

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
TWIN FALLS DISTRICT
BURLEY FIELD OFFICE
IDAHO

EA Name (Includes Type of Proposal) Williams Buried Irrigation Water Pipeline ROW			EA Number: ID-220-2009-EA-3769		
LANDS INVOLVED					
Township	Range	Meridian	Section	Subdivision	Acres
11 South	17 East	Boise	34	NE ¹ / ₄ SW ¹ / ₄ ,NW ¹ / ₄ SW ¹ / ₄ , NW ¹ / ₄ SE ¹ / ₄ .	1.1
Serial, Lease or Case File Number: IDI- 35995		Land Use Plan Decision: N/A		Plan Name: Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP)	
Applicant Name (if applicable): Jeff Williams					
Other information: N/A					
Estimated date(s) desired for field examination (cultural, T&E, etc.) and by whom: Cultural exam completed by John Lytle on 11-20-07 T and E Species field exams, were completed on 6-22-09 (animals) and Various since 1992 (plants)					
Prepared by: Scott D. Barker		Title: Realty Specialist		Date: 4-30-09	

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

JEFF WILLIAMS BURIED IRRIGATION WATER PIPELINE RIGHT-OF-WAY

INTRODUCTION

Background: The Williams Family farm and run cattle in the subject area and have for several generations. Specific to the proposed action, they farm an area south of the subject public land which is irrigated with Salmon River Canal water via a ditch. The Salmon River Canal Company canal (lateral no. 1) and the existing ditch cross the subject public land. They now desire to enhance their use of the canal water by utilizing the natural terrain and gravity to pressurize the canal water for sprinkler irrigation by running it through a 12” diameter pipeline. The proposed pipeline would originate at a new head gate on the canal and cross approximately 2400 feet of public land and about one quarter mile of private land to deliver water to the subject farm.

Type of Action: The action would involve the grant of a right-of-way pursuant to Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1761).

Purpose of and Need for Proposed Action: On October 3, 2007 Jeff Williams filed an application for a right-of-way to construct, operate and maintain a buried 12” diameter, 80 psi plastic irrigation pipeline that would deliver irrigation water to private land owned by him. The proposed pipeline is needed so that the Williams’ can convert irrigation on this particular farm from flood to sprinkler and make more efficient use of their canal water.

Location of Proposed Action: The proposed pipeline route is approximately 9 miles south of Twin Falls, ID. The proposed route is legally described as follows:

T. 11 S., R. 17 E., B.M., Twin Falls County, ID
Section 34: NE¹/₄SW¹/₄,NW¹/₄SW¹/₄,NW¹/₄SE¹/₄.

See the attached maps, Exhibits “A-1” and “A-2” for the physical location of the proposed route.

Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan: The subject lands are managed in accordance with the Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP) which was approved on September 16, 1982. The Twin Falls MFP makes no specific recommendations regarding rights-of-way for irrigation pipelines, nor does it preclude rights-of-way for this area. The proposal is therefore in conformance with the appropriate land use plan.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations or Other Plans: The subject application was made in accordance with Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 of October 21, 1976, as amended, 43 U.S.C. 1761 (FLPMA) and the regulations found at 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 2800. These regulations will govern the approval and administration of the

right-of-way grant (if approved), including monitoring requirements. The proposed action does not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Description of Proposed Action: The proposed action is to grant a right-of-way to Jeff Williams for the proposed pipeline pursuant to FLPMA. The proposed right-of-way would be 20 feet in width, approximately 2400 feet in length and would occupy 1.1 acres of public land, more or less.



This photo looks to the east along the proposed route. The proposed pipeline route is marked by the red dashed line on the photo. The silver pickup truck in the back ground is parked on the boundary between public and private land with the private being beyond the truck.



This photo looks west and shows the proposed new headgate location (green box) on the canal (Salmon River Canal Co. lateral no. 1 – black dashed line). The proposed pipeline route is shown as a red dashed line.

