



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Mother Lode Field Office
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El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
www.blm.gov/office/mother-love-field-office

Categorical Exclusion Documentation DOI-BLM-CA-C080-2024-0010-CX

A. Project Title: Feral Swine Abatement in the Red Hills Area of Critical Environmental Concern

B. Description and Rationale:

The Red Hills Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) was designated in 1993 (and expanded in 2008) to protect rare plant species, unusual serpentine soils that provide habitat for unique flora, and habitat for the rare (State Species of Special Concern) minnow known as the Red Hills roach. This ACEC supports seven different federal and state listed plant species, some of which are endemic (i.e., only found in the Red Hills).

Feral swine were recently observed and reported to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Mother Lode Field Office, by members of the public who frequent the area. California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have recently observed and trapped feral swine on private lands adjoining the ACEC. This is the first confirmed knowledge of feral swine in the ACEC.

Due to the sensitivity of the rare plants in the ACEC and the endemic Red Hills roach, there is an immediate need for action to control the feral swine who have already caused substantial damage to vegetation and soils across large areas of the ACEC by “rooting” or pushing their snouts through the soil to find food. Negative impacts from feral swine invasion include displacement of rare and native plants; reduction in functionality of habitat and forage for native wildlife; increased potential for soil erosion and reduced water quality; and alteration of physical and biological properties of the soil. The relevant and important values of the ACEC - special status plants and wildlife, and unique soils - would be compromised if the feral swine are not removed.

The BLM plans to work in conjunction with APHIS Wildlife Services to remove feral swine from the Red Hills ACEC. In 2012, APHIS developed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for *Feral Swine Damage Management: A National Approach*. The FEIS is programmatic in nature and is intended to help APHIS achieve the program goal of reducing feral swine damage to agriculture, natural resources, property, animal health, and human health and safety.

Feral swine abatement in the Red Hills ACEC could include any or all of the following actions:

- Installation of remote cameras to track swine use in certain areas.
- Installation of bait stations (5-gallon buckets of a corn slurry).
- Installation of metal cages (approximately 5 meters by 5 meter “corral traps”) at discrete (off-trail) locations where feral swine would be captured, euthanized, and removed.

- Removal of feral swine with firearms by authorized personnel.

C. Location: Red Hills ACEC; Tuolumne County – T 1S, R 13E, Sections 1, 2, 11-13; T 1S, R 14E, Sections 6-8, 16-29, 34 & 35; T 1S, R 15E, Sections 30 & 31; T 2S, R 15E, Section 6; T 2S, R 14E, Section 1

D. Stipulations/Mitigations:

1. Locations of traps and bait stations would not block any trails or roads in the ACEC and would be placed as discretely as possible.
2. BLM will approve the location of traps or bait stations once APHIS determines where they are needed to ensure sensitive resources like rare plants, cultural, and wildlife are not impacted.
3. Vehicles will not drive off road during trap placement to avoid damage to sensitive resources.
4. Dispatching of swine would occur whenever possible on weekdays and those parts of the day when there would be the least amount of effect via noise and disturbance to recreational visitors. Carcasses of dispatched swine would be disposed of at locations authorized to accept carcasses.
5. Traps will be checked daily.

E. Plan Conformance: The proposed action is consistent with the Sierra Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (ROD), approved in February 2008. The ROD states that one goal for vegetative communities in the Mother Lode Field Office is to:

“Promote a healthy and diverse mix of plant communities and provide a wide spectrum of organisms and ecosystem processes for the needs of plants, animals and humans.”

The Objectives stated under that goal include:

- 1) *“Conserve and restore oak woodland, conifer forest, chaparral, riparian, meadow, Central Valley wetland, and grassland habitats to support long-term viability of native bird species, sensitive species, and the associated natural diversity of these habitats.”*
- 2) *“Manage vegetation (including invasive species removal) to improve habitat conditions for particular wildlife species.”*
- 3) *“Control invasive species and increase native plant species using early detection, rapid response, and prevention measures.”*

Management actions for vegetative communities are to:

- 1) *“Improve habitat conditions for special status species through vegetation treatment in Central Valley wetlands, oak woodlands, coniferous forests, grasslands, riparian forest, and riverine habitats.”*

- 2) *“Prevent, eliminate, and/or control undesired non-native vegetation or other invasive species using an Integrated Pest Management approach that combines biological, cultural, physical, and chemical tools to minimize economic, health, and environmental risks.”*
- 3) *“Continue weed inventory, control, and monitoring. Prioritize weed treatment in habitat for special status species and high use recreation areas. Control and eradicate invasive species in important habitat for special status species. Invasive species management in ACECs, special status species habitat, and other environmentally sensitive areas will be designed to prevent or minimize damage to rare biological resources.”*

A Goal for Fish & Wildlife in the ROD states *“Maintain, improve, or enhance native fish and wildlife populations and the ecosystems upon which they depend.”* An Objective under this Goal states: *“Prevent and control infestations of non-native species that negatively impact native and game species.”*

F. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act: The project is a categorically excluded action under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, A.6, which allows for “Relocation of nuisance or depredating wildlife, providing the relocation does not introduce new species into the ecosystem.”

The proposed action has been reviewed to determine if extraordinary circumstances exist that would require further environmental analysis and documentation (516 DM 2, Appendix 2). None have been identified (see attached).

G. Signature

Jeffrey Horn
Field Manager
Mother Lode Field Office

Date

H. Contact

For more information, contact Beth Brenneman, NEPA Coordinator, (916) 941-3138 or bbrennem@blm.gov.

NEPA Compliance
Categorical Exclusion Review
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The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A (3) requires review of the following “extraordinary circumstances” (516 DM 2 Appendix 2) to determine if an otherwise categorically excluded action would require additional environmental analysis/documentation.

1) *Have significant impacts on public health or safety.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

2) *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.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

3) *Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].*

☐ Yes ☒ No

4) *Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

5) *Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

6) *Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

7) *Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

8) *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.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

9) *Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.*

☐ Yes ☒ No

10) *Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).*

☐ Yes ☒ No

11) 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).

☐ Yes ☒ No

12) 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).

☐ Yes ☒ No

Reviewers:

/s/ Jeffrey Horn

2024.01.19

Recreation/VRM

/s/ Beth Brenneman

2024.01.19

Botanist/NEPA Coordinator

/s/ Jeffrey Jones

2024.01.19

Wildlife biologist

/s/ Ann-Sheree Brown

2024.01.19

Archaeologist