

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
EAST FORK HIGH ROCK CANYON ACQUISITION
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2013-0002-EA**

Based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM0NV-W030-2013-0002-EA, dated July 2013, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be required per Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act. This finding 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.

I have determined that the acquisition of the 320 acres of private lands adjacent to the East Fork High Rock Canyon Wilderness within the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (Black Rock NCA) located within Washoe County, Nevada is in conformance with the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area and Associated Wilderness, and other Contiguous Lands Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Surprise RMP. The Proposed Action is also consistent with the plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state, tribal and federal agencies and governments.

As a result of the proposed action and analysis presented in the EA, environmental protection measures and mitigation measures were not identified. Management of the acquired lands will be in conformance with the existing Black Rock and Surprise RMPs and in coordination with the Surprise Field Office (BLM California).

Context

The Proposed Action is the acquisition of 320 acres of private lands adjacent to the East Fork High Rock Wilderness within the Black Rock NCA. These parcels are located in Washoe County, NV, in T. 41 N., R. 23 E., Sec. 1, SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 12, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 13 E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$. The subject parcels are surrounded by public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management's Black Rock Field Office, Nevada, and Surprise Field Office, California. The proposed acquisition parcels are needed to acquire priority wildlife habitat, and recreational and cultural resource sites located within the Black Rock NCA. These characteristics are considered valuable to the surrounding area.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the acquisition of 320 acres of private lands and subsequent change of ownership from private to public lands. The acquisition will provide BLM with opportunities to manage all of the resources identified in the EA. Identification and treatment of invasive, non-native species will be possible as part of the Winnemucca District's noxious weed control program. It will be possible to manage habitat for migratory birds, the Greater sage-grouse, special status species, and other wildlife resources on

these parcels once status has changed from private to public lands. Additionally, the land acquisition will provide the opportunity to manage the acquired parcels to protect the wilderness values/resources currently being protected by the NCA designation on the adjacent lands.

Property tax collections for the parcels to be acquired (totaling \$254.34) will no longer be collected. However, this loss will be offset, at least partially, by reduced property tax administrative costs for Washoe County and by Payment in Lieu of Taxes from the Department of the Interior.

2) The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety.

Public health and safety was determined to be not affected during the development of the EA. No impacts to public health are anticipated.

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 Proposed Action would not affect park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas. The project area is located within the Black Rock NCA and contains priority wildlife habitat. The acquisition area is located entirely within the Black Rock NCA and will be managed in compliance with the Black Rock RMP and the Surprise Field Office RMP.

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

No controversy with this project has been identified. A scoping letter was sent to potentially interested parties on November 21, 2012 notifying them of the initiation of the EA. Of the five comments received, four were in support of the acquisition and one was not relevant to the Proposed Action. During the public review of the Preliminary EA three comments were received during the public review period from May 31, 2013 through June 29, 2013 and all three comments were in support of the acquisition.

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

There are no known effects that would result from implementation of the Proposed Action, as analyzed in the EA, that would be considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

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

The Proposed Action will not establish a precedent for future actions. There have been acquisitions of private parcels within the NCA and other Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas in the past. Any future land use changes in the subject areas will require independent evaluation and analysis in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

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

No significant cumulative impacts were 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 NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

The East Fork High Rock parcels have not been inventoried for cultural resources, but are in an area considered to be sensitive for cultural resources. The proposed action will have no direct or indirect short-term impacts on cultural resources, such as districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP, because no changes in on-the-ground management will occur as a result of the acquisition. Over the long-term, the potential exists to increase protection of Cultural Resources as authorizations for uses and permit applications will be evaluated. Decisions implemented for future projects will incorporate multiple use considerations and be in compliance with the requirements of federal laws, regulations and policies for protection of resources. The parcels will become part of the NCA.

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.

There are no known federally endangered or threatened species or their critical habitats within the project area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were consulted (informally) in development of this EA.

The Greater sage-grouse, a candidate species, and related habitat were considered in the analysis. The subject parcel is located within the Massacre sage-grouse Population Management Unit (PMU) and the area is considered essential and irreplaceable habitat. No direct or indirect short-term impacts were identified in the analysis, because no changes in on-the-ground management will occur as a result of the acquisition. In the long-term, habitat improvement for sage-grouse will be possible through habitat management identified in the Black Rock and Surprise RMPs.

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 does not violate or threaten and known Federal, State, or local laws or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.



Victor Lozano
Associate District Manager
Winnemucca District



Date