



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Winnemucca Field Office
5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445



In Reply Refer To:

2800
N-75253
(NV023-23)

Dear Interested Party,

Enclosed is the environmental assessment (EA) analyzing impacts from the proposed road right-of-way (R/W) to access private property. The R/W would include an existing road and new road construction. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a federal agency determine if the proposed federal action would result in significant impacts to the human environment.

Should you have any comments on the EA's substance or on procedure, please provide your written comments to us by close of business, 4:30 PM Pacific Time, January 15, 2003. They will be reviewed by the BLM specialists. Unless the comment(s) reshape the analysis to require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), a Findings of No Significant Impacts to the Human Environment (FONSI) will be issued with the Decision. Please send your written comments to our address found in the above letterhead; include N-75253 in the address, and send to the attention of M. Lynn Trost.

A federal action can be appealed after the Decision is signed. You will automatically receive a copy having provided written comments. If you do not provide comments but want to be advised of the signing, please notify us by January 15, 2003 that you request Standing.

If we can be of any assistance, please call M. Lynn Trost, Realty Specialist, at (775) 623-1500.

Sincerely,

Colin P. Christensen
Assistant Field Manager
Nonrenewable Resources

2800
N-75253
(NV-023.23)

UDOVCH ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY N-75253
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
EA: NV-020-04-06

LOCATION: "Anderson Garden", T. 37 N., R. 40 E., Sec. 12: SW¹/₄NE¹/₄, N¹/₂NW¹/₄,
SE¹/₄NW¹/₄, E¹/₂SE¹/₄SW¹/₄NE¹/₄, E¹/₂NW¹/₄SE¹/₄, E¹/₂SW¹/₄SE¹/₄, N¹/₂SE¹/₄SE¹/₄. MDM, NV

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) NUMBER: NV-020-04-06

CASE FILE (SERIAL NUMBER): N-75253

APPLICANT: Joseph Udovch

BLM OFFICE PREPARING THE EA: Winnemucca Field Office
5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, NV 89445

DATE OF PREPARATION: December 9, 2003

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WINNEMUCCA FIELD OFFICE
NV-020-03-XX

UDOVCH ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY N-75253
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. PURPOSE AND NEED

Mr. Joseph Udovch has applied for a right-of-way on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Regulations require an individual to obtain an authorized right-of-way (R/W) from BLM should one want to improve, maintain, or construct a road on public lands, or use public land in a capacity which is not casual use (43 CFR 2800 and 2801) (BLM Manual 2801 Rel. 2-263). According to the application, the proposed road is for Mr. Udovch's year-round personal need to access his private land, which lays to the east of the proposed route. His land is located in T. 37 N., R. 44 E., Section 7, MDM. To achieve year-round access, a constructed and maintained road would be necessary, and therefore a R/W would be required. See the attached map for the location. The proposed R/W includes an existing gravel road and additional footage of new construction.

II. RELATIONSHIP TO PLANNING

A. The Proposed Action analyzed in this EA is in conformance with the Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (MFP), BLM, 1982.

Objective L5.0 states: "To allocate public lands for utility corridor purposes".

MFP III 3-1 states in part: "Insure legal access, where consistent with the management plans on all Bureau roads to public lands in the Paradise-Denio Resource Area".

B. The Proposed Action would be authorized under the authority of Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976, as amended, through September 1999, Public Law 94-579, Sec 303, (43 USC 1733); Sec. 501 (43 U.S.C. 1761)(a)(5, 6, & 7), (b)(1); Sec. 503 (43 U.S.C. 1763); Sec. 504 (43 U.S.C. 1764); Sec. 505 (43 U.S.C. 1765); and Sec. 506 (43 U.S.C. 1766).

C. The Proposed Action analyzed in this EA would be in conformance and consistent with Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible.

III. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

1. Soils: erosion/sediment could impact private lands directly below the newly constructed road. Storm events have the potential for flood waters to plug or wash out culverts, depositing sediment on the adjacent private land. Restricting the natural flow of the drainage channels should be avoided.
2. Water Resources: There is a potential for water related erosion due to road design parameters and the plugging of culverts (if installed).
3. Invasive, Non-native Species: Non-desirable, invasive, non-native plant species could be brought to the site on equipment or supplies, and quickly establish in disturbed areas.
4. Visual Resource Management: Selection of a route prominent from the Eden Valley County Road could be a visual intrusion.
5. Recreation Resources: A permanent road could inhibit the public lands from recreational use.

