

**United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0106-EA

July 20, 2016

**ZOOK CREEK HAZARDOUS FUELS PROJECT**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS  
(FONSI)**

*Location:*     **Rosebud County, MT**  
T5S, R41E, Section 24 and 25, and portions of 30 & 32.  
T5S, R42E, Section 29, 30 and portions of 19.  
T6S, R41E, Section 1 & 2.

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**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Zook Creek  
DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0106-EA**

**BACKGROUND**

The origin of the environmental assessment was due to an assessment of the project area and the resulting conclusion of the assessment for the need to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildland fire to people, communities, and natural resources while restoring tribal priority landscapes, forest and rangeland ecosystems to closely match their historical structure, function, diversity and dynamics. The Northern Cheyenne Agency cooperated with the Miles City Field Office in this assessment.

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-MT-C020-2016-0106-EA), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that:

- (1) The implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 2015, Miles City Field Office (MCFO), Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS).
- (2) The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Record of Decision for the BLM 2015, MCFO Approved Resource Management Plan (ARMP); and
- (3) The Proposed Action 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.

**Context**

The proposed action would occur within the Quarter Circle U, Three Circle and the Moreland allotments designated as available for implementation of fuels treatments in the BLM 2015 MCFO ARMP. The ARMP, anticipated that mechanical thinning and prescribed fire would occur. The proposed action is in accordance with the BLM 2015 MCFO ARMP.

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM proposes to treat ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) utilizing a series of treatments. Treatments include prescribed fire, mechanical and hand thinning, where appropriate, to restore resiliency and reduce risks associated with wild land fire in forested systems.

On page 3-36 of the ARMP, it states MD Fire 1: "Mechanical thinning of vegetation, biomass removal, and chemical and biological treatments are allowed to reduce hazardous fuels or improve land health; and page 3-37, MD FIRE 5: "Prescribed fire is allowed in the planning area with required design features to meet resource goals and objectives."

**Intensity**

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the proposed action and all alternatives relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ.

**1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** The EA considered both potential beneficial and adverse effects. None of the effects are beyond the range of effects analyzed in the BLM 2015 MCFO PRMP/FEIS, to which the EA is tiered.

**2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.** No aspect of the proposed action would have an effect on public health and safety.

**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.** A cultural resource inventory of the project area resulted in the identification of three cultural sites. Two of the sites are recommended as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Avoidance of the eligible sites is required. BLM has determined the project would have no adverse effect to historic properties (See report number listed in the EA). There are no parklands prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas in the project.

**4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** No unique or appreciable scientific controversy has been identified regarding the effects of the Proposed Action.

**5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The analysis has not shown that there would be any unique or unknown risks to the human environment not previously considered and analyzed in EISs to which this EA is tiered.

**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.** This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The proposed action is consistent with actions appropriate for the area as designated by the BLM 2015 MCFO ARMP.

**7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The environmental analysis did not reveal any cumulative effects beyond those already analyzed in the EISs which accompanied the BLM 2015 MCFO ARMP.

**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 proposed action will not adversely affect any district, site, highway, structure, or object listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

**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.** There are no threatened or endangered species or habitat in the area of the proposed action.

**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 does not threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law.

/s/ **Todd Yeager**  
Todd Yeager  
Field Manager  
Miles City Field Office

**7/20/2016**  
Date