

DOE CAMP FENCE  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
EA OR-026-00-17

Bureau of Land Management  
Burns District Office  
HC 74-12533 Hwy 20 West  
Hines, OR 97738

June 30, 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction .....	1
	A. Purpose .....	1
	B. Need .....	1
	C. Conformance .....	1
II.	Proposed Action and Alternatives .....	2
	A. Proposed Action .....	2
	B. No Action .....	2
III.	Affected Environment .....	2
	A. Landform and Climate .....	2
	B. Vegetation .....	3
	C. Fish and Wildlife .....	3
	D. Cultural Resources .....	3
	E. Wilderness and Recreation .....	3
IV.	Environmental Consequences .....	4
	A. Analysis of the Critical Elements .....	4
	B. Proposed Action .....	4
	1. Landform and Climate .....	4
	2. Vegetation .....	4
	3. Fish and Wildlife .....	4
	4. Cultural Resources .....	5
	5. Wilderness Study Area and Recreation .....	5
	6. Cumulative Impacts .....	6
	C. No Action .....	6
	1. Landform and Climate .....	6
	2. Vegetation .....	6
	3. Fish and Wildlife .....	6
	4. Cultural Resources .....	6
	5. Wilderness Study Area and Recreation .....	6
	6. Cumulative Impacts .....	7
V.	Consultation and Coordination .....	7

VI.	Participating Staff .....	7
VII.	Maps .....	7

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I. INTRODUCTION

The project area is located on the north side of the Steens Mountain, approximately 11 miles south of Diamond on the west side of McCoy Creek. The project is in the Oliver Springs Pasture of the Chimney Allotment #6033.

A. Purpose

The purpose of the project is to provide rest for the riparian area in this pasture and improve riparian conditions on 3.5 miles of McCoy Creek and .8-mile of Horton Creek, which would help meet resource objectives in the allotment. Currently, there is no grazing system in the Chimney Allotment and this pasture is used at the same time each year, approximately June 5 to July 15.

B. Need

In 1998, McCoy Creek was rated as functioning at-risk with a downward trend. Horton Creek was found functioning at-risk; trend was not apparent, and was attributed to past grazing practices. In an attempt to alleviate the problem, the permittee agrees that McCoy Creek should be fenced off and rested for at least 2 years. After the initial 2 years of rest, monitoring would be conducted to determine trend and to ascertain whether or not further rest is needed. Horton Creek would be grazed for a shorter period to improve conditions.

The proposed project would also provide the opportunity to create flexibility in the development of a grazing system.

C. Conformance

This project is in conformance with the 1982 Andrews Management Framework Plan (MFP), the 1983 Andrews Grazing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the 1997 Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health, and the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan (SEORMP)/EIS as proposed.

## II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### A. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct 3 miles of 3-wire fence. The first fence would be 1.8 miles which would connect two existing fences to create a small riparian pasture along Horton Creek for a short time period. The other two would be gap fences; one would be .9-mile and the other one would be .3-mile. The three fences would control cattle movement into McCoy Creek. The fences would be located in T. 31 S., R. 33 E., Sections 28 and 33, and T. 32 S., R. 33 E., Sections 4 and 9.

Access to the project area would be by All Terrain Vehicle (ATV). Although the fenceline would not be bladed, portions of the fenceline may be cleared using hand tools. The fence would be constructed using green steel posts. The top two strands would be barbed wire, and the bottom wire would be smooth wire, with a wire spacing of 18 inches, 26 inches, and 38 inches from the ground. Steel posts would be spaced 16 feet apart with one wood stay between each post. Eleven rock cribs would be constructed as corners, and two gates would be installed.

Riparian area monitoring would be conducted along McCoy Creek to assess the effectiveness of the project. If needed, the gap fences would be extended enough to adequately control livestock movement within the area.

### B. No Action

The proposed project would not be constructed.

## III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### A. Landform and Climate

The elevation of the project area is approximately 6,250 feet. The major geological feature is McCoy Creek Canyon which runs from south to north and ranges from 300 to 500 feet deep throughout much of its course. The yearly precipitation ranges from 10 to 20 inches and comes primarily in the form of snow. Seasonal temperatures are variable with summer temperatures as high as 95 degrees F and winter temperature to -40 degrees F.

