

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION

CX No. DOI-BLM-ID-B020-2012-0008-CX

A. BACKGROUND

BLM Office: Bruneau Field Office

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type: Construct a free-standing (above ground) pole fence, approximately 300 feet, to function as a visual barrier on a closed vehicle route

Location of Proposed Action: Bruneau Field Office; near Pole Creek Wilderness boundary along the Mud Flat Road, approximately 40 miles southeast of Grand View, Owyhee County, Idaho
(See attached map)

1. **Description of Proposed Action:**

The proposed installation of a barrier fence to prevent motorized and mechanized travel in wilderness is scheduled for September 29, 2012. Volunteers would assist in the construction of approximately 300 feet of free-standing (above-ground) pole fence as part of a National Public Lands Day project. The route was closed to vehicles in 2009 with the designation of the Pole Creek Wilderness Area. There is no existing vehicle barrier on this closed vehicle route at the present time to deter use by motorized vehicles. The fence would be located outside of wilderness and adjacent to the Mud Flat Road. Limited vehicle access for livestock grazing management by the grazing permittee will continue on this route.

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

Land Use Plan Name: Bruneau MFP

Date Approved or Amended: 1983

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):

Objective WN (Wilderness)-1.1 (4): Boundary roads, "cherry stem" roads, and ways will not be closed prior to wilderness designation unless they are degrading wilderness values.

The Pole Creek Wilderness was designated in 2009. The Wilderness Act of 1964 requires BLM to ensure protection of Wilderness values. Opportunities for visitor solitude would be enhanced

by this project.

C: COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA:

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 E(19)

Category Description:

- *Construction of small protective enclosures, including those to protect reservoirs and springs and those to protect small study areas.*

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances that would introduce potential effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM6 apply. This closed vehicle route requires a barrier (enclosure) as motorized vehicles are not allowed in wilderness.

The following list of Extraordinary Circumstances (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) was considered:

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

No, Building a small enclosure to function as a vehicle barrier for a closed vehicle route in wilderness would have no measurable negative impact to public health or safety. There may be minor positive health benefits in the form of exercise to the public volunteers who construct the project.

The Proposed Action would not have any significant impacts to public health or safety.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/David Draheim Outdoor Recreation Planner 7/6/12

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.

No, The proposed project is intended to protect wilderness values, which may also indirectly benefit cultural and wildlife values or resources by closing vehicle access to the area. The project area of potential effect has been evaluated by the Archeologist and Wildlife Biologist. Project activities will not impact any wetlands or floodplains.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/David Draheim Outdoor Recreation Planner 7/6/12

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

No, The use of native materials in this project would not attract the attention of the visitor and would blend with the existing character of the landscape. Scenic resources and visual quality would be maintained in this area of the Owyhee Upland Backcountry Byway and Pole Creek Wilderness.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/David Draheim Outdoor Recreation Planner 7/6/12

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

No, The project has been reviewed and cleared by resource specialists with knowledge of the area. Typically, limiting vehicle access benefits wildlife, cultural, and wilderness resources. Given that the fence is only 300 feet long and that there are no sensitive resources in the project area (as discussed under #'s 7 and 8) there are not any potentially significant environmental effects.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/David Draheim Outdoor Recreation Planner 7/6/12

5. Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

No, The route was effectively closed by the designation of the Pole Creek Wilderness Area. Such fences and barricades are a common practice in the BLM's efforts to prevent motorized and mechanized travel within Wilderness. The Boise District BLM has signed the vehicle route closed, installed temporary fences, and placed rock barricades on approximately 10 other vehicle routes closed in Wilderness designated by the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Seth Flanigan NEPA Specialist 9/13/12

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

No, Other human-related activities occurring in the area include livestock grazing and casual recreation use. The grazing operator would still have vehicle access on the closed route. Recreational use will be slightly diminished for activities dependent on motorized and mechanized vehicles (not allowed in Wilderness) but would be improved for primitive activities.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Seth Flanigan NEPA Specialist 9/13/12

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.

No, The findings for the cultural survey were negative for surface evidence of cultural resources in area of potential effect. I recommend that the project proceed as planned. If cultural material is located at the time of project construction, then work would cease until the site is evaluated, in

consultation with SHPO and the tribes. Work would resume after notification from the authorized officer. See attached cultural resource evaluation sheet.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Lois Palmgren Bruneau FO Archaeologist 8/31/12

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.

No, The project has been reviewed by the Botanist/Ecologist, and it was determined that the event would not adversely impact any special status plants or suitable habitat.

Plants Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Holly Beck Botanist 9/5/12

Comments/Explanation:

No, Given the small footprint of this project and the resulting increase in effective exclusion of motorized and mechanized vehicles behind the proposed fence, this project will benefit wildlife species. See the Special Status Animal Clearance Worksheet for more detailed analyses.

Wildlife Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Bruce C. Schoeberl Wildlife Biologist 9/14/12

Comments/Explanation:

No, The project site would have no impacts to fish species as it is over one mile from the nearest stream channel.

Aquatics Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Dave Mays Fisheries Biologist 9/14/12

9. Violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

No, Implementation of this project would not be in violation of federal, state, local, or tribal law, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Rather, this project will help facilitate compliance with the Wilderness Act and the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 by deterring a prohibited use within the Pole Creek Wilderness.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Aimee D. K. Betts Assistant Field Manager 9/11/12

10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

No, 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 project than any other visitor.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Seth Flanigan NEPA Specialist 9/13/12

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).

No, This project would not limit access to ceremonial use of sacred Indian sites on federal lands or adversely affect the physical integrity of known sacred sites. Tribal consultation on this project was completed in August 2012. Also, see attached cultural resource evaluation sheet.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/Aimee D. K. Betts Assistant Field Manager 9/11/12

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).

No, The proposed project would not 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 species. No ground-disturbing activities would take place.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Lonnie Huter Noxious Weed Specialist 7/12/12

D: SIGNATURE

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.

Authorizing Official: /s/ Arnold L. Pike Bruneau Field Manager 9/24/12

Arnold L. Pike
Field Manager
Bruneau Field Office

Prepared By/Contact Person:

David Draheim, Outdoor Recreation Planner