United States Department of the Interior

Granite HMA 6/3/96

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Winnemucca District Office
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445
702 623 1500

In Reply Refer To:
(NV-026.14)

June 3, 1996

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is a Draft Environmental Analysis for an exclosure/relocation of the Granite Mountain Drift fence (also known as the Cottonwood Drift fence) along the south fork of Wagon Tire Creek. If you have any comments please respond by July 3, 1996.

Please contact Leigh Redick at 623-1500 with any questions you may have.

Sincerely yours,

Colin P. Christensen, Asst. District Manager
Division of Renewable Resources

Enclosure

Draft Environmental Assessment
Granite Mountain Drift Fence - Relocation

I. Introduction/Overview

Purpose and Need

The Buffalo Hills Allotment is located immediately north of Gerlach, Nevada. It consists of four pastures and is managed under a rest rotation grazing system. The main fork of Wagon Tire Creek is located in the Dolly Varden pasture with the south fork meandering between the Granite and Dolly Varden pastures. During 1993 and 1994 a section of the south fork of Wagon Tire Creek was used quite heavily by horses and livestock. Utilization limits had been exceeded both years even before livestock entered the pasture. The permittees have herded their livestock continually and removed them from this portion of the pasture in order to keep use levels down. Due to the high horse numbers this has not been very effective or efficient.

The proposed action is to relocate a portion of the Granite Mountain Drift fence so that this fork of Wagon Tire Creek would be protected from both wild horses and livestock. Though the action is not specifically addressed in the Sonoma-Gerlach MFP, it is consistent with the objectives of the MFP and with Federal, State, and Local laws, regulations, and policy.

II. Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct 1½ miles of fence along the south fork of Wagon Tire Creek. The action would take place in T. 35N. R. 22E. Sections 34 & 35 (See attached map). The original fence would be left in place to form an exclosure and facilitate a more expeditious recovery of the riparian area; when recovery is completed the original fence may be removed. The fence would be a four strand barbed wire fence built to antelope standards. The new fence would tie in with the existing fence 1/4 mile southeast of Heward Reservoir and continue westerly until it met back up with the existing fence. Access to the site would be by existing roads, no new road construction would be needed.

This project would be impleted under a cooperative agreement. The Bureau would provide materials and remove the original fence when it was decided to do so and the permittees would construct and maintain the fence.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative the fence would not be constructed. The riparian vegetation and stream would continue to be impacted by wild horses and livestock.

III. Affected Environment/Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action:
A. Vegetation

Reconstruction of the fence would occur in a variety of vegetation types, ranging from low sagebrush (*Artemisia arbuscula*) to snowberry (*Symphoricarpus spp.*). The dominant vegetation would be low sage and Sandberg bluegrasss ((*Poa secunda*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Agropyron spicatum*), and rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus spp.*). The fence would not be constructed in the riparian area, so disturbance to riparian vegetation would be minimal. Vegetation within the newly created exclosure would be protected from large ungulate herbivory until fully recovered and thus would be more vigorous. Riparian vegetation is characterized by willows (*Salix spp.*), (*Juncus spp.*), and (*Carex spp.*).

B. Water Resources

It is anticipated that there would be no adverse impacts to water quality. As a result of the exclosure water quality would be higher.

C. Wildlife

Several species of wildlife occur in habitat surrounding the proposed project. Mule deer, pronghorn antelope, chukar, sage grouse, quail, and several nongame species inhabit the area. Since the proposed fence would be built to antelope specifications, there should be a positive impact to wildlife from the improved condition of the riparian area. Wagontire Creek, at present, does not contain any fish populations.

D. Wild Horses

Wild horses could potentially be affected through implementation of these proposed actions. Horses would not be able to access water in this section of the creek if the fence were built. The next nearest water source would be Heward Reservoir on years of good precipitation and the main fork of Wagon Tire Creek in years with below normal precipitation. Heward Reservoir is about 100 yards above the stream and the main fork is about 1½ miles from the proposed project, so water would be available in the vicinity.

E. Cultural Resources

A class III Cultural resources survey of the project area was conducted on July 20, 1995 [CR2-2682(N)]. No National Register properties would be impacted by the proposed project.

F. Threatened and Endangered Species

No on the ground search for sensitive plants was conducted, but the Nevada Threatened and Endangered Plant Map Book (Nevada State Museum, 1988) located in the Winnemucca Office shows that no sensitive plants are known to occur in the immediate vicinity of either proposed activity. No threatened or endangered wildlife species would be impacted through implementation of this proposed action.

G. Visual Resource Management

This project would be located in a Class II visual resource management area. The management objective for this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. The proposed fence would meet Class II VRM objectives. A Visual Contrast Rating Worksheet was completed on November 30, 1995. See Attachement 1.

