



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE
3040 BIDDLE ROAD
MEDFORD, OREGON 97504

DECISION RECORD / RATIONALE / FONSI *Smullin Visitor Center at Rand Expansion* (EA #OR110-03-26)

I. DECISION

The decision is to implement Alternative 2, the proposed action, for the Smullin Visitor Center Expansion as described in the Environmental Assessment for this project. The project design features described in the EA are an integral part of the proposed action and are to be implemented. In addition, the existing building will be documented before it is altered by using Historic American Building Survey (HABS) photography and its associated narrative as well as other mitigation measures as coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

II. RATIONALE

Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, is rejected because it will not meet the purpose and need identified in the EA. It will not remedy the need for more workspace to serve employees and visitors. The current building does not comply with ADA guidelines for accessibility.

Alternative 2 is selected because it will meet the identified purpose and need. The increased size and improved layout will serve the current and future needs of employees and will help provide quality public services to visitors enjoying the Wild and Scenic Rogue River. Furthermore, the new design will be ADA compliant and universally accessible, thus accommodating a wider variety of individual needs.

III. PLAN CONSISTENCY

The project is consistent with and promotes the goals of the RMP to “manage scenic, natural, and cultural resources to enhance visitor recreation experience expectations and satisfy public land users.” (RMP p.63). Implementation of Alternative 2 will also promote Goals 1.1 and 3.0 of the BLM’s Strategic Plan for FY2000 to FY2005.

BLM Strategic Goal 1.1 is to provide recreational opportunities while minimizing risks to public health and safety and maintaining the health and diversity of the land. It also addresses maintaining physical facilities in good condition. Implementing Alternative 2 will improve public health and safety by providing universally accessible facilities at the visitor center. It will also maintain in good condition the visitor center facilities.

Goal 3.0, which is to improve internal organizational effectiveness, is served by implementing Alternative 2 in that it will improve efficiency and effectiveness of employees by providing a larger workspace that can accommodate needs and house necessary equipment.

Based on the information and analysis of potential environmental impacts in the environmental assessment (EA) and the response from the public and state agencies during design and assessment of the project, I conclude that this decision is consistent with (a) *Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan* (June 1995), (b) *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (April 1994), (c) *Standards and Guidelines for Late-Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, and (d) *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (January 2001). This decision is also consistent with the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; 1972 Rogue River management plan; Endangered Species Act; Native American Religious Freedom Act; National Historic Preservation Act and other cultural resource management laws and regulations; Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice; and Executive Order 13212 regarding potential adverse impacts to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution.

IV. CONSULTATION, COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Throughout planning for this project, the BLM consulted and coordinated with SHPO.

Public notification and involvement for earlier iterations of this project occurred from 1999 – 2000. Public involvement specific to this project proposal began in early 2003 and included mailings to more than 400 interested individuals, organizations, outfitters, tribes and other public entities. Notices and articles also appeared in the Grants Pass Daily Courier. Eleven responses to scoping were received, only one of which expressed opposition to the project. One response, from SHPO, was received during the formal public comment period. SHPO expressed concern that the project would not comply with Department of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation in that the size of the addition would overwhelm the existing structure, the alterations to the original structure would be too extensive, and an outside stairway would be too visually intrusive. These concerns resulted in a SHPO determination of adverse effect, which will be mitigated through recordation of the site through HABS photography and narrative as well as other mitigation measures as coordinated with SHPO.

V. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Based on information contained in the EA, the project's record, and on comments received to date from the public, it is my determination that the proposed action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. During scoping and the public comment period, those who commented shared their preferences on how to implement the project or proposed additional objectives, but no new impacts were brought to light that would indicate a need for further analysis. This project does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This conclusion is also based on a consideration of both the context and intensity of the impacts of the selected action(s) (40 CFR §1508.27). **Context** refers to analysis of environmental consequences at various social or geographic scales. For this project, impacts were assessed primarily at the site-specific scale (fisheries addressed the 5th field watershed scale as well).

Intensity refers to the severity of impacts. Conclusions regarding intensity are supported by the following findings:

1) *Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* Both adverse and beneficial impacts will result from the project. Impacts will be inconsequential at the site-specific scale for the following issues (resources not mentioned are expected to have no impacts at any scale): soil compaction, erosion, sedimentation, noxious weed dispersal, and wildlife disturbance (specifically to roosting bats).

2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No adverse effects to public health or safety have been identified. Providing universal accessibility will improve safety for visitors and/or employees with special access needs.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The visitor center is located within the Rand Ranger Station, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Furthermore, the Rand complex is located within the Hellgate recreation section of the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River. No known long term adverse impacts to the river's outstandingly remarkable values (ORVs) of natural scenic qualities, fisheries, and recreational opportunities are anticipated. Recreational opportunities are expected to be enhanced.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.* Earlier proposals, which called for an entirely new structure, generated opposition to the project. This social controversy resulted in scaling down the plans to the more modest proposal described in this EA, ameliorating nearly all of the earlier controversy.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* There is no indication that the effects on the human environment are highly uncertain and/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 action is not precedent setting. Facilities maintenance and improvement is a common and frequent activity. Given the historic nature of this facility, SHPO was consulted throughout project design to ensure conformance with the Department of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* Past activities within the project area (Rand complex) include re-roofing other buildings, paving, and installation of new waterlines. Consultation with SHPO ensured that none of these projects would affect National Register eligibility of the historic Rand complex. Furthermore, the scope and magnitude of these projects' effects on other resources were such that cumulatively they are not significant even when combined with the current project.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* The project design has resulted in a determination of adverse effect by SHPO. In keeping with the National Historic Preservation Act, recordation mitigation (HABS

photography and narrative) will preserve information that may be lost through project implementation. Additional mitigation measures will be coordinated with SHPO. This project will not affect the Rand ensemble's status on the National Register of Historic Places, although it may lead to the status change of the visitor center itself as a "non-contributing" building within the Rand ensemble.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.*
The project area is within spotted owl Designated Critical Habitat. However, no impacts to ESA listed species are anticipated.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.*
There are no indications that the action will violate any environmental protection law or requirement.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe that they will be adversely affected by this decision. Who may appeal: those who have taken action related to the above decision or who have otherwise participated in the process, such as by commenting on an environmental document, leading to the decision under appeal (43 CFR § 4.410 as amended by the Federal Register, Vol. 68, No. 108, Rules and Regulations).

Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board), in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. Notice of appeals must be filed in this office within 30 days after the publication date of this decision. If your notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and with the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. A copy of your notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs, must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Northwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 500 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 607, Portland, Oregon 97232. In taking an appeal, there must be strict compliance with the regulations.

The effective date of this decision will be the date of publication of the Notice of Decision in The Grants Pass Daily Courier. Publication of this notice establishes the date initiating the appeal period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4.


Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

9-29-03
Date