REQUEST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

Report Control Symbol
RCS:

INSTRUCTIONS: *Section I to be completed by Proponent; Sections II and III to be completed by Environmental Planning Function. Continue on separate sheets as necessary. Reference appropriate item number(s).*

SECTION I - PROPONENT INFORMATION

1. TO *(Environmental Planning Function)*	2. FROM *(Proponent organization and functional address symbol)*	2a. TELEPHONE NO.
43 CES/CEV	43 CES/CEVP	4-1639

3. TITLE OF PROPOSED ACTION
INRMP 2001 Update Implementation

4. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION *(Identify decision to be made and need date)*
Evaluate environmental effects of implementing the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan 2001 Update

5. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES *(DOPAA) (Provide sufficient details for evaluation of the total action.)*
See p. 2

6. PROPONENT APPROVAL *(Name and Grade)*	6a. SIGNATURE	6b. DATE
V. R. Walker, GS-11	V. R. Walker	20011010

SECTION II - PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY.

(Check appropriate box and describe potential environmental effects including cumulative effects.) (+ = positive effect; 0 = no effect; - = adverse effect; U = unknown effect)

	+	0	-	U
7. AIR INSTALLATION COMPATIBLE USE ZONE/LAND USE *(Noise, accident potential, encroachment, etc.)*		X		
8. AIR QUALITY *(Emissions, attainment status, state implementation plan, etc.)*		X		
9. WATER RESOURCES *(Quality, quantity, source, etc.)*		X		
10. SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH *(Asbestos/radiation/chemical exposure, explosives safety quantity-distance, bird/wildlife aircraft hazard, etc.)*		X		
11. HAZARDOUS MATERIALS/WASTE *(Use/storage/generation, solid waste, etc.)*		X		
12. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES *(Wetlands/floodplains, threatened or endangered species, etc.)*	X			
13. CULTURAL RESOURCES *(Native American burial sites, archaeological, historical, etc.)*		X		
14. GEOLOGY AND SOILS *(Topography, minerals, geothermal, Installation Restoration Program, seismicity, etc.)*			X	
15. SOCIOECONOMIC *(Employment/population projections, school and local fiscal impacts, etc.)*		X		
16. OTHER *(Potential impacts not addressed above.)*				

SECTION III - ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS DETERMINATION

17. [X] PROPOSED ACTION QUALIFIES FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CATEX) # A2.3.7&24 ; OR
[ ] PROPOSED ACTION DOES NOT QUALIFY FOR A CATEX; FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS IS REQUIRED.

18. REMARKS
This action does not qualify for additional environmental analysis, because the 'the study efforts involve commitment of personnel and funding only(A2.3.24)'. The proposed action will improve 43 CES/CEVP ability to protect and enhance base resources. Biological resources and Native Ecosystems will improve through implementation of the Integral Natural Resource Management Plan. This action is not "regionally significant" and does not require a conformity determination in accordance with 40 CFR 93.153(c)(1). The total emission of criteria pollutants from the proposed action are below the de minimus thresholds and less than 10 percent of the Air Quality Region's planning inventory.

19. ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING FUNCTION CERTIFICATION *(Name and Grade)*	19a. SIGNATURE	19b. DATE
RP 16Oct01 PRITPAL S. HANS, GS-12 // 43 AW/JA Chief, Environmental Planning		15Oct01

Proposed Actions

The INRMP provides and environmental baseline for Pope Air Force Base, and has four associated component plans. The actions proposed for the associated plans are:

Fish and Wildlife Management Plan Actions:

- Project support
- Maintaining species lists
- Updating habitat maps
- Conducting aquatic and fish surveys
- Evaluating for and developing a Watchable Wildlife Program/Brochure
- Evaluating Bird/Wildlife Airstrike Hazards (BASH) situations
- Developing formal agreements with the state for Fish and Wildlife Coordination
- Developing formal agreements with the Ft. Bragg

Threatened and Endangered Species Plan (includes Species of Concern) Actions:

- Project support
- Obtain a GIS system
- Establish a controlled burning cycle beginning in January/February 2002
- Conduct yearly red-cockaded woodpecker activity surveys; assess habitat
- Conduct a new survey for threatened and endangered species, and species of concern

Forest Management Plan:

- Controlled burning coordination
- Post-burn assessments

Wetland Management Plan:

- Protection of wetlands

Effects of Implementing INRMP:

Implementation of the INRMP would have the effects shown on p. 1. Most of the actions called for are project support or surveys and studies. These would have no direct environmental effect. Indirectly, they would be the basis for conservation practices.

