

## Categorical Exclusion Documentation

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District  
San Juan Islands National Monument  
37 Washburn Place  
Lopez Island, WA 98261

### A. Background

*BLM Office:* San Juan Island National Monument

*NEPA Log Number:* DOI-BLM-ORWA-W040-2016-0001-CX

*Proposed Action Title:* Patos Hazard Tree Management

*Location of Proposed Action:* SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Section 29, T.3N., R.5E., WM, San Juan County

*Proposed Action:* BLM is proposing to manage hazard trees on Patos Island. Hazard tree management includes cutting and/or pruning 18 or more hazard trees (approx. 11 to 50 inches in diameter) on Patos Island. These trees were identified during a recent inventory and contain one or more root rot diseases; additional trees may contain root rot diseases and will be monitored and may be removed over the next 3-5 years if they become hazardous. The trees that will be cut and/or pruned are located in or adjacent to campsites or facility infrastructure. Trees will be felled with low stumps. Cutting and piling will minimize ground disturbance.

A hazard tree is any standing live or dead tree, including snags, with evidence of deterioration or physical damage to the root system, trunk, or stem, when a tree is in proximity to people, property, structures, or infrastructure. Examples of property, structures, and infrastructure include, but are not limited to: roads, landings, campgrounds, trails, right-of-ways, buildings, fences, and power lines, on BLM managed lands, on BLM-maintained right-of-ways, or adjacent (non-BLM) lands.

In the San Juan Island National Monument, hazard trees often result from typical weather events of heavy winter rains, combined with severe wind conditions, which cause blowdown or tree damage (e.g., snapped tops or limbs). Hazard trees also result from disease or pathogen infestations (e.g., root rot), or from tree growth that results in damage to infrastructure (e.g., root growth cracking building foundations or paved paths). Hazard trees present a safety threat to persons and/or property.

The proposed action is to remove, or fell and leave on site, trees which jeopardize human safety and/or pose hazards to people, property, structures, or infrastructure. Removal of hazard trees, whether blowdown that has blocked access or standing snags/diseased trees presenting a danger in a campground or adjacent infrastructure, would occur expeditiously, as soon as the hazard is identified and resources are available to remove the tree(s).



## **B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Public lands in the San Juan Islands National Monument are not covered by a resource management plan. In accordance with land use planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.8 (b) (1)), a proposed action on such lands may be authorized if supported by appropriate analysis. The 2013 Presidential Proclamation that established the San Juan Islands National Monument recognizes that these lands are a refuge of scientific and historic treasures and a classroom for generations of Americans. The proposed action is consistent with preservation of the objects identified in the Proclamation because it allows for public use and enjoyment of these scientific and historic treasures.

## **C. Compliance with NEPA**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. The proposed action is a kind of action that has been determined to fit within a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have significant effects on the human environment. The proposed action falls within category:

516 DM 11.9.C (2) Sale and removal of individual trees or small groups of trees which are dead, diseased, injured, or which constitute a safety hazard, and where access for the removal requires no more than maintenance to existing roads.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply, as described below:

*a. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on public health or safety.*

The proposed project would have a positive impact on health and safety. The proposed action is to remove dying, diseased, damaged, or collapsed trees that are a threat to safety. Removing these trees will reduce safety hazards from falling trees.

*b. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.*

The proposed action would not result in any adverse or significant impacts to the aforementioned resources because many of those resources do not occur in the project area. The San Juan Islands National Monument was designated for protection of natural features related to scientific and historic features. Impacts would not be significant because only a small number of trees would be cut or pruned and only for safety concerns. The project area was surveyed for cultural

resources; cutting and pruning trees would avoid the location of any cultural resources and would not cause any adverse effect.

*c. The proposed action would not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].*

Hazard tree management is a necessary management tool used to protect the health and safety of the public and other valuable assets. There are no controversial effects or unresolved conflicts for these actions.

*d. The proposed action would not have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.*

Because the trees will eventually fall on their own, they pose a risk to people and infrastructure if left in place. The proposed action would reduce the risk by controlling when and how the hazard trees are removed. The hazard trees are a small fraction of the existing trees and other vegetation that are not rated as hazardous and will remain in place.

The effects and risks of removing hazard trees as proposed are well known and do not present a potential for significant effects. Hazard tree removal has occurred year-round on the District to protect life and property and the impacts of their removal are well understood. These actions do not involve any unique or unknown environmental risk because the action of removing hazard trees is a common BLM activity that results in little or no environmental risk.

*e. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.*

The proposed action will not set a precedent for future action, because this action would not authorize future management beyond the scope of the time considered. Hazard tree removal in the San Juan Island National Monument has occurred in the past to protect life and property. These actions proposed would continue already well-understood work, and would not cause potential for significant environmental effects.

*f. The proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.*

The proposed action does not have a direct relationship with any other actions, other than the regularly occurring recreation use on Patos Island. The San Juan Islands are a popular recreation destination and there is a campground and other recreation facilities in the project area. The effects of removing hazard trees are not significant and will not add any incremental impacts to other known actions occurring within the project area during this timeframe. BLM did not identify any effects from this project that when combined with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future work in the project area would result in any significant cumulative effect.

*g. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau.*

There are no properties listed or proposed for the National Register of Historic Places present within the project area.

*h. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species.*

There is no risk for significant impacts on species listed as threatened or endangered. Only a small number of hazard trees would be removed. These trees are diseased and damaged and will fall down as a result of natural processes. The hazard trees are a small fraction of the existing trees and other vegetation that will remain in place. Removing these trees will not alter the habitat for any threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat.

