



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Winnemucca Field Office  
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard  
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445  
<http://www.nv.blm.gov>



In Reply Refer To:  
4160.1  
(NV-022.15)

## NOTICE OF PROPOSED DECISION

CERTIFIED MAIL NO. 7005 0390 0000 6386 2656  
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

John Estill  
Estill Ranches LLC  
P.O. Box  
Eagleville, CA 96110

**RECEIVED**  
JUN 28 2005  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR  
BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION

Dear Mr. Estill:

Please find enclosed the Finding of No Significant Impacts for the County Road/Colman Fence range improvement project as identified in the Soldier Meadows Allotment (SMA) Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD). The purpose and need for this project is described in the County Road/Colman Fence Environmental Assessment (EA) No. NV-020-05-EA-14, which is enclosed. At this time the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Winnemucca Field Office (WFO) website is not available, therefore, I am enclosing a hard copy of the EA for your information.

### PROPOSED DECISION

It is my Proposed Decision, which is both a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Decision and a Proposed Grazing Decision as outlined under 43 CFR subparts 4160 and 4120.2 (c), to approve the County Road/Colman Fence range improvement project, as described in the Proposed Action in the enclosed EA No. NV-020-05-EA-14. The terms identified in the proposed action of the EA are hereby accepted and will serve as conditions in the "Cooperative Agreement" with the permittee for the construction and maintenance of the project.

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the SMA FMUD dated May 5, 2004, the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) Stipulation dated February 28, 2005 and the OHA Order dated March 1, 2005. The BLM WFO will be responsible for insuring that the proposed project is constructed and maintained in accordance with the stipulations identified in the Cooperative Agreement.

## **RATIONALE FOR DECISION**

The SMA FMUD determined that the County Road/Colman Fence was required for the final grazing system to function properly. This fence will prevent livestock from drifting into the Colman Use Area and impacting existing Lahontan cutthroat trout, a federally listed threatened species, habitat in Colman Creek. The combination of livestock management practices and range improvements, including the County Road/Colman Fence, are expected to achieve, or make significant progress towards achievement, of the Standards for Rangeland Health.

The County Road/Colman Fence range improvement EA analyzed a range of alternatives and determined that the proposed alternative is the best management action to properly manage livestock with fewer impacts to other resource values.

## **AUTHORITY**

The authority for this decision is contained in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which states in pertinent parts:

- 4120.3-1(a) Range improvements shall be installed, used, maintained, and/or modified on the public lands, or removed from these lands, in a manner consistent with multiple-use management.
- (b) Prior to installing, using, maintaining, and/or modifying range improvements on the public lands, permittees or lessees shall have entered into a cooperative range improvement agreement with the Bureau of Land Management or must have an approved range improvement permit.
  - (c) The authorized officer may require a permittee or lessee to maintain and/or modify range improvements on the public lands under Sec. 4130.3-2 of this title.
  - (e) A range improvement permit or cooperative range improvement agreement does not convey to the permittee or cooperator any right, title, or interest in any lands or resources held by the United States.
  - (f) Proposed range improvement projects shall be reviewed in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.). The decision document following the environmental analysis shall be considered the proposed decision under subpart 4160 of this part.

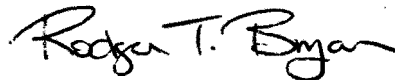
## **PROTEST**

In accordance with 43 CFR 4160.2, any applicant, permittee, lessee or other interested public may protest the proposed decision under 4160.1 of this title, in person or in writing to the authorized officer, Gail G. Givens, Field Manager, 5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd., Winnemucca, NV 89445, within 15 days after receipt of such decision. The protest, if filed, must clearly and concisely state the reason(s) why the protestant thinks the proposed decision is in error.

In accordance with 43 CFR 4160.3 (b), should a timely protest be filed with the authorized officer, the authorized officer will reconsider the proposed decision and shall serve the final decision on the protestant and the interested public.

Subsequent to the protest period, a Final Decision will be issued which will provide an opportunity for appeal in accordance with 43 CFR 4160.4 and 43 CFR Part 4.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rodger T. Bryan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

for Gail G. Givens  
Field Manager

2 Enclosures:

1. Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) (1 p)
2. Environmental Assessment NV-020-05-EA-14 (35 pp)

cc: See Attached List

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# United State Department of the Interior

## Bureau of Land Management

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Winnemucca, Nevada 89445  
<http://www.nv.blm.gov/winnemucca>

### **Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

I have reviewed the County Road/Colman Fence range improvement project Environmental Assessment (EA) (NV-020-05-EA-14) including the proposed action and alternatives, and the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts.

Based on the analysis of the EA and implementation of stipulations and monitoring and mitigation measures identified, I have determined that the proposed action would not have any significant impacts on the human environment or to minority or low-income populations or communities. Preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is not required for the following reasons;

- 1) Sensitive resource values will not be adversely impacted from implementation of the proposed action.
- 2) There would be no adverse affect on threatened or endangered, or Nevada State Sensitive Species within the project area.
- 3) The project will not adversely affect or cause destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
- 4) The proposed action would not adversely affect public health or safety. The proposed action and its potential effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.

  
for Gail G. Givens, Field Manager

6/24/05  
Date



# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

United States  
Department  
of the Interior

Bureau of  
Land Management

June 17, 2005

## The County Road/Colman Fence

Environmental Assessment NV-020-05-EA-14

Winnemucca Field Office, Nevada BLM  
Humboldt County, Nevada



View of Colman Creek in Soldier Meadows Allotment, Photograph courtesy of Matthew Varner

**THE COUNTY ROAD/COLMAN FENCE  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
EA NO. NV-020-05-EA-14**

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
WINNEMUCCA FIELD OFFICE**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE  
COUNTY ROAD/COLMAN FENCE**

**EA Number: NV-020-05-EA-14**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1 Purpose and Need***

The Soldier Meadows Allotment (SMA) 2004 Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) identified the need for this range improvement project to eliminate livestock drifting into the Colman Use Area and impacting existing Lahonton cutthroat trout (LCT), a federally listed threatened species, habitat in Colman Creek. Currently there is no fence between the Warm Springs and Colman Use Areas. When livestock are grazing in the Warm Springs Use Area, 5/1 to 7/31 or 8/1 to 9/30, they have historically drifted into the Colman Use Area and impacted LCT habitat in Colman Creek. This proposed fence would eliminate livestock drift into the Colman Use Area and is essential for the final grazing system to function properly. This proposed project is consistent with the Office of Hearings and Appeals Stipulation dated February 28, 2005 and the Order dated March 1, 2005.

### ***1.2 Relationship to Planning***

The proposed action and alternatives are in conformance with the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan (NCA/RMP) and is consistent with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible.

The NCA/RMP identifies program specific objectives and decisions for managing the resources identified in the NCA planning area as follows:

#### Grazing Management

GRAZ-6: "New rangeland projects may be developed when consistent with achieving Land Health Standards and the objectives of the plan."

#### Special Status Species

SSS-2: "Actions and stipulations necessary to protect special status species and their habitats will be made in authorization and actions that occur during RMP implementation."

The proposed action is in conformance with the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Recovery Plan (USFWS 1995), the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Species Management Plan for the Quinn River/Black Rock Basins and North Fork Little Humboldt River Sub-Basin (NDOW 1999)

and is consistent with recovery strategies and objectives identified within these plans. The proposed action would enhance and protect LCT and their associated habitat, which would allow for increased sustainability of the population and also improved opportunities to establish new populations within other streams, using excess LCT from Colman Creek.

The proposed action is in conformance with the Soldier Meadows Allotment Biological Opinion (BO) (File No. 1-5-03-F-184), as amended. The BO states that; “construction of approximately 6.5 miles of fence along the Soldier Meadows County Road to protect Colman Creek”...was necessary to minimize impacts to LCT.

The proposed action is a component of and in conformance with the Soldier Meadows Allotment (SMA) Final Multiple Use Decision dated May 5, 2004.

## **2 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES**

### ***2.1 Proposed Action***

The proposed action is to construct approximately four and a half (4.4) miles of fence within portions of T.41N., R.25E., Secs. 2, 11, 14, 15, 22, 27, & 33 (see **Map 1**). This proposed fencing project consists of two separate sections. The first section (0.1mi.) would extend from an existing fence around private lands at the Soldier Meadows Ranch to a rock bluff northeast of the ranch. The second section (4.3mi.) would extend from a rock bluff west of Soldier Creek to the Summit Lake Reservation tribal fence.

The majority of the proposed fence would be constructed adjacent to existing roads west of the North Black Rock Range Wilderness Area. There are two small portions of the proposed fence, totaling approximately 1000 feet, which would be constructed within wilderness to reduce the occurrence of sharp angular corners that have the potential to trap livestock, wild horses and burros and impede wildlife movement.

The two small portions of the fence that are within the Wilderness would be constructed and maintained with non-motorized hand tools and no motor vehicles. Fencing materials would be hauled into the site on foot or horseback.

The proposed fence would be constructed within the Warm Springs Herd Management Area (HMA) near the Black Rock West HMA boundary (see **Map 4**). This proposed fence would be constructed to BLM antelope specifications and would not result in sharp angular corners that could increase the risk of trapping livestock, wild horses and burros, or wildlife. Flagging would be placed on the fence to make it more visible and minimize the potential of horses or wildlife impacting the fence, particularly during low light conditions.