H. Cumulative Impacts

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. There would be no direct cumulative impacts to resource values as a result of the proposed action, however an indirect impact could occur on the main fork of Wagon Tire Creek. If wild horse and livestock use in the proposed fence area shifts to the main fork of Wagon Tire Creek utilization limits may continue to be exceeded in this area.

I. Other Critical Elements of the Human Environment

Implementation of the proposed projects would not have any impact on floodplains, wetlands, air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, hazardous materials, paleontological resources, wild and scenic rivers, prime or unique farmlands, wilderness, or Native American Religious conerns.

IV. Consultation, Coordination, Cooperation

The specialists who have signed the face sheet of this document have reviewed and concur with the technical aspects of this environmental assessment, as concerns their respective specialties. The permittees have been consulted.

Form 8400-4
(September 1985)

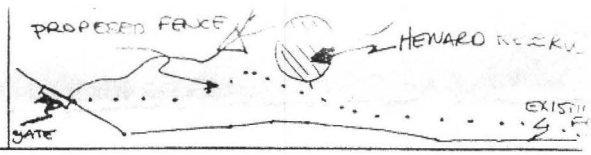
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

VISUAL CONTRAST RATING WORKSHEET

Date 95·11·30
District WINNEMUCCA
Resource Area SONOMA-Gerlach
Activity (program) 1020 RANGE

SECTION A. PROJECT INFORMATION

1. Project Name Granite Mtn. Drift Fence
2. Observation Point CREST OF Hill between Howard Res. & WASON TIRE PASS.
3. VRM Class II
4. Location
Range 22E
Section 34 & 35
5. Location Sketch (SEE ATTACHED U.S. MAP)



SECTION B. CHARACTERISTIC LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

	1. LAND/WATER	2. VEGETATION	3. STRUCTURES
FORM	STEEP SLOPE TOWARD ~~CREEK~~ EAST Rolling terrain toward SOUTH	SCATTERED JUNIPER, LOW SAGE (Simple forms)	—
LINE	undulating, sloping	Flowing, undulating	—
COLOR	dark grey to light tan on top of slopes	lt green to light tan	—
TEXTURE	Broken, patch. coarse	patch to smooth	—

SECTION C. PROPOSED ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

	1. LAND/WATER	2. VEGETATION	3. STRUCTURES
FORM	LINEAR - ~~Vertical~~	NO CONCERN - NO CHANGE	LINEAR
LINE	Angular - Flowing	NO CHANGE seen	vertical, horizontal, angular
COLOR	metal grey-mtn fence dk green stakes	—	DK. green
TEXTURE	subtle	-	subtle

SECTION D. CONTRAST RATING ☐ SHORT TERM ☑ LONG TERM

DEGREE OF CONTRAST	FEATURES: LAND/WATER BODY (1)				VEGETATION (2)				STRUCTURES (3)			
	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None	Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
ELEMENTS: Form			✓					✓			✓	
Line			✓					✓			✓	
Color				✓				✓			✓	
Texture				✓				✓				✓

