

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Twin Falls District
Burley Field Office
15 East 200 South
Burley, ID 83318

**Scoping Information Package
Water Gap Well**

DOI-BLM-ID-T020-2015-0005-EA

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to drill a well for livestock water and close a water gap on Lake Walcott. These actions are in accordance with the 1985 Monument Land Use Plan (Monument LUP). Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations to determine potential environmental consequences.

The purpose of this report is to inform interested and affected parties of the proposal and to solicit comments to assist with the NEPA review of the proposal. Analysis of the proposal is ongoing, and will be documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) with an estimated completion date of September 2015. Comments received in response to this solicitation will be used to identify potential environmental issues related to the proposed action and to identify alternatives to the proposed action that meet the purpose of and need for the project.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of this proposal is to provide livestock with a reliable water source while closing livestock off from Lake Walcott and the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) evaluated the use of livestock on the Refuge and found it to be incompatible with the purpose for which the refuge was established. According to their regulations, the water gap should be closed. The need that is driving this proposal is to protect the small area of the refuge from livestock impacts, while still providing for the livestock use within the Schodde Allotment authorized under the Monument LUP.

Existing Condition

The proposed project is about 13.5 miles southeast of Minidoka, Idaho, located in the southernmost tip of the Schodde Allotment in the Smith Springs Pasture (see Map 1). The area is dominated by a crested wheatgrass seeding in a primarily sandy soil type. The proposed well location is about 0.7 mile north of the current water gap, but located in the same seeding treatment. One other water source exists in the pasture about 2.4 miles to the north of the current water gap. Livestock grazing in the allotment is managed in a rest-rotation grazing system with about 500 cow-calf pairs using the pasture for up to two months in the spring, summer, or fall.

Proposed Action

The BLM is proposing to drill a well and construct a 10,000 gallon storage tank and two troughs to provide water for livestock. Also needed would be a generator, fuel tank, and a pump-house. All pipelines would be buried about 3 feet deep or as deep as bedrock allows. About 0.1 mile of new two-track road would be made to access the well site. Total footprint of the project would be about 2 to 5 acres. All disturbed areas would be re-seeded to a low elevation seed mix suited to the site. The project area and the area of the water gap would be monitored for noxious weeds and treated if necessary.

Preliminary Issues

Currently, livestock obtain water from a small water gap on Lake Walcott in the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. The USFWS determined that this use is incompatible with the purpose of the refuge and intend to close the water gap. Without mitigation, closing the water gap would change the use patterns in the allotment, requiring a new evaluation of the grazing system.

Preliminary Alternative Development

The alternative to the proposed action is the “No Action” alternative—no well would be drilled, and no additional features of the project would be needed.

Decision to be Made

The decision to be made for this project is whether or not to allow the project to proceed. Through agreements with USFWS, several other water gaps that have historically provided water to livestock have been closed, with the establishment of alternate water sources. This is the last such water gap remaining on Lake Walcott in the Schodde Allotment.

Public Input Needed

Comments are specifically requested on the proposed action, preliminary issues, and alternatives. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received by April 15, 2015 and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. The BLM will not reject public feedback outside established public involvement timeframes; however, these comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions, proposal, design, or analysis presented in the EA.

