



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CX)

A. BACKGROUND

Project Name / Type: CTF Blowdown Tree Removal and Trail/Vegetation Revitalization

NEPA Register Number: DOI-BLM-AK-A010-2013-0015-CX

Case File Number: N/A

Location / Legal Description: Seward Meridian, T 12N R 3W, Section 3

Applicant (if any): N/A

Description of Proposed Action:

Background

Beginning August 26 through September 15, 2012, a series of severe wind storms battered the Campbell Tract and damaged 185 trees. These 185 dead and dying trees include leaning trees, trees with root wads above ground (impedes trail sight distance), and trees that were lying across trails. In addition, several trees growing near trails ripped up the trail tread when toppled, which caused damage to trail treads.

To repair the damage and to meet trail standards, many trees need to be removed from the 75-foot "area of consideration" on each side of the trail tread centerline, and the damaged treads need to be reconstructed. In addition, the vegetative cover adjacent to the Lynx Trail requires treatment due to power company vehicle access and subsequent ruts and vegetation removal. This area would be reseeded and monitored for invasive plant species establishment. Finally, tread repairs would be performed where tree roots ripped up the trail tread.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to reduce the amount of accumulated fuel wood from the wildland-urban interface, increase trail sight distance, to revegetate an area damaged by large utility truck access, and to repair trail tread damage caused by uprooted trees.

The need for this action is to reduce the risk associated with:

1. Insect infestation of dead and dying trees and potential spread and infection of healthy tree stands,
2. The introduction of non-native plant species growth in disturbed areas where trees were uprooted or utility trucks caused vegetation damage and ruts, and
3. The accumulation of fuel-wood in the wildland-urban interface.

Proposed Action

The BLM will use work crews for seven consecutive days during the summer of 2013 to remove approximately 185 damaged trees from along the Campbell Tract trail system, repair damaged trail tread sections, and re-establish vegetative cover near the damaged tread sections. The trees are now either dead or dying, which require dispersal within the forest beyond the 75-foot “area of consideration,” or chipping with machinery and dispersal within the “area of consideration.” Once the trees are removed and dispersed, any damaged trails would be reconstructed, and bare soil patches would be revegetated. Specifically, these individual phases include:

1. Vegetation Removal

Methods to remove vegetation would include the use of chainsaws, loppers, bow saws and work crews to carry wood out of the forest to the trail system. Any standing dead or dying trees would be evaluated by a group of BLM Anchorage Field Office resource specialists to determine adequacy and need for felling, in accordance with being selective and choosing intelligently. This includes wind-thrown trees hung up in otherwise-healthy stands of timber.

2. Dispersal Methods

The three dispersal methods would involve:

1. Manual transportation of vegetative material with a diameter >2” to wooded areas 75 feet out,
2. Use of a UTV or ATV and trailer to transport light loads off the trail system (when trails are hard and no damage would occur), or
3. Splitting and chipping of vegetative material with a diameter <2” with a large rented wood chipper to dispersed piles within the “area of consideration” along trails.

3. Trail Tread Repairs

Three trees close to the trail tread on Lynx Trail, Lore Road Trail, and Salmon Run Trail damaged 5-10’ sections each, requiring trail tread repair during the snow-free season. A work crew would travel via a UTV and utilize a trailer of gravel, a gasoline-powered tamper (Wacker), rakes, shovels, and buckets of water to each tread repair location. Crews would lay down geotextile cloth first (if applicable) and apply surfacing and water to reshape the trail tread.

4. Vegetation Re-establishment

Patches of bare soil next to the tread repair sites (under the uprooted tree root wads) would be re-covered with root systems, and reseeded with native species of grasses, such as arctared fescue, and sourdough bluejoint. These areas would need to be watered twice a week for the rest of the growing season until they are established and can compete well for sunlight and water. Reseeded areas would then be monitored for three growing seasons to observe for, and eradicate if noticed, any invasive plant species.

No cutting would occur in riparian areas. Any cut ends on trees that are viewable from trails and not removed from the area of consideration would be waffle-cut and soil-capped to encourage natural decomposition, which would allow for visitor's sensation of a natural area, unencumbered by human trammeling.

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

Applicable Land Use Plan:

Ring of Fire Record of Decision and Approved Management Plan. Approved March 2008.

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following land use plan decisions (objectives, terms, and conditions):

O. Recreation

O-2: Allocations

Retain the existing Campbell Tract SRMA. Management of this administrative site would continue to be guided by *A Management Plan for Public Use and Resource Management on the Bureau of Land Management Campbell Tract Facility* (BLM 1988), and any future amendments to this plan.

Under "Recreation Management Actions," the 1988 Campbell Tract Management Plan states that the, "BLM will undertake or initiate the following actions. For trail system improvements outlined below, refer to Map 10." Specifically, "Recreation Management Action RM-5: Trail Maintenance" states to,

Perform trail maintenance as needed.

- a. Perform routine maintenance annually.
- b. Perform corrective maintenance as necessary, including drainage and trail hardening. Complete a corrective maintenance survey and update as needed.
- c. Initiate and maintain an automated trail inventory and maintenance record.

C. CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with United States Department of the Interior 43 CFR 46.210 or United States Department of the Interior Manual, Part 516, Chapter 11, which provides:

I. Emergency Stabilization

1. Planned actions in response to wildfires, floods, weather events, earthquakes, or landslips that threaten public health or safety, property, and/or natural and cultural resources, and that are necessary to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover to a management approved condition as a result of the event. Such activities shall be limited to: repair and installation of essential erosion control structures; replacement or repair of existing culverts, roads, trails, fences, and minor facilities; construction of protection fences; planting, seeding, and mulching; and removal of hazard trees, rocks, soil, and other mobile debris from, on, or along roads, trails, campgrounds, and watercourses. These activities:

- a. Shall be completed within one year following the event;
- b. Shall not include the use of herbicides or pesticides;
- c. Shall not include the construction of new roads or other new permanent infrastructure;
- d. Shall not exceed 4,200 acres; and
- e. May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and
- f. Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment by artificial or natural means, or vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.

D. EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

The proposed action must be screened against the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 43 CFR § 46.215 (listed below). Any “yes” finding requires that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for the Proposed Action.

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES	YES/NO
1. Have significant adverse impacts on public health or safety.	NO
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; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	NO
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].	NO
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	NO
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	NO
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	NO
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
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.	NO
9. Violate Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	NO
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	NO
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
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or 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

E. SIGNATURE

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable land use plan and is an action that can be categorically excluded. The Proposed Action does not trigger any of the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 516 FM Chapter 2, Appendix 2. I recommend that the Proposed Action be allowed and that no further environmental analysis is required.

/s/ Alan Bittner

May 9, 2013

Alan Bittner
Anchorage Field Manager

Date