

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Finding of No Significant Impact
DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2012-0002-DNA
March 22, 2012**

**Administrative Access Authorization for Cold Spring
Allotment**

Location: South Steptoe Valley, Eastern Nevada

U.S. Department of the Interior
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**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
ELY DISTRICT OFFICE**

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2011-0015-EA) that analyzed the effects of a travel management plan to be conducted within the South Steptoe Travel Management Area (TMA). The EA considered a range of development alternatives, including the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. The EA is tiered to, and incorporates by reference, the *Ely Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* (RMP/FEIS), released in November 2007 (BLM 2007).

I have reviewed the EA for the South Steptoe Travel Management Plan (DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2011-0015-EA), dated February 8, 2012. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, I have determined that the designation of routes 2103, 2126, 2139, and 2157 as “limited” to Administrative Access Only, as proposed in the Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2012-0002-DNA) will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. These routes were analyzed as “closed” in Alternatives B and F. Three of the routes (#2103, 2126, and 2157) were analyzed as “open” in Alternatives C and D, and all four were analyzed as “open” in Alternative A. The designation of “limited” falls within the range of designations that were analyzed in the EA.

I have also considered 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:

Context:

Comprehensive travel management planning has become a priority for federal land management agencies over the past decade. Whereas many public lands have traditionally been open to cross country traffic without restriction, new pressures have necessitated a national level change from passive to active transportation management.

The South Steptoe Travel Management Plan (TMP) is located within the South Steptoe Valley TMA, which is primarily south of Ely, Nevada. There are 1,554 existing routes totaling approximately 928 miles. The routes are used primarily by residents and visitors of Ely for access to private property and recreational uses primarily including hunting access, sightseeing, and off-highway vehicles (OHVs). The Decision approving the TMP was issued on February 10, 2012.

Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA), the permittee for the Cold Spring Allotment, requested that several routes be reopened to provide access for water hauling and other administrative functions in conjunction with their sheep grazing activities. After further discussion with the BLM, four routes (route #2103, 2126, 2139, and 2157) were identified as

being needed to support sheep movement and maintenance activities in compliance with the existing grazing permit (Authorization #2703273).

Intensity:

- 1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:
The “limited” designation would allow more traffic than would be permitted under the current “closed” designation, but less than the “open” designation that was in place prior to February 10, 2012 when the decision was issued for the South Steptoe Travel Management Plan.
- 2) The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety:
There are no concerns for human life and safety or public health as a result of this action since the impacts resulting from the “limited” designation are expected to be less than the impacts from the routes being open until February 10, 2012. Dust is expected to continue to occur similar to current levels, but is not expected to exceed Nevada and National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- 3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historical or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:
No unique areas occur near the four routes under consideration and no unique characteristics of the area would be affected as a result of the action.
- 4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:
A 60-day comment period and four public meetings were held for the South Steptoe TMP Preliminary EA. Only 10 people attended the public meetings and 12 parties provided written comments regarding the proposal. This action would affect only four routes totaling 8.2 miles. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.
- 5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:
The effects of the proposed action identified in the DNA are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. Travel Management techniques such as those described in the EA are not new or unique, and have been successfully used by the Bureau of Land Management in many previous travel plans.
- 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 actions associated with this project, and as identified in the DNA, do not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and do not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. While post treatment monitoring data from this project might be used to determine appropriate actions for future travel planning, those

projects will be subject to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and an independent decision-making process.

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

All resources have been considered for cumulative effects and any potential impacts have been documented in the EA. No significant impacts were identified. As standard procedure, future projects will be subject to their own cumulative impact analysis and reviewed on a site-specific case-by-case basis.

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

The proposal would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places, nor would it cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical places.

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:

No federally listed threatened or endangered species are known to occur within the project area.

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

The proposal would not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposal is consistent to the maximum extent possible with Federal, State and local policies and plans.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that the proposed action would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

for
Mary D'Aversa
Field Manager
Schell Field Office

3/22/2012
Date