversely affect endangered or threatened species or designated critical habitat (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). ESR treatments would stabilize soils and promote recovery of perennial vegetation. Design features would either eliminate or minimize potential effects from ESR treatments. These actions would benefit listed species and their habitats.

A biological assessment (BA) has been completed for the PESRP EA. The BA analyzed the potential effects of proposed ESR actions to listed species. This analysis resulted in two determinations: 1) Proposed treatments and design features may affect but are not likely to adversely affect bull trout, Snake River physa, Banbury Springs lanx, Bruneau hot springsnail, Bliss Rapids snail, or slickspot peppergrass; 2) ESR actions would not affect the North American wolverine. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with these determinations on May 10, 2013.

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)). The Proposed Action conforms to applicable statutes, policies, and land use plans (EA, pp. 4 - 6).

APPROVED:



Timothy M. Murphy
Acting Idaho BLM State Director

October 31, 2013

Date