

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE

M3 Eagle LLC, Access Roads & Drainage Ponds ROWs

Four Rivers Field Office

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to grant four right of way (ROW) corridors in accordance with the Cascade Resource Management Plan. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date of December 2009. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Purpose and Need for Action

BLM has received four applications for transportation and utility systems and facilities on federal lands and is now processing these applications under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Title V. The actions correspond to the Cascade Resource Management Plan direction to consider ROW actions in areas where they are not specifically excluded if there is a demonstrated need and resource conflicts are low or can be mitigated. The City of Eagle's Comprehensive Plan and the Ada County Northwest Foothills Traffic Study have both demonstrated the need for regional infrastructure improvements that do not compromise sensitive environmental values. If authorized, these ROW corridors would allow the applicant to construct roads and drainage structures that meet terms and conditions in the Pre-annexation and Development Agreement for M3 Eagle, and would make available corridors for future transportation and infrastructure improvements within the City of Eagle's Area of Impact.

Existing Condition

The following information summarizes the environment where the actions are proposed. This information provides a general context of the environmental components that could be affected by the proposed actions.

Air Quality

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for six criteria pollutants. The concentration of pollutants in the atmosphere determines air quality. The EPA classifies geographic areas as attainment or nonattainment based on air pollutant levels. A geographic area that meets or has pollutant levels below the NAAQS is called an attainment area. An area with persistent air quality problems is designated a nonattainment area. Maintenance areas have been re-designated by the EPA from "nonattainment" to "attainment with a maintenance plan" commonly called "maintenance areas." These areas have demonstrated through monitoring and modeling they have sufficient controls in place to meet and maintain the NAAQS.

- Carbon Monoxide (CO) – Northern Ada County is a limited maintenance area for CO.
- Coarse Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) – Northern Ada County is an attainment area for PM₁₀.
- Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) – Ada County is designated as an attainment area for PM_{2.5}.
- Ozone - Ada County is designated as an attainment area for ozone.
- Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) – Ada County is designated as an attainment area for NO_x.
- Lead - Airborne lead is no longer considered a major health threat in most of the U.S. The Idaho DEQ no longer monitors airborne lead levels.

Water Quality

No perennial surface water exists at the proposed action areas. The nearest water body to the proposed action areas is the Farmer's Union Canal, which conveys seasonal irrigation water.

Soils

Soils in the proposed action areas occur on nearly level to very steep dissected sedimentary terraces and foothills. These soils formed in alluvium and residuum derived from sedimentary materials and mixed volcanics that accumulated in the basin once occupied by Lake Idaho. Approximately half of the soils in the proposed action areas have a high erosion hazard.

Vegetation

The actions are proposed in shrub-steppe habitat that displays a mosaic of shrub and grassland dominance. Various perennial and annual grasses comprise the grassland areas. Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and two species of rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*, *Ericameria nauseosa*) are the dominant shrub types. The proposed action areas do not support riparian vegetation.

Special Status Plants

Four special status plant species could occur in the project area (Table 1). There is a slickspot peppergrass (*Lepidium papilliferum* or LEPA) management area and several element occurrences in the area. Slickspot peppergrass was listed as "Threatened" on October 5th, 2009 with an effective date of listing 60 days beyond the publishing date of the final Rule in the Federal Register (December 7, 2009). The Conservation Agreement of 2009 (CA) between the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provides conservation measures for slickspot peppergrass. The BLM implements the following management when considering new land use authorizations in slickspot peppergrass habitat areas: 1) a project level inventory of slickspot peppergrass occurrences and habitat; 2) modification of the proposed actions to avoid and minimize anticipated impacts to slickspot peppergrass; 3) conserving remaining stands of sagebrush; and 4) initiating Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7(a) consultation with the USFWS. Temporary or permanent project fencing to protect adjacent habitat areas from construction activities may also be necessary.

