Integrated Weed Management Plan

DRAFT

Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-NV-C000-2015-0003-EA

May 2015

Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Carson City District (CCD) has prepared this Integrated Weed Management Plan (IWMP) and draft programmatic environmental assessment (EA) to address potential environmental consequences associated with the control and/or eradication of noxious and invasive weeds, and to identify potential resource protection measures that would mitigate potential adverse impacts.

Invasive plants are defined in Executive Order 13112 as "non-native plants whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health." Invasive plants are compromising the ability to manage public lands for a healthy native ecosystem. Invasive plants can create a host of environmental and other effects, most of which are harmful to native ecosystem processes, including: displacement of native plants; reduction in functionality of habitat and forage for wildlife and livestock; increased potential for soil erosion and reduced water quality; alteration of physical and biological properties of soil; loss of long-term riparian area function; loss of habitat for culturally significant plants; high economic cost of controlling noxious and invasive weeds; and increased cost of keeping recreational sites free of noxious and invasive weed species.

The Carson City District (CCD) manages approximately 4.8 million acres of public land in western Nevada and eastern California. This includes portions of Washoe, Carson City, Storey, Lyon, Mineral, Churchill, Nye and Douglas counties in Nevada, and Alpine, Plumas and Lassen counties in California. The CCD has two field offices that administer these public lands, the Sierra Front Field Office, and the Stillwater Field Office (Figure 1 of the draft EA). There are approximately 4.2 million acres of non-BLM-managed lands within the CCD (private, other State or federal agency etc.). CCD treatments would also occur in those Herd Management Areas (HMA) and grazing allotments that are partially within CCD and other BLM district(s), where the CCD is the lead BLM district (which includes portions of Pershing and Lander counties, Nevada) (Figure 11 of the draft EA).

A list of chemicals proposed for use under the Proposed Action are found in Attachment 1 and adjuvants proposed for use are found in Attachment 2. A list of noxious weeds published by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) are found in Attachment 3, and by the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) are found in Attachment 4.

Determination

On the basis of the information contained in the *Integrated Weed Management Plan/Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment* (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C000-2015-0003-EA), I have preliminarily determined that the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore an environmental impact statement (EIS) would not be required.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the *context* and *intensity* of the impacts described in the draft programmatic EA, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Context

The CCD is primarily located in the Central Basin and Range eco region, which encompasses a total of 120,000 square miles (EPA 2012). The CCD includes a portion of northwestern Nevada and a small portion of California.

The Central Basin and Range encompasses large areas of Nevada and Utah and extends into California and Idaho. It lies to the immediate east of the Sierra Nevada, to the north of the Mojave Basin and Range, to the west of the Wasatch/Uinta Mountains, and south of the Northern Basin and Range eco regions.

The CCD has a wide range of minimum and maximum monthly temperatures with 15 to 50°F (degrees Fahrenheit) in the winter months and 40 to the mid-90s°F in the summer months. Annual average total precipitation ranges from 5 to 10 inches, about 70 percent of the annual total typically falls between November and April. Occasional summer thunderstorms can cause flash flooding and debris flows. Within the CCD, elevation gain between the basin and range is typically 5,000 to 7,000 feet. Wind conditions reflect the elevation change and temperature gradient between basin and range. Predominately westerly winds disperse air pollution; i.e. wildland and prescribed fires from California and Washoe County's poor air quality, over the Great Basin.

The Central Basin and Range eco region is internally drained and is characterized by a mosaic of dry basins, scattered low and high mountains, and salt flats. It has a hotter and drier climate, more shrub land, and more mountain ranges than the Northern Basin and Range eco region to the north. Between the Sierra Nevada to the west and Wasatch Range to the east, more than 300 long, narrow, roughly parallel mountain ranges are separated by broad elongated valleys. Basins are generally covered by sagebrush (*Artemisia sp.*) or saltbush-greasewood (*Atriplex canescens/Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) vegetation. Cool season grasses are less common than in the Snake River Plain and Northern Basin and Range eco regions. This region is not as hot as the Mojave Basin and Range eco region to the south and it has a greater percent of land that is grazed. Small areas of wetland habitats including perennial streams, wet meadows, springs, and seeps are scattered throughout the CCD.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The BLM has evaluated the potential beneficial and adverse effects from a range of treatment methods to control and/or eradicate noxious and invasive weeds. Short-term effects could occur during treatment implementation, which may last a few days or a few weeks depending on the size and complexity of the weed infestation. Manual and mechanical treatments have the potential to directly injure people and wildlife from debris. Noise and other treatment activities may temporarily displace wildlife. All treatments have the potential to adversely affect non-target plant species. The effects on non-target plant species and wildlife would generally depend on the timing of treatment, method, type of chemical used, and the species sensitivity to chemical exposure. All potential adverse effects would be minimized through adherence of standard operating procedures (Appendix A of the draft EA).

Long-term effects may occur over several years after implementation of treatments, such as increase in native plant community diversity and health, and decrease in the presence of noxious or invasive weeds. In the long-term, native plant communities and wildlife would be expected to benefit from treatments and control or eradication of noxious and invasive weeds.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.
The BLM has evaluated the potential effects to human health and safety from the various treatment methods. Potential effects from mechanical and manual treatments include injury while operating motorized and hand-held equipment. Workers conducting manual treatments may be exposed to environmental injuries such as heat or cold exposure, biting animals or insects, or exposure to loud sounds from machinery. The public could be exposed to potential injury from flying debris. During implementation of biological treatments, such as targeted grazing, workers and the public may be exposed to injury by livestock or while using equipment to transport livestock. Use of herbicides would increase worker and public risk from exposure to the chemicals applied. Adhering to label directions and implementing standard operating procedures would ensure that exposure risks are minimal. To minimize potential risks from all treatment methods, standard operating procedures (Appendix A of the draft EA) would be adhered to, such as including safety zones around work areas and public notification prior to implementing treatments.

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 BLM has evaluated the potential effects to unique resources within the CCD, including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Wilderness Study Areas, wetlands and to cultural resources. When carrying out treatments in sensitive resource areas, the BLM would implement additional standard operating procedures (Appendix A of the draft EA) to minimize potential adverse impacts to these resource values.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.
The effects of the weed treatments in the Proposed Action are well understood and are not highly controversial.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
There are no known effects of the Proposed Action which are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

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.
The Proposed Action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future actions within the CCD, if they were to occur, would be subject to separate environmental review and decision-making.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.
No significant cumulative effects have been identified in the draft programmatic EA. Any other actions proposed in the CCD would be evaluated as to whether the actions effects added to the Proposed Action would cause cumulatively significant effects.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss of destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
When preparing treatments for units that may adversely affect historic properties, the BLM would consult with the State Historic Preservation Office under the National Historic Preservation Act, and tribes with an affiliation with the treatment area, prior to issuing a decision to implement such treatments. In most cases potential effects would likely be resolved through site avoidance, such as establishing an exclusion area along with buffer to protect historic properties that could be adversely affected by a proposed treatment.

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 ESA or 1973.
When preparing treatments for units that may affect a listed species and/or its critical habitat, the BLM would consult with USFWS under the ESA and include any conditions as a part of such consultation, prior to issuing a decision to implement such treatments.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.
The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (2001). Implementation of the Proposed Action would not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

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Ralph Thomas Date
District Manager
Carson City District Office