IV. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. THE PREFERRED ACTION ALTERNATIVE:

The Proposed Action is The Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is to issue a road R/W to the applicant, Joseph Udovch, at the approximate location described in his application. The R/W is for the road's prism which includes the driving surface, shoulders, cuts/fill, drainage and turn-outs as applicable. The R/W would encompass approximately 6.95 acres of public land.

The proposed road R/W includes authorizing an existing gravel road and its associated short cut. The short cut is 307 feet long. The existing gravel road is 3, 586 feet long. These are referred to as segment "a" in the subsequent analysis.

The proposed R/W would also authorize new road construction entailing approximately 3,400 feet in length. Approximately 1,900 feet would be constructed within an existing two-track road. It is referred to as segment "b" in the subsequent analysis.

The remaining new road construction of approximately 1,500 feet would be located primarily within ground which has not been previously disturbed. It is referred to as segment "c" in the subsequent analysis.

Road construction would be subject to stipulations developed in compliance with BLM Manual 9100. The applicant would be responsible for road maintenance on the existing road and the new road after construction, and restoration features. The road system road could not be improved, reconstructed, modified or realigned without submission of an application, NEPA analysis, and authorization by the BLM.

B. THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE:

Under this alternative, the applicant would not be issued a R/W. The No-Action Alternative would require restoration features to finalize a willful trespass through construction of

unauthorized bridges within the proposed R/W. The trespass was formalized by the BLM when the bridges were discovered. The restoration would include but is not limited to: the removal of the unauthorized bridges and building materials; scattering the boulders used as support materials; de-compacting the soils including the two-track roads; re-contouring the drainages as needed; reseeding; cultural mitigation as needed; and not using the two-track road's driving footprint.

V. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

1.) PRIVATE EASEMENT AND BLM RIGHT-OF-WAY

The alternative was eliminated. An agreement between the landowners has not been negotiated.

2.) NEW CONSTRUCTED SEGMENT ON BLM

This Alternative would include the existing gravel road and the north-south segment but would continue southward several hundred feet to make a wide arch swinging back onto the applicant's property. This alternative would place the road on higher ground with more topographic relief. The location on BLM was preferable to the location applied for. BLM cannot direct actions on private land, therefore, due to foreseeable impacts on private land which included full bench construction causing steep high wall cuts, greater visual intrusion that would be visible for miles, and potential unacceptable impacts to a spring location, this alternative was not considered further.

3.) PREVIOUS PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERED DESIGN

The applicant submitted a professional engineered alternative. This alternative was dismissed due to the extent of surface disturbance; the road's placement would require a R/W width in excess of 185 feet; and would result in steep 13 foot high cut-banks adjacent to private property.

4.) FENCING THE RIGHT-OF-WAY:

Under this alternative the R/W would be fenced to preclude range cattle from congregating along the access road. The range cattle are authorized under a grazing permit. The alternative was not developed because fencing would keep cattle from accessing nearby historic watering sources. Also, fencing the R/W would create an exclusive use of the road which is precluded under regulations 43 CFR 2801.1-1 (a)(2).

VI. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The proposed road is located at the western base of the Osgood Mountain Range. The surrounding land base is primarily BLM land with intermittent large private holdings. The primary economic base is cattle ranching.

Please refer to the attached map "1" for the proposed road location. The proposed R/W is projected as three segments:

Segment "a": the existing gravel road is approximately 3,586 feet long by 30 feet wide, and a short-cut approximately 307 feet long by 15 feet wide. The primary footage begins at Eden Valley road, and ends fifty feet before private property begins to its east. Total acreage is 2.57 acres. There is an existing R/W authorized to another Holder. Both the applicant and the existing Holder would have authorization on this segment.

Segment "b": the new construction segment runs north-south. It begins by turning off segment "a" and ends where it turns east to become segment "c". It would be approximately 1,900 feet long by 30 feet wide, except for a 60-foot wide R/W to allow for a 90 degree turn. Total acreage is approximately 1.45 acres.

