



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest

Santa Rosa Ranger District
1200 Winnemucca Blvd. East
Winnemucca, NV 89445

File Code: 1950

Date: May 10, 2013

Dear Reader:

The Santa Rosa Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the proposed Cold Springs Phase II Project which is located on National Forest System land within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Humboldt County, Nevada. The project proposal is to stabilize headcuts within the Cold Springs Pasture using mechanical equipment. I am enclosing the Scoping Document and Notice of Proposed Action for your review.

Sincerely,

For JEFF ULRICH
District Ranger

Enclosure





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Forest
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April, 2013

Scoping Document and Notice of Proposed Action

Cold Springs Watershed and Stream Habitat Restoration Phase II Project

Santa Rosa Ranger District
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Humboldt County, Nevada

COMMENTS WELCOME

The Santa Rosa Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the Cold Springs Watershed and Stream Habitat Restoration Phase II Project. Written, facsimile, hand delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the 36 CFR 215 Notice of Proposed Action in the Humboldt Sun. For detailed information on how to provide comments please refer to the "Comment Process" section of this document on page 6.

This document initiates both the scoping process pursuant to Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR 1501.7 and provides notice of the 30-day comment period pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. The purpose of the scoping process is to solicit public comment early in the analysis. The purpose of the 30-day comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide meaningful input on the proposed action prior to a decision by the Responsible Official. For this project the Forest Service has decided to run the two periods simultaneously.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Purpose of the project is to stabilize the stream channel habitat and restore the water table in the meadow habitat on either side of the streams within the Cold Springs Pasture. This action is needed as there are a series of headcuts working up the streams in the area that are diminishing the stream quality and resistance to flood events and lowering the water table in the meadows. The reduction in stream stability and water table is contributing to reduced sage-grouse brooding habitat quality.

Forest Plan Compliance

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USFS 1986).

- Standard and Guide (HNF LRMP, pg IV-48) - degraded riparian areas as identified in Water Resources Inventory will be given high priority in the range improvement and watershed restoration programs. In addition, the causes of degradation will be eliminated.
- Standard and Guide (HNF LRMP, pg IV-47) – Install erosion control structures and seed as needed to reduce gully erosion and improve ground cover.
- Standard and Guide (HNF LRMP, pg IV-48) – adopt soil and water conservation practices in the development of projects.
- Standard and Guide (HNF LRMP, pg IV-49) – Management activities in riparian areas will be monitored and corrective action will be taken to prevent deterioration of riparian areas or degradation of water quality.

Sage grouse is a Humboldt National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) indicator species (pages II-10, II-11).

DECISION FRAMEWORK

Based on the environmental analysis, the District Ranger would decide 1) whether to select the proposed action as proposed, or modified; 2) what mitigation measures are needed; and 3) what monitoring is required.

It is expected that this project can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. The appropriate category is: timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction. (36 CFR 220.6(e)(6)).

The level of analysis and the type of documentation may change depending on public comment and the results of analysis.

THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Santa Rosa Ranger district proposes to stabilize the headcuts present in the stream and restore water table levels in adjacent meadows within the majority of the Cold Springs Pasture. This project is located in Humboldt County Nevada T 45 N, R 45 E sections 16, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36. None of the streams proposed for stabilization under this proposal are perennial (ie they do not flow year round). The stabilization will be accomplished by installing modified check dams (structures) along the stream network as needed to control the channel grade and stop the upstream progression of headcuts. The check dams are designed to restore the channels natural width depth ratio and water level. The structures are buried in the soil surface using either a track-hoe or backhoe depending on how large the structure needs to be, the size of the materials used to construct the structures, and the availability of equipment. Other actions such as sloping back unstable vertical bank sections and small headcuts will occur to allow the sites to stabilize and revegetate this would also be done with the heavy equipment.

The rock structures will be built from rock that is quarried in the county. The rock source will be certified weed free by the zone botanist or other qualified designee. The track hoe/back hoe, haul truck, loader and any other mechanized equipment will be washed before entering the site to prevent weed propagules (seed and vegetative parts capable of forming a new plant) from being transported to the site.

If all of the work can be performed in one field season then the entire pasture will be rested for a minimum of two years or until the restoration sites are stabilized whichever is longer. If the restoration work will take more than one field season to complete, then in consultation with the Range Permittee, the treated areas may either be fenced and rested from grazing, or the entire pasture rested during implementation and for two years after implementation is complete, which ever has the least impact on the

permittee. It is anticipated that the work will take one to two field seasons to complete depending on weather conditions, availability of equipment and personnel. In the event of a two season implementation and the permittee electing to rest the pasture as opposed to fencing out the treatment areas this would mean a three year minimum rest of the pasture.

Archeological sites, if present, would be avoided during implementation by the heavy equipment. Structure placement would be done in consultation with the project Archeologist to ensure appropriate protection of historic and prehistoric resources that may be present in the project area.

The in channel work would be done at the time of lowest seasonal flow (mid to late summer) and would be done with clean rock to limit the introduction of sediment into the stream. Only the bucket portion of the equipment would be in the stream in the event that water is present. Any unvegetated areas larger than 6ftx6ft or if within 3 feet of the channel would be seeded and covered with mulch gathered on site. A weedeater or similar small engine powered device may be used to cut the mulch. The seed mix will be developed by the zone botanist consistent with the Forest Plan, regional and national guidance on native plant use, and probability of success.

The project area would be monitored for the first two years after implementation to ensure that the restoration was successful. Some of the treatments might be modified to make them more suited to the site conditions if they are showing signs of not successfully repairing the headcut or gully. If revegetation is not successful in the first two years then additional seeding and mulching would occur with the affected areas being temporarily excluded from livestock use until such time as there is 50% well rooted ground cover vegetation (not easily pulled up by hand).

Monitoring for new weed populations would occur and treatment of those populations would occur under the existing weed treatment authorizations.

Preliminary Issues

The following preliminary issues were identified by the team.

- Potentially historic and prehistoric sites located within the treatment areas
- Potentially Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive or otherwise protected plant and animal species in the project area.
- Potential impact to the Range Permittee.
- Water quality and quantity conservation.
- Potential impacts to the roadless area.
- Unknown or miss mapped weed populations.
- Potential for previously unidentified active tribal use areas within the project.

Comment Process

The Forest Service encourages your comments on this proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision.

Your comments will help us complete the environmental analysis on the proposed action.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the legal notice for this project in the Humboldt Sun.

Comments must be submitted to the following:

Jeff Ulrich
District Ranger
Santa Rosa Ranger District
1200 East Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, NV 89445

Or via fax at (775) 625-1200

The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to:

comments-intermtn-humboldt-santarosa@fs.fed.us.

Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the information identified in 36 CFR 215, including:

- Name and Address;
- Title of the proposed action;
- Specific comments (36 CFR 215.2) on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
- Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
- For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
- Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual. Comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For further information contact Robin Wignall, Project Manager at (775) 778-6122 or via e-mail at rjwignall@fs.fed.us.