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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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How do we know anything about this how many more?

Called Rick Waldrop 10/14 requested document
Isoman?

In Reply Refer To:
8500 (NV-043)

SEP 26 1997

Dear Interested Party:

In keeping with our policy of informing interested parties of actions occurring within Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), this letter is to inform you of the recent reconstruction of a livestock water development within the Weepah Spring WSA in southwest Lincoln County, Nevada. It is also our policy, of course, to prepare environmental analyses in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and provide notification to interested parties of impending actions, *prior* to authorizing any developments within WSAs. However, in this instance, the project was constructed before a formal proposal had been submitted for analysis. Since the format for an environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the *projected* impacts of a "Proposed Action," District policy provides for the preparation of an Impact and Mitigation Analysis, which describes the impacts of an action already taken and evaluates the need for additional mitigative measures to correct any unacceptable impacts that occurred as a result of the action. This document is available for review upon request at the above address or phone number.

ask for? in HMA?

Representatives of the BLM, including a wilderness specialist, range management specialist, archaeologist, and special projects coordinator visited with the livestock permittee more than a year ago to discuss the feasibility of the project prior to its construction. The conclusion of the on-site discussion was that the project was feasible for reconstruction in accordance with BLM policies, including the *Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review* (IMP). The next steps in the process should have involved the permittee's submission of a project proposal, development of the environmental assessment, and public notification. Although the process was breached, the results are the same. The project involved reconstruction of a dilapidated water development, including digging out a spring source where a hillside had sloughed off over it, reconnecting and/or replacing a pipeline, and installing a new trough essentially the same size and location as the previous one. The water right on the spring source was identified for stockwatering and dated from 1917.

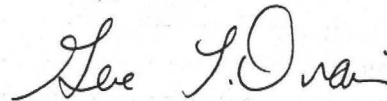
The grazing use within the area was a grandfathered use which may continue in the same manner and degree as existed on October 21, 1976, according to the IMP. **"Maintenance of grandfathered" livestock developments will be permitted to insure that the usefulness**

consequences to permittee

of the project for its intended purposes may be realized, but will not be allowed to modify a facility to exceed the physical and visual impacts existing on October 21, 1976." (IMP, p.16). The project reconstructed in the Weepah Spring WSA is virtually identical to the project which existed prior, and will not affect permitted grazing use levels within the WSA. The sloughed in spring source was dug out by hand with pick and shovel, the existing pipeline was reconnected where possible, and was replaced along the same alignment where existing pipe was no longer usable. A trough, essentially the same size as the previous one, was installed in essentially the same location as the previous one. No additional AUMs (animal unit months) will be authorized as a result of the project reconstruction.

We recognize that this action did not occur using proper procedures, but are satisfied, in fact pleased with the care with which the project was developed to maintain the surrounding conditions. Both wilderness and cultural values were at stake, and were carefully maintained in the construction effort. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Rick Waldrup, Outdoor Recreation Planner, at the above address or phone number. Thank you for your continued interest in the management of our wilderness resources.

Sincerely,



Gene L. Drais
Assistant District Manager
Non-Renewable Resources

IMPACT AND MITIGATION ANALYSIS
Weepah Spring

*Revised
10/17*

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

On August 1, 1997 the Steele family notified BLM of the maintenance that they performed on Weepah Spring. On August 8, 1997 Jay D'Ewart, Rick Waldrup and Caroline Sherve inspected the maintenance performed by the Steele's. The Spring source was a dug out cavern with a collection pipe in the bottom, and a quarter of a mile pipeline to a trough. Through lack of timely maintenance, the cavern sluffed and silted in creating a smaller seep and thus plugging the pipeline to the water trough. The Steele family dug out the spring source with hand tools (shovel, pick, and bar), moving approximately 8 to 10 yards of material. Weepah Spring is located on a sidehill, therefore, the material was moved below the spring site creating a small shelf on the sidehill. A new collection pipe was placed in the bottom of the cavern and hooked up to the existing pipeline that goes .25 miles to a trough. Where breaks in the pipeline occurred, new splices of pipe were installed until it flowed to the trough.

