

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
VALE DISTRICT OFFICE
DECISION RECORD**

Star Valley Road Maintenance Material Sites
Environmental Assessment
EA. No. OR-030-08-006

Background:

The Star Valley Road (SVR) was constructed in the early 1970's and is a graded, drained, and largely natural surface, all-weather road. Regular road maintenance has consisted of seasonal surface grading. Several portions of the existing road surface have been maintained in past years by grading and placing gravel in areas prone to deterioration during wet weather. Only two major upgrades have occurred since construction. The upgrades consisted of culvert replacement at the Tent Creek Cow Camp (T. 40 S., R. 47 E., Section 31 SW¹/₄) and at Tent Creek in T. 41 S., R. 46 E., Section 1 SE¹/₄SW¹/₄. Both culverts were damaged in 2002 by increased water drainage in the area.

The need to develop new sources of rock aggregate along the SVR to the Nevada border has been known for several years. The need for more local sources of rock aggregate has become increasingly more important as fuel and equipment operating costs continue to rise. The nearest BLM Community pit is at Tent Creek in T. 40 S., R. 47 E., Section 31 near the southern end of the SVR. This sand and gravel source has become unusable due to water inflow and will be abandoned. Currently, the nearest existing community pits are Antelope Flat Community Pit (rock aggregate) (T. 38 S., R. 43 E., Section 25) and Santa Reservoir Community Pit No.1 (topsoil) (T. 37 S., R. 44 E., Section 26) which are between 12 and 40 miles from the project areas.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of the proposed action is to develop three sites with favorable geologic characteristics to provide rock aggregate for maintenance of the SVR. The Vale District BLM is tasked with maintaining the SVR to provide safe public and administrative access to public lands in the southeastern portion of the District. The maintenance of the SVR requires that rock material is available within a reasonable distance to the work area. Existing rock sources from designated community pits are between 12 and 40 miles from the primary road maintenance area. The Vale District BLM needs to develop three material sites along the SVR to allow cost effective and efficient maintenance of BLM transportation plan roads. Increased fuel and equipment maintenance cost would be buffered by reducing the haulage distance of rock materials to a maximum of 6 miles for the road maintenance projects. The material sites would be developed to provide aggregate material for the resurfacing and subsequent maintenance of the SVR and any adjacent roads. The SVR continues south across the Nevada border and the potential exists that a portion of this material would be used by Nevada BLM, Winnemucca

District, for maintenance of the SVR into the Quinn River area and the McDermitt Reservation.

Public Comment:

The EA was available for a 10-day public review period. The EA was posted on the BLM Vale District Internet. No comments have been received.

Finding of No Significant Impact:

All three of the proposed material sites would occur within citizen-proposed wilderness study areas. An intensive update of wilderness characteristic information conducted by the BLM for the Louse Canyon Geographic Management Area (LCGMA) found that two of the citizen-proposed areas did not possess or meet the required characteristics of size, naturalness, or outstanding opportunities for solitude and/or outstanding opportunities for primitive unconfined recreation. The third material site, the Tent Creek site, would occur within an area identified by the BLM to possess wilderness characteristics. The Tent Creek site would be located at the extreme edge of that area, affecting only 0.10% of the 9,134 acres and would have no significant impact to the area. Significance is further diluted when considered in the context of the 273,837 acres found by BLM to have wilderness characteristics within the LCGMA. Geographic screening would provide further protection to the wilderness characteristics of the area. The BLM is not required by policy, regulation or law to protect areas identified by citizen's wilderness study area proposals but has chosen to minimize impacts to these areas in the LCGMA.

On the basis of the information contained in the attached Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts not already addressed in the Southern Malheur Management Framework Plan (MFP, March 1983) and the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan (SEORMP, September 2002). I have determined, based upon the analysis of environmental impacts contained in the referenced EA (OR-030-08-006), that the potential impacts resulting from the proposed action would not be significant and that, therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. I have determined that implementation of the proposed action shall best meet resource management objectives and the intent of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, and the National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of 1980.

Decision:

Based on the analysis documented in the EA (OR-030-08-006) and the Finding of No Significant Impact, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action. This action would create material sites not to exceed ten acres of surface disturbance for both the excavation and stockpile operations. The portion of each site designed for rock extraction would be cleared of vegetation and available growth medium would be stockpiled adjacent to the site. An air-track drill rig would be used to construct holes to

depths of 20 to 40 feet which would be subsequently loaded with blasting agent. The blasting agent would be ANFO (ammonium nitrate and fuel oil) which would fragment the rock to a size fraction amenable to loading operations (typically 15-18 inches in diameter). The fragmented rock would be pushed by a dozer into a pile and then loaded into a portable crushing unit to reduce the rock material to a size required for the road surfacing and maintenance. All blasting operations would be supervised by an Oregon State-licensed blasting professional. The crushed rock would be stockpiled in two size fractions, 3-inch minus and 1-inch minus, within the material site until needed for road maintenance. The location of these proposed material sites are in close proximity to the SVR to minimize the material haul distance (See Vicinity Maps No.1-No.3). In the future, each site would be designated as a BLM Community Pit, as per 43 CFR 3601, allowing access to rock sources for yearly road maintenance.

This Decision Record documents my approval of the proposed alternative for three material sites along the SVR including the operating stipulations established in the EA (OR-030-08-006). The SEORMP Best Management Practices (Appendix O) shall also be in effect for the duration of the Project.

Decision Rationale:

The Proposed Action was selected because it best meets the purpose and need of the project. The criteria used in choosing the preferred alternative included safety, environmental impacts, cost, and whether or not the alternative meets the project purpose and need, and complies with the BLM management goals for road maintenance requirements.

Implementing the proposed action with identified stipulations, meets the criteria described in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to authorize the disposal of mineral materials and the 43 CFR 3600 Mineral Material Disposal Regulations. The proposed action is also in accordance with the MFP, March 1983, and the SEORMP, September 2002, which provides for the disposal of common variety minerals in order to meet public demand.

Appeals:

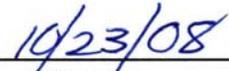
Any applicant or other person whose interest is adversely affected by the final decision may file an appeal in accordance with 43 CFR 4.411. The appeal may be accompanied by a petition for a stay of the decision in accordance with 43 CFR 4.21. The appeal and petition for a stay must be filed in the BLM Vale District Office, 100 Oregon Street, Vale, Oregon 97918, within 30 days following receipt of the final decision, or within 30 days after the date the proposed decision becomes final. This decision is full-force-in-effect immediately upon signature in accordance with 43 CFR 2801.10, unless a petition for stay is filed and allowed by the Interior Board of Land Appeals. Refer to 43 CFR 4.411 and 4.412 for more information regarding filing of an appeal.

Carolyn R. Freeborn

10/23/2008



Carolyn R. Freeborn
Jordan Field Manager



Date