



Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

On January 12, 2017, Presidential Proclamation 9563 added the Cotoni-Coast Dairies unit to the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM). This proclamation called for the Cotoni-Coast Dairies (C-CD) unit to be available for public access upon the BLM's completion of a management plan. The BLM released a Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Assessment (EA), as well as a Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for a 45-day public comment period on February 24, 2020. The Draft RMPA analyzed a range of alternatives (Alternatives A, B and C) that would provide opportunities for public access and recreation at C-CD, while ensuring care for the objects and values identified in Presidential Proclamation 9563. These objects include traditional use areas of the indigenous people, archaeological resources, as well as a wide array of habitats and the diversity of wildlife that they support, including forests, shrublands, grasslands, riparian/wetlands, and aquatic systems.

Following the public comment period, the BLM analyzed public comments and developed a Proposed RMPA and EA. Based on public feedback, the BLM crafted a fourth alternative (Alternative D), which has been incorporated into the Proposed RMPA and EA and identified as the agency preferred alternative. This FONSI reviews the impacts of the preferred alternative or proposed action, Alternative D.

Context

The geographic scope of the RMPA comprises 5,843 acres of public land managed by the BLM's Central Coast Field Office in Santa Cruz County, California. The C-CD is located approximately ten miles north of the City of Santa Cruz along State Highway 1. It surrounds the small, rural, coastal community of Davenport. Prior to European contact, the Cotoni tribelet of the Costanoan People (also called the Ohlone) inhabited the area - making use of the landscape's diverse resources - for thousands of years. The landscape of C-CD is defined by a prominent series of stair-stepped marine terraces that rise from the coastline on the western edge and culminate in the steep terrain of the Santa Cruz Mountains at the eastern edge. The marine terraces are dissected by six perennial streams that flow from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the ocean. The wide, open terraces provide expansive, sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean. The steep gradient of topography and climate at C-CD produce a wide diversity of niches that support riparian zones and wetlands, grasslands, coastal scrub, oak woodlands, and conifer forest. These diverse habitats in turn, support numerous fish and wildlife species including coho salmon, steelhead, California red legged frogs, mule deer, and mountain lions.

Intensity

The BLM considered the following criteria established by the Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) to evaluate intensity:

1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.

As discussed in the supporting analysis (Chapter 4) of the Proposed RMPA and EA, beneficial and adverse effects are anticipated for biological, cultural, and other resources. Adverse effects are anticipated to be less than significant because of protective measures and project design features (Appendix D) incorporated into Alternative D. These measures minimize or avoid impacts to biological and cultural resources, while allowing for public access and other uses of C-CD. Measures designed to minimize or avoid effects to biological and cultural resources within Alternative D of the Proposed RMPA include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Establishment of a weeds control program to eradicate and prevent the introduction and spread of non-native, invasive plant species (MA-VEG-1)
- Measures designed to avoid and/or minimize surface disturbance within 100 feet of area waterways (MA-RIP-2)
- Measures requiring temporary trail and facility closures when continued use could lead to trail damage or erosion (MA-RIP-3)
- Prohibition or limitations on activities that could result in harm to cultural resources (AU-CUL-8)
- Establishment of Resource Management Zones 2 and 4 (3,187 acres, 55%) as core fish and wildlife protection areas where trail development will be precluded and public access will be limited to permitted uses, traditional cultural practices, and guided tours (MA-WLD-6 and MA-REC-12)
- Requirement that all visitors stay on designated trails unless specifically authorized (AU-REC-4)
- Camping is allowed with an access permit only for traditional cultural practices, work groups, research, and educational purposes (AU-REC-5)
- Restrictions on dogs to on-leash only and limited to designated trails (AU-REC-6)
- Limits on placement of picnicking areas to minimize impacts of corvids and gulls (MA-REC-15)
- Phased approach to trail and facility development that will ensure that the BLM is able to effectively manage public access on C-CD prior to proceeding with full build out of trails and facilities on the property (MA-REC-16)
- Actions to fence spring developments and riparian areas to prevent trampling by livestock (MA-GRZ-3)

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Alternative D is not anticipated to cause significant adverse impacts to public health or safety. Appendix K contains a supplemental traffic analysis, which documents potential impacts of the alternatives on public safety. This study concludes that traffic and roadway safety will not be significantly impacted by the proposed trail and trailhead developments. The proposed parking areas and visitor services to support public access at C-CD would improve public safety by providing public restrooms, trash collection, and legal parking areas. Collection of fees for use of the property

will ensure a sufficient funding stream to maintain and monitor these facilities. Following completion of this RMPA, the BLM will continue to work with the public and partners to monitor and evaluate potential public health and safety concerns related to development of recreational trails and facilities on the property.

