

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Lynch Gulch
DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2015-0004-EA

Finding

Based upon review of the environmental assessment (EA), I have determined that the Lynch Gulch project will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. As described and analyzed in the EA, no environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined by regulations to implement NEPA found at 40 CFR 1508.27. This finding is based on my consideration of both the context and intensity of the project, as described below.

Context. This means that the significance of an action was analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the local rather than in the world as a whole. Both short-and-long-term effects are relevant.

Intensity. This requirement refers to the severity of impact. The following factors are considered in evaluating intensity.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The project has been planned to include measures to avoid or reduce adverse impacts to affected resources, consistent with meeting objectives for forestry, watershed, wildlife/habitat management in the 2007 Approved Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan. As analyzed in Chapter 7 of the EA, the proposed silvicultural and fuels management treatments are expected to help attain desired future condition for forest vegetation (EA pages 13-15), and reduce the risk of a stand-replacing wildfire in the WUI (EA pages 31-34). No significant impacts on watershed resources (EA pages 66-67), special status aquatic, plant or wildlife species and their habitat are identified (EA pages 16-31 and 41-58). Forest products from the project are expected to benefit the local economy (EA pages 70-71).

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

The proposed activities would not significantly affect public health and safety. The purpose of the project is to restore the area back to historic species composition while increasing the resiliency of the forest to forest insects, disease, and wildfire; thus, the risk posed by forest fires to the public and firefighter health and safety would be reduced, especially in relation to the community of Pinehurst. Logging activities would be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public. A minor impact for a short period of time may occur to local air quality from the prescribed burning/underburning treatments and the burning of logging slash.

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.

No historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or wilderness occur in the proposed project area. This project is in compliance with the agreement between the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

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

An analysis of the proposed action and alternatives has been conducted using the best information available and the latest methods of analyzing data by professionals in their respected disciplines. Throughout the analysis process, comments varied in their recommendations on ways to best manage resources within the project area. However, the effects of the proposed alternatives on the various resources are not considered to be highly controversial by professionals, specialists and scientists from associated fields of botany, forestry, wildlife biology and management, fisheries, recreation and hydrology.

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

The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for determining the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, past experience, knowledge of the area, and professional judgment. Impacts are within the limits that are considered thresholds of concern.

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.

Many similar projects have been conducted for our area of jurisdiction. The forest health conditions of today require active management. This project is not precedent setting for future actions and is not expected to have any significant effects. This action 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.

This project is similar to activities that have or are taking place on adjacent Bureau of Land Management lands and USDA Forest Service land. Timber harvest activities on adjacent private land have occurred and can be expected to continue and may be occurring for economic reasons as well as reducing fire hazard. The EA includes a cumulative impacts analysis of all similar and related past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions on affected resources, and no cumulatively significant impact on any affected resource is anticipated (EA pages 12-72).

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 historical resources.

There are no features in the area affected that are listed or are being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A cultural resource inventory has been completed in the area, cultural resources were located. Within the proposed project area of potential effect two cultural resources were located. Both are related to historic mining and primarily consist of collapsing adits. Several other cultural resources, also related to past mining, are located in the analysis area in designated retention areas. The State Historic and Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation was completed and there were no significant findings.

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

The project was determined to have no effect on water howellia and Spalding's catchfly (threatened plant species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)). No individuals, populations, or potential habitat of water howellia occur within the project area. Less than one half acre of suitable habitat for Spalding's catchfly occurs in the project area, but no individuals or populations were found (EA pages 16-31).

The fisheries biologist determined that the project area is not located within the critical habitat area for Bull trout (threatened under ESA); therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was required (EA pages 36-39).

Although three federally protected species occur in north Idaho (Grizzly bear, woodland caribou and Canada lynx), none have been documented on the project site (EA page 41-58).

Consistent with BLM policy for special status species, the analysis of sensitive plant, aquatic and wildlife species that may occur in the action area did not anticipate that the proposed action would cause any species to be listed under the ESA.

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

The action does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or permits imposed for the protection of the environment. Consistent with requirements for air quality, prescribed burning would be done in accordance with state air quality standards and within burning periods approved by the North Idaho/Montana Airshed Group. Best management practices would be used to protect water quality.

Signature

/s/

6/3/16

Kurt Pavlat
Field Manager

Date