

BUREAU OF LAND MANGEMENT IDAHO FALLS DISTRICT
CANYON CREEK-HAWLEY CREEK HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT
SALMON FIELD OFFICE

This information package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposal to grant rights-of-way (ROWs) and improve wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat in accordance with the 1987 Lemhi Resource Management Plan, as amended.

The Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek Habitat Restoration Project is a partnership project between the BLM Salmon Field Office (SFO), the Idaho State Office of Species Conservation-Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program (OSC-USBWP), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District (LSWCD), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), McFarland Livestock Company (MLC), and Leadore Land Partners (LLP) to benefit Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and Columbia River bull trout as well as resident redband/rainbow trout and BLM sensitive westslope cutthroat trout.

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 2016. 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.

Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek are tributaries to the Lemhi River. The hydrology of these streams has changed dramatically since the mid-1840s because of diversions that resulted in lack of stream connectivity to the floodplain and the Lemhi River. Most of the surface water is diverted from these Lemhi River tributaries for flood and sprinkler irrigation during the irrigation season.

The Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek partnership actions are focused on the restoration of the historical migratory corridors between the Lemhi River and quality habitat on public land upstream of the Lemhi-Hawley Creek-01 (LHaC-01), Lemhi-Hawley Creek-02 (LHaC-02), and Lemhi-Canyon Creek-03 (LCC-03) diversions for Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout by:

(1) Increasing water quantity and perennial flow in Hawley and Canyon creeks below the LHaC-01, LHaC-02, and LCC-03 diversions;

- (2) Eliminating entrainment and mortality of fish in the irrigation ditches and the LHaC-02 bubbler;
- (3) Reducing the potential for fish stranding and mortality caused by rapid flow fluctuations that occur during irrigation operations;
- (4) Improving water quality; and
- (5) Restoring wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat quality, quantity, and complexity.

Purpose and Need for Action

The need for action is established by the 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) direction to respond to the right-of-way (ROW) requests and to grant ROWs to qualified individuals and to improve fisheries habitat in the area of the ROW. The purpose of the action is to grant a ROW to the applicants and to restore wetlands, riparian, and aquatic habitat quality, quantity, and complexity.

This project is part of a comprehensive partnership plan to reduce the cumulative effects of past and present actions that continue to prevent anadromous access to these streams and adversely impact resident fish populations and habitats, designated Chinook salmon critical habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat in these watersheds.

Existing Condition

The Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek watersheds have potential to provide high quality habitat for spawning, migration, and/or rearing Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout as well as resident redband/rainbow trout, and westslope cutthroat trout. The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) instream flow assessments for Canyon and Hawley creeks concluded the primary limiting factors for fisheries in these tributaries are flow, summer water temperatures, and sedimentation. The corresponding loss of riparian vegetation is another significant limiting factor in these systems.

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) 2013 Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Addendum and 5-Year Review delisted the Canyon Creek source to diversion assessment unit from Category 5 for combined biota/habitat bioassessments and listed it in Category 4a for *E. coli* and in Category 4c for low flow alterations. The 2013 report also recommended Lower Hawley Creek, from the LHaC-03 diversion in the canyon to the confluence with Eighteenmile Creek for listing as Category 4c: impaired for low flow alterations.

In addition, the LHaC-01, LHaC-02, and LCC-03 diversion structures and dewatering are fish passage barriers. Entrainment into the unscreened ditches and bubblers, and the stranding that occurs when the streams are rapidly dewatered due to flow fluctuations cause fish mortality.

Proposed Action

1. Construction of Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek instream rock A-weir diversion structures and rock grade control structures at the LLC-03 and LHaC-02 PODs;
2. Installation of two temporary 36-inch diameter culverts on Hawley Creek in the Leadville Allotment for a low water vehicle ford to facilitate pipeline construction;
3. Issuance of two ROWs to IDFG for the Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek fish screen systems and use of an existing two-track road that will be reconstructed to access the Canyon Creek headworks, as well as the new access road from the Canyon Creek headworks to the end of the fish screen system for maintenance;
4. Issuance of a ROW to LLP for the portion of the LLP LHaC-02 pipeline outside of the existing ROW;
5. Restoration and construction of the off-channel livestock water projects called Trouble Spring and Hatch Pipeline in the Upper and Lower pastures of the Leadville Allotment;
6. Construction of Hawley Creek beaver dam analog structures on public land managed by the SFO; and
7. Construction of bioengineered encapsulated soil lifts to reconstruct the over-widened channel at the Hawley Creek-Rocky Canyon ford.

While not part of the BLM proposed action, we understand that the partner agencies would also install closed pipeline systems at both locations, within existing ROWs for the transport of irrigation water. We also understand that the partners would remove the arch culverts that were used as Canyon Creek LLP pivot bridges which would facilitate sediment transport. The bubbler on the MLC LHaC-02 pipeline would be removed when the new pipelines are constructed

The diversion rates would be limited by the pipelines, fish screen designs, and irrigation requirements of the sprinkler systems so that additional water could not be diverted. Any time the new closed systems are closed off, the water would return immediately to the natural stream.

Preliminary Issues

Sediment: Fine sediment has accumulated behind the Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek diversion check structures. Downstream transport of sediment following removal of the old diversion check structures, construction of the new rock A-weir diversion and rock grade control structures, and the other construction activities are potential short-term impacts on water quality, fishes, and aquatic habitat.

Vegetation: The construction activities are potential short-term impacts on riparian and upland vegetation.

Noxious and Invasive Weeds: Ground disturbance in the construction sites are potential sites for noxious and invasive weed expansion or establishment.

Greater Sage-Grouse: Hawley Creek is greater sage-grouse priority habitat and focal area. The construction activities and the issuance of a ROW for construction of the FLPMA portion of the LLP LHaC-02 pipeline are potential impacts on sage-grouse and sage-grouse habitat.

Cultural Resources: Construction of the Canyon Creek and Hawley Creek irrigation pipelines, fish screen systems, access roads, and temporary fish and water by-pass systems have potential to impact cultural resources.

Decision to be Made

The BLM SFO Field Manager is the authorized officer responsible for the decisions regarding management of public lands managed by the BLM within the project area. The EA will provide information for the authorized officer to make an informed decision. Based on the results of the NEPA analysis, the authorized officer will issue a determination of the significance of the environmental effects and whether an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be required.

If the authorized officer determines that it is not necessary to prepare an EIS, the EA will provide information for the authorized officer to make an informed decision whether to grant the ROWs and authorize the other components of the Proposed Action above, a modified Proposed Action based on scoping comments and internal review or to choose the No Action alternative.

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 August 22, 2016 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. Comments sent electronically should be sent to llittlejohn@blm.gov with 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.

The primary contact for questions and comments for this analysis is Lucy Littlejohn, SFO Fish Biologist, (208) 756-5423.