

# Scoping Document

And

## Notice of Proposed Action



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

### **Santa Rosa Range Rescission Implementation Project**

Forest Service

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

July 2013

### **Comments Welcome**

The Santa Rosa Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest welcomes your comments on the proposed Range Rescission Implementation Project which is located on Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Santa Rosa Ranger District, Humboldt County, Nevada. This project proposes to improve forest health and protect heritage resources through better livestock distribution on five grazing allotments. This project involves construction of 12 miles of 4 strand wire fence with the objective of better managing livestock grazing, protecting heritage resources, and maintain/improve ecosystem health.

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 218. 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.

The Forest Service recently adopted a new pre-decisional review process for projects documented in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. These new procedures, which became effective on March 27, 2013, are contained in 36 CFR 218, subparts A, B, and C. Those interested in this project are encouraged to become familiar with these new procedures.

Santa Rosa Range Rescission Implementation Project

Specifically, this project is a project implementing a land management plan and not authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, that is subject to subparts A and B of 36 CFR 218.

## Background

During the process of making the original and supplemental Martin Basin Rangeland Project decisions<sup>1</sup> and in completing the Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) resulting from those decisions, it was determined that forest health could be improved through better livestock distribution in some areas with the construction of some strategically placed fences. The proposed fence projects will aid in the implementation of the Martin Basin Rangeland Project decisions.

The legal description of each proposed fence is listed below in Table 1, also see attached map.

Id	Fence Name	UTM NAD 83 (Central Point)		Mount Diablo Meridian		Sections	Miles	Feet
		Northing X	Easting Y	Town- ship	Range			
1	Granite Peak 1	446,935.2	4,607,956.6	T43N	R38E	1 & 12	1.1	5,772.8
2	Granite Peak Division A	448,567.7	4,610,351.4	T43N	R39E	31 & 32	3.3	17,353.2
				T43N	R39E	6 & 7		
3	Granite Peak Division B	449,989.0	4,611,085.8	T44N	R39E	32 & 33	0.7	3,700.3
4	Willow Creek Drift/Gabica Fork	444,743.9	4,611,469.6	T44N	R38E	35	0.2	1,266.7
5	Devils Gate 1	455,629.5	4,648,483.3	T47N	R39E	3	0.4	2,346.4
6	Devils Gate 2	458,036.3	4,648,301.0	T47N	R40E	5, 6 & 8	2.6	13,812.9
				T47N	R39E	3		
7	Siard Bench 2	458,040.4	4,621,726.9	T45N	R40E	30	0.8	4,419.3
8	Siard Bench 1	457,593.7	4,621,911.6	T45N	R40E	30	0.1	629.8
9	Long Valley Pond	463,052.8	4,620,430.8	T45N	R40E	7	0.2	973.7
10	Buttermilk Meadow Trough Fix	460,143.5	4,607,448.2	T43N	R40E	9	0.1	560.8
11	Pole Creek Division	451,461.1	4,619,879.6	T44N	R39E	3 & 4	1.0	5,202.4
				T45N	R39E	9		
12	Chimney Creek Lower Drift	437,915.6	4,583,984.3	T41N	R38E	10	0.2	928.6
13	Chimney & Porcupine Division	439,044.6	4,583,234.2	T41N	R38E	11 & 32	0.5	2,796.9
14	Chimney Creek Upper Drift	439,552.3	4,584,744.2	T41N	R38E	12	0.2	948.7
15	Porcupine Drift	440,518.1	4,583,499.2	T41N	R38E	13	0.0	176.9
16	Jakes Creek Drift	454,404.2	4,637,668.0	T46N	R39E	14	0.1	275.0

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=2470](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=2470)

## Purpose and Need

The primary purpose of this project is to improve livestock distribution, keep livestock within their prescribed grazing pattern, protect riparian areas of concern, create a new pasture, and protect cultural/historical sites.

- The Granite Peak Fences Project (Table 1 id 1-3), will facilitate better livestock distribute, create new pastures and implement a grazing strategy that will improve fish & wildlife habitat and general vegetation health. The fences will help managers reduce the amount of time livestock stay in key areas and move them through to other pastures.
- The Willow Creek/Gabica Fork Drift Fence Project (Table 1 id 4), will eliminate a fence and move a second fence to a better location. The fence to be moved is adjacent to a historic rock foundation and needs to be moved to a location that will not disturb this site as described in the Martin Basin Rangeland Project decisions. Old fence will be removed.
- Devils Gate Pasture Fences Project (Table 1 id 5 & 6), will create a new pasture primarily within the Quinn River riparian area. These fences will help managers reduce the amount of time livestock are within the Quinn River riparian area, and adds an additional pasture livestock can rotate through.
- Siard Bench Exclosure Project (Table 1 id #7 & 8), will create an exclosure with around a riparian area, to improve its condition.
- Long Valley Pond Fence Project (Table 1 id 9), will protect a cultural site in proximity of the pond.
- Buttermilk Meadow Fence Relocation Project (Table 1 id 10), will move an existing fence further away from an existing trough to eliminate cattle pushing on the fence and breaking through to get to water, in the buttermilk meadow exclosure.
- Pole Creek and Porcupine/Chimney Division Fence Projects (Table 1 id 11 & 13), will stop livestock drift between grazed and rested pastures.
- Chimney, Porcupine and Jakes Cr. Drift Fence Projects (#12, 14, 15 & 16), will help manages hold and distribute livestock in the upper canyons keeping them out of the lower riparian areas of the drainages.