Table 1. Special Status Plant Species Known or Suspected to Occur in the Vicinity of the Proposed Action Area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	BLM Status *	General Habitat Description/Potential for Occurrence in Project Area
Slickspot peppergrass	<i>Lepidium papilliferum</i>	Type 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bare, open nitric (slickspot) sites in Wyoming big sagebrush habitat; elevation range: 2,200-5,400 feet. - Known to occur in proposed action areas.
Aase's onion	<i>Allium aaseae</i>	Type 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coarse sandy soil; most commonly on steep southerly exposures; on or near ridge tops in sagebrush communities often with three-awn grass and bitterbrush; elevation range: 2,625-4,920 feet. - Known to occur within 5 miles of proposed action areas.
Mulford's milkvetch	<i>Astragalus mulfordiae</i>	Type 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mostly south-facing sandy slopes and ridges; with needle-and-thread grass, rice grass, and bitterbrush; elevation range: 2,130-2,790 feet. - Potential habitat in vicinity but not within proposed action areas. Project area at upper end of elevation range and above. No documented occurrences (none in the CDC database). Not observed during field surveys. Not expected.
Woven-spore lichen	<i>Texosporium sancti-jacobi</i>	Type 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well decomposed humus, especially old clumps of Sandberg bluegrass; on flat or north-facing slopes; elevation range: 2,890-3,280 feet. - Majority of project area below the elevation range for this species. No documented occurrences. Low likelihood of occurrence based on disturbance and presence of invasive species.

*Type 1 = Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species; Type 2 = Rangewide/Globally Imperiled Species – High Endangerment

Noxious Weeds

The term 'noxious' is a legal designation given by the Director of the Idaho State Department of Agriculture to any plant having the potential to cause injury to public health, crops, livestock, land, or other property. Two species of noxious weeds are known to occur in the proposed action areas. Rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*) is well established in the proposed action areas and whitetop (*Cardaria draba*) occurs in small localized populations. Other noxious weed species are known to occur in Ada County.

Wildlife

The project area provides habitat for wildlife species including big game, upland game birds, and non-game animals such as raptors, small mammals, and passerines. Resident mule deer occasionally utilize portions of the project area which is part of the larger mule deer winter range of the foothills area. The grasslands are utilized on occasion by antelope. The area provides habitat for upland game bird species including Hungarian partridge, ring-necked pheasant, California quail, and chukar, and these birds have been observed in the project area vicinity. Long-billed curlew are known to nest in the vicinity. Raptor use has been observed in the majority of the project area and is expected where ground dwelling small mammals are abundant. Raptor species, other than those listed in Table 2, known to occur in the proposed action areas include American kestrel, Swainson's hawk, northern harrier, short-eared owl, western burrowing owl, golden eagle, and red-tailed hawk. Small mammals observed in the project area include Piute ground squirrel (most abundant), badger, black-tailed jackrabbit, and desert cottontail. Passerine use in the project area includes horned lark, western meadowlark, western kingbird, and black-billed magpie. Wildlife habitat overall in and adjacent to the proposed action is limited due to the lack of diversity and structure in the vegetation community and is suited primarily to species that utilize grassland habitats.

Special Status Wildlife

Six special status animals are either known to occur or could potentially occur in the proposed action areas (Table 2). The following information lists each animal and indicates a probability of occurrence.

Table 2. Special Status Animal Species¹ Known or Suspected to Occur in the Vicinity of the Proposed Action Area.

