

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION

CX No. DOI-BLM-ID-B020-2013-0004-CX

A. BACKGROUND

BLM Office: Bruneau Field Office

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Proposed Action Title/Type: Temporary Route Closures at Hot Well Wildlife Tract

Location of Proposed Action: T. 7 S., R. 5 E., Section 6, W1/2SE1/4, Boise Meridian, Idaho.

1. **Description of Proposed Action:** The Hot Well Wildlife Tract has been identified as the only location in Idaho for a BLM Sensitive plant, alkali cleomella (*Cleomella plocasperma*). The public's use of this wildlife tract as a local party spot is in conflict with the Bruneau Management Framework Plan (MFP) direction to manage the site for wildlife values and with MFP direction to protect and conserve special status plants. The documented high level of recreational use associated with the adjacent geothermal well and the associated large quantities of trash have resulted in the need for temporary route closures to protect threatened natural resources. These activities are damaging habitat for the sensitive plant and increasing the risk for population decline. Future route management will be evaluated in the forthcoming travel management plan. A locked metal gate will be placed at the north entry point on Cattle Drive Road. All existing routes in the wildlife tract (approximately 1 mile of routes total) will be temporarily closed to motorized use; pedestrian access will still be allowed. Ground disturbance may include a 5-foot radius at each side of the gate where metal posts may need to be installed to support the gate.

Administrative use will be maintained for the BLM and for the owner of the private land on which the geothermal well is located. The land owner requires access across the public land to maintain the geothermal well (private land) and canal (public land).

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

Land Use Plan Name: Bruneau Management Framework Plan (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):

W/L-4.2 Manage public lands in the vicinity of irrigated agricultural areas to maintain or improve the habitat for pheasants, Hungarian partridge, valley quail and cottontails. Specifically, retain the following tracts of public land as wildlife habitat. These tracts are known to have high wildlife values and should be managed for them. T7S, R5E, S6

Objective RM-5: Provide for protection and conservation of rare and endangered plants within the planning unit.

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 G(3)

Category Description: Temporary closure of roads and trails.

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 DM 2 apply.

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

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Comments/Explanation:

The Proposed Action would not have any significant impacts to public health or safety. Public health and safety would improve with a reduction in trash and alcohol use on public land.

Specialist Signature/Date: , Botanist, 10/29/12

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.

Comments/Explanation:

The proposed route closures lie outside nationally designated parks, recreation areas, refuges, wilderness areas, wild and scenic river corridors, monuments and national landmarks. There are no unique geographic characteristics or floodplains present. It has been determined that there are no significant cultural and historic resources that need to be avoided. The Hot Well Wildlife Tract is not a sole or principal drinking water aquifer or part of prime farmland. The tract does contain wetland habitats, but these would be maintained or improved with route closure. Migratory birds would not be negatively affected by the proposed action.

Specialist Signature/Date: , Botanist, 10/29/12

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

Comments/Explanation: No unresolved or controversial natural resource issues are associated with the temporary closure of the routes. The BLM has experience with route closures to protect threatened resources and the environmental effects are not considered controversial. The effects to natural resources generally result in improvement to conditions. Improvements to vegetation and wildlife habitat expected at the Hot Well tract. Conflicts over alternative uses of resources have been resolved by allowing access by the well owner, Simplot. Closing access to the well by the public will cause conflict, but there is already no legal public access to the private well.

Specialist Signature/Date: H. Beck, Botanist, 10/29/12

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

Comments/Explanation: No environmental risks have been identified for this action. No uncertain or potentially significant environmental effects would occur as a result of the temporary route closures. Environmental effects are expected to be positive with an improvement in wildlife habitat quality, reduction in the amount of trash and waste, and reduced risks to a special status plant.

Specialist Signature/Date: H. Beck, Botanist, 10/29/12

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

Comments/Explanation: No precedent will be set as a result of the route closures. The action is temporary until travel management is completed.

Specialist Signature/Date: H. Beck, Botanist, 10/29/12

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

Comments/Explanation: The route closures do not have any relationship to other actions at this property, in the vicinity or to other route closures.

Specialist Signature/Date: H. Beck, Botanist, 10/29/12

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.**

Comments/Explanation: A Class III inventory was conducted on 10/11/2012. There are no sites located in the area of potential effect that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Specialist Signature/Date: Lois G. Grogan, Archaeologist, 1/14/2014

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.**

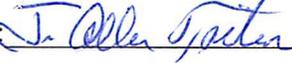
Comments/Explanation: Closure of these routes will provide improved protection for a BLM Sensitive plant species, *Cleomella placosperma*. No federally listed or proposed plant species are present in or adjacent to this property.

Plants Specialist Signature/Date: H. Beck, Botanist, 10/29/12

Comments/Explanation: The most likely BLM Sensitive animal species that might inhabit the Hot Well Wildlife Tract are western ground and/or longnose snakes. This gate installation would not negatively impact these snake species and would contribute toward decreased disturbance to all wildlife species in the 320-acre area and decreased introduction of trash and wildfire risk.

Wildlife Specialist Signature/Date: , Wildlife Biologist, 10/28/13

Comments/Explanation: No federally listed or proposed fish species or critical habitat is present on or adjacent to the tract. The action (installing a gate) would not result in any effects that could be transmitted offsite which could influence a listed or proposed fish species or its critical habitat.

Aquatics Specialist Signature/Date: , Natural Resource Specialist, 2/4/14

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

Comments/Explanation: This action does not conflict with any other laws that protect the environment. On November 21, 2013, BFO consulted with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on this temporary closure; no issues regarding tribal law were raised.

Specialist Signature/Date: , Botanist, 10/29/12

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

Comments/Explanation:

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.

Specialist Signature/Date: , Botanist, 10/29/12

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).

Comments/Explanation:

This action would not limit access to ceremonial use of sacred Indian sites on federal lands or adversely affect the physical integrity of known sacred sites. On November 21, 2013, BFO consulted with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on this action; no issues or concerns were identified at that time.

Specialist Signature/Date: , Assistant Field Manager, 1/14/2014

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).

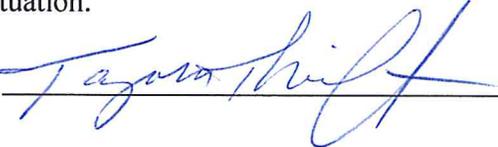
Comments/Explanation:

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.

Specialist Signature/Date: , Botanist, 10/29/12

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:  , 2/4/14 _____

Tanya M. Thrift
Field Manager
Bruneau Field Office

Prepared By/Contact Person:
Holly Beck, Botanist, Bruneau Field Office