

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT****Wenatchee Field Office
915 North Walla Walla Avenue
Wenatchee, Washington 98801****SCOPING/INFORMATION NOTICE
Gillespie Ranch LLC Range Improvement
Environmental Assessment****Introduction**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to implement a new range improvement project on BLM grazing allotment 02861. The proposed range improvement was developed for the lessee by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) under the 2014 farm bill Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The purpose of the proposal is to improve livestock utilization patterns on the allotment. The proposed improvement consists of a water development to provide water for livestock in areas unused by livestock due to the lack of water, and the rerouting of an existing fence to aid in livestock management once the water development is installed.

Two alternatives are under consideration at this time: Proposed Action and No Action. Under the proposed action, the BLM would authorize installation of the water development and rerouting of an existing fence. Under the no action alternative, the BLM would not authorize a new range improvement project and the allotment would continue to be grazed without the new water development or fence rerouting.

The objective of this scoping notice is to inform interested and potentially affected parties of the preliminary proposal and to solicit public comments. Federal actions must be analyzed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to determine potential environmental consequences. Comments we receive in response to this solicitation will be used to identify issues related to the proposed action.

Project Area Description

Proposed project activities would be conducted on BLM-administered lands in grazing allotment 02861 located in Okanogan County, Washington. The project area is approximately 3 miles southwest of Okanogan, in Sections 23 and 26 of Township 33 North., Range 25 East (see Map 1). The allotment consists of 560 acres of BLM-administered lands and 310 acres of private land. The current authorization is for 112 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) allowing cattle grazing from April 1st to October 30th. The lessee grazes BLM-administered land in concert with private land.



Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to respond to a request to authorize a new range improvement in grazing allotment 02861. The lessee has applied for funding for the range improvement from the NRCS. The lessee has been approved for this funding pending the results of this environmental assessment (EA).

The need for the action arises from the BLM's requirement to respond to external requests for range improvements. The BLM is mandated to cooperate with state, county, and federal agencies to achieve objectives to improve grazing management on BLM-administered land (CFR 4120-5.1).

Proposed Action

The proposed range improvement project consists of two elements; the water development and changes to fencing. These improvements are described in detail below and illustrated on Map 2.

The proposed water development includes approximately 3,550 feet of 1¼-inch high density polyethylene pipe buried to a depth of 3 feet in a trench approximately 18 inches wide. Using a tracklayer cat to install the pipe will reduce the disturbance by lifting the soil, laying the pipe, and placing the soil back in place. This will minimize disturbance to the vegetation and reduce the potential for invasive species establishment. The water development also includes installation of two 1,000-gallon water troughs on BLM land, and one buried cistern along the pipeline at approximately 1,120 foot intervals. The two troughs will be placed on leveled pads 30 feet wide by 30 feet long with a disturbance depth of 3 feet. The troughs will be anchored with wood posts, and include wildlife escape ramps. A 1,700-gallon storage tank will be buried into the hillside at the end of the pipeline to store water for when the pump is shut off. The area of disturbance for installation of the cistern will be an area of 10 feet by 12 feet with a depth disturbance of 6 feet.

The change to the existing fence is twofold; a new fence will be installed and portions of the existing boundary fence will be removed. The new fence will consist of 6- to 7-foot steel T-posts spaced at 16 to 20-foot intervals. The 1,100-foot four strand wire fence, three barbed and one smooth, will be built with the following parameters. Three strands of barb wire will be placed at 42, 30, and 22 inches from the ground. The second strand of barb wire must be at least 12 inches from the top wire to allow enough space for deer to move through without injury. The one smooth wire will be placed at least 16 inches from the ground to allow fawns to move under the fence without injury (H-1741-1). Once this fence is built, 850 feet of existing fence will be removed.

The total area of impact associated with the construction of this proposed project is approximately 23 acres.

Public Input Needed

The BLM is seeking input on this proposal. Please submit comments on the proposed action to the address noted below. Responses should be postmarked or received (electronic) by **March 4th, 2016**. Comments will be most useful if they identify issues and/or concerns with the implementation of the proposed action.

Please send electronic comments to Linda Coates-Markle at: BLM_OR_WN_Mail@blm.gov with “Gillespie Ranch LLC Range Improvement EA” in the subject line.

Please send comments to: Linda Coates-Markle, BLM-Wenatchee Field Office, Attn: Gillespie Ranch LLC Range Improvement EA, 915 Walla Walla Ave Wenatchee, WA 98801.

