

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
for
(DOI-BLM-CA-N070-2010-0003-EA)
West Toney Burn Fence

INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis (DOI-BLM-CA-N070-2010-0003-EA) analyzing the impacts of constructing 4.2 miles of fence in the Nevada Coleman Allotment.

The EA analyzes (2) alternatives from which I have selected Alternative 1 (Proposed Alternative).

1. Alternative 1, the selected alternative, is described on page 4 of the EA and consists of:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to allow construction of 4.2 miles of fence to separate the Back of the House and Glenco Spring Use Areas. The proposed fence would be located in Washoe County, NV, T.46 N, R.20 E, sections 21, 16, 9, 4.

The proposed action addresses the underlying need for the proposal and accomplishes the following objectives:

These objectives were developed from the Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision, April 2008, and Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs).

Objective 1: Sustainable, ecologically sound, and economically viable livestock grazing opportunities would be provided, where suitable, in the Surprise Field Office management area.

Objective 2: Continue to modify and adjust grazing management within individual grazing allotments to ensure that a vigorous plant community is sustained in combination with livestock grazing. Adjustments would be prioritized for allotments or areas where plant communities are at risk or have greater potential for improving before they become degraded and less productive.

In conformity to BLM policy and the Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for Nevada and Eastern California – First Edition, Vya PMU (2004), all new fencing would be built to comply with applicable wildlife standards.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

The proposed action is subject to and conforms with the “Surprise Field Office Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision, April 2008. The RMP supports the proposed project construction as identified in the following sections:

Section 2.14.4 (p.2-59):

- Actions would minimize damage to the watershed and its soil, vegetation, air-quality or other resources of the public lands.

Section 2.22.2 (p. 2-87)

- Ensure that sufficient vegetation is retained around springs and other water sources, riparian areas, and wetlands to fulfill the needs of wildlife.
- Remove fencing that is no longer required and replace fencing that is harmful to wildlife. Build all new fencing to wildlife-friendly specifications.

The action is also in accordance with 43 CFR 4100 and to be consistent with the provisions of the Taylor Grazing Act, Public Rangelands Improvement Act, and Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION:

Based upon a review of the attached EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. For this reason no environmental impact statement needs to be prepared. This finding is based on the following rationale and discussion of context and intensity of the action.

Rationale:

Following is the rationale for why the identified issues discussed in the EA will not be significantly affected or affect the action.

Cultural Resources

A search of the BLM cultural resource data base revealed that no cultural resource sites had been previously identified within the proposed project area. However, a number of prehistoric cultural resources had been identified in the vicinity of the project area. The majority of the resources are associated with tool stone procurement and hunting. The project area is also situated within an obsidian source that was frequently exploited by Native Americans. Prehistoric sites are often associated with obsidian cobbles that have been exposed through erosion processes. It was expected that sites such as these would be found within the project area. Portions of the project area had also been burned over during the Barrel Fire of 2005.

A Class III cultural resource inventory was completed for the project. As a result of the inventory three prehistoric archaeological sites were identified and recorded within the Area of Project Effect (APE). The sites are associated with lithic procurement and hunting. No historic resources were identified during the inventory. None of the sites have been evaluated for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) significance. Therefore, the Bureau of Land Management assumes that the three sites are eligible to the NRHP. As a result of the identification of the cultural resources, the fence line was adjusted to avoid any direct or indirect impacts to cultural resources.

Sage-grouse Habitat

One active sage-grouse strutting ground or "lek" is known to occur about 1 mile from the proposed fenceline. The fenceline was moved away from the lek and other known sage-grouse use areas in accordance with the Vya sage-grouse conservation strategy which recommends that new developments be placed greater than 0.6 miles from active leks. This project was designed

to ensure compliance with the 2004 grazing decision, which would also benefit riparian areas used by sage-grouse for brood rearing of chicks and therefore is expected to have positive impacts to sage-grouse populations. The fences would be built to BLM specifications that minimize impacts to wildlife, and reflective tape would be placed on wire fence to prevent wildlife strikes. The monitoring included in the proposed alternative would allow for early identification of sage grouse impacts and prompt response if impacts are identified.

Resource(s)/Concerns discussed but Eliminated as an Issue

Seven resources and/or potential concerns were identified during internal and external scoping. These are listed and discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA, starting on pg. 9. I have reviewed the rationale provided for each resource or concern and support their elimination as an issue.

Context: The proposed action is in a project area involving a grazing allotment of 55,060 acres, within a pasture system of with three use areas totaling approximately of 14,000 acres of BLM administered land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance, but on a local level it is important to the local economy and public land health.

Intensity: The following discussion is based on the relevant factors that should be considered in evaluating intensity as described in 43 CFR 4100:

1. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

I have determined that none of the direct, indirect or cumulative impacts associated with the selected alternative are significant, individually or combined.

2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.

The proposed action is located within a rural setting. Grazing has been authorized within the affected area since the inception of BLM, and there have been no known instances where public health or safety has been affected or a conflict has occurred.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

A discussion of these unique geographic areas and anticipated environmental issues is located in Chapter 3 of the EA, starting on pg. 9. Based on the EA I have determined that the selected alternative will not have a significant impact on the unique characteristics within affected area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

Scoping for the proposed action and background information was sent to known affected and interested publics. There were no comments received, therefore I have determined that the effects described in the EA are not highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

Fence construction is an activity common to BLM management, and BLM has developed standards for fence development to minimize wildlife risks. The analysis provided in the attached EA does not indicate that this action would involve any unique or unknown risks.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The construction of a fence is not precedent setting.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.

A cumulative effects analysis was conducted as part of the EA, and it determined that there were no cumulative effects associated with the selected alternative.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The fence design has been adjusted to insure that there would be no direct or indirect effects to cultural resources. Therefore, there would be no affect or impacts to cultural resources under the selected action.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.

The action does not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species, or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where nonfederal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.

The action does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Shane DeForest, Field Manager

Date