The 12” diameter, 80 psi plastic pipe would be installed using a medium sized backhoe disturbing the minimum amount of surface soil and vegetation to dig a 36” deep trench and then backfill over the pipe. No blading would occur on the proposed right-of-way. Once backfilled, the pipeline trench would be contoured to approximate the original terrain. There would however be a slight mound of soil left over the pipe to account for potential subsidence in the trench since the backfill would not be compacted. The disturbed area would then be seeded with species commensurate with that currently on the ground and in accordance with the right-of-way stipulations found in Exhibit “B” to this environmental assessment. If noxious weeds occur as a result of the ground disturbance, they will be treated also in accordance with Exhibit “B”. Seeding would be done in the late fall following construction to maximize the chances of seeding success. Additionally, the proposed project, through construction timing, would avoid causing harm, disturbance or mortality to nesting birds or their young in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Best Management Practices (BMP), in addition to construction timing and seeding, are also found in Exhibit “B”. These would be implemented to insure that disturbance to the environment is minimized.

Description of Alternatives: Field examination of the subject area did not reveal any alternative routes for the proposed pipeline that do not involve public land. The proposed route is the shortest, most direct and best utilizes the available terrain. Therefore, the only alternative considered further in this assessment is the no action alternative. Under the no action alternative, the applicant would continue to utilize his Salmon River Canal Company water through an open ditch on public land and flood irrigate his farm. However, no pipeline construction or other disturbance would occur on public land.

Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail: No alternatives were considered, but not analyzed in detail.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

General Setting: The subject area is characterized by nearly level to gently sloping and rolling terrain that is vegetated predominantly by sagebrush and grasses at an elevation of between 4270 and 4370 feet. This is better shown by the photo above under, Description of the Proposed Action. The area is located on a terrace approximately 9 miles south of Twin Falls and about 2 miles east of Highway 93 (see the map, Exhibit “A-2”). The area is most generally used for livestock grazing, wildlife habitat and recreation.

The no-action alternative reflects the current situation within the project area.

Through the process of reviewing the proposed action and the affected area, the Interdisciplinary Team considered several resources and supplemental authorities. The Interdisciplinary Team determined that several of these resources or elements of the human environment would potentially be affected. These elements and the expected impacts to the human environment are discussed below:

Vegetation: The subject area is predominantly vegetated with Wyoming sagebrush, Sandberg’s bluegrass, cheatgrass, western wheatgrass and Hood’s phlox. No threatened, endangered or sensitive species of vegetation or their habitats occur in the vicinity of the proposed route (see Exhibit “D”).

Noxious Weeds and Non-Native, Invasive Species: Noxious weeds are plant species that have been designated "noxious" by law. The Idaho Department of Agriculture uses the following criteria for designation of a noxious weed:

- It must be present in but not native to Idaho;
- It must be potentially more harmful than beneficial to Idaho;
- Eradication must be economically physically feasible;
- The potential adverse impact of the weed must exceed the cost of control.

There are hundreds of weed species in Idaho; however, only 57 are designated noxious by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture.

Non-native, invasive species are defined as an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.

According to the BLM inventory, four noxious weeds are known to occur in the scoping area of the proposed project, although none occur directly on the proposed route. These weeds occur predominantly along ditches and canals in the area and usually occur as a single plant or in small patches. There were 14 occurrences of Russian knapweed, 1 occurrence of diffuse knapweed, 2 occurrences of Canada thistle, and 7 occurrences of white top. These known occurrences have been treated to stop the spread of noxious weeds in the area. Cheatgrass brome is present along the proposed route and occurs to some extent in all areas.

Wildlife: The subject area provides habitat in terms of food and cover for a variety of small mammals and birds. As a result, a number of predators utilize the area, both terrestrial and avian. Also, some winter range for big game such as mule deer and pronghorn is provided by the area. No threatened or endangered wildlife species are known to inhabit or use the area (see Exhibit "E"). There is a ferruginous hawk (a BLM Sensitive Species) nest (active from March 1 through July 31), within one half (½) mile of the proposed route.

Soils: Soils in the subject area are of the Chiara silt loam series on 1 to 8 percent slopes. These are well drained soils on terraces that are shallow to a hardpan. The average annual precipitation is about 8-10 inches, average annual air temperature is about 47-49 degrees F. and the frost-free season is 120 to 130 days. In a typical profile, the surface layers to a depth of 17 inches are pale brown silt loam, light yellowish brown silt loam and white silt loam. These are underlain by white lime- and silica-cemented hardpan. Depth to these layers is 49" +. This would not restrict the depth to which proposed pipeline could be placed. The soil is of moderate permeability and the hazard of water and wind erosion is moderate.

