

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT - ALTURAS FIELD OFFICE

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION

A. Background

BLM Office: Alturas Field Office LLCAN02000

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: CA320-NEPA-08-32

Proposed Action Title/Type: Fitzhugh Creek Wildlife Fence Modification

Location of Proposed Action: This project is located approximately 10 miles southeast of Alturas, California, in Modoc County, and within the Fitzhugh Creek corridor.

Mount Diablo Meridian

T. 41 N., R. 13 E., Secs. 23, 24, 27, and 28;

T. 41 N., R. 14 E., Secs. 18 and 19.

See Attached Map

Description of Proposed Action:

The Bureau of Land Management, Alturas Field Office would maintain, rebuild, or improve fence crossings across the Fitzhugh Creek corridor at livestock crossings to prevent livestock access into the wildlife/riparian enclosures on the creek.

Two large barbed wire fence enclosures are in place on the Fitzhugh Creek corridor. The lower enclosure has: 8 miles of fence, is approximately 300 acres in size, protects 3.5 miles of creek, has 3 livestock crossings, and was constructed in 1980. All livestock crossings have ¾" steel cable spanning the creek with juniper limbs or PVC pipe suspended from the cable to prevent livestock access into the creek and riparian areas. Two of these crossings are constructed from hanging juniper limbs and posts to restrict livestock from the creek, while diversion crossings are constructed with hanging 4" diameter PVC pipe. The upper enclosure has: 2.5 miles of fence, protects 1 mile of creek and 150 acres of riparian habitat, has one livestock crossing, and was constructed in 1986. High rock rims prevent livestock access to another 1.5 miles of the creek and protects an additional 150 acres of stream and riparian resources.

These proposed crossings would utilize the same cables that currently hang across the creek. The fences that hang off of the cables and cross the creek are designed to allow debris to pass under the fence but restrict livestock from the wildlife and riparian areas. Some of the crossings would only need a few hanging juniper limbs or hanging PVC pipe replaced where limbs or pipes are missing. Other crossings or boundary fences would be reconstructed of 2" x 4" wood material, but still utilize the same footprints and cables as the old crossings. All fences within the stream corridor and enclosure fences would be maintained as needed.

The work would be done manually by Cal Fire Conservation Crews and/or the BLM fuels crew.

Any salvageable metal T-posts and wire would be returned to the Alturas Field Office. Non-useable metal materials would be recycled at the Alturas recycling center.

Lower Exclosure

At the western BLM/private boundary, the fence would be rebuilt on the original hanging cables with 2" x 4" wood posts packed to the site by local Conservation Crews. The Crews would drive to within 1 mile of the site on the Little Juniper Reservoir Road, then walk west along the south rim for 1 mile to the work site.

The Little Juniper crossing would be accessed by vehicles on the Little Juniper reservoir road to the south rim and walk ¼ mile to the creek. Work would consist of replacing 5-10 juniper limbs on each existing cross fence, and tightening up the adjacent barbed wire fence. The juniper to be used would be cut from trees at the site.

Maintenance on the west fence of Willow crossing would consist of replacing 5-10 juniper limbs cut from trees on site. The adjacent barbed wire on the west and east cross fences would be tightened as needed. Vehicles would use the Signal Butte Road on the north side of the creek, park at the antelope trap, and walk 400' south to the creek.

Within the lower wildlife/riparian exclosure area, approximately ½ mile of down barbed wire fence that is hazardous to wildlife would be removed, wooden posts would be left standing intact.

One quarter mile of standing and non-functional barbed wire fence would be removed and utilized to construct ¼ mile of barbed wire fence in an adjacent location to prevent livestock access into the lower 200 acre wildlife/riparian exclosure area. BLM's wildlife specifications (BLM Fencing Manual H-1741-1) would be used for the fence.