Under a Cooperative Agreement with Estill Ranches LLC, BLM would provide the fencing materials, complete the required permitting, clearances and consultation and the rancher (Estill Ranches LLC) would construct and maintain the fence.

Gates would be placed at select locations to facilitate authorized livestock trailing and/or wild and domestic ungulate removal. Gates would be open when livestock are not in this area to facilitate seasonal movement of wild horses and burros.

## **2.2 Alternative 2**

This alternative would roughly follow the same alignment (Humboldt County Road) as the proposed action on the northern portion. The southern portion would continue to follow the Humboldt County Road all the way to the Soldier Meadows Ranch (see **Map 2**). This proposed alternative would require approximately seven (7) miles of fence compared to four and a four tenths (4.4) miles for the proposed action.

## **2.3 Alternative 3 (No Action)**

Under this alternative, no fence would be constructed and the issues identified in the Purpose and Need Section would continue.

## **2.4 Alternative considered but eliminated from detailed analysis**

The alternative of constructing the fence across the northwestern corner of the North Black Rock Range Wilderness Area was considered, because it would have reduced the amount of fencing required. This alternative would have constructed between 2 and 3 miles of new fence within the Wilderness. This alternative was dropped from further analysis because it was not considered to be the minimum required action for maintaining the wilderness values in the area. (See Appendix 1 and **Map 3** for details)

# **3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate that the effects of a proposed action and alternative(s) on certain critical environmental elements be considered. Not all of the critical elements that require inclusion in this EA will be present, or if they are present, may not be affected by the proposed action and alternatives (Table 1). Only those mandatory critical elements that are present and affected are described.

In addition to the mandatory critical elements, there are additional resources that require impact analysis relative to the proposed action and alternatives. These are presented under, **3.2 Additional Affected Resources**.

The Affected Environment related to this environmental assessment is described in the Soldier Meadows Allotment (SMA) Multiple Use Management Environmental Assessment (EA No. NV-020-03-09), and is hereby incorporated by reference. This document can be obtained at the Winnemucca Field Office, BLM.

### 3.1 Critical Environmental Elements

The following critical elements of the human environment are present and affected by the proposed action and alternative: cultural resources, invasive, non-native species, migratory birds, Native American religious concerns, special status species, and wilderness/wilderness study areas.

**Table 1. Critical Elements of the Human Environment.**

Critical Elements	Present	Affected		Critical Elements	Present	Affected	
		Yes	No			Yes	No
Air Quality	X		X	Prime/Unique Farmlands			X
ACEC's			X	Special Status Species	X	X	
Cultural Resources	X	X		Wastes, Hazardous/Solid			X
Environmental Justice			X	Water Quality (Surface & Ground)	X	X	
Floodplains			X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones	X	X	
Invasive, Nonnative Species	X	X		Wild & Scenic Rivers			X
Migratory Birds			X	Wilderness/Wildernes Study Areas	X	X	
Nat. Amer. Rel. Concerns	X		X				

#### 3.1.1 Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources within the project area are described in Section 3.8, page 55 of the SMA EA.

The Soldier Meadows Allotment contains a complex array of cultural resources representing human occupation dating from perhaps 10,000 to 12,000 years ago to comparatively recent historic times. In addition to the considerable temporal span indicated by these resources, surveys conducted to date indicate a wide breadth of behaviors of both a transitory and semi permanent nature took place in the allotment, including the exploitation of floral and faunal

resources associated with marshes and hot springs, lithic procurement and tool manufacture, trade and exchange, ranching, transportation, and emigration. While archaeologists have studied some aspects of these activities, others are not well understood.

### **3.1.2 Invasive, Nonnative Species**

Invasive, nonnative species within the project area are described in Section 3.5, page 49 of the SMA EA.

Although a complete inventory of the Soldier Meadows Allotment has not been completed, inventory efforts completed to date, have identified numerous noxious weeds within the allotment. The current weed inventory (2004) does not identify any noxious weeds within the proposed project area.

### **3.1.3 Special Status Species**

Special Status Species within the project area are described in Sections 3.2.1, page 26, 3.3.2, page 42, and 3.4.2, page 46 of the SMA EA.

Colman Creek which is within the vicinity of the project area provides habitat for an existing population of the federally listed threatened LCT.

A greater sage-grouse lek is located approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile (4,000 feet) east of the proposed fence. In 2000, four (4) birds were documented at this lek.

No on-the-ground field investigations have been conducted for sensitive/protected plant species. However, according to the Nevada Natural Heritage Program (2004) data base, no endangered, threatened, candidate or sensitive plant species have been reported within or near the project area.

### **3.1.4 Water Quality**

Water resources within the project area are described in Section 3.1, pages 20-24 of the SMA EA.

Water resources within the vicinity of the project area include Colman Creek and Soldier Creek. Soldier Creek is primarily an intermittent, non-fishery stream system. The perennial portions of these streams occur greater than 0.5 mile away from the county road. No other perennial aquatic resources occur within 1.0 mile of the project area, which is the area in proximity to the Humboldt County Road.

### **3.1.5 Wetland/Riparian Zones**

Riparian zones within the vicinity of the project area include the riparian areas related to Colman Creek and Soldier Creek. There are no other riparian areas within 1.0 mile of the project area in the proximity of the Humboldt County Road.

### **3.1.6 Wilderness**

The majority of the proposed fence would be constructed adjacent to existing roads west of the

North Black Rock Range Wilderness Area. There are two small portions of the proposed fence, totaling approximately 1000 feet, which would be constructed within wilderness to reduce the occurrence of sharp angular corners that have the potential to trap livestock, wild horses and burros and impede wildlife movement.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 mandates that wilderness areas be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness. The Wilderness Act also mandates that wilderness areas be managed in such a manner as to maintain or enhance the values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for primitive or unconfined recreation, and any special features found in the areas. Several special features that were specifically mentioned in the BRHR NCA Act of 2000, may be found within the North Black Rock Range Wilderness Area. They include; prehistoric and historic Native American sites, threatened fish and sensitive plants, and a largely untouched emigrant trail viewshed.

## **3.2 Additional Affected Resources**

### **3.2.1 Vegetation**

Vegetative Resources within the project area are described in Section 3.4, pages 46-48 of the SMA EA.

Vegetation on fan piedmonts is mainly shadscale/bud sagebrush at lower elevation, Wyoming big sagebrush at mid-elevation, and basin big sagebrush at higher elevations.

Vegetation on plateaus is mainly bluebunch wheatgrass, Lahontan sagebrush and big sagebrush.

### **3.2.2 Livestock Grazing**

Livestock grazing within the project area is described in Section 2.1, pages 10-19 of the SMA EA.

Livestock grazing is in accordance with the SMA Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) and the Biological Opinion (USFWS 2003).

Livestock would be authorized to graze within the Colman Use Area from 11/16 to 12/15 on an annual basis subject to the Terms and Conditions established in the Biological Opinion.

### **3.2.3 Native American Religious Concerns**

Native American Values within the project area are described in Section 3.9, page 55 of the SMA EA.

The Soldier Meadows area lies within the traditional territory of Northern Paiute peoples. Ethnographic sources indicate that the area was used by the Aga'ipanadokado (fish lake eaters)

or Moadokado (wild onion eaters) groups who inhabited the shores of Summit Lake (BLM 1998). Contemporary tribal groups have been consulted in the past with regard to proposals in the Soldier Meadows Allotment (BLM 1998). At that time, they could not provide information on the traditional use of the area and had no knowledge of Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP's) or sacred places. They do, however, view Soldier Meadows as part of their ancestral territory and have expressed concern over potential impacts to cultural resources in the area.

### **3.2.4 Soils**

Soils within the project area are described in Section 3.6, page 49-52 of the SMA EA.

Soils within the SMA are diverse, ranging from lake deposits in the Black Rock Desert to residual soils at the higher elevations of the Black Rock Range. SMA contains 66 soil map units and 13 general map units in the draft Soil Survey of Humboldt County Nevada, West Part. These 13 general units were grouped into five categories, based on major landforms. The soils in the project area occur on **Fan Piedmonts** and **Plateaus** and are described below:

The McConnel-DunGlen-Pumper, Shawave-Deadyon, Aboten-Tumtum-Oxcorel, and Simon-Fulstone-Welch soils units are on **Fan Piedmonts**. These soil units are nearly level through strongly sloping, shallow through very deep, and well drained. These soils have medium textured surface layers and moderately fine and fine textured subsoils with strongly cemented layers.

The Wylo-Bucklake-Pickup, Devada-Tuffo, and Badger Camp-Bear Butte soil units are on **Plateaus** that are moderately sloping through very steep, shallow or moderately deep, and well drained. They have very stony medium textured surface layers and fine textured subsoils.

Soil erosion hazard potential varies with parent material, elevation, slope, aspect, and vegetation cover. Erosion hazard is the probability that erosion damage may occur as a result of site preparation, fires, and overgrazing (Soil Survey Manual 1993). Water and wind erosion hazards in the project area range from slight to moderate.

### **3.2.5 Recreation**

Recreation within the project area is described in Section 3.8, page 57 of the SMA EA.

