

USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Burns District
28910 Hwy 20 West
Hines, Oregon 97738

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
Packsaddle Allotment Management Plan/Agreement
Environmental Assessment
OR-025-02-048

INTRODUCTION

The Packsaddle Allotment #7012 is located 30 miles northwest of Burns, Oregon. It is currently divided into four pastures of unequal size and with differing resource concerns. In 2004, monitoring data collected on the Packsaddle Allotment over the past 10 years were analyzed through a formal interdisciplinary evaluation process. The evaluation analyzed whether or not management actions in place were causing resource objectives to be met.

The results of the evaluation describe how riparian; water quality; and native, Threatened and Endangered, and locally important species standards are not being achieved in Mineral Creek and in Wickiup Creek. It also concludes that livestock are not a significant factor for nonachievement of the standards. The standards for uplands and ecological processes were met throughout the allotment.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action alternative incorporates livestock management changes, project development, project maintenance and reconstruction, project modification, incorporates additional acreage into the allotment and removes acreage from the Packsaddle Allotment.

The proposed action is to implement the following grazing management actions that would address the resource concerns identified in the Packsaddle Allotment evaluation.

1. Adjust the season of use in the allotment from April 1 to June 15 to May 1 to June 15.
2. Schedule the rotation of pastures on a 2-year cycle to provide total rest every other year in all pastures.
3. Small enclosure fences consisting of no more than 1-acre would be constructed around several existing spring sources to protect them from future livestock impacts.
4. Develop one spring source to provide for offsite water for livestock and wildlife.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The proposed management plan and associated projects would improve grazing management and resources within the Packsaddle Allotment. This proposal is in conformance with the 1992 Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It is in conformance with the objectives stated in the August 12, 1997 Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington. It is also consistent with the Endangered Species Act, Section 2(c) and 7(a)1.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and all other available information, I have determined that the proposed action and the alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Rationale:

This determination is based on the following: The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed in the Three Rivers RMP/FEIS, and are not known to be present in the project area or affected by enacting any of the alternatives analyzed: Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Special Status Flora, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Cultural Heritage, American Indian Religious Concerns, Paleontology, Floodplains, Noxious Weeds, Prime or Unique Farmlands, and Hazardous Materials. The two following critical elements are not discussed in the Three Rivers RMP/FEIS, but are either not known to be present in the project area or affected by enacting any of the alternatives analyzed: Adverse Energy Impacts and Environmental Justice. All potentially impacted resources were analyzed in the EA specific to the proposed action and alternatives. The following resources were analyzed in the EA: Water Quality, Special Status Fauna, Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Migratory Birds, and Livestock Management. Impacts to these resources are considered to not be significant (based on the definition of significance in 40 CFR 1508.27) for the following reasons:

Water Quality:

Fence realignment and enclosure fences around Wickiup Creek, Mineral Creek and spring water sources would cause continued improvement in water quality. Water temperatures are currently improving as the water flows through the allotment. This trend is likely to continue under a grazing plan which shortens the season of use in the allotment.

Special Status Fauna:

A shortened grazing season and rest periods in all pastures within the allotment every other year would improve sage-grouse habitat within the allotment. The Preble's shrew would benefit from increased cover. Many other species would benefit from improved riparian habitat within the Wickiup Pasture.

Wetlands and Riparian:

Riparian and wetland areas associated with Wickiup and Mineral Creeks would begin to expand as the Wickiup Pasture is rested from any livestock use for the first 5 years of the project. Wetland areas associated with the springs that would be excluded from livestock use would expand and improve in diversity. More water storage within these areas is expected to occur over time.

Migratory Birds:

Migratory birds are known to use the project area for nesting, foraging, and resting as they pass through on their yearly migrations. The proposed action would likely benefit all or most of the migratory birds that use the area. Proposed projects would cause improvement in wetland and riparian conditions, thus, improving nesting, brood rearing, and foraging habitat.

Noxious Weeds:

There are no known noxious weed sites in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project area. There would be minimal risk of an introduction of new weed populations as a result of implementing the proposed action. Long-term benefits of providing good condition riparian and upland habitat should discourage noxious weed establishment and spread.

Livestock Management:

Fencing of spring sources into exclosures would reduce or eliminate livestock impacts on these areas. Realignment of fences along the ridgelines will reduce livestock pressure on problem area fences and reduce the unauthorized use of the riparian and meadow areas in the allotment.

Other:

1. Beneficial, adverse, direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts have been disclosed in the EA. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Burns District, Three Rivers Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.

3. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.
4. The proposed actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State, or local natural resource-related plans, policies or programs.
5. The proposed actions are in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

Signature on File

Jim Buchanan Acting for
Joan M. Suther
Three Rivers Resource Area Field Manager

10/26/2004

Date