

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

**Finding of No Significant Impact
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2015-0190-EA**

August, 2016

**Moab Field Office Programmatic Invasive Species
Management Plan**

Location: Bureau of Land Management, Within Moab Field Office Boundary



Moab Field Office
82 E. Dogwood Ave.
Moab, Utah 84532
Phone: (435)259-2100
Fax: (435)259-2106



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INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis (NEPA Number) for a proposed action to address invasive species management within the Moab Field Office (MFO) area in Grand and San Juan Counties. The project would implement a Programmatic Invasive Species Management Plan (PISMP) within approximately 2,856,082 acres of land within the MFO Boundary utilizing several different treatment methods. Targeted noxious weeds, invasive species and undesirable species would be controlled by implementing an integrated invasive plant management plan (combined use of preventative, mechanical, chemical, manual, prescribed fire, and biological measures). Invasive plant control would be accomplished by implementing a long-term integrated invasive plant control along major rivers, drainages, roads, and uplands within the MFO to reduce invasive plant spread, decrease infestations, and control populations; thereby enabling greater function of ecological processes. The underlying need for the proposal would be met while accomplishing the following goals/objectives:

- Aid in the reduction of vegetative degradation that results from accelerated establishment of noxious and invasive species.
- Make progress towards attainment and maintenance with Utah's Rangeland Health Standards.
- Protection, enhancement and restoration of ecological conditions, biological diversity, ecological stability and overall resilience.
- Manage landscapes for biotic integrity and enhanced competitive interactions against undesired invasive plants.
- Manage for plant communities that provide a sustainable forage base.
- Manage riparian communities in a properly functioning condition (PFC) state with attributes capable of withstanding high stream flow events.
- Maintain adequate habitat at an appropriate level for the site and desired species involved.
- Protect important wildlife habitats such as sagebrush and blackbrush communities.
- Maintain desired plant species at a level appropriate for the site and species involved.
- Improve the visual aesthetics of designated scenic byways, wild and scenic rivers and WSA's.
- Protection of the health and safety of the public and firefighters.
- Protection of the wildland urban interface (WUI) including infrastructure and developments.
- Minimize the potential for stand-replacement wildfires.
- Protect/Restore the health and productivity of watersheds.
- Protection of cultural resources.
- Provide fuel wood opportunities for the public.

Treatment objectives include:

- Treatment of invasive species to promote native plant regeneration.
- Seed/plant in selected treatment areas with native and beneficial non-native species to encourage the growth of grasses, forbs, trees and shrubs in order to promote a more diverse vegetation community and improve watershed health and wildlife habitat.

The 2,856,082 project area is situated in the canyon, plateau, and desert areas of the Colorado Plateau physiographic province. It is located in southeastern Utah and includes all of Grand County and the northern third of San Juan County. Geographically, the MFO is bounded by the Book Cliffs to the north, the Utah-Colorado state line to the east, Harts Point and Lisbon Valley to the south, and the Green River to the west. Major waterways within the MFO include the Colorado River, the Dolores River, and the Green River. Elevations within the MFO range from approximately 13,000 feet above mean sea level in the La Sal Mountains to approximately 3,900 feet above mean sea level at Mineral Bottom along the Green River.

EA DOI-BLM-UT-Y010-2015-0190-EA is available at the BLM Canyon Country District office in Moab, Utah, and is incorporated by reference for this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). A No Alternative and proposed action alternative were analyzed in the EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the project is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects described in the 2008 Moab Field Office Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP FEIS). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed.

This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described:

Context: The project is a landscape level action directly involving approximately 2,856,082 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

Intensity: The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders.

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to: Fish and Wildlife, Floodplains, Fuels/Fire Management, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Soils, T&E or Candidate Plant Species, Vegetation, Visual Resources, Water Quality and Wetlands/Riparian zones were incorporated in the design of the action alternatives. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the MFO RMP FEIS.”
2. **The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** The proposed action is designed to reduce the adverse impacts associated with noxious and invasive weeds on BLM-administered lands within the office boundaries. The proposed PISMP also provides a mechanism for evaluating a range of treatment options or combination of options to eradicate, control, contain, or prevent weed infestations.

The desired goal is to contain or control the spread of invasive species, and eradicate species that pose the greatest threat to the biological diversity within the MFO, and prevent any new weeds from becoming established by utilizing a wide range of treatment options (i.e. mechanical, manual, herbicide, etc.). The resulting pro-active management of these plants would promote the areas ecosystem health and promote diverse native communities by maintaining and improving native forbs and grass species, increasing the regeneration of native cottonwoods and willows in riparian corridors, and ultimately preventing the loss of wildlife habitat, species diversity, and wildfire risk.

