



DECISION NOTICE (DN) AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) OF THE QUESTAR FEEDER LINE 24 HIGHLAND, UTAH REPLACEMENT PROJECT

**USDA Forest Service
Pleasant Grove Ranger District, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests
Utah County, Utah**

1. INTRODUCTION

This document details my decision regarding the approval of the Questar Feeder Line Highland, Utah Replacement Project on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest (UWCNF) (Figure 1). The actions were developed at the onset of the project and are based on site-specific needs and preliminary issues. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Forest Service regulations on its implementation, the potential environmental impacts of this proposal were assessed and documented in an Environmental Assessment (EA) released concurrent with this draft decision. The EA is incorporated herein by reference.

2. BACKGROUND

The Pleasant Grove Ranger District (PGRD), Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forests (UWCNF), received a proposal from Questar Gas Company (Questar) to replace 0.29 miles of existing 10-inch natural gas pipeline, known as the Questar Feeder Line (FL) 24 Highland City Replacement Project (Project). The pipeline segment proposed for replacement occurs within an existing utility corridor situated on the foothills above Highland City. The replacement project will cross the American Fork River three-quarter mile west of the mouth of American Fork Canyon at the eastern edge of Highland City. It will parallel the Salt Lake Aqueduct easement between the northern end of the Cedar Hills Golf Course and the eastern end of the Alpine Country Club subdivision.

Questar's FL 24 currently provides natural gas to residential and commercial customers in Utah County. The existing 10-inch diameter steel pipe will be replaced with 12-inch diameter steel pipe in order to meet increasing customer demands for natural gas and to increase pipeline depth below the American Fork River. Approximately 0.24 miles of the pipeline replacement will be on lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and approximately 0.05 miles will be on private lands. Once the replacement section is installed, the section of existing, 10-inch diameter pipe will be abandoned in place to minimize additional ground disturbances. The maximum width of the right-of-way (ROW) construction corridor is 75 feet with a permanent ROW width of 50 feet. Access and equipment staging for the Project will make use of existing access roads and open areas around the project and will not require additional ground disturbance. The project area is shown in Figure 1.