A wide diversity of recreation occurs in the SMA. Some people visit the area simply to enjoy its solitude and naturalness, while others go there to tour historic trails, ride off highway vehicles, rockhound, or view wildlife and wild horses. Recreation opportunities in the SMA predominately include camping, hunting, hot springs bathing, and wilderness trekking.

Several popular recreation destinations occur within the SMA. These include: Soldier Meadows Hot Spring Complex, Double Hot Springs, Black Rock Hot Springs, Portions of the Applegate-Lassen Emigrant Trail and the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Wilderness Study Area.

### **3.2.6 Visual Resource Management**

The proposal would occur primarily within VRM Zone II, a small portion would also occur within designated wilderness which is managed as a VRM Zone I.

The objective for Zone II management is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the existing landscape should be low.

The objective for Zone I management is to preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.

The existing landscape in the project area consists of rolling sage covered hills with several rocky basalt outcrops. A dirt road and an existing weather station add elements of vertical, angular and linear forms to the project area.

### **3.2.7 Wildlife**

Wildlife resources and terrestrial sensitive species within the project area are described in Section 3.3, pages 40-45 of the SMA EA.

Wildlife species in project area include **mule deer** and **pronghorn antelope**. There are other wildlife species that potentially occupy habitats within the project area including raptors, predators, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and small game species. However, the above mentioned species were chosen because of past consideration in BLM's planning process, and knowledge about habitat needs and conditions.

**Mule deer** are widespread, typically associated with complex middle to upper elevation landforms that support a wide variety of sagebrush, mountain shrubs, quaking aspen and herbaceous vegetation. Mule deer also use lower elevations during years when heavy snowfall depth forces them to move.

**Pronghorn antelope** are distributed throughout much of the project area in valleys and mountain foothill habitats. Pronghorn are sagebrush obligates, but are known to use salt desert scrub communities during the late winter and spring.

### **3.2.8 Wild Horses and Burros**

Wild Horses and Burros information within the project area are described in Section 3.7, pages 52-54 of the SMA EA.

The proposed fence would be constructed near the boundary between the Warm Springs Canyon Herd Management Area (HMA) (NV-226) and Black Rock Range West HMA (NV-227), (see **Map 4**).

A removal of horses was conducted within the Warm Springs and Black Rock Range West HMA'S during winter of 2005. This gather reduced the horse numbers to the lower end of the Appropriate Management Level Range.

Current estimates place the 2005 pre-foaling population at 57 horses in the Black Rock Range West HMA and 105 horses and 17 burros in the Warm Springs Canyon HMA.



## **4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **4.1 Impacts of Proposed Action**

#### **Critical Environmental Elements**

##### **4.1.1 Cultural Resources**

###### **Direct and Indirect Impacts**

The construction of the proposed fence has the potential to adversely impact cultural values. Cultural resources situated along the route of the fence could be impacted by activities associated with construction and, also by cattle that tend to form trails along established fence line routes.

In order to analyze the consequences of this action in more detail, a Class I records review of the area was conducted and determined that no National Register quality sites are present. In addition, a Class III inventory was conducted along the entire proposed fence route. The results of the inventory indicate that the proposed action would have no adverse effect on significant cultural resources.

##### **4.1.2 Invasive, Nonnative Species**

###### **Direct Impacts**

Direct impacts of fence construction activities would result in minimal removal of existing vegetation, leaving few disturbed areas prone to the establishment of noxious weeds. The degree of establishment would be dependent on any available noxious weed seed source, such as vehicles used to build the fence. Based on the limited amount of disturbance and the ability for existing vegetation to heal, due to late seral stage of the native vegetation, fence construction would pose a low risk for spreading noxious weeds. Therefore, minimal direct impacts are anticipated from the proposed action.

###### **Indirect Impacts**

Upon completion of the proposed project the Final grazing system can be implemented which would ensure more uniform grazing throughout the allotment. This improved livestock grazing system should achieve the allotment objectives and Standards for Rangeland Health resulting in healthier vegetative communities.

##### **4.1.3 Special Status Species**

###### **Direct Impacts**

New and/or established fence lines near a lek have been documented to kill and negatively impact sage-grouse (Danvir 2002). Collisions with fences were most frequent closer to the lek and ceased beyond ½ mile (2,640 feet) of a lek. Connelly et al. (2000) suggests that it is important to “increase the visibility of fences and other structures occurring within 1 km (¾ mile) of seasonal ranges by flagging or similar means if these structures appear hazardous to flying grouse (e.g., birds have been observed hitting or narrowly missing these structures or grouse remains have been found next to these structures).” These recommendations were adopted in the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies sage-grouse guidelines (2000). Even though the lek is further than ½ mile from the proposed fence these mitigation

measures would be initiated.

#### Indirect Impacts

The proposed action would eliminate unauthorized livestock grazing on the fishery and aquatic resources. Therefore, impacts from unauthorized livestock during the summer months (i.e. the hot season) would be eliminated, which would improve and maintain the long term riparian health and aquatic habitats on both Colman Creek and Soldier Creek. These benefits will promote the maintenance and improvement of LCT habitat, thus contributing to the fulfillment of delisting criteria for the species.

### **4.1.4 Water Quality**

#### Direct Impacts

No direct impacts would occur to water quality.

#### Indirect Impacts

The proposed fencing project would eliminate unauthorized livestock from seasonally drifting into the Colman Use Area and impacting the water quality of Colman and Soldier Creeks. Impacts to water resources are expected to be incrementally positive over the long term. Eliminating seasonal livestock drift into Colman and Soldier Creeks should increase riparian vegetation resulting in less sediment entering the creek thereby improving water quality.

### **4.1.5 Wetland/Riparian Zones**

#### Direct Impacts

No direct impacts would occur to wetland/riparian zones.

The proposed action would eliminate unauthorized livestock grazing on the wetland/riparian zones. Therefore, impacts from unauthorized livestock during the summer months (i.e. the hot season) would be eliminated, which would improve and maintain the long term riparian health and aquatic habitats on both Colman Creek and Soldier Creek. These benefits will promote the maintenance and improvement of wetland/riparian zones, thus contributing to attainment of allotment objectives the standards for rangeland health.

### **4.1.6 Wilderness**

#### Direct Impacts

##### *Naturalness-*

Under this alternative approximately 4.4 miles of fence would be constructed along the northwestern boundary of the North Black Rock Wilderness Area. The majority of the fence would be constructed outside of the Wilderness Area so there would be minimal impacts to the appearance of naturalness within the Wilderness. Two portions of the fence (totaling approximately 1,000') would be constructed just inside the wilderness boundary and would impact the appearance of naturalness in those immediate areas. However, because the fence would be constructed along the existing boundary route and would be located within 30 feet of the boundary, the impact would be minimal.

A Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA-NV-025-01) was mailed to the wilderness interested public

for comment on the proposed fence. One letter was received in response to the NOPA and these comments were taken into consideration in the development of this EA.

The proposed fence would ensure proper livestock management in the Wilderness Area. The fence would maintain and possibly enhance the naturalness of the area by excluding livestock during the hot season. Other potential impacts to naturalness can be found in the Water Resources, Vegetation, Wildlife, and Soil Sections.

*Opportunities for Solitude/Primitive or Unconfined Recreation-*

The proposed project could have an impact on the opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the North Black Rock Wilderness Area. The fence would eliminate livestock drift into the Wilderness Area during the hot season and reduce the potential of livestock impacting wilderness visitors during that time.

The fence would also be built across several closed routes within the Wilderness and may reduce the amount of motorized trespass that occurs along those routes. Reducing the amount of unauthorized motorized use would benefit the opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

*Special Features-*

LCT is considered to be one of the special features of this Wilderness. LCT habitat would be enhanced by constructing the fence and excluding grazing impacts in their habitat during the hot season.

Other special features would not be impacted.

Indirect Impacts

The proposed action would eliminate livestock drift into the Colman Use Area and the associated impacts to wilderness resource values resulting in achieving the management objectives of the NCA/RMP.

**Additional Affected Resources**

**4.1.7 Vegetation**

Direct Impacts

Direct impacts of the proposed alternative may include minimal vegetative disturbance along the fence route. However since the area of the proposed project is in late seral stage ecological status any disturbed sites should quickly re-vegetate.

Indirect Impacts

Implementation of the proposed action would eliminate unauthorized livestock grazing in the Colman Use Area. The current grazing system only allows grazing during the dormant season (11/15 to 12/15) in the Colman Use Area.

Elimination of hot season grazing in the Colman Use Area would increase the standing crop resulting in increased litter, which could indirectly improve seedling establishment and allow for

earlier growth of plants by providing retention of soil moisture.

#### **4.1.8 Livestock Grazing**

##### Direct Impacts

Upon completion of the proposed fence the final grazing system would become effective in accordance with the SMA FMUD. The final grazing system allows livestock to graze within the Warm Springs Use Area from 5/1 to 7/31 (early) or 8/1 to 9/30 (late) in a deferred rotational grazing system.

The proposed fence combined with natural features would prevent livestock drift from the Warm Springs Use Area into the Colman Use Area and impacting LCT habitat.

