

Categorical Exclusion Review
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Boise District Office
Four Rivers Field Office

Range and Training Land Analysis (RTLTA) Plot Addition

CE No.: DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2011-0019-CX	Lease/Serial/Case File No.:
Purpose and Need for Action: The RTLTA, formally referred to as Land Condition Trend Analysis (LCTA) monitoring program was initiated on OTA in 1989 with 200 core plots and 10 special use plots. Core plots are permanent plots located by a stratified random method (Warren <i>et. al.</i> 1990) and are used for monitoring changes in land condition. They are distributed throughout OTA with the exception of the Core Impact Area. Over time, the number and distribution of core and special use plots has increased based on adaptive management requirements set forth in the IDARNG's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) and Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) program. Currently, there are 225 core plots (within the OTA boundary), 39 special use plots (inside and outside the OTA boundary), and 50 control plots (core plots outside the OTA boundary) (Map 1). The Idaho Army National Guard (IDARNG) is requesting permission to increase the number of RTLTA plots on BLM lands outside the Orchard Training Area (OTA) boundary. The installation of 40 additional core plots outside the OTA boundary would increase the total RTLTA plots to 90 which would enhance the statistical robustness of the existing data set and provide important long-term monitoring information to enhance public land management.	
Description of Proposed Action: Installation of 40 additional (IDARNG) long-term (RTLTA) vegetation monitoring plots outside the OTA boundary to increase the amount of data relative to the area, and to enhance the statistical validity of the existing data set. The attached RTLTA summary describes the RTLTA set up and data recording process (Attachment 1). The overall ground disturbance associated with the establishment of the plot pins is measured in square centimeters and no commensurate impact to resources would occur.	
Project Location: Townships 1, 2, 3, and 4-South, and Ranges 1, 2, 3, and 4-East (Map 1).	
Applicant (if any): Idaho National Guard	

Part I – Plan Conformance Review

This proposed Action is subject to the following land use plan: Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the 1983 Kuna Management Framework Plan (MFP).

Date Plans Approved:

- NCA-RMP: September 30, 2008
- Kuna MFP: March 14, 1983

2008 NCA-RMP: The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions): Specifically, it meets the objective to designate of up to 5,000 acres for research purposes (2-10) and would provide monitoring data to integrate into the Adaptive Management Framework specified in the RMP (3-2). This project would be an expansion of an existing monitoring program and would be conducted in a manner that complies with management actions identified in the NCA RMP.

1983 Kuna MFP: The proposed action is in conformance with the MFP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following MFP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Objective WL-5.2: Manage the Snake River Birds of Prey Area as outlined by PLO 577 for the wellbeing of raptors and for other compatible uses, with the following goals:

- c. Coordinate and conduct studies to support management needs.
- d. Make knowledge gained from management and research activities available to the public, other agencies, and to the scientific community.

Part II – NEPA Review

- A. Categorical Exclusion Review: This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 2, Appendix 1
Category description: 1.6 Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, research, and monitoring activities.
- B. Departmental List of Extraordinary Circumstances Review: Before any non-Energy Act CX is used, you must conduct sufficient review to determine if any of the following extraordinary circumstances apply (516 DM 2, Appendix 2). If any of the extraordinary circumstances are applicable to the action being considered, either an EA or an EIS must be prepared for the action. Part 516 of the Departmental Manual (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) states that extraordinary circumstances exist for individual actions within CXs which may: (Mark applicable answer for each item. If "yes", prepare an EA/EIS and append this form to it.)

List of Extraordinary Circumstances

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford 9/20/2011
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Comments/Explanation: The proposed action is passive monitoring only; as such, there would be no effect on public health or safety. In addition, no water supply, either sole or communal is located in the vicinity of these research sites. Additionally, there would be no use of potentially dangerous equipment or hazardous materials during field data collection.

