U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

CX#DOI-BLM-MT-L060-2016-0002-CX

Project Title: Lewistown Field Office and Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Fence Modification and Removal

Location: Fergus and Petroleum Counties. Areas identified as collision risk zones around all know Sage-Grouse leks within Sage-Grouse priority and general habitat. See map for areas that fence modification will be occurring.

Applicant/Address:

Project Contact:

Name: Andrew Oestreich
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CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

A. Background

Lease/Serial/Case File No.:

Description of Proposed Action:

Removal and/ or modification of fences in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and Lewistown Field Office. Fences that are identified in consultation with Rangeland Management Specialists and Permitees as non-functional and/or no longer needed for livestock management will be removed within the identified Sage-Grouse Collision Risk areas. Additionally, with consultation with RMS's and Permittees, fences that are impeding wildlife movements, but still necessary for livestock management will be modified to meet the needs of wildlife and grazing management. Woven-wire fences would be converted to 3 or 4 wire wildlife friendly fences(H-1741-1 Fencing). Fences that are not wildlife friendly the bottom two wires will be clipped together in areas showing high use by wildlife. Fences within 1.25 miles of known sage grouse leks are identified as high priority for installing fence markers to the top wire for fences. See map for areas identified as collision risk to Sage-Grouse. Trail cameras will be used to monitor effectiveness and unknown impacts of the fence modifications

B. Land Use Plan Conformance *(select all that apply)*

- ☐ Headwaters RMP (approved in July 1984)
- ☐ West HiLine RMP (approved in September 1988 and on January 29, 1992 for the Upper Missouri National Wild and Scenic River)
- ☒ Judith-Valley-Phillips RMP (approved on September 9, 1994)
- ☒ Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Final EIS for Montana and North and South Dakota (approved on August 7, 1997)
- ☐ Off-Highway Vehicle EIS and Proposed Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota (approved on June 18, 2003)
- ☐ Fire/Fuels Management EA/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (approved on September 26, 2003)
- ☒ Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Approved Resource Management Plan (approved on December 4, 2008)
- ☒ Other *(specify name/date approved)*

Lewistown Field Office Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Amendment. Sept. 2015

Conformance:

The proposed action is in conformance with the land use plan(s) selected above, which states as follows: *(If more than one plan applies, include the page no. and language from all applicable plans)*:

Page No.	***Language***
p. 15	Approved Judith Resource Area RMP "BLM will maintain and enhance suitable habitat for all wildlife species."
p. 35 p. 45	UMRBNM RMP "BLM will maintain and enhance habitat for wildlife." "The BLM could modify existing fences that are creating barriers to wildlife movement."
p. 4-139	Greater Sage-Grouse Amendment Sept. 2015 "fences would require flagging to lessen risk for GRSG strike impacts"

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with (select one):

☐ 43 CFR 46.210, *or* ☒ 516 DM 11.9

Appropriate CX Number and Text, or Paraphrase of the Text:

A. Fish and Wildlife
1. Modification of existing fences to provide improved wildlife ingress and egress.

J. Other
10. Removal of structures and materials of no historical value, such as abandoned automobiles, fences, and buildings, including those built in trespass and reclamation of the site when little or no surface disturbance is involved.

The proposed action has been reviewed and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having significant effects on the environment.

Explanation of why there is no potential for significant impacts:

Any fence modifications other than sage grouse markers will be focused on BLM lands. Sage Grouse markers will be on all fences regardless of ownership pending landowner permission. Fences identified for removal are no longer functional and not needed for livestock management. Permittee has confirmed no future needs/plans for the fence in the Monument and LFO. Woven-wire fences no longer needed since no sheep allotments exist within area. These fences would be converted to wildlife friendly 3 or 4 wire fences. Marking fences near sage-grouse leks would reduce mortality from fence collisions. Converting woven-wire fences to 3 or 4 wire fences would improve wildlife movements (especially pronghorn) and connectivity.

There are no historical issues for modifying existing fence. Removing only the wire would not alter potential eligibility on the National Register of Historic Places. No posts or other structures would be altered prior to archaeological clearance.

While noxious weeds have the potential to be found in the project area the timing and season of work will limit any negative impacts from any noxious weeds encountered. No further analysis is warranted.

D: Signature

I considered this review and determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis. It is my decision to approve the proposed action.

Pertinent design features, stipulations or mitigation (if applicable):

Design features:

Equipment will be clean prior to entering project areas.