The proposed action would assist in the management of livestock grazing, specifically in the Warm Springs and Colman Use Areas. The proposed fence would prevent livestock from drifting into the Colman Use Area prior to the authorized season of use (11/15 – 12/15). The fence would require livestock to disperse more evenly throughout the Warm Springs Use Area and eliminate cattle drift into the Colman Use Area and access to water in Colman and Soldier Creeks.

##### Indirect Impacts

The proposed fence combined with the other fence projects (Idaho Canyon and Desert Dace) would ensure proper livestock management and attainment of the allotment objectives and the Standards for Rangeland Health.

#### **4.1.9 Native American Religious Concerns**

A solicitation letter has been sent to the Summit Lake Tribal Council inviting them to express any concerns they may have about places of traditional and religious importance in the vicinity of the proposed action. If such places are present in the area, the BLM would ensure that measures are taken to avoid or reduce adverse impacts associated with the proposed action in consultation with tribal officials and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

#### **4.1.10 Soils**

##### Direct Impacts

Direct impacts of the proposed alternative may include minimal soil disturbance along the fence route during construction which may increase the short term potential for localized soil erosion.

##### Indirect Impacts

Reduced utilization of the vegetative resources within Colman and Soldier Creeks and the upland sites within the Colman Use Area would be achieved, lessening the potential for soil erosion. Improved ecological condition would increase productivity, litter, soil fertility, infiltration and nutrient cycling. Long term beneficial impacts to the soil resources are anticipated from the proposed action.

#### **4.1.11 Recreation**

##### Direct Impacts

No direct impact to recreational users would occur under the proposed action.

#### Indirect Impacts

Indirect impacts would be beneficial or adverse depending on the user. The indirect impacts stem from the reduced potential of unauthorized vehicular access to the North Black Rock Wilderness as a result of the proposed fencing.

### **4.1.12 Visual Resource Management**

#### Direct Impacts

The proposed fence would be constructed in both Class I and II VRM Management Classes. The project would meet the VRM objectives for both the Class I and II Zones. Because the project would be constructed along an existing disturbance (i.e. route), the change to the existing landscape would be low and would not attract additional attention.

#### Indirect Impacts

The project would assist in achieving the Standards for Rangeland Health in the Coleman Use Area. If they are achieved, there would be the potential for improved resource conditions which could indirectly benefit visual resources in the area.

### **4.1.13 Wildlife**

#### Direct Impacts

Construction of the fence would decrease the ability of pronghorn antelope to access the area. This impact would be reduced through the use of fence specifications designed to facilitate antelope movement through the fence (BLM Handbook H1641). Fencing would slightly increase the risk of collisions of other wildlife passing through the area, particularly during low light conditions. Presence of the fence would increase perching opportunities for birds, particularly birds of prey. The proposed project consists of two sections of fence separated by natural rock bluffs which should allow wildlife movement through the area while restricting livestock movement due to steepness of slopes.

#### Indirect Impacts

Increases in vegetation as a result of the seasonal exclusion of livestock would yield an increase in the standing, residual vegetation and litter on the soil surface. This would indirectly benefit non-game wildlife species, particularly wetland obligates and seasonal migrants by increasing residual cover and increasing the vertical structure of vegetation along Colman and Soldier Creeks.

These increases in growing and residual vegetation would also improve the potential nesting habitat cover for sage-grouse and would be expected to improve the habitat for all game and non-game species in general and may improve potential habitat for pygmy rabbit. Furthermore, the sage-grouse early and late brooding habitats would be expected to improve when the meadows and riparian areas improve.

### **4.1.14 Wild Horses and Burros**

#### Direct Impacts

Construction of the fence would decrease the ability of wild horses and burros to access some areas in the vicinity of the fence. The fence would increase the potential of wild horse collisions with the fence, particularly during low light conditions. This potential risk would be minimized by attaching flagging to the fence making it more visible.

#### Indirect Impacts

The proposed Colman/County Road fence would be near the boundary between the Black Rock Range West and Warm Springs HMAs. Although wild horses and burros seasonally use this area there is minimal evidence that animals migrate between these two HMAs.

The proposed fence would not eliminate horses from their historical sources of water since there are water sources on both sides of the proposed fence.

The proposed project consists of two sections of fence separated by natural rock bluffs which may allow horses to move through this area while restricting livestock movement due to the steepness of slopes.

Gates would be open when livestock are not in this area to facilitate the seasonal movement of wild horses and burros. Therefore, direct and indirect impacts from the proposed action would be minimal.

## **4.2 Impacts of Alternative 2 (Seven Miles of Fence)**

### **Critical Environmental Elements**

#### **4.2.1 Cultural Resources**

This alternative would require approximately 2.6 miles of additional fence adjacent to the county road to obtain the same objective. No cultural resources inventory was conducted for this section (2.6 mi.) of proposed fence under this alternative. If selected the route identified in Alternative 2 would be surveyed and any significant cultural resources be avoided or adverse effect mitigated in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and tribal groups.

#### **4.2.2 Invasive, Nonnative Species**

Although the length of the fence would be greater (7 v. 4.4 mi.) than that described in the proposed action (4.1.2), the impacts would be the same as discussed for the proposed action.

#### **4.2.3 Special Status Species**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.3).

#### **4.2.4 Water Quality**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.4).

#### **4.2.5 Wetland/Riparian Zones**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.5).

#### **4.2.6 Wilderness**

*Naturalness-*

Same as the Proposed Action except the minor impacts to the areas where the fence would be built inside the Wilderness would not occur.

*Opportunities for Solitude/Primitive or Unconfined Recreation –*

Same as the Proposed Action.

*Special Features –*

Same as the Proposed Action.

#### **Additional Affected Resources**

#### **4.2.7 Vegetation**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.6), with the exception of an additional 2.6 miles of disturbance during construction.

#### **4.2.8 Livestock Grazing**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.7), with the exception that the burden of fence maintenance would be greater under this alternative due to an additional 2.6 miles of fence.

#### **4.2.9 Native American Religious Concerns**

As indicated under the proposed action, the Summit Lake Tribal Council has been asked for assistance in the identification of places of traditional and religious importance in the Soldier Meadows area. If concerns are expressed, the BLM will take these into consideration in consultation with tribal officials and the Nevada SHPO.

Impacts would be the same as those discussed for the proposed action, except that there would be an additional 2.6 miles of fence added to the proposed action. This alternative would result in a solid fence extending from the existing tribal fence to the private fence at Soldier Meadows Ranch.

#### **4.2.10 Soils**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.9), with the exception of an additional 2.6 miles of soil disturbance during construction.

#### **4.2.11 Recreation**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.10).

#### **4.2.12 Special Designations**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.11).

#### **4.2.13 Visual Resource Management**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.12).

#### **4.2.14 Wildlife**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.13), with the exception that the additional 2.6 miles of fence would eliminate wildlife movement in the area of natural rock bluffs.

#### **4.2.15 Wild Horses and Burros**

The impacts are the same for this alternative as those described for the proposed action (4.1.14), with the exception that the additional 2.6 miles of fence would eliminate wild horse and burro movement in the area of natural rock bluffs. The additional fence would also increase the potential of wild horses and burros running into the fence.

### **4.3 Impacts of Alternative 3 (No Action)**

#### **Critical Environmental Elements**

##### **4.3.1 Cultural Resources**

The no action alternative would eliminate the potential of impacting cultural resources during fence construction and by cattle that tend to form trails along established fence line routes.

##### **4.3.2 Invasive, Nonnative Species**

The no action alternative would eliminate the impacts of fence construction activities that would result in minimal removal of existing vegetation, leaving disturbed areas prone to the establishment of noxious weeds.

##### **4.3.3 Special Status Species**

Under the no action alternative the fence would not be constructed to protect LCT habitat. Continued impacts from unauthorized livestock grazing would likely occur on Colman Creek and Soldier Creek. However, the impacts would be reduced through implementation of the 2004 FMUD interim grazing system compared to the historic grazing system.

##### **4.3.4 Water Quality**

The no action alternative would allow livestock drift to continue into the Colman Use Area potentially impacting the water quality of Colman and Soldier Creeks. These potential impacts would be reduced through adherence to the 2004 FMUD interim grazing system.

##### **4.3.5 Wetland/Riparian Zones**

The no action alternative would allow livestock drift to continue into the Colman Use Area



potentially impacting the wetland/riparian zones along Colman and Soldier Creeks. These potential impacts would be reduced through adherence to the 2004 FMUD interim grazing system.

#### **4.3.6 Wilderness**

Under the no action alternative the two small sections of the proposed fence would not be constructed within the North Black Rock Range Wilderness Area. Livestock drift into the Colman Use Area would continue and the management objectives of the NCA/RMP would not be achieved.

##### *Naturalness-*

The appearance of naturalness and the viewshed would not be impacted under this alternative. The North Black Rock Wilderness Area would continue to be grazed by unauthorized livestock drifting into this area during the hot season and the potential impacts to naturalness would continue.

##### *Opportunities for Solitude/Primitive or Unconfined Recreation-*

No impacts would occur to the current conditions.

##### *Special Features-*

Impacts that are currently occurring to LCT habitat in the North Black Rock Wilderness Area from livestock grazing would continue.