The impacts of implementing a controlled burning regime follow.

Air Quality:

Controlled burning would conducted during prescribed limits including specific weather parameters. The weather parameters are intended to ensure smoke dispersal and well as to maintain control of the fire. During a burn, there would be smoke in the immediate area of the fire, which would be carried up and dispersed by higher-elevation transport winds. However, in the past, smoke from nearby areas rose before settling down by weather inversions that occurred at night, the smoke moved along the Little River and creeks to settle on the Base. This situation reduced visibility and prevented flying until the inversion lifted and smoke dissipated. In such a situation, breathing

conditions may be aggravated. Prescribed fire weather parameters minimize but do not eliminate such problems.

Conversely, controlled burning reduces the potential negative effects of wildfires (arson, accidental, and lightning-caused fires), including the negative effect on air quality. First, with a controlled burning regime, forest fuel is reduced. With less fuel, wildfires are generally smaller, less likely to spread, and produce less smoke. Second, wildfires are not limited to the weather parameters that controlled fires are limited to. A wildfire that occurs during stable wind conditions is more likely to smoke-in the Base.

Biological Resources and Native Ecosystems

A controlled burning regime will have both direct and indirect effects on vegetation and wildlife; it would have a positive net effect on native biological species.

- Vegetation and Native Ecosystems:

A burning regime would mimic the natural fire regime. After a controlled burn, there will be a flush of grasses and forbs sprouting in the burned area. Over time, the repeated burns will result in decreased vegetative structural diversity in the dryer areas, caused by reduced woody vegetation, more open habitats, and an increase in herbaceous species. This vertical structure is believed to be similar to the native pine ecosystems that were subject to periodic naturally-occurring fires and fires set by Native Americans. The open, burned habitat would benefit flora such as *Solidago verna,* state-listed as Threatened and a Federal Species of Concern.

Wetter areas will not burn, and the shrub layers and vertical diversity would not be affected in those areas.

- Wildlife:

It is expected that small less-mobile animals would be killed by fire. For instance, fire may kill some lizards, non-flying insects, small animals that do not burrow into the ground, or other small animals whose habits and habitat do not provide fire protection. Fire will temporarily displace other animals such as deer and fox; these animals will seek cover in unburned areas. In addition, ground-nesting and shrub-nesting species would be negatively affected; growing season burns will destroy their nests, eggs, or hatchlings.

Wildlife will also be affected indirectly by the change of vegetation. The increased quantity and quality of herbaceous species that sprout following a burn are expected to result in increased insect biomass and small mammal numbers. The increase in small mammals would benefit raptors and snakes that prey on small mammals. The increase in raptor numbers is expected to be small, however, due to the small amount of habitat on Pope and raptors' territorial nature.

The change in vegetation would affect deer by reducing deer cover (used for shelter and loafing), browse species (woody species used for food in the winter), and hard-mast-producing species. Conversely, the change would increase the herbaceous vegetation used by deer at other times of the year. After the burn, the increased number and palatability of grasses and forbs would attract deer. Over time and with continued burns, there may be a slight decrease in deer numbers resulting from the decrease of winter foods and deer cover. However, any change in numbers would probably be small due to the small size of Pope habitat.

Safety and Occupational Health:

Prescribed fire safety precautions are standard operating procedures for prescribed burning. Implementing these will prevent negative safety impacts.

Past burns of the airfield grassy areas were associated with an increase in the number of birds in the burned areas soon after the burn (Finchum pers. comm. 10-9-01), presumably due to the fresh herbaceous species. Burning of the grassed area is not proposed in the INRMP. However, to be conservative, one may assume a short-term increase in some BASH species, but a long-term decrease due to decreasing vertical diversity in the vicinity of the airfield.

Soils:

Burned vegetation will expose soils in some areas, making it susceptible to erosion. However, revegetation of herbaceous species is expected soon after burns, and there should be little erosion.

Summary of Environmental Analysis:

The prescribed fire is a "continuation or resumption of pre-existing actions" (AFI 32-7061 A2.3.7) and other actions such as evaluations and surveys fall under (AFI 32-7061 A2.3.24) which categorically exclude study efforts. If the study efforts result in the need for other actions, the environmental analysis impact process will be initiated at that point.