Rangeland Resources: The subject lands are included in the Squaw Joe grazing allotment (#4114) which is grazed by cattle at various times between April 24 and July 14.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternative

Proposed Action

Direct/Indirect Impacts: It should be noted that the subject public land is already impacted by human activity due to the presence of a fence line and the Salmon River Canal Company canal and associated roads and an open ditch and numerous two-track trails.

VEGETATION & SOILS – Digging the trench for the proposed pipeline would result in the destruction of the vegetative resource on a strip of land approximately 24 inches wide by 2400 feet long. The excavated soil would cover about a 4 foot wide strip of vegetation along the edge of the pipeline. Some vegetation would be destroyed when the excavated soil is scraped up to backfill the pipeline trench. Some crushing of vegetation would result from vehicle use along the pipeline route during construction. Some dust and noise would also be expected during construction.

NOXIOUS WEEDS AND NON-NATIVE, INVASIVE SPECIES – Since several noxious species occur in the area (although directly on the proposed pipeline route), it is possible that they could move in on disturbed soil following pipeline construction prior to desirable vegetation becoming established.

WILDLIFE – Wildlife species using the subject area may be temporarily displaced during construction and reclamation. However, the area is so small and proposed construction time is so short that the impact is not measurable. It is also adjacent to large amounts of similar to identical habitat which should accommodate any displaced wildlife during the reclamation process.

RANGELAND RESOURCES – The only impact to rangeland resources would be the temporary immeasurably small loss of forage in the allotment.

GENERAL IMPACTS – The proposed pipeline would eliminate the need for the open ditch that is currently in use which would reduce evaporation loss of irrigation water. This ditch would be abandoned and allowed to vegetate over which would improve hiding cover for wildlife species. Use of the proposed pipeline and the natural slope of the terrain would also eliminate the need for an electric pump to pressurize the water for sprinkler irrigation which would result in a net savings of electric power usage. Sprinklers result in more efficient use of irrigation water and an associated reduction in soil erosion.

Cumulative Impacts: In addition to the proposed ROW, the applicant is proposing to install approximately .5 miles of new buried irrigation pipeline on his private land within the scoping area for this project. The subject private lands are all currently under irrigated cultivation. The only change on these lands would be in the type of irrigation used (e.g. flood to sprinkler) and in the water delivery system. As a result, use of irrigation water would become more efficient and less labor intensive on these farms as a whole.

Alternative (No Action)

Direct/Indirect Impacts: There would be no direct impacts to the public land, including: Vegetation & Soils; Noxious Weeds and Non-Native, Invasive Species; Wildlife; and, Rangeland Resources, as a result of the no action alternative which would allow no pipeline to be constructed.

Cumulative Impacts: There would be no cumulative impacts associated with the no action alternative.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Persons and Agencies Consulted: Jeff and Billy Williams were consulted as the applicants for the proposed pipeline. Katie Fite of Boise, ID and Julie Randell of the Prairie Falcon Audubon Chapter were provided with scoping notices on the proposed project. In addition, scoping information was posted to the internet via the BLM NEPA database.

List of Preparers:

Scott Barker	Realty Specialist
Rance Marquez	NEPA Coordinator
Nancy Ady	Rangeland Resources
Jesse Rawson	Wildlife Resources
Jim Tharp	Vegetative Resources
John Lytle	Cultural Resources
(Retired BLM Archeologist)	
Suzann Henrikson	Cultural Resources
Michael Courtney	Management

ADDENDUM

Attachment #1 -- Resources and Supplemental Authorities Not Analyzed
Exhibit "A-1" -- Site Map
Exhibit "A-2" -- Project Maps
Exhibit "B" -- Right-of-Way Stipulations
Exhibit "C" -- Cultural Resources Clearance
Exhibit "D" -- Threatened and Endangered Plant Clearance
Exhibit "E" -- Threatened and Endangered Animal Clearance