

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

# **Summit Spring Reconstruction Project**

## **Finding of No Significant Impact**

DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2013-0006-EA

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
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It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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## **BACKGROUND**

The Bureau of Land Management, Carson City District, Stillwater Field Office (BLM) proposes to remove and replace the existing riparian enclosure fence, spring head box, water pipeline and troughs at Summit Spring. The condition of the existing range improvements are beyond regular maintenance and require removal and reconstruction to prevent the continual heavy degradation of the spring source and adjacent riparian habitats.

The proposed project area is located at T. 11 N, R. 28 E., section 18 S/W ¼, on the west side of the Wassuk Mountain Range in Mineral County, Nevada (See Map in the EA Appendix). Summit Springs was incorrectly named on the current BLM 2006 Surface Management Status 1:100,000-Scale Topographic Map as Abraham Spring and will be corrected during the next BLM map updating cycle.

The Summit Spring project area is within the Wassuk Herd Management Area (HMA). The permitted livestock operator has voluntarily not grazed in this area of the Gray Hills Livestock Grazing allotment since 2002, due to the over-utilization of forage and spring source degradation by wild horses with compounding drought conditions. The increasing number of wild horses has increased the pressure on the riparian fence, causing the wire and T-posts to bend and break. The current condition of the range improvement structures increases the occurrence of injuries to the wild horses from wire cuts and/or entanglement in the loose barbed wire. It is unknown how many horses have been severely injured on the fence; however in the past year, three (3) horses have become entangled in wire resulting in fatalities. The fence is down in multiple sections allowing horses to move about within the riparian area. The riparian vegetation has been nearly depleted leaving the bare soil highly susceptible to erosion. The water quality of the spring is also impacted due to the lack of vegetation and continual soil compaction from trampling by the horses.

The original pipeline was constructed in 1966 but was not analyzed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA was not a federal requirement in 1966. A cultural resource inventory was not conducted for the 1966 pipeline. An Environmental Analysis Record for the Summit Springs Fence and Gully Plugs (NV-030-6-76) was completed in 1976; however the Decision/Rational was not signed until February 1979. After the Decision Rational was signed in 1979 the existing enclosure fence was added to the 1966 spring head box, pipeline and troughs. The pipeline was extended by the BLM and permittee in 1981 to provide water to Pumpkin Hollow. The Summit Spring Pipeline and Tank Extension EA dated November 16, 1981 and cultural inventory were completed for the 1981 extension. The fence received maintenance in 2006 and cultural monitoring was conducted again at that time. All existing project structures within the project area have been maintained and repaired numerous times since the 1966 construction.

Water used on the described project must be provided by an established utility or under permit or waiver issued by the State Engineer's Office. All waters of the State belong to the public and may be appropriated for beneficial use under the provisions of Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapters 533 and 534 and not otherwise. The water rights located at the project area are held by the permittee of the Gray Hills Allotment.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would improve the availability, quantity and quality of wet meadow/riparian habitat; provide a dependable water source for wildlife, wild horses, and livestock to ensure healthy rangelands. The Proposed Action would restore a multiple use relationship between livestock, wild horses and wildlife within this portion of the Gray Hills Grazing Allotment. Renovating the existing Summit Spring range improvements would reduce impacts to the riparian area and reduce wild horse injuries and fatalities. The Proposed Action would assist the BLM to make progress in attaining the management objectives identified in the Carson City Consolidated Resources Management

Plan (CRMP) and the Standards for Rangeland Health & Guidelines for Grazing Management (S&Gs) in the Sierra Front Northwestern Great Basin Area.

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

Based upon the analysis in the EA Summit Spring Reconstruction Project DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2013-0006 it is my determination that the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the EA and that the Proposed Action is in conformance with the CRMP adopted in 2001. I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

### **CONTEXT AND INTENSITY**

This finding and conclusion is based on 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 or as articulated in the letters of comment.

**Context:** The Proposed Action is a site-specific action located on public lands administered by the BLM CCD in Mineral County, Nevada, which by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance.