Segment "c": the new construction segment runs east-west. It begins at the terminus of the 90 degree turn and ends at the applicant's private property. It would be approximately 1,500 long and encompasses approximately 2.93 acres based on an 85-foot wide temporary R/W.

The landscape where segment "a" is located is relatively flat. Turning south off segment "a" begins the non-developed BLM lands upon which the new constructed segments "b" and "c" would be located. The new construction area contains ephemeral drainages. The channels carry the ephemeral storm water events associated with the 220-acre watershed within which the road is proposed. The channels begin to the south, at a higher elevation, and channel from the south to the north – toward the proposed road's location. One of these channels breaks into two primary channels which are upward of ten feet deep, and somewhat narrow at the higher elevation. They widen out while remaining deep where segment "c" is proposed. The drainages flow through segment "c" onto the adjacent private land. On the private land, they flatten out and re-enter BLM flowing through segment "b". Here they are shallow drainages, averaging from twelve to eighteen inches deep. The several drainages flowing through segment "c" range from approximately eighteen inches in depth to ten feet in depth.

A heavy rain downpour can result in flash floods creating high flow conditions as experienced in the monsoonal event the summer of 2003. Several small previously non-evident channels were inventoried on segments "b" and "c" soon after the event. The existing vegetation within the channels was flattened by the storm water on the proposed new construction segments, and likely it prevented erosion by creating a protective cover on the soils.

Within the proposed new construction area is a two-track road. It runs adjacent to a boundary fence which parallels the proposed new construction route. The vegetation within the two-track road has been displaced by cross country driving. Segment “b” would be located to include the two-track road. Segment “c” generally would not include the two-track road which is too close to the boundary fence to offer a safe location for a permanent road.

The proposed new construction segments would be classified as a maintenance level 3 type road according to the BLM Roads Manual 9113 because the applicant’s proposed use is for accessing his property, and he is not intending to subdivide. Along the east-west segment, a temporary construction width of 85 feet would facilitate road placement through the deep drainages. Standards would be developed for construction and maintenance.

RESOURCES

RESOURCES NOT PRESENT OF FEDERAL LAND:

The following resources are not present to this federal action or would not be affected by implementing the Proposed Action/Preferred Alternative: Wild Horse and Burro, Paleontologic Resources.

RESOURCES PRESENT ON FEDERAL LAND LISTED ALPHABETICALLY:

Air Quality:

The project is located in an area of arid climate characteristic of the Great Basin. Summers are typically warm and dry with moderately cold winters. Precipitation ranges from approximately 10-15 inches per year. The existing air quality is typical of large undeveloped areas in the western United States and is generally considered good quality. The major contributor to overall air quality is particulate emissions. These emissions include dust from cultivating agricultural fields and vehicular traffic on unpaved roads. Smoke, caused by burning of fields or wild land range fires, may degrade air quality during the spring and summer months.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

The Winnemucca Field Office (WFO) has two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) located within its boundary: the Soldier Meadows-Desert Dace ACEC and the Osgood Mountain Milk-vetch ACEC. The latter is west of the proposed R/W within the Osgood Range. Neither are near the proposed R/W.

Cultural Resources:

Prehistoric use of the area has been seasonal or temporary as evidenced by the sparse use of the landscape. Water sources are the locations of camp sites used during the seasonal round and hunting parties. This is not an environment that would promote permanent habitation sites.

Native American Concerns:

Traditional hunting and gathering areas are associated with traditional tribal territories. Often the preferred or abundant resources lent their names to the territory. In the case of this specific project area, the name does not translate into English. Root crops, yamba, sage bark, willows, and other plant species were gathered. Small and large game were hunted. No known concerns are identified here.

Engineering:

Segment “a” being an existing constructed road, is not a concern. It has been continually maintained by an authorized user other than the applicant, and is in good condition.

The proposed new construction on segment “b” (the north-south segment) is suitable for simple road construction. The ground has a natural slope to the west which facilitates drainage. The existing vegetation acts as a soil stabilizer. The road would be within the existing two-track road.

The proposed new construction segment “c” (the east–west segment) would generally not be recommended for simple road construction due to the numerous wide, deep drainages, and the excavation that would be required to contain them. This location would be considered complex road construction. The road generally would not utilize the existing two-track road. There are four methods to cross the two major drainages located to the immediate west of the applicant’s property: fill, culvert, low water crossing, and bridge.