*i. The proposed action would not violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action does not threaten to violate any Federal, State, local, or tribal law imposed for the protection of the environment. Removing a small number of hazard trees would not result in any significant impact.

*j. The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).*

The proposed action would not disproportionately affect low income or minority populations as none are present in the area of consideration.

*k. The proposed action would not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).*

The proposed action would not alter any existing access; therefore, it would not limit access to or use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners. The BLM initiated consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Lummi Nation in a letter of May 14, 2015 regarding the proposal to prune and/or fall trees determined to be hazards to public health and safety. The project area is located around the State Park campground and rest stations on Patos Island in San Juan County. Should inadvertent discovery of previously undocumented cultural resources or remains be identified during implementation, disturbance would be halted in the area of the discovery and DAHP and the Lummi Nation would be consulted.

*l. The proposed action would not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).*

The proposed action will result in little to no ground disturbance. Trees will be felled and left in place or cut and piled. Because any ground disturbance will be minor, the proposal will not create any conditions that are conducive to the introduction or spread of noxious weeds or invasive plant species. Therefore this action should not contribute to the introduction or spread of noxious weeds or non-native species.

**D. Signature**

/s/ Marcia deChadenedes  
Marcia deChadenedes  
Monument Manager

5/19/2016  
Date

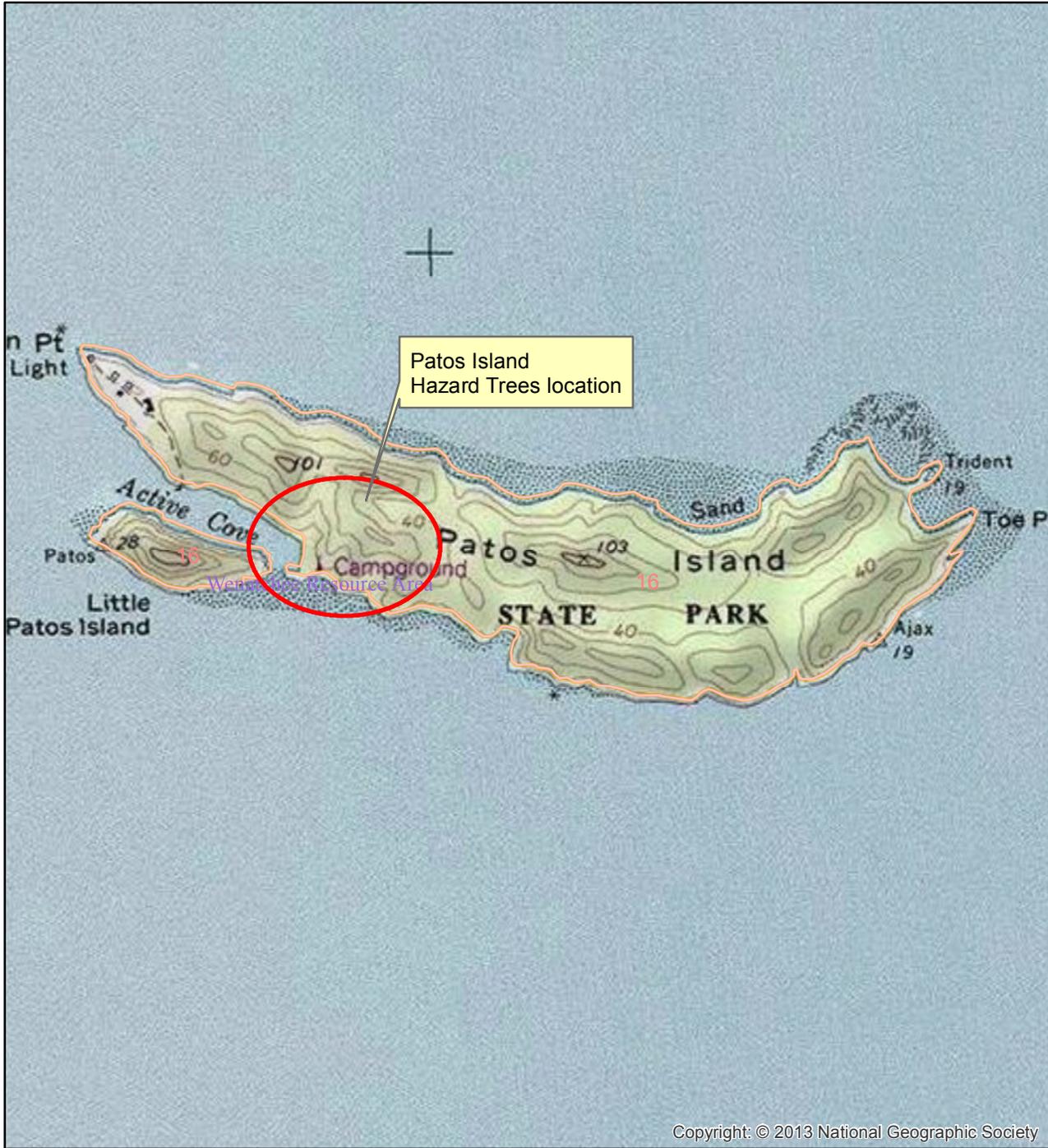
**E. Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this Categorical Review, contact Mark Williams, Forester, at (509) 665-2117.

**Note:** A separate decision document has been prepared for the action covered by this CX.

# Patos Island - Hazard Trees Location

## Section 16, Township 38 North, Range 02 East



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### Legend

-  Section
-  Bureau of Land Management



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