For all comments submitted, please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. If the latter, please identify the organization you are representing.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, please 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.

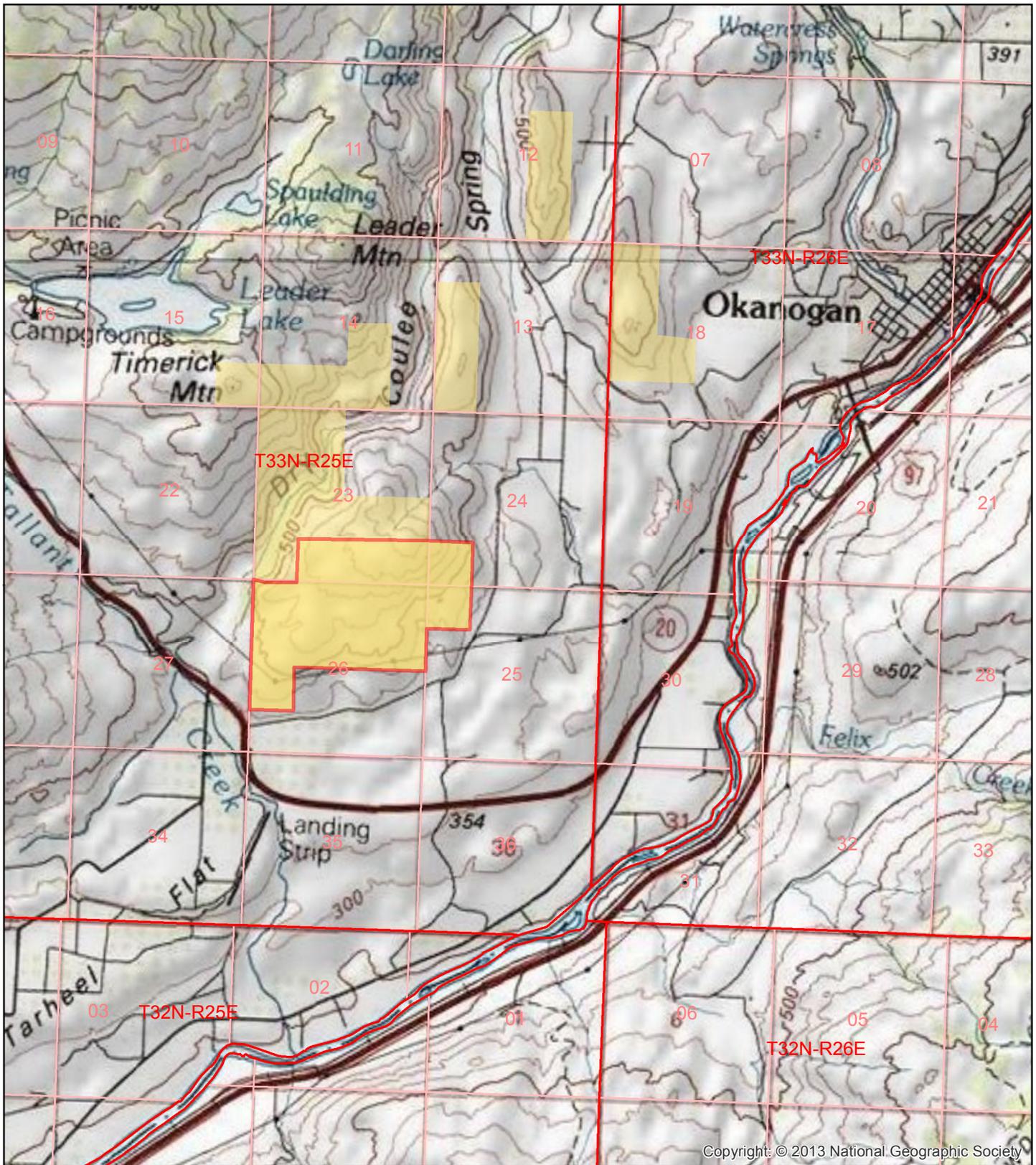
If you have any questions regarding the proposed action please contact Angela Link, Rangeland Management Specialist, at 509-665-2115 or alink@blm.gov.

