

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Little Snake Field Office  
455 Emerson Street  
Craig, CO 81625-1129**

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2015-0025CX

PROJECT NAME: Juniper Encroachment Study

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: T8N R99W section 17

APPLICANT: Colorado State University

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

A graduate student from CSU has requested a field location to obtain data for research involving juniper encroachment and soil water dynamics. 106 acres on BLM managed lands has been identified as suitable area for this data collection to occur. Two different types of soil cores would be taken - one would be used for water extraction and one would be for root analysis.

The cores for water extraction would be taken once a month from May through August involving 10 cores per month. These cores would be taken with a one inch diameter core that would be pounded in by hand 24 inches deep.

The root analysis cores involve a 2 inch diameter coring bit driven 2-3 meters deep. The corer is a Gidding's hydraulic soil corer which is mounted on the back of a truck. Approximately 50 of the deep cores would be taken near sagebrush plants, juniper plants, or between sage and juniper plants growing together. This coring operation would also occur from May through August and would involve limited off-road travel. All coring holes would be filled back in.

If the area north of highway 318 is used, a temporary gate in the highway right-of-way fence would be utilized. The gate would be removed at the conclusion of the study so as to not encourage the establishment of a new route. The south side of the highway has an existing two-track that would be used. Varied routes of off road travel would be utilized so as to not establish a recognizable new two-track. Vehicle operations would not be allowed when conditions are wet enough to cause rutting.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3) the following plan:

Name of Plan: Little Snake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (RMP)

Date Approved: October, 2011

Decision Language: The Little Snake RMP (page RMP-14) directs the BLM to manage toward the maintenance or restoration of the physical function and biological health of rangeland ecosystems through sound scientific principles. The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Little Snake RMP because it may provide important scientific information for vegetation management as it relates to juniper expansion.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 2, 1.6. None of the following extraordinary circumstances in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2, apply.

Extraordinary Circumstances	YES	NO
1. Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Have the potential for a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

13007).	
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).	____ <u>X</u>

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Reviewed</u>
Cultural Resources	4/28/2015
T&E Plants	4/20/2015
T&E Animals	4/15/2015

NAME OF PREPARER: Dale Beckerman

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: *Kathy McKinstry*

DATE: *4/29/15*

This action is listed in the Department Manual (516 DM 2, Appendix 1 and/or 516 DM 11, as amended) as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 12 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: *Wendy Reynolds*  
 Wendy Reynolds, Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: *5/3/15*