2. Does project design meet visual resource management objectives? ☑ Yes ☐ No (Explain on reverse side)

3. Additional mitigating measures recommended ☐ Yes ☑ No (Explain on reverse side)

Evaluator's Names: DESNA YOUNG
Date: 11.30.95

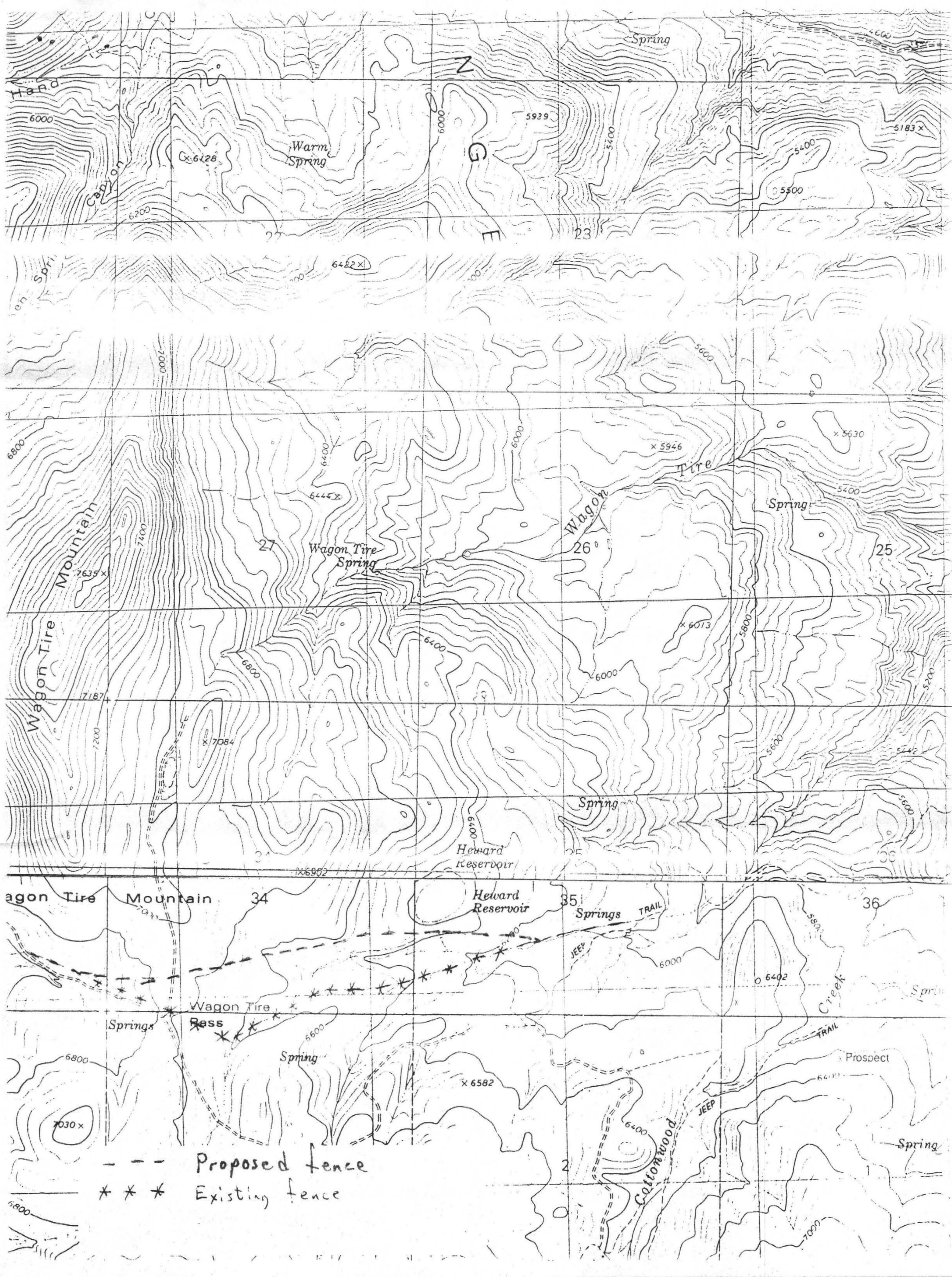
SECTION D. (Continued)

Comments from item 2.

THE RANGE FENCE (proposed) meets the CLASS II VRM objectives as it does not dominate the landscape. The level of change is low. The fence will not attract the attention of the casual observer.

Additional Mitigating Measures (See item 3)

☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1985—461-988/33094


Hand
Canyon
Warm Spring
Spring
6128
5939
5183
5500
22
23
6422
Wagon Tire Mountain
7635
7187
7084
27
Wagon Tire Spring
6444
26
Wagon Tire
5946
5630
25
6013
Heward Reservoir
6902
Wagon Tire Mountain
34
35
36
Springs
TRAIL
JEEP
Wagon Tire Pass
Springs
Spring
6582
6402
Creek
Prospect
Cottonwood
7030
Spring
2
1
- - - Proposed fence
* * * Existing fence

BOB MILLER
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

CATHERINE BARCOMB
Executive Director

**COMMISSION FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF WILD HORSES**

**255 W. Moana Lane
Suite 207A
Reno, Nevada 89509
(702) 688-2626**

June 18,1996

Mr. Pete Christensen
Paradise-Denio Resource Area
Bureau of Land Management
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, Nevada 89406

Subject: Cottonwood Drift Fence

Dear Mr. Christensen:

Thank you for consulting the Commission for the Preservation of Wild Horses concerning the Cottonwood Drift Fence to protect the south fork of Wagon Tire Creek. Protective fencing for this portion of the creek is necessary to eliminate livestock grazing of critical riparian habitat.

Since the Buffalo Hills Allotment Livestock Decision prescribe rest for the Dolly Varden Pasture, we would like to request a copy of the use pattern mapping data collected during 1993 or 1994 that was exclusively wild horses. These data will assist us to determine the full extent of wild horse use and the success of livestock herding as the primary management tool applied in the Sonoma-Gerlach Resource Area.

We appreciate your efforts concerning this matter.

Sincerely,

Catherine Barcomb

CATHERINE BARCOMB
Executive Director