Prior to implementing Phase 2 of recreational facility and trail development, the BLM will evaluate the adequacy of its facilities to meet anticipated increased visitation.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Alternative D will not have a significant effect on historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The BLM has completed Class III cultural surveys of all phase 1 implementation actions proposed in the RMPA. The BLM does not anticipate significant effects to historic or cultural resources from development under phase 1. Similar surveys will be completed for phase 2 implementation actions prior to the signing of the decision record for the RMPA. The BLM has identified Recreation Management Zones 2 and 4 as core fish and wildlife protection zones and areas where traditional cultural practices will be emphasized. This area encompasses 3,187 acres, or 55% of C-CD, and encompasses the entire CCNM portion of the watersheds of San Vicente, Liddell and Laguna Creeks to protect resource objects and values.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects on the quality of the human environment of proposed uses in Alternative D (primarily non-motorized recreation and livestock grazing) are not considered to be highly controversial because the effects of these activities are well-understood. The project design features incorporated into Appendix D are designed to minimize potential effects associated with these uses. "The term 'highly controversial' refers to instances in which 'a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.'" *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Alternative D allows for public access and recreational uses of C-CD, while identifying indicators to be monitored throughout implementation (Appendix C). The BLM has incorporated a phased approach to implementation into Alternative D to ensure that the BLM's management approach is resulting in predicted outcomes prior to implementation of phase 2. The BLM maintains the authority to delay or adjust implementation of the RMPA if unforeseen effects occur.

In addition, the public access and recreational uses proposed under Alternative D are similar to activities that occur on other properties in the region, including Wilder Ranch State Park and Fort Ord National Monument. In both cases, effects of recreational use and public access are well understood and have not involved 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.

Alternative D proposes to establish public access and recreational uses (including hiking, mountain biking, equestrian use, and archery hunting) on C-CD. These uses are common on BLM-managed public lands, including within National Monuments and other National Conservation Lands. The other activities proposed under Alternative D (principally vegetation management and livestock grazing) are also common on BLM-managed public lands, including National Monuments. Therefore, the actions proposed under Alternative D do not establish a precedent.

The C-CD is one of six on-shore units added to the CCNM by Presidential Proclamation. It is the first on-shore unit to develop a RMP amendment. However, this is not likely to establish a precedent for other onshore units of the CCNM because the six on-shore units are geographically distinct and spread along hundreds of miles of the California coast. Each unit is unique, as reflected in the establishing Proclamation and has its own set of objects and values. The environmental and social context for each unit is unique. Subsequent RMP amendments for on-shore units will consider the objects, values, and context of each unit. Therefore, Alternative D does not set a precedent for future actions on these other units of the CCNM.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Recreation visitation to the planning area is affected by changes in recreation opportunities and demand outside of the C-CD. Other related and recent actions on the North Coast of Santa Cruz County include the San Vicente Redwoods Access Plan and the North Coast Rail Trail project. These projects, in combination with Alternative D of this RMPA, will likely result in additional visitors to the North Coast of Santa Cruz County and could negatively affect individuals who value solitude. However, each project will also increase investment in the region, resulting in improved public facilities within the region (e.g. public restrooms, trash collection). In addition, these projects may result in a small and net beneficial condition to some local communities, as a result of improved land protection and economic benefits from recreation. Future public access development activities subject to local and/or State agency approval would require further project- and site-specific analysis, during which time applicable PDFs, BMPs, and other conditions of approval (COAs) would be identified. With BLM's discretionary review of future proposals, conflicts between reasonably foreseeable actions and other projects on the North Coast of Santa Cruz County would be avoided. Assuming the development trends in the region continue, cumulative impacts on recreation resources from Alternative D would be beneficial because effects on regional trail connectivity from the RMPA would result in outstanding new opportunities for public use and enjoyment in region over the next 15-20 years.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may

cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.

The BLM has completed Class III cultural resource inventories for Phase 1 implementation actions included within Alternative D of this RMPA and this information has been incorporated into the Proposed RMPA and EA. Based on these surveys and the BLM's commitment to avoid impacts to cultural resources, the BLM does not anticipate adverse impacts to significant cultural or historical resources from the actions proposed under Alternative D. Project design features are incorporated into the range of alternatives to avoid or reduce potential effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additional plan components address resources of concern unique to Native American individuals and communities. For example, Alternative D emphasizes management of portions of RMZ 2 and 4 for resource protection and traditional cultural practices to ensure that Native American heritage resources potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are protected and preserved.

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.

The BLM has initiated consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service. Through such consultation and coordination, the BLM will ensure that the RMPA will be consistent with the Recovery Plan for the California Red-legged Frog (USFWS 2002), the Recovery Plan for the Evolutionarily Significant Unit of Central California Coast Coho Salmon (NOAA 2012), the South-Central California Coast Steelhead Recovery Plan (NOAA 2013), and the Coastal Multispecies Final Recovery Plan for California Coastal Chinook Salmon, Northern California steelhead and Central California Coast steelhead (NOAA 2016).

The BLM does not anticipate significant adverse impacts on endangered or threatened species or their habitats. Measures included in Alternative D to improve riparian habitat and water quality are anticipated to have a beneficial impact on threatened and endangered species and their habitats.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Alternative D does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The BLM is engaged in ongoing coordination and consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Santa Cruz County, the California Coastal Commission and others to ensure consistency with relevant laws and regulations.

Conclusion

On the basis of the preliminary information contained in the Proposed RMPA and EA, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the RMPA will not have significant environmental impacts

beyond those already addressed in (i) the EIS for the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM) Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved in 2005; and (ii) the Final EIS for the RMP for the Southern Diablo Mountain Range and Central Coast of California, approved in 2006; and (2) the RMP Amendment 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), with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

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08/26/2020

Karen E. Mouritsen
BLM California State Director

Date