**Intensity:** The following discussion is based on the relevant factors that should be considered in evaluating intensity as described in 40 CFR 1508.27:

***1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency as described believes that on balance the affect will be beneficial.***

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action. Current uses of the lands surrounding Summit Spring are expected to remain for the foreseeable future and it is unlikely that increases in these or other land uses will occur. I have determined that none of the direct, indirect or cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Action are significant, individually or combined. The EA evaluated both beneficial and adverse impacts of the Proposed Action.

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

There would be no significant change in the existing soil structure or composition. The Proposed Action would not impact vegetation resources in the project area as the current vegetation is in poor condition or depleted from the project area. Only small temporary quantities of hazardous and /or solid wastes would be generated by the proposed action during project construction. All hazardous materials would be transported, used, and stored following "best management practices" and in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations. All wastes would be disposed of offsite following all local, state, and federal regulations. Any spill of hazardous materials would be contained, remediated, and disposed of offsite following all local, state, and federal regulations. Indirectly, the proposed action would help to prevent/decrease the noxious and invasive, not-native species population by improving the vegetative communities. Effects to public health and safety would be negligible.

***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 BLM Interdisciplinary Team (ID) identified the following Supplemental Authorities as being not present and present/not affected: Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Farm Lands Prime or Unique, Floodplains, Native American Religious

Concerns, Threatened and Endangered Species (plant or animal), Wastes Hazardous or Solid, Wild and Scenic Rivers, designated Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) are not present. The ID team identified the following Supplemental Authorities as being present/may be affected: Water Quality, Surface/Ground and Wetlands/Riparian Zones. Other Than Supplemental Authorities identified as being not present and present/not affected include: Visual Resources, BLM Sensitive Species (animal or plant), General Wildlife, Recreation, Wildlife, Socioeconomics, Minerals, Global Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Resources Other Than Supplemental Authorities identified as being present/may be affected include: Soils and Wild Horses and Burros. The Supplemental Authorities and Resources other than Supplemental Authorities that may be present and may be affected were evaluated in DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2013-0006-EA.

A cultural inventory number 670 (N) and 3-676 (N) was completed for the November 16, 1981 Summit Spring Pipeline/Tank Extension EA. The fence received heavy maintenance in 2006 and cultural monitoring was conducted again at that time. The area has been previously disturbed to the point that any culturally significant artifacts have been lost. If any new artifacts are uncovered during the installation process, work will stop and a BLM archeologist will be notified at once.

External scoping was performed with the Walker River Native American Tribe regarding the possibility of Native American religious concerns or any other impacts that could result from the Proposed Action. No comments have been received to date, however consultation is considered ongoing. No concerns were brought forward, however, in the event that human remains are discovered the tribe will be contacted per NRS 383.170 (appendix D).

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

No unresolved issues have been identified following public notification of the proposed action. This is demonstrated through the effects analysis in the EA.

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

The analysis provided in the EA does not indicate that this action would involve any unique or unknown risks. Relevant components of the human environment which would be either affected or potentially affected by the Proposed Action and other alternatives were addressed through the affects analyzed in this EA.

***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.***

Current uses of the land surrounding the Summit Spring project area are expected to remain for the foreseeable future and it is unlikely that increases in these or other land uses will occur.

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

The Proposed Action is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative impacts. All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts.

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

The Proposed Action Alternative has no potential to adversely affect significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

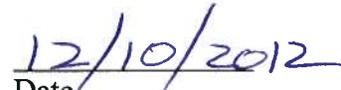
**9. *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.***

The Proposed Action will have no affect to any federally listed species under the ESA. After consulting with the BLM wildlife biologist and the USFWS website for Nevada, there are no federally listed threatened or endangered species within the project area.

**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 is in compliance with the CRMP. The Proposed Action is consistent with Statutes, regulations and policies of neighboring local, County, State, Tribal governments and other Federal agencies. The Proposed Action does not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

  
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Date