

**DECISION MEMO**  
**Wildlife Guzzlers**

USDA – Forest Service  
Uinta National Forest  
Pleasant Grove Ranger District  
Utah County, Utah

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The wildlife guzzler project 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 bighorn 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 is also at risk of being hit by vehicles.

The project would install two guzzlers along the Wasatch Front during 2004-2005 to provide water sources 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 is a continuing effort to provide water for wildlife species in areas where water is not available throughout the summer or periods of sustained drought.

## **2. PROPOSED ACTION**

The Forest Service completed an environmental analysis of a proposal to install two wildlife guzzlers along the Wasatch Front during 2004-2005 (Installation depends on the availability of aircraft, personnel, weather, and other variables). The legal descriptions of the location of these proposed guzzlers are as follows:

- 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 will 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 will be secured on-site by excavating depressions of about ½ to one foot in depth, and the guzzlers placed in these depressions. All excavation and placement of the guzzlers will be accomplished using hand labor; no mechanical equipment will be used in the installation of these guzzlers. The guzzlers will be situated so as to collect and store seasonal runoff water for use by bighorn sheep and other wildlife species. The guzzlers will be fitted with a small animal ramp, which will allow small animals and birds to access the water without drowning.

### 3. PURPOSE AND NEED

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.

### 4. SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District initiated scoping for this proposal by issuing a scoping letter on August 3, 2004, which was sent to about 90 known interested parties. The proposed project was also listed in the Uinta National Forest's "*Schedule of Proposed Actions*" Fall 2003, Winter, Spring, Summer 2004 editions. An announcement of the project proposal for comment was published as a legal notice in the *Provo Daily Herald* on August 6, 2004. In response to these solicitations and internal scoping, the following issues were identified.

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 identified sites. A Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation were completed for these projects with findings of no effect. (Hartman, July 2004)*

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 will 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 will require excavation, by hand, of an area about 8x10 feet. This is just enough area to secure the guzzler in place and not expose any more soil than necessary. Disturbed soil will 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 UWDR and Forest Service recognize the need for continual maintenance of these types of facilities to ensure long-term 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) Roadless Areas. How might installation of these guzzlers impact roadless area characteristics?

*The impacts on wilderness attributes and roadless area characteristics were considered. Installation of these guzzlers may have minor, short-term impacts on wilderness attributes and roadless characteristics of these Inventoried Roadless Areas. Those effects include minor, short-term disturbance during the installation of the guzzlers, minor soil disturbance from placement of the guzzlers, minor effects on landscape character and integrity in the immediate area near the guzzlers. Vegetation and local topography should help screen them from view of the occasional passerby. None of the effects are considered irreversible or irretrievable commitments of the roadless resource and would not exclude the areas from future wilderness consideration. If desired, these unnatural features could be removed.*

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 will not place them in view of the casual observer. Installation will require these tanks to be situated so as to be "invisible" to*

*anyone who might walk within proximity to them. Vegetation and local topography should help screen them from view of the occasional passerby.*

8. What effects, if any, would there be on TEPS, MIS, and FS Sensitive aquatic, terrestrial, avian and migratory bird species?

*There are no threatened, endangered, sensitive species within the project site. A Biological Evaluation/Biological Assessment was completed (Hartman, July 2004), and a determination of “no effect” and “no impact” to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species was made. No adverse impacts on birds are anticipated, and this decision is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.*

9. The guzzler would attract livestock if it were accessible to livestock on Cascade Mountain.

*There is no grazing allotment on Cascade Mountain. The Pleasant Grove Ranger District currently has no permitted livestock grazing. There are two unoccupied grazing allotments on the ranger district. Neither of them is near proposed locations for the wildlife guzzlers.*

## **5. CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THIS PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment. Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 states that “a proposed action may be categorically excluded from documentation...only if the proposed action” ... “is within a category listed in section 31.1b or 31.2; and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.” (FSH 1909.15, section 30.3 (1)) The proposed action is specifically listed as one of the Forest Service Chief’s categories for categorical exclusion (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, Section 31.2, No. 6):

*“Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction.”*

The proposed action fits this category because it will improve wildlife habitat and will not include the use of herbicides or require any road construction.

FSH 1909.15, Section 30.3 (WO Interim 1909.15-2002-2) lists the following as “extraordinary circumstances”:

Steep slopes or highly erosive soils – The guzzlers will be located on relatively flat ground on mountain tops or ridges. Disturbed soil will be seeded with native grasses/forbs suitable for the elevation to prevent weeds and invasive plants from establishing and reduce the potential for erosion.

Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – The project area does not contain any critical habitat for threatened and endangered species. The Forest Service has determined that this project will have no effect on any federally protected species or critical habitat (Hartman, July 2004).

Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – Installation of the guzzlers will have no impact on floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds. The project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on any water bodies, floodplains, or wetlands.

Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any congressionally designated areas.