B. Vegetation

Vegetation consists of western juniper, mountain big sagebrush, low sagebrush, quaking aspen, Thurber needlegrass, Idaho fescue, and Sandberg bluegrass. Riparian vegetation occurs along perennial streams and contains willow, alder, dogwood, black cottonwood, sedges, rushes, and other riparian species.

The Steens Mountain paintbrush (Bureau sensitive species) may be found on windswept ridges from 6,500 feet to 9,000 feet. The paintbrush has been detected approximately 2 miles south of the proposed project area, and is not expected to be found in the project area.

McCoy Creek was evaluated for functionality in 1998. The portion of the creek affected by the proposed project was rated as functioning at-risk with a downward trend due to the lack of young woody species and excessive erosion. Water quality data indicate the average water temperature was 67 degrees C, in the warmest part of the year. This is above the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ's) water quality standard for a 7-day average of 64 degrees C. On the same year Horton Creek was found to be functioning at-risk with a trend not apparent. This was due to the lack of young woody species and low vegetative cover along the creek on the upland portion of the creek.

C. Fish and Wildlife

Wildlife found in the area are summering and wintering mule deer, pronghorn antelope, Rocky Mountain elk, western sage grouse, chukar, sage thrasher, common flicker, garter snake, and coyotes. The western sage grouse are U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) sensitive candidate species.

Fish species found in McCoy Creek include mountain whitefish, speckled dace, Great Basin redband trout, and Malheur mottled sculpin. Redband and sculpin are managed as Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sensitive species.

D. Cultural Resources

There are no known cultural resources in the proposed project area. There is a high potential for prehistoric as well as historic sites to occur in the area.

E. Wilderness and Recreation

There is no special designation identified in the project area. The area is being proposed for special designation.

Recreation use occurs primarily during the summer and fall as most of the area is snowbound during the spring and winter. Recreation includes hiking, hunting, fishing, and sightseeing. This area is categorized as a Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II. The objective of the classification is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to landscape characteristics should be low.

#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

##### A. Analysis of the Critical Elements

The following critical elements of the human environment are either not present or will not be adversely impacted by the proposed action: air quality, cultural or historic resource values, floodplains, weeds, prime or unique farmlands, American Indian religious concerns, and hazardous or solid wastes.

##### B. Proposed Action

###### 1. Landform and Climate

There would be no impacts to landform or climate.

###### 2. Vegetation

Some short-term disturbance to the vegetation would occur along the fenceline during construction. Impacts to vegetation would be minimized by removing shrubs, only when necessary, and using hand tools.

Approximately 640 acres of riparian vegetation would be excluded for a minimum of 2 years, and afterward would receive lighter grazing with the construction of the proposed project. This would improve herbaceous cover and increase woody species while decreasing erosion along the riparian area.

A botanical clearance will be completed identifying location, to avoid impacts to sensitive plants, and if necessary, mitigation measures to avoid T&E plant sites.

###### 3. Fish and Wildlife

Some wildlife may be temporarily disturbed or displaced by the fence construction.

Fences in the area may restrict movement of wildlife. Gates will be left open when not in use, and combined with the wire spacing should minimize the obstacles and allow wildlife passage with little difficulty.

The proposed action would reduce the use on affected riparian vegetation, and contribute toward improving riparian conditions by increasing cottonwoods, willow, and other riparian species. It is anticipated that available fish habitat would increase with the improvement of riparian conditions and streambank stabilization.

#### 4. Cultural Resources

There would be no impacts to cultural resources, as impacts to significant sites would be avoided or otherwise mitigated through fence realignment. A cultural resources inventory would be conducted to determine the existence of prehistoric and historic sites and any fence modifications necessary to avoid impacts.

#### 5. Wilderness Study Area and Recreation

There is no Wilderness Study Area (WSA) designation in this area. The area is being considered for special designation.

The fence is expected to reduce the effects of grazing within this portion of McCoy and Horton Creeks which should benefit recreation by improving fish habitat. Hikers and campers would find less evidence of livestock use along the creek.

Visually, the fence would be an unnatural feature on the landscape. However, fence materials which blend into the landscape would be used. Most of the fence would be out of sight of the main road and would only be visible from the Doe Camp access road. The construction of the proposed project may hinder the movement of recreational users such as hunters, hikers, and sightseers. This should not impact solitude. One gate would be constructed on an existing road to allow access to users.

6. Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts include the enhancement of aquatic species and wildlife habitat through the improvement of woody species and the reduction in erosion, which, in turn, would improve downstream water quality. Recreation would benefit from the improvement in camping opportunities. There would be no adverse cumulative impacts from the proposed action.

C. No Action

1. Landform and Climate

There would be no impacts to landform or climate.

2. Vegetation

This alternative lacks mitigation of the effects of grazing on vegetation in riparian areas along the streams and meadows. Movement toward rangeland objectives would be slower because of the difference in domestic livestock grazing management.

3. Fish and Wildlife

Without the proposed project, livestock use would continue in riparian and wetland areas. Flexibility in habitat management would be decreased, and habitat would be slower to improve.

4. Cultural Resources

There would be no impacts to cultural resources.

5. WSA and Recreation

There is no wilderness designation for the area. There would be no direct impacts to recreational opportunities. The benefits described under the proposed alternative would not occur. Visual evidence of livestock would be more evident along the riparian zones.

6. Cumulative Impacts

No action would delay recovery of the riparian areas. Additional grazing restrictions may be placed on the livestock operator in an attempt to improve riparian condition and trend. This would likely affect the other pastures in the grazing rotation and may only be partially successful in achieving management objectives. Resource objectives may be unobtainable under the no action alternative.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Shirley and Earl Carson, Kiger Ranch  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

VI. PARTICIPATING STAFF

Manuel Berain, Range Technician  
David Blackstun, Supervisory Natural Resource Staff Advisor  
Mary Emerick, Recreation Planner  
Rick Hall, Natural Resource Specialist  
Brian Lampman, Fisheries Biologist  
Gina Lampman, Fisheries Biologist  
Mat Obradovich, Wildlife Biologist  
Ellie Sippel, Hydrologist  
Scott Thomas, Archaeologist

VII. MAPS

- A. Allotment Area Map
- B. Project Area Map

USDI, Bureau of Land Management  
Burns District  
HC 74-12533 Highway 20 West  
Hines, Oregon 97738

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
for  
Doe Camp Fence  
EA OR-026-00-17

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Andrews Resource Area has analyzed the proposal and its alternatives to construct approximately 4.3 miles of 3-wire fence in the Chimney grazing allotment. This fence would improve the control of livestock and allow for improvement of riparian areas, water quality, and aquatic habitat in McCoy and Horton Creeks. This proposal is in conformance with the 1982 Andrews Management Framework Plan (MFP), the 1983 Andrews Grazing Management Program Final Environmental Impact Study, and the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (SEORMP/EIS) as proposed.

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) and all other available information, I have determined that the proposal and its alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would adversely impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following factors:

1. Beneficial, negative, direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed. Analysis indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality. The physical and biological effects are limited to the Burns District, Andrews Resource Area and adjacent land.
2. Public health and safety would not be adversely impacted. There are no known or anticipated concerns with project waste or hazardous materials.
3. There would be no negative impacts to regional or local air quality, prime or unique farmlands, known paleontological resources on public land within the area, wetlands, floodplains, weeds, areas with unique characteristics, ecologically critical areas or designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Floodplains, wetlands, riparian habitat, and water quality would be protected and enhanced.
4. There are no highly controversial effects on the environment.
5. There are no effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Sufficient information on risk is available based on information in the EA and other past actions of a similar nature.

6. This alternative does not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented in the future to meet the goals and objectives of adopted Federal, State, or local natural resource-related plans, policies or programs. It does not preclude consideration or adoption of various alternatives in the ongoing SEORMP, which will supersede the Andrews MFP.
7. No cumulative impacts related to other actions that would have a significant negative impact were identified or are anticipated.
8. Based on previous and ongoing cultural resource surveys, and through mitigation by avoidance, no negative impacts to cultural resources were identified or anticipated. There are no known American Indian religious concerns or persons or groups who might be disproportionately and negatively affected as anticipated by the Environmental Justice policy.

Wilderness characteristics would be enhanced throughout the affected area as riparian and watershed health improve. The proposed fence would enhance the BLM's ability to manage the land in a manner so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness. Livestock use within the effected Wilderness Study Area (WSA) would be reduced.