Archeologist will determine if posts for fences identified for removal have historic value prior to alteration.

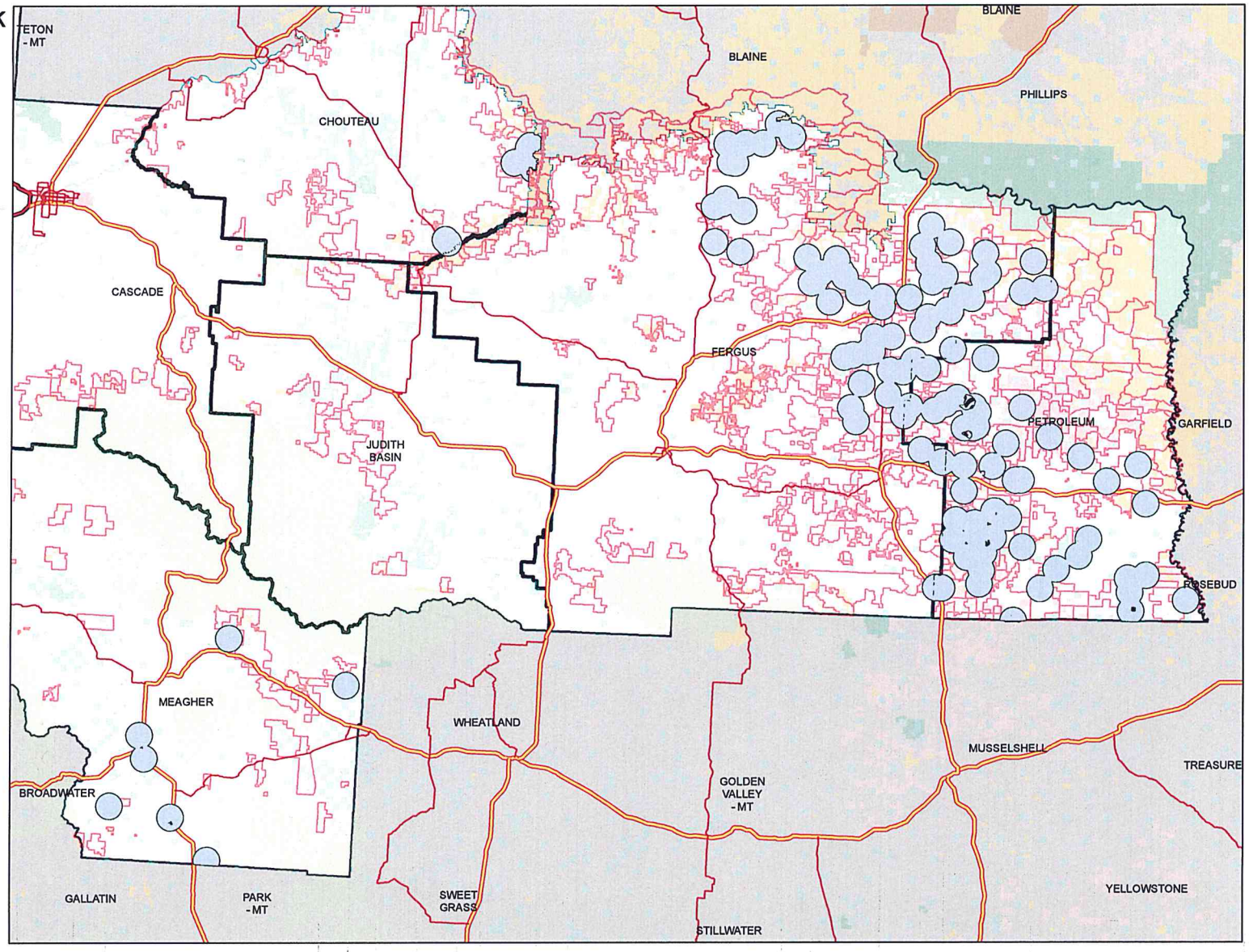
Authorizing Official: _____ Date: 10/20/15
(Signature)

Name: Shane Hershman
Title: Lewistown Field Manager; UMRBNM Manager

Sage-Grouse Collision Risk Fence Modification Areas

DRAFT

10/1/2015



COLLISIONRISK_CX_MAP

GRIDCODE

2

N

0 2.75 5.5 11 16.5 22 Miles