NORTH RIVER ALLOTMENT FENCE
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
EA OR-025-01-13

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

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

A. Purpose and Need

The proposed fence would be located about 3 miles southeast of Drewsey, Oregon, in T. 21 S., R. 36 E., Sections 8, 17, and 18 (Map 1). The proposal is to construct a new fence on a surveyed property line to replace an existing fence that is on private land not owned by the grazing permittee. The purpose of the proposal is to align the fence on the property line. The proposed fence would tie into a fence the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) will construct north of this project. Map 1 shows not only the landownership but also the proposed fence in relation to the old one as well as the one to be constructed by ODFW. The need for the proposal is to upgrade the existing fence to facilitate livestock management between private land and the River Allotment. The only logical alternative to the proposal is no action which would result in continued use of the old fence and the private land remaining within the River Allotment.

B. Compliance and Authorities

This proposal is in conformance with the Three Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP), the Record of Decision, and Rangeland Program Summary published in September 1992, and the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in the States of Oregon and Washington.

CHAPTER II. ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. No Action Alternative

Under this alternative the fence would not be constructed and current management would continue.

B. Proposed Action Alternative: Fence Construction

The proposed action is to construct approximately 1.25 miles of 3-wire fence with the bottom wire smooth, which is the District standard to provide for wildlife movement. The fenceline would be cleared with hand tools only; it would not be bladed. Fence materials would be sling loaded to certain points along the project line to lessen impacts of delivering materials cross-country with vehicles. The fence would be constructed on a surveyed property line and replace an old fence which has been a past maintenance problem. The new fence would be a realignment of the old fence and a continuation of

a fence that ODFW will construct on their property line.

CHAPTER III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The following resources and activities are not present or will not be affected by either of the alternatives: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), air quality, environmental justice, prime or unique farmlands, fire management, fisheries, floodplains, forestry, hazardous materials, land and rights-of-ways, migratory birds, minerals, noxious weeds, reclamation, socioeconomics, water quality, Wild and Scenic Rivers, wild horses and burros, wetlands and riparian zones, wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), and woodland resources.

A. Vegetation and Range

The vegetation along the proposed fence route is predominantly big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass with the associated grasses and forbs usually found in this habitat type. The proposed fence would replace an existing fence that is on the allotment boundary along the northeast portion of the River Pasture of the River Allotment. Annually, livestock graze in this pasture during March and April. Livestock grazing on private land adjacent to the fence typically occurs in late summer and sometimes fall or winter. As the river goes down in late summer, passage around and through the fence by cattle from private land into the River Allotment becomes a problem.

B. Cultural and Paleontological Resources

The proposed project area has not been inventoried for cultural or paleontological resources. This project area is in close proximity to the Malheur River and obsidian and paleontological resources are known to exist in the vicinity; therefore, the expectation of site discovery is high.

C. Special Status Species

There are several known sites of Leiberg's clover (*Trifolium leibergii*) along the existing fenceline. Leiberg's clover is a Federal Species of Concern, a State Candidate, a Bureau Sensitive species and on the Oregon Natural Heritage Program List 1, as a species which is threatened or endangered throughout its range. There are also known sites of Palid milkweed (*Asclepias cryptoceras*) in the vicinity. This species has recently been dropped from the Special Status plant lists.

Bald eagles and ferruginious hawks have been seen flying over the area near the proposed project.

D. Wildlife

Wildlife species common to the big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass habitat of southeastern Oregon may be found in the proposed project area. Some of these species are mule deer, pronghorn antelope, Rocky Mountain elk, deer mouse, meadow lark, Brewer's sparrow, northern fence lizard, and western rattlesnake.

E. Recreation and Visual Resources

The main recreational use of the proposed project area is for big game hunting. The proposed project area is within Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III and IV, where projects of this type are allowed.

F. Soils

The proposed fence traverses two soil map units. The primary map unit, making up 95 percent of the area is B1811, Torriorthents-Gumble complex, 2-35 percent slopes. The other 5 percent of the fence traverses map unit B1880, Mahoon-Cagle complex, 10-40 percent slopes.

B1811, Torriorthents-Gumble complex, 2-35 percent slopes

Torriorthent soils make up 45 percent of this complex, and are located on hillsides and escarpments. These soils are extremely gravelly loam on the surface, becoming a loam from 1 to 5 inches deep and below that it is diatomaceous earth. Depths of these soils are very shallow (4 to 10 inches) to soft bedrock. They are moderately well-drained with moderately slow permeability. Water and wind erosion potentials are slight, but shrink-swell capacity is moderate. Steel corrosivity is moderate and frost action is moderate.

