

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE
AND
MOAB FIELD OFFICE**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Fish Park Gunnison Sage-grouse Habitat Improvement

DOI-BLM-CO-N030 2015-0016-EA

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1508.27, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

BACKGROUND

This environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to analyze the impacts of habitat modifications aimed at improving Gunnison Sage-grouse habitat in the Piñon Mesa area known as Fish Park.

The BLM prepared an EA which analyzed the effects of mechanically removing vegetation, planting and seeding, building fence, and developing a water source in the Fish Park area. The project encompasses approximately 2,620 acres and spans across the Colorado-Utah border with 1,885 acres in Colorado and 735 acres in Utah. The EA considered a range of 2 alternatives that include the No Action alternative of not approving the project and the Proposed Action, which includes sage grouse habitat vegetation treatment research and vegetation treatment projects. The Proposed Action was made available for public review on February 25, 2015 in Colorado on the BLM NEPA Register and ePlanning website. Utah posted the proposed action on the Environmental Notification Bulletin Board for public comment on August 27, 2015. No public comments were received.

INTENSITY

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the Fish Park Gunnison Sage grouse Habitat Improvement Project decision relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ). The following findings have been made with regard to each of the ten CEQ considerations:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

This project may have minor short term impacts to soils, vegetation, visual resources, and wildlife; however these impacts are temporary (2 to 5 years) and not significant. This project will have a long term net benefit for sage grouse and other wildlife species in the project area once vegetation objectives are achieved.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

The proposed action is not expected to impact public health and safety. Standard Operating Procedures for herbicide use are in place to minimize health impacts to both the public and applicators.

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

There are no significant impacts to riparian vegetation, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic rivers within the project area. The project has been modified to avoid impacts to cultural and historic resources. There are no municipal water supplies in the project area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The impacts of habitat modification projects are generally well known and documented in the academic and practicing communities. Therefore the environmental effects are not likely to be controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Habitat modification projects have a long history in the region and pose no unique or unknown risks. The use of herbicides approved for BLM use have undergone extensive studies and risk assessments for both human and wildlife impacts. Standard Operating Procedures for herbicide use are in place minimizing any potential risks to the human environment.

6. The 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.

This decision is like one of many that have previously been made and will continue to be made by BLM responsible officials regarding vegetation treatments on public lands. The decision is within the scope of the Resource Management Plan and is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

There are no significant cumulative effects on the environment, either when combined with the effects created by past and concurrent projects, or when combined with the effects from natural changes taking place in the environment or from reasonably foreseeable future projects.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

There would be no adverse impacts to the above resources. The project has been modified to avoid impacts to cultural and historic resources. Project work would not occur where cultural resource inventory has not been completed. Any areas proposed for treatment that have not been inventoried for cultural resources will require inventory prior to any project activities. In areas

where inventory has been completed, project work would not occur within 50 meters of a cultural resource site that has been determined eligible or needs data for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. BLM has consulted with the Colorado and Utah State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in accordance with 36 CFR 800 with a determination of "No Historic Properties Affected." The Utah SHPO concurred with BLM's determinations of effect and eligibility on September 17, 2015.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The intent of the proposed project is to have a beneficial impact to critical habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse. Concurrence was received from USFWS on July 21, 2015 that the project May Affect, Is Not Likely to Adversely Affect Gunnison sage-grouse or its designated critical habitat.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, tribal law, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

This decision complies with other Federal, State, or local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The BLM consulted with the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Pueblo of Hopi, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Pueblo of Zuni, and Navajo Nation to ascertain any other potential impacts to cultural resources.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the associated EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the "Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (August, 2015); (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the CEQ criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.



Field Manager
Grand Junction Field Office

9/30/15

Date



Field Manager
Moab Field Office

9/30/15

Date