### **Additional Affected Resources**

#### **4.3.7 Vegetation**

Under this alternative no fence would be constructed and livestock would continue to impact the vegetation within the Colman Use Area outside of the scheduled season of use. Unauthorized grazing by livestock would continue to impact riparian vegetation in Colman and Soldier Creeks.

#### **4.3.8 Livestock Grazing**

Under the no action alternative the fence would not be constructed and the final grazing system identified in SMA/FMUD would not be implemented.

#### **4.3.9 Native American Religious Concerns**

The no action alternative would have no effect on places of traditional or religious importance to Native American groups. Under this alternative, no solicitation or consultation with local tribal officials would be undertaken.

#### **4.3.10 Soils**

Under the no action alternative the fence would not be constructed and the minimal soil disturbance along the fence route would not occur. Livestock drift into the Colman Use Area and the related impacts to soils would continue.

#### **4.3.11 Recreation**

The no action alternative would continue to allow unauthorized vehicular access to the North Black Rock Wilderness.

#### **4.3.12 Visual Resource Management**

Under the no action alternative no impacts would occur to the viewshed.

#### **4.3.13 Wildlife**

Current conditions would remain. Antelope and other wildlife passing through the area would not be impacted by the fence. No additional wildlife perches would be created.

#### **4.3.14 Wild Horses and Burros**

The no action alternative would allow wild horses and burros to access all areas in the vicinity of the fence. The potential risk of wild horses and burros running into the fence would be eliminated.

### ***4.4 Mitigation Measures and Monitoring***

No additional mitigation measures would be required beyond those identified in the proposed action and alternatives.

The BLM Winnemucca Field Office would be responsible for insuring that this project is in compliance with the Soldier Meadows Allotment Final Multiple Use Decision dated May 5, 2004 and the stipulations identified in the Cooperative Agreement.

### ***4.5 Cumulative Impacts***

The Council of Environmental Equality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA defines cumulative impacts as: "...[T]he impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or Non-Federal) or person undertakes such actions." Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

#### **Cumulative Assessment Area**

The assessment area would be the same as described in the Soldier Meadows Multiple Use Management Environmental Assessment (EA No. NV-020-03-09), which is hereby incorporated by reference (see MAP 5). The Cumulative Assessment Area is described in Section 4.16, page 115. This document can be obtained at the Winnemucca Field Office, BLM.

#### **4.5.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions.**

Cumulative impacts are described in the Soldier Meadows Multiple Use Management Environmental Assessment (EA No. NV-020-03-09) which is hereby incorporated by reference. The Cumulative Analysis can be found in Section 4.16, pages 115-127. In summary the cumulative impacts to Visual Resources, Wilderness, Water Resources, Wild Horse and Burros,

and Livestock are minimal. The proposed fence impacts a small portion of the SMA and a much smaller portion of the assessment area. The proposed action would have a beneficial impact to water quality, wetland/riparian zones, wildlife and special status species within the Colman and Soldier Creek watersheds.

#### **4.6 Literature cited**

Connelly, J. W., M. A. Schroeder, A. R. Sands, and C. E. Braun. 2000. Guidelines to manage sage-grouse populations and their habitats. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 28:967-985.

Danvir, R. E. 2002. Sage Grouse Ecology And Management In Northern Utah Sagebrush-Steppe. *Deseret Land and Livestock. Wildlife Research Report.* 39.

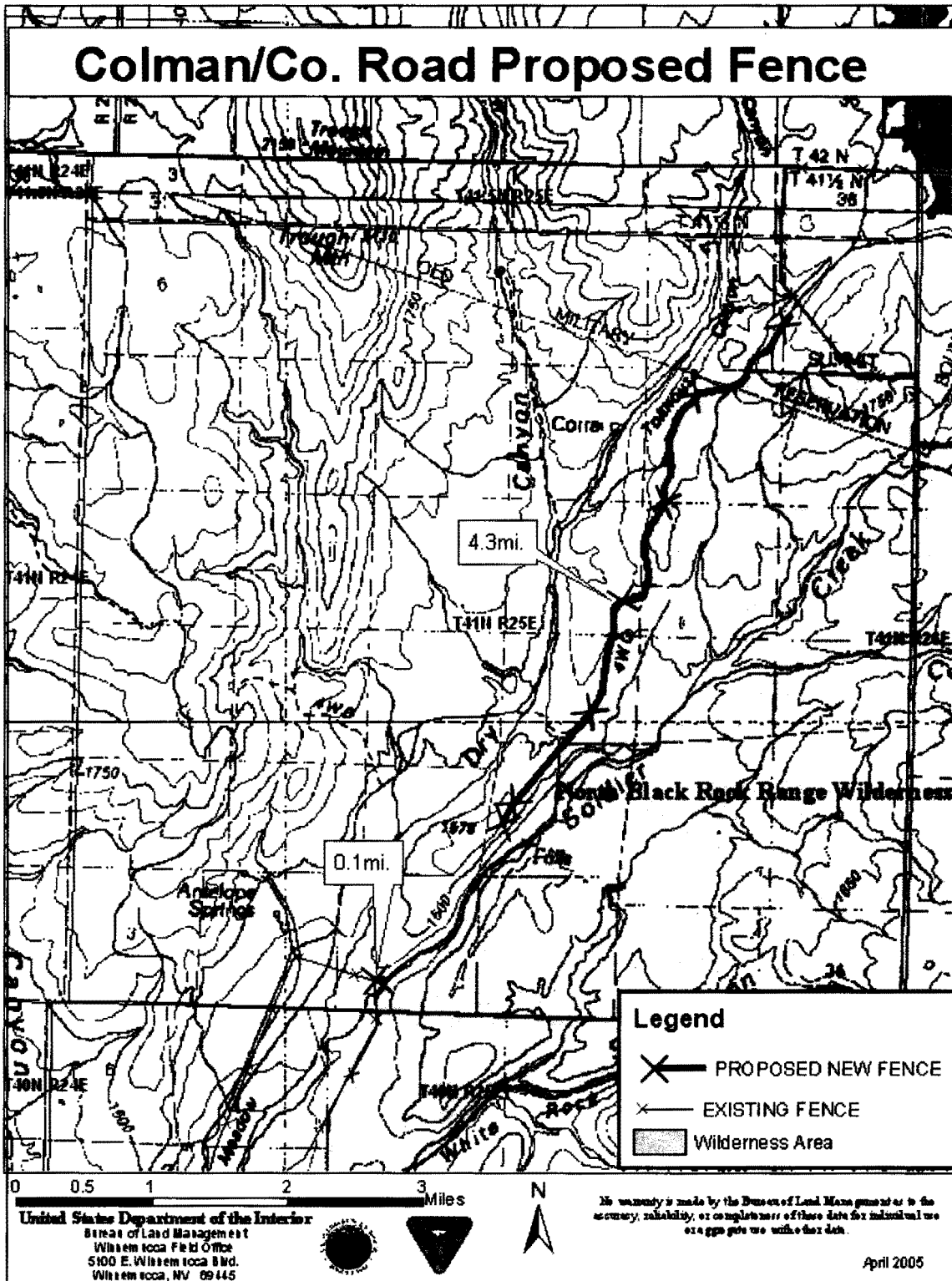
#### **4.7 Persons/Agencies Consulted**

Mark Maley, Fish and Wildlife Biologist (USFWS)  
John Estill, Soldier Meadows Allotment Permittee  
Summit Lake Paiute Tribe