Gumble soils make up 40 percent of this complex, and are found on hills and ridges. These soils are very gravelly silt loam on the surface, becoming loam from 3 to 8 inches, they become a clay loam from 8 to 14 inches, then a silty clay loam from 14 to 16 inches, finally becoming tuffaceous sedimentary rock at 16 inches. Depths of these soils are shallow, ranging from 10 to 20 inches to soft bedrock, and are well-drained with slow permeability. Water erosion potential is moderate, while wind erosion potential is slight. Shrink-swell capacity is high with steel corrosivity at a moderate level, and frost action is low.

B1880, Mahoon-Cagle complex, 10 to 40 percent slopes

Mahoon soils make up 65 percent of this complex, and are located on hillsides and footslopes with 10 to 20 percent slope. These soils are typically very cobbly loam on the surface, changing to gravelly clay from 3 to 25 inches. They have a diatomaceous base ranging from 25 to 35 inches. Mahoon soils are well-drained with slow permeability, and the wind and water erosion potentials are slight. Shrink-swell potential is high with steel corrosivity being moderate, and frost action low.

Cagle soils make up 20 percent of the complex, and are located on north and east facing hillsides with 20 to 40 percent slopes. Cagle soils are very stoney clay loam on the surface, transitioning to clay from 4 to 24 inches. From there, they are clay loam from 24 to 36 inches where they become soft tuffaceous sedimentary rock. Cagle soils are moderately deep (10 to 40 inches), well-drained with slow permeability. They have slight wind and water erosion capacity and a high shrink-swell capacity. Steel corrosivity is moderate while frost action potential is low.

CHAPTER IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Vegetation and Range

No Action

There would be no change to the vegetation resources under the no action alternative. The existing fence would continue to be difficult to maintain and result in occasional unauthorized livestock use.

Proposed Action

Impacts to the vegetation resource would result from the construction of the fence and would be limited to an area approximately 10 feet wide along the proposed fenceline. These impacts would be from vehicle driving along the proposed fenceline and hand clearing of vegetation from the fenceline when needed to construct the fence. The new fence would provide for improved livestock management and replace the existing fence that is difficult to maintain and is not on the property line.

B. Cultural and Paleontological Resources

No Action

The existing situation would continue.

Proposed Action

No impacts to cultural resources are expected. The proposed project area would be surveyed for these resources prior to construction. If any sites containing these resources are found appropriate mitigation measures would be implemented. Such measures may include avoidance, data recovery, and/or other actions as deemed necessary.

C. Special Status Species

No Action

The existing situation would continue.

Proposed Action

Leiberg's clover sites could be adversely impacted by construction activities and by livestock trailing along the fenceline. Sites along the south end of the existing fence would benefit from the removal of the fence through the sites. A site-specific clearance in the appropriate season would be conducted prior to construction. The fenceline would be relocated to prevent going through sites of Leiberg's clover which would be adversely impacted by the fence. If new sites of Pallid milkweed are discovered, they would be documented on a site report form. There would be no impact to Special Status animal species.

D. Wildlife

No Action

There would be no change from the current situation.

Proposed Action

Disturbance from construction activities would displace some animals from the area for a short period of time. The impacts are not expected to result in a change in any animal

populations in the project area.

E. Recreation and Visual Resources

No Action

There would be no change from the current situation.

Proposed Action

There would be no impact to recreation by the proposed action. The proposed fence would be visible from a close distance but use of all green posts and not blading the fenceline would help the fence blend into the natural surroundings. Improvements of this type are allowed in VRM Class III and IV areas.

F. Soils

Installing a fence in map unit B1811 would pose difficulty in driving the posts as both soils are shallow to very shallow. Also, corrosion on the t-posts would somewhat shorten the life of the fence. Erosion due to disturbance should be slight unless there is much disturbance from vehicular traffic. Shrink-swell concerns and frost heaving are of concern in this area, but if the posts are installed to a proper depth these factors should be of little concern.

Installing fencing in B1880 would be difficult because of the shallow bedrock in the majority of the unit. Corrosion on the t-posts would somewhat shorten the life of the fence. Erosion would not be of concern unless there is ground disturbance from vehicles. Shrink-well capacities would be of concern due to their high potential although frost action is low. Slope is the biggest concern on this unit with regard to installation of the fence.

CHAPTER V. CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Wilber Brothers, Adjacent Landowners
Terry Williams, Grazing Permittee

CHAPTER VI. PARTICIPATING STAFF

Rudy Hefter, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist
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