



File Code: 1950/2600

Date: August 3, 2004

Dear Forest Interest:

The Pleasant Grover Ranger District, Uinta National Forest is initiating scoping and requesting public comment on a proposal to install two guzzlers along the Wasatch Front, one in the summer of 2004 and one in the summer of 2005, to provide a water source for bighorn sheep and other wildlife. These guzzlers would be located in Townships 6 and 7 South, Ranges 3 and 4 East, Salt Lake Base and Meridian, Utah County, Utah (see map for specific locations). Installation of these guzzlers would be a continuing effort to provide water for wildlife species in areas where water is not available throughout the summer or periods of sustained drought.

This project would continue the Forest's program of wildlife habitat improvement and enhancement for bighorn sheep. Because the majority of live water is collected for culinary use, little water is left available for wildlife in the drainages across the Front. The prolonged drought has resulted in slow recharge of groundwater resources, and many small springs and seeps that would otherwise provide water for wildlife have gone dry or go dry by mid-summer.

A more detailed description of the purpose and need for this project and the specific actions being proposed follows. Your input will help direct and define issues, alternatives considered, and the analysis of environmental effects associated with this proposal. To be most helpful, comments should identify specific issues and concerns with the proposed action. Valid issues and concerns are not factored or weighted by numbers of people or organizations submitting them. This process and decision is not based on popular vote but by the soundness of the analysis and the information that it incorporates. However, all comments will be addressed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Forest Service is initiating environmental analysis of a proposal to install two guzzlers along the Wasatch Front over the next two years (one each in the summers of 2004 and 2005). These guzzlers would be placed in the following locations (see map):

- Township 6 South, Range 3 East
 - SE1/4 NE1/4 Sec 10

- Township 6 South, Range 4 East
 - NE1/4 SW1/4 Sec. 31

The guzzlers would be flown into the placement sites by helicopter. These guzzlers are rectangular in shape, and are 16ft x 8ft x 2ft. Once on the ground, the guzzlers would be secured on-site by excavating depressions of approximately ½ to one foot in depth, and the guzzlers placed in these depressions. All excavation and placement of the guzzlers would be



accomplished using hand labor; no mechanical equipment would be used in the installation of these guzzlers. The guzzlers would be situated so as to collect and store seasonal runoff water for use by bighorn sheep and other wildlife species. The guzzlers would be fitted with a small animal ramp, which will allow small animals and birds to access the water without drowning.

BACKGROUND

The project proposal is one in a continuing wildlife habitat improvement/enhancement program to facilitate maintenance of the bighorn sheep herd that uses the Wasatch Front. Water sources historically used by wildlife have been diverted for other uses. Water diverted from streams and springs and used for human consumption has left bighorns and other wildlife species with little or no water in the canyons. Drought conditions have added to this problem. Drought conditions over the last several years have resulted in a lack of sufficient water along the Wasatch Front for the sheep, as well as other wildlife species. In an attempt to find water and food, bighorn sheep have been moving out of the high country into the areas adjacent to urban areas. While this provides an opportunity to view wildlife, it also results in wildlife being subjected to stresses and threats not normally encountered. Additionally, wildlife that move into urban areas pose a threat to private property through damage to ornamental vegetation, as well as posing potential threats to the public in general. Big game that moves into urban areas are also at risk of being hit by vehicles.

IMPACTS BEING ADDRESSED

Some of the impacts being addressed are associated with situations resulting from dewatering of streams for culinary water needs, and long-term drought conditions on springs and seeps at higher elevations. Those that can be mitigated through implementation of the guzzler installation include:

- Encourage wildlife to stay at higher elevations, keeping them away from urban areas and minimizing potential for being killed when crossing US Highway 186 (Provo Canyon).
- Potentially reduce animal damage to ornamental vegetation caused by big game that moves out of the higher elevations to lower elevations to find water.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The *Purpose* of the proposed action is to install two guzzlers over the next two years to provide water sources at high elevations for big game and small game/non-game wildlife species along the Wasatch Front. The *Need* for the proposed action is:

- Provide additional water sources for bighorn sheep and other wildlife species during periods of drought and/or as springs dry out in late summer and early fall.
- Attract bighorn sheep to suitable summer range at higher elevations; encourage wildlife species to move to and stay higher on the slopes and stay out of urban areas and avoid being killed by vehicles and avoid damage to private property.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE 2003 UINTA NATIONAL FOREST LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The 2003 Forest Plan's Forest Wide Goal # 2 states, "*Biologically diverse, sustainable ecosystems maintain or enhance habitats for native flora and fauna . . .*" (LRMP, p. 2-1). These guzzlers would be installed in suitable summer range for bighorn sheep, which is not currently being used to its full extent. These areas would be enhanced because of the new water sources available. This would also help to keep the bighorn sheep on the National Forest and out of urban setting where there is a greater likelihood that they will be hurt or cause damage to private property.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

Internal scoping identified the following issues/concerns with this proposal.

