

F 6/2/83

DECISION RECORD RATIONALE
EA-NV-010-3-039
PARIS-COUNTY LINE FENCE

DECISION:

Based on the Environmental Assessment, beneficial effects will result from construction of the proposed fence. However, the alternative of constructing only the eastern three miles of the fence is adopted and the proposed action of constructing eight miles of fence is rejected.

RATIONALE:

Cattle drift between the Ely and Elko Districts in Butte Valley must be mitigated if proper control of forage utilization in the West Cherry Creek Allotment is to be achieved. However, since the greatest amount of cattle pressure is anticipated along the eastern three miles of the proposed project, it is felt that fencing the western five miles is not necessary at this time in order to achieve the desired results of the proposed action. If at a later date water is developed in the west portion of the West Cherry Creek Allotment, fencing the county line in this area will be evaluated further to determine mitigating measures necessary to reduce impacts on wild horses and mule deer.

This alternative action does not constitute a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Charles L. Boyer
CHARLES L. BOYER,
Area Manager

6-2-83
Date

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I. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Description of the Proposed Action

Construction of approximately 8 miles of 4-strand modified Type-D fence (16-6-8-12 with 165 foot post spacings) is proposed along the Elko/White Pine county line in Butte Valley. This fence would serve to control cattle drift from the Medicine Butte Allotment (Ely District) onto the West Cherry Creek Allotment (Elko District).

Grazing on the West Cherry Creek Allotment is currently administered by the Ely District. Three Allotments in the Ely District are combined with the West Cherry Creek Allotment to form the Medicine Butte Allotment/Complex. It is proposed that the West Cherry Creek Allotment be separated from the Medicine Butte Complex with the responsibility for grazing administration being returned to the Elko District. Cattle which are currently licensed in the Medicine Butte Allotment are allowed to drift both north and south of the county line. Construction of the proposed fence would serve to control livestock numbers and season of use in the Elko District. A separation of the West Cherry Creek Allotment from the Medicine Butte Complex would not be feasible without a fence along the county line.

The Bureau of Land Management would furnish all materials and construct the proposed fence. The entire project would be on public lands. The proposed fence would tie-in to a private pasture fence on the east side of the valley and would tie-in to an existing drift fence on the west side of the valley.

B. Special Project Stipulations for the Proposed Action

1. Green steel fence posts will be used.
2. The proposed fence will be constructed in accordance with BLM specifications for a Type-D modified fence (16-6-8-12 with 16.5 foot post spacing).
3. Gates will be constructed at least every mile and across major wild horse trails identified by the District Wild Horse Specialist. These gates will be left open when livestock are not in the area in order to facilitate the movements of wild horses.
4. Clearing and/or blading of the fence line will not be allowed.
5. All trash and excess materials will be removed from the public lands when construction is complete.

C. Alternatives to the Proposed Action

1. An alternative to the Proposed Action would be to reduce the length of the proposed fence by five miles, constructing only three miles of fence (west end of the fence terminating at the SW corner of section 13, T. 26 N., R. 61 E).
2. No development. Under the No Development Alternative the fence would not be constructed.

II. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The proposed fence would cross several vegetation types in Butte Valley. Those areas on the east end of the proposed fence are dominated mostly by big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and saltgrass. The western portion of the project area is dominated by big sagebrush, bottlebrush squirreltail, and bluebunch wheatgrass. In addition, the area close to the existing drift fence on the west side of the valley contains both low sagebrush and juniper.

Game and numerous nongame wildlife species inhabit the proposed project area. Sage grouse are the major game bird species, inhabiting the Odgers Creek drainage area during the nesting season. The east end of the proposed fence terminates two miles from crucial deer winter habitat. Butte Valley has been identified as "potential" antelope habitat.

Bald eagles are known to inhabit this area during winter months (November-May).

Wild horses are known to inhabit the proposed project area year-round. However, relatively little is known about their movements with respect to the county line. A field examination on April 6, 1983 revealed wild horses moving north and south of the county line in the western five mile portion of the proposed fence.

A survey of the available literature indicates there are no threatened or endangered plant species in the proposed area.

No mining claims exist in the project area.

The proposed project is located on lands no longer under wilderness review (see attached clearance).

Most of the proposed fenceline would lie on dissected alluvial fans which generally have slopes of 3-8% and deep medium textured soils. The west end of the proposed project would terminate in low hills with 30-50% slopes and shallow medium textures soils. The east end of the proposed project would terminate in an axial stream floodplain with 0-3% slopes. The soils in this area are medium textured and alkali affected.

The proposed project is located in a VRM Class IV area.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Proposed Action

The proposed fence project would enhance livestock control, mitigating the current problem of cattle drift in Butte Valley. The result would be increased control of forage utilization in the West Cherry Creek Allotment.

Minimal surface disturbance to soil and vegetation would occur during construction. Surface disturbance would be limited to vegetation trampling and soil compaction as a result of vehicle traffic.

The project design meets Visual Resource Management (VRM) requirements (see attached clearance).

Coordination with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) has been completed (see attached correspondence).

The east end of the proposed fence does not terminate close enough to the crucial deer winter range identified along the Cherry Creek Mountains to impact deer movements. Although the western portion of the proposed project area has not been identified as a seasonal mule deer range, it is possible that mule deer could migrate through this habitat type. However, since little data is available concerning deer populations in this area, the extent of its impact cannot be predicted. The smooth bottom wire (16 inches above ground level) should mitigate any impacts on antelope, should they occur in the area.

The proposed project would not impact the existence of wintering bald eagles in the project area (see attached clearance).

Since wild horses are known to exist in the project area year-round, the proposed project could affect their movements, especially in the western area of the proposed fence.

An archaeological investigation has not been completed at this time. Therefore, the impacts to cultural resources are unknown.

B. Alternatives

1. Since there is no water and little cattle feed available west of Butte Valley on the West Cherry Creek Allotment, the greatest amount of cattle pressure would be in Butte Valley. Therefore, by reducing the length of the fence by five miles, the desired results of the proposed action could be achieved with a reduced impact on wild horse and mule deer movements in the area.

Except for the impacts on mule deer and wild horses, all other environmental impacts discussed with respect to the Proposed Action would still apply to this alternative action (three mile fence).

2. The No Development Alternative would result in continued cattle drift between the Ely and Elko Grazing Districts in Butte Valley and a continued lack of control with respect to forage utilization by livestock in the West Cherry Creek Allotment.

IV. MITIGATING MEASURES

A. Proposed Action

1. Fence construction will not begin until a BLM Archaeological Clearance has been granted. Recommendations in the cultural resources report will be adhered to by BLM and other agencies or parties responsible for construction. If cultural resources are discovered that could be adversely affected by project-related activities, work will cease immediately and the Elko District Manager will be notified as soon as possible.

B. Alternative(s)

1. Same as Proposed Action.
2. The No Development Alternative would require no mitigating measures.

V. PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

Bert Paris - Allotment Permittee
Pete Paris - Allotment Permittee
Kevin Carson - Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM
Tim Murphy - Archaeologist, BLM
Steve Foree - Wildlife Biologist, NDOW
Alan Page - Wildlife Biologist, BLM
Remsen Berher - Soil Scientist, BLM
Bruce Portwood - Wild Horse Specialist, BLM