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) – The project area is located within the Rock Canyon/Buckley Mountain (#418011) and South Fork Provo River (#418024) Roadless Areas outside the Rock Canyon/Buckley Mountain IRA. Minor and/or short-term effects from installation and use of the guzzlers will not affect these areas from any future wilderness consideration.

Research natural areas – The project area does not reside in, and the project will not have any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on, any research natural areas.

American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites, archeological sites, or historic properties or areas – 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)

## 6. DECISION

I have decided to approve the installation of the wildlife guzzlers on Cascade Mountain and Provo Peak.

## 7. REASON FOR MY DECISION

The proposed action will be of limited context and intensity and capable of producing little or no significant environmental effects (**40 CFR 1508.4**) individually or cumulatively on the quality of the human environment; is within a category listed in FSH 1909.15, Section 31.2; and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action.

- **Need to prepare an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement:** There are no impacts to “extraordinary circumstances” that require preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. The description of projects that may be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS may be found in the Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 164/ Friday, August 23, 2002/Notices Section 30.3, paragraph 5.

## 8. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

Cascade Mountain and Provo Peak are located within the Lower Provo Management Area as identified in the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). The proposed project is consistent with Forest-wide and Management Area specific direction. The following 2003 Forest Plan references are some of the direction applicable to this activity:

**FW-Goal-2** Biologically diverse, sustainable ecosystems maintain or enhance habitats for native flora and fauna, forest and rangeland health, watershed health, and water quality. (LRMP, p.2-1)

**Sub-goal-1-1** Forest Service activities, including those permitted by the Forest Service, maintain or enhance the long-term productivity and physical, chemical, and biological processes and functions of the soil. (LRMP, p.2-2)

**Sub-goal-2-6** Ecosystems on the Forest provide and maintain viable and well-distributed populations of flora and fauna. New listings of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species as a result of Forest Service management activities are avoided. Population objectives developed cooperatively with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are achieved. . . (LRMP, p.2-5)

**Sub-goal-2-17** Activities and vegetation management minimize or eliminate the occurrence of non-native pests (including noxious weeds) and epidemic episodes of native pests. (LRMP, p.2-7)

**Sub-goal-2-23** Areas identified as being of special concern for habitat such as big game winter range, . . . are maintained and, where potential exists, improved or expanded. Disturbances in these areas are limited during critical periods for wildlife. (LRMP, p.2-9)

**Objective-2-8** Detect and prevent new infestations of noxious weeds and other undesirable plants from becoming established, and prevent further spread or reduce existing infestations. (LRMP, p.2-13)

**Aqua-5 Guideline:** Avoid equipment operation in stream courses, open water, seeps, or springs. If use of equipment in such areas is required, impacts should be minimized. (LRMP, p.3-2)

**WL&F-2 Standard:** Provide wildlife escape ramps in all developed water sources. (LRMP, p.3-11)

**WL&F-3 Guideline:** Provide for wildlife movement through and/or around structures or project sites such as fences, spring developments, guzzlers, roads, and ditches. (LRMP, p.3-11)

**Weeds-8 Guideline:** To the extent practical and consistent with other land management objectives, retain shade to suppress noxious weeds in areas where ground-disturbing activities are planned. (LRMP, p.3-16)

**Weeds-9 Standard:** For at least three years after a project is completed, treat invading noxious weeds, as needed, on areas impacted by ground-disturbing operations. (LRMP, p.3-16)

**Scene-2 Guideline:** Forest resource uses or activities should meet the assigned objectives for scenery management as displayed on the map for each management area located in Chapter 5. In the short-term there may be activities that produce impacts not meeting planned scenery objectives, yet facilitate a higher level of scenic quality in the long-term. . (LRMP, p.3-31)

There are no floodplains or wetlands within the project area, and none of these areas will be impacted. The project sites are located away from streams and springs and will not impact water quality. The project is consistent with the Clean Water Act.

There are no threatened, endangered, sensitive species within the project site. A Biological Evaluation/Biological Assessment was completed (Hartman, July 2004), and a determination of “no effect” and “no impact” to threatened, endangered, or sensitive species was made. No adverse impacts on birds are anticipated, and this decision is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

No cultural resources will be affected by the proposed action. The decision is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, this action will not result in any disproportionate impact to minority or low-income populations.

Implementation of this proposal is consistent with other Federal, State, and local laws for the protection of the environment.

#### **9. IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

This decision may be implemented immediately.

#### **10. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8 (a)(4), this decision is not subject to a higher level of review or appeal.

#### **11. CONTACT PERSON**

For further information about this decision or project, please contact Pamela Gardner, District Ranger, at 390 North 100 East, Pleasant Grove, Utah 84062, or by phone at (801) 785-3563.

*/s/ Pamela J. Gardner*  
Pamela J. Gardner  
District Ranger  
Pleasant Grove Ranger District

*September 23, 2004*  
Date