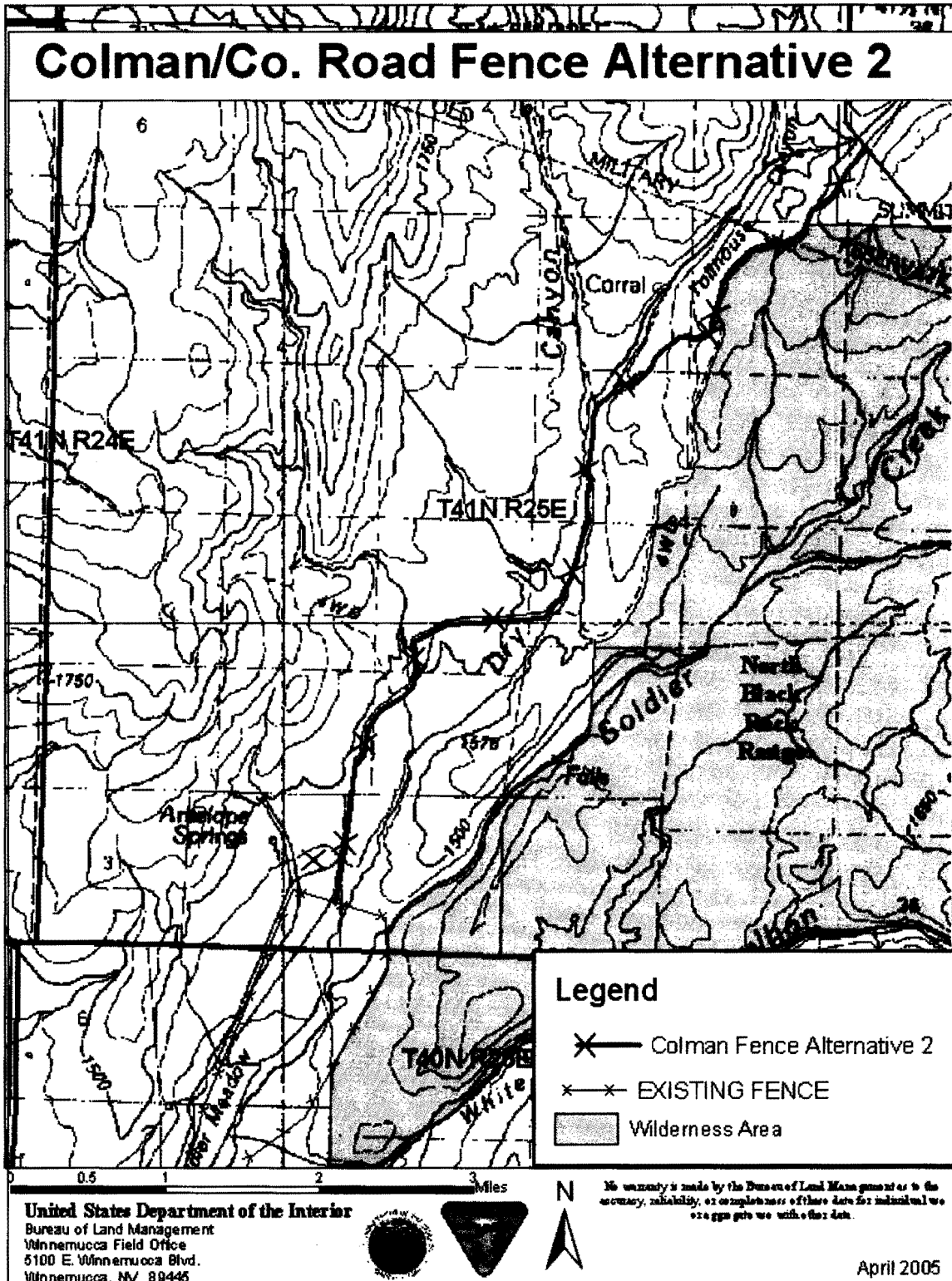
#### **4.8 BLM Staff Specialists**

Lynn Harrison, NEPA Lead  
Craig Drake, Hydrologist  
Mike Zielinski, Soil Scientist  
Matthew Varner, Fishery Biologist  
Ron Pearson, Rangeland Management Specialist  
Dave Valentine, Archaeologist, Native American Consultation  
Brian Murdock, Wilderness Coordinator, VRM  
Charles Neill, Weed Specialist  
Clarence Covert, Wildlife Biologist  
Heidi Hopkins, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist  
Quintin Boyles, Range Technician  
Jerry Carpenter, Engineering  
Mike Whalen, Fire Ecologist  
Mark Ennes, NEPA Coordinator

