

**Twin Lakes Recreation Site Improvements  
EAOR135-EA-01-011  
Border Resource Area, Spokane District**

**Introduction**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes recreational improvements at its Twin Lakes recreation site, located within 20 miles of the communities of Davenport, Harrington and Odessa and some 80 miles west of Spokane (see maps). The Twin Lakes recreation site is in Lincoln County in eastern Washington, within the Upper Crab Creek Management Area of the Border Resource Area, Spokane BLM District.

**Background**

The BLM acquired land in the Twin Lakes area in the 1990s and since that acquisition, recreational use has steadily been increasing there.

**Need for Proposed Action**

In its present condition, the site has limited level parking available for recreational vehicles. There is also limited public access, particularly to the east side of the lake and the non-motorized trail route. Recreationists wanting to get to that side of the lake either wade between the two lakes, or drive their vehicles across the lake. Vehicular use to access the far side of the lake has damaged bank vegetation and potentially damaged cultural resources. Attempts to block vehicular access with boulders have been unsuccessful because some people drive around the boulders.

The proposed improvements are needed to provide better public access to prevent resource damage and to meet recreational needs.

**Description of the Alternatives**

Two alternatives were considered: Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) and Alternative 2 (No Action). A description of each alternative is provided below.

***Alternative 1 (Proposed Action)***

The proposed action is to expand the existing parking area, install a pedestrian/non-motorized footbridge across the creek between the two Twin Lakes, post signs along the existing trail, and install pass gates in the existing fence. This bridge would be constructed to follow BLM safety standards and with minimal impact to the creek and its banks.

The existing parking area would be expanded along its north side by mowing and grading an area (approximately 100 feet by 50 feet). Some gravel may be placed to smooth the surface of the parking. The footbridge bridge would be constructed to follow BLM safety standards and with

minimal impact to the creek and its banks. Additional boulders would be placed along the edge of the access road to prevent vehicles from driving on the riparian area.

Fiberglass posts with “TRAIL” stickers would be placed intervisibly along the 10 miles of existing non-motorized jeep trails and access routes. Pass gates with spring-loaded hinges would be installed in existing fences that cross this route. Trail construction would not be needed, but the trail route may need periodic mowing to maintain a visible route.

### Project Design Features

Appropriate resource inventories (including cultural, botanical and wildlife) will be conducted prior to implementing specific projects. If important resources are identified or located, the project would be redesigned to reduce or eliminate impacts to those resources. If historically significant cultural properties cannot be avoided, consultation would be conducted with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colville Confederated Tribes, Spokane Tribe, and historical societies, as appropriate, and in some cases the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation.

Installation of the footbridge will be monitored by an archaeologist.

### ***Alternative 2 (No Action)***

Under the No Action Alternative, the Twin Lakes Recreation site would remain in its current condition.

## **Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts**

### ***Vegetation, Water Resources, and Fisheries***

The project area has two lakes (Upper and Lower Twin) which together stretch along two miles of the Lake Creek drainage. Both lakes are regularly stocked with rainbow trout, which is not a special status species. A short section of an intermittent creek meanders between the two lakes. Riparian vegetation along the lakes consists primarily of reed canary grass, shrubs, and aquatic and semi-aquatic herbs. Along the creek, the riparian vegetation is similar, but denser.

Impacts from Alternative 1: The footbridge would provide access across the creek and between the two lakes, precluding the need for recreationists to drive across the creek between the two lakes. As a result, there would be reduced sediment deposition in the creek and the Lower Twin Lake, and less potential for the vegetation along the creek bank to be damaged. This alternative has the greatest potential to benefit fish spawning habitat by reducing direct disturbance from vehicle and human use within the stream bed.

Impacts from Alternative 2: Due to continued use of the creek area for vehicular access, vegetation along the creek would continue to be degraded, and sedimentation would continue to be deposited into the creek and lower lake. This alternative allows continued disturbance to potential fish spawning habitat and damage to bank vegetation important for fish spawning, rearing and shading.

## **Wildlife**

Wildlife that could inhabit the project area for part or all of their life cycle include amphibians, waterfowl and insects.

Impacts from Alternative 1: The improvements in this alternative would protect amphibian egg-laying habitat, insect cover and breeding area, and waterfowl foraging and resting habitat.

Impacts from Alternative 2: Under this alternative, there would be continued disturbance and loss of important wildlife habitat needed for egg-laying, rearing, breeding, foraging and resting.

## **Special Status Species**

There are no federally ESA-listed or state special status wildlife species nor special status aquatic or riparian plants known or suspected to occur within the project area. Spalding's catchfly, a plant proposed for federal listing as Threatened, occurs on the Twin Lakes property, but not within the areas where the improvements will occur.

Impacts from Alternative 1: The proposed improvements are outside areas where Spalding's catchfly is located, so this plant would not be affected by construction of these improvements.

Impacts from Alternative 2: No impacts.

## **Recreation**

Existing improvements include a graveled parking area, information kiosk, pole fencing, a handicap-accessible toilet, five developed campsites (including picnic tables and fire rings), a portable fishing dock, and two boat launch areas.

The primary recreation uses in this area are camping, fishing and hunting. Other uses include picnicking, horseback riding, hiking and wildlife/wildflower viewing. In private ownership, before BLM acquisition in the early 1990s, recreational use was limited to permission by the private landowner. Since BLM acquisition, however, the area has become a recreational destination point for many residents in northeast Washington. The stocked lakes provide popular recreational fishing opportunities. The popularity of the area is steadily increasing. **In 1999 and 2000**, about 5,700 people visited the Twin Lakes recreation site, according to BLM visitor use numbers.