Species ²	Status ³	ID Comprehensive Report/ Idaho Gap Analysis ⁴	General Habitat Requirements/ Potential for Occurrence in Project Area
<p>Prairie Falcon <i>(Falco mexicanus)</i></p>	<p>Type 3</p>	<p>Predicted habitat in project area.</p>	<p>Habitat: Nests on cliffs, outcroppings, or pinnacles in cavities, ledges, or nests of other raptors and ravens. Forages over open habitats. Breeds in Snake River canyon corresponding with seasonal patterns of ground squirrels (January to June).</p> <p>Potential Occurrence: Moderate to high – Foraging habitat present and birds likely forage in area.</p>
<p>Ferruginous Hawk <i>(Buteo regalis)</i></p>	<p>Type 3</p>	<p>Predicted breeding distribution in portions of the project area.</p>	<p>Habitat: Inhabits flat and rolling terrain in grassland or shrub-steppe regions, typically avoiding high elevation, forest interior, and narrow canyons. Nests in trees, cliffs, ground, and electrical poles with nesting platforms. Forages over grassland and steppe habitats.</p> <p>Potential Occurrence: High – Birds known to forage in the project area and nesting is possible.</p>
<p>Loggerhead shrike <i>(Lanius ludovicianus)</i></p>	<p>Type 3</p>	<p>Predicted habitat in project area.</p>	<p>Habitat: Found in open country with scattered trees and shrubs, in savannas, desert scrub, and occasionally in open juniper woodlands. Often found on poles, wires or fence posts.</p> <p>Potential Occurrence: Moderate to high, where sagebrush is present.</p>
<p>Sage sparrow <i>(Amphispiza belli)</i></p>	<p>Type 3</p>	<p>Minor amount of project area is modeled as predicted habitat.</p>	<p>Habitat: Shrub-steppe. Breed almost exclusively in sagebrush.</p> <p>Potential Occurrence: Low.</p>

Table 2. Special Status Animal Species¹ Known or Suspected to Occur in the Vicinity of the Proposed Action Area.

Species ²	Status ³	ID Comprehensive Report/ Idaho Gap Analysis ⁴	General Habitat Requirements/ Potential for Occurrence in Project Area
Brewer’s sparrow <i>(Spizella breweri)</i>	Type 3	Minor amount of project area in predicted breeding distribution.	Habitat: Shrub-steppe; closely associated with big sagebrush. Potential Occurrence: High where sagebrush is present – known to occur in project area vicinity.
Woodhouse toad <i>(Bufo woodhousii)</i>	Type 3	Predicted breeding distribution in vicinity of the project area.	Habitat: Sagebrush deserts, grasslands, desert streams, woods, valleys, floodplains, and farms. Potential Occurrence: Low to moderate – could occur in project area and vicinity outside of breeding season.

¹ Only special status species associated with grasslands and sagebrush in the BLM Boise District Four Rivers Field Office were considered.

² Species with a moderate potential of occurrence or higher are in bold type.

³ Status: Type 2 = Range-wide/globally imperiled species; Type 3 = Regional/State imperiled species; Type 4 = Peripheral species in Idaho; Type 5 = Watch list species, are not included in Table 2 but species that potentially occur in the proposed action areas include: Swainson’s hawk, long-billed curlew, short-eared owl, western burrowing owl, and grasshopper sparrow.

⁴ The source for the predicted distributions of species in Idaho was from Appendix F of the Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Where the Strategy lacked data for a given species, the Idaho Vertebrate Modeling Database was used. Data in the Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Strategy came from the Gap Analysis of Idaho.

Recreation

BLM administered public lands in the area are scattered parcels in close proximity to the communities of Eagle, Star, and Emmett, Idaho. These “urban interface” lands have limited accessibility due to privately controlled access points. The only publicly available access is at the northern end of Hartley Lane. Private landowners situated adjacent to the proposed action area also have access but may not make that access available to the general public.

Despite limited access, the area receives frequent visitation from local residents because of its proximity to communities. This area offers undeveloped and dispersed recreational opportunities in a roaded-natural type of setting. The opportunities and experiences that these lands supply in the urban interface are of locally significant recreational importance. The area does not offer the exceptional types of recreational opportunities that draw out-of-state or international visitors, such as the nearby Payette River Corridor.

Accessible portions of the BLM administered public lands are increasingly used for local or community activities such as horseback riding, off-highway vehicle use, walking, running, picnicking, bicycling, dog-walking, and nature-viewing. While demand for riding areas and trails has increased, surrounding areas are becoming more urbanized and some popular trails crossing private lands have been closed to public use as new developments are built.

The proposed action areas are managed as an extensive recreation management area. Management emphasis in the area focuses primarily on visitor health and safety, avoiding user conflict, resource protection, and land health. This custodial management approach is not intensive and there are no recreational facilities like full-service campgrounds, potable water, interpretive signs, or vault toilets.

