

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey
National Conservation Area

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW

CX No. DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2012-0015-CX

A. BACKGROUND

BLM Office: Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey/NCA

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: IDI-16310

Proposed Action Title/Type: Idaho Power Ferry Substation

Location of Proposed Action: T. 2 S., R. 1 E., Section 20, Boise Meridian, Ada County, Idaho
(See attached Exhibit A)

Description of Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to grant a 30-year renewal of an existing 55 ft. x 70 ft. (0.1 acres) site right-of-way (ROW) that would allow for the continued operation and maintenance of the existing Ferry Substation facilities. This action would be administrative in nature and will not require any construction or groundwork activities other than periodic maintenance of the existing facilities. The existing facilities have been in existence for approximately 47 years. Environmental impacts which occurred due to the original construction have stabilized and no further substantial impacts are expected to occur from periodic maintenance.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is authorized under Title V of the Federal Land Management and Policy Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976: 43 CFR § 2802 to issue a FLPMA ROW grant. This grant will be subject to the terms and conditions found at 43 CFR § 2800, as well as those stipulations attached as Exhibit B, dated April 17, 2012.

B. LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

Land Use Plan Name: Snake River Birds of Prey, NCA RMP

Date Approved or Amended: September 30, 2008

The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

Section 2.11 Lands and Realty

“All lands and realty proposals undergo site-specific NEPA analysis, and must be compatible with the purposes for which the NCA was established.” and *“Meet the needs of the public in a manner that minimizes impacts on resources consistent with NCA legislative requirements.”* The renewal of this ROW would meet the objective of continued energy transportation and, if approved, would not likely cause any substantial environmental impacts or adverse effects to other resource management objectives.

C: COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA:

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with **516 DM 11.9E (9)**.

Category Description:

“(9) Renewals and assignments of leases, permits, or rights-of-way where no additional rights are conveyed beyond those granted by the original authorizations. “

The following list of Extraordinary Circumstances (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) were considered:

1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: No public health or safety issues have been raised in the approximately 47-year existence of this substation. The proposed renewal action would be identical to the existing action. The renewal of the approximately 1-acre power substation ROW is not anticipated to have any substantial impacts (adverse or beneficial) to public health or safety.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; or ecologically significant or critical areas, or is not in compliance with the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The renewal of this substation site ROW would not have any effect on natural resources or unique geographic characteristics such as those listed above.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Dean C. Shaw 5/6/2010

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The BLM routinely grants ROW for power facilities similar in nature to substations. The environmental effects from the administrative renewal action, where no new or additional construction is necessary, are generally uncontroversial in nature.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The BLM has extensive experience in administering power utility rights-of-way on public land. The potential environmental impacts associated with the ongoing operation and maintenance of these utilities is well known and generally unsubstantial. BLM performs scheduled compliance site visits to check that the ROW use conforms to the grant for which it was issued. This effort assists with ensuring that no unknown or potentially significant environmental effects occur.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

5. Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: This proposal would not set a precedent or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. Each future proposal would be analyzed on its own merits according to law, federal regulations, and BLM policy.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The structure has been in place for over 47 years. The facility was originally granted within a Federal Power Commission (now FERC) ROW and BLM subsequently issued a ROW for the facility since it is on federal lands administered by the BLM. One action that has occurred since the inception of this ROW was the installation of the communication site facility that consists of a microwave emitter and a 30-ft. radio antenna for Idaho Power communications from the Swan Falls dam to their other facilities. The addition of the communication site (within the same footprint area of the substation facility) added an incremental environmental impact. The overall impact from these two actions would not constitute a substantial impact to any resources. There are currently no other planned or reasonably foreseeable future actions in this area to analyze in conjunction with this proposed ROW renewal. Therefore, this administrative renewal action would not have significant environmental effects.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: This site was originally surveyed with a Class III Cultural Resource Survey by G. Ruebelmann in 1975. He recorded and collected an isolated Humbolt concave base projectile point fragment. In 1984, J. Young performed a Class II inventory in this area. In 2000, L. Palmgren surveyed the area of potential effect (APE) and did not locate any cultural resources. From a cultural resource management standpoint, it is recommended to renew the ROW grant.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Dean C. Shaw 5/6/2010

8. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The site of proposed ROW renewal was surveyed for special status plant species on April 19, 2011 by S. Baczkowski. No special status plant species or their habitat were found to exist within the ROW or the adjacent surrounding area. The site is graded relatively level and has been graveled for many years. Therefore, it is concluded that the proposed action of renewal the site ROW for the substation facility will not adversely affect any special status plant species.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Mark Steiger 6/11/2012

Comments/Explanation: This electric power site was originally built around 1965 and was originally an ancillary facility to the Swan Falls power transmission project. The site of proposed ROW renewal was surveyed for special status animal species on April 19, 2011 by S. Baczkowski. No special status animal species were found to exist within the ROW or the adjacent surrounding area. The substation facility is within the foraging area of several special status animal species including: prairie falcon, long-billed curlew, northern goshawks, burrowing owl, short-eared owl, sage thrashers as well as five special status bats. They include: townsend's big-eared bat, spotted bat, small-footed myotis and western pipistrelle. The existence of the substation is inert in nature and only receives occasional inspection and maintenance activities. Animals living in, or passing through the area have likely adapted to the existence of the facility and would not suffer any substantial adverse effects from the administrative renewal of the existing ROW grant.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jill Holderman 6/11/2012

Comments/Explanation: Surface water was not observed along the ROW or within the immediate adjacent area during a site visit performed by J. Mork, on April 18, 2012. It is therefore highly unlikely that the renewal of the ROW grant would impact riparian or aquatic resources.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

9. Violate a Federal, State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The proposed action would be in compliance with all laws and requirements that pertain to environmental protection in the area.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: The area of this proposed renewal is in a rural location that is lightly populated with no particular low income or minority population areas. As such, the proposed renewal of this power site ROW would not affect low income or minority populations living in the area any differently than any other citizen.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Jeremy Bluma 4/17/2012

11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: Access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands would not be impeded by the renewal of this power site ROW. No adverse impacts are anticipated to occur to Indian ceremonial or sacred sites by the proposed action of renewing this power site ROW.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Dean C. Shaw 5/6/2010

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

NO, does not apply.

Comments/Explanation: A site visit to the project area was performed on 6/2/2011 and no populations of noxious weeds located in the renewal area. If noxious weeds would be encountered after the implementation of this renewal, the grant holder would be required to treat, monitor, and retreat as necessary, consistent with established BLM procedures, to prevent infestations from establishing and spreading in the project area.

Specialist Signature/Date: /s/ Lonnie R. Hurter 5/3/2012

D: SIGNATURE

I certify that none of the Departmental exceptions (Extraordinary Circumstances) listed in the above Part II (516 DM 2, Appendix 2) apply to this action; therefore, this categorical exclusion is appropriate for this situation.

Authorizing Official: /s/ Patricia S. Roller Date: 6/19/2012

Patricia S. Roller
Manager, Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey, NCA

Prepared By/Contact Person:

Jeremy Bluma
Realty Specialist
BLM - Boise District Office
3948 Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705
(208) 384-3348
jbluma@blm.gov