The project is located in the Seaman Range in N.E.1/4 S.E.1/4 Section 5, T. 1 N., R. 62 E. Weepah Spring is located in a Pinyon Juniper drainage and is piped to a trough located in a drainage bottom.

On 03/11/97 Jay D'Ewart, Rick Waldrup, and Caroline Sherve went to Weepah Spring to coordinate the maintenance proposed by the Steele Family. Weepah Spring is a vested water. Application No. 4666, Certificate Record No. 1575, Book 6, Page 1575 for Stock watering, period of use January 1, thru December 31. Date of application is November 1, 1917, and the State Water Engineer approved this application November 25, 1936. After inspection of the Spring the following concerns were identified:

1. The spring lies within the Weepah Spring Wilderness Study Area. All work would be accomplished with hand tools.
2. The method of collection for the site would be the use of perforated pipe and/or geo-textile and gravel. Gravel to pack the collection system can be gathered on site from the bottom of the drainage and/or by screening the material excavated from the water source.
3. The pipeline will be routed following the existing line as discussed during the Task Force meeting. All remnants of black plastic pipe and refuse will be collected and disposed of in an authorized landfill.
4. Within the wilderness Study Area, access to Weepah spring will be maintained for four-wheel drive vehicles only by hand tools where necessary.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

There are no impacts to threatened or endangered species, floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas, areas of critical environmental concern, wild and scenic rivers, prime or unique farmlands, social and economic values, paleontological and historical resource values, water and air quality. There are no adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low income populations. Wilderness values will be effected compared with conditions in recent years, by presence of domestic livestock and the concomitant reduction of naturally occurring vegetation. However, these conditions are expected to be similar to those that existed at the time of the wilderness inventory. The physical and visual impacts of the project do not exceed those existing on October 21, 1976, and are therefore within the constraints provided for grandfathered livestock developments in the IMP.

The project lies within the Seaman wild horse Herd Management Area and horses use the area in the vicinity of Weepah Spring. The functioning spring will provide water year round for horses.

The proposed project will have no effect on archaeological site CrNV-04-561. On December 6, 1996, the area for proposed project was surveyed for impacts to the archaeological site and surrounding area (CRR-97-04-1213P). On August 8, 1997, Weepah Spring was revisited to observe the completed project. As the project was completed by hand (no mechanized equipment), there was no damage/impact to site CrNV-04-561. There will be no effect to any Historic Properties by this project.

Likelihood of Noxious Weed Species Spreading to Project Area:

None: Noxious weed species are not known to be located within or adjacent to the project area. Project activity is not likely to result in the establishment of noxious weed species in the project area.

The project is in a Class 2 VRM area.

Greater quality and quantity of water will be available to wildlife as a result of this project.

MITIGATION

1. Install a bird ladder, securely attached to the side of each trough, to allow small animals and birds which inadvertently fall in the tank a chance to escape.
2. Anchor the storage tanks and pipe away the overflow to ensure the integrity of the project.
3. Remove all extraneous materials from previous projects, including cable near spring source and all extraneous black

pipeline. Historic wooden trough should be left on site.

LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE / DECISION

It is my decision that the maintenance of Weepah Spring is in conformance with the Schell Management Framework Plan. RM-4.2 Maintain all existing range improvement projects considered necessary for proper range management. RM-4.1 Install management facilities, where feasible, or assist grazing permittees to develop these facilities consistent with the findings of the EAs. Maintenance of this project is also in conformance with provisions of the IMP as a grandfathered livestock development.

Prepared by: Jay C. D'Ewart 9-25-97
Jay D' Ewart Date
Range Management Specialist

Reviewed by: Rick Waldrup 9-25-97
Rick Waldrup Date
Environmental Coordinator

Approved by: Alfred W. Coulloudon 9-25-97
Bill Coulloudon Date
ADM, Renewable Resources

Approved by: Gene L. Drais 9-25-97
Gene L. Drais Date
ADM, Non-Renewable Resources