

PROJECT DESCRIPTION  
BLUE CREEK WATER GAP MAINTENANCE – T11S, R02E, SEC20 (#306843, #309366)

**BACKGROUND**

This project was created in two phases, in 1984 and in 2000. The proposal addresses the water gap into a pothole that was created by construction of the two respective closures on each side of it. This year, low water levels in conjunction with the hanging board panels allowed access by calves into the upper enclosure and contributed to access by both cattle and calves into the lower enclosure. While enclosure maintenance is our responsibility, the slope to water on the west side is steep, and Simplot has proposed to reduce the grade with an excavator, similar to access points to irrigation ditches in and around their feedlot property at Grand View.

The creation of the water gap was addressed in the EA for the Blue Creek Enclosure expansion and fence realignment, which received full clearance for cultural, wildlife, and botanical resources in 1998. Simplot has asked that we include this project in the package for this year in conjunction with repairs/upgrades for the panels to prevent access.

**WHO**

Dickshooter Cattle Co. (permittee) retains a grazing permit in the Northwest Allotment of the Bruneau Field Office, BLM. The permittee proposes to reduce the grade of the slope into the water gap on the west side to reduce the numbers of cattle that hang out on the east side of the gap when water is scarce at other locations, although he does not have any assigned maintenance responsibilities. The permittee has also offered to donate labor in repairing or realigning the panels bordering the water gap.

**WHAT**

Maintenance activities would include reducing the grade of the ramp into the water gap on the west side. The material would be partly moved into the pothole and partly spread over the surface on the west approach. The extent of the disturbed area would not exceed 5 acres.

**WHEN**

Prior to September 30, 2014. The timing will be constrained by a combination of factors, but especially by continuing dryness of the proposed treatment area, equipment and operator availability, and completion of BLM clearances and/or availability of BLM staff. Wet conditions could hinder equipment access to the area over the unpaved access routes.

**WHERE**

Maintenance work would be done on the west side of the existing water gap located in the Southeast of the Northwest quarter of Section 20, Township 11 South, Range 3 East. The project map depicts the most likely access route that runs along the west side of the upper enclosure from the Wickahoney Road, and then cuts east a short distance cross-country from the enclosure corner to the west side. The equipment operator could walk the excavator into position from an unloading point on the main road.

Figure 3. Reservoir Maintenance Location and Access Overview





**Figure 2.** Blue Creek Water Gap on June 24, 2014. Low snowpack, precipitation year. West (opposite) approach is very steep.

**HOW**

Work would be performed with an excavator (Figure 3). Equipment would access the water gap along an existing route from the Wickahoney Road (Figure 1). The excavator would be transported on a low boy trailer to a staging area along the Wickahoney Road. The operator would then drive the excavator along the remainder of the route to the water gap described above. The probable area of surface disturbance at the reservoir maintenance site would not exceed 2 acres.

The following maintenance stipulations would be in effect:

1. All earth work will occur within the existing area of disturbance.
2. Disturbed areas used for spoil disposal will be graded to resemble existing landscape contours to minimize visual contrast. Depending on the depth of the deposited soil, reseeding may be required.
3. Maintenance work will be restricted to periods when the soil is dry and firm enough to support vehicles without creating ruts.
4. No new roads or blading will be allowed in moving equipment to the reservoir site.



**Figure 3.** Example of Excavator