

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Klamath Falls Resource Area

Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Swan Lake Geotechnical Investigations Environmental Assessment
#DOI-BLM-OR-L040-2015-019-EA

Introduction

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) of the Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis to evaluate the impacts of issuing a short term right of way to conduct geophysical and geotechnical investigations in the proposed Swan Lake Pump Storage Project area, as requested by Swan Lake North Hydro, LLC and EDF-Renewable Energy. The EA analyzes two alternatives: the no action alternative, and the proposed action.

Plan Conformance and Consistency

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan(s): Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement, approved in September 1994. The proposed action has been determined to be in conformance with this RMP as required by regulation (43 CFR 1610.5-3(a)).

Context & Intensity

The proposed action would include the drilling of one borehole approximately 6 to 18 inches in diameter and one trial pit. Seismic studies on BLM land would include the collection of seismic reflection and refraction data using seismographs and geophones. All work areas would be accessed via existing roads. The proposed project is within the Klamath Falls Resource Area, and does not include any wilderness or lands with other special designations. I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the geophysical and geotechnical investigations relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Based on the analysis contained in the EA, the proposed action would not have significant beneficial or adverse impacts on the human environment. This is a relatively small scale, short term project (one borehole, one trial pit, and collection of data using seismographs and geophones). There are no areas of critical environmental concern, research natural areas, wilderness study areas, designated wilderness areas, areas with wilderness characteristics, wild and scenic rivers, prime and unique farmlands, floodplains, special status plants, forest or woodlands, wetlands or riparian areas, fisheries or aquatic habitats, wild horses, or livestock grazing use in the project area. I have determined that none of the direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts associated with the proposed action are significant, individually or combined.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed action is located within a rural setting adjacent to private land with little public access and would have no significant impacts on public health or safety.

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

The project area does not contain park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Cultural resource surveys were conducted and no sites will be impacted.

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

A scoping letter describing the proposed action and background information was sent to approximately 139 adjacent landowners, agencies, groups, and other affected and interested publics. Two comments were received related to the associated Swan Lake Pumped Storage Project for which an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared by FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) at later date. I have determined that the effects described in this Swan Lake geotechnical investigations 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.

Similar rights of way for geotechnical studies have been implemented in similar areas within the Klamath Falls Resource Area. The nature of these impacts is not highly uncertain, nor does it involve unique or unknown 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 proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions on KFRA-managed lands. This analysis would be used for only for the geophysical and geotechnical investigations as described in the EA.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The actions considered in the proposed action were reviewed by the interdisciplinary team within the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. Significant cumulative effects are not anticipated.

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

The proposed action would not have adverse effects on any cultural sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places or sites known to be eligible.

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 ESA of 1973.*

There are no threatened or endangered listed, proposed, candidate species or designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act (as amended USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) 1973) that occur within the project areas or that would be affected from project activities.

10. *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The project does not violate any known Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Local tribes were consulted and are listed in the EA. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

DRAFT Finding of No Significant Impact Determination

I have reviewed the EA (DOI-BLM-OR-L040-2015-019-EA), dated September 2015. On the basis of the information contained in the EA, it is my determination that: (1) implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the KFRA RMP; (2) the proposed action is in conformance with the RMP; and (3) the proposed action does not constitute a major Federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing RMP and Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA or as articulated in the letters of comment.

Donald J. Holmstrom
Field Manager, Klamath Falls Resource Area

Date