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; or ecologically significant or critical areas, or is not in compliance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Jill Holderman 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> This study would in no way impact nesting birds of prey, or any other members of the local ecosystem due to the scale and nature of this research project. The study sites would not involve ground disturbing activities and would not be located in slickspots within existing or proposed critical Slickspot habitat. The monitoring sites would encompass only a small areas (<0.075 acres) and no equipment would be left on-site. Second, the site would be occupied for only a short period of time due to the relatively short duration of sample collection.		
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"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford Baun 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> Sample collection would have negligible environmental impact and would not promote conflict regarding such impacts. The utilization of public resources at the site would be limited to occupation of public recreation area at a small spatial and temporal scale. No other site resources would be required for completion of the study objectives. The impacts associated with vegetation monitoring are well understood and not controversial in the scientific community.		
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> There would be virtually no uncertainty regarding the environmental impact of this study. Vegetation sampling would be non-destructive.		
5. Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> No alternative use of public resources within the proposed project area would be motivated or promoted by this study. Vehicle use would be constrained to roadways that are already established and care would be taken to ensure that there would be no disturbance to local biota beyond the specific sample sites. The impacts associated with the proposed action are associated with passive monitoring program already established in the area. As such, the program is well understood and would not be precedent setting.		
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> The impacts associated with data collection would be inconsequential both spatially and temporally; therefore, they would not be expected to overlap with other actions that could have similar impacts.		
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Dean Shaw/Jake Fruhlinger 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> The IDARNG Cultural Resource Manager has reviewed the proposed plot locations to ensure that the project has no effect on cultural resources.		
8. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date for Plants: Anne Halford/Charles Baun 9/20/2011 Specialist Signature/Date for Wildlife: Jill Holderman 9/20/2011 Specialist Signature/Date for Aquatics: Jill Holderman 9/20/2011
<i>Plants Comments/Explanation:</i> Site clearances will be conducted by IDARNG environmental staff as each plot is established. In the event that a species is observed, it will be recorded and submitted to BLM. As the nature of the monitoring is to track changes in vegetative, the plot will be relocated only if it poses a threat to the species. Therefore, there would be no adverse effect on any T&E species.		

Wildlife Comments/ <i>Explanation</i> : Several special status raptors, songbirds, and reptiles occur in the area. None are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Field data collection would occur after most avian species have fledged their young. Reptiles would generally be active above ground. The limited spatial and temporal disturbances associated with the proposed data collection would have minimal impacts to special status wildlife species.		
Aquatics Comments/ <i>Explanation</i> : There are no aquatic ecosystems within 1 mile of the project area.		
9. Violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Dean Shaw/Jake Fruhlinger 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation</i> : The proposed action would be in compliance with laws associated with the protection of the environment.		
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation</i> : There are no low income or minority populations living in the project area. Low income or minority visitors to the area would not be affected any differently by the proposed activities than any other visitor.		
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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Dean Shaw/Jake Fruhlinger 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation</i> : There would be no identified or expected locations within the project area that have been identified as sacred sites, or used by Indian religious practitioners. In addition, the action would not result in any access restrictions.		
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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Specialist Signature/Date: Anne Halford/Charles Baun 9/20/2011
<i>Comments/Explanation</i> : Non-native invasive plants are common in some portions of the study area. Because of the limited surface disturbance associated with the project, it would not be expected to alter their present distribution. This research project directly supports efforts to reclaim sagebrush steppe ecosystems from invasive species in southwestern Idaho. Isolated occurrences of whitetop, perennial pepperweed, and Canada thistle have been identified and treated in the area before or during 2010. This action would not be expected to facilitate the spread of these occurrences. Placing transects >100m from known slickspot peppergrass EOs would minimize the potential for changes in invasive non-native species caused by sampling to adversely affect EOs.		
I certify that none of the Departmental exceptions (Extraordinary Circumstances) listed in the above Part II (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) apply to this action; therefore, this categorical exclusion is appropriate for this situation. Remarks:		
Authorizing Official: /s/ Patricia Roller		Date: 11/19/2011
Name: Patricia Roller Title: BOP NCA Manager, Four Rivers Field Office		

Part III – Decision

I have reviewed this plan conformance and NEPA compliance record and have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the approved land use plan and that no further environmental analysis is required. It is my decision to implement the project, as described, with the mitigation measures either identified below or with the stipulation(s) described above.

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 Four Rivers Field Office, Boise District, 3948 Development Ave, Boise, ID 83705. 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.

To file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR part 4.21(b), it must accompany your notice of appeal and must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If a petition for stay is submitted with the notice of appeal, a notice of appeal and petition for stay must be served on each party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, and with the IBLA at the same time it is filed with the authorized officer.

A copy of the notice of appeal, any statement of reasons, and all pertinent documents must be served on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken and on the *Office of the Solicitor, Field Solicitor-U.S. Department of the Interior, University Plaza, 960 Broadway Avenue, Suite 400, Boise, Idaho 83706*, not later than 15 days after filing the document with the authorized officer and/or IBLA.

Mitigation Measures/Other Remarks:

Remarks:

Authorizing Official: /s/ Patricia Roller

Date: 11/19/2011

Name: Patricia Roller

Title: Patricia Roller, BOP NCA Manager - Four Rivers Field Office