Upper Exclosure

Sheep Bridge crossing maintenance would consist of replacing a total of 20 juniper limbs on the east and west cross fences, and the limbs would be cut from trees on site. Adjacent barbed wire fences would also be tightened. Vehicle access would be from the Jim Creek Road to Yankee Jim Ranch and park on the southwest boundary of the ranch. The crew would tighten the existing north/south fence, then walk 1 mile west to Sheep Bridge crossing, following an existing 4x4 road on the north rim.

The upper or eastern boundary fence between BLM and California Department of Fish and Game would have 5-10 juniper limbs replaced, which would be cut on site, and the adjacent wire fence would be tightened. Access would be from the Jim Creek Road to the southwest corner of Yankee Jim Ranch, park and walk ¼ mile to the site.

Stipulations

1. Prior to entry on public lands, clean all vehicles and equipment of extraneous vegetative material to prevent spread of noxious weeds.

2. Noxious weeds would be treated prior to and after construction and disturbance.

3. Wildlife Stipulations:

Sage-grouse:

- All work activities would be conducted outside sage-grouse breeding season- March 1- June 15th.
- New segments of fence would have deflectors added to the barbed wire (See Attachment 1).

Golden Eagles:

- An eagle/raptor survey is required prior to the commencement of project activities to identify active nest along Fitzhugh Creek. If an active nest is identified, restrictions according to “Seasonal Restriction and Distance Buffers for Wildlife” (Alturas RMP Table 2.24-3) will be applied accordingly.

Pronghorn:

- All project activities would be conducted outside pronghorn migration and kidding seasons November 1-June 15.
- All fences would be constructed following BLM Fencing Manual H-1741-1, *Standard Bureau Modifications to Meet Multiple-Use Needs*, which includes the following;

Number of Wires (maximum)	Fence Height (maximum)	Wire Spacing (from ground up)	Wire Type	Number of Stays (between posts spaced 16.5-30 feet)
3	38 inches	16, 10, 12 (inches)	Bottom smooth	One w/post at 16.5 feet, 1 or 2 w/ post at 30 feet

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

This action conforms to the Alturas Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision (ROD), approved on April 17, 2008 because it is specifically provided for or is clearly consistent with the RMP objectives and decisions as follows:

Protection of riparian, wildlife, and fisheries resources is identified as a major management action in the wildlife and recreation sections of the 2007 RMP.

C. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 A-1. (the applicable BLM categorical exclusion is listed below)

A. Fish and Wildlife

1. Modification of existing fences to provide improved wildlife ingress and egress.

J. Other

10. Removal of structures and materials of no historical value, such as abandoned automobiles, fences, and buildings, including those built in trespass and reclamation of the site when little or no surface disturbance is involved.

D. Signature

This categorical exclusion is appropriate for this action because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply (see attached).

I have considered the impacts to wildlife resources due to hazards posed for wildlife concerning; fence maintenance, removal of fences, and fence construction activities. Livestock water crossings were considered for maintenance to ensure that the areas outside of the crossings provide high quality habitat for wildlife and aquatic resources. Therefore, I feel these projects should go forward for the protection of these critical wildlife resources.

Timothy J. Burke
Field Manager

Date

E. Contact

For more information, contact Claude Singleton, Recreation Planner, 530-233-4666.

Review of Extraordinary Circumstances

The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A (3) requires review of the following “extraordinary circumstances” (516 DM 2 Appendix 2) to determine if an otherwise categorically excluded action would require additional environmental analysis/documentation.

Would the proposed action: (YES or NO)

1) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments:

2) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments: No impacts to recreation and wild and scenic rivers.

