

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Environmental Assessment  
DOI- BLM-UT-Y010-2015-0241 EA**

**October 2015**

**Powerdam Toilet Installation**

*Location: Powerdam Parking Lot, Grand County, Utah*

*Applicant/Address: BLM, 82 East Dogwood, Moab, UT 84532*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Moab Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management proposes to install a toilet in the Powerdam area in the South Moab Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). A parking lot has existed at this location since the BLM closed the road further up Mill Creek Canyon in 1992. The parking lot allows visitors and local residents to access Mill Creek; it is adjacent to the Moab City limits and, for that reason, is a popular location. The canyon offers scenery, shade, water and other attractions which attract many people.

#### **PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The Powerdam parking area is a popular recreation destination, as it is the access point to Mill Creek Canyon and is located adjacent to the city of Moab. Users include local residents and visitors from out of town. While many residents have attempted to keep Mill Creek a “secret”, it is featured in guidebooks and websites. A google search for “Mill Creek Canyon Moab” resulted in 125,000 hits, including listings on hiking and waterfall websites. The parking lot is taxed, especially during summer months, and there is a need for a toilet to serve the many visitors who park there and begin their forays into the canyon.

The proposed action is to install a toilet at the existing Powerdam parking area. This would amend the decision in the Mill Creek Management Plan which states: “Human waste facilities will not be provided on a permanent basis (EA#UT-068-96-028)”. The reasoning in the referenced Environmental Assessment was that the provision of toilet facilities was cost-prohibitive.

#### **CONFORMANCE WITH BLM LAND USE PLAN**

The proposed action described below is in conformance with the 2008 Moab Resource Management Plan (RMP). In REC-42 (page 93), the 2008 RMP states that the BLM should “manage the Mill Creek Power Dam hiking trailhead”.

#### **RELATIONSHIPS TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS**

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act mandates multiple use of Public Lands, including recreation use. An objective of BLM’s recreation policy is to satisfy recreation demand within allowable use levels in an equitable, safe and enjoyable manner, minimizing adverse resource impacts and user conflicts.

The proposed action specifically implements the Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Recreation Management for BLM Lands in Utah by seeking to repair long-term damage caused by excessive visitation. The proposed action “limits or controls activities through specialized management tools.” The tool in this case is the installation of a toilet.

The Mill Creek Management Plan (BLM, February 2001) states that recreation use must be managed. Vehicular camping was precluded within the planning area, parking lots

were delineated and hiking areas defined. Vehicular travel up the creek past the present-day parking area was prohibited and barriers installed to prevent motorized and mountain bike travel.

## **CHAPTER 2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are two alternatives: (a) the Proposed Action, to install a toilet, thereby amending the Mill Creek Management Plan's prohibition of permanent toilet facilities and (b) No Action, which is to not construct the additional facilities. The No Action alternative is considered and analyzed to provide a baseline for comparison of the impacts of the proposed action.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

The BLM would install a toilet at the existing Powerdam parking area. See the attached image for a depiction of the proposed action.

### **NO ACTION**

The toilet would not be installed.

## **CHAPTER 3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL SETTING**

The affected environment of the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives was considered and analyzed by an interdisciplinary team as documented in Appendix A, the Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist. The checklist indicates which resources of concern are either not present in the project area, or would not be impacted to a degree that requires detailed analysis. Critical Elements of the Human Environment are those elements that are subject to the requirements specified in statute, regulation, or executive order, and must be considered in all EAs (BLM H-1790-1, Appendix 5). Critical Elements of the Human Environment are included in Appendix A. Resources, including Critical Elements, which would be impacted to a level requiring further analysis are described in Chapter 3 and impacts on these resources are analyzed in Chapter 4 below.

#### **Recreation**

The Powerdam parking area has been a popular recreation destination for many years. One of the first water-powered electrical facilities in Utah was installed in the area in 1916; the dam was originally wooden and was updated to concrete at some point in the 1930's. From the 1880's to about the 1960's, the canyon was used to drive cattle to the mountains. Local residents have long used the location for recreation (especially cooling off in the water on hot summer days); the Powerdam area is also utilized by Moab Irrigation to draw off water for farming purposes.

The increasing use of the area resulted in long-term degradation of the riparian zone and to unacceptable impacts. In 1996, the BLM blocked the upper Powerdam road and constructed a parking lot at its current location. Vehicular access to the Powerdam from Potato Salad Hill and from Kayenta Heights was also prohibited and the roads were closed and rehabilitated. At the same time, overnight camping, campfires, firearms discharge and wood collection were disallowed. Attempts were made to delineate one hiking trail within the canyon, rather than the multiple social trails (and old cattle trails) that previously existed.

