

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

Twin Falls District
Jarbidge Field Office
2536 Kimberly Road
Twin Falls, ID 83301

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Saylor Creek Herd Management Area Wild Horse Release
Environmental Assessment
NEPA NO. DOI-BLM-ID-T010-2011-0001-EA**

I have reviewed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of Alternative 2 analyzed in the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area (HMA) Wild Horse Release Environmental Assessment (EA). I have reviewed the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 CFR 1508.27 which define significance and found the actions analyzed in the Saylor Creek Herd Management Area Wild Horse Release EA do not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

Context: The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The Release Area within the Saylor Creek HMA is limited in size and the activities limited in potential. Effects are local in nature and would not significantly affect regional or national resources. The EA was prepared with input from interested parties.

Intensity: There is no evidence that the severity of impacts is significant.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Alternative 2 is expected to meet BLM's objective for wild horse management in the Saylor Creek HMA of maintaining a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple use relationship consistent with other resource needs. Impacts associated with Alternative 2 are discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA. Even though the EA acknowledges that there will be impacts to several resources, impacts to these resources do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts.

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

The activities included in Alternative 2 will not significantly affect public health or safety. The purpose of the action is to release wild horses back into the HMA. Similar actions have not significantly affected public health or safety.

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 are no unique historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wild and scenic rivers, wetlands, Wilderness Study Areas, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern within the project area.

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

Public comments and the analysis did not identify any controversy or disagreement concerning effects of releasing wild horses back to the HMA. Public comments did express concerns about effects of management actions on various resource values; these effects have been analyzed and discussed in the EA.

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

The analysis did not identify any effects on the human environment which are highly uncertain or involve 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.*

Alternative 2 represents a continuum of actions associated with wild horse management. As such, Alternative 2 neither sets a precedent nor does it, in itself, trigger future actions.

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

The effects of releasing wild horses as described in Alternative 2 would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions. The EA discloses that there are no other connected or cumulative actions that would cause significant cumulative impacts.

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.*

Alternative 2 will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It also will not cause loss or destruction of significant, cultural, or historical resources.

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

There is no threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat designated within the project area and surveys did not reveal the presence of any threatened or endangered species. The EA determined that there will be no affect on any endangered or threatened species.

Although sage-grouse are a candidate species, they are not presently listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Habitat for sage-grouse was historically present in the West Pasture of the Twin Butte Allotment (i.e. the release area); however, sage-grouse use is unlikely because recurring wildfires have essentially removed sagebrush, a key habitat component for sage-grouse. There are no records of sage-grouse leks within the HMA. For these reasons, releasing wild horses as described in Alternative 2 would not adversely affect sage-grouse.

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

This action violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws. The action will be implemented in accordance with all federal, state, and local environmental protection laws.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed for Alternative 2 in the EA are not a major federal action and that its implementation would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that the preparation of an EIS is not necessary for this project.

APPROVED:

/s/ Rick VanderVoet
Rick VanderVoet
Jarbidge Field Manager

5/13/11
Date