UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Boise District
Four Rivers Field Office
3948 S. Development Ave.
Boise, ID 83709

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
PUMPKIN BRAINARD FOREST RESTORATION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOUR RIVERS FIELD OFFICE
DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2010-0024-EA

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-ID-B010-2010-0024-EA would not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the above EA.

Context: This requirement means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts, such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short and long-term effects are relevant.

The disclosure of effects in the EA found the actions limited in context. The planning area is limited in size and the activities limited in potential. The proposed action described within the EA focuses on a small portion of the landscape (< 1% of the Lower Payette River Sub-basin). The implementation of these actions would result in the harvest of trees and subsequent burning of landing site slash piles on 1,293 acres within a 4,180 acre project area, which spans across portions of three 6th field hydrologic unit codes (HUCs). Effects from these treatments would be local and would not result in regional or national significance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into BLM's Critical Elements of the Human Environment list (H-1790-1), and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, acts, regulations, and Executive Orders. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1) The activities described in the proposed action and alternatives do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)).

The environmental assessment (EA) considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. The proposed action would selectively thin approximately 1,293 BLM acres in the Pumpkin, Brainard, Hill, and Deer Creek drainages over the next five years with whole tree yarding techniques using contracted tractor/jammer and tracked harvester equipment. Selective thinning of both commercial and non-commercial size trees would modify forest stand structure and species composition, making the area more resistant to and resilient from large-scale stand-replacing wildfire. The resulting forest would also be less susceptible to severe bark beetle infestations and dwarf mistletoe induced tree mortality (EA, pgs. 10-17). The impacts of the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment because the scale of the Pumpkin Brainard Forest Restoration Project is very small when considered in relation to the Lower Payette River Sub-basin (approx. 380,000 acres) of which it is a part.

While the long-term effects of this project would be beneficial, some short-term adverse impacts would occur including; localized areas of soil disturbance where logging equipment skids logs to landing locations, a small and temporary increase in sediment delivery into Pumpkin Creek during a road decommissioning and rerouting in that drainage, temporary avoidance of some areas by livestock during implementation, temporary displacement of some species of wildlife during implementation, minor disturbance to nesting habitat for raptors in the Pumpkin Creek drainage, localized short-duration impacts to air quality due to smoke production during the treatment of slash (several hours to a few days during the fall or winter months), temporary displacement of hunters and recreationists during implementation, and localized temporary degradation of visual quality (EA Section 3 and 4). Implementation activities would be spread out over a 2-3 year period. Design features of the proposed action would minimize these negative short-term impacts to the extent possible (see EA Section 2.2.2.1 Project Design Features, pgs. 12-17).

2) The activities included in the proposed action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).

The proposed action would reduce the risk of large and hard to control wildland fires over time and, therefore, would have beneficial effects to public and firefighter safety by reducing fire intensity and rate of spread, as well as, high concentration long duration impacts from smoke. The analysis of the proposed action did not identify any appreciable negative effects on public health or safety. All chemicals proposed for treatments in the project area have been analyzed for their effects on public health and approved for use in the 2007 Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on BLM Lands in 17 Western States Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, Final Programmatic Environmental Report, and Biological Assessment. Public safety during logging activities would be maintained by restrictions of access near active logging, limitations on days of log haul, and appropriate warning signs along roads near the project area.

3) The activities included in the proposed action 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.

The Pumpkin Brainard Forest Restoration Project Area does not contain any of these unique characteristics.

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

The activities described within the proposed action are related to harvesting trees as part of forest health treatments and the impacts are not highly controversial. These activities include cutting and removing trees, road construction/relocation, road decommission, truck haul of logs, burning slash, and re-vegetating disturbed areas. All of these actions are common practices within actively managed forests and currently occur throughout the nation on private and public lands. Since these are practices that occur regularly, there are established Best Management Practices (BMPs), policies, and laws to limit actions that would result in undesirable outcomes. Within the EA, it is identified that all actions will conform to existing BMPs and policies and will abide by all applicable laws.

5) The activities described in the proposed action do not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).

The activities described within the proposed action are not uncommon to the BLM or any other entity that manages forest ecosystems and therefore the policies, laws, and best management practices that have been established remove unknown risks.

The analysis did not identify any significant effects on the human environment, which are highly uncertain or involve unknown risks as a result of this action. Proposed activities are commonly used by federal, state, and private land management agencies throughout the state of Idaho with reliable results and no unknown risks. Also, conformance with the rules of the Idaho Forest Practices Act, as well as other federal and state acts, is intended to prevent highly uncertain or unknown risks (EA Section 2.2.2.1, pgs. 13). Inaction is expected to increase the potential of wildfire size, intensity and severity, which would pose additional uncertainty and risks to soil, water, and wildlife resources.

6) A decision to implement the proposed action does 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)).

This EA does not set a precedent for future actions that have significant effects or represent any future considerations. The objectives and guidelines of the proposed action are in accordance with decisions and direction established in the Cascade Resource Management

Plan (RMP pgs. 24-34 and 38-61) for the Four Rivers Field Office of the Boise District.

7) The effects of the proposed action and alternatives 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 there are no other connected or cumulative actions that would cause significant cumulative impacts.

The EA considered potential cumulative impacts of the proposed action and concluded that implementation would not result in significant cumulative effects on biological, cultural, or social resources, when considered in relation to other actions (EA Section 3.9.2.2, pgs. 51-60).

8) I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction to 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)).

Seven historic and/or prehistoric cultural sites were recorded during survey work completed for the project area. Only one of these sites was determined to be significant and eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Mitigation measures have been developed to avoid ground disturbing adverse impacts to this site. With adherence to the mitigation measures as stated in the design feature (EA, pg. 16) there would be no adverse effect to the site from the proposed project. Consultation with the State Historical Preservation Office was completed on January 12, 2011.

9) The proposed action is not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).

The EA has not identified any threatened or endangered plant or wildlife species or their habitats within the project area; therefore, no adverse effects to these species or their habitats would occur (EA Section 3.6.6.2, pgs. 43-45 and Section 4.6.6.2 pg. 60).

10) The proposed action 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 was developed with the specific intent of adhering to all applicable Federal, State and local laws or requirements; with additional design features built into the proposed action to provide additional assurance of environmental protection (EA Section 2.2.2.1, pgs. 13-18). The EA discloses the effects of the proposed action and determined that no laws or requirements would be violated.

APPROVED:

/s/ *Terry A. Humphrey*	07/15/2013
Terry A. Humphrey Four Rivers Field Manager Four Rivers Field Office	Date