Noxious Weeds:

Noxious weeds were not observed within the proposed project area.

Range Resources:

The subject BLM land is the Eden Valley Allotment, authorized under the Taylor Grazing Act. The adjacent landowner is the livestock permittee for the allotment. The BLM lands are managed for multiple use. The grazing use and use of the land for a road R/W have traditionally been compatible with the other. Private lands in Nevada come under Nevada's open range law,

which states, the private property owner is responsible to fence the private land to keep the range cattle off his/her private land. The cattle in the allotment have access to graze throughout the permitted area.

The permitted livestock grazing schedule for the Eden Valley allotment is as follows:

| <u>Livestock #</u> | <u>Period of Use</u> | <u>AUMs</u> |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 424 Cattle | 03/01 to 08/15 | 1,429 |
| 424 Cattle | 10/15 to 02/28 | 1,165 |
| 3 Cattle | 03/01 to 02/14 | 35 |

Cattle concentrate at the fence corner shared by the applicant to the east, the BLM to the south, and the adjacent landowner (the permittee) to the north. Two gates are located at this fence corner with one gate being on the north corner that separates the permittee's private land from the BLM. The other gate is on the east corner that separates the applicants land from the BLM. The cattle's water source is a pond on the permittee's private property a short distance north of the east corner. During the time period the cattle are on the allotment, the gate located near the east corner is left open for the cattle to have access to water at the pond. This pond has been a historical watering location for the cattle. The road location proposed by the applicant would be located proximate to the location.

Recreation:

The site is not a developed recreation site, nor are there developed recreation sites within the vicinity of the parcel. Often recreational use is dependent on the available access and the site's location. Primary access to areas locally used for recreation is likely by Eden Valley county road. Hunting has been observed on the federal land to the south of the proposed road's location. Other recreational uses could include but are not limited to photography, hiking, and horseback riding. Recreationists have been observed driving on the existing two-track road discussed in this EA.

Soils:

Soil information is extracted from the Soil Survey of Humboldt County, Nevada, East Part. The R/W is located on soil mapping units: 201 Davey loamy fine sand, 2 to 8 percent slopes. Soil Unit 1321 Vanwyper-Midraw association is up slope from the R/W, runoff from this unit could impact the R/W. These are the Vanwyper soils.

Davey soils consist of very deep, somewhat excessively drained soils that formed in alluvium from mixed rock sources. The surface is loamy fine sand; subsoil is fine sandy loam, and the substratum is fine sand or loamy sand. Water erosion is slight and wind erosion hazard is high

Vanwyper soils consist of moderately deep, well-drained soils that form in residuum and colluvium from mixed rock sources. The surface is very cobbly loam; subsoil is very cobbly clay loam or clay overlying bedrock. Water erosion hazard is high and wind erosion hazard is slight.

Vegetation:

The vegetation is primarily basin big sagebrush, Sandberg bluegrass, and needleandthread. Portions of the proposed road's location would be within existing un-disturbed vegetation. The road along segment "b" would be placed to include the existing vegetation disturbance within the land base subject to construction. The existing vegetation disturbance within the R/W allowances for segment "c" would be included as much as possible.

Threatened and Endangered Plant Species:

According to the Nevada Threatened and Endangered Plant Map Book, as updated, no sensitive plants are known to occur in the project area.

Visual Resource Management (VRM):

The site is located in a Visual Resource Management Class IV area. The objective of Class IV management is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing landscape character. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. Management activities may dominant the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. Every attempt, however, should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic landscape elements.

The landscape of the proposed road consists of a relatively flat foreground, a gently sloping midground, and a moderate to steep, low mountainous background. The dominant feature of the existing landscape is the low mountainous background which rise from 5000 feet elevation to about 6300 feet. The proposed road would be constructed in elevations ranging from 4850 feet to 5000 feet in the gently sloping midground, near the base of the low mountains, where the elevation begins to increase. The road would parallel two existing fence lines at this elevation.

Water Resources:

Water resources on federal lands within the project area are limited to ephemeral drainages which flow only in response to large precipitation events. Groundwater is most likely present within the project area, but at a depth where it will be unaffected by the action and is NOT considered further. Water quality data for the ephemeral drainages does not exist, but is most likely of good quality for dissolved constituents, and moderate to poor quality for physical

parameters (suspended sediment and turbidity). The nearest surface water resource is a spring located on the adjacent private land.