The following mitigation measures would be implemented:

The project areas will be surveyed for archaeological, and endangered, threatened, and sensitive plant and animal sites. Areas that have any of these concerns will be appropriately mitigated to conserve these resources.

## **Proposed Action**

This project proposes to construct approximately 12 miles of new fence within five grazing allotments located on the Santa Rosa Ranger District. The fences will be constructed to Forest Service standards. They will be a 4 strand fence with the top 3 wires barbed, the bottom wire smooth to facilitate wildlife passage. The fences will be constructed with metal T-posts and H-braces to prevent raptor perching.

Equipment such as tractors, skid loaders, trucks, chainsaws, ATV/UTVs etc... may be used in removing the old fence material, brushing fence line,, pounding and drilling posts, stretching wire, hauling in materials etc... In the more rugged and remote areas, livestock may be used to pack in gear and materials.

## **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:

#9 (page IV-3) Provide for a pleasing visual landscape in the Humboldt National Forest.

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

#16 (page IV-5) Manage all allotments to maintain suitable range presently in satisfactory ecological condition, and improve suitable range that is in less than satisfactory condition.

#18 (page IV-6) Manage livestock to recognize the special needs relating to wet meadows and riparian areas, and fisheries habitat.

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

#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.

#56 (page IV-16) Public involvement – Ensure appropriate public participation in National Forest Planning and decision making.

## Expected Analysis

A proposed action may be analyzed and documented in an environmental assessment (EA) only if there are no significant effects related to the proposed action, which would require documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS). The environmental analysis will focus on the definition of “significantly” found in the Council of Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR 1508.27).

If during the analysis it becomes apparent the Proposed Action will have a significant effect on the human environment as defined by 40 CFR 1508.27, then the Forest Service will reassess the project and adjust the analysis and documentation as necessary.

The following preliminary impacts have been identified as potentially occurring. This information is provided to give the public an initial understanding of the project effects and is subject to change as the Forest Service completes its analysis:

Resource Condition	Potential impacts
Fisheries	No impacts are expected because work in riparian zones would be limited.
Wildlife	Minimal impacts are expected because of the limited nature of the work. Some individual animals may be displaced into adjacent areas while the work is being performed.
Botany and Vegetation	No impacts are expected. This project should improve vegetation conditions especially with the riparian enclosure. Drift fence will improve riparian areas by helping distribution.
Municipal Watersheds	No impacts are expected because there are no municipal watersheds within the project areas.
Water Quality	The proposed fences should improve water quality within the project area.
Public Health and Safety	No impact.
Air Quality	No impact.
Cultural resources	The project will improve and protect cultural resources.
Wilderness, and Other Special Designated Areas	The project is not in wilderness. There are no other special designated areas close to the project.
Recreation	No impact as project work is not expected to interfere with any recreational activities

## Analysis Time Frames

This project was initially posted on the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) in May of 2013 and a decision is expected in fall 2013.

## Implementation Time Frames

Implementation of the project is expected to begin as early as October of 2013 and continue through fall of 2014 and if needed 2015.

Santa Rosa Range Rescission Implementation Project

## Comment Process

The Forest Service encourages your specific written comments on this proposed action, along with supporting reasons the responsible official should consider in reaching a decision as defined in 36 CFR 218.2:

*“Specific written comments. Written comments are those submitted to the responsible official or designee during a designated opportunity for public participation (§ 218.5(a)) provided for a proposed project. Written comments can include submission of transcriptions or other notes from oral statements or presentation. For the purposes of this rule, specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.”*

A few examples:

- A comment that says “grazing is bad and must be stopped” or “grazing is essential and must be increased” would not be considered specific written comments because the issue of whether or not grazing occurs is outside the scope of this decision and the comments are opinions unsupported by site specific rationale.
- A comment that says “consider all our/my previous comments submitted on another project” would not be considered specific written comments because the comments would not be specific to the project being considered.
- A comment that says “consider a list of publications” would not be a specific written comment unless the commenter identified how and why specific sections of each publication had a direct relationship to the proposed action.
- A comment that says “relocate fence id 4 because it would go through a known sage grouse lek and would interfere with sage grouse reproduction” would be considered a specific written comment because it is site specific, within the scope of the proposed action and the commenter presents a rationale why the fence should be relocated.

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.

Any written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic comments concerning this action will be most helpful if submitted within 30 calendar days following the publication of legal notice in the Humboldt Sun. Comments must be submitted to: Jeff Ulrich, District Ranger, Santa Rosa Ranger District, 1200 E Winnemucca Blvd; Winnemucca, NV 89445. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8:00 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-santarosa@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-santarosa@fs.fed.us). For objection eligibility each individual or representative from each entity submitting timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project must either sign the comments or verify identity upon request.

For further information and maps of each proposed project, please visit our website at [http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=41444](http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=41444) or contact Boyd Hatch, Project Coordinator at 775-623-5025 ext. 119; or bhatch@fs.fed.us.

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Figure 1: Proposed Action Location Map:

