

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Categorical Exclusion
for
Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range
Boundary Cattle Guard**

Grand Junction Field Office
2815 H Road
Grand Junction, Colorado 81506

DOI-BLM-CO-G010-2023-0025-CX

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The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the stewardship of our public lands. It is committed to manage, protect, and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people for all times. Management is based on the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield of our nation's resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources include recreation, rangelands, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness, air, and scenic, scientific, and cultural values.

INTRODUCTION:

Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range (LBCWHR) – Main Canyon Cattle Guard

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) is proposing to install one 1 sixteen-foot cattle guard as part of V2/10 Rd. This cattle guard will tie into the existing drift fence and will provide the northern boundary that deters wild horses from moving onto other adjacent cattle allotments (Map 1). The cattle guard would be installed on a two-track dirt road open to all modes of transportation under the 2015 RMP Grand Junction Field Office Travel Management Plan. Currently, the road has no movement restriction allowing for wild horses to leave the horse range. The cattle guard would provide a barrier and assist in restricting wild horse movement outside the LBCWHR.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: S17, T9S, R99W

APPLICANT: BLM

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposed cattle guard location would be located on V2/10 Road. The cattle guard would tie into the adjacent cliff where the low water gap fence is in Main Canyon. To the southwest the cattle guard would tie into an existing drift fence which ties into natural barriers.

Cattle guards require excavation within the roadway to install and usually contain a concrete or timber foundation. Wings that attach the cattle guard to the existing fence are used to make the sides impassible by livestock. Specific guidance can be found in the technical reference, “Fencing” (BLM Manual Handbook H-1741-1). These roads are maintained as needed. A wire gate would be installed adjacent to the cattle guard wide enough to move livestock/horses and tie into the existing drift fence. Cattle guards require regular maintenance and cleaning. Volunteer groups and the BLM will inspect the cattle guard and report issues before maintenance can be performed. The cattle guard would be considered a new Range Improvement Project and is subject to routine inspection.

The following design features, including standard operating procedures and best management practices from Appendix H, and stipulations in Appendix B in the GJFO RMP are included as part of the proposed action to help reduce potential impacts associated with this project:

- **WH-5:** Any new facilities shall be designed to avoid injury to horses or fenced to prevent wild horse access.
- **WH-6:** Require rebar to be welded between the rails of cattle guards if the cattle guard or similar device is to be installed in or near herd management areas to decrease the risk of wild horse and/or burro entrapment.

- **WH-7:** All new or reconstructed fences on the perimeter of the wild horse range will be comprised of materials (e.g., wooden poles and smooth wire) that would reduce injury to wild horses.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR §1610.5, BLM §1617.3) the following plans:

Name of Plan: Grand Junction Field Office Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved September 15, 2015, amended by the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) approved March 14, 2019.

Date Approved: August, 2015

Decision Number/Page: **WHS-MA-09**, Page 62

Decision Language: **WHS-MA-09:** Maintain and construct range improvements to ensure that the horses are confined to the LBCWHR and have adequate water and forage.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW:

The proposed action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, G (2), which allows “Installation of routine signs, markers, ditches, culverts, waterbars, gates, or cattle guards on/or adjacent to roads and trails identified in any land use or transportation plan, or eligible for incorporation in such a plan.”

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

There are no extraordinary circumstances having effects, which may significantly affect the environment. I considered the following resource conditions in determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warranted further analysis and documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (516 Departmental Manual (DM) 2, Appendix 2):

1. Have significant impact on public health and safety.

No. The proposed action is not expected to impact public health and safety because the proposed cattle guard will occur on preexisting rights-of-way and will have minimal disturbance and fugitive dust.

2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation, or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, national monuments, migratory birds, and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

No Historic and Cultural Resources are known to be at the site of the proposed action.

Wilderness Characteristics: There are no wilderness areas or lands found to possess wilderness characteristics in the proposed project area.

Migratory Birds: Migratory birds will not be impacted by installation of the cattle guard. There will be no removal of vegetation.

Through review of the proposed action, BLM did not identify any significant impacts on natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation, or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, national monuments, migratory birds, and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

No. The impacts from the construction of a cattle guard in the existing footprint of a roadway is minimal and will ultimately restrict wild horse movement from occurring off the wild horse range.

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

No. Wild horse use is an ongoing activity within these allotments and poses no unique or unknown risks. Cattle guards have long been used in the restriction of wild horse movement from the wild horse range and pose no unique or unknown risks.

5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

No. The Proposed Action would not establish a precedent for future actions. It is similar to decisions the BLM has made regarding the LBCWHR. The Proposed Action is within the scope and in conformance with the 2015 GJFO Resource Management Plan. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

6. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

No. This is a stand-alone project. There are no projects with significant environmental impacts known to BLM that would result directly or indirectly from implementation of this project.

7. Have adverse effects on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

No. There are no sites that have been found that are listed on or eligible for listing to the NRHP within the area of the project.

8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

No. Cattle guards have the potential to impede wildlife movement. Vegetation clearing is not expected to be required for this project therefore migratory bird-timing limitations do not apply.

9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

No. The Proposed Action complies with other Federal, State, or local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

No. This action is located in a remote area away from any low income or minority populations and therefore would not have any effects on these populations.

11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

No. The proposed cattle guard would not impact Tribal or Native American access. No religious concerns regarding the installation of cattle guard in these locations are known to the agency.

12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

No. This project is designed and follows best management practices to minimize disturbance to avoid new infestation of noxious weeds. The field office routinely treats weed infestations when they are found; therefore, BLM does not expect the project to contribute to invasive species infestation. Only equipment clean of seeds and soil will be utilized for construction.

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Area of Responsibility</u>
Lynae Rogers	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Wild Horses
Erin Kowalski	Range Management Specialist	Range, Vegetation, Invasive, Non-Native Species, Vegetation
Scott Hall	Realty Specialist	Realty, Rights-Of-Way
Isaac Pittman	Assistant Field Manager	Range and Resources Team, NEPA review

NAME OF PREPARER: Lynae Rogers

NAME OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:

DATE:

COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 DM 11.9, G (2). This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

This signed Determination is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the Decision Document, grant, permit, or other authorization based on this CX is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.

Field Manager
Grand Junction Field Office

Date

ATTACHMENT: Location - Proposed Cattle Guard