9. No negative impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat that was determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act was identified. Habitat for fish species which are BLM Sensitive Species, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species of Concern, and Oregon Sensitive Species would be protected and enhanced. If, at a future time, there could be the potential for adverse impacts, treatments would be modified or mitigated not to have an adverse effect or a new analysis would be conducted.
10. This alternative is in compliance with relevant Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and requirements for the protection of the environment.

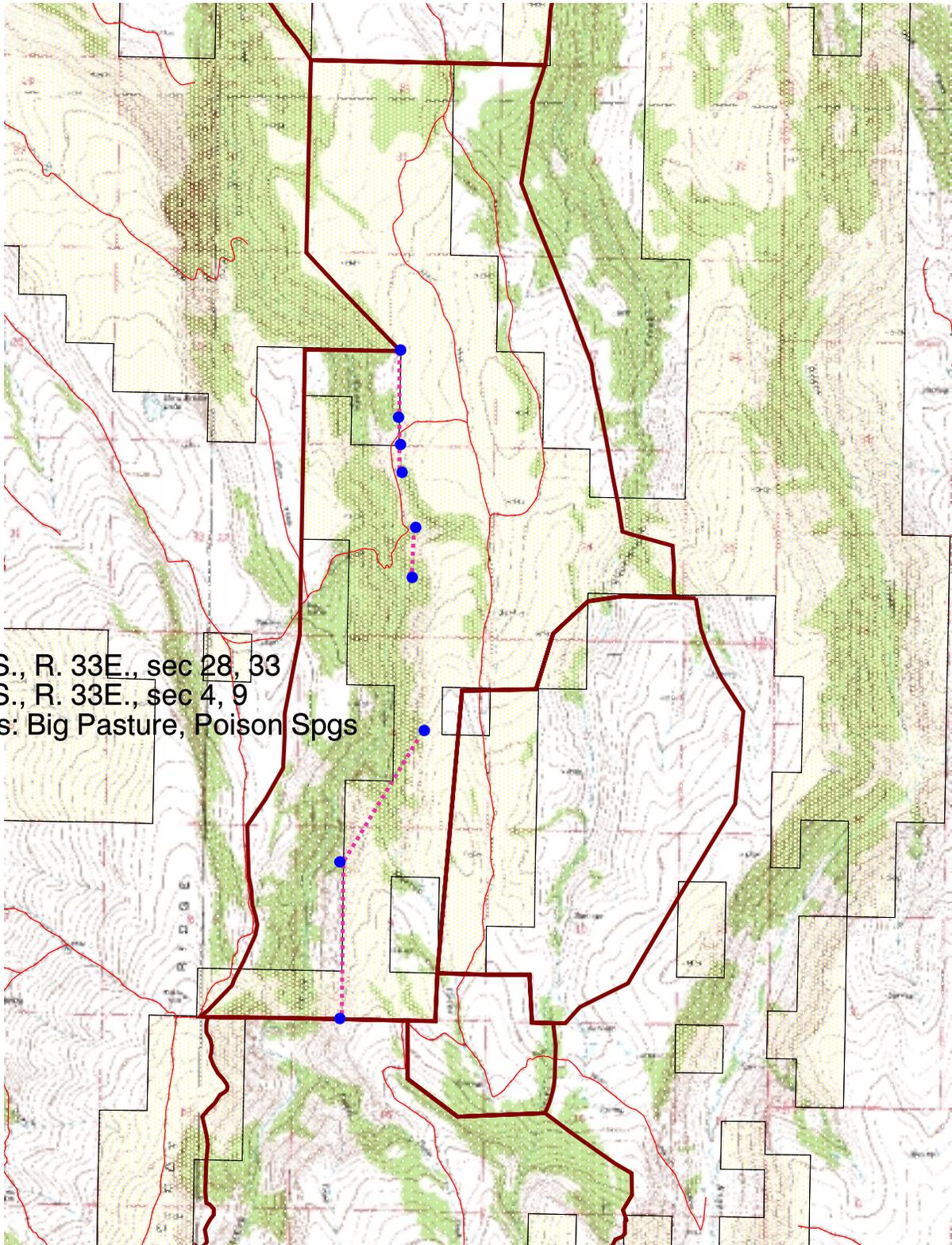
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Miles R. Brown  
Andrews Resource Area Field Manager