Wetland/Riparian Zones:

There are no wetlands or riparian areas on the BLM land. A riparian feature is fed by a spring, both being present on the applicant's property.

Wildlife:

A wide variety of wildlife species common to the Great Basin ecosystem/big sagebrush community type can be found adjacent or within the project area. Approximately 100 bird species, and 70 mammal species can be found in habitats similar to the project area and within adjacent sagebrush sites (Braun et al. 1976; Trimble 1989).

The following is a list of BLM State Sensitive species and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service species of concern that may occur in or around the project area:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species of Concern

Mammals

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| pygmy rabbit | <u>Brachylagus idahoensis</u> |
| small-footed myotis | <u>Myotis ciliolabrum</u> |
| fringed myotis | <u>Myotis thysanodes</u> |
| Pacific Townsends big-eared bat | <u>Plecotus townsendii-townsendii</u> |
| spotted bat | <u>Euderma maculatum</u> |
| long-eared myotis | <u>Myotis evotis</u> |
| long-legged myotis | <u>Myotis volans</u> |

Birds

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| western burrowing owl | <u>Speotyto cunicularia</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|

BLM Sensitive Species

Birds

western sage grouse

Centrocercus urophasianus

Migratory Birds:

Executive Order #13186 titled, “Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds,” signed 1/10/01, requires that the BLM evaluate the effects of federal action on migratory birds. No migratory bird inventories have been completed for the entire area of public lands administered by the Winnemucca Field Office (WFO). Common migratory birds, which may use the area as habitat, include ducks, geese, song birds, owls, blackbirds, ravens, crows, hawks, finches, juncos, killdeer, robins, and meadowlarks.

Threatened or Endangered Species:

There are no known Threatened or Endangered species in the proposed project area (See Appendix 2 for a list of Species of Concern).

Mandatory Critical Elements

AFFECTS TO THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

| CRITICAL ELEMENTS | AFFECT | NO AFFECT | PRESENT |
|---|--------|-----------|---------|
| Air Quality | X | | X |
| Areas of Critical Environmental Concern | | X | |
| Cultural Resources | X | | X |
| Native American Religious Concerns | X | | |
| Environmental Justice | | X | |
| Flood Plains | | X | |
| Noxious Weeds | X | | |
| Prime or Unique Farm Land | | X | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Threatened or Endangered Species | X | | |
| Migratory Birds | X | | X |
| Water Quality | X | | X |
| Drinking or Ground Water | | X | X |
| Wetlands/Riparian Zones | | X | |
| Wilderness | | X | |
| Wild and Scenic Rivers | | X | |
| | | | |

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. THE PREFERRED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The environmental effects associated with issuing a Right-of-Way on federal land should be negligible resulting from the implementation of the BLM's Standards for Road Construction, (BLM Manual 9113).

Air Quality:

Wind blown dust would be generated during road construction. Travel on unpaved road surfaces accessing the property would generate dust into the atmosphere. Dust generated would be localized and of short duration. Minor vehicle emissions would be generated from burning fossil fuels by vehicular traffic. Overall adverse impacts to air quality from the preferred alternative would be minimal.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC):

The ACECs are not near the proposed R/W. Issuance of the R/W would be of no affect.

Cultural Resources:

An inventory of the proposed R/W, along the fenceline, disclosed two prehistoric sites. Previous disturbance on one and lack of significant data on the other has determined that neither site is National Register eligible.

Native American Concerns:

There are no known concerns, no consultation has been conducted.

Engineering:

Segment “b”:

There would be minimal disturbance because of the easy slope of the terrain. The channel crossings through the proposed road are shallow and would easily hold a culvert or low water crossing with minimal excavation. There is ample existing vegetation which acts as a soil stabilizer. Its removal for the road’s construction should result in minimal wind borne dust due to the adjacent vegetation acting as a wind break until the re-seeding of disturbed area not within the road’s driving surface becomes established. The road’s placement would be within the existing two-track road thereby utilizing the land base already compacted and de-vegetated. This would reduce the overall disturbance as compared to if the road were placed on totally non-disturbed land and there were, in addition, the land base already being utilized by the two-track road.

