



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Baker Field Office
3165 10th Street
Baker City, Oregon 97814
<http://www.or.blm.gov/Vale/>

IN REPLY REFER TO:

June 14, 2002

2890
OR 57407

Dear Reader:

An Environmental Assessment and proposed Finding of No Significant Impact have been prepared for a small wind & weather data collecting station in Baker County. The location is about five miles east of Baker City on the ridge forming the divide between Baker Valley and Virtue Flat.

A public comment period is now in effect until July 17, 2002. To be considered in final decision making, comments must be filed by that date with the Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 3165 10th Street, Baker City, Oregon 97814.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Steve Davidson at 541-523-1349.

Sincerely,

s/Penelope Dunn Woods

Penelope Dunn Woods
Field Manager

**PROPOSED
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT #OR-035-02-04**

The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) contains a description of the proposed action, an analysis of expected impacts on land and resources, and mitigating measures to reduce those impacts.

In terms of context, I find that the impacts described would occur only on the site of the proposed action. There would be no societal or regional impacts and no impacts on potentially affected interests.

In terms of intensity, I have evaluated the effects of the proposed action, together with the proposed mitigating measures, against the tests of significance found at 40 CFR 1508.27. I find that:

1. The proposed action would cause no significant impacts, either beneficial or adverse. All impacts would be negligible.
2. The proposed action would have no effect on public health or safety.
3. The proposed action would not affect unique characteristics of the geographic area.
4. The proposed action would have no controversial effects.
5. The proposed action would have no uncertain effects and would not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The proposed action is a small routine project. Although it may be a precursor to a future more complex project, it does not establish a precedent for that action.
7. The proposed action is not related to any other action being considered by BLM.
8. The proposed action would have no effect to any property listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
9. The proposed action would not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species, or any habitat critical to an endangered or threatened species.
10. The proposed action does not violate any law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Therefore, I have determined that the proposed action, with the proposed mitigating measures, would not have any significant impacts on the human environment, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

s/Penelope Dunn-Woods

Field Manager

July 18, 2002

Date

OPTIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORM

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER: OR-035-02-04

BLM Office: Baker Resource Area

Lease/Serial/Case File No. OR 57407

Proposed Action Title/Type: Rick May Weather Station

Location of Proposed Action: WM, T. 9S., R. 41E., sec. 17, lot 2. See map attached.

Applicant (if any): Rick L. May

Conformance With Applicable Land Use Plan:

This proposed action is subject to the following land use plan.

Name of Plan: Baker Resource Management Plan **Date Approved:** 7/12/89

This plan has been reviewed to determine if the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

Remarks: Within Baker County Geographic Unit. Public lands are to be available for local rights-of-way. Baker County has zoned the area Exclusive Farm Use. This type of use would be outright permitted.

Need for Proposed Action: Collect wind/weather data to determine if area is suitable for wind turbine electric generators.

General Setting: The site is about five miles east of Baker City on top of a broad ridge which forms the divide between Baker Valley and Virtue Flat. Elevation is about 4120 feet. The location is about 120 feet east of a barbed-wire fence which serves as the boundary between two grazing allotments.

Description of Proposed Action: The proposed structure is a metal mast about 50 feet high with four guy wires. Various instruments for data collection would be attached to the mast. There would also be a small solar panel and a sealed battery inside a box attached to the mast. See the attached sketch. The site would probably be fenced to protect it from livestock.

A rod would be driven about two feet into the ground. The mast would be clamped to this rod with u-bolts. The mast and its attachments would be partially assembled off-site. All work at the site would be with hand tools. It is anticipated that some hand digging would be necessary to set the mast rod and the guy anchors, also in constructing the fence.

Access to the site would be by 4x4 pickup on a road trace along the fence running past the site. No road building would be done. The data would be gathered by remote sensing, so no regular trips to the site are expected. However, it should be assumed that the applicant would occasionally visit the site.

The distance from guy anchor to guy anchor would be about 80 feet. Total dimensions of the right-of-way applied for is 100 x 100 feet.

Alternatives: No action is the only alternative considered.

Environmental Impacts:

Critical Element	Affected		Critical Element	Affected	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Air Quality		X	T & E Plants		X
ACECs		X	Tribal Concerns & Treaty Rights		X

Cultural Resources		X	Wastes, Hazardous/Solid		X
Environmental Justice		X	Water Quality, Drinking/Ground		X
Farmlands, Prime/Unique		X	Wetlands/Riparian Zones		X
Floodplains		X	Wild & Scenic Rivers		X
T & E Animals		X	Wilderness		X
T & E Fish		X			

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Description of Impacts: A negligible amount of vegetation and soil disturbance would occur during installat of the facility, resulting from the hand digging to set the mast rod and guy anchors, and in constructing the protective fence.

The site is within sage grouse nesting habitat and about 2¼ miles from an active lek. This species is a Bu Sensitive Species and is afforded the same protection and management as a Federal Candidate Species. habitat would be affected since no sagebrush plants would be removed. Rock jack posts on the protective fence might provide perches for predators.

If the site is fenced, about .2 acre of livestock forage would be removed from Virtue Hills Allotment #2099. is not significant enough to warrant any change in use or management of this allotment.

The project would be “skylined” on its ridge location from Virtue Flat, including from a house in the Flat, an from Baker Valley north of Baker City. However, this small spindly mast is unlikely to be visible from any g distance and would not attract attention.

There are mining claims in the vicinity, but this site is not within a claim, according to records in the Baker Office.

Impacts of No Action: The above impacts would not occur. Ongoing impacts from livestock use would continue.

Cumulative Impacts: None are identified.

Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts: All work to be done be hand. No unnecessary off-road vehicular travel; confine it to the faint trace along the fence. Barbed wire fence, per BLM specs. N cutting of sagebrush. Avoid visits to the site during sage grouse breeding season at dawn or dusk. Place approved perch guards on the rock jack posts.

Possible sage grouse impacts would be reduced. Other residual impacts would be as described above.

Persons/Agencies Consulted: Baker County Planning was contacted regarding the zoning of the area. Letters were sent to the permittees for the affected grazing allotment and nearby allotment, the owner of the above mentioned house on Virtue Flat, and the claimant of the nearest mining claim.

Preparer(s): s/Steve Davidson

Date: June 4, 2002

Environmental Coordinator: s/Ted Davis

Date: June 4, 2002
