

**Finding of No Significant
Impact (FONSI) For
DOI-BLM-CA-N070-2013-0002**

**Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Cedarville, CA**

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Chapter 1. Finding of No Significant Impact

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INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis (DOI-BLM-CA-N070-2013-0002-EA) analyzing the impacts of placing wildlife water developments under typical scenarios throughout the Surprise Field Office (SFO).

The EA analyzes (2) alternatives from which I have selected Alternative A (Proposed Action).

1. Alternative A, the selected alternative, is described on pgs. 8-11 of the EA and consists of:

The BLM and cooperators (Nevada Department of Wildlife [NDOW], and Nevada Bighorns Unlimited [NBU]), propose to construct a minimum of nine wildlife water developments throughout the SFO over the next ten years. Additional wildlife water developments may be proposed and built within this 10 year period by BLM and cooperators.

Two different size units are proposed to be built. A 7,500 gallon capacity unit impacting no more than 1 acre and a smaller 325 gallon capacity unit impacting no more than 0.10 acres.

A combination of heavy equipment and manpower will be used to construct each unit which will then be fenced to promote exclusive use by wildlife. Units will be built by volunteers or NDOW employees and supervised by the NDOW and BLM. Cultural resource, wildlife and plant surveys will be conducted on all sites prior to any site disturbance.

The proposed action addresses several goals and management actions outlined in the 2007 Surprise Field Office RMP (ROD 2008).

1. Restore, enhance, and maintain important habitats for wild ungulates on BLM-administered lands.
1. Cooperate with state wildlife agencies to build and maintain additional guzzlers east of Surprise Valley to discourage bighorn sheep from crossing to the Warner Mountains and Coppersmith Hills.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

The Proposed Action is subject to, and consistent with, the 2008 SFO Resource Management Plan (RMP). Specifically, the Proposed Action conforms to the following sections of the RMP.

2.22.4.2 Goal for State-Listed and BLM Sensitive Species

Restore, enhance, or maintain populations and habitats of state-listed and BLM sensitive wildlife on lands administered by the SFO. Habitats and populations of these species would be healthy and robust; therefore, actions permitted, funded, or conducted by the SFO would not contribute to the need to list any species under the Endangered Species Act. State-listed species will be managed in accordance with the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Species protection and habitat conservation would satisfy the minimum requirements of the CESA.

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1.1. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT DETERMINATION

Based upon a review of the attached EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that Alternative A, the Proposed Action, is not a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. For this reason no environmental impact statement needs to be prepared. This finding is based on the following rationale and discussion of context and intensity of the action.

Rationale:

Following is the rationale for why the selected Action discussed in the EA will not significantly affect the resources present within the area encompassed by these projects.

Cultural Resources

In preparation for the EA, all potential project sites identified for immediate construction were surveyed for cultural resources. Areas found to have cultural resources or high densities of cultural resource sites were removed from consideration as project sites. Therefore no cultural resources are known to occur within any currently proposed project site.

If any cultural resources (surface or subsurface) are discovered during construction, construction will cease immediately. The BLM will be notified immediately and the Field Office Archaeologist will determine mitigation measures that are needed and if construction will be allowed to continue.

Prior to construction at any future site, a Class III cultural resource inventory would be completed for each new wildlife water development site and no site will be built in a National Register Eligible or unevaluated site.

Recreation

The Proposed Action is expected to disperse small game and big game species and increase overall hunting quality in the SFO due to increases in wildlife population numbers and a more even distribution of wildlife species across hunt units. As wildlife populations increased around guzzler locations, increased wildlife viewing opportunities and increased hunting opportunities in the vicinity of guzzlers is expected to occur. The Proposed Action is not expected to negatively affect other recreational opportunities and activities.

Visual Resources

Guzzler locations will not be evident to the casual observer. Guzzlers will be located in areas where natural topography and landscape hides the location to the extent possible. Guzzlers will be painted and blended with naturally occurring colors (brown, tan, and gray) as needed to minimize visual impacts and hide location. Vegetation and rock outcropping adjacent to the guzzler will be irregularly distributed and contrasting to reduce visual impacts of the guzzlers.