Segment “c”:

The overall landscape is gentle and rolling except for the large drainages. The latter drainages create an inability to safely observe oncoming traffic. The two-track road generally would not be incorporated into the road’s placement because it is too close to the boundary fence. The too close feature results in: there is not enough room to establish the drainage crossings on the last two drainages as one approaches the applicant’s private land; there is not enough “elbow room” adjacent to the fence for the road to be safe; impacts to the private land during the construction phase and long term use would be likely; the inter-visible sight clearance is impaired.

The several small drainages and the medium depth drainage all lend themselves to being easily contained by a culvert or low water crossing. The two large drainages near the end of the proposed route require careful design and construction to prevent future degradation from potential ephemeral flood events. Most methods would require fill acquired from the excavated materials and additional material from other sources. Some methods would require more excavation than others. All methods would result in exposed soils with the potential for erosion from wind, rain, snowmelt, and driving forces until the re-seeding becomes established.

It would be the applicant’s option how to cross the two primary drainages. The fill method is described but would not be authorized.

Fill: Filling entails filling the drainages with excavated material until they are comparably high enough in elevation to drive across. A flood event could cause waters to back up, the fill material would be forced out of the drainage (blow out) resulting in

extreme erosion, loss of stable land, and deposits of materials downstream. More excavation would be required to acquire fill material than the other three methods. This method would not be authorized.

Culvert: Culverts allow the water to flow through them rather than down the natural channel. Sizing the culvert to the width and depth of the channel and the anticipated flow of potential flood events is important. Were the culverts not placed on the natural channel bottom, or were the culvert sized too small to accommodate the waters of a potential flood event, the results would be essentially the same as the fill method when the water backs up and blows out the fill. Additionally, vegetation could plug the culvert and cause a blow out or over riding the culvert, both resulting in erosion and impacts to private and federal land. Design stipulations would specify the culvert's placement on the natural channel; its design size to accommodate a 50year flood event; and the maximum excavation and fill to limit resource impacts.

Low water crossing: This method places the road across the natural channel bottom which needs to be rocked or capped to accommodate year round access. It is the most accommodating to allow flood waters to pass without interruption. A temporary 85 foot wide construction R/W would be authorized. The objective is to facilitate the road's placement to take advantage of topographic features for determining ingress and egress points. Potential excavation needs could be more than the previous methods discussed. Design specifications would limit the maximum height of the cut banks.

Bridge: This method requires the greatest amount of excavation to establish adequate support for concrete footings. Scouring resulting from flooding could undermine the footings and erode adjacent stable land. Stipulations specific to bridges would be incorporated into the R/W Grant.

Standard construction criteria based on the BLM Road Manual 9113 Standards for Road Construction would be a part to the R/W Grant. The applicant enlisting the services of a Professional Engineer (PE) would be recommended.

Discussion of crossing the spring/riparian area on private land is not addressed in this document. BLM has no authority to direct actions on private land. However, per guidance provided in FLPMA, it must be mentioned that the applicant selects this location on his own property.

Noxious Weeds:

Noxious weeds could establish and spread on disturbed areas. These areas are relatively small and would be localized. The spread of noxious weeds is dependent on the amount of surface disturbance and the type of noxious weeds should they become established.

Range:

Conflicts could result between the R/W holder and the cattle gathering at where the property corners converge; by crossing back and forth over the road; or walking down it. The reduction of forage resulting from the road utilizing the ground would be minimal.

Recreation:

Issuance of the R/W should not interfere with the recreation usage. The road would be open to the public allowing users to access the land area previously requiring cross-country driving or walking. There could be an increase in recreational uses on the adjacent federal land resulting in having the permanent road for access.

Soils:

Erosion/sediment could impact private lands directly below the newly-constructed road. Storm events have the potential for flood waters to plug or wash out culverts, and depositing sediment on the adjacent private land. Sediment damage to private land could occur. Flash floods could concentrate debris in drainages result in fence failure.

Water Resources:

The only aspect of water resources that may be impacted by the proposed action is water quality. The drainage crossings have the potential for accelerated erosion depending upon which construction technique is selected. Low water crossing, constructed at the present drainage grade, will contribute sediment when the drainages are flowing. Structural crossings, such as culverts, have the potential to accumulate debris in the absence of adequate maintenance, which often leads to failure and larger erosion events. Minor affects to overland flow patterns will occur as the roadbed interrupts the natural topography.

