

Dated: September 20, 2019.

John Bravacos,

*General Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Community Planning and Development.*

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[19X.LLAKA02000.L16100000.
DS0000.LXSS043L0000.241A]

Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire Resource Management Plan

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management,
Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Glennallen Field Office, Glennallen, Alaska, has prepared the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the BLM-managed public lands in the Haines area of Alaska and, by this notice, is announcing its availability.

DATES: Planning regulations state that any person who meets the conditions as described in the regulations at 43 CFR 1610.5-2 may protest the BLM's Final EIS/Proposed Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire RMP. A person who meets the conditions and files a protest must file the protest within 30 days of the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**.

ADDRESSES: Copies or notification of the electronic availability of the Final EIS/Proposed Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire RMP are being sent to affected Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies and other stakeholders. Copies of the Final EIS/Proposed RMP are available for public inspection at BLM Glennallen Field Office, Milepost 186.5 Glenn Highway, Glennallen, AK 99588; BLM Alaska Public Information Center, Federal Building, 222 West 7th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99513; Haines Borough Public Library, 111 3rd Ave., Haines, AK 99827; Municipality of Skagway Borough, 700 Spring Street, Skagway, AK 99840; BLM Anchorage District Office, 4700 BLM Road, Anchorage, AK 99507; and Alaska Resources Library

and Information Services, 3211 Providence Drive, Suite 111, Anchorage, AK 99507. A link to the BLM's ePlanning page with the Final EIS/Proposed RMP can be found at www.blm.gov/alaska/rof-haines-amendment. All protests must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail: BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, P.O. Box 71383, Washington, DC 20024-1383.

Overnight Delivery: BLM Director (210) Attention: Protest Coordinator, 20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bruce Loranger, BLM Anchorage District Office, telephone: 907-267-1221, email: bloranger@blm.gov. People who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Haines Planning Area encompasses approximately 920,000 acres in Southeast Alaska, bounded by the Canadian Border to the north and west, Glacier Bay National Park to the southwest, and the Tongass National Forest to the south and east. This Planning Area consists mainly of steep and remote mountainous terrain, with bedrock and glaciers that restrict road and trail access. Of the total acreage within the Planning Area, the BLM manages approximately 316,000 acres. The size of the Planning Area has changed since the 2008 signing of the Ring of Fire RMP Record of Decision (ROD) due to the conveyance of several sections of BLM-managed lands to the State of Alaska. The purpose of this planning effort is to identify which designations, associated management practices, and implementation actions best fulfill the resource and multiple-use needs within the Haines Planning Area. It is also intended to evaluate an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, as required by the Ring of Fire RMP ROD. In addition, this planning effort considered the results of a multi-year, BLM-funded study of goat and bear habitat in the Haines area by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, completed in 2017. This amendment revises the applicable portions of the Ring of Fire RMP and provides a plan which is consistent with evolving law, regulations, and policy.

The BLM conducted public outreach to inform the public and answer questions regarding the Proposed Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire RMP/EIS. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the Draft RMP Amendment/Draft EIS was published in the **Federal Register** in March 2009. The NOI initiated a 90-day formal scoping period that lasted until June 26, 2009. Public meetings were held during the scoping period in the communities of Haines, Skagway, and Anchorage. In 2018, an additional 60-day public outreach that closed May 30 was offered and public meetings were held in the communities of Haines, Skagway, and Juneau. In addition to both public meetings, BLM consulted with and solicited comments from local, state, and federal governments, special interest groups, and Native American tribes. In May of 2019, the Supplemental Draft EIS for the Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire Resource Management Plan was published for a 90-day public comment period. An open house was held in Haines on June 20, 2019. Additional consultation and cooperating agency meetings were held in Haines in June 2019. Public involvement is further described in Chapter 5 of the Final EIS.

Instructions for filing a protest regarding the Final EIS/Proposed Haines Amendment to the Ring of Fire RMP may be found in the "Dear Reader" letter and at 43 CFR 1610.5-2. All protests must be in writing and mailed to the appropriate address, as set forth in the **ADDRESSES** section above. Emailed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the emailed protest as an advance copy and it will receive full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, please direct emails to protest@blm.gov.

Before including your phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your protest you should be aware that your entire protest—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your protest to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

(Authority: 16 U.S.C. 3120(a); 40 CFR 1506.6(b))

Chad B. Padgett,

Acting State Director, Alaska.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[19XL.LLIDB03000.DF0000.LFHFFR650000.241A.4500136018]

Notice of Availability for the Tri-State Fuel Breaks Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Idaho and Oregon

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Boise District Office, Boise, Idaho, and the BLM Vale District Office, Vale, Oregon, have prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) titled Tri-state Fuel Breaks Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2015-0001-EIS) (Draft EIS) and, by this notice, are announcing the opening of the comment period.

