

Subject: Review of Environmental Compliance Documents,
Jackson Administrative Site Lands Convenance and Development Environmental Assessment
USFS-BTNF-Jackson RD
Selected Modified Alternative Review

To: File

A. Background

The Bridger-Teton National Forest (BTNF) completed an environmental assessment (EA) on October 28, 2009, to analyze and disclose the effects of a range of alternatives selling administrative land at 340 North Cache Street, Jackson, Wyoming, and for developing facilities at North Cache, Nelson Drive Residential, and Cottonwood Work Center administrative sites.

No decision was made after the 2009 EA was released to the public. Because of the length of time since the original EA was released in 2009, the Forest completed a Supplement to the EA, which was released on January 27, 2012. In this Supplement, the Forest created a new alternative (Alternative 5) in response to both public comments and in recognition of several changed conditions. The new alternative disclosed the effects of selling approximately 10 acres of administrative land at North Cache Street, the proceeds from which would be used to construct new facilities at Nelson Drive Residential administrative site, in addition to remodeling/expansion of several structures at North Cache Street and constructing new facilities at the Cottonwood Work Center administrative site. Alternative 5 would also allow for 10 new multi-family housing units to be built within and immediately adjacent to the existing residential area.

The original EA identified Alternative 3, which proposed the construction of up to 18 housing units, as the Preferred Alternative; however, based on public comments and real estate market and other changed conditions noted in the Supplement, this preference was reconsidered and the Forest Supervisor at the time, Jacqueline Buchanan, identified Alternative 5 as the Preferred Alternative in the Supplement.

The Forest Supervisor, in the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) signed on May 4th, 2012, selected a modified Alternative 5, based on a combination of Alternative 3 from the original EA and Alternative 5 from the Supplement. As noted in the FONSI, “Alternative 3 allow(ed) (the Forest Supervisor) to authorize three additional housing units at Nelson, beyond the 10 disclosed in Alternative 5”. The combination of these two alternatives best met the original Purpose and Need as set forth in the original EA. Specific to the Nelson Drive Residential Site, the modified Alternative 5 increased the authorized number of housing units from 10 in Alternative 5 in the Supplement to the EA by three to 13 total units within or immediately adjacent to the existing development, which is within the range of units considered in Alternatives 3 and 5.

The Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on May 4th, 2012, and the authorized work at Nelson Drive has not been implemented.

B. Previous Decision

The FONSI and the selected modified Alternative 5 authorized the construction of 13 new housing units at the Nelson Drive Residential administrative site. Current site and design plans for the housing project propose the construction of 14 units within a smaller footprint, less than four acres, than noted in the modified Alternative 5, which will allow for greater employee occupancy and partnership opportunities with the local non-profit housing organization.

C. Modification

This review specifically addresses actions at the Nelson Drive Residential Site (T. 41 N., R. 116 W., Sec. 35, W½NW¼) with the selected modified Alternative 5 as it pertains to the number of housing units authorized for construction. The current approved site plan for the housing project shows 14 units, and this would be an increase of one additional unit beyond what was approved in the selected modified alternative but within a smaller footprint than noted in environmental compliance documents.

D. Context and Justification

In the interval since the signing of the FONSI, housing studies, employee surveys, and real estate data have emphasized the need for more affordable and stable rental opportunities for housing Forest Service employees in Jackson. The creation of stable, secure rental opportunities for employees will enable the BNF to recruit and retain Forest Service employees, facilitating and supporting a viable workforce at both the Supervisor's Office and Jackson Ranger District to effectively serve the communities of Teton County.

In the 2012 Decision Notice and FONSI, the Forest Supervisor selected a portion of Alternative 3 from the EA that related to housing at Nelson Drive Residential administrative site. Alternative 3 allowed for up to 18 housing units in multi-family buildings outside the area of development, while Alternative 5, as introduced in the Supplement to the EA, allowed for the construction of up to 10 housing units. The Forest Supervisor noted her focus on the administration and operation aspects of the Forest and that the selected modified alternative provided for the best operational efficiencies possible while taking into consideration current realities. I base my determination along similar lines, with the addition of one housing unit to bring the total to 14 units within an area of less than 4 acres, which is within the range of the two alternatives considered, analyzed, and used for the basis of the modified alternative.

E. Determination

After reviewing the environmental compliance documents, holding multiple discussions with Forest staff and cooperating agencies, I find the additional housing unit within a smaller footprint to be justified.

No additional effects beyond what have already been disclosed in environmental compliance documents (original EA, Supplement to the EA, and the DN/FONSI) will occur as a result of building an additional housing unit in an acreage building envelope that is less than originally authorized.

I find that after considering the two alternatives upon which the modified alternative was based and the associated disclosed effects within the Jackson Administrative Site Lands Convenance and Development EA, the proposed change in number of housing units from 13 to 14 within a smaller footprint does not change the original Finding of No Significant Impact. I have determined that this action will not have a reasonably foreseeable significant impact on the quality of the human environment (7 CFR Part 1b.6(b)(3)).

Chad Hudson
Bridger-Teton National Forest, Forest Supervisor

Date