Wetland/Riparian Zones:

There would be no environmental impacts to wetlands or riparian zones on public lands.

Vegetation:

The road placement would be within the existing disturbance as much as possible. It is anticipated existing vegetation would be removed by road construction.

T&E Plant:

T&E Plant species were not identified. There would be no adverse affect to them.

Visual Resource Management (VRM):

Once constructed, the proposed road would create a minimal visual impact to the existing landscape. This is primarily because of its location at lower elevations in the landscape, near the base of the low mountainous background. The level of change to the existing landscape would be low. Therefore, the proposed road would meet the criteria for Visual Resource Management Class IV objectives.

Wildlife:

Based on the past disturbance of the area, presence of exotic plant species and the fragmentation by agricultural lands, this parcel would provide limited habitat value for the majority of species, which would otherwise utilize this area, especially for sagebrush obligate species such as the Brewer's sparrow, sage thrasher, sage grouse, and pygmy rabbit. Removal of any sagebrush plants in the area could cause some disturbance and displacement to approximately eight species of migratory birds, which are associated with a sagebrush/grass site. Their nesting sites could be adversely impacted. Removal of existing cover could also impact some of the smaller rodents due to the loss of escape cover.

Threatened And Endangered Species:

Based on the proposed action, project area location and habitat characteristics at the site, there are two sensitive wildlife species which may be adversely impacted. The sage grouse (Centrocercus urophasianus) and the burrowing owl (Speotyto cunicularia). The sage grouse is present in big sagebrush communities throughout northern Nevada, and burrowing owls can be found in open, dry grasslands, agriculture and rangelands, and desert habitats. Based on the past disturbance, location, and vegetative component of the area as described above, and the fact that the project area is not located in a sage grouse distribution area, any use by sage grouse would be incidental and adverse impacts should be marginal. There are no known occurrences of the burrowing owl within the project area, however, they are known to occur in similar habitats within the area.

Migratory Birds:

Based on the past disturbance of the area, presence of exotic plant species and the fragmentation by agricultural lands, this parcel would provide limited habitat value for Migratory Bird species which would otherwise utilize this area, especially for sagebrush obligate species, such as the

Brewer's crows and sage thrasher. Removal of any sagebrush plants in the area could cause some disturbance and displacement to approximately eight species of migratory birds, which are associated with a sagebrush/grass site. Their nesting sites could be adversely impacted, however, the displacement would be temporary in nature as new nest sites would be found.

B. NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

There should be nominal environmental consequences associated with the No Action Alternative. There would be some ground disturbance and air borne particles when removing the unauthorized bridges which would be resolved by seeding the disturbed areas. Other conditions would generally remain static.

VII: CUMULATIVE, INTERDEPENDENT, INTERRELATED IMPACTS

A. THE PREFERRED ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA defines cumulative impacts as; “The impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, or reasonable foreseeable future actions.” Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

The cumulative impact analysis area for this EA begins on the west base of the Osgood Mountains and scans diagonally to the north, west, and southwest direction, comprising a six mile reach. Please refer to map “2”. The area includes a combination of public and private lands.

Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions: Actions identified within the analysis areas include cattle grazing, recreation use, agricultural use, and lands and realty actions.

Cultural – Cumulative impacts to cultural resources would include physical destruction to cultural resources from recreation use, including off road travel, agricultural plowing, and realty actions where surface disturbing activities occur. These impacts would be expected to be minimal as they would be localized and would be mitigated on public lands by permit requirements. Livestock grazing may remove vegetation in areas of concentrated use, exposing cultural resources and making them more vulnerable to collection. These impacts would be further mitigated by grazing permit requirements and compliance with Standards for Rangeland Health.

Engineering – Engineered projects for range improvements, agricultural use, and realty actions would likely not realize an appreciable increase. Impacts would be limited by permit requirements and Best Management Practices.