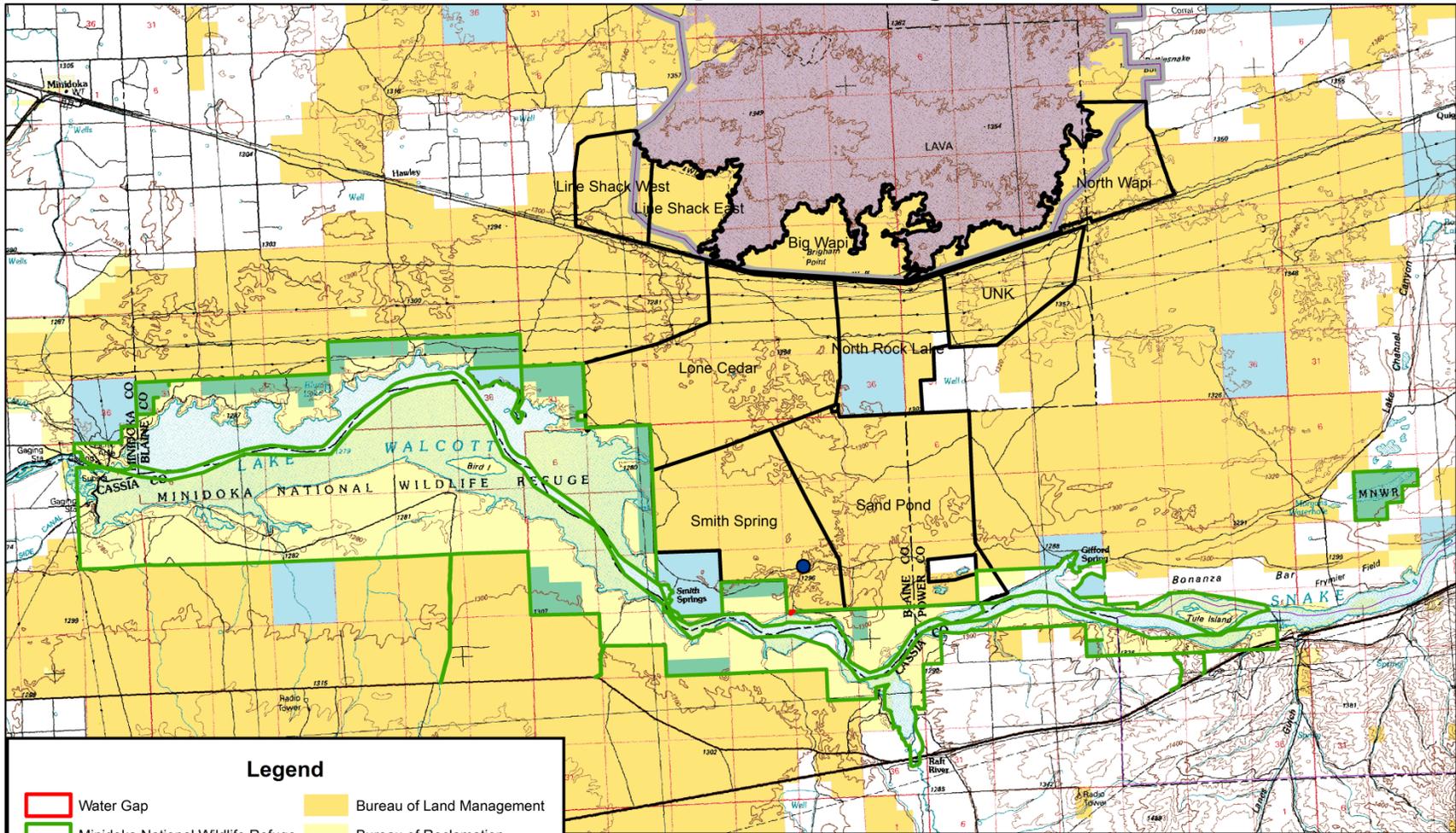
Written comments must be submitted to Jim Tharp, Acting Burley Field Manager. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to dpatten@blm.gov. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments

sent electronically should include the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the proposal will not be addressed at this planning level.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Dan Patten, Rangeland Management Specialist at 208-732-7291.

Map 1. Water Gap Well Project Area



Legend

Water Gap	Bureau of Land Management
Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge	Bureau of Reclamation
Schodde Allotment	Forest Service
Proposed Well Site	Fish and Wildlife Service
Proposed 2-track	National Park Service
BLM Offices	Private; other
National Monument	State

