DECISION RECORD
&
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

AMENDMENT TO THE
REDDING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

CHANGE TO THE BOUNDARY OF THE
HORSESHOE RANCH WILDLIFE AREA

Environmental Assessment
CA-360-EA-2001-24

March 2004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
REDDING FIELD OFFICE
355 Hemsted Dr.
Redding, CA 96002

AMENDMENT TO THE REDDING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN CHANGE TO THE BOUNDARY OF THE HORSESHOE RANCH WILDLIFE AREA

SUMMARY

The Horseshoe Ranch Wildlife Area (HRWA) is located along the Oregon state boundary east of Interstate 5 in Siskiyou County, California. The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) provides onsite management of the eastern one-half of the HRWA including roughly 8,902 acres under agreement with BLM since the original purchase of the Miller Ranch in 1977. The Redding Resource Management Plan of 1993 provided direction to BLM in connection with Horseshoe Ranch, including a provision to "acquire available, unimproved privately owned land between Interstate 5 and the existing public lands."

Some Siskiyou County residents were concerned about the potential expansion of the HRWA in response to a subsequent proposed land exchange in 1995 that would have transferred about 1,200 acres of private land to BLM (this offer to BLM was later withdrawn). In August 1999, Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors and others requested that BLM redraw the HRWA boundary to the 1977 limits. BLM agreed to consider amending the RMP.

BLM distributed a draft amendment in December 2001. The proposed amendment was distributed in May 2003.

DECISION

The May 2003 Proposed Amendment is approved, and the boundary of the HRWA is modified as shown on the attached map. Key points of this decision are:

- The new HRWA boundary does not include private land.
- BLM will continue to manage for multiple uses, including permitted livestock grazing, on the approximately 1,200 acres in the western portion of the HRWA.
- The "interest area" identifying potential lands for future acquisition described in the draft plan amendment is eliminated.
- BLM would consider private landowners' offers to sell adjacent lands for addition to the HRWA only if the private parcels are immediately adjacent to the boundary, and only if the land meets criteria for deer winter habitat.
- The amendment does not call for BLM to actively pursue acquisition of private parcels.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

BLM considered three alternatives. In the December 2001 Draft Amendment, the BLM preferred alternative was identified as Alternative 2. However, BLM revised alternative 2 in May 2003, setting the boundary to conform to the boundary line established in a 1989 Habitat Management Plan and deleting the acquisition "interest area". The revised Alternative 2 was

identified as the BLM Proposed amendment. A summary of the alternatives is as follows:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative would limit the HRWA to the 1977 boundaries encompassing 2,395 acres of Federal and 5,067 acres of State public land. No private lands would be included within the HRWA. There would be no future BLM acquisition of private land for the HRWA.

- **Alternative 2:** This alternative contained 3,835 acres of Federal and 5,067 acres of State public land. The HRWA boundary would include only the public lands within the 1977 boundary as well as public lands immediately adjoining the western margin of that boundary. In addition, the 2001 draft amendment included any private lands within widely scattered parcels of federal that could be incorporated into the management for deer winter range through future acquisitions. This "area of potential interest" was bounded by Interstate 5 on the west, Klamath River to the south, Iron Gate Reservoir and Camp Creek on the east and the Oregon state boundary on the north. Alternative 2 was identified as the BLM preferred alternative in the December 2001 draft. However, in the May 2003 proposal, Alternative 2 was revised to eliminate the area of interest. The boundaries of the HRWA remained the same. Alternative 2 of the 2003 proposal was identified as the Proposed Plan Amendment.

- **Alternative 3 - No Action:** This alternative retains the existing HRWA boundaries as described in the RMP. Approximately 3,875 acres of BLM, 732 acres of Klamath National Forest and 5,067 acres of State public land would be encompassed within the HRWA. Up to 7,766 acres of private land within the HRWA boundary, mainly between Interstate 5 and the existing core area, would be considered for acquisition if willingly offered to BLM or other cooperators.

MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS (RATIONALE)

This amendment of the Redding RMP was approved based on the following management considerations:

- Ensure Decision Provides for Sound Management of Deer Winter Habitat Consistent With 1993 RMP

  The approved amendment continues to provide for sound management of the deer winter habitat consistent with the RMP and in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game. No public lands are removed from the HRWA. As provided in the 1993 RMP, management of the HRWA continues to emphasize "the improvement of public administered deer winter habitat." Subject to the specific requirements guiding any federal acquisition of private lands, the decision will afford long-term protection for any "additional privately owned deer winter habitat in cooperation with wildlife values." The amendment decision does not change the long-term restoration of riparian zones identified in the 1993 plan.

- Recognize Property Rights and Concerns of HRWA Neighbors

  The approved amendment reduces the 1993 RMP emphasis on future acquisition and expansion of HRWA. BLM's first priority in this decision is to continue to provide for sound wildlife management on public lands of HRWA as stated above. However, the approved amendment recognizes the private property rights and the concerns of neighboring property owners by limiting the scope of federal acquisition of private lands and future expansion of HRWA.

- Balance Federal Land Disposal With Acquisitions of Private lands in Siskiyou County

  BLM has publicly expressed its intention to balance the approximately 17,000 acres of public land transferred from Federal ownership in Siskiyou County since 1993 by acquisitions of environmentally sensitive lands in other parts of the County. For this reason, and in response to a 1999 request by Siskiyou County, BLM eliminates the extensive area identified in alternatives 2 and 3 for potential federal acquisition of private lands. BLM does not actively pursue new acquisitions in connection with HRWA. However, the amendment continues to allow for acquisition from willing sellers of private lands contiguous to HRWA that also meet criteria for deer winter range.

- Continue to Provide Opportunities for Hunting, Livestock Grazing Use and Non-Motorized Recreation in HRWA

  The decision does not change the current cooperative management of the HRWA by BLM and the California Department of Fish and Game. The agencies manage HRWA to provide important winter habitat for deer and other wildlife, and to provide public land hunting opportunities. Livestock grazing use is authorized as a management tool for benefit of deer winter habitat. Non-motorized recreation use is permitted, and use of vehicles remains reserved only for administrative purposes. Public access is not changed by the decision, and will be continued through a single point on the east boundary.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Initial scoping was conducted in March 2000, and provided the public opportunities to identify issues to be considered in the EA. The BLM received more than 700 scoping letters.

The draft Resource Management Plan amendment was released for public comment on Dec. 7, 2001, and the BLM announced a comment deadline of Feb. 14, 2002. About 140 people participated in a public comment meeting held by the BLM in Yreka on Jan. 23, 2002. The Redding field office analyzed comments received in this meeting, along with comments received in 738 letters, 530 postcards and about 2,200 faxes (identical comments urging environmental protection) in preparation of the proposed plan amendment and EA.

During this period the BLM Redding Field Manager and staff members participated in public meetings of the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors and attended other public forums, providing additional opportunities for public participation.

The draft amendment received considerable media attention in Siskiyou County and southern Oregon.

A BLM news release issued May 5, 2003 announced availability of the proposed plan amendment. The proposed plan amendment and EA were posted on the BLM Redding field office website, and 300 copies of the document were mailed to requesters. The BLM received four protests to the proposed amendment.

PROTESTS

BLM received four protests to the proposed RMP amendment. The protests have been addressed by the Director of BLM and responses have been sent to each protestant. In accordance with BLM land use planning regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.5-2(b), the decision of the Director on a protest is the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

STATE AND LOCAL PLANS CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

In accordance with Federal regulations, 43 CFR 1610.3-2, BLM must identify any known inconsistencies with State or local plans, policies, or programs. No inconsistencies were identified by BLM, Siskiyou County, or the Governor's Office.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Environmental Assessment
CA-360-EA-2001-24