Noxious Weeds – Incremental increases in the spread of noxious weeds would be dependent on the extent of surface disturbance created within the assessment area. Continued grazing could possibly spread noxious weed seeds and promote establishment of weeds in heavily grazed areas. These impacts would be expected to be low as grazing operations would be subject to Standards for Rangeland Health. Permit requirements for lands and realty actions would also include mitigation measures to reseed disturbed areas reducing the potential for noxious weeds to get established.

Range – It is expected that grazing within the assessment area would not appreciably increase over time. Recreation activities could disrupt livestock grazing however these impacts should be short term. Realty actions may preclude livestock from areas depending on the type of facilities installed.

Recreation – It is anticipated that recreation growth would continue throughout Nevada as the population grows. The assessment area has limited recreation potential and impacts from recreation would continue to remain minimal. Agricultural use and lands and realty actions would restrict recreation use in certain areas. Grazing continues to have some negative impacts to recreational experiences near water sources. Overall cumulative impacts of actions to recreation would remain low.

Vegetation – Impacts to vegetation is dependent on the degree of surface disturbance within the assessment area. It is anticipated that future actions would not substantially increase. Grazing would continue to impact vegetation in areas where high concentrations of cattle occur. Agricultural and lands and realty actions would cause minimal damage to vegetation as both activities would include re-establishment of vegetation. However, vegetation diversity in the area would be reduced. Overall impacts to vegetation would remain low.

Visual Resource Management – There would be little visual resource impacts from livestock grazing and agriculture with the exception of possible range improvements such as fencing. Fencing would create long linear lines within a view shed. Recreation and realty actions would probably not increase to any degree within the assessment area. Cumulative visual impacts would be mitigated by blending colors with the surrounding background or ensuring facilities are not located in prominent areas. Overall visual impacts would be considered low for the area and would slowly increase over time with increasing public use.

Water – Direct and indirect impacts from grazing, agriculture, recreation, and realty actions are few, due to the lack of water resources within the project vicinity. Likewise, cumulative impacts to water resources are minimal and are limited to the potential for increased sedimentation and downstream deposition. Due to the lack of a receiving waterbody, the impacts would not extend much beyond the immediate project area.

Wildlife – There would be few, interrelated or cumulative impacts to wildlife. Continued livestock grazing in the area would continue competition for forage between livestock and wildlife. These impacts would be mitigated by permittee compliance with the Standards for Rangeland Health and allotment specific objectives. Agricultural use could change habitat for

some species, however there is sufficient nearby habitat to accommodate most species should they be forced to relocate. Recreation activity could stir up wildlife, for short durations. Lands and realty actions would affect habitat through surface disturbing activities. These actions would be mitigated by implementation of environmental protection measures required in the permitting process. Overall there would be minimal interrelated or cumulative impacts to wildlife.

Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) – There would be no interrelated or cumulative impacts to wildlife or plant T&E species due to there being no known populations of T&E species within the assessment area.

B. NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

There would be no cumulative impacts to resources from implementation of the No Action Alternative as the proposed road Right-of-Way would not be granted. There would be minimal disturbance to remove existing drainage structures currently in place.

VIII. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST AND RECORD CONTACTS

Two letters were on record requesting a copy of the Preliminary Environmental Assessment.

B. AGENCY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

The Preliminary Environmental Assessment has a 30-day public comment and was made available by:

1. Public was informed of the EA being available through the “Humboldt Sun” public notice section.
2. EA was available at the Humboldt County Public Library.
3. EA was available at Winnemucca Field Office upon request.
4. EA was announced on the BLM WFO’s web site.
5. Individual mailings to the parties on the attached mail list: APPENDIX 1.

C. INTERNAL DISTRICT REVIEW

The following staff participated in the writing or in the review of the EA:

Delores Cates - Visual Resource Specialist
Jerry Carpenter - Engineering
Steve Bird - Wildlife Biologist
Regina Smith - Archeologist
Mike Zielinski - Soil Scientist
Scott Clarke - Range Resources
Chuck Neill - Invasive Plant Species
M. Lynn Trost - Realty Specialist, Author
Jeff Johnson - Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Craig Drake - Hydrologist
Robert Edwards - Supervisory Realty Specialist
Jeff Johnson - NEPA Coordinator

IX. REFERENCES

The "Paradise-Denio Management Framework Plan (Plan)," 1982.

“Standards For Road Construction” BLM Manual 9100

Letter to United States Fish and Wildlife, Department. of the Interior