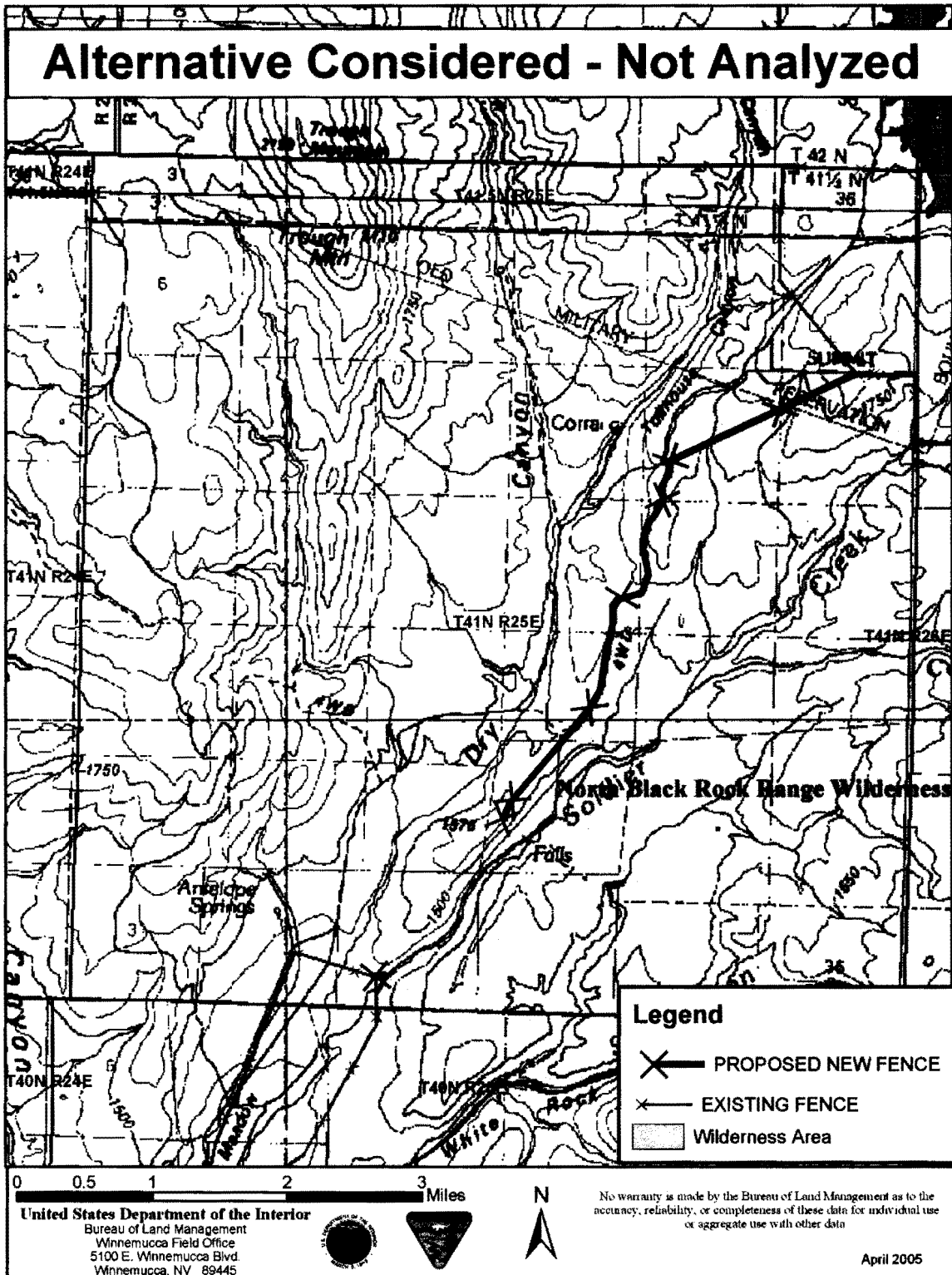
MAP 1



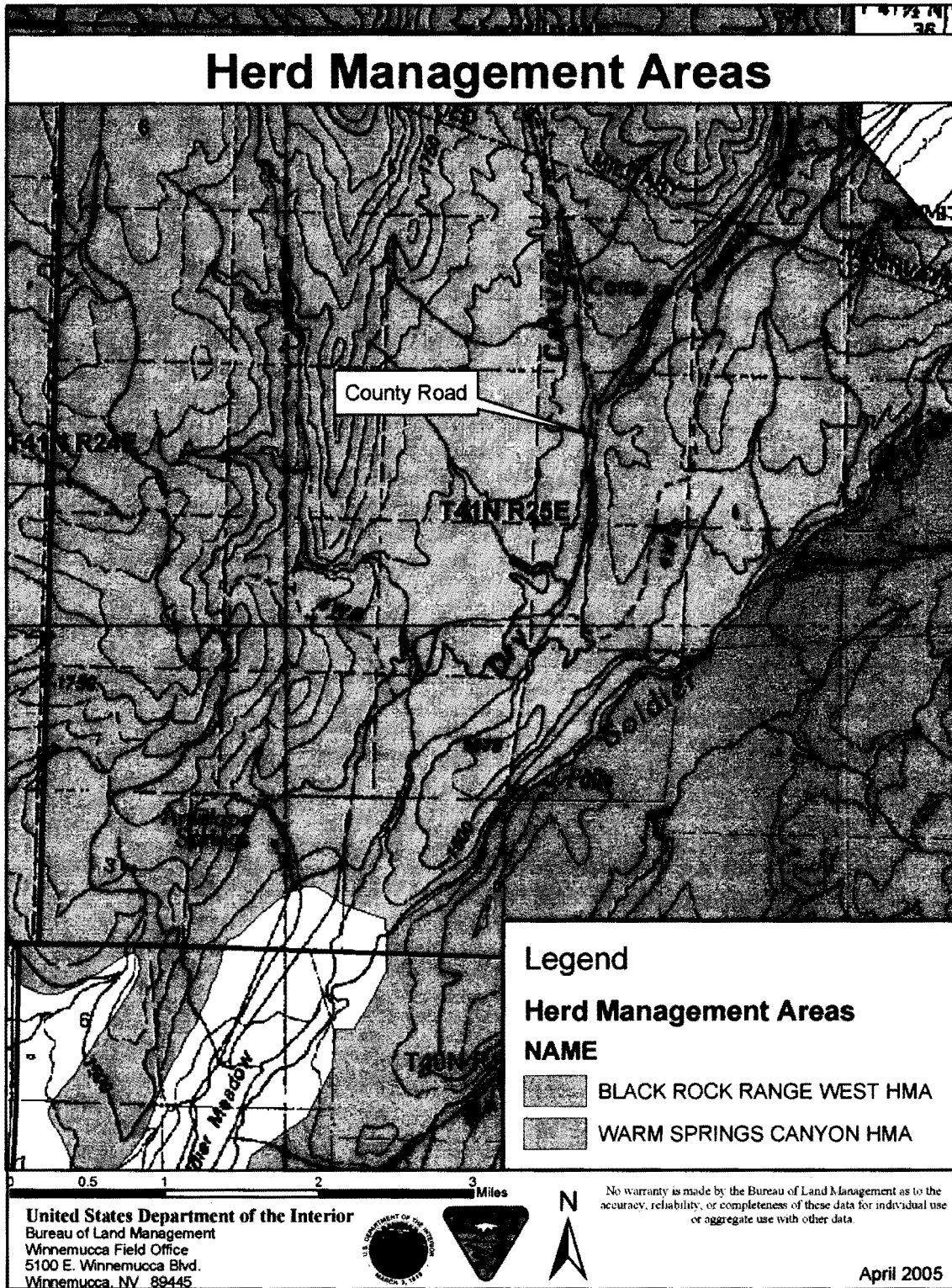
MAP 2



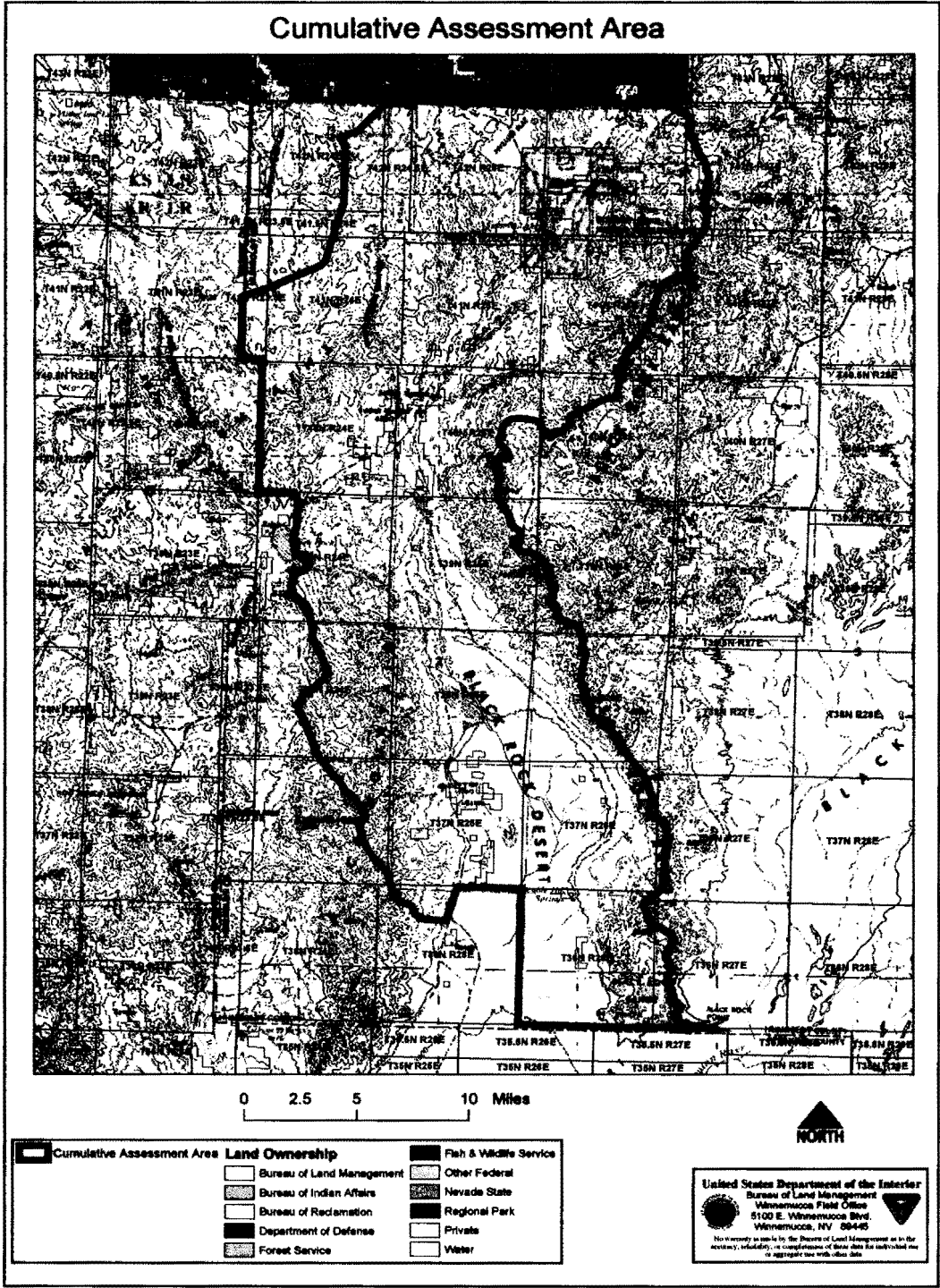
MAP 3



MAP 4



### Cumulative Assessment Area





## 5 Appendix 1

### Minimum Requirement/Tool Worksheets for the Proposed County Road/ Colman Fence Project

#### Step 1- Determining the Minimum Requirement (a two-part process)

Part A. Minimum Requirement Key to making determinations on wilderness management proposals

(This flow chart will help you assess whether the project is the minimum required action for the administration of the area as wilderness. Answering these questions will determine *if* this proposed action really is the *minimum required* action in wilderness.)

#### Guiding Questions

#### Answers and explanations

<p><b>1. <u>Is this an emergency?</u></b> (i.e. a situation that involves an inescapable urgency and temporary need for speed beyond that available by primitive means, such as fire suppression, health and safety of people, law enforcement efforts involving serious crime or fugitive pursuit, retrieval of the deceased or an immediate aircraft accident investigation)</p> <p>If Yes&gt; Document the rationale for line officer approval using the minimum tool form and proceed with action.</p> <p>If No&gt; Go to question 2</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>2. <u>Does the project or activity conflict with the stated management goals, objectives and desired future conditions of applicable legislation, policy and management plans?</u></b></p> <p>If Yes&gt; Do not proceed with the proposed project or activity.</p> <p>If No&gt; Go to question 3</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>3. <u>Are there any less intrusive actions that should be tried first?</u></b> ( i.e. signing, visitor</p>	<p>No, Using herders to keep cattle out of the Colman Creek drainage would be less</p>

<p><b>education, or information)</b></p> <p>If yes&gt; Implement other actions using the appropriate process.</p> <p>If No&gt; Go to question 4</p>	<p>intrusive but would not be sufficient to ensure that impacts do not occur to the LCT habitat in Colman Creek within the Wilderness.</p>
<p><b><u>4. Can this project or activity be accomplished outside of wilderness and still achieve its objectives?(such as some group events)</u></b></p> <p>If Yes&gt; Proceed with action outside of wilderness using the appropriate process.</p> <p>If No&gt; Go to question 5</p>	<p><b>Yes,</b> Originally the majority of the fence was proposed to be constructed within the wilderness. After analyzing the preliminary proposal it was determined that the fence could be constructed outside of the wilderness and accomplish the objective of mitigating impacts associated with livestock grazing in the LCT habitat of Colman Creek. The proposed action will now construct only two small portions of the fence within the wilderness boundary. These portions of fence would be constructed just within the wilderness boundary (20 to 30 feet) to avoid sharp angular sections of fence that have the potential to trap livestock, wild horses and burros, and native wildlife. Constructing the fence to avoid sharp angular sections will also assist wildlife movement around the fence.</p>
<p><b><u>5. Is this project or activity subject to valid existing rights? (such as mining claims or right of way easements)</u></b></p> <p>If Yes&gt; Proceed to Minimum Tool Analysis</p> <p>If No&gt; Go to question 6</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>
<p><b><u>6. Is their special provisions in legislation (the Wilderness Act or Black Rock Act) that allows this project or activity?</u></b></p> <p>If Yes&gt; the proposed project or activity should be considered but is not necessarily <u>required</u> just because it is mentioned in legislation. Go to part B</p> <p>If No&gt; Go to Part B</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

**Part B- Determining the Minimum Requirement**

Responsive Questions for Minimum Requirement Analysis: Explain your answer in the response column. If your responses indicate potential adverse affects to wilderness character, evaluate whether or not you should proceed with the proposal. If you decide to proceed, begin developing plans to mitigate impacts, and complete a Minimum Tool Analysis. Some of the following questions may not apply to every project.