Gates in the fences are either locked or difficult to open, which restricts access to many recreational users, such as horse back riders and bicycle riders.

Impacts from Alternative 1: The walking footbridge would provide easy walking access to dispersed camping and hiking opportunities on the other side of the lakes. Providing improved access and signing to the existing jeep trails would create an approximate 10-mile non-motorized loop trail that would connect the developed recreation site with the public access and parking area to the north. The pass gates would improve access to this loop easier for equestrian and

bicycle recreationists, and the signing would prevent visitors from getting lost and from inadvertently trespassing onto adjacent private land.

Installing these improvements could increase public use in these area for fishing and use of non-motorized trails. Signing and improving access on the non-motorized loop could draw increased use (horseback, hiking and mountain biking) to this area. Since most use is expected to occur on existing roads and trails, impacts would be minimal

Installing pass gates as is proposed in Alternative 1 would allow access to more types of recreational use across pastures.

Impacts from Alternative 2: Access to the east side of the lake and the non-motorized trail would remain limited. Inadequate signing of the non-motorized jeep trail could result in trespass on adjacent private land.

### ***Cultural and Paleontological Resources***

The proposed project area is located in an area of long-term human occupation and use. The area has been utilized by Native American for thousands of years and by Euro-American settlers over the last hundred years. The lakes have been used by Native American for numerous resources including fish, wildlife and plants. More recently, since BLM acquisition, the lakes have been used for fishing and recreation.

Consultation with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Spokane Tribe has been initiated, and BLM databases and records have been reviewed. The proposed parking, access, and footbridge areas have been inventoried for cultural resources. A multi-component site (45LI229) was recorded in the project area between the two lakes. The site includes an historic fishing resort, Twin Lakes Resort, and a prehistoric archaeological site. In consultation with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the Twin Lakes Resort was determined “not eligible” for the National Register of Historic Places.

The archaeological component was tested by the Eastern Washington University field school in 1996-97. The site is potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The stream connecting the upper and lower lakes was identified in the Government Land Office survey notes in 1878 as a Native American fish trap area. The area continues to be used by Native Americans for resource procurement. No sacred sites or Traditional Cultural Properties have been identified in the project area.

Paleontological remains have not been identified in the project area, nor are any likely to be there.

Impacts from Alternative 1: The proposed parking lot expansion is in an area composed primarily of basalt talus and gravels. The area was previously disturbed during fishing resort operations in the 1940s-60s. Expansion of the parking area into the proposed location is unlikely to affect historically significant cultural resources.

Placement of the boulders would reduce vehicular impacts to the archeological site located in the deeper sediments between the lake and the access road. The footbridge location is outside the identified boundaries of the archaeological site. Improving access across the footbridge and expanding parking facilities would likely increase access to cultural resources beyond the recreation site.

Monitoring of the footbridge installation and the project design feature to protect any cultural resources located during project work would provide protection to cultural resource values.

Increased use could increase erosion, indirectly increasing the potential for cultural resources to be exposed and subject to damage.

*Impacts from Alternative 2:* Cultural resources, particularly archaeological remains associated with the prehistoric site 45LI229, would be damaged by continued recreational vehicular use across the creek and in the riparian area.

### ***Other Resource Values Considered in the Analysis***

*Grazing Use:* **The project area is within grazing allotment 0647.** There are numerous fences and gates in the area, including some that intersect with the Twin Lakes Loop Trail. Locked gates are located in two locations along the trail (see Map 1).

Few user conflicts occur between livestock grazing on this allotment and dispersed recreational use. Horse and bike recreationists using the gates sometimes inadvertently leave the gates open. Under Alternative 1 (Proposed Action) installing gates with spring-loading features would prevent gates from being inadvertently left open, improving the capability to manage livestock use on this allotment. Under Alternative 2, gates could be left open and interfere with grazing control.

*Environmental Justice:* There would be no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations as a result of implementing the Proposed Action (Alternative 1). Recreationists with physical limitations would have wheelchair access for fishing and wildlife viewing. Alternative 2 (No Action) would not provide disabled access at the Twin Lakes recreation site and, therefore, would restrict use to this segment of users.

*Mineral Resources:* The Twin Lakes area is considered to have moderate potential for gas and oil. The proposed improvements are not expected to conflict with any future mineral use of the area.

*Other Values:* The following resources were considered in this analysis, but determined to be either not present or not expected to be impacted: air quality, prime or unique farmlands, special areas, wilderness, wastes (hazardous or solid), floodplain, invasive non-native species, and wild and scenic rivers.

### ***Cumulative Impacts***

Impacts from Alternative 1: The proposed improvements, along with the existing improvements and considering the area's increasing popularity, could result in higher use in the perimeter area outside the developed recreation site. Also, the improvements could attract higher numbers of horse back riders and mountain bike riders.

Impacts from Alternative 2: Anticipated higher use by recreationists in the future could compound the impacts to the creek riparian area and cultural resources.

### **Coordination with Other Agencies, Groups and Individuals**

Lori Baker, Recreational Planner, Spokane District - BLM (Team Lead for EA)

Rich Bailey, District Archaeologist, Spokane District - BLM

Barb Benner, Botanist, Border Resource Area - BLM

Kathy Helm, District Planner & Environmental Coordinator, Spokane District - BLM

**Richard McComas, Natural Resource Specialist, Border Resource Area - BLM**

Robert Troiano, District Weed Specialist, Spokane District - BLM

Joyce L. Whitney, Wildlife Biologist, Border Resource Area - BLM

### **Consultation**

Consultation was initiated with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colville Confederated Tribes and the Spokane Tribe on September 4, 2001.