

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Fortymile River Management Plan approved October 22, 1983 or the Fortymile Management Framework Plan approved September 8, 1980. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

The project is a site-specific action directly involving 1,600 feet of lower Jack Wade Creek (JWC) which is within the Fortymile Wild and Scenic River corridor. JWC is designated as "recreational" where rivers are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. As a result, this corridor has national, regional, and statewide importance based on its designation. The proposed action would result in improved naturalness and riparian and stream conditions within the project area, thus enhancing the values which make it outstandingly remarkable. Given the size of the project area in relation to the corridor, the effects are localized and minimal.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

The beneficial effects of the project would be long term and include improved stream and wetland function, as well as fish habitat diversity, in the project area. Other benefits include the evaluation of various natural stream bank stabilization methods, techniques for rehabilitation of riparian areas, and the success of natural channel design methods for successfully increasing diversity of fish habitat. This project is also designed to illustrate the application of a stream functional assessment methodology and how it could be used to evaluate functional gains/losses from development or restoration in Alaska.

Adverse effects include minor impacts to recreation, visual resources, wildlife(terrestrial and aquatic), water quality, and visual resources that will occur temporarily during construction of the Proposed Action. No long term adverse effects were identified.

2. Degree of effect on public health and safety:

The project is unlikely to measurably affect public health and safety. Waste from historic mining practices would be properly disposed of, thus enhancing public safety in the area. During project construction, safety signs and flaggers would be positioned along the Taylor Highway to alert the public and maximize safety along the road.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:

The project affects wetlands and a segment of a designated wild and scenic river. As described in the EA and Section 7 Determination, impacts to these resources are expected to be primarily beneficial with minor adverse impacts being temporary in nature. Monitoring and Mitigation included in the Proposed Action will be implemented during project construction to minimize the potential for adverse impacts to resources.

4. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:

Public outreach on this project has been ongoing and extensive. Multiple presentations to users groups (primarily the placer mining industry and agency staff) have been given over the last 2 years regarding the proposed project. Information was provided to all BLM miners via the mail in late 2014. In general, agency staff, organizations, and the public at large are supportive of the project objectives, goals, and subsequent efforts that result in improved stream reclamation techniques for placer miners.

5. Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk.

A minimal level of uncertainty exists for the proposed action based on limited discharge data for the project area as well as effects from aufeis scour. These areas of uncertainty were minimized through the use of models and all available data in the development of the design. No highly uncertain or unknown risks to the human environment were identified during analysis of the proposed alternative.

6. Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration:

The preferred alternative neither establishes a precedent for future BLM actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts:

No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified for the proposed alternative. Any adverse impacts identified for the proposed alternative, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of

other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions will result in negligible to moderate impacts to natural and cultural resources.

8. Degree to which the action may adversely affect district, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:

An archeological inventory to identify districts, sites, or other properties eligible for listing to or included on the National Register of Historic Places was completed for proposed alternative using the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey database.

The information review and conclusions are attached to the EA as Appendix D.

9. Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat:

No endangered or threatened species and critical habitat exist in the project area.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law:

The preferred alternative violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

Authorized Officer

Date