Enclosures:

Project Area Maps

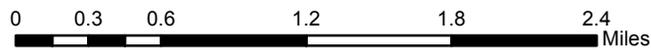
Gillespie Ranch LLC Range Improvement EA Map 1

DOI-BLM-ORWA-W020-2016-0005-EA



Legend

- BLM Grazing Allotment 02861
- Township
- Bureau of Land Management



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

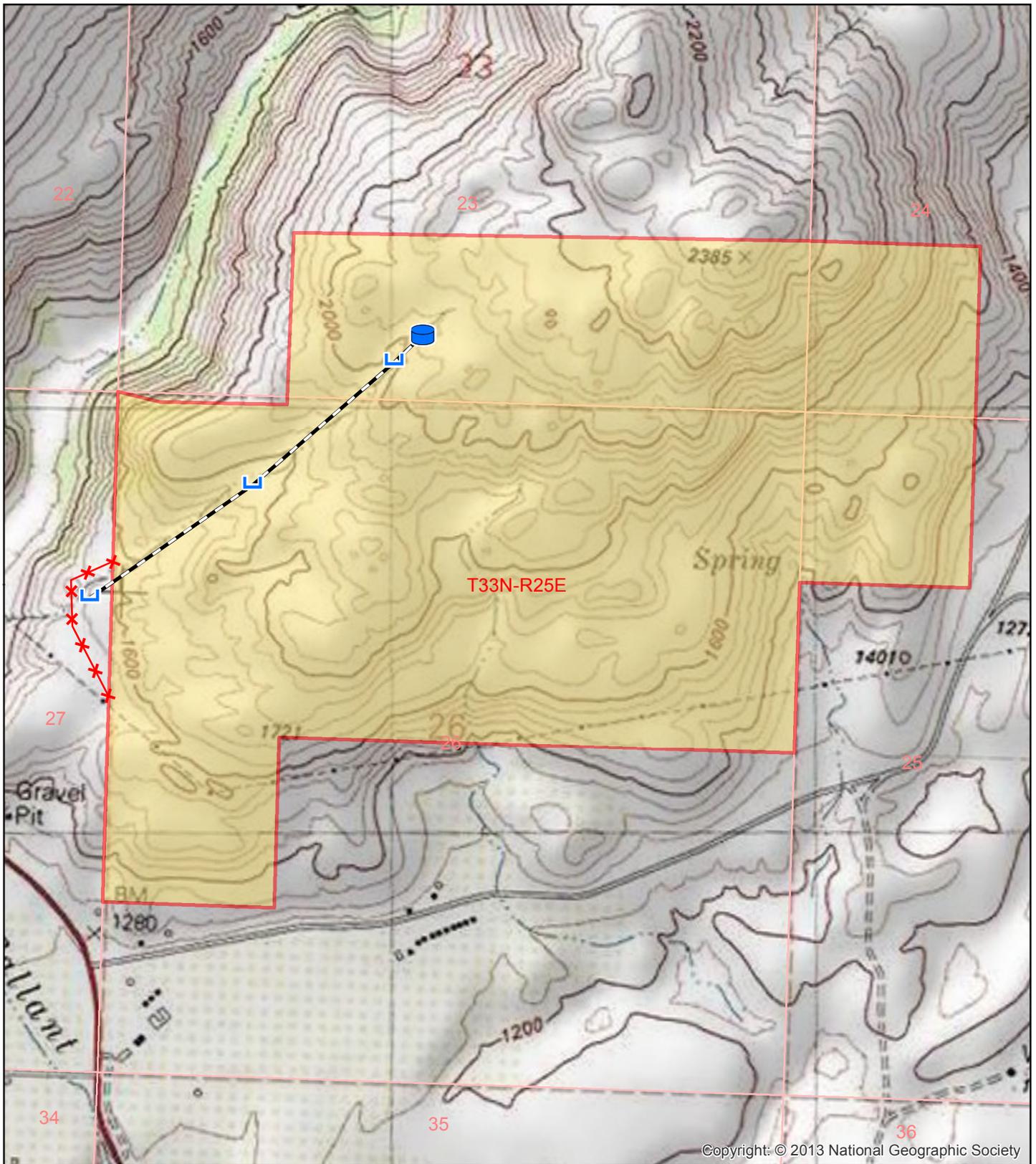


January 25, 2016



Gillespie Ranch LLC Range Improvement EA Map 2

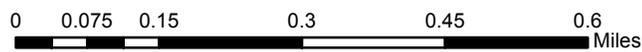
DOI-BLM-ORWA-W020-2016-0005-EA



Copyright: © 2013 National Geographic Society

Legend

- 2861 Storage Tank
- 2861 Trough sites
- 2961_Pipeline
- 2861_Fence reroute
- BLM Grazing Allotment 02861
- Township



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

January 25, 2016

