

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Programmatic Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Management
Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
Environmental Assessment
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-0300-2011-0009-EA**

August 29, 2015

Location: Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) is located in south-central Utah. GSENM includes approximately 1.9 million acres of public land in Kane and Garfield Counties.

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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 significantly affect the quality of the human environment. I considered the impacts of this action both individually and cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental impacts meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. The environmental impacts of this project, individually and cumulatively do not exceed those impacts described in the GSENM MMP/FEIS (BLM 2000), the "Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States: Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Final)" (BLM 2007a; hereinafter "PEIS") and the "Record of Decision: Vegetation Treatments on Bureau of Land Management Lands in 17 Western States" (BLM 2007c; hereinafter "ROD"). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

In making this finding, I considered both the context and intensity of the project as discussed below.

Context:

The project is a site-specific action directly involving approximately 1,870,800 acres of BLM administered land (GSENM) on the Colorado Plateau in Garfield and Kane Counties in Utah. Approximately 68 percent of the Monument is in Kane County, while the remaining 32 percent is in Garfield County. The Monument is primarily surrounded by other federal lands. Dixie National Forest borders the Monument to the north, Capitol Reef National Park to the east, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area to the east and southeast, Bryce Canyon National Park to the northwest, and other Bureau of Land Management administered lands to the south and west. Elevation ranges from 3840 feet in Little Valley Canyon to 8612 feet near Canaan Peak.

The climate in the Monument is classified as semiarid. Annual precipitation ranges from 13 inches in the Grand Staircase physiographic region to about 8 inches in the lower Escalante Desert. The area experiences a bimodal precipitation pattern with peaks in the summer and winter. The highest moisture received during one year was 24.75 inches recorded at the Nephi Pasture rain gauge in 1980 and the lowest recording of 1.56 inches was at the Croton rain gauge in 2000.

The Monument encompasses portions of four broad hydrologic subbasins, all of which are part of the Colorado River system. The Escalante River system flows from the Aquarius Plateau and Boulder Mountain into the central portions of Lake Powell. Last Chance Creek and Wahweap Creek are the principal tributaries off the Kaiparowits Plateau, flowing into the lower portion of Lake Powell. The Paria River Subbasin (including Hackberry Creek and Cottonwood Creek) extends from the Bryce Canyon-Bryce Valley area, terminating below Glen Canyon Dam near Lee's Ferry. The Escalante and Paria River drainages cover much of GSENM and are the major perennial flowing waters.

- Floodplains
 - How will floodplains be protected? What mitigation measures and best management practices will be employed to limit adverse effects on floodplains?
- Wild and Scenic River
 - How will Wild and Scenic Rivers be protected?
- Fuels and Fire Management
 - Will removal of species such as tamarisk and Russian olive increase fuel for fires?
- Recreation
 - How will visitors be notified of projects to reduce conflicts?
 - What will BLM do to protect visitors from potential exposure to herbicides?
- Livestock Grazing
 - Treatments, whatever the method used, would be temporary actions that have the potential to affect livestock grazing depending on location, timing, and method type.
- Paleontology
 - How will Paleontological resources be protected from ground disturbing activities?
- Visual Resources
 - How will removal of non-native vegetation affect the character of a landscape?
- Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
 - How will lands with wilderness characteristics be protected?
- Wilderness Study Areas
 - How will Wilderness Study Areas be protected?

2. The activities included in the proposed action would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)). Human health and safety were considered in all proposed alternatives. Standard Operating Procedures and Mitigation Measures previously defined in the ROD (BLM 2007c) and included in Appendix B of the EA outline the actions which will be taken to actively reduce or eliminate any risks to human and environmental safety. These include:

- All herbicide application will follow label direction which takes into account health and safety issues.
- When applying herbicide in proximity to water sources use aquatic approved active ingredients according to label instructions.
- Sign areas of high use (trail heads, camp grounds, etc.) prior to herbicide application.
- Follow SOPs, Mitigation, and design features.

3. The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Although present, historic and cultural resources would not be affected because annual weed treatment plans will be reviewed by the staff archaeologist. If cultural resource conflicts are identified, cultural resources will be inventoried, followed by consultation with SHPO, as necessary. The impacts on wetlands and riparian areas, paleontological resources, threatened, endangered or candidate plant and animal species, unique water resources, wild and scenic rivers, lands with wilderness characteristics and Wilderness Study Areas were analyzed in detail

archaeologist. If cultural resource conflicts are identified, cultural resources will be inventoried, followed by consultation with SHPO, as necessary.

9. The proposed activities are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)). The EA addresses potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the proposed action on threatened, endangered and candidate animal (Sections 4.3.1.4, 4.4.4) plant (Sections 4.3.1.5, 4.4.5) species and their habitats. Following Standard Operating Procedures and Mitigation Measures previously defined in the ROD (BLM 2007c) and included in Appendix B of the EA will minimize any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts.

10. The proposed activities will not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)). EA Section 1.5 describes conformance with the GSNEM Management Plan, and Section 1.6 describes the relationship with statutes, regulations and other plans. State, local, and tribal interests were provided an opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. EA Section 1.7 describes the public scoping process and Section 5.2 summarizes public participation.


Cynthia Staszak
Monument Manager

8-29-15
Date