

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Boise District
Four Rivers Field Office
3948 Development Ave
Boise, ID 83705

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Four Rivers Field Office - Livestock Trailing
Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. Because the actions analyzed in the EA will not have any significant impact, an environmental impact statement is not required.

My finding was made after considering both the context and intensity of the effects, as described in the above EA, which this document incorporates by reference. I considered the following factors in determining significance:

Context:

The active herding of livestock from one grazing area to another has been a preferred method of managing livestock on rangelands historically. The routes proposed in the EA are generally the same as or near the routes that in the past have been used. The stipulations added to the permit as design features in Alternative C also require the operators to avoid sensitive areas and to schedule trailing events as to reduce effects to wildlife or sensitive resources.

Intensity:

1. The activities described in the proposed action (Alternative C of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA) do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)), as described below:

- a. There would not be any significant beneficial impacts of Alternative C of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA to the applicants for crossing permits. As is explained in Section 3.10.2 and in Table 31 of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA, there are several costs and minor conflicts to the operators associated with livestock trailing.
- b. There would not be any significant beneficial impacts of Alternative C of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA to species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), candidate species for listing under ESA, and BLM special status species.

- c. There would not be any significant adverse impacts of Alternative C of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA on a species listed as threatened under the ESA.
 - 1) Slickspot peppergrass habitat, as described in Section 3.5.2.4 of the EA, will not be measurably impacted. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided a letter of concurrence that the proposed action would not be likely to adversely affect slickspot peppergrass (Appendix 1 of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA). Please see the answer to Factor 9 for more detail.
 - d. There would not be any significant adverse impacts of Alternative C of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA on candidate species for listing under the ESA. For example:
 - 1) Effects on greater sage-grouse would be negligible to minor as trailing activities would only occur between 10 am and 6 pm as is described in Section 3.8.2.4 of the EA. Cumulative impacts from Alternative C would be less than those described for Alternative A or B. Although both alternatives would have only minimal direct and indirect effects and there would be no measurable impacts to sage-grouse populations, Alternative C would have even fewer consequences to sage-grouse due to the imposed timing and location restrictions.
 - e. There would not be any significant adverse effects of Alternative C of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA on BLM special status species. For example:
 - 1) In regards to Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, there are not expected to be any measurable direct/indirect or cumulative impacts as a result of livestock trailing under Alternative C. Forage competition will be limited and there are not likely to be any direct contact between domestic and wild sheep as described in Sections 3.8.2.3 and 3.8.2.4 of the EA.
 - 2) Effects to long-billed Curlew would be reduced compared to Alternative B as cross-country travel will be limited. Therefore there will be a minor reduction to nest disturbance and trampling.
 - 3) Effects to special status plant species would be mostly beneficial as trailing activities would be restricted to existing roads in the vicinity of Special Status Plant Element of Occurrences. Cumulative impacts to special status plants in Alternative C would be similar to, but substantially less than Alternative B, where cumulative impacts would be relatively minor when viewed in the overall context of population viability (Section 3.5.3.5).
2. The activities included in the proposed action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).

A majority of the livestock trailing would occur along and adjacent to roads. The public may occasionally encounter livestock on roads during trailing activities; however, these encounters would not significantly affect public health and safety because the number of

encounters along roads is expected to be low and the duration of the encounters would be limited in time. These effects are described in Section 3.11.2 of the EA, *Environmental Consequences – Recreation Management*. Furthermore, livestock trailing has occurred throughout this area for several decades and is not a new or unusual event that the public would encounter.

3. The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern.

No prime and unique farmlands, caves, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern are found within the trailing corridors.

4. The activities described in the proposed action would not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).

Livestock trailing is a routine activity, and the effects of livestock trailing are well understood as described throughout Section 3.0 of the EA, *Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences*.

Public input was requested from affected permittees and interested publics. Comments in response to these scoping efforts did not reveal any controversy related to the size, nature, or effects of livestock trailing activities.

5. Livestock trailing would not involve any effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).

Livestock trailing has occurred throughout this area for several decades, and the effects are well understood. The EA (Section 3.0, *Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences*) discloses the expected environmental effects on the human environment; no unique or unknown risks have been identified.

6. My decision to authorize livestock trailing would 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)).

No significant cumulative impacts were identified within the EA. Implementation of Alternative C would not trigger other actions, nor will it represent a decision in principle about future considerations.

7. The effects of livestock trailing 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 no other connected or cumulative actions would cause significant cumulative impacts (throughout Section 3.0, *Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences*). The proposed action was designed to lessen potential environmental effects

relative to the routes originally applied for. The proposed action also contains general and route-specific stipulations that will be used to lessen potential environmental effects (Section 2.3.3, *Alternative C – Trailing with Design Criteria*). The cumulative effects analysis in the EA does not reveal any known significant cumulative effects. Any adverse impacts identified as a result of livestock trailing, when added to any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions, would result in negligible to minor impacts to natural and cultural resources.

8. I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action 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)).

Based on the proposed trailing activities, an Area of Potential Effects (APE) was identified. Past inventory efforts within the APE were reviewed to identify sites that may be affected by the trailing activities. The EA (Section 3.9, *Environmental Consequences – Cultural Resources*) discloses that trailing activities are not expected to adversely affect six NRHP-eligible sites within the APE; however, “one potentially NRHP-eligible site, 100E-6706, is potentially being adversely affected.” – page 96 of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA. For this site, a mitigation plan will be implemented, as described in Section 3.19.2, *Mitigation of Potentially Adverse Impacts to Cultural Site 100E-6706*, to “assess whether or not impacts are occurring to the characteristics that would make site 100E-6706 eligible for listing on the NRHP.... If impacts are documented to have occurred, further measures would be taken to mitigate impacts.” – page 121 of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA.

In addition, as described in Section 3.19.1, *Mitigation of Potential Impacts to Cultural Resources*, “the BLM will conduct Class III inventories at all stream crossings, spring areas, and overnight areas to further consider effects to cultural resources resulting from the issuance of the crossing permit. If NRHP-eligible sites are found and are determined to be impacted by livestock trailing, additional mitigation measures would be identified and implemented.” – page 121 of DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2012-0008-EA. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office was initiated on March 1, 2012, and will be completed in association with individual crossing permits.

9. The proposed activities would not likely 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)).

As disclosed in the EA (Section 3.5), slickspot peppergrass occurs throughout the Four Rivers Field Office (FRFO) and the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) and trailing would occur within occupied and proposed critical habitat. However, Alternative C would restrict cross-country when soils are saturated and bedding areas would not occur within proposed critical habitat. Slickspot peppergrass habitat has already been affected by historic trailing activities (Section 3.5.2.4, Appendix 1). Negligible to minor impacts to habitat from proposed trailing were identified, primarily on cross-country routes (26 miles). The affected area, slickspot peppergrass habitat (4,168 acres), potential habitat (1,101 acres), and bedding areas, would be less than three percent of

the total slickspot peppergrass habitat within the FRFO and no slickspots currently known to contain slickspot peppergrass would be directly impacted.

10. The proposed trailing activities would 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)).

Chapter 1 of the EA (Section 1.6, *Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Requirements*) describes how trailing activities conform to relevant laws, regulations, policies, and any relevant local permitting requirements.

/s/ *Terry A. Humphrey*

8/17/2012

Terry A. Humphrey
Field Manager
Four Rivers Field Office

Date