Other Lands With Wilderness Characteristics

All Public Lands within the Alturas Field Office were analyzed and summarized in the 1979 wilderness inventory pursuant to the Federal Land Policy Management Act. The contiguous lands within this portion of the inventory unit (Fitzhugh Creek canyon) total 1060 acres, whereas the overall inventory unit was comprised of 19,000 acres. During the 2011 wilderness characteristics inventory, no lands with wilderness characteristics were found within the larger portion of the study unit, and only small segments of the canyon have an opportunity for solitude. There will be no further discussion or assessment of this issue in this document. For additional information and rationale see the folder for the “Fitzhugh Creek Wildlife Fence Modification project” in the wilderness case files. (CA-NO-02-003). CS 1-25-2011

Comments: This project is exempt under the Statewide Heritage Protocol Agreement, October 2007, Appendix D, Exemptions, Class A Activities, Activity A34. September 9, 2010 DJS

3) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments:

4) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments:

5) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments:

6) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments:

7) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

Yes No

Date: September 9,2010 DJS

Comments:

8) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat.

Yes No

Date: 04/26/2010 MPD & 03/01/2011 ADK

Comments:

- Surveys for BLM special status plants (SSP) have been conducted in the project area in past years and no SSP or T&E plants have been located.
- See Wildlife Stipulations & Attachment 1.

9) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Yes No

Date:

Comments:

10) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

Yes No

Date: 1-25-2011 CS

Comments:

11) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

Yes No

Date: September 9, 2010 DJS

Comments:

12) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

Yes No

Date: 06/02/2010

Comments: The Fitzhugh Creek Wildlife Fence Modification Project would have a low probability to contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. A review of the Alturas Field Office noxious weeds database shows no existing noxious weed sites near the project area. However, 70 Mediterranean sage sites and 3 Yellow starthistle sites and 4 Scotch thistle sites were inventoried and treated in the past 3 years, approximately 0.6 - 2 miles from the project location. If access to the project location is from the south (Little Juniper Road) drivers of vehicles will be made aware of existing noxious weed locations they will be driving through. BLM will continue to inventory the area to ensure existing noxious weeds do not increase, or new weeds become established and/or to prevent any further spread of any existing infestations found during the inventory and treatment process. AMU

Reviewers:

Botany/Riparian

Date

Cultural Resources

Date

Wildlife

Date

Invasive Species

Date

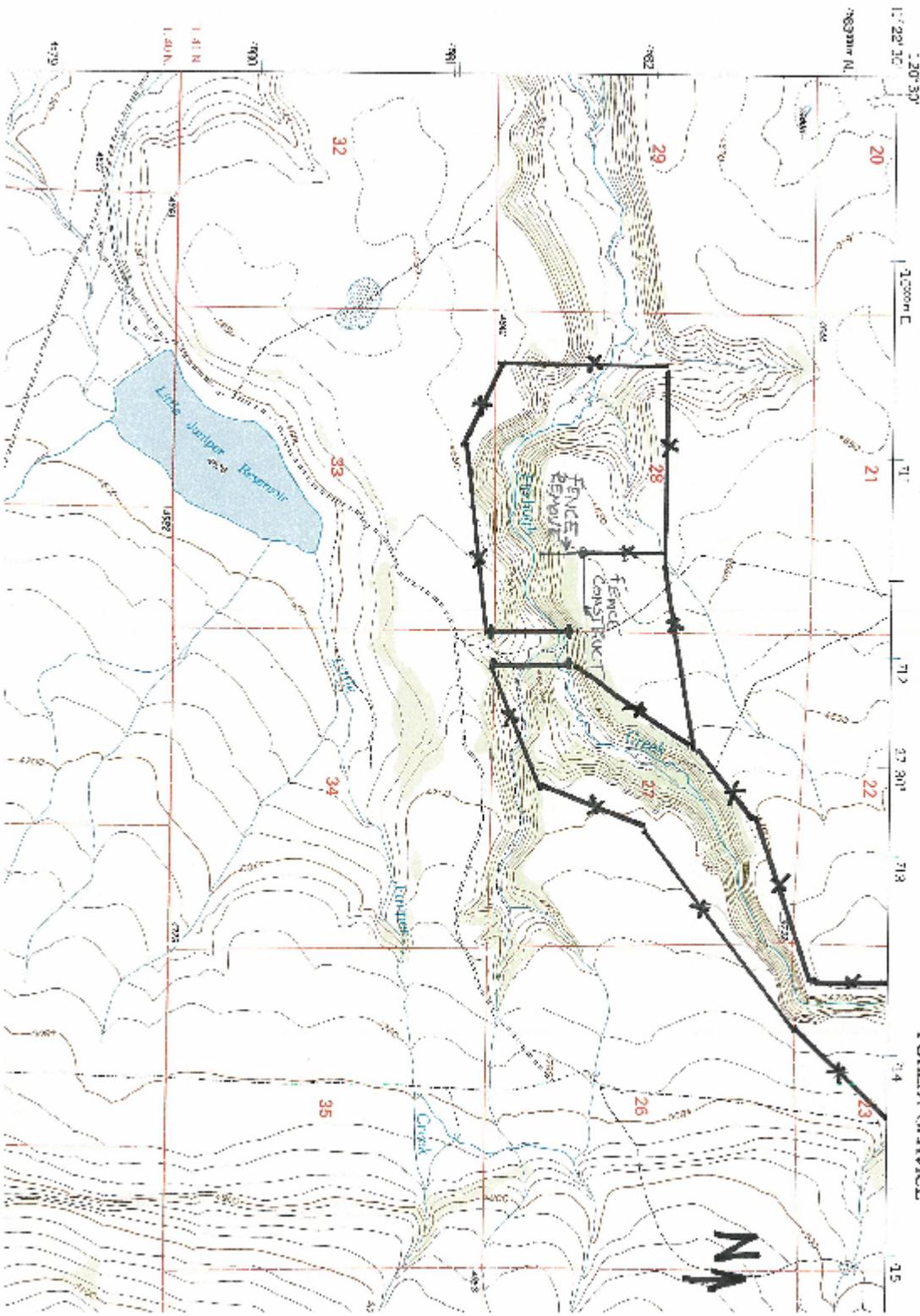
Recreation

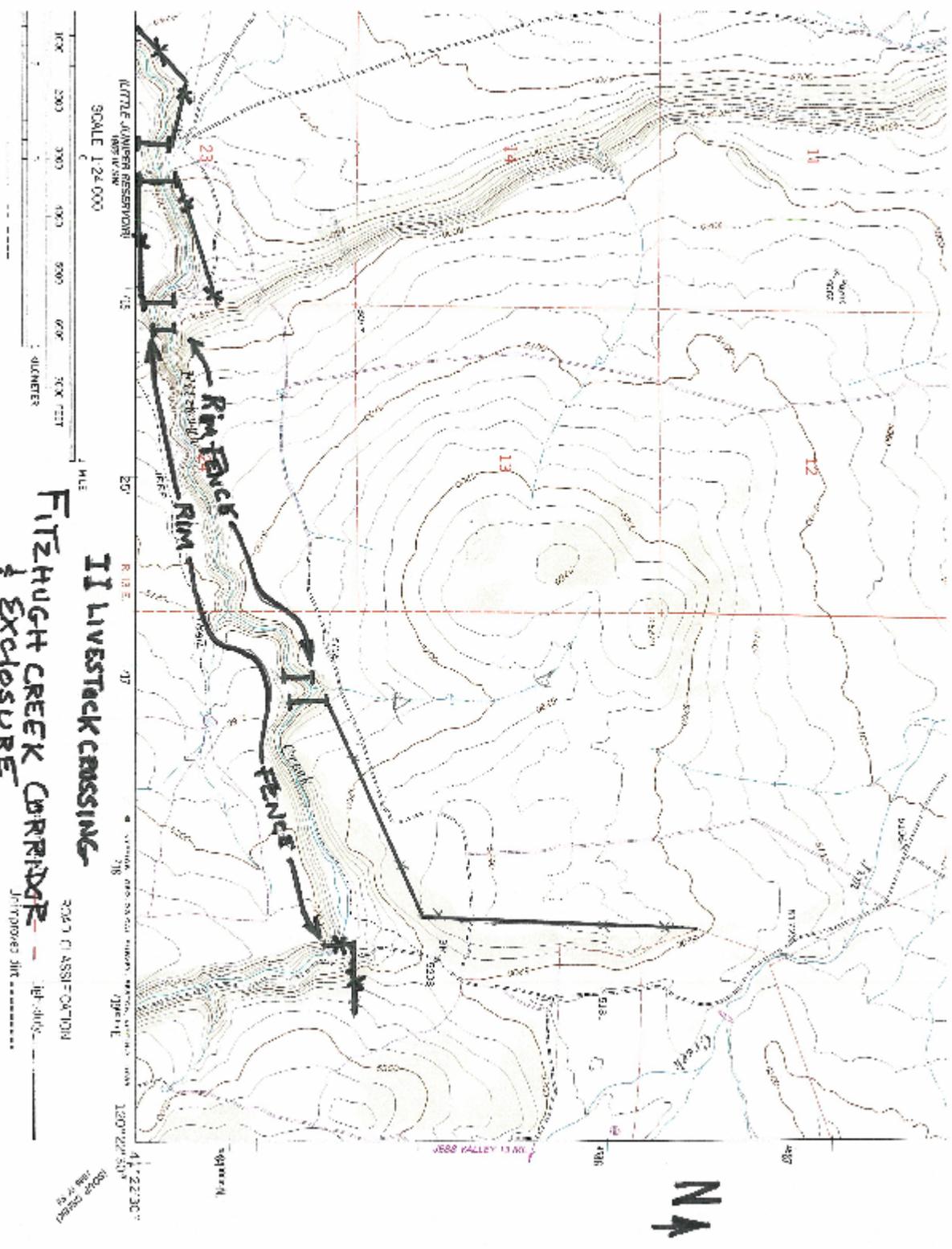
Date

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

FITZHUGH CREEK CORRIDOR EXCLUSION

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

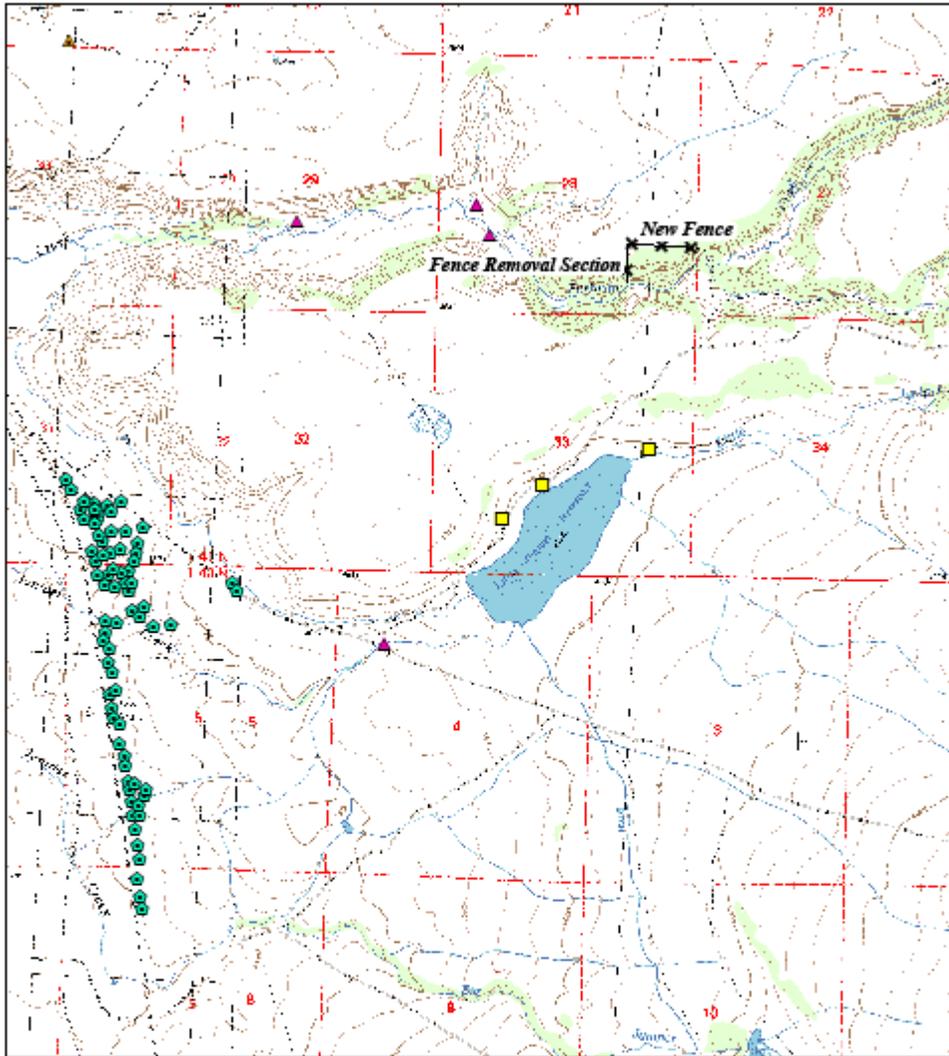




II LIVESTOCK CROSSING
FITZHUGH CREEK CORRIDOR
& EXPOSURE

2023 CLASSIFICATION
 Improved JWC

41° 22' 30"
 120° 22' 30"
 2023 CLASSIFICATION
 Improved JWC



Fitzugh Creek Wildlife Fence Modification Noxious Weed Map

Legend

✕✕ fitzugh_creek_fence_052010.shp

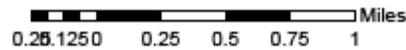
Noxious Weeds Points

WEED_NAME