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Date

# Doe Camp Fence Proposal



T. 31S., R. 33E., sec 28, 33  
T. 32S., R. 33E., sec 4, 9  
Quads: Big Pasture, Poison Spgs

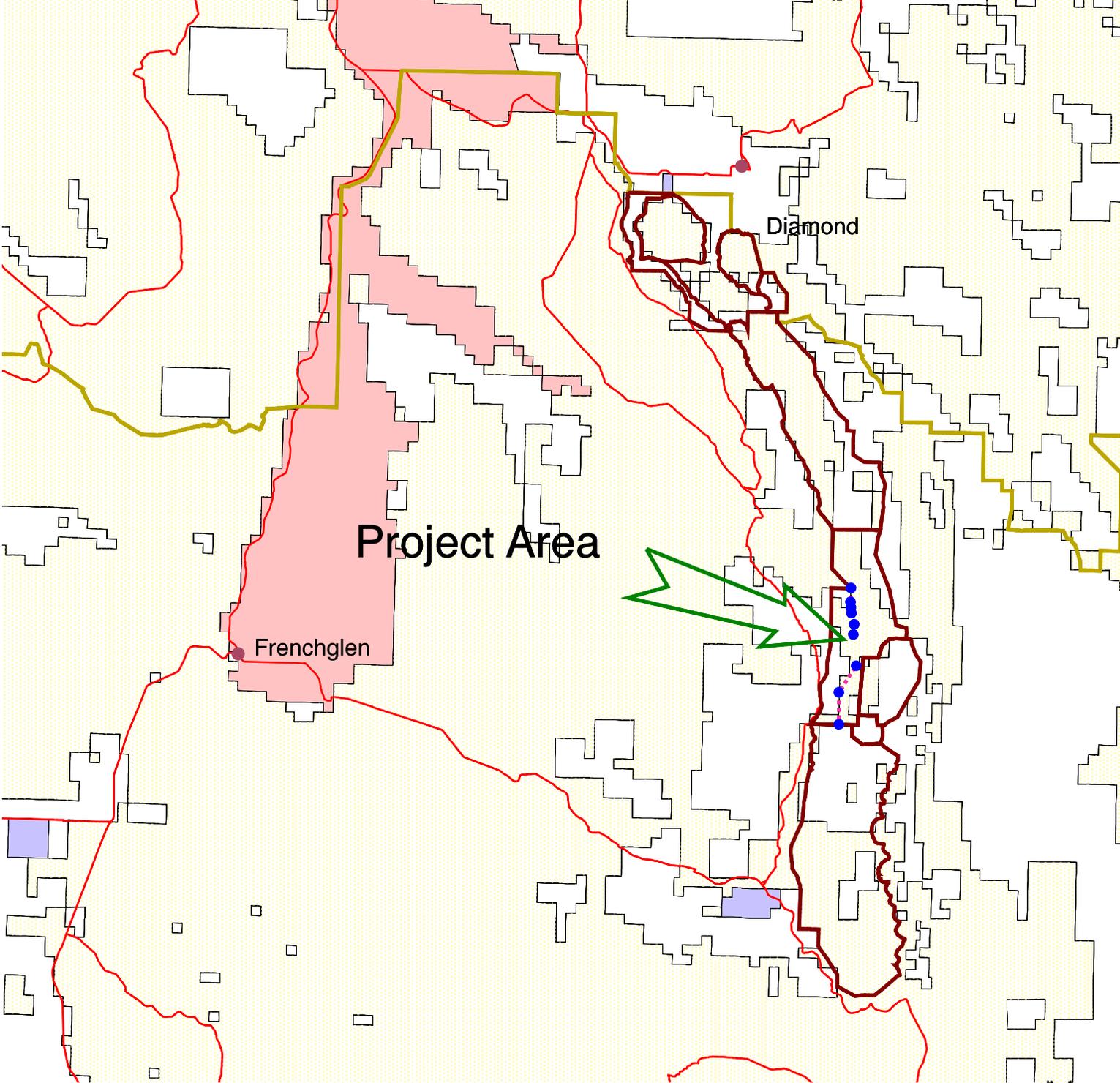
..... Proposed Fence

● Rock Crib

0.2 0 0.2 0.4 Miles



# Doe Camp Fence Proposal



Andrews Resource Area  
Chimney Allotment

-  Allotment Boundary
-  Roads

