

Finding of No Significant Impact

Issuance of Authorizations to Nevada Department of Wildlife for Wildlife Water Development Inspection, Maintenance and Repairs within BLM Wilderness areas in Nevada

NEPA DOI-BLM-NVL030–2012–0003–EA

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Introduction:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) are committed to maintenance and restoration of fish and wildlife populations and habitats in Nevada within the jurisdictions of their respective agencies. The NDOW is the state agency which maintains jurisdiction with respect to fish and wildlife management on public lands. Availability and distribution of dependable waters sources in desert bighorn sheep habitat is a limiting factor to the increase in sustainable population density. In order to fulfill its mission with respect to fish and wildlife management, the NDOW has installed big and small game wildlife water developments within both the BLM Ely and Southern Nevada Districts.

Context:

The 35 wildlife water developments are located in seven wilderness areas within the BLM, Ely and Southern Nevada Districts. For the Ely District, the wilderness units involved include Delamar Mountains Wilderness (13 developments), Far South Egans Wilderness (3), Meadow Valley Range Wilderness (3), and Mormon Mountains Wilderness (12). For the Southern Nevada District, the wilderness units involved include Arrow Canyon Wilderness (1), Muddy Mountains Wilderness (2), and North McCullough Wilderness (1). This area is of interest to residents in Nevada and portions of southwestern Utah and northern Arizona. However, these wilderness areas are primarily used by, and of interest to, local residents. The BLM has the authority to protect and provide habitat for wildlife under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 United States Code 1701 et seq.) (FLPMA). Furthermore, FLPMA also authorizes the BLM to administer wilderness areas in accordance with the provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. §§ 1131–1136).

Finding of No Significant Impact:

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NVL030–2012–0003–EA dated January 13, 2012. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the proposed action identified in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required to be prepared.

For those actions within the Ely District, I have determined the proposed action is in conformance with the approved Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan

(2008), and is consistent with applicable plans and policies of county, state, tribal and Federal agencies. Furthermore, the proposed action within Southern Nevada District has been determined to be in conformance with the Record of Decision for the Approved Las Vegas Resource Management Plan (1998) and Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Record of Decision for the Approved Resource Management Plan (2006), and is consistent with applicable plans and policies of county, state, tribal and Federal agencies. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The environmental assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the inspection, maintenance and repair of 35 wildlife water developments. The proposed action would enhance some elements of wilderness character (preserving naturalness by maintaining wildlife populations) and detracts from other elements (undeveloped); nevertheless, overall the project will enhance wilderness character.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Inspection, maintenance and repair of the wildlife water developments will not result in potentially substantial or adverse impacts to public health and safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The 35 wildlife water developments all lie within seven wilderness areas located throughout Lincoln County and Clark County, Nevada. These wilderness areas were designated for their unique characteristics including high scenic qualities, important wildlife habitat, and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreational pursuits. Some of the wildlife water developments analyzed in this EA are located within the Kane Springs and Mormon Mesa Area of Critical Environmental Concern which were designated primarily to protect habitat for the desert tortoise. One wildlife water development is located within the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area which was established to conserve, protect, and enhance in part the natural, wilderness, and wildlife resources.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.

The effects of inspection, maintenance and repair of wildlife water developments are well known, documented, and are not highly controversial. Wildlife water developments in Lincoln and Clark counties, Nevada wilderness areas are allowed by law (LCCRDA 2004, Public Law 108-424; CCCPLNRA 2002, Public Law 107-282) and no public comments against the project were received. The methods chosen for inspection, maintenance and repair of the wildlife water developments are accepted methods to meet resource and management objectives and are not considered highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no effects of the proposed action identified in the EA which are considered uncertain or involve unknown risks. All actions proposed to be employed are accepted standard practices.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The proposed action does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

After analysis, no significant cumulative impacts have been identified in the EA.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The proposed action will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because no new surface disturbing activities are being proposed.

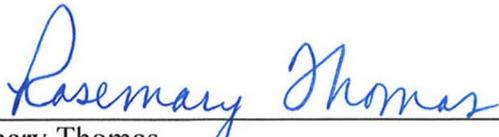
9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The threatened desert tortoise has been identified within the planning area. The EA has identified that no significant or adverse impacts would result to this species or its critical habitat from implementation of the proposed action due to avoidance and minimization measures and the lack of new ground disturbance. The measures would ensure that no take of desert tortoises would occur.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Signed:



Rosemary Thomas
District Manager, Ely District
Office

1/13/2012

[Date]



Mary Jo Rugwell
District Manager, Southern Nevada District Office

1/13/2012

[Date]

FOR