In the last ten years, the Treasure Valley has seen an increase in the development of new subdivisions with many more proposed on lands adjacent to BLM holdings. Meetings with the residents of new and old communities alike have consistently advocated for continued public ownership, access, and use of adjacent BLM-managed lands. Portions of the proposed action areas are currently under a pending Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) application for a regional park from the City of Eagle. Close coordination has occurred involving M3 Eagle and the City of Eagle on these ROW applications and the proposed ROW applications have been included in the City of Eagle’s R&PP application.

Visual Resources

The proposed action areas are managed under the current land use plan as a VRM Class III area. The management objective for visual resources in the area is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape which allows for a moderate level of change.

Fire Management

The proposed action areas are in the Boise Front Fire Management Unit. The area is a high priority for fire suppression due to the safety concerns associated with the wildland urban interface (WUI) and natural resource values. All fires in this area are actively suppressed. The BLM places a high priority on hazardous fuels treatments in this area to mitigate the risk of wildland fire to sensitive resources and the

WUI area. Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation projects are also a high priority in the post-fire environments of this area.

Social and Economic

The opportunities and experiences that these lands supply in the urban interface are of locally significant economic and social importance. Meetings with the residents of these new communities have repeatedly underscored the fact that continued public ownership, access, and use of BLM-managed lands adjacent to local communities are of critical importance to them. Local residents regularly express the importance of these public lands to their “quality of life” and often emphasize that they chose to live where they do largely due to the nearby parcels of BLM lands available to them.

Livestock Grazing

The grazing allotments that could be affected by the proposed projects are #196, #278, and #310. Allotment #196 is approximately 240 acres (100 percent public land) and permitted for spring cattle grazing. Allotment #278 totals approximately 45,153 acres, of which 7,379 acres (16 percent) are public lands. Allotment #278 is permitted for sheep grazing during the spring and cattle grazing during the spring, summer, and fall. Allotment #310 totals approximately 12,333 acres, of which approximately 11,041 acres (89 percent) are public land. Allotment #310 is permitted for spring and winter sheep grazing.

Cultural Resources

Surveys within the area located a multiple episode historic dump spanning the earlier and later 20th century. A historic hitching post was also located. Goodall’s cutoff, part of the Oregon Trail transects the proposed action area. The trail was relocated and noted in 2007 paralleling an existing dirt road. No prehistoric sites have been identified in the proposed action areas.

Proposed Action

M3 Eagle LLC (M3) is proposing the four ROW corridors. M3 is an adjacent landowner with plans to develop a planned community on private property adjacent to the proposed action areas. The proposed actions would be for BLM to issue ROW for the following corridors:

- The Big Gulch Drainage Channel ROW would be used to direct and detain existing runoff and channelize the floodplain of Big Gulch. This ROW would accommodate a small portion of a larger system with small seasonal flows and would be used as a public regional park that would include underground road crossings, erosion control measures, trails, pedestrian access, and landscaping.
- The State Highway 16 (SH-16) Access ROW would accommodate an east-west arterial transportation and utility connection to the M3 Eagle development.
- The Linder Road Access ROW corridor would accommodate a north-south arterial transportation and utility connection to the M3 Eagle development.

- Hartley Road Access ROW corridor would accommodate a north-south collector transportation and utility connection to the M3 Eagle development.

All four ROW corridors would become part of a regional transportation and drainage infrastructure network. Map 1 provides an overview of all four proposed action areas. The ROW corridors are proposed for year-round use and access for an indefinite period. Utilities including water, power, gas, sewer and communications could be placed along each of the three roadway ROW corridors. M3 Eagle LLC would provide funding for the construction and maintenance of all ROWs. M3 intends to dedicate the roadways to the Ada County Highway District (ACHD) who would take over maintenance of the roadways if and when an agreement is reached between all parties involved. The roadways would be connected to other arterial streets within the M3 Eagle development and the Big Gulch drainage features would be connected to a series of detention basins to allow for infiltration. The roadways would be dedicated to ACHD and the drainage would eventually be dedicated to the M3 Eagle Homeowner's Association or the City of Eagle pending future agreements between all parties involved.

