

Scoping Document

And

Notice of Proposed Action



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Pole Creek Pipeline Project

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Jarbidge District

Forest Service

Elko County, Nevada

May 2013

Comments Welcome

The Jarbidge Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the proposed Pole Creek Pipeline Project which is located on both private and National Forest System land within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The project proposes to allow approximately 2 miles of new waterline to cross portions of the forest and onto private land.

For detailed information on how to provide comments please refer to the "Comment Process" section of this document.

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 primary purpose for this project is to improve livestock distribution and restore and protect habitat for wildlife, primarily brood-rearing habitat for greater sage-grouse in riparian areas around Pole Creek and Sheep Creek.

Proposed Action

The proposal is to construct approximately 4 miles of water pipeline across both private and National Forest System land in partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service who was approached by a private land owner requesting assistance. The point of diversion and points of use (four livestock watering troughs) would be located on private lands. The waterline would be 1.5” in diameter and buried beneath the frost line. It could cross up to 2 miles of Forest Service land. The exact route will be determined once engineering surveys are completed by June 2013. The line will supply water to several gravity fed troughs on private land.

The project is located within Elko County, Nevada. The legal description is T47N, R60, Sections 19, 29, 30, and 31. Mount Diablo Meridian. See attached map.

Decision Framework

The deciding officer would decide whether or not to approve the proposed action on National Forest System land. Actions on private land are outside of the decision framework.

Forest Plan Compliance

Forest Plan Goals

The following goals and objectives from the Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan(1986, as amended) are applicable to the project:

#29 (page IV-8) Provide water and soil resource input to other resource activities to protect and or improve water quality and soil productivity.

#10 (page IV-3) Identify, protect, interpret, and manage significant cultural resources.

#32 (Page IV-9) Design and implement practices on-the-ground that will re-establish acceptable soil, hydrologic, and vegetative conditions which are sufficient to secure and maintain favorable water flow.

Inland Native Fish Strategy

This project falls within the area covered by the Inland Native Fish Strategy (USDA Forest Service, 1995). This project has been designed to meet the riparian management goals and riparian management objectives as established in the interim direction. See pages A-1 through A-4 of the Inland Native Fish Strategy (USDA Forest Service, 1995) The following standard and guideline applies to this project:

LH-3: Issue leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements to avoid effects that would retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives and avoid adverse effects on inland native fish. Where the authority to do so was retained, adjust existing leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements to eliminate effects that would retard or prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. If adjustments are not effective, eliminate the activity. Where

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the authority to adjust was not retained, negotiate to make changes in existing leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements to eliminate effects that would prevent attainment of the Riparian Management Objectives or adversely affect inland native fish. Priority for modifying existing leases, permits, rights-of-way, and easements would be based on the current and potential adverse effects on inland native fish and the ecological value of the riparian resources affected.

Expected Analysis

A proposed action may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA) only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and the proposed action is with a category listed in 36 CFR Section 220.6. The preliminary assessment is that this proposal fits within the following category – *Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land (36 CFR 220.6(e) 3).*

If during the analysis it is apparent that an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is required, then the Forest Service would reassess the project and adjust the analysis as necessary.

Analysis Time Frames

This project will be posted on the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in May of 2013. Surveys would be completed by August of 2013 and a decision is expected by September, 2013.

Implementation Time Frames

Implementation for the project is expected to begin October of 2013 and continue through fall of 2013 and into 2014 if needed.

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. 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, will be available for public inspection, and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Because the Forest Service is inviting comments under both the Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR 1501.7 and Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215 it is important to understand the different procedures for commenting.

Under the scoping regulations (40 CFR 1501.7), comments may be provided at any time during the analysis process and submittal of comments do not provide eligibility to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

Under the Forest Service appeal regulations (36 CFR Part 215) written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Elko Daily Free Press. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period. It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who provide comment or express interest in this proposal during this comment period will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

Submit comments to Matthew Boisseau, Deputy District Ranger, Jarbidge Ranger District, 140 Pacific Avenue, P.O. Box 246, Wells, NV 89835 or fax 775-752-1799. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 7:30 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday, excluding federal 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-toiyabe-rubymtns-jarbidge@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.

For further information please visit our website at www.fs.usda.gov/htnf/projects or contact Kyra Walton Reid, Project Coordinator at 775-752-1701; or kireid@fs.fed.us.

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Figure 1: Location Map

