

**Trinidad Head Lighthouse Withdrawal Revocation**

**EA # DOI-BLM-CA-N030-2014-0004**

**Partial Withdrawal Revocation of the Following Orders:**

Executive Order dated June 8, 1866

Executive Order dated September 10, 1902

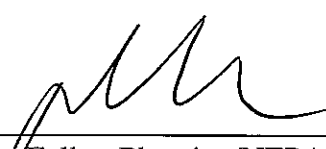
**Applicant: United States Coast Guard**

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)  
Arcata Field Office  
Arcata, CA**


Prepared By: Susie Greenhalgh, District Realty Specialist

03/21/2014

Reviewed By:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dave Fuller, Planning/NEPA Coordinator

3/21/2014

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Heppe, Assistant Field Manager

3/21/14

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **Background and Setting**

Executive Orders dated June 8, 1866 and September 10, 1902 withdrew 60.99 acres at the Trinidad Head for lighthouse purposes which was managed by the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The Trinidad Head Lighthouse Station is located along the northern California coastline, in the City of Trinidad, Humboldt County, California. The Trinidad Head Lighthouse Station began operation in 1871 to aid vessels transporting lumber in Humboldt County. The lighthouse station originally contained a lighthouse, navigation system and associated equipment, a housing complex for USCG personnel, and a communication site.

The USCG later discovered that the lands in the withdrawal were in excess of their needs and relinquished most of Trinidad Head. In April 1983, the USCG relinquished a portion of the withdrawn lands and 46.94 acres was patented to the City of Trinidad for public recreation use under the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act. On March 23, 2007 the USCG submitted a Letter of Intent to relinquish an additional 12.97 acres to the BLM. The housing complex on the property has been removed, but the lighthouse, fog station, light beam and two water tanks remain on the parcel. The lighthouse and surrounding property are no longer needed for navigation purposes because the light system is automated and does not need to be manned. The USCG would submit an application for a right-of-way or enter into an agreement with BLM for continued use and maintenance of the light beam and fog station located on the property to be relinquished.

The remaining 1.08 acres of withdrawn land on Trinidad Head, which houses the communication site, would continue to be withdrawn and managed by USCG.

On May 12, 2005, Instruction Memorandum No. 2005-151 (IM), was issued that states "It is the Director's policy that the BLM will not retain or manage lighthouses other than those for which the BLM has already accepted responsibility." The BLM-CA is requesting a one-time exemption from this policy to allow the BLM-CA to finalize the analysis of the suitability determination, which considers the return of the Light Station to the public domain for management by the BLM in support of the CCNM.

If the Light Station is returned to the public domain for BLM's management, the BLM would develop a cooperative management plan for the Light Station and surrounding lands in coordination with its many CCNM Collaborative Partners. The BLM has a partnership with the Trinidad Gateway Committee which supports the BLM's management of the Light Station. The City of Trinidad, the Yurok Tribe, and the Trinidad Rancheria are cooperators of the Trinidad Gateway Committee along with Trinidad Museum Society, California State Parks, Humboldt State University, California Fish and Wildlife, Tsurai Ancestral Society, Trinidad Coastal Land Trust, Coastwalk California, Redwood Region Audubon Society, Trinidad Coastal Land Trust, and the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce.

## **Purpose and Need for Action and Decision to be made**

The purpose of the action is to respond to USCG's request to transfer jurisdiction of the Trinidad Head Lighthouse and surrounding property to the BLM by initiating a partial revocation of the withdrawal orders which assigned jurisdiction to the USCG. The need for the action is for the USCG to discontinue ownership and maintenance of the property as the parcel is no longer needed for the originally intended purpose.

The decision to be made is whether the proposed action complies with management planning decisions and that the lands are environmentally acceptable for return to BLM, thereby managed in accordance with applicable federal land and mining laws.

## **Conformance with Land Use Plans**

The proposed action is consistent with both the Arcata Planning Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and the California Coastal National Monument RMP (2005) which allows for acquisition of lands along the coastline.

