

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Bureau of Land Management
Rock Springs Field Office

Project Title: Killpecker Sand Dunes Recreation Site Facility Improvement

EA Number: WY040-EA13-098

Location of Proposed Action: T 23 N R 103 W sec 16 W ½ SW ¼ SW ¼

Applicant: BLM

BACKGROUND

The proposed action is to improve facilities at the site and protect the nearby riparian area and the Crookston Ranch Cultural Site by providing for controlled access and promoting responsible visitor use through improved facilities. The site is not being utilized in an environmentally responsible fashion. The current use is degrading the adjacent riparian area and cultural site. Visitor satisfaction of the current facilities is low.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon the information contained in Killpecker Sand Dunes Recreation Site Facility Improvement environmental assessment (WY040-EA13-098) and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in Green River RMP EIS; (2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Resource Management Plan; 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 environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

The Proposed Action has been designed to avoid or minimize environmental impacts to the extent feasible. The following mitigations measured have been identified for the proposed action:

Parking and camping areas:

Actions would include: expand the parking and camping area from 80' x 200'; to 150' x 500'.; install picnic tables and fire rings in specific areas to direct visitor use during the average use days; place a trash facility in a centralized location; improve the access and day-use parking areas; install informational kiosks; develop safety related information for the public to mitigate exposed pipelines in the open area; and place information/interpretive signs at the site.

Family and group camping area:

The planned actions would include: construction of 10 pullouts approximately 150 yards to the east of the existing parking area; place picnic tables and fire rings at each site; install stop signs, speed limit signs and other safety related signs throughout the site.

Supplemental Rules:

Actions would include posting and implementing the following supplemental rules for the site:

- SAFETY FLAGS ARE REQUIRED ON ALL VEHICLES IN THE KILLPECKER SAND DUNES RECREATION AREA (This includes two-wheeled motorcycles.) All vehicles shall be equipped with

a whip mast and a 6x12 inch red/orange flag. Flags may be of pennant, triangle, square, or rectangular shape. Masts must be securely mounted on the vehicle and extend 8 feet from the ground to the mast tip. Safety flags must be attached within 10 inches of the tip of the whip mast with club or other flags mounted below safety flag or on another whip.

- A 15 MPH SPEED RULE EXISTS ON THE SAND HIGHWAYS. No person shall operate an OHV in excess of 15 mph on public lands within 500 feet of access roads within the Killpecker Sand Dunes Open Play area.
- FIRES - The burning of potentially hazardous materials e.g.(but not limited to) pallets, treated lumber, gas, oil, plastic and magnesium is prohibited.
- NO GLASS BEVERAGE CONTAINERS ARE ALLOWED. Possession or use of any glass, cup or bottle, empty or not, used for carrying any liquid for drinking purposes is prohibited. Persons may pick up glass beverage containers discarded by others to remove for deposit in approved trash receptacles.

BLM committed measures

Before any construction begins at the parking areas a survey will be conducted for *Penstemon haydenii* (Blowout penstemon) and for Cultural Resources. If construction occurs between May 1 and June 15, a survey will be conducted for nesting Mountain Plovers

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's 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.

Context:

The Open Play area is located within the Killpecker Dune Field which is one of the largest active dune fields in North America. The Killpecker Dune Field is approximately 109,000 acres extending 55 miles east from the Green River Basin across the Continental Divide into the Great Divide Basin and includes the Sand Dunes and Buffalo Hump Wilderness Study Areas. This dune field in turn is part of the Greater Sand Dunes System which Extends across the United States north to south from Canada to Mexico.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

The new facility would serve as a focal point for the Bureau to educate and inform the public about the unique and diverse resources found in the area. Information and education brochures and interpretive displays could help get voluntary compliance for adjoining area's OHV designations, the seasonal OHV closure on Steamboat Mountain and land use ethics such as Leave NO Trace and Tread Lightly! which would benefit numerous resource programs. Potential impacts to wildlife have been identified as both beneficial and adverse. Reducing motor vehicle trespass at Crookston Ranch would be very beneficial to wildlife but the potential increase in OHV users could increase the destruction of tall sagebrush that elk use for cover.

No additional impacts were identified that would be both beneficial and adverse.

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

Health and safety issues would be improved significantly by directing visitor use and reducing congestion in the parking area. User conflicts would be reduced by providing for improved access and separating different uses. Implementing the Supplemental Rules would further improve the visitor experience for all users.

Health and safety problems would be expected to continue as uncontrolled visitor use continues. The visitor experience would continue to degrade and visitor satisfaction would continue to decline. Supplemental Rules would not be implemented and dangerous conditions would not be addressed. Positive benefits would not be realized.

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

The Crookston Ranch Historic site and an associated riparian area are directly adjacent to the south of Killpecker Sand Dunes Open Play Area.

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

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not expected to be highly controversial.

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

The proposed action does not include any effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve 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 is not expected to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about future considerations.

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

The proposed action is not related to any other actions that have been identified as individually insignificant but would have cumulatively significant impacts.

- 8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or 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 historic resources.***

By not addressing the congested parking issue and not installing controls at the existing site degradation of the adjacent riparian area and cultural site would continue.

- 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 of 1973.***

Before any construction begins at the parking areas a survey will be conducted for *Penstemon haydenii* (Blowout penstemon) and for Cultural Resources. If construction occurs between May 1 and June 15, a survey will be conducted for nesting Mountain Plovers. Nothing in the proposed action would adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

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

Nothing in the proposed action threatens a violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Authorized Official:

Stephanie Odell
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Acting Field Manager
Rock Springs Field Office

3/12/13
Date