- Mediterranean Sage
- ▲ Medusahead
- ▲ Scotch Thistle
- Yellow Starthistle

Scale

1:35,000



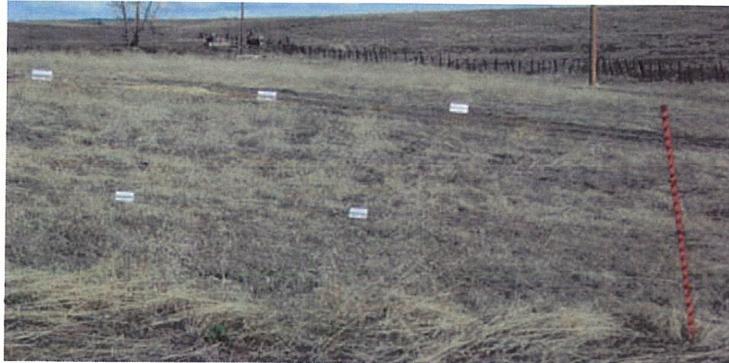
*Prepared by: Alan M. Uchida
BLM - Almaras Field Office
Date: 06/02/2010*



Friendly Designs

Visibility (CONTINUED)

Another relatively inexpensive alternative is offered by the Sutton Avian Research Center in Oklahoma using "undersill" or trim strips of white vinyl siding cut into 3" pieces. The undersill siding strips have a lip that can be snapped onto barbed-wire fence, and the vinyl strips can be easily cut with tin snips or a miter saw. The siding pieces are lightweight and durable, and a long run of fence can be marked quickly and easily.



Christine Paige

Durable Markers for Wire Fence

- Several 12' strips of "undersill" or trim strips of white vinyl siding, available at home hardware centers.
- Cut strips to 3" lengths. Use tin snips for small projects, or use a 10" miter saw with a 200-tooth blade to cut up to eight pieces at a time for larger projects.
- One 12' siding strip yields 48 pieces.
- Snap pieces onto top and middle wires: at least four pieces on the top wire per fence section, and three pieces on the middle wire per section.



Christine Paige



Christine Paige

Durable and lightweight fence markers can be cut from strips of vinyl siding trim. The trim strip has a lip that easily snaps onto fence wires.

DURABLE MARKERS ON WIRE FENCE