Construction of the guzzlers is within the objectives of the Class II and Class IV Visual Resource Management outlined in the 2008 SFO RMP. None of the project sites are located within a special designation area e.g. Wilderness, WSA, NCA. Guzzler construction is not expected to have a large effect on the existing on the existing landscape.

Wildlife

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Wildlife species expected to benefit from the Proposed Action include California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, sage-grouse, chukar, quail, and associated predators such as bobcats, raptors, and mountain lions. Habitat effects from the guzzler are expected to be short (less than two years) and wildlife use should increase adjacent to guzzler locations within approximately two years of construction.

West Nile Virus

The effect on wildlife directly is expected to be slight due to the fact that wildlife will have to access some water source during drought and summer months. Guzzlers could however serve as a refuge for mosquitoes during dry periods and then disperse into previously unsuitable areas during wet periods. The risk of this occurring is slight due to the current patchiness of West Nile Virus in Washoe and Modoc County, the relative small increase in water distribution after guzzler construction, and the uneven distribution of water that will exist even after guzzler installation due to the arid environment that the SFO exists in.

Wilderness

None of the guzzler locations are within or adjacent to designated wilderness areas or WSA's. All BLM lands, including those within the Action Area, were inventoried for wilderness characteristics in 1979 as directed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA).

Land with Wilderness characteristics

Wildlife water developments under this EA will not be located within WSA's or designated wilderness areas however developments will likely be located in areas that have wilderness character. Wildlife developments may slightly impact natural conditions due to a new development however the impacts would be negligible due to the isolated nature of guzzlers in comparison to the large acreage of surrounding areas and their small size. Overall, the Proposed Action is expected to have negligible impacts to Lands with Wilderness Character.

Resource(s)/Concerns discussed but Eliminated as an Issue

Nine resources and/or potential concerns were identified during internal and external scoping. These are listed and discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA, starting on pg. 12. I have reviewed the rationale provided for each resource or concern and support their elimination as an issue.

Context: Project sites outlined in the Proposed Action could occur throughout the SFO, in any allotment, involving up to 9 acres of BLM administered public land that by itself does not have international, national, regional, or state-wide importance, but on a local level it is important to the local economy and public land health. Project sites themselves would be no larger than 1 acre in size of total disturbance.

Intensity: The following discussion is based on the relevant factors that should be considered in evaluating intensity as described in 43 CFR 4100:

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

I have determined that none of the direct, indirect or cumulative impacts associated with the selected alternative are significant, individually or combined.

2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.

The proposed action is located within a rural setting. Constructing wildlife guzzlers as described in the selected alternative and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures would not result in instances where public health or safety would be affected.

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

A discussion of these unique geographic areas and anticipated environmental issues is located in Chapter 3 of the EA, starting on pg.18. The unique characteristics associated with the analysis area were analyzed in the EA. Based on the EA and above rationale I have determined that the selected alternative will not have a significant impact on the unique characteristics within affected area.

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

Scoping for the proposed action and background information was sent to known affected and interested publics. After review of the comments and issues identified from the scoping process and those analyzed in the EA, I have determined that the effects described in the EA are not highly controversial.

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

Construction of guzzlers is a widespread action authorized by the BLM, the effects from which have been thoroughly analyzed in NEPA documents, including the recent RMP, and scientific publications. The analysis provided in the attached EA does not indicate that this action would involve any unique or unknown risks.

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 issuance of an authorization to build wildlife guzzlers is not precedent setting. Wildlife guzzlers have been authorized within the SFO in the past.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts – which include connected actions regardless of land ownership.

A cumulative effects analysis was conducted as part of the EA, and it determined that there were no cumulatively significant effects associated with the selected alternative.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other 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 action will not adversely affect National Register of Historic Places sites or cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. No wildlife guzzlers will be located in National Register Eligible sites so there will be no effect on these 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 Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.

The action does not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species, or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of a federal, state, local, or tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment, where non federal requirements are consistent with federal requirements.

The action does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

1.2. Signatures:

/S/ Tim Burke _____ 1/23/13 _____

Timothy Burke, Acting Field Manager Date

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