<b>Effects on Wilderness Character</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<p><b>1.</b> How does this project/activity benefit the wilderness as a whole as opposed to one resource?</p>	<p>The proposal will assist in allowing the Colman Creek area within the North Black Rock Range Wilderness to meet the Rangeland Health Standards which will maintain or enhance the naturalness of the area. The proposal will also mitigate impacts to LCT associated with livestock grazing. LCT are considered to be one of the special features of this particular Wilderness.</p>
<p><b>2.</b> If this project/activity were not completed, what would be the beneficial and detrimental effects to the wilderness resources?</p>	<p>If the proposal were not completed the impacts occurring to LCT habitat within the Wilderness would continue to occur and livestock grazing could potentially have a greater impact on the overall naturalness of the area.</p> <p>The impacts to solitude and primitive recreation associated with the installation of the fence would not occur.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> How would the project or activity help ensure that the wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? (e.g. does the project/activity contribute to the people's sense that they are in a remote place with opportunities for self-discovery, adventure, quietness, connection with nature, freedom, etc.)</p>	<p>The project is being proposed to protect the LCT habitat and maintain the naturalness of the area; however an indirect benefit may occur to the opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation by possibly reducing the amount of motorized trespass along the western boundary of the Wilderness.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> How would the project/activity help ensure that human presence is kept to a minimum and that the area is affected primarily by the forces of nature rather than being manipulated</p>	<p>The project should reduce the amount of human manipulation within the Wilderness by reducing impacts to naturalness associated with commercial livestock grazing.</p>

by humans?	The project will also increase the human presence in the area adjacent to the fence.
<b>Management Situation</b> <b>5. What do your management plan, policy, and legislation say to support proceeding with this project?</b>	<p>Currently no approved wilderness management plan exists for the involved wilderness areas. Management is based on the Black Rock NCA Resource Management Plan, law, regulation, and policy.</p> <p>The NCA Plan allows for the development of new rangeland projects when they are consistent with achieving Rangeland Health Standards and the objectives of the Plan.</p> <p>BLM Wilderness Policy allows for the construction of new range developments when it is required to maintain the wilderness values of the area, not to increase AUMs.</p>
<b>6. How did you consider wilderness values over convenience, comfort, political, economic or commercial values while evaluating this project/activity?</b>	The primary purpose of the project is to protect the LCT habitat one of the special features of the Wilderness.
<b>7. Should We Proceed?</b>	<b>Yes</b> Go to step 2 (Minimum Tool Analysis)

**Step 2 - Determining the Minimum Tool (the Minimum Tool Analysis)**

These questions will assist you in determining the appropriate tool(s) to accomplish the project or proposed activity with the least impact to the wilderness resource.

Develop several alternate approaches to implementing the project or activity. At a minimum consider the following three alternatives.

Describe the alternatives. Be specific and provide detail.

- What is proposed?
- Why is it being proposed in this manner?
- Who is the proponent?
- When will the project take place?
- Where will the project take place?
- How will it be accomplished? (What methods and techniques)

<p>Alt#1</p> <p>Constructing a fence along the western boundary of the North Black Rock Range Wilderness and two small portions (1000 feet) within the Wilderness.</p> <p>The proponent is the BLM.</p> <p>Project is scheduled to occur during the spring of 2005.</p> <p>The entire fence will be constructed using motor vehicles for access and using motorized equipment where needed.</p>	<p>Alt#2</p> <p>Same as Alt#1 except the wilderness portions of the fence will be constructed with non-motorized hand tools and no motor vehicles will be used within the Wilderness. Fencing materials would be hauled in to the site on foot or horseback.</p>
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Utilize the following criteria to assess each alternative (a brief statement should suffice)

Biophysical effects

- Describe the environmental resource issues that would be affected by the proposed action.
- Describe any effects this action will have on protecting natural conditions within the regional landscape, (i.e. non-native insects and disease, or noxious weed control)
- Include both biological and physical effects.

<p>Alt#1</p> <p>See Water Resources, Vegetation, Wildlife and Soils sections for specific impacts from the proposal.</p> <p>Using vehicles to construct the entire fence will impact the naturalness of the wilderness portions of the fence by smashing vegetation, potentially introducing exotic species to new areas and compacting soils along the fence line.</p>	<p>Alt#2</p> <p>See Water Resources, Vegetation, Wildlife and Soils sections for specific impacts from the proposal.</p> <p>Impacts associated with using vehicles in the wilderness would not occur under this alternative.</p> <p>I</p>
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Social/recreation/experiential effects

- Describe how the wilderness experience may be affected by the proposed action
- Include effects this recreation use and wilderness character
- Consider the proposed effect the proposal may have on the public and their opportunity for discovery, surprise and self-discovery

<p>Alt#1</p> <p>Using motor vehicles and motorized</p>	<p>Alt#2</p> <p>No additional impacts would occur to the</p>
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equipment to construct the fence would have minimal additional impacts on visitors wilderness experience because it would occur within 30 feet of the boundary near an existing route.	wilderness experience under this alternative.
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Societal/political effects

*-Describe any political considerations, such as MOUs, agency agreements, local positions that may be affected by the proposed action.*

*-Describe relationship of method to applicable laws*

Alt#1 One comment letter was received opposing the construction of the fence, but generally it is seen as a positive project that will protect the naturalness and LCT habitat within the wilderness.	Alt#2 Same as Alt#1
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Health and safety concerns

*-Describe and consider any health and safety concerns associated with the proposed action. Consider the types of tools used, training, certifications and other administrative needs to ensure a safe work environment for employees. Also consider the effect the proposal may have on the health and safety of the public.*

Alt#1 The fence will span several closed routes that lead into the Wilderness. The routes will be reclaimed and camouflaged so that visitors do not inadvertently drive into the fence. No health or safety concerns are associated with constructing the fence.	Alt#2 Same as Alt#1
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Economic and timing considerations

*-Describe the costs and timing associated with implementing each alternative*

*-Assess the urgency and potential cumulative effect from this proposal and similar actions*

Alt#1 This alternative could allow the fence to be built somewhat quicker.	Alt#2 This alternative may take a longer time to implement.
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Formulate a preferred alternative from the above alternatives and describe in detail below

**The two small wilderness portions of the fence would be constructed with non-motorized hand tools and no motor vehicles would be used within the Wilderness. Fencing materials would be hauled in to the site on foot or horseback.**

Further refine the alternative to minimize impacts to wilderness

*-What will be the specific operating requirements?* **No motorized tools, or motorized/mechanized transport would be used within the Wilderness to construct the fence.**

*-What are the maintenance requirements?* **All maintenance of the wilderness portions of the fence would be conducted with non-motorized equipment and access would be by foot or horseback.**

*-What standards and designs will apply?* **The fence would be constructed to antelope specifications to allow for antelope movement through the area.**

*-Develop and describe any mitigation measures that apply?* **Solid green T-posts would be used to construct the fence.**

*-What provisions have been made for monitoring and feedback to strengthen future efforts and/or prevent the need for recurring future actions?* **Routine monitoring of the riparian and vegetation resources would occur to measure the effectiveness of the fence.**

## 6 Appendix 2

### Visual Contrast Rating Worksheet for the County Road/Colman Fence

**Office:** Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA

**Activity (Program):** Range

#### Section A. Project Information

**Project Name:** County Road/Colman Fence

**Location:** Western boundary of the North Black Rock Range Wilderness, Humboldt Co. Nevada

**Key Observation Point:** Rock outcrop 100 yards east of the project

**VRM Class:** Class II ( 1000' of the project is within Class I)

#### Section B. Characteristic Landscape Description (see photo 1)

	<i>1.Land/Water</i>	<i>2.Vegetation</i>	<i>3.Structures</i>
<b>Form</b>	Rolling terrain, large hills and plateau to the east	Relatively thick	Weather station- angular, geometric 20' high Routes- linear
<b>Line</b>	simple, horizontal	diffuse edges, existing route creates a band	vertical, geometric, angular
<b>Color</b>	Sage green and dark basalt rock	Light, sage colored	Weather station-steel gray Routes- lighter brown than the rest of the area
<b>Texture</b>	smooth	Smooth to course	Smooth

#### Section C. Proposed Activity Description

	<i>1.Land/Water</i>	<i>2.Vegetation</i>	<i>3.Structures</i>
<b>Form</b>	Rolling terrain, large hills and plateau to the east	Relatively thick	Solar panels- angular, square Storage tank- cylindrical
<b>Line</b>	simple, horizontal	diffuse edges, existing route creates a band	vertical, geometric, angular
<b>Color</b>	Sage green and dark basalt rock	Light, sage colored	Fence posts- green Fencing- steel gray
<b>Texture</b>	smooth	smooth to course	smooth

#### Section D. Contrast Rating

1. Is the project short term or long term? Long term

2. Fill in the table, estimating the degree of contrast between the characteristic landscape and the proposed activity

*1.Land/Water*

*2.Vegetation*

*3.Structures*



	strong	moderate	weak	none	strong	moderate	weak	none	strong	moderate	weak	none
<b>Form</b>			X					X			X	
<b>Line</b>			X					X			X	
<b>Color</b>			X					X			X	
<b>Texture</b>			X					X			X	

**3. Does the project design meet visual resource management objectives? (*Explain on separate page if necessary*)** Yes, the project would meet the VRM objectives for both the Class I and II Zones. Because the project would be constructed along an existing disturbance (i.e. route), the change to the existing landscape would be low and would not attract additional attention.

**4. Are there additional mitigating measures recommended? (*Explain on separate page if necessary*)** No



**Photo 1. Existing landscape in the vicinity of the County Road/Colman Fence (*fence would be constructed along the existing route that is visible in front of the pickup truck. Fence posts marking the location of the fence are in place in the photo, but are essentially indiscernible*)**