## **Categorical Exclusion of Discretionary Actions**

The proposed action will partially revoke two withdrawal orders that currently affect 12.97 acres along the California coastline and will open those lands to the mining laws. The proposed action is not included in the group of actions for which a Categorical Exclusion may be used; therefore, this Environmental Assessment will consider the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the potential use that could occur as a result of opening public lands to mining.

## **Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans**

Statutory authority for withdrawals is found in Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1716) and implementing regulations are found in 43 CFR 2300.

Trinidad Head is included within the Humboldt County Local Coastal Program. The proposal to transfer lands to BLM would have positive effects on the coastal zone, as one of BLM's primary missions is to provide public recreation opportunities and experiences where appropriate. Trinidad Head is currently designated as Public Facility (PF) however, the coastal plan states "should Trinidad Head be declared "surplus" by the federal government, this area should be evaluated in terms of open space and recreational opportunities (Humboldt County 1995). Future management of the lighthouse property under BLM jurisdiction would be consistent with the local coastal plan.

### Initial Determination of Wilderness Character:

The BLM is required to evaluate wilderness character of all areas subject to project-related activities. The project area does not contain wilderness characteristics because of its relatively small size. It has not been demonstrated that this area is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition. The area is not contiguous to any other wilderness areas or areas with identified wilderness characteristics.

## **Scoping and Issues**

The Arcata Field Office has received positive feedback from the local community as to the potential of allowing public access to this site. The USCG and local groups have showed special interest in assisting the BLM Arcata Field office in developing plans to address site improvements.

The Arcata Field Office informed the Yurok Tribe and the Trinidad Rancheria of the potential for relinquishment through letters dated September 12, 2013.

## **2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### **Proposed Action:**

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has submitted a Letter of Intent to relinquish 12.97 acres in which were originally withdrawn in 1902 for lighthouse purposes. The proposed action would determine that the lands are environmentally suitable for return to BLM jurisdiction to be management in accordance with applicable land and mining laws.

The lands involved in the revocation are described as: Humboldt Meridian, T.8N.,R.1W.,Section 26, Lot 6.

The above legal description has been reviewed and approved by BLM Chief Cadastral Surveyor, Lance Bishop (Branch of Geological Services) on November 19, 2013.

The lighthouse property contains a 30 foot lighthouse, a light beam, fog station and two water towers. The lighthouse and water tanks would transfer with the property. Upon change of jurisdiction, USCG would submit a right-of-way application or enter into an agreement with BLM for continued use and maintenance of the light beam and fog station, in a way that would not disrupt public recreation or historic purposes. If the right-of-way were not applied for or approved by BLM, all navigation equipment would be removed.

BLM intends to maintain the historic lighthouse, any other historic uses of the property, and improve public recreation/access along the California coastline with assistance and cooperation from local interest groups.

### **Alternative 1 (No Action):**

If the proposed revocation is not completed, the USCG would continue with disposal of the public lands through the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act program. In that circumstance, the future owners of the parcel could be a state or local agency, a non-profit group, or a private party. There is a possibility that public recreation on the historic site would be eliminated.

### **3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The Trinidad Head Lighthouse Station is located approximately 200 feet above the along the Pacific Ocean coastline on a rocky bluff overlooking Trinidad Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The Trinidad State Beach borders the area to the northwest and Trinidad State Park is about one mile northeast.

#### **Invasive, Non-native Species:**

Trinidad Head is densely vegetated with native plants dominated by Sitka Spruce, red alder, evergreen huckleberry, salal, blue blossom, twinberry, Pacific reedgrass, California blackberry, and many other common coastal scrub species. However, historical areas of disturbance, such as along roads, trails, and coast guard facilities are also infested with invasive, non-native species such as pampas grass, cotoneaster, and English ivy. These species produce large amounts of seed that are easily distributed through wind and birds.