3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** Future projects within the analysis area will conduct a literature search for every undertaking. Survey may or may not be conducted based on the findings, if no survey is recommended then 106 consultation would be undertaken with U-SHPO for concurrence of findings and recommendations. If no survey is conducted prior to the undertaking then an archaeologist would be present during implementation. In areas where mechanical treatment would take place an Archaeological Report (Class III) would be prepared, and information documenting the archaeological inventory and compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, would be on file in the Canyon Country Fire Zone office. Sites identified and determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would likely be avoided during the mechanical treatment portion of the project, unless treatment options are such that it would be beneficial to the archaeological resource to treat the vegetation on site. Tribal groups have been requested to identify traditional cultural properties or any other areas of traditional cultural importance to be considered within proximity of the project. The following components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues are not affected because they are not present in the project area:

Wastes				
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In addition, the following components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues, although present, would not be affected by this proposed action for the reasons listed in Appendix A of the EA:

Air Quality	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	BLM Natural Areas	Cultural Resources	Greenhouse gas emissions
Environmental Justice	Geology/Mineral Resources/Energy Production	Lands/Access	Livestock Grazing	Native American Religious Concerns
Paleontology	Rangeland Health Standards	Recreation	Socio-Economics	Wilderness/WSA
Woodland/Forestry				

Eight components of the Human Environment and Resource Issues were analyzed in detail in Chapter 4.

Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species	Floodplains	Fire/Fuels Management	Hydrologic Conditions	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	Migratory Birds	Soils	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species
Utah BLM Sensitive Species	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species	Visual Resources	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)	Wetlands/Riparian Zones
Wild and Scenic Rivers				

None of these would be significantly impacted because mitigating measures to reduce adverse impacts to the resources were incorporated in the design of the action alternative. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the Moab Field Office RMP FEIS. Although the selected alternative is designed specifically to reduce invasive/noxious species, improve ecosystem function and restore vegetative resilience

through grass, forb and shrub establishment in the MFO, indirect beneficial impacts to public health and safety will result from the decreased chance of invasive species spreading to adjacent WUI and recreational areas.

4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** There is no scientific controversy over the nature of the impacts.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The project is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve 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.** The actions considered in the selected alternative were considered by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete analysis of the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative and all other alternatives is described in Chapter 4 of the EA.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.** The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other 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 historical resources.** The project will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Future projects within the analysis area will conduct a literature search for every undertaking. Survey may or may not be conducted based on the findings, if no survey is recommended then 106 consultation would be undertaken with U-SHPO for concurrence of findings and recommendations. If no survey is conducted prior to the undertaking then an archaeologist would be present during implementation. In areas where mechanical treatment would take place an Archaeological Report (Class III) would be prepared, and information documenting the archaeological inventory and compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, would be on file in the Canyon Country Fire Zone office. Sites identified and determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) would likely be avoided during the mechanical treatment portion of the project, unless treatment options are such that it would be beneficial to the archaeological resource to treat the vegetation on site.

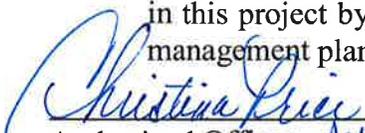
Tribal groups have been requested to identify traditional cultural properties or any other areas of traditional cultural importance to be considered within proximity of the project.

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, or the degree to which the action may adversely affect: 1) a proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species or its habitat, or 2) a species on BLM's sensitive species list. Mitigating measures to reduce impacts to wildlife and fisheries have been incorporated into the design of the action alternatives. Although seven listed species occupy habitat within the project boundary, it has been determined that they will not be affected because of the following stipulations:

- No activities would take place within 0.5 miles of Mexican spotted owl nest territory or PAC.
- No activities would take place within 0.25 miles of occupied Southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. Treatments will be limited to 30% of a HUC 12 watershed.
- Yellow billed cuckoo Conservation Measures require habitat evaluations and protocol surveys in suitable habitats prior to treatments and no activities would be allowed within 0.5 miles of occupied habitats. Treatments will be limited to 30% of a HUC 12 watershed.
- Colorado pikeminnow, Bonytail chub, Humpback chub, and Razorback sucker will have Section 7 consultations re-initiated if broadcast application or large scale treatment of herbicides will occur within Critical Habitats Endangered Colorado River Fishes from May 1st through July 15th.
- Section 7 consultation will be re-initiated if proposed treatments are in Jones Cycladenia occupied habitat. Occupied habitat is defined as sites that are currently occupied, or were historically occupied by the taxon.

No other threatened or endangered plants or animals are known to occur in the area. Section 7 ESA Consultation was done May 9th, 2016, and the USF&WS concurred with BLM's determination on July 20th, 2016.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non-federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements. The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, letters were sent to 20 Native American tribes concerning consulting party status, and there was response from the Hopi Tribe. The Hopi tribe requested continued consultation and to be provided with cultural resource reports once available. Follow up phone calls were initiated with the tribes, and it was concluded and documented that there was no interest in this project by those tribes. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.


Authorized Officer - Acting Field Manager


Date