Recreation use of the Powerdam area has been much improved since the early 1990s with the initiation of restrictions and facilities improvement. In the 1990s, the BLM stated that it would not provide toilet facilities in the Powerdam area due to the cost of such an installation and its subsequent maintenance.

#### **Water Resources/Quality**

Mill Creek is a perennial stream within 200 yards of the proposed toilet location. The State of Utah designated Mill Creek as having impaired water quality conditions, based on high stream temperatures and elevated levels of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS). In addition, recent sampling data collected by the Utah Division of Water Quality (UDWQ) show elevated levels of total coliform, fecal coliform and e.coli bacteria immediately downstream of this section of Mill Creek. These conditions are most likely the result of human waste and dog waste from recreationists while in the canyon.

## **CHAPTER 4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS**

#### **PROPOSED ACTION**

This section analyzes the impacts of the proposed action to those resources described in the Affected Environment, Chapter 3, above.

#### **Recreation**

The installation of a toilet at the Powerdam parking area would improve the experience of visitors and local residents who utilize the area because extraneous human waste would be eliminated. Health concerns associated with human waste disposal would be reduced. The Recreation program at the Moab BLM has sources of revenue to pay for the installation and upkeep of the toilet as of 2015; thus, the reason for the prohibition of a permanent facility does not currently exist.

#### **Water Resources/Quality**

The proposed action would positively impact water quality conditions in Mill Creek. Human waste would be contained and removed from the site, reducing the amount of human waste left in the bushes or washed into the stream during rainstorms. The current

elevated levels of total coliform, fecal coliform and e.coli bacteria would be reduced to more safe levels.

**NO ACTION**

The No Action alternative would not meet the need for the proposed action and would not improve a recreation resource for visitors and residents.

**Recreation**

The current parking lot would remain without a toilet. People would continue to deposit human waste in an unmanaged manner within the environment of the Mill Creek drainage

**Water Resources/Quality**

With the no action alternative the water quality conditions would continue to be degraded, with elevated readings of total coliform, fecal coliform and e.coli. These bacteria can pose health hazards to recreationists that are playing or wading in Mill Creek.

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Cumulative impacts are those impacts resulting from the incremental impact of an action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. The Cumulative Impacts of this project are considered negligible, as the direct impacts of adding an amenity to an already existing parking area are considered negligible.

**CHAPTER 5  
PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED**

During preparation of this EA, the public was notified of the proposed action by posting on the ePlanning website on September 11, 2015. No comments were received as a result of this posting.

**BLM Preparers**

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Ann Marie Aubry	Hydrologist	Soils, Wetlands, Air Quality, Floodplains, Water Resources
Bill Stevens	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness, Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, Socioeconomics, BLM Natural Areas, Environmental Justice
David Pals	Geologist	Wastes, Geology
Pamela Riddle	Wildlife Biologist	T&E Animals, Fish and Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Utah BLM Sensitive Species
Jared Lundell	Archeologist	Cultural, Native American Consultation
Katie Stevens	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Team Lead, Recreation, VRM, ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers
Dave Williams	Range Management	T&E Plants, Livestock Grazing, RHS, Vegetation

	Specialist	
Jordan Davis	Range Management Specialist	Invasive Species, Woodlands
Josh Relph	Fuels Specialist	Fire and Fuels

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Interdisciplinary Team Analysis Record Checklist**

**Appendix B: Diagram of the Proposed Toilet Installation and Parking Lot Expansion**

## INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM CHECKLIST

**Project Title:** Powerdam Toilet Installation  
**NEPA Log Number:** DOI BLM UT Y010-2015-0241 EA  
**Project Leader:** Katie Stevens

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**DETERMINATION OF STAFF:** *(Choose one of the following abbreviated options for the left column)*

NP = not present in the area impacted by the proposed or alternative actions  
 NI = present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required  
 PI = present with potential for relevant impact that need to be analyzed in detail in the EA  
 NC = (DNAs only) actions and impacts not changed from those disclosed in the existing NEPA documents cited in Section D of the DNA form. The Rationale column may include NI and NP discussions.

The following elements are not present in the Moab Field Office and have been removed from the checklist:  
 Farmlands (Prime or Unique), Wild Horses and Burros.

