

Categorical Exclusion Review
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Boise District Office
Four Rivers Field Office, Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA

Sagebrush Restoration Pilot Project

CE No.: DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2014-0001-CX	Lease/Serial/Case File No.:
Purpose and Need for Action: The purpose of this pilot project is to look at the success rate of variable restoration processes to use in the reintroduction of sage brush (<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> Wyomingensis) into historically disturbed areas. The information would be used to develop large-scale sagebrush restoration projects in the area and provide additional shrub habitat for raptors and associated prey species within the OCTC.	
Description of Proposed Action: The IDARNG intends to plant 6,000 sagebrush plants (supercells) that the IDARNG grew from locally collect seed. There will be three full plots, each plot divided into a fenced and unfenced section with 4 sub sections (supplemental irrigation and VAM, VAM alone, supplemental irrigation alone, no irrigation or VAM). See attached graphic and map. The fence will be a single strand electrical fence with solar charger. There will no animal control measures other than the fence used to protect the plants from foraging wildlife or livestock. Each site will be broadcast seeded with a mix of native grass, shrubs, and forbs prior to planting. A total of 6,000 plants, with 2,000 per plot and 1,000 plants per fenced/unfenced site will be planted in late fall. All plants will be watered and placed on roughly 36 inch centers (see diagram). Supplemental irrigation will happen in early summer (June/July) depending on precipitation patterns.	
Project Location: Township 1-South, Range 2-East, and Sections 33 and 34 (See Map).	
Applicant (if any): Idaho National Guard (IDRANG)	
Part I – Plan Conformance Review	
This proposed Action is subject to the following land use plan: Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP)	
Date Plan Approved: September 30, 2008	
The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): OR 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):	
Remarks: 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): Specifically, it meets the objective to designate of up to 5,000 acres for research purposes (2-10) and would provide monitoring data to integrate into the Adaptive Management Framework specified in the RMP (3-2). In addition, it also meets the objective to restore approximately 130,000 targeted-acres of degraded small mammal and big game habitat. This project would be an expansion of an existing monitoring program (Vesicular Arbuscular Mycorrhizae (VAM) Fungus Survey DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2012-0022-CX) and would be conducted in a manner that complies with management actions identified in the NCA RMP.	

Part II – NEPA Review

- A. Categorical Exclusion Review: This proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 2, Appendix 1 (for Departmental Categorical Exclusions) or 516 DM 11.9 INSERT APPROPRIATE CX REFERENCE NUMBER AND LETTER (for BLM Categorical Exclusions)

Category Description: 1.6 - Nondestructive data collection, inventory (including field, aerial, and satellite surveying and mapping), study, **research**, and monitoring activities.

- B. Departmental List of Extraordinary Circumstances Review:

List of Extraordinary Circumstances

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Yes	No	X	Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
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Comments/Explanation: The proposed action is associated with isolated monitoring and restoration locations with minimal disturbance; as such, there would be no effect on public health or safety. In addition, no water supply, either sole or communal is located in the vicinity of these research sites. Additionally, there would be no use of potentially dangerous equipment or hazardous materials during field data collection or planting.

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.

Yes	No	X	Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
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Comments/Explanation: This study would in no way impact nesting birds of prey, or any other members of the local ecosystem due to the scale and nature of this research project. The planting/study sites would involve very limited ground disturbing activities and would not be located in occupied slickspots within existing or proposed critical Slickspot habitat. The planting/monitoring sites would encompass only a small area (<5.0 acres) and no equipment would be left on-site. Second, the site would be occupied for only a short period of time due to the relatively short duration of planting (3 days). The proposed location of the project is within potential LEPA habitat; However, the proposed project would not affect any slickspots, and would enhance the local ecosystem relative to native species use.

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

Yes	No	X	Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
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Comments/Explanation: Planting and monitoring would have negligible environmental impact and would not promote conflict regarding such impacts. The utilization of public resources at the site would be limited to occupation of public recreation area at a small spatial and temporal scale. No other site resources would be required for completion of the study objectives. The impacts associated with planting are well understood and not controversial in the scientific community.

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> There would be virtually no uncertainty regarding the environmental impact of this study. Shrub planting is limited spatially and temporally and would be non-destructive.		
5. Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> No alternative use of public resources within the proposed project area would be motivated or promoted by this study. Vehicle use would be constrained to roadways that are already established and care would be taken to ensure that there would be no disturbance to local biota beyond the specific planting area. The impacts associated with the proposed action are associated with planting and seeding, are limited spatially and temporally, and would be non-destructive. As such, the program is well understood and would not be precedent setting.		
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> The impacts associated with planting, seeding and data collection would be inconsequential both spatially and temporally; therefore, they would not be expected to overlap with other actions that could have similar impacts.		
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.		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Dean C. Shaw 11/19/2013
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> Cultural resource surveys were conducted by the IDARNG Cultural Resource Manager and the proposed plot locations reviewed to ensure that the project has no effect on cultural resources. A project report was reviewed by the BLM Four Rivers Archaeologist and he concurred that no historic properties would be impacted by the plots.		
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.		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date for Plants: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13 Specialist Signature/Date for Wildlife: /s/ Jill Holderman 11/8/2013 Specialist Signature/Date for Aquatics: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
Plants <i>Comments/Explanation:</i> Site clearances were conducted by IDARNG environmental staff at all plots and surrounding area. Clearances were conducted at all proposed planting sites and there are no identified T&E or BLM listed species that would be affected. There are no slickspots within the proposed planting area.		
Wildlife <i>Comments/Explanation:</i> Several special status raptors, songbirds, mammals, and reptiles occur in the area. None are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Planting and data collection would occur after all avian species have fledged their young. Reptiles would not generally be active above ground. The limited spatial and temporal disturbances associated with the proposed action would have no impacts to special status wildlife species.		
Aquatics <i>Comments/Explanation:</i> There are no aquatic ecosystems within 1 mile of the project area.		
9. Violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: Dean C. Shaw 11/19/2013
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> The proposed action would be in compliance with laws associated with the protection of the environment.		
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Anne S. Halford 11/14/13
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> 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 other visitors.		

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).		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: <i>Dean C. Shaw</i> 11/19/2013
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> There would be no identified or expected locations within the project area that have been identified as sacred sites or used by Indian religious practitioners. In addition, the action would not result in any access restrictions.		
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).		
Yes	No	X Specialist Signature/Date: <i>/s/ Anne S. Halford</i> 11/14/13
<i>Comments/Explanation:</i> Non-native invasive plants are common in some portions of the study area. Because of the limited surface disturbance associated with the project, it would not be expected to alter their present distribution. This research project directly supports efforts to reclaim sagebrush steppe ecosystems from invasive species in southwestern Idaho. Isolated occurrences of whitetop and Scotch thistle have been identified and treated in the area. This action would not be expected to facilitate the spread of these occurrences.		
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. Remarks:		
<i>/s/ Patricia Roller</i> _____		11/20/13_____
Authorizing Official: <i>/s/ Patricia Roller</i>		Date:
Name: Patricia Roller		
Title: Manager, Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey Nat'l Conservation Area		