#### **Recreation:**

Recreation use consisting of hiking, enjoying the scenery of the ocean, rocks and islands making up the California Coastal National Monument (CCNM), wildlife viewing, and natural and cultural resource interpretation has increasingly become a more popular and suitable use of Trinidad Head, especially due to its proximity near communities and easy access to the coastline. The local community and interest groups have been very supportive in increasing access to the coastline and retaining the lighthouse property for public recreation/historic preservation purposes. Currently the subject parcel does not receive recreation use because a locked gate and thick vegetation prevent the public from using the area. Nearby the project area is a hiking trail that loops around Trinidad Head, providing the public with outstanding views of the ocean and rocks and islands of the California Coastal National Monument. Public use of this hiking trail is estimated at 18,000 visits annually assuming an average of 50 visits per day.

#### **Visual Resources:**

The scenic quality within the project area itself is relatively low due to an abundance of invasive, nonnative species dominating the site. The lighthouse is a unique feature that stands out, attracts attention, and has high scenic quality. The distant views of the ocean with varied rock and island formations create outstanding scenery.

#### **Interpretation and Environmental Education:**

Currently no consistent interpretation or environmental educational activities occur on the site. The City of Trinidad hosts a yearly event (Trinidad Fish Festival) and in coordination with the US Coast Guard, the Trinidad Museum Society, and the Trinidad Rancheria, this site is open for guided tours for one day each year. Local schools and community groups have expressed interest in providing regular natural and cultural history interpretation through frequent guided walks and a docent program. The Trinidad gateway to the California Coastal National Monument is a BLM "Hands on the Land" site and has an active marine education program.

#### **Mineral Potential and Mining:**

Trinidad head is underlain by sandstone of the Franciscan formation (Fratlicelli *et al.* 1987). Mineral potential in this rock type has historically been low to non-existent. A review of the U.S. Geological Survey Mineral Database (USGS 2013) indicates historic gold prospects in nearby quaternary alluvial deposits. Such deposits do not occur on Trinidad head. Similarly, gas and oil deposits found in late Neogene marine sedimentary rocks in the area are not known to occur on or near Trinidad Head. Rocks found on Trinidad Head have potential for quarry development. However, several quarries currently serve the vicinity and the quality of rock (*i.e.*, hardness) found on Trinidad Head is less than that available elsewhere.

## **4. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS – Direct, Indirect and Cumulative**

### **Proposed Action**

#### **A. Direct and Indirect Effects:**

##### Invasive, Non-native Species

The proposed revocation and transfer to BLM would enable the BLM to proceed with eradication efforts of invasive, non-native weeds at many of the infested sites on the subject property. Decreasing infestations of invasive, non-native weeds leads to a reduction in seed load available for additional infestation and spread, while providing an opportunity for native plant recovery.

##### Recreation

Once under BLM jurisdiction, the project area would potentially be open for public use and enjoyment. Recreation use consisting of guided hikes, interpretation of the historic lighthouse, and education regarding the cultural significance of Trinidad Head are possible.

##### Visual Resources

Maintenance of the lighthouse and surrounding area (including eradication of nonnative, invasive plants would improve the scenic quality of the project area.

##### Interpretation and Environmental Education

The proposed action would allow for future development of consistent interpretation and environmental educational activities. Local schools, community groups and the public at large could have access to the site and be able to provide regular natural and cultural history interpretation.

The Trinidad Gateway “Hands on the Land” site could be added to the national network of field classrooms that connects students, teachers, families, and volunteers to public lands.

##### Mineral Potential and Mining

As described in the Affected Environment Section, mineral potential on Trinidad Head is low to non-existent. Any mineral present would likely be very small in quantity and difficult to extract. In the case of quarry rock, rock quality is less than that found elsewhere in the vicinity. Given the numerous coastal regulations applicable to the area, no development of mineral or aggregate resources is expected.

#### **B. Cumulative Effects:**

##### Invasive, Non-native Species

The City of Trinidad and surrounding area is highly infested with invasive species such as pampas grass, English ivy, cotoneaster, and Scotch broom. There are citizen efforts to control invasive species in the greater Trinidad community but the effect is limited. Trinidad Head is less infested than the City of Trinidad and surrounding areas, and more limited in the number of species.

