CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION

CX No. DOI-BLM-ID-B020-2014-0001-CX

A. BACKGOUND

BLM Office: Bruneau Field Office
Lease/Serial/Case File No.: SRP#: ID120-14-02
Proposed Action Title/Type: Desert Rats Motorcycle Club Special Recreation Permit Application

Location of Proposed Action: Ten miles southwest of Grand View, Idaho

Description of Proposed Action: The purpose and need is to respond to an application submitted to the Bruneau Field Office for a competitive use special recreation permit by the Desert Rats Motorcycle Club. The proposed action is to issue a competitive use special recreation permit for a 50-mile motorcycle race on existing vehicle routes and trails specifically authorized for the event on BLM lands managed by the Bruneau Field Office. The event is scheduled for March 9, 2014. The start of the event would be timed, where no more than 5 competitors would start the race per minute. The starting area would be in a large sand wash (McKeeth). The course would be approximately 50 miles long. The routes were selected to minimize interaction with or avoid sensitive resources such as known special status plant and animal habitat and cultural resources.

The event route would follow a defined, plainly marked course. The permittee would mark the entire route a maximum of 14 days in advance and would remove the markers within 14 days after the event. Painting rocks and establishing permanent markers and improvements would not be authorized. Race participants would be informed that passing on the race course would be limited to previously disturbed areas of roads and trails and would not occur in vegetated areas adjacent to the course. When requested, the permittee would place flagging, signs, and barriers sufficient to effectively protect natural and cultural resources as directed by BLM officials, including marking and enforcement of no passing restrictions or speed limits on course segments specified by BLM. There would be a sufficient number of race officials to enforce compliance with permit stipulations. Warning signs and flaggers would be placed along all affected asphalt or gravel roadways, and competitors would be required to walk their motorcycles across. Refueling and major servicing of race vehicles would only occur where trails cross roads. A designated area would be established with fuel-absorbent material provided by BLM in which refueling and major servicing of race vehicles would occur. The permittee would provide portable toilets and refuse containers and would perform a sweep of the area to remove litter once the event is completed. Owyhee County Sherriff would be notified prior to the event, and an emergency unit would be on-site for the entire race.

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

This proposed Action is subject to the following land use plan: Bruneau MFP
Date Plan Approved: 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):

Objective R-12: Maintain or improve ORV (off-road vehicle) opportunities: Allow organized cross-country motorcycle races on a case by case basis consistent with other resource uses and values.

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 X(X)

Category Description:

- The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Departmental Manual, Part 516 Managing the NEPA Process, Chapter 11-Managing the NEPA Process-Bureau of Land Management effective date 5/8/08; 11.9 Actions Eligible for a Categorical Exclusion (CX); Section H. Recreation Management: Issuance of Special Recreation Permits for day use or overnight use up to 14 consecutive nights, that impacts no more than 3 staging area acres; and/or for recreational travel along roads, trails, or in areas authorized in a land use plan. This CX cannot be used for commercial boating permits along Wild and Scenic Rivers. This CX cannot be used for the establishment or issuance of Special Recreation Permits for "Special Area" management (43 CFR 2932.5 Administration of Special Recreation Permits).

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. Adequate safety precautions would be implemented to ensure public safety including: race course would be signed and flagged, race officials would be posted throughout the course at major intersections and areas identified as hazardous, local authorities and other permittees would be notified, and a medical unit would be on scene.

   Specialist Signature/Date:__ /s/ *David Draheim*, Outdoor Recreation Planner 2/3/14_____

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 lies 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. Resource specialists have determined that there are no significant cultural and historic resources that need to be avoided. The competitive area is not a sole or principal drinking water aquifer. The competitive area is not prime farmland. The competitive area does not contain wetland habitats. Migratory birds would not be negatively affected by the proposed action.

   Specialist Signature/Date: /s/_*David Draheim*, Outdoor Recreation Planner 2/3/14_____

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

   Comments/Explanation: The authorization of this permit would not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. This event would be conducted on existing roads and trails and within an area used on an annual basis for motorcycle races. The race routes and timing of event would minimize resource concerns including sensitive plants, wildlife species, and riparian areas; avoid cultural resources, and other uses of the area including grazing of livestock. Livestock are not present in the event area (East and West Castle Creek Allotments) during the period of this event.

   Specialist Signature/Date:_/s/_*David Draheim*, Outdoor Recreation Planner 2/3/2014_____

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

   Comments/Explanation: The event has been reviewed and cleared by resource specialists with knowledge of the area. All motorized activity would take place on existing roads and trails. Refueling and major servicing of race vehicles would only occur at start/finish areas and intersections of roads and trails. Refuse containers and restrooms will be provided at the staging area. The Bureau has conducted and monitored many similar events, and the potential associated environmental impacts are well known.