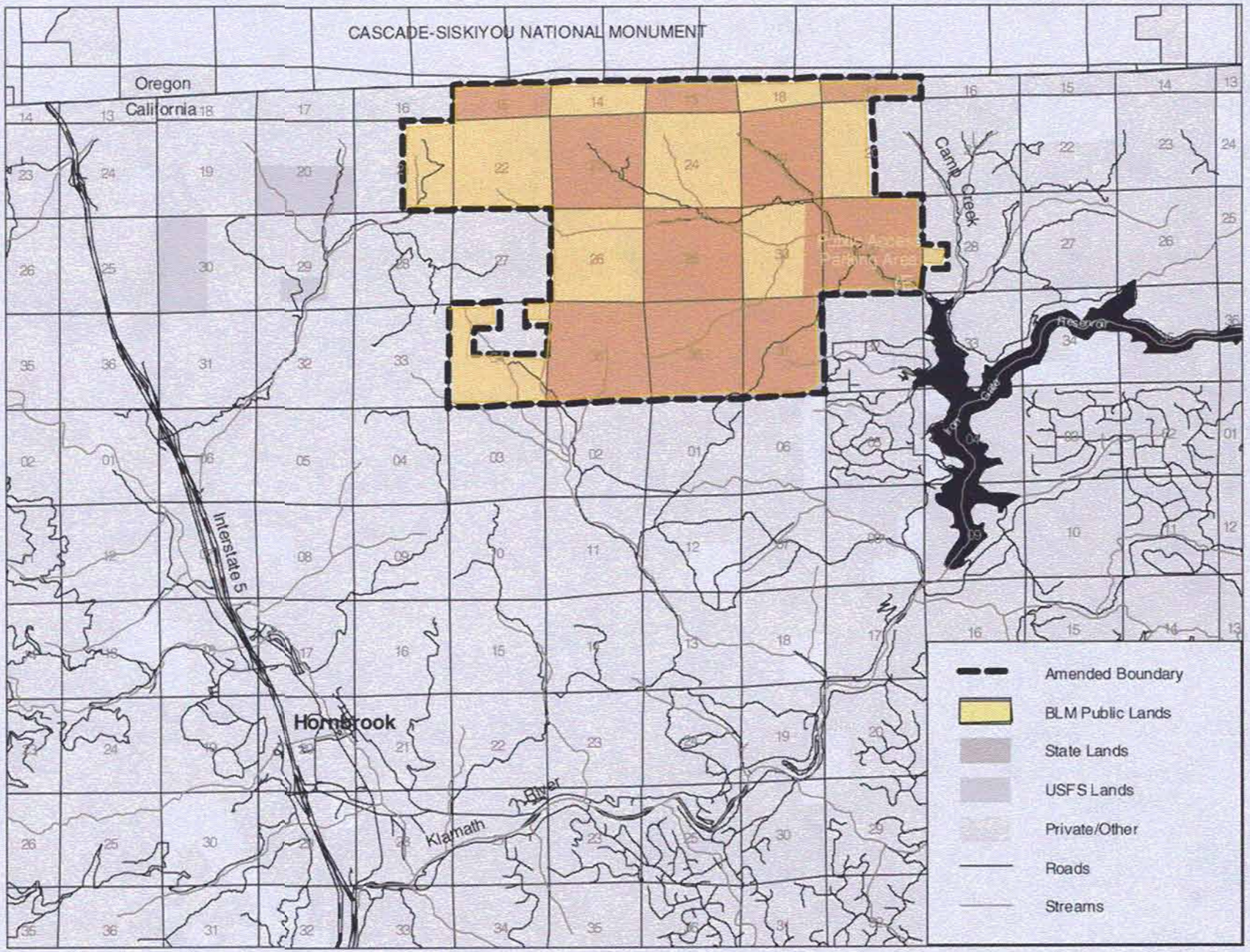
Amendment to the Redding Resource Management Plan: Change to the Boundary of the Horseshoe Ranch Wildlife Area (HRWA).

Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and the alternatives have been assessed. Based upon the analysis provided in the attached EA, CA-360-2001-24, I conclude the approved action is not a major federal action and will result in no significant impacts to the environment under the criteria in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.18 and 1508.27. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement to further analyze possible impacts is not required pursuant to Section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

DECISION APPROVED BY: _____
Mike Pool
California State Director
Bureau of Land Management

RECOMMENDED BY: _____
Francis Berg
Acting Redding Field Office Manager
Bureau of Land Management

PREPARED BY: _____
Glen R. Miller
Redding Field Office Planning Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management



Horseshoe Ranch BLM Amended Boundary
March 2004

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