It is plausible that with BLM becoming involved as a landowner on Trinidad Head, more action could be completed that would lead to a detectable decrease in the distribution of invasive, non-native species. Trinidad Head has the potential to be an island of native species providing a window of natural vegetative heritage. Cumulative effects are expected to be negligible.

### Recreation

Cumulative effects on recreation opportunities and experiences are considered to be negligible when considered in the context of past, present and reasonable foreseeable similar projects. The recreation resource in the project area is not particularly vulnerable to incremental effects, and the proposed project is not one of several similar actions or activities in the region.

### Visual Resources

Cumulative effects on visual resources are considered to be negligible when considered in the context of past, present and reasonable foreseeable similar projects. The proposed project is not one of several similar actions or activities in the region.

### Interpretation and Environmental Education

Cumulative effects on interpretation and environmental education are considered negligible at this time.

### Mineral Potential and Mining

Mineral extraction is not expected to occur on Trinidad Head. Therefore, no cumulative effects are expected.

## **Alternative 1 (No Action)**

### **A. Direct and Indirect Effects:**

#### Invasive, Non-native Species

If the proposed revocation does not transfer to BLM, Trinidad Head could likely continue to host invasive, non-native species that are likely to persist and continue to offer their seed load to new susceptible areas of disturbance as they occur. There would be no invasive, weed distribution relief between Trinidad Head and the City of Trinidad and surrounding areas.

#### Recreation

Recreation opportunities and experiences could be precluded under this alternative if the subject land were disposed of to an entity that did not allow future public access and use of the historic lighthouse and surrounding lands.

#### Visual Resources

Impacts on visual resources are unknown. If the affected lands were disposed to an entity that protected and enhanced the scenic quality, then visual resources would be improved. Conversely, if the land were disposed to an entity that was not concerned with scenic quality, then the visual amenities would be degraded.

## Interpretation and Environmental Education

No effects to interpretation and environmental education are expected if the no action alternative were selected.

## Mineral Potential and Mining

Mineral extraction would be precluded if the no action alternative were selected.

### **B. Cumulative Effects:**

#### Invasive, Non-native Species

If the proposed revocation does not transfer to BLM, Trinidad Head could likely continue to host invasive, non-native species that are likely to persist and spread seed. Given the abundance of invasive species present in the surrounding area, this effect would be negligible.

#### Recreation

Recreation opportunities and experiences could be precluded under this alternative if the subject land were disposed of to an entity that did not allow future public access and use of the historic lighthouse and surrounding lands. Given the unique nature of the lighthouse and coastal vistas, this would result in a minor cumulative effect to recreation opportunities in the area.

#### Visual Resources

Impacts on visual resources are unknown. If the affected lands were disposed to an entity that protected and enhanced the scenic quality, then visual resources would be improved. Conversely, if the land is disposed to an entity that was not concerned with scenic quality, then the visual amenities would be degraded. Cumulative impacts cannot be determined.

## Interpretation and Environmental Education

Cumulative effects on interpretation and environmental education are considered negligible at this time.

## Mineral Potential and Mining

Mineral extraction is not expected to occur on Trinidad Head. Therefore, no cumulative effects are expected.



## 5.0 TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS and AGENCIES CONSULTED

The following persons, organizations, and agencies were consulted during preparation of this analysis. Inclusion of an organization or individual's name below should not be interpreted as their endorsement of the analysis or conclusions.

Mr. Garth Sundberg, Chairman, Trinidad Rancheria  
Mr. Thomas O'Rourke, Chairman, Yurok Tribe  
Members of the Trinidad Gateways to the California Coastal National Monument

## 6.0 REFERENCES

Fratlicelli, L.A., Albers, J.P., Irwin, W.P., and Blake, M.C., Jr., 1987, Geologic map of the Redding 1 X 2 degree quadrangle, Shasta, Tehama, Humboldt, and Trinity Counties, California: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 87-257, scale 1:250,000.

