

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
COEUR D'ALENE DISTRICT, IDAHO**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

**Project Name:** Programmatic Pile Burning  
**BLM Office:** Coeur d'Alene Field Office, Idaho  
**NEPA Register No:** DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2012-0009-EA  
**Contact:** Lonnie Newton, Fire Ecologist (208-769-5017)

**Project Location:** Public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Coeur d'Alene Field Office (CdAFO) in Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties.

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed activities documented in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) for Programmatic Pile Burning and the project record for this analysis. As analyzed in the EA, no environmental effects of the proposed action meet the definition of significance as defined by regulations to implement NEPA found at 40 CFR 1508.27. This finding is based on my consideration of both the context and intensity of the project, as described below.

**(a) Context:**

The disclosure of effects in the Environmental Assessment (EA) found the Proposed Action limited to the local area (Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties) in context. The Coeur d'Alene Field Office (CdAFO) manages approximately 99,000 acres of public land (1.9%) of the approximately 5,000,000 total acres in the planning area. The greatest effects of the proposed action would be to air quality; the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects would remain in compliance with air quality standards for pollutants established by the Environmental Protection Agency. The CdAFO is a member of the Idaho/ Montana Airshed Management System, which governs and serves as a management tool for reducing the impacts to air quality (eg. permitting on good dispersion days) by all burners in their associated states.

**(b) Intensity:**

*(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.*

The project has been planned to include measures to avoid or reduce adverse impacts to affected resources. As described in Chapter 3 of the EA, the proposed pile burning would help to reduce the surface fuels present across the CdA FO. Burning of piled vegetation would reduce potential fire flame lengths and change fire type from passive and active potential crown fire behavior to surface fire in the treated areas (page 12). No significant impacts on other resources (water resources (pages 18-19) or special status aquatic, plant or wildlife species and their habitat) are identified (pages 25-26 and 30-42).

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

The proposed activities would not have a significant adverse effect public health and safety. The purpose of the project is to burn piled vegetation to reduce the potential hazard resulting from natural and activity fuels. Prescribed fire activities would be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public. A minor impact for a short period of time may occur to local air quality from the prescribed burning treatments. A prescribed fire burn plan will be implemented with all the appropriate safety considerations and smoke management will be coordinated with the Idaho/ Montana Airshed Group for all burning activities. (EA, pg. 8)

*(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.*

The BLM's analysis did not reveal any potential effects to unique characteristics of the geographic area.

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

An analysis of the proposed action and alternative has been conducted using the best information available and the latest methods of analyzing data by professionals in their respected disciplines. The effects of the proposed alternative on the various resources are not expected to be considered highly controversial by professionals, specialists and scientists from associated fields of affected resources. The BLM conducted public scoping for the proposed action and received no comments, indicating little potential for controversy.

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

The BLM's analysis did not reveal any highly uncertain effects or 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.*

The Proposed Action is not precedent setting for future actions and is not expected to have significant adverse effects. This action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration other than the need to burn piled vegetation that compromises natural ecosystems and their functions.

*(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.*

The analysis of the Proposed Action did not reveal any relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant adverse impacts. The EA includes a

cumulative impacts analysis of similar and related past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions on affected resources, and no cumulatively significant impact on any affected resource is anticipated (EA, pages 11-42).

*(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.*

The analysis shows that the Proposed Action would result in "no effect" to districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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

The project was determined to have no effect on water howellia and Spalding's catchfly (threatened plant species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)) because prescribed burning of slash piles would not occur near occupied special status plant habitat (EA, pg. 26).

Although three federally protected species occur in north Idaho (Grizzly bear, woodland caribou and Canada lynx), impacts to these species and their habitat from prescribed burning of slash piles are expected to be negligible due to the limited size of treatment areas, mitigation measures, and adherence to conservation measures listed in the Coeur d'Alene RMP (2007; pages 20–26).

Consistent with BLM policy for special status species, the analysis of sensitive plant, wildlife and aquatic species that may occur in the action area did not anticipate that the proposed action would cause any species to be listed under the ESA.

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

The action does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or permits imposed for the protection of the environment. Consistent with requirements for air quality, prescribed burning would be done in accordance with state air quality standards and within burning periods approved by the Idaho/Montana Airshed Group. Environmental design and resource protection measures would be used to protect water quality. All Forestry Practices would meet or exceed requirements set forth under the Idaho Forest Practices Act, Title 38, Chapter 13, Idaho Code.

## Conclusion

Based upon my review of the analysis conducted, I have determined that implementation of the proposed Programmatic Pile Burning will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

/s/

February 15, 2013

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Kurt Pavlat  
Field Manager

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Date