

Finding of No Significant Impact

Right-of-Way Renewal and Amendment for Construction of an Access Road and Temporary Contact Station, Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area

**DOI-BLM-NV-S020-2015-0008-EA
N-78443**

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-S020-2015-0008-EA dated November 4, 2015. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the Proposed Action identified in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. I have determined the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved Sloan Canyon Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the North McCullough Wilderness Management Plan (NMWMP). The Proposed Action is also consistent with applicable plans and policies of county, state, tribal and Federal agencies. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed action consists of the following elements:

- An approximately 0.7 mile long roadway and pedestrian pathway to the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site and the North McCullough Wilderness from the planned extension of Democracy Drive.
- A looped vehicle turnaround and parking area.
- Temporary visitor amenities such as a contact station, portable restrooms, potable water supply, trash receptacles and bike racks.
- Restoration of areas disturbed during construction as well as segments of the existing unpaved access road.

Most of the proposed Nawghaw Poa Road traverses public lands managed by the BLM. The southern terminus where visitor amenities would be located is located immediately within the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA).

Intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA has considered both the beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. Benefits of the proposed action include conservation and protection of cultural and natural resources within the Petroglyph Management Area and the North McCullough Wilderness, respectively. Visitor experiences would also be substantially improved. The proposed action would entail minor impacts to native vegetation, soils, and wildlife. With implementation of mitigation measures identified in the EA, potential impacts would be minimal.

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

With construction of a paved road and a looped vehicle turnaround that could accommodate fire and other emergency personnel; an ingress/egress with a dedicated left turn lane; and placement of temporary visitor amenities, vehicle and pedestrian safety would be substantially improved.

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 area is not located within or adjacent to prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas. The Proposed Action area is located within the vicinity of the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site. However, by facilitating implementation of management and interpretive programs, the Proposed Action would serve to protect the cultural resources within Sloan Canyon.

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

The effects of the Proposed Action on the quality of the human environment are unlikely to be controversial. Visitations to the Sloan Canyon Petroglyph Site and the North McCullough Wilderness are expected to increase commensurate with the increase in population within the Las Vegas metropolitan area including the city of Henderson. The Proposed Action would substantially improve visitor experiences. Vehicular and pedestrian safety would also improve substantially. The proposed action would entail minor impacts to native vegetation, soils, and wildlife. With implementation of stipulations and mitigation measures identified in the EA, potential impacts are expected to be negligible.

A draft of the draft EA was made available for public review from October 1, 2015 through October 12, 2015. Furthermore, a public meeting was held on October 1 from 6

to 8 p.m. at Levi Strauss & Co. located at 501 Executive Airport Drive, Henderson. There were 44 people in attendance excluding BLM staff. Fifteen written comments were received. Most comments expressed support for the proposed action. The list of attendees, submitted comments, and responses to comments are found in Appendix C of the EA.

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

The Proposed Action entails the construction of a standard roadway using standard design, construction techniques and materials. There are no unique geological, ecological, cultural, hydrological or other environmental constraints requiring novel designs, construction techniques, or materials. With implementation of stipulations and mitigation measures identified in the EA, uncertainty or unknown risks are expected to be low.

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 proposed action would provide infrastructure for the construction of a permanent visitor center as part of a future project. Construction of the permanent visitor center is not likely to result in disturbance of additional areas beyond the construction footprint evaluated in the EA. Environmental impacts are likely to be less than significant. The need for development of such facilities was articulated in the Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.8 of the RMP and Sections 3 and 4.2 of the NMWMP.

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

The majority of the proposed Nawghaw Poa Road is located outside the Sloan Canyon NCA boundary on public lands managed by the BLM. These lands have been designated for disposal pursuant to the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act and likely be developed for low density residential uses and designated open spaces. Disposal of these lands would contribute incrementally to regional declines of the creosote/bursage scrub vegetation community. Environmental impacts associated with disposal of lands have been evaluated in the Las Vegas Valley Disposal Boundary EIS.

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 area has been subjected to previous archaeological survey and there has not been significant cultural resources found within the Area of Potential Effect for the undertaking. Thus, the Proposed Action will not adversely affect districts,

sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP. It will not cause the loss or destruction of 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 Federally-threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is present within the NCA. Though the project area is not within designated critical habitat for the species, it is within moderate density tortoise habitat. The Proposed Action would result in a "may affect, likely to adversely affect" determination pursuant to the ESA.

Section 7 ESA consultation for this project is covered under the Programmatic Biological Opinion 84320-2010-F-0365.R003. With implementation of the terms and conditions of the Biological Opinion, the Proposed Action would avoid and minimize impacts to the desert tortoise and would be in full compliance with the ESA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

With the implementation of all stipulations and mitigation measures identified in the EA, the Proposed Action will not violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Signed:

402 

Catrina Williams
Field Manager
Red Rock/Sloan Field Office

11/4/15

Date