1. Sites selected for placement of guzzlers should not be occupied by or be in immediate proximity to Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive (TES) plant species to minimize potential trampling effects from wildlife using the water sources.

Utah Division of Wildlife Resource (UWDR) botanists have surveyed the proposed guzzler sites, and have found no TES plants on or within close proximity of the selected sites.

2. Excavation of the guzzler sites should not result in erosion that could result in development of gullies as a result of overland flow of water.

Excavation of the guzzler sites would be designed to ensure soil is stabilized and overflow of water from the guzzler is directed across the slope to minimize potential for development of gullies down slope.

3. Excavation of the guzzler sites should be only as much as necessary to install the tanks and not leave undisturbed soil upon which weeds or invasive plants could establish.

Installation of the guzzlers would require excavation, by hand, of an area approximately 8x10 feet. This is just enough area to secure the guzzler in place and not expose any more soil than is necessary. Disturbed soil would be seeded with native grasses/forbs suitable for the elevation to prevent weeds and invasive plants from establishing and reduce the potential for erosion.

4. Maintenance of these facilities needs to be consistent to meet the intent of the purpose and need.

The UDWR and Forest Service recognize the need for continual maintenance of these types of facilities to ensure long-tem functionality. Volunteers will help maintain these guzzlers.

5. These guzzler sites are situated within the Rock Canyon/Buckley Mountain (#418011) and South Fork Provo River (#418024) Road less Areas. How might installation of these guzzlers impact road less area characteristics?

The environmental analysis of this proposal will consider the level of impact, if any, on the road less area characteristics. It is anticipated that installation of these guzzlers will not adversely impact the road less characteristics of these road less areas. A complete analysis of potential impacts on road less area characteristics will be conducted as part of the evaluation of this proposal.

6. What effects, if any, upon cultural resources or biological resources would result from the implementation of this proposed action?

Based on previous survey results and the opinion of the Forest Archeologist, no cultural resources are expected to be found upon these sites because of their location in steep, inaccessible areas. (C. Thompson memo dated 25/11/2002)

7. What effects, if any, would there be upon the scenic resources from implementation of this proposal?

The 2003 Forest Plan classifies these proposed site locations as having a retention scenery management objective. This translates to requiring all management activities and uses to be subordinate to the viewer, with no visible evidence of modification upon the landscape. The location of these guzzlers would not place them in view of the casual observer. Installation would require these tanks to be situated so as to be “invisible” to anyone who might walk within proximity to them. Vegetation and local topography may help screen them from view of the occasional passerby.

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

Send substantive comments relative to this proposal to the Responsible Official for this project, who is Pam Gardner, District Ranger, 390 N 100 E, Pleasant Grove, UT 84062; phone 801-342-5241; or you may hand deliver your comments during normal business hours from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Email comments may be sent to comments-intermtn-uinta-pleasantgrove@fs.fed.us. The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice for this project in the *Provo Daily Herald*. Your comments need to be as specific as possible and contain the following:

1. Your name, address, and (if possible) telephone number;
2. Title of the document(s) on which comment is being submitted; and
3. Specific facts or comments along with supporting reasons that the person believes the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision.

SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF ANALYSIS

- Scoping and public review and comment on the proposed action begins with publication of a legal notice in the *Provo Daily Herald*, and end 30 days later.
- The environmental analysis is tentatively scheduled to be completed and appropriate decisions made in the summer of 2004.
- It is anticipated that the analysis of this proposed action will be documented in a decision memo.
- One guzzler is scheduled for installation this year. The second guzzler would be installed in FY2005.

Thank you for your interest in management of the Uinta National Forest. If you have questions regarding this proposal, please contact Pam Gardner at the Pleasant Grove Ranger District at the address above or by phone at 801-342-5241.

Sincerely,

/s/ Pamela J. Gardner
PAMELA J. GARDNER
Pleasant Grove District Ranger

Attachment: [Project/guzzler location map](#)