   Specialist Signature/Date: /s/_*David Draheim*, Outdoor Recreation Planner 2/3/2014_____

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

Comments/Explanation: Requests for competitive events are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and have been a recognized use in both the 1983 Bruneau MFP and a 1994 Environmental Assessment (ID-01-94111) addressing competitive use in the Owyhee Front. The SRP would be for a one-point-in-time event and would not set a precedent for how the area could be used in the future.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ *Seth Flanigan*, Environmental Planner 2/4/2014

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

Comments/Explanation: Other human-related activities occurring in the area include livestock grazing and casual recreation use. A recent NEPA analysis on livestock grazing (ID-120-2008-EA-45) addressed cumulative impacts in the area and determined that grazing, in conjunction with casual recreation use and events such as the proposed action, would not have significant impacts on the resources present. The proposed action would not have a relationship to other actions with cumulatively significant impacts.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Seth Flanigan, Environmental Planner 2/4/2014

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: There are no known cultural properties within the area of potential effect. One historic site, 10OE-1455 in the Bruneau MFP is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The site is between 15-20 feet from a wash that is designated as a trail for this race. The site will not be impacted provided the race participants stay in the wash. The proposal is exempt from inventory and project specific review by Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (ISHPO) under the current BLM / ISHPO protocol (1998). Exemption # 20.a. which states *"Issuance of recreation special-use permits where the potential to cause ground disturbance or affect cultural properties is negligible. Periodic monitoring may be conducted to confirm that effects are negligible. Types of projects include but are not limited to: a. Well-established trails, and other specified areas where use is similar to previous permits for which environmental documents have been prepared, and which would not substantially increase the level of use or continue unsatisfactory environmental conditions."*

Specialist Signature/Date: Lois Palmgren 1/22/2014

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: All authorized routes were reviewed by the Botanist/Ecologist and it was determined that the event would not adversely impact any special status plants.

Plants Specialist Signature/Date:__*Holly Beck*, Botanist 1/14/14

Comments/Explanation: This area resides within the Owyhee Front and is characterized by Wyoming big sagebrush and shadscale mix shrub communities with varying amounts of cheatgrass. Effects to wildlife from motorcycle racing was assessed in the 1994 Southwest Idaho Desert Racers Association EA, and mitigations in that analysis prescribed that race events should occur before March 1 to minimize effects to many wildlife species found in the area (e.g., nesting raptors and other birds). Although this race is occurring on March 9th and only a short time beyond the mitigation timing, a re-route of the proposed course was incorporated to locate activities roughly 1 mile from an historic ferruginous hawk platform to preclude disturbance to possible nest-building activities. Additionally, reptiles will likely be hibernating during early March, so collision mortalities of any of the four BLM Sensitive snakes (3) and lizard (1) are unlikely. Wintering antelope do occur in a small portion of the area so temporary displacement may result from the race, but ongoing casual motorized use in the area means that antelope have adapted to these types of activities and will not suffer mortalities from the event. See the Special Status Animal Clearance Worksheet for more detailed analyses.

Wildlife Specialist Signature/Date:_____/s/ Bruce Schoeberl, Wildlife Biologist 2/3/14___

Comments/Explanation: Authorization of this permit would not result in any impacts to fish species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or their critical habitat. The proposed routes also do not follow perennial streams but rather ephemeral dry washes. The proposed routes are far removed from perennial surface water and would not affect any fish species.

Aquatics Specialist Signature/Date:_____/s/ *Kavi Koleini*, Ecologist, February 5, 2014_____

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

Comments/Explanation: Implementation of this permit would not be in violation of federal, state, local, or tribal law, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. On November 21, 2013, BFO consulted with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on this event; no issues regarding tribal law were raised.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Aimee D K Betts, Assistant Field Manager, January 13, 2014

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: /s/ Seth Flanigan, Environmental Planner 2/4/2014

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 permitted event 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 event; no issues or concerns were identified at that time.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Aimee D K Betts, Assistant Field Manager, January 13, 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 event 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 range species. No ground-disturbing activities would take place. Motorized travel would be limited to existing roads and trails. Cross country travel is prohibited.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Lonnie Huter, Weed Management Specialist, January 17, 2014

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 Signature/Date:____/s/_Tanya M. Thift___2/5/14_____

Tanya M. Thrift
Field Manager
Bruneau Field Office

Prepared By/Contact Person: David Draheim, Outdoor Recreation Planner