Big Gulch Drainage Channel ROW

The proposed Big Gulch Drainage ROW would authorize realignment of the existing channel and construction of two storm water detention basins on BLM administered public land to direct and detain surface water runoff and channelize the Big Gulch floodplain (Figure 1). The ROW would become part of a regional drainage and park system extending from Willow Creek Road to SH-16 (Figure 2). While the entire system covers a distance of approximately 5.1 miles, BLM administered public land would accommodate approximately 0.8 miles of the system's total length. Minimal amounts of runoff from the developed portions of M3 Eagle would be directed into this channel, it would primarily convey drainage from existing natural watersheds through a series of drainage basins. Two of the drainage basins would be located on BLM administered public land. The smaller basin would be approximately two acres and the larger basin would be approximately ten acres. The ROW width would vary from 150 to 250 feet.

Multi-use trails would parallel the channel on either side. The northern pathway is planned to be paved with asphalt and landscaped, similar to a greenbelt park meant to blend in with the developed areas to the north. The southern pathway is planned to be unpaved with native vegetation blending with the BLM land to the south. Pathways would be accessible to walkers, runners, bikers, and equestrians and motor vehicle use would be prohibited.

Construction would involve excavation below the surrounding grade and construction of a 2 to 3 foot high berm along the north side of the channel, creating an approximate 3:1 or 4:1 containment slope. The channel would be constructed with native soil and may be lined with riprap in certain areas. The channel feature itself would vary from 40-100 feet wide with the remaining ROW width (110 to 150 feet) providing room for open space and a trail corridor. The channel would have a maximum depth of 3 feet. The ROW would be treated with plantings appropriate for the site and monitored for weeds. Construction of the Big Gulch channel and detention basins is planned to occur in 2010 or 2011 during the first phase of M3 Eagle development. Channel and basin construction would take approximately 1 year and be complete by the end of 2011 or 2012.

SH-16 Access ROW

The proposed SH-16 Access ROW width would be variable, with a minimum of 200 feet, a maximum of 480 feet, and a weighted average width of 339 feet (Map 1). The ROW would accommodate approximately 6,761 linear feet (1.3 miles) of road across BLM administered public lands. Operational roadway width from curb to curb would be approximately 89 feet, which would accommodate two traffic lanes in each direction, a bike lane in each direction, curbs, and a landscaped median. The remaining ROW corridor width (111 ft. - 341 ft.) would be necessary to accommodate construction, stabilization, landscaping, drainage, and utilities.

The route minimizes major cuts and fills by following the natural terrain and blending with existing topography. At the same time, the SH-16 Access ROW accommodates a road design capable of servicing anticipated traffic levels. The estimated volume of earthwork necessary to construct the road totals approximately 125,027 cubic yards (CY) of cut material and 140,641 CY of fill material. The road would be surfaced with asphalt.

The SH-16 Access is anticipated to be built during Phase 4 of M3 Eagle's development and would be constructed as needed as SH-16 changes to a limited access expressway. The proposed SH-16 Access ROW would serve as a more efficient connection to SH-16 with a higher capacity than the existing SH-16 connection. The SH-16 Access would take approximately six months to one year to construct.

Linder Road Access ROW

The Linder Road Access ROW width would be variable, with a minimum of 300 feet, a maximum of 580 feet, and a weighted average width of 379 feet (Map 1). This ROW would accommodate approximately 6,031 linear feet (1.1 miles) of road across BLM administered public lands. The Linder Road Access would initially feature one traffic lane and one bike lane in each direction but the ROW would be wide enough to accommodate an additional traffic lane in each direction if necessary. While the Linder Road Access ROW could accommodate a road with four motor vehicle traffic lanes, it would be kept as a two lane road until traffic levels warrant additional lanes. Traffic projections included in ACHD's Northwest Foothills Transportation Study indicate that if both Linder and Hartley Roads are constructed, additional lanes on Linder Road would not be necessary. The volume of earthwork necessary to construct the four lane road is estimated at approximately 109,594 CY of cut material and 139,971 CY of fill material. The volume of earthwork necessary to construct a two lane road would be less. The road would be surfaced with asphalt.

