

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**
Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey
National Conservation Area
3948 Development Ave.
Boise, ID 83705

Finding of No Significant Impact

**Mountain Home Air Force Base
Sustainable Water Supply Project
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2017-002-EA**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have determined that Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, as described in Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-ID-B011-2017-002-EA, will not have any significant impact, individually or cumulatively, on the quality of the human environment. Because there would not be any significant impact, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

In making this determination, I considered the following factors:

Context

The Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) is located in southwestern Idaho, comprising more than 483,000 acres, including portions of Ada, Canyon, Elmore, and Owyhee counties, and extending 81 miles along the Snake River. The NCA was designated in 1993 with the enactment of Public Law (PL) 103-64, which stated that the NCA was established and is managed to provide for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats and the natural and environmental resources and values associated therewith, and of the scientific cultural, and educational resources and values of the public lands in the conservation area.

The NCA contains the greatest concentration of nesting raptors in North America. Approximately 700 raptor pairs, representing sixteen raptor species, nest in the NCA every spring. Eight other raptor species use the area during migrations and in the winter. Primary species include eagles, falcons, hawks, and owls. The area is a unique habitat for these species because the cliffs of the Snake River Canyon provide ideal nesting sites, while the adjacent upland plateau supports unusually large populations of small mammal prey species. The NCA has one of the highest densities of ground squirrels ever records, with the Piute ground squirrel serving as a critical food source during late winter, spring, and early summer for many raptor species.

Public activities and uses that existed when the NCA was designated are allowed to continue to the extent that they are compatible with the purposes for which the NCA was established. This includes the Orchard Combat Training Center, used by the Idaho Army National Guard for military training since 1953. In addition, the NCA is used for livestock grazing, various recreational activities, and numerous rights-of-way, including large transmission lines.

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27 and incorporated into resources and issues considered (includes supplemental authorities Appendix 1 H-1790-1) and supplemental Instruction Memorandum, Acts, regulations and Executive Orders.

The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this proposal:

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1. The activities described in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, do not include any significant beneficial or adverse impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)).

The proposed action would impact resources as described in the EA. Best management practices to reduce impacts to paleontological resources, cultural resources, vegetation, wildlife, livestock grazing, soil, public health and safety, and air resources were incorporated in the design of the action alternatives. None of the environmental effects discussed in detail in the EA and associated appendices are considered significant.

2. The activities included in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, would not significantly affect public health or safety (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)).

Best management practices incorporated into Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, include the following:

- The hauling of equipment and materials on public roads would comply with all Department of Transportation regulations.
- No toxic substances would be stored or used within the proposed project area.
- The proponent would have monitors present during construction, and any accidents involving persons or property would immediately be reported to the BLM and the USAF.
- The proponent would notify the public of potential hazards by posting signage, as necessary.

Impacts to public health and safety are described in Section 3.12 of the EA.

3. Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, would not significantly affect any 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 (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)).

The activities proposed under Alternative C would occur within a congressionally designated area, the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA. Impacts to the values for which the NCA was designated are described in Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.7. None of the impacts would significantly alter the unique characteristics associated with those values.

4. The activities described in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, do not involve effects on the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)).

Impacts associated with the construction of a water pipeline are well known as this is a common activity on BLM-managed lands.

5. The activities described in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, do not involve effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)).

Impacts associated with the construction of a pipeline are well known as this is a common activity on BLM-managed lands.

6. The decision to implement Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)).

7. The effects of Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, would not be significant, individually or cumulatively, when considered with the effects of other actions (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)).

The interdisciplinary team evaluated the possible actions in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. Significant cumulative effects are not predicted. A complete disclosure of the effects of the project is contained in Chapter 3 of the EA.

8. The activities described in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, will not adversely affect or cause loss or destruction to scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)).

Cultural resource record searches were conducted in February of 2016 and March of 2017. Field surveys were completed in March 2017. No cultural resources eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties were identified in the Area of Potential Effect for the Proposed Action or BLM Preferred Alternative. Impacts to cultural resources are described in Section 3.7 of the EA.

Consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office was completed in July 2017. Consultation with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes was initiated in Spring 2017. Information regarding these consultations can be found in Section 4.1.1. of the EA.

9. The activities proposed in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, are not likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)).

Slickspot peppergrass is a small annual or biennial species with small white flowers. While known to occur in the region, field surveys conducted on March 22, 2017, determined that neither specimens nor suitable habitat for this species occurs within the project area. Slickspot peppergrass is discussed in Section 1.6.5. of the EA.

10. The activities proposed in Alternative C, the BLM Preferred Alternative, will not threaten any violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)).

The project does not violate any known federal, state, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. In addition, the project is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

REFERENCES

BLM. 2008. *National Environmental Policy Handbook. H-1790-1*. Bureau of Land Management. National Environmental Policy Act Program.

APPROVED:

Amanda Hoffman
Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey
National Conservation Area Manager

Date