

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

EA Number: DOI-BLM-AZ-G010-2014-0009-EA

Serial/Case File No.: None

BLM Office: Safford Field Office

The type of impacts to the human environment expected from implementation of the Proposed Action (now Selected Alternative) of the Navajo County Vegetation Management Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-AZ- G010-2014-0009-EA) were anticipated and declared within the analysis of the Phoenix District Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, approved in 1991 and the Arizona Statewide Land Use Plan Amendment for Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality Management (LUPA;2004). The site specific impacts described in the EA are no greater than those anticipated in the RMP and EIS. The EA specifically tiers to the analysis in the Phoenix RMP and LUPA, in accordance with CEQ regulations, Sec. 1502.20 and 1502.21. To the extent there are impacts beyond those described in the RMP, LUPA, and EA they are not significant. The Selected Alternative allows BLM to manage vegetation conditions on federal land through applicable laws and regulations. Specific resource objectives are identified in the RMP and LUPA; and where appropriate, these RMP objectives are repeated through the impact analysis section of the EA along with indications of how these objectives would be met.

For the Selected Alternative, these objectives would be achieved through implementation of a variety of vegetation management techniques, which incorporate project design features, co-operator coordination, and bio-mass utilization, without creating any significant impacts. The EA thoroughly analyzes the impacts of a range of viable alternatives developed through public and interdisciplinary team scoping and it clearly indicates that the Selected Alternative, with specific project design features (best management practices and conservation measures) would not significantly affect the human environment. Specific project design features ensure that resource values are protected through avoidance, reducing impact to a level so that it is not significant or rectifying disturbance through rehabilitation actions. Project design features are applied to the Selected Alternative to minimize or avoid impacts, as noted in the EA, even though the action(s), without mitigation, may not rise to the level of “significant” as defined in 40 CFR 1508. The Navajo County Vegetation Management area does have regional (Navajo County) importance for ecosystem health, bio-mass utilization, and socio-economics. The Selected Alternative, as described, would have little if any effect on the human environment at the state-wide level or beyond.

The “intensity” of impacts, beneficial and adverse, is thoroughly described in the Environmental Impacts section of the EA. Intensity is a component of “significance” and is determined by applying ten criteria (CEQ regulations, Sec 1508.27). In review of these criteria, relative to the Selected Alternative, I have found:

- Beneficial and adverse effects (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(I))

The EA has analyzed and disclosed both beneficial and adverse impacts of the Selected Alternative and subsequent connected actions. Implementing the Selected Alternative is expected to improve ecosystem health and function. Cultural resources and special status species would be afforded additional protection from better management.

- Public Health or Safety (40 CFR 1508.2(b)(2))
There would be no significant effects on public health or safety. The area is remote, so the chance of affecting members of the public in any measureable way would be minor. Any hazards would be localized and limited to those involved with implementation activities and are within accepted parameters for such work.
- Unique geographic characteristics (cultural or historic resources, park lands, prime and unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness or wilderness study areas, ecologically critical areas, areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), or research natural areas (RNAs)) (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3))
There are no ACEC's, RNAs, wilderness areas, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or prime and unique farmlands in the Navajo County Vegetation Management Area. The historic and cultural resources of the area will be protected through project design features which include Archaeologist coordination, identification (survey), and exclusion.
- Highly Controversial Effects (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(4))
The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial because there are no known controversies over the impacts of the project.
- Unique or Unknown Risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5))
The BLM has experience in planning vegetation management projects and analyzing impacts from vegetation treatments. The nature of these impacts is not highly uncertain, nor does it involve unique or unknown risks. In addition, the RMP, LUPA, and EA analyze the anticipated impacts thoroughly.
- Precedent for future actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6))
The proposed alternative does not represent new, precedent-setting vegetation management techniques, nor does it establish a precedent for future similar actions with potentially significant effects. The specific actions involved in the Selected Alternative have been implemented before, separately, and collectively, to manage public lands.
- Cumulative Effects (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(7))
The impacts of the Selected Alternative has been analyzed and considered, separately, cumulatively, and at multiple scales of analysis in the Safford Resource Management Plan, LUPA, and in the EA. Impacts would not have significant cumulative effects within the project area, even when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
- Impacts to significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(8))
Cultural resources (historic and prehistoric) will be surveyed prior to implementation of the selected alternative. Coordination with an Archaeologist during implementation of vegetation treatments will occur. No impacts to cultural resource values are anticipated to occur as a result of the Selected Alternative.

- Federally listed endangered or threatened species (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9))
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species list for Navajo County was reviewed and determinations made for each species. The Bureau determined that implementation of vegetation management techniques in the Navajo County Vegetation Management Area is consistent with the Biological Opinion (BO), (AESO/SE 02-21-03-F-0210) for the LUPA. This BO was reviewed to insure that implementation of the vegetation treatments is within the scope of the consultation, and all conservation measures stated in the BO are being followed. The Bureau has determined that there is no effect on listed species from the Selected Alternative or alternatives.
- Compliance with Federal, State or Local Law (40 CFR 1508.27 (b)(10))
The Selected Alternative is in compliance with federal, state, and local laws, and requirements relative to environmental protection. Further, it is in conformance with the Phoenix District Resource Management Plan and the LUPA and would contribute to the attainment of state water quality standards.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Environmental Assessment and all other available information, I have determined that the Selected Alternative does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary and will not be prepared.

/s/ Scott C. Cooke
 Scott C. Cooke
 Bureau of Land Management
 Safford Field Office Manager

7/22/2014

Date