

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Central Coast Field Office
Fort Ord National Monument
Finding of No Significant Impact

Fort Ord National Monument Dog Management Plan
DOI-BLM-CA-C090-2016-21-EA

Background

The establishment of an appropriate dog management strategy on Fort Ord surfaced as a critical need within the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) planning process for the Southern Diablo Mountain Range and Central Coast of California Resource Management Plan (2007 RMP). Due to concerns over impacts of dogs to wildlife, livestock and other visitors to BLM administered lands at Fort Ord, the 2007 RMP called for the development of a site specific pet (i.e. dog) policy. The 2007 RMP reads:

“Establish pet restrictions (e.g., leash policy, exclusion areas) to reduce user conflicts and protect wildlife and livestock on Fort Ord Public Lands.

Establish an education program addressing impacts and the minimization of impacts of dogs and cats on BLM lands.”

Public use, including dog use, has been steadily increasing on BLM administered lands at Fort Ord. The designation of the current and future BLM administered lands as the Fort Ord National Monument (FONM) on April 20, 2012 has contributed to the increase in public use. Today, recreation use is estimated to be 400,000 annual visits, and dog visitation is estimated to be more than 75,000 annual visits. On April 8, 2015 the BLM enacted an interim dog leash restriction under the authority of 43 CFR 8364.1 across the FONM in response to a munitions cleanup plan released by the Army on April 7, 2015, and continued concern of the impact of off-leash dogs on livestock. Following the announcement of the interim dog leash restriction, the BLM hosted a series of meetings to solicit input from the community on the development of a suitable long-term dog management plan.

Following agency policy and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the BLM has prepared the Fort Ord National Monument Dog Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA), and has identified a “Preferred Action Alternative” to approve. The BLM also described and analyzed several other alternatives regarding pet use and other associated public recreation uses.

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On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Preferred Action Alternative will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in The Hollister Resource Management Plan for the Southern Diablo Mountain Range and Central Coast of California (BLM 2007); (2) the Preferred Action Alternative is in conformance with the Hollister RMP and the Proclamation for the Fort Ord National Monument; and (3) the Preferred Action Alternative does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR '1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA or as articulated in the letters of comment.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Preferred Action dog management strategy would have important impacts on recreational opportunities available on the Fort Ord National Monument. These recreation impacts were considered in context of general impacts, conflicts and safety between user groups, off-site and distributive impacts, and changes in public use. The dog management strategy would also impact biological resources (flora, fauna and special status species), livestock use and range management, impacts to cultural and historic resources, and impacts to water quality. In all cases, the BLM considered both the beneficial and adverse effects of the various options to these impact topics.

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

No aspects of the Preferred Action dog management strategy have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. The Preferred Action was formulated to ensure public health and safety in regards to hazards from munitions and explosives of concern located on the Fort Ord National Monument, and to reduce pet and bicycle related conflicts that many visitors to the monument have safety concerns with.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The BLM considered the impacts of the Preferred Alternative to all aspects of the natural, cultural and historic environment. This included considering how the preferred alternative would affect the unique "objects and values" of the National Monument as identified within the Presidential Proclamation. The anticipated effects are not expected to be significant.

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

No anticipated effects have been identified that are scientifically controversial. As a factor for determining within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27(b)(4) whether or not to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, “controversy” is not equated with “the existence of opposition to a use.” *Northwest Environmental Defense Center v. Bonneville Power Administration*, 117 F.3d 1520, 1536 (9th Cir. 1997). “The term ‘highly controversial’ refers to instances in which ‘a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.’” *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).

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

The analysis contained within the environmental assessment does not show that the preferred alternative would involve any 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.

BLM’s dog management plan is not precedent setting and various agencies that manage other National Monuments across country have taken similar actions to manage pet use.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

No significant site specific or cumulative impacts have been identified. The project is consistent with the actions and impacts anticipated in the Hollister Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (2006).

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 historic resources.

The Property does not include any sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places or sites known to be eligible.

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 Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The preferred action is expected to be beneficial to the biological resources on the Fort Ord National Monument that includes endangered and threatened species and habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.

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

There is no indication that this decision will result in actions that will threaten such a violation. The Preferred Action is meant to compliment local ordinances and codes that are relevant to dog use on and near the Fort Ord National Monument

Recommended By:

Approved By:

Eric Morgan
Fort Ord National Monument Manager

Rick Cooper
Central Coast Field Office Manager

Date

Date