

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Boise District
Owyhee Field Office
20 First Ave West
Marsing, ID 83639
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
***Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 Field Trial**
Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2015-0017-EA

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined the actions analyzed in Environmental Assessment (EA) No. DOI-BLM-ID-B030 -2015-0017-EA will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. The EA analyzes two alternatives, from which I have selected Alternative 2 (Proposed Action). Alternative 2 was designed to minimize potential environmental effects by locating the two treatment units avoiding Areas of Critical Concern, cultural resources areas, riparian areas, fisheries habitat, floodplains, wetlands, and Threatened or Endangered species habitat. The EA analyzes effects of application of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7. The bacterium would be applied by coating perennial grass seed; this seed would be drill seeded in one unit and aerial seeded in the other. The actual seeding is covered under the Boise District Normal Fire emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan EA 2005. Because the actions analyzed in the EA will not have any significant impact, an environmental impact statement is not required.

My finding was made after considering both the context and intensity of the effects, as described in the above EA. I considered the following factors in determining significance:

1. The activities described in the proposed action do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)). The EA includes a description of the expected environmental consequences of application of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 on 50 acres within two units.
 - A. There are no beneficial impacts/effects represented by Alternative 2 other than the opportunity to test *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7's control of cheatgrass, medusahead rye, and jointed goatgrass within a burned area.
 - B. There are no adverse impacts from Alternative 2 to Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or candidate species for listing under the ESA because there is no habitat for any of these species in the project area.
 - C. No effect on BLM Special Status Animals or Plants or their habitat is expected from the proposed action.

1. No Special Status Plants or their habitat are known or expected from the project areas.
2. Both treatment units are within Greater Sage-grouse designated Important Habitat Management Areas, but no effect to sage-grouse or their habitat is expected.
3. Other special status wildlife species that occur or could occur in the project area include golden eagles, bighorn sheep, and pygmy rabbits. No effect to any of these species is expected.

2. The activities included in Alternative 2 would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).

Pseudomonas fluorescens is a naturally occurring soil bacterium with no known effect on mammals, and thus no impact to human health or safety. *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 specifically targets cheatgrass, medusahead rye, and jointed goatgrass. Studies submitted in support of the strain D7 registration indicated that there was no impact on the growth and development of daphnia, lemna, mites, ladybugs, honeybees, fish, birds, or mice, as specified through the EPA Registration process. Applying D7 by coating grass seed before planting provides little or no potential for public contact with the bacterium, and the two treatment units are over a mile from the nearest private land.

3. The proposed activities would not significantly affect any unique characteristics (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)) of the geographic area such as prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern.

No prime and unique farmlands, caves, wild and scenic rivers, designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, or areas of critical concern are found within or adjacent to the treatment units so there would be no impact to these characteristics.

4. The activities described in Alternative 2 do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).

Because *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 works specifically on certain annual grasses, no noticeable effect on the human environment is expected. The only expected effects are a potential reduction in cheatgrass, medusahead, and/or jointed goatgrass. No effects to humans, other animals, or to non-target plants are anticipated.

- Public input was requested from permittees of the Blackstock Spring and Hardtrigger allotments, non-governmental organizations, and the BLM interdisciplinary team. On October 15, 2015 BLM consulted with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes through Wings & Roots on the ESR plan, which included the D7 treatments.

In addition, several researchers have expressed interest in monitoring vegetation responses from this field trial. None of the comments received in response to scoping revealed any highly controversial issues related to the size, nature, or effects of the proposed action.

5. Application of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 does not involve any effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).

Coating seed with various types of inoculants before planting is a standard agricultural practice. The EA (Section 3.0, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences) discloses the expected environmental effects on the human and natural environment; no unique or unknown risks have been identified.

6. My decision to authorize application of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).

There are no cumulative actions that are connected with the proposed action, and no significant cumulative impacts were identified within the EA No. DOI-BLM-ID-B030-2015-0017-EA. Implementation of this decision would not trigger other actions, nor will it represent a decision in principle about future considerations.

7. The effects of applying *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).

The EA discloses that no other connected or cumulative actions would cause significant cumulative impacts (throughout Section 3.0, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences). Alternative 2 would have minimal direct and indirect effects. The cumulative effects analysis in the EA does not reveal any known significant cumulative effects. Any adverse impacts identified as a result of application of *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7, when added to any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions, would result in negligible to minor impacts to natural and cultural resources.

8. I have determined that the activities described in the proposed action will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction of scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

No scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, are present in the proposed treatment units. Therefore, no effect to these resources is expected.

9. Alternative 2 is 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)).

There are no Endangered Species or critical habitat found within the treatment units so there would be no impact. No effect to any BLM Special Status species is expected, as disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

10. The proposed *Pseudomonas fluorescens* strain D7 treatment 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)).

Chapter 1 of the EA (see Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Plans), describes how the proposed action conforms to relevant laws, regulations, policies, and any relevant local permitting requirements.

Jenifer Arnold

November 6, 2015

Jenifer Arnold
Acting Boise District Manager

Date