



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Bishop Field Office
351 Pacu Lane Suite 100
Bishop, California 93514
www.blm.gov/ca/bishop



**Finding of No Significant Impact
for the
Mono City Secondary Ingress/Egress Road Right-of-Way
Environmental Assessment, Revised April, 2014
Mono County, California
(DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0025-EA)**

One of the primary purposes for preparing an environmental assessment (EA) is to determine whether or not a proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and therefore require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). As defined in 40 CFR 1508.13, a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly presents the reasons why a federal agency action will not have a significant effect on the human environment and for which an EIS will therefore not be prepared. The regulations specify that both the context and intensity of effects be considered when determining significance (40 CFR 1508.27). This document presents the findings of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Bishop Field Manager concerning the selected alternative (Fire Station Alternative - Proposed Action) for the issuance of a thirty (30) year renewable road right-of-way (ROW) (CACA 052688) to Mono County for a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City, California, as described and analyzed in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-025-EA.

Finding of No Significant Impact and Land Use Plan Conformance Determination

I have reviewed EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0025-EA which includes the identification, explanation, and resolution of any potentially significant effects on the human environment that would result from implementation of the selected alternative (Fire Station Alternative - Proposed Action) for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City, California. Based on my review of the environmental analyses, I have determined that implementation of the Fire Station Alternative, when fully mitigated as recommended by staff in the EA, does not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. None of the effects identified, including the direct, indirect and cumulative effects, in the environmental analyses meet the definition of significance either in context or intensity as outlined in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, an EIS is not required and will not be prepared.

I have also reviewed the *Bishop Resource Management Plan Record of Decision* (Bishop RMP) and determined that the selected alternative, when all recommended mitigation measures are applied, does conform to the terms and conditions of the applicable land use plan as defined at 43

CFR 1601.0-5(b) and as required by 43 CFR 1610.5-3(b). Specifically, the Bishop RMP provides that “Management will be on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield” pursuant to Section 102 (a)(7) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (General Policies, Page 8, No. 1). The Bishop RMP also provides that “Management of public lands will consider ... [s]afety of the public and Bureau personnel” (General Policies, Page 8, No. 8 a).

In addition, the Fire Station Alternative, when fully mitigated, is consistent with the following Area Manager’s Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures, and Decisions prescribed by the Bishop RMP:

1. Actions that interfere significantly with efforts to maintain or enhance sage grouse habitat will generally not be allowed (Area Manager’s Guidelines, Page 9, No. 8).
2. Manage candidate species, sensitive species and other species of management concern in a manner to avoid the need for listing as state or federal endangered or threatened species (Standard Operating Procedures, Wildlife, Page 12, No. 3).
3. Protect and enhance unique or important vegetation communities and wildlife habitats (Area-Wide Decisions, Page 17).
 - Yearlong Protection of endangered, threatened, candidate, and sensitive plant and animal habitats.
 - Seasonal Protection within 2 miles of active sage grouse leks from 5/1 to 6/30.
4. Manage the area to conform to the following Visual Resource Management (VRM) standards (Granite Mountain Management Area Decisions, Page 36).
 - VRM II - Mono Basin and Granite Mountain.

Pursuant to Section 501(a)(1-7) of the FLPMA, the BLM is authorized to grant rights-of-ways, amendments, and temporary use permits for uses such as pipelines, roads, power lines, wells, and other facilities on the public lands for the public good. Consistent with both Bishop RMP direction and law, the BLM can authorize a ROW as proposed by Mono County under the FLPMA and 43 CFR 2800 regulations.

Therefore, I will issue a thirty (30) year renewable road right-of-way (ROW) (CACA 052688) to Mono County for a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City, California, as described and analyzed under the Fire Station Alternative (Proposed Action) in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0025-EA. The ROW grant document will include all the mitigation measures identified in section B.1.M. of the EA and will identify about 0.44 acres of existing roads and previously disturbed areas in the immediate project vicinity to be rehabbed. A separate decision record for the proposed action based on the analyses provided in the EA and this FONSI will be used to issue the ROW. The decision record will include a description of administrative remedies and appeal procedures that may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by my decision to issue this ROW.

Rationale for Finding of No Significant Impact

My finding is based on consideration of both the context (40 CFR 1508.27(a)) and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27(b)) of the effects identified in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-0025-EA as summarized below:

Context

The proposed action is the issuance of a thirty (30) year renewable road right-of-way (ROW) (CACA 052688) to Mono County for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City, California. The proposed road would be approximately 2,850 feet (0.54 miles) long varying from 12 feet wide to 18 feet wide and include 2 turnouts. Total project area surface disturbance would be about 0.82 acres, the majority of which would be within the footprint of an existing road. New vegetation loss from construction and maintenance would be limited to 0.30 acres.

The proposed road would be gated at the three primary access points (Highway 167, intersection of the secondary road and parallel road, and just northwest of the Mono City well) and managed by Mono County for emergency ingress/egress purposes only.

The ROW grant document would include all the mitigation measures identified by BLM staff specialists in section B.1.M. of the EA. The rehabilitation of a about 0.44 acres of existing roads and previously disturbed areas in the immediate project vicinity would exceed the 0.30 acres of new vegetation disturbance that would result from road construction and maintenance. The ROW grant document would also include stipulations to minimize and/or eliminate potential adverse impacts to vegetation, nesting and wintering sage-grouse, migrating or holding mule deer, nesting migratory song birds, cultural resources, and Mono City residents living adjacent to the Mono City Fire Station.

The beneficial and adverse effects expected from the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City are site specific and localized in scale. None of the effects associated with the proposed action are considered measureable at the regional, state-wide, national, or international scale.

