



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

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition

DOI-BLM-WY-P060-2022-0057-EA

Finding of No Significant Impact

June 2023



Casper Field Office
2987 Prospector Drive
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1300 3rd Street
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BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-WY-P060-2022-0057-EA) which analyzed the effects of acquiring private lands by the BLM through an acquisition. On May 18, 2022, a decision record and finding of no significant impact were signed by the BLM authorized officers (for the Casper and Rawlins Field Offices) for the Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition EA. On June 17, 2022, the State of Wyoming appealed the decision to the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Hearings and Appeals, Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). Based on BLM's recommendation, on October 21, 2022, the IBLA issued an order to set aside and remand the BLM's decision, so that the BLM can "reevaluate its May 18, 2022, decision, provide additional opportunities for public notice and comment, and supplement its environmental analysis to better address issues raised by the Appellant in the Statement of Reasons."

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The selected alternative is to implement Alternative B, the Proposed Action to acquire the Marton Ranch parcel.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA, and all other information available to us, it is our determination that: (1a) the implementation of the selected alternative will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in Casper Resource Management Plan (Casper RMP), December 2007, or amendments; (1b) the implementation of the selected alternative will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in Rawlins Resource Management Plan (Rawlins RMP), December 2008, or amendments; (3) the selected alternative is in conformance with the referenced Resource Management Plans; and (4) the selected alternative does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Rationale

The primary purpose for conducting an EA is to determine whether or not a proposed action will have a significant impact on the human environment and therefore will require the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). As defined in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1501.6, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is a document that briefly presents the reasons why an action will not have a significant effect on the human environment.

The following have been considered in evaluating the degree of effects for this proposal (40 CFR 1501.3 (b)).

1. Effects that are short- and long-term.

Short-term effects were analyzed by the EA and none were found to rise to the level of significance. The long-term effects of acquiring the lands were found to not rise to significance. The transfer of land from one entity to another often is just an administrative exercise. As referenced in the EA, the short- and long-term effects were analyzed in the Casper RMP and Rawlins RMP when those decisions were made to acquire these types of lands.

2. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Impacts associated with the acquisition, although beneficial would not rise to significance. The transfer of lands from one entity to another is administrative in nature and impacts are usually quite low. In addition to the impacts, the EA also demonstrates conformance with the Casper RMP and Rawlins RMP, while not causing appreciable impacts that rise to the level of significance as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality. Furthermore, the referenced RMPs analyzed these impacts when those decisions were made which included acquisition of these lands.

3. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

Acquisitions are inherently administrative exercises in which lands are transferred from one entity to another, in this case into Federal ownership. As such, the acquisition will not affect public health and safety to a great degree if any.

4. The affected environment or setting of the geographic area.

The lands acquired are high desert scrub with streams and wetlands running through them and being bounded on the northwest by the North Platte River. The environment and geographic setting were analyzed in the EA. Furthermore, the EA incorporated by reference the analysis from both RMPs in analyzing the degrees of effects to these two key issues and specifically to acquiring lands in these areas. The affected environment and geographic area will not be impacted to any level of significance.

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

The EA analyzed all Federal laws and compared State and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Furthermore, the EA was reviewed by local and State entities and the public at large for consistency as well. None of the comments raised or were found to impact these types of laws or requirements.

Marton Ranch LWCF Land Acquisition FONSI

Authorized Officer
Casper Field Manager

Date

Authorized Officer
Rawlins Field Manager

Date