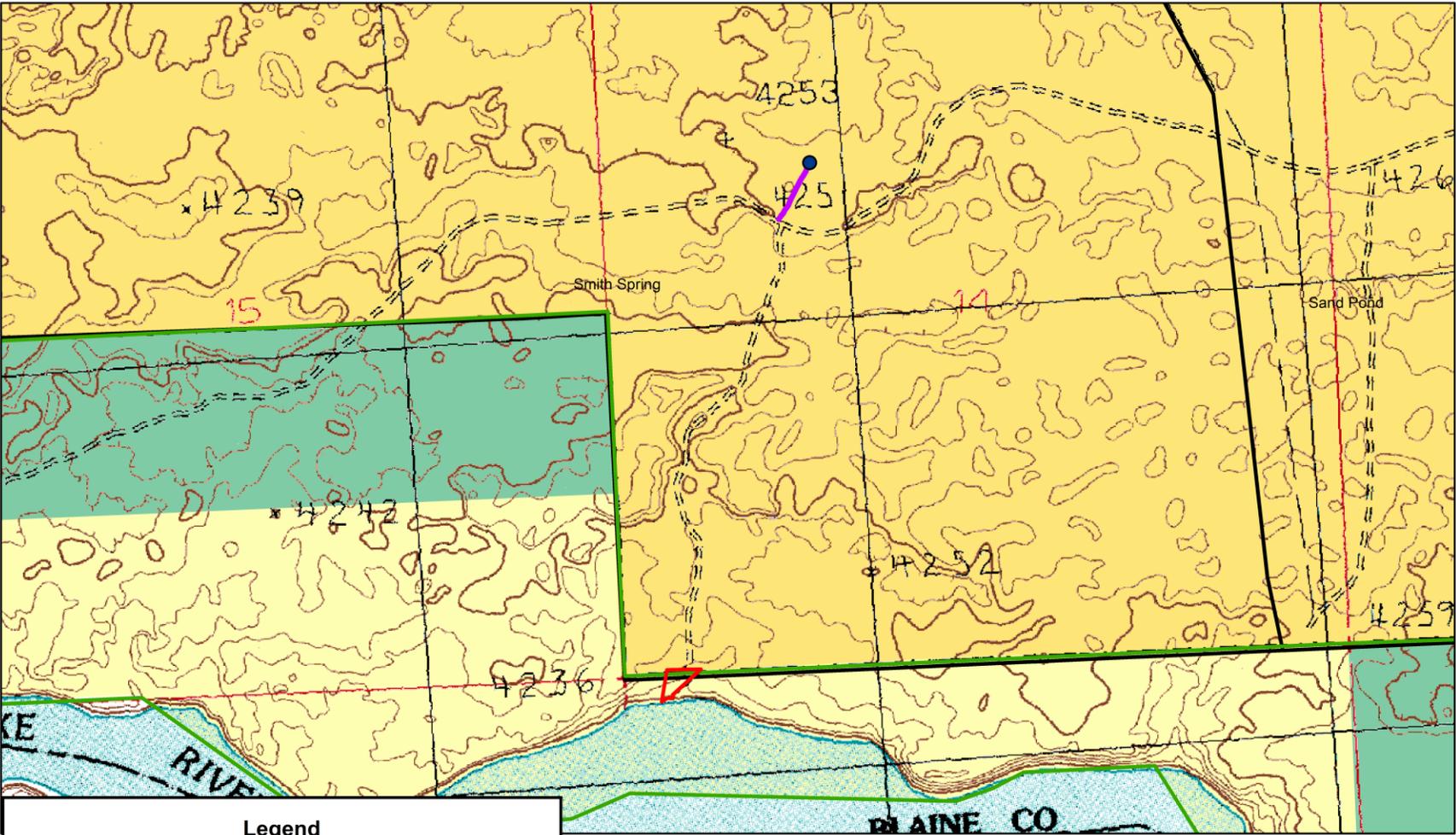
Map Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N



The surface management status ("land ownership") should be used as a general guide only. Official land records, located at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and other offices, should be checked for up-to-date information concerning any specific tract of land.

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Map 2. Water Gap Well and Closure Area



Legend

Water Gap	Bureau of Land Management
Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge	Bureau of Reclamation
Schodde Allotment	Fish and Wildlife Service
Proposed Well Site	Private; other
Proposed 2-track	State



Map Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N
 0 0.05 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 Miles

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