Intensity

I have considered the intensity and severity of effects anticipated from the issuance of a thirty (30) year renewable road right-of-way (ROW) (CACA 052688) to Mono County for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City, California, as described and analyzed under the Fire Station Alternative (Proposed Action) in EA DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2013-025-EA. My consideration of the ten “significance” criteria identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b) is summarized below:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA provides a description of both beneficial and adverse effects expected from implementation of the proposed action. Primary effects are briefly summarized below.

Beneficial Effects

The primary beneficial effects will accrue from: 1) Providing a secondary ingress/egress route for the Mono City subdivision, and; 2) Rehabilitating about 0.44 acres of existing roads and previously disturbed areas in the immediate project vicinity to improve sagebrush-bitterbrush vegetation and associated habitat conditions for greater sage-grouse and migratory mule deer. Overall, the magnitude of the predicted beneficial effects are limited and restricted to the local scale.

Adverse Effects

The primary adverse effects will incur from the: 1) Long-term loss of 0.30 acres of sagebrush-bitterbrush vegetation and associated wildlife habitat from road construction and maintenance, and; 2) Long-term loss of motorized vehicle access on 1,361 feet (0.26 miles) of existing roads in the immediate project area that are targeted to be closed and rehabbed as mitigation.

There may also be some short-term disturbance and displacement of wildlife in the immediate project vicinity as the result of noise and human activity associated with road construction and maintenance. Displacement and disturbance impacts will be short-term and no measureable long-term detrimental effects are expected.

Due to the installation of a gate at the well area, disturbance impacts to property owners living adjacent to the Mono City Fire Station from increased vehicle use through the fire station are not expected. Mitigation is identified that will require Mono County, the Mono City Fire Department, and the BLM to work together to minimize any unanticipated disturbance impacts should they occur.

Overall, the magnitude of the predicted adverse effects are limited and restricted to the local scale.

Conclusion

The EA provided a description of both beneficial and adverse effects expected from implementation of the proposed action. The magnitude of both the predicted beneficial effects and the predicted adverse effects of the proposed action are minimal and restricted to the local scale. None of the direct, indirect, or cumulative effects associated with the proposed action are considered significant, either individually or cumulatively, based on the analyses provided in the EA. In addition, none of the predicted adverse effects are considered significant, even when evaluated independent of the beneficial effects that will occur from implementation of the proposed action.

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

I have determined the proposed action meets the intended purpose of Mono County's applied for right-of-way, which is, to improve public safety by providing a secondary ingress/egress route for the Mono City subdivision. However, the degree to which the proposed action affects public safety will be dependent upon Mono County's management of the secondary ingress/egress route, particularly under an emergency situation. The issuance of a thirty (30) year renewable road right-of-way (ROW) (CACA 052688) to Mono County for a gravel secondary ingress/egress road for Mono City by the BLM will not ensure that the authorized route will provide for the safe evacuation of the Mono City subdivision, or for safe access to the community by emergency response vehicles, under all emergency situations. To ensure public safety, Mono County will need to closely manage the use of the secondary ingress/egress road in the event of an emergency.

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 proposed project site is not characterized by proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. Implementation of the proposed action will have no effect on any historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the surrounding geographic area.

The proposed project site is located just northwest of the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area. The Bishop RMP prescribes Class II Visual Resource Management (VRM) standards for public lands immediately adjacent to the Mono Basin to maintain the existing scenic quality of the characteristic landscape. Implementation of the proposed action will result in minimal changes to the basic elements of form, line, color and texture in the characteristic landscape and would not attract the attention of the casual observer. The proposed action conforms to VRM Class II objectives prescribed by the Bishop RMP and no measurable adverse effect on scenic quality in the Mono Basin is predicted.

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

The effects of road construction and maintenance activities are well understood. In addition, the majority of the proposed ROW alignment is restricted to the footprint of an existing road and new surface disturbance will be limited to about 0.30 acres. None of the anticipated effects identified in the EA are considered 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 is not unique or unusual. The effects of road construction and maintenance activities are well understood and the BLM has extensive experience evaluating the

environmental effects associated with road ROW authorizations. There are no predicted effects on the human environment that are considered to be 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.

Any similar action must be evaluated through an appropriate site-specific environmental review and decision making process consistent with applicable law, regulation, policy, and land use plan guidance. Implementation of the proposed action will not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

The proposed action was evaluated in the context of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. No individually significant or cumulatively significant effects are identified in the EA. None of the alternatives analyzed in the EA were predicted to contribute to significant cumulative effects on the human environment at either the local, regional, state-wide, national, or international scale.

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 historical resources.

A Class III cultural resource inventory of the area of potential effect for the proposed project was completed and no districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects currently listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places were identified. Implementation of the proposed action will not adversely affect any cultural properties currently listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

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.

No threatened or endangered species are known or likely to occur within the proposed project area based on historical records, field monitoring, and/or habitat suitability. In addition, there is no designated critical habitat for any listed species within or immediately adjacent to the proposed project site. Implementation of the proposed action will have no effect on any threatened or endangered species, nor will it result in the destruction or adverse modification of any designated critical habitat for any listed species.

The Bi-State distinct population segment (DPS) of greater sage-grouse is currently proposed for listing as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This DPS occurs within the proposed action area and the proposed action area is within proposed designated critical habitat. The

proposed action, when fully mitigated as recommended in the EA, would have no measureable effect on greater sage-grouse or their habitat and therefore is not likely to adversely affect the Bi-State DPS or its proposed critical habitat.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The EA included consideration of applicable federal, state, and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Federal, state, local, and tribal interests were consulted and/or considered during the environmental review process and no potential violations or inconsistencies with existing laws or policies were identified or left unresolved.

Implementation of the proposed action does not threaten a violation of any known federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

Authorized Official

/s/ by Steven Nelson

Steven Nelson
Bishop Field Manager

4/8/2014

Date: _____