

Finding of No Significant Impact
Wilderness In-Holding Acquisitions - Wilderness Land Trust
Environmental Assessment: DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA
IDI-36723; IDI-36808; and IDI-36859

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (CEQ) for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). I have determined the proposed action analyzed in EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA will not constitute a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. This finding was made by considering both the context and intensity of the potential effects, as described in the EA, using the following factors defining significance:

(1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA documents that the proposed action will make public land management more efficient and cost effective, and will benefit vegetation, soils, and wildlife by precluding impacts associated with potential private development. The private properties lie within and/or adjacent to the Little Jacks Creek and North Fork Owyhee Wilderness Areas, and are surrounded by public land. Future residential or commercial development of the private land would increase public use of the areas, which could affect the surrounding public lands.

(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) of the parcels found that all of the parcels had historically been used principally for livestock grazing. The site inspection of Parcel 2 (Anchustegui property) noted the presence of a small, dilapidated two-room house, and two smaller dilapidated outbuildings, as well as accumulated household refuse and other artifacts, including a truck and assorted small farming-related equipment/implements. Although nothing specific was substantiated during the field inspection, the investigator pointed out that, because of its age, the house could potentially contain asbestos and/or lead-based paint. Mr. Anchustegui agreed to remove the three buildings prior to BLM's acquisition, including the accumulated refuse, the truck and equipment, and any other unacceptable articles or substances. A follow-up site visit will ensure that appropriate actions have occurred before title closing.

No other potential public health and safety issues were identified in the EA.

(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 private lands lie within and/or immediately adjacent to the Little Jacks Creek and North Fork Owyhee Wilderness Areas and are surrounded by public land. Acquisition of

the private land would consolidate public land ownership. No cultural resources, parklands, or prime farmlands are known within the boundaries of the private land. Two parcels contain riparian areas along Shoofly Creek, and one parcel contains a segment of the wild and scenic North Fork Owyhee River designated as “recreational.”

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

There is no known opposition to the proposed acquisition of wilderness in-holdings. These parcels were specifically identified for acquisition by the Owyhee Initiative Partnership, and are referenced in the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, which designated the affected wilderness areas. The EA identified no controversy concerning effects on the quality of the human environment.

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

The proposed acquisition involves no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks. The EA identified potential environment effects if the private lands were developed for residential or commercial purposes. The actual effects would depend on the type and level of development.

(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 acquisitions are a discretionary action on the part of BLM, and do not establish a precedent or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA identified no known significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effects associated with implementation of the proposed action.

(8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA showed that the acquisition would cause no adverse effects to natural, scientific, cultural or historic resources. The acquisition would, however, have the positive effect of precluding potential indirect adverse effects of future development of the private land.

(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 Endangered Species Act of 1973.

EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA identified no threatened or endangered species or their habitat that would be affected by the acquisition.

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

The proposed action analyzed in EA #DOI-BLM-ID-B000-2010-0024-EA is consistent and compatible with all known Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.

/s/ Aden L. Seidlitz
District Manager
Date: September 10, 2010