DATES: To ensure that comments will be considered, the BLM must receive written comments on the Draft EIS within 45 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. The BLM will announce future meetings or hearings and any other public-participation activities at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media releases, and/or mailings.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the Draft EIS by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* blm_id_tristate@blm.gov.
- *Fax:* 208-384-3489.
- *Mail:* 3948 South Development Ave., Boise, ID 83705.

The Draft EIS and accompanying background documents are available on the project website: <https://go.usa.gov/xPruu>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lance Okeson, Project Lead, telephone: 208-384-3300; 3948 South Development Ave., Boise, ID 83705; email: blm_id_tristate@blm.gov. Contact Mr. Okeson to have your name added to our mailing list. Persons who use a

telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Relay Service (FRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact Mr. Okeson during normal business hours. FRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or a question. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Southwest Idaho, southeast Oregon, and northern Nevada (the Tri-state area) comprise one of the largest intact strongholds of Greater Sage-grouse habitat in the Northern Great Basin. This area supports habitat for big game and other sagebrush-obligate species and provides for a variety of multiple-use activities. Multiple science-based assessments dating back to 2010 have identified the project area as a landscape particularly threatened by wildfire and the consequent spread of invasive annual grasses. The 2010 Rapid Eco-regional Assessment of the Northern Basin and Range and Snake River Plain identified the Tri-state area as being at high risk for large-scale wildfires. Wildfires in this remote area can grow quickly and affect hundreds of thousands of acres of sage-steppe habitat and working landscapes within a matter of days. The 2012 Long Draw Fire (558,198 acres), the 2014 Buzzard Complex Fire (395,747 acres), the 2015 Soda Fire (285,360 acres), the 2018 Martin Fire (435,569 acres), and the 2018 Sugar Loaf Fire (233,462 acres)—all of which were in or near the project area—each impacted over a hundred thousand acres within 24 hours.

The shrub-steppe landscapes within this area represent one of the most imperiled ecosystems in the United States. The Secretary of the Interior's 2017 Wildland Fire Directive requires incorporation of fuels management into resource management planning. Secretarial Order 3372 calls for active management of public lands to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire to America's forests and rangelands. Management of wildfire has been identified as one of the key issues for maintaining sage-grouse populations in sagebrush-dominated landscapes.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed BLM action is to provide safe areas and strategic opportunities in the Tri-state area to more rapidly and effectively protect sagebrush-steppe habitat and other natural and cultural resources and socioeconomic values from wildfires by creating and maintaining fuel breaks along a network of established roads through mechanical, biological, chemical, and prescribed fire

treatments. Fuel breaks reduce fuel accumulations and disrupt fuel continuity to modify fire behavior and provide for firefighter safety and efficiency, in order to reduce the spread of wildfire across the sagebrush-steppe ecosystems within the project area.

Alternatives

Under the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), a fuel-break network would not be created. Fuels adjacent to roadways would not be treated to reduce fuel accumulations and disrupt fuel continuity. Fire suppression personnel would continue to use existing paved and other improved BLM and county roads and natural topographic features to hold and control wildfire.

Under all action alternatives, fuel breaks would only be implemented alongside existing roads. Fuel breaks would extend up to, but no farther than, 200 feet from both sides of roadways. Environmental constraints such as adjacent vegetation, terrain, soil type, and resource concerns would dictate width (≤ 200 feet) and treatment type in a given area. The methods for fuel break creation and maintenance analyzed in the Draft EIS include mowing, hand cutting, seeding (including seedbed preparation techniques), herbicide treatment, prescribed fire (*e.g.*, pile burning), and targeted grazing. These methods may be implemented in combination or as stand-alone treatments as necessary to meet the treatment objectives. Depending on available funding, implementation could occur over 15 years.

Alternative 2 contains the highest number and density of fuel breaks of all action alternatives. The BLM would implement and maintain a fuel break network along approximately 1,539 miles of existing roads: 731 miles in Idaho and 808 miles in Oregon. No fuel breaks would be constructed in designated wilderness. Fuel breaks may be established along the non-wilderness side of boundary roads adjacent to designated wilderness. Fuel breaks may be established along boundary roads surrounding lands with wilderness characteristics and wilderness study areas (WSAs).

Alternative 3 was developed to protect natural resources and socioeconomic values from large wildfires while minimizing impacts to social and cultural resources. Alternative 3 emphasizes avoidance of cultural resources and limiting impacts to special management areas (*e.g.*, wilderness and WSAs) and lands with wilderness characteristics. The fuel-break network would span 1,063 miles