

USDI, Bureau of Land Management  
Three Rivers Resource Area, Burns District  
Hines, Oregon 97738

Finding of No Significant Impact  
for  
Egli Reservoir Waterfowl Habitat Improvement  
Environmental Assessment

OR-04-025-040

**INTRODUCTION:**

Egli Reservoir is located in the East Wagontire Allotment, Egli Ridge Pasture, approximately 40 miles southwest of Burns, Oregon. The legal description of the project area is T. 25 S., R. 24 E., Section 13, NWSE. Egli Reservoir is an ephemeral reservoir that fills as a result of snowmelt from the surrounding slopes and generally holds water through August. When full it is approximately one-half acre in size. In 1990 a livestock well was drilled and a 30-foot bottomless trough was installed approximately 300 meters from the reservoir. A pipeline from the well to the reservoir was also installed at that time in order to maintain water levels within the reservoir if needed.

This area is a primary watering site for livestock in the East Wagontire Allotment. The trough and the associated overflow pond are adequate water sources to service livestock watering requirements. However, due to the close proximity of the trough to the reservoir, livestock not only tend to congregate around the trough and overflow pond but also the reservoir. As a result, nesting cover for waterfowl in and around the reservoir is lacking.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION:**

The proposed action is to construct approximately one-half mile of fence around the existing Egli Reservoir to create a 9-acre enclosure. The northwest section of the fence (approximately one-eighth mile) would consist of 16-foot heavy duty livestock panels 5 feet in height. This sturdier portion of fence would be placed at the highest pressure point, between the watering trough and reservoir, to help reduce maintenance costs. The remainder of the fence would be constructed to Bureau specifications for a four-strand barbed wire fence with 16-foot post spacing and three rock crib corners. Wire spacing would be 16 inches, 6 inches, 8 inches, and 12 inches from the ground up, with a smooth bottom wire. Wood stays would be placed every 8 feet to help withstand the high cattle pressure this fence will likely face. No blading, grading or scalping of the fenceline would be allowed.

The next portion of the proposal is to reroute the Egli access road approximately one-quarter mile to circumnavigate the enclosure and connect to the existing power line road. The new road would be bladed to a width of 8 feet.

If needed, additional water from the Egli stock well may be used to maintain water levels in the reservoir. Currently, Peila Ranches covers all utility costs associated with the stock well. With the proposed action the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would also be utilizing water from this well; therefore, a cooperative agreement between the BLM and Peila Ranches would be created in which the BLM would supplement the electric bill for the stock well.

The final portion of the proposed action would be to plant native vegetation throughout the enclosure to facilitate the succession of the area into suitable duck brooding and nesting habitat. Basin wildrye and basin big sagebrush would be planted in the upland areas and cattail plugs and willow species collected locally would be transplanted onto the reservoir's shoreline. Only certified weed-free seed would be used.

The risk of noxious weed expansion would be minimized by ensuring equipment is clean prior to entry into the site, minimizing human disturbance, and follow-up inspections to ensure no new noxious weed establishment. If noxious weeds become introduced, timely, appropriate treatments would occur.

#### FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

This proposal is in conformance with objectives and land use plan allocations in the 1992 Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP). Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA and all other information, I have determined that the proposed action and alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared.

#### Rationale:

This determination is based on the following: The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed in the Three Rivers RMP/Final EIS, and are not known to be present in the project area or affected by enacting either alternative: Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Air Quality, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Special Status Flora, Special Status Fauna, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Cultural Heritage, American Indian Religious Concerns, Paleontology, Floodplains, Prime or Unique Farmlands, and Hazardous Materials. The following two critical elements are not discussed in the Three Rivers RMP/FEIS, but are either not known to be present in the project area or affected by enacting either alternative: Adverse Energy Impacts and Environmental Justice. All potentially impacted resources were analyzed in the EA specific to the proposed action. The following resources were analyzed in the EA: migratory birds, noxious weeds, water quality, wetlands and riparian, wildlife, vegetation, livestock management, recreation, soils, and visual resources. Impacts to these resources are considered nonsignificant (based on the definition of significance in 40 CFR 1508.27) for the following reasons:

### Migratory Birds:

Migratory birds are known to use the project area for nesting, foraging, and resting as they pass through on their yearly migrations. The proposed action would likely benefit all or most of the migratory birds that use this area. First, it would improve wetland and riparian conditions, thus, improving nesting, brood rearing, and foraging habitat. Direct impacts to migratory birds occurring from installation of the enclosure fence would be minimized by installing it in the fall, thereby avoiding nesting and fledging season.

### Noxious Weeds:

There are no known noxious weed sites in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project area. There would be minimal increases in the risk of introduction of new weed populations or the expansion of existing weed populations as a result of implementing the proposed action. Monitoring for noxious weeds would occur for at least 2 years following treatment, and any weeds attempting to establish a population would be treated. Long-term benefits of providing good condition riparian habitat should discourage noxious weed establishment and spread.