Under the scenario with two traffic lanes and two bike lanes in each direction, the operational width of the roadway from curb to curb would be approximately 81 feet. Under the scenario with one traffic lane in each direction, the operational width of the roadway from curb to curb would be approximately 58 feet, which accommodates one traffic lane in each direction, a bike lane in each direction, curbs, and a landscaped median. The remaining ROW corridor width (219-500 ft.) would be necessary to accommodate construction, stabilization, landscaping, drainage, utilities, and trail crossings. All construction, operation, and maintenance activities would be contained within the ROW corridor or on adjacent private land under either scenario.

The Linder Road Access ROW would include a trail overpass and a trail underpass to accommodate non-motorized recreation, as shown on Map 1. At the trail underpass, the road would be elevated as it crosses Little Gulch. A trail overpass would span the road along the ridge between Little Gulch and Big Gulch. Refer to Map 1 for the location of the trail crossings and Figure 5 for a conceptual design plan for the trail crossings.

The Linder Road Access would be built with the first development phase of M3 Eagle, currently planned in 2010 or 2011. Road construction would take approximately one year from initiation to complete.

Hartley Access ROW

The Hartley Road Access ROW width would be variable, with a minimum of 180 feet, a maximum of 310 feet, and a weighted average width of 223 feet (Map 1). The ROW would accommodate approximately 3,058 linear feet (0.6 miles) of road paved with asphalt. The operational width of the roadway from curb to curb would be approximately 58 feet which accommodates one traffic lane in each direction, a bike lane in each direction, curbs, and a landscaped median. The remaining ROW corridor width (122- 252 feet) would accommodate construction, stabilization, landscaping, drainage, utilities, and a trail crossing. All construction, operation, and maintenance activities would be contained within the ROW or on adjacent private lands. The estimated volume of earthwork necessary to construct the road totals approximately 44,667 CY of cut material and 35,378 CY of fill material.

A grade separated trail overpass would be installed along the ridge to provide east-west trail connectivity for recreation. Refer to Map 1 for the location of the trail overpass and Figure 5 for a conceptual design plan for the overpass.

The Hartley Road Access is planned to be built after the Linder Road Access, possibly in the second or third phase of development. Hartley Road would be constructed as necessary in order to ease traffic congestion on Linder Road.

Additional Features Common to ROW Actions

Utility lines could be installed along the three access ROW corridors (SH-16 Access ROW, Linder Access ROW, and Hartley Access ROW). The utilities would include a combination of water, power, gas, sewer, and communications. Utilities could be in a trench within the roadway or in a trench on the outside of the roadway. Some utilities including power and communications may be on poles. Any above ground utility lines would be contained within the ROW corridors. Water lines for irrigation purposes may potentially be constructed within the ROW. Water lines could include fire hydrants.

Landscaping would be installed within medians and along margins of all construction areas to achieve stabilization, weed prevention, fire mitigation, and aesthetic objectives. Landscaping would include a combination of seed, ground cover, shrubs, and trees along medians and roadsides and in selected areas including trail crossings and any other areas where users of the BLM administered public land would interact with users of the proposed ROW. Disturbed areas that are not landscaped for aesthetic objectives would be re-vegetated with a seed mix of plant species approved by the BLM to achieve stabilization and weed prevention objectives.

Other components of the ROW corridors include culverts, signs, and road markings, the location of such have yet to be determined. All traffic signage and road markings would meet standards of the ACHD. Construction work areas would be located within the ROW and on adjacent private land.

Preliminary Issues

Preliminary efforts have included BLM internal meetings between resource specialists to help define the issues related to the proposed actions. Two meetings with representatives from the USFWS helped determine issues specific to slickspot peppergrass. The BLM also convened a public meeting on November 20, 2008 to solicit public input and identify issues. The following information summarizes the preliminary issues:

- Soils – Some soils in the area have an inherently high erosion hazard. Construction and operation activities in the ROW corridors have the potential to cause excessive erosion. Water runoff from paved roads could cause erosion in adjacent unpaved areas.
- Special Status Plant Species – Slickspot peppergrass is known to occur in the area. Construction and operation activities could result in direct or indirect mortality of element occurrences. The proposed actions have been modified to avoid known slickspot peppergrass occurrences. The roads could increase the likelihood of fire and recreational use in the area which would have an indirect adverse effect on slickspot peppergrass and its habitat.
- Cultural Resources – Goodall's Cutoff, a section of the Oregon Trail, has been identified in the area. Construction activities in the ROW corridors could disturb localized sections of the Cutoff.
- Noxious Weeds – Rush skeletonweed is well established in the proposed action areas and whitetop occurs in small localized populations. Construction and operation of the proposed ROW corridors could affect establishment and spread noxious weeds. A noxious weed abatement plan has been drafted to deal with this issue.
- Recreation – Public interest in a variety of non-motorized recreational activities in the proposed ROW corridor areas include: equestrian trail riding; mountain biking; walking; jogging; and opportunities for solitude. Authorization of the proposed ROWs could affect recreational use of the areas. The trails proposed in this EA would be open to all members of the public. The proposed actions include trails and trail crossings to accommodate non-motorized recreation. Except for the SH-16 Access, all ROWs being proposed are on BLM administered public land currently under a pending Recreation and Public Purposes Act application for a regional park from the City of Eagle.
- Livestock Grazing – The actions are proposed on lands currently identified within active grazing allotments. Construction and operation activities in the ROW corridors would reduce forage availability for livestock and could reduce or complicate livestock movement for grazing permit holders.
- Social & Economic Issues – The ROW corridors are proposed on a landscape recognized by local citizens for its non-market value. The value of the proposed project areas as open space could be

affected by construction and operation of the proposed projects. The Hartley and Linder Access ROWs could affect market real estate values for those properties adjacent to the areas. Emergency response times could be affected by the three road access ROW authorizations depending on design.

- Fire Management – Fires have been ignited in the area by natural and human causes. The proposed actions involving roads and traffic in this area could increase the risk of fire.
- Visual Resources – The Linder and Hartley Access ROWs would both be visible from the vicinity of Eagle, Idaho. The SH-16 Access ROW would be visible from a short portion of SH-16. These areas are viewed frequently by a variety of individuals.
- Cumulative Effects – Private land holdings in the vicinity are being developed for residential and mixed use. These land use changes could have cumulative effects to the resources and resource uses described above. Traffic levels in residential areas adjacent to the proposed ROW corridors at Linder Road and Hartley Lane could be affected.

Preliminary Alternative Development

The No Action alternative would not authorize any of the proposed ROW corridors on BLM administered public lands. The No Action alternative is presented in Map 2. An alternative set of ROW corridors has also been drafted to avoid rare plants, minimize the ROW in Big Gulch, retain contiguous open space northeast of Linder Road by routing the Linder Access ROW further west, and provide alternative routing along the SH-16 Access (Map 3). Rare plant occurrences north of Hartley Lane led to a third alternative for the Hartley Access ROW (Map 4).

Decision to be Made

The BLM will decide which, if any, of the four ROW corridors would be authorized and will have the discretion to stipulate the ROW authorizations with conditions that minimize or mitigate resource conflicts. The decision will be made under the legal requirements of Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Title V.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received by December 18, 2009 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA. Comments sent electronically should be sent to effie_schultsmeier@blm.gov with the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

11/13/2009

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Effie Schultsmeier (384-3357), Realty Specialist, Four Rivers Field Office, Boise District BLM, 3948 Development Ave, Boise, ID 83705.

MAPS & FIGURES

Map 1 – Overview of the Proposed Actions

Map 2 – No Action Alternative

Map 3 – Alternative ROW Corridor Actions

Map 4 – Additional Alternative for Hartley Lane

Figure 1 – Big Gulch Drainage Channel

Figure 2 – Big Gulch Regional Park Concept

Figure 3 – Trail Crossing Concept