Determi- nation	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
<b>RESOURCES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED (INCLUDES SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES APPENDIX 1 H-1790-1)</b>				
NI	Air Quality Greenhouse Gas Emissions		A.M. Aubry	9/30/15
NI	Floodplains		A.M. Aubry	9/30/15
NI	Soils	Minimal surface disturbance involved	A.M. Aubry	9/30/15
PI	Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)	A positive impact to water quality in Mill Creek	A.M. Aubry	9/30/15
NI	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		A.M. Aubry	9/30/15
NI	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	The parking area is within the Mill Creek ACEC. The installation of infrastructure to an already existing facility would not impact the values for which the ACEC was established. Installation of a toilet would improve water quality and enhance riparian functioning (a relevant and important value within the ACEC).	Katie Stevens	9/15/15
PI	Recreation	Would provide recreation benefit.	Katie Stevens	9/15/15
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	See 2008 Moab RMP	Katie Stevens	9/15/15
NI	Visual Resources	Already existing infrastructure	Katie Stevens	9/15/15
NP	BLM Natural Areas	See 2008 Moab RMP	Bill Stevens	9/15/15
NI	Socio-Economics		Bill Stevens	9/15/15
NP	Wilderness/WSA	See 2008 Moab RMP	Bill Stevens	9/15/15
NP	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	See 2008 Moab RMP	Bill Stevens	9/15/15
NP	Cultural Resources	BLM conducted a literature search and a Class III archaeological inventory of the project area. The BLM found no properties eligible to the National Register of Historic	M. Jared Lundell	10/8/15

Determination	Resource	Rationale for Determination*	Signature	Date
		Places. The BLM, therefore, made a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. Details of these finds are discussed in the Cultural Resource Inventory Report (U-15-BL-0760). BLM will consult with the Utah SHPO in accordance with the threshold procedures for small projects specified in the Utah BLM/Utah SHPO Statewide Smallscale Undertakings Programmatic Agreement.		
NP	Native American Religious Concerns	No known sites of religious or cultural significance to Native American tribes are within the project area.	M. Jared Lundell	10/8/15
NI	Environmental Justice		Bill Stevens	9/15/15
NI	Wastes (hazardous or solid)		David Pals	9/15/15
NI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species	No new impacts as area is within current disturbance	Pam Riddle	9/15/15
NI	Migratory Birds	No new impacts as area is within current disturbance	Pam Riddle	9/15/15
NI	Utah BLM Sensitive Species	No new impacts as area is within current disturbance	Pam Riddle	9/15/15
NI	Fish and Wildlife Excluding USFW Designated Species	No new impacts as area is within current disturbance	Pam Riddle	9/15/15
NI	Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds		Jordan Davis	9/15/15
NI	Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species		Jordan Davis	9/15/15
NP	Livestock Grazing	No grazing occurs in this area	Jordan Davis	9/15/15
NI	Rangeland Health Standards		Jordan Davis	9/15/15
NI	Vegetation Excluding USFW Designated Species		Jordan Davis	9/15/15
NI	Woodland / Forestry		Jordan Davis	9/15/15
NI	Geology / Mineral Resources/Energy Production		David Pals	9/15/15
NI	Lands/Access	Subject to valid existing rights	Jan Denney	9/15/15

**FINAL REVIEW:**

Reviewer Title	Signature	Date	Comments
Environmental Coordinator	<i>KC Stevens</i>	10/9/15	
Authorized Officer	<i>Beth Rand</i>	10/9/15	



Proposed location for new double wide vault toilet

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
AND  
DECISION RECORD**

***Powerdam Toilet Installation  
DOI BLM Y010 2015 0241 EA***

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached environmental assessment, and considering the significance criteria in 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that the action will not have a significant effect on the human environment. An environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

**Decision:**

It is my decision to authorize the installation of a toilet at the Powerdam Recreation Site as described in the Proposed Action of DOI BLM Y010 2015 0241 EA. The decision also amends the Mill Creek Management Plan to include the installation of toilet facilities at the Powerdam location.

**Summary of the Selected Alternative:**

The Powerdam, a recreation site within the South Moab Special Recreation Management Area, has seen an increase in use in the past several years. There is a need to provide toilet facilities.

**Rationale for the Decision:**

The addition of the toilet is in conformance with the 2008 Moab Resource Management Plan, which calls for the BLM to “manage the Mill Creek Power Dam hiking trailhead”. The toilet will improve health and human safety at this popular recreation destination, and the slightly enlarged parking area will provide for additional vehicles and prevent resource damage by uncontrolled parking along the entrance road. No public comment was received on the proposal.



Beth Ransel  
Moab Field Office Manager

10/13/15

Date of signature