### Water Quality:

Currently, water turbidity appears high although no formal water quality monitoring has occurred within Egli Reservoir. The proposed action should cause water quality to improve. Turbidity would decrease once the road is moved away from the reservoir and outside of the enclosure. The increase in vegetation surrounding the reservoir would help to trap sediment which would also cause a reduction in turbidity levels.

### Wetlands and Riparian:

Currently, Egli Reservoir does not support riparian obligate vegetation due to the tendency of livestock to congregate around the reservoir. The proposed action would facilitate the expansion of riparian habitat within the enclosure and protect the new vegetation from being trampled. As the habitat for duck brooding improves, greater riparian plant diversity is expected as more riparian vegetation would be introduced into the area by the waterfowl.

### Wildlife:

Many species common to the sagebrush steppe of eastern Oregon are found in the general vicinity of the project area. The proposed action will likely benefit all or most of the wildlife species that utilize this area as wetland and riparian conditions improve. Increased vegetation around the pond would result in better brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl and wading birds as well as provide some cover for other animals that use the pond for watering. The water source will also be much more reliable in the fall as the proposed action will maintain water levels throughout much of the year.

#### Vegetation:

The site is located in a Wyoming big sagebrush; low sagebrush, needlegrass, bluebunch vegetation type. Initially, minor impacts to the vegetation resource may occur as the enclosure fence is installed. However, in the long run the vegetation resource should improve within the enclosure. The recovery rate would be accelerated with the seeding of basin wildrye, basin big sagebrush, cattail, and willow species.

#### Livestock Management:

The Egli Well water source serves as one of only three permanent water sites within this 30,000-acre pasture. The well and trough provides adequate water to service livestock watering requirements. The proposed fence would only cause minor alteration of livestock trailing patterns. The exclusion of use at the reservoir site would not impact livestock use of the area.

#### Recreation:

The primary recreation activities in the project area are associated with hunting big game species. Under the proposed action, recreational opportunities are likely to increase in the area. During dry years, water levels within the reservoir would be maintained with the Egli stock well. This would improve the availability of water for big game. Due to the increased availability of water, big game as well as an array of other wildlife species would increase use in the Egli Ridge area. Big game hunting opportunities should improve with the increase use of habitat on public land.

#### Soils:

The soils in the project area are well-drained, shallow cobbly loam with moderate potential for water erosion and low potential for wind erosion. Some soil compaction or erosion may occur along the fenceline due to cattle congregating and moving along the fence. There may be an increase to soil erosion during and immediately after project implementation. However, in the long term, vegetation cover will increase and soil erosion should decrease.

#### Visual Resources:

The project area is remote and not visible from any highway. The project area falls entirely within Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The proposed action meets management direction outlined in the Three Rivers RMP for VRM Class III. Visual resources would be temporarily affected with short-term impacts while treatments are taking place. Upon completion of the project, long-term benefits to visual resources should be enhanced as wetland and riparian conditions improve.

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Joan M. Suther  
Three Rivers Resource Area Field Manager

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Date

## DECISION RECORD:

Decision: Having considered a range of alternatives and associated impacts within the analysis of the Egli Reservoir Waterfowl Habitat Improvement EA, it is my decision to implement the proposed action. The proposed action establishes criteria and objectives to enhance wetland and riparian communities, as well as improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

Rationale: I have selected the proposed action for the following reasons:

The exclusion of cattle from a 9-acre area around Egli Reservoir will provide adequate water for these animals and not impact the overall management of livestock on the allotment. It also maintains water levels within the reservoir. This exclusion from use will maintain and improve wetland and riparian conditions, vegetative diversity, water quality, wildlife habitat, and landscape diversity.

Public involvement consisted of direct mailing to the permittee, two other individuals, organizations, tribes, agencies, and a notice in the local newspaper.

It is in conformance with Section 7(a)1 of the Endangered Species Act.

It is in compliance with the Three Rivers RMP (1992).

It is in compliance with Federal laws that mandate the management of public land resources (Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976).

The decision does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation.

I have also considered alternatives to the proposed action including:

Alternative 1 - No Action: Under this alternative no changes would be made at this site. I did not select this alternative because it was not responsive to improving wetland and riparian habitat conditions around Egli Reservoir that are identified in the purpose and need of the EA.

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and Form 1842-1. If an appeal is filed, your notice must be filed in the Burns District Office, 28910 Hwy 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738 by September 3, 2004. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed is in error.

If you wish to file a petition, pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21, for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits.
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
4. Whether or not the public interest favors granting the stay.

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Joan M. Suther  
Three Rivers Resource Area Field Manager

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Date