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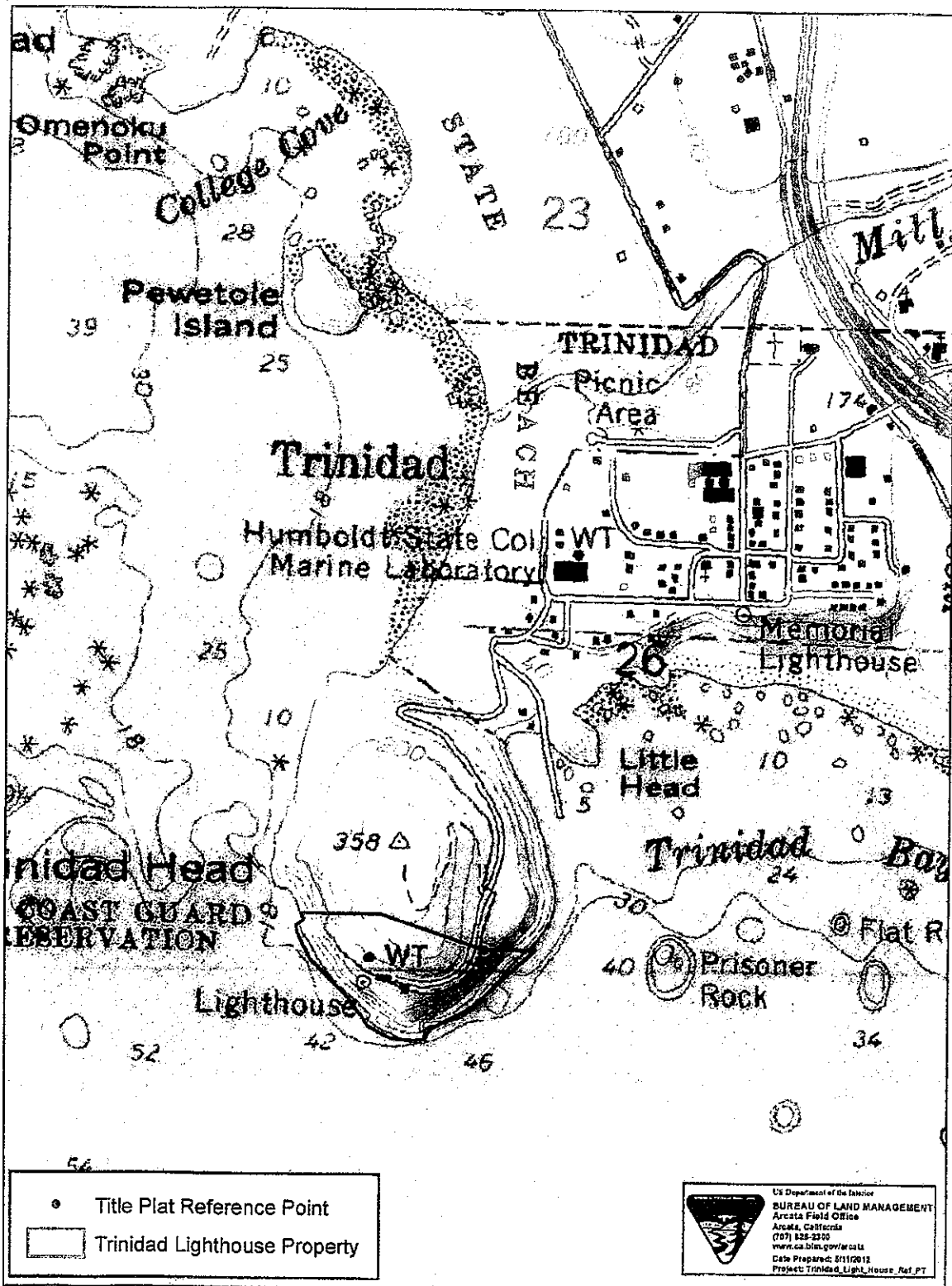
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U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management. 1996. *Arcata Planning Area Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment Decision Record.* Decision Record, Environmental Assessment. Arcata, CA.

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Exhibit A  
Trinidad Head Light Station



Date: 9/11/2013