

Categorical Exclusion Documentation
CX No. DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2015-0002-CX

A. Background

BLM Office: Four Rivers Field Office

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: N /A

Proposed Action Title/Type: USGS Bunchgrass Maturity Study and ESR Monitoring Exclosure

Location of Proposed Action: Township 03S, Range 09E, Section 30 (see Map)

Description of Proposed Action: The Boise District Office (BDO) Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) program proposes to construct a 3- to 5-acre exclosure for research and long-term monitoring purposes. The exclosure would encompass a USGS research macro plot, as well as provide a 1- to 2-acre long term ESR monitoring area; both of which are part of the 2012 Stout Fire rangeland seeding in the Lower Bennett Creek Allotment. The exclosure is necessary keep livestock from entering the study/monitoring area once grazing resumes in the pasture and for the duration of the study/monitoring.

The focus of the USGS study, designed in conjunction with the BDO ESR program, is to determine maturity of (native and introduced) bunchgrasses seeded following a wildfire. The macro plot will be sub-divided into numerous randomized micro plots and subjected to varying levels of simulated grazing (for up to five years). Study design and parameters are available in the project record. Long-term ESR monitoring would compare seeded grass canopy and basal cover, overall species diversity, and other metrics inside of and outside of the exclosure at intervals of approximately five years.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved/Amended: 1987

 The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): N/A

 X 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):

The exclosure will allow research and monitoring to occur that will help inform land managers and the ESR program when recently seeded bunchgrasses are mature enough to resist livestock grazing and persist into the future. Therefore, the project is consistent with the following RMP objectives (MUA-3, Lower Bennett, page II-18): maintain existing range vegetative improvements, improve land in poor ecological condition, and maintain existing upland game and nesting habitats; as well as meeting individual ESR Plan rehabilitation goals (i.e., soil stabilization, invasive species abatement, and establishment of perennial species to provide structure and function to the site).

Although vegetative treatments in this instance are the result of ESR actions and not expressly range improvements, they serve a similar purpose and the outcome is the same (or similar) (i.e., establishment of perennial grasses that provide forage for wildlife and livestock, stabilize soils, compete with invasive species, and provide structure and function to the site resulting in habitat maintenance).

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.J.9 "Construction of small protective enclosures...to protect small study areas".

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances that would potentially have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM2 apply. Appendix 6 - 158 H-1790-1 - NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT HANDBOOK – (Public) BLM MANUAL Rel. 1-1710 Supersedes Rel. 1-1547 01/30/2008.

Authorizing Official Signature

Date: 01/12/2015

/s/ Tate Fischer

Tate Fischer
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Contact:

For additional information concerning this CX, please contact Lara Hannon, Natural Resource Specialist-ESR, at 208-384-3421, by email at lhannon@blm.gov, or by mail at 3948 Development Ave. Boise, ID, 83705. You may also contact Cindy Fritz, supervisory Natural Resource Specialist-ESR, at 208-384-3416 or cfritz@blm.gov, or by mail at the address provided above.