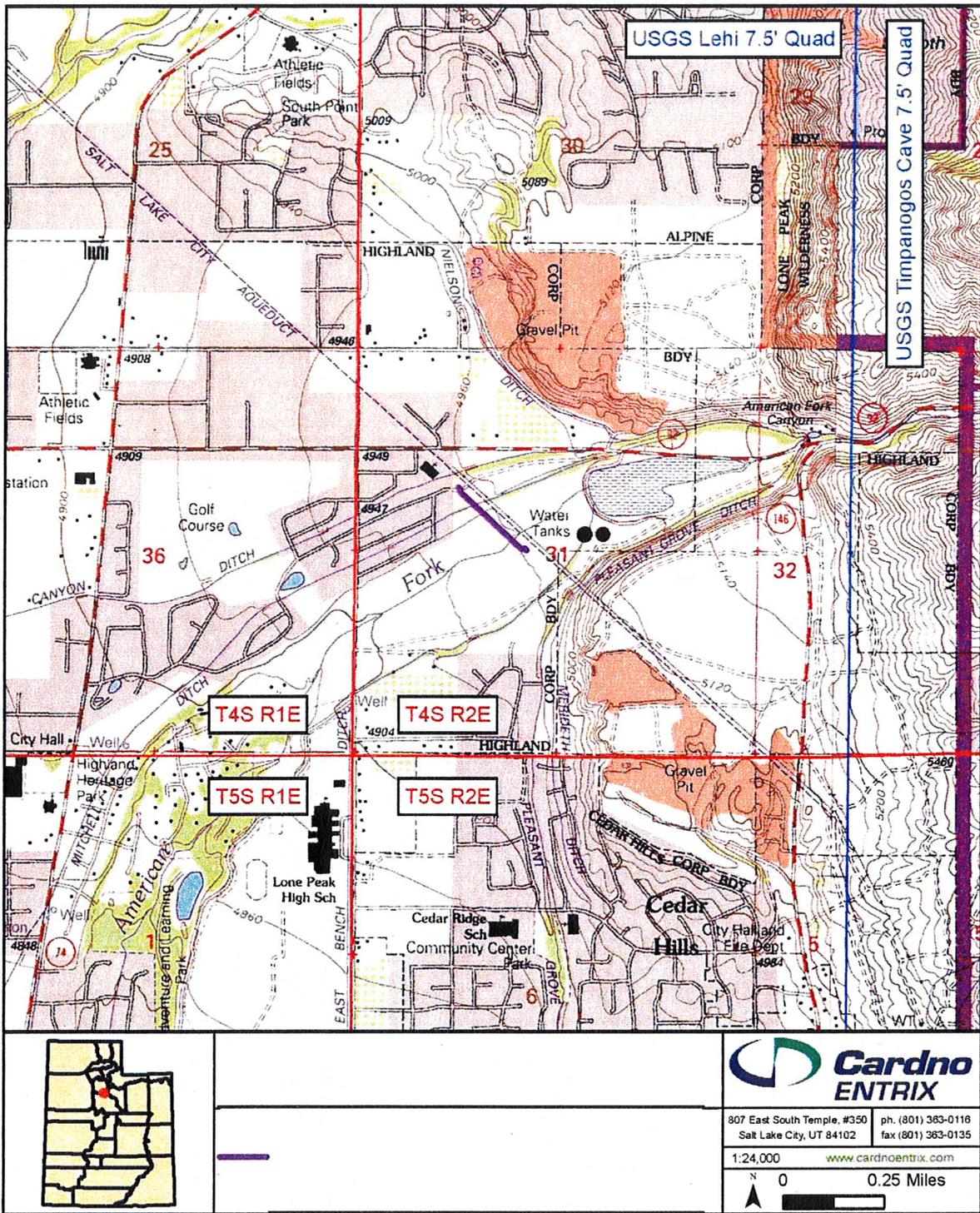


Figure 1: Project Vicinity Map

3. DECISION

My decision is to authorize the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) for the portion occurring on the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest. The proposed action consists of construction activities associated with the replacement of a section of Questar's FL 24 natural gas pipeline near Highland, Utah. Approximately 0.29 miles of existing 10-inch diameter steel pipe will be replaced with 12-inch diameter steel pipe in order to meet increasing customer demands for natural gas and to increase pipeline depth below the American Fork River. Approximately 0.24 miles of the pipeline replacement will be on lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and approximately 0.05 miles will be on private lands. Once the replacement section is installed, the 0.29-mile section of existing 10-inch diameter pipe will be abandoned in place to minimize additional ground disturbances. The proposed action and the alternatives considered in detail are described in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3) of the EA.

My conclusions are based on the scientific analysis in the EA (and supporting project record) that demonstrates a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information. The analysis identifies techniques and methodologies used, considers current and accurate science, and references scientific resources relied upon. The analysis includes a summary of scientific evidence relevant to evaluating reasonably foreseeable impacts.

4. DETAILS OF THE DECISION

Alternative 1: The Proposed Action

The Proposed Action consists of construction activities associated with the replacement of 0.29 mile of existing 10-inch diameter natural gas pipeline with a 12-inch diameter natural gas pipeline and increase of the existing 16-foot-ROW by 34 feet for a total permanent ROW of 50 feet (the maximum width of the ROW construction corridor would be 75 feet with a permanent ROW (width of 50 feet). The Proposed Action is located within and directly adjacent to an existing utility ROW. Construction activities would occur during the summer of 2014 for duration of approximately 60 days. The existing 10-inch diameter piping would be deactivated and abandoned in place; new 12-inch diameter pipe would be installed, tested, and placed in service. The proposed activities are discussed in three phases: Phase 1 - Preliminary Construction Work, Phase 2 - Standard Pipeline Construction, and Phase 3 - Clean-up, Restoration, Reclamation and Pipeline commissioning.

Initial design investigations that have been completed include the following:

- Project Design:
 - Geotechnical studies
 - Identification of the pipeline centerline, work areas, Project staging areas, and access points.
- Baseline Field Surveys of the Project area:
 - Jurisdictional Waters of the U.S.
 - Archaeological, cultural, and historic resources,
 - Wildlife and vegetation – USFWS federally listed species, Region 4 Forest Service
 - Sensitive Species of interest, raptor nests, and noxious and invasive weeds.

Coordination with state and federal resource management agencies would continue through Project completion.

Phase 1 - Preliminary Construction Work

Establishment of construction access points would be necessary to safely and efficiently access the Project ROW. Primary access would be gained from an existing access road off of Country Club Drive in T4S, R2E, Section 31. Another existing dirt road may be used to minimize impact to the American Fork River while accessing the southern part of the project. Accessing the ROW from this location would not require a Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)-approved closure.

Prior to construction, the section of the FL 24 pipeline that is proposed to be replaced would be isolated and depressurized. Local emergency response agencies and adjacent landowners would be contacted prior to this activity.

Construction crews would clear vegetation from the ROW. Clearing of vegetation will be kept to the minimum and limited to only the removal necessary for safe construction operations. In some cases this may be less than the approved temporary ROW and in other cases this may include most of or the entire approved temporary ROW depending on localized conditions. Root systems will be left in place, where feasible and where they do not pose a safety concern for workers or an impediment to equipment or rubber-tired vehicle access. All pipeline construction activities, including clearing and grading, will only be performed within the approved construction (temporary) ROW.

Trees, brush, other woody material, and rocks cleared from the ROW will be moved to one side of the ROW for later use in reclamation. These uses could include measures to impede unauthorized vehicle traffic, or re-contouring and reclamation efforts.

Topsoil removed during the clearing and grading operations will be segregated from subsoils. Topsoil and subsoils will be placed in separate piles on the non-working side of the ROW for subsequent restoration activities.

Phase 2 - Standard Pipeline Construction

Standard pipeline construction consists of the following tasks:

- Trench excavation
- Pipe stringing (laying pipe along the ROW)
- Use of hydraulic bending machine to conform pipe with the bottom of the trench
- Welding of pipeline joints and coating
- Pipe Laying and tie in
- Placement of backfill over new pipe in the trench
- Pipeline testing

Trench excavation

Excavation of the trench will be conducted with the use of conventional track-mounted backhoes. The pipe will be cut on each end near the end of the project to allow for tie-ins with the FL 24 pipeline. The abandoned section of the existing pipe will be left in place. A typical trench will be excavated 36-40 inches wide and approximately 40 inches deep. The depth of the trench will vary with the conditions encountered. The cover from top of pipe to ground level will generally be 40 inches. In all instances, pipeline burial depths will be in

conformance with the requirements of DOT pipeline safety regulations. The minimum cover from top of pipe to ground level will be at 60 inches under the American Fork River.

Accepted erosion control practices will be followed in order to minimize erosion during excavation and construction activities. Erosion control practices will adhere to the Utah Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit (UPDES) for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity. Project impacts are anticipated to be approximately 2.6 acres and will require development of a SWPPP. Although not anticipated, if groundwater is encountered during excavation, discharge from any trench de-watering will be appropriately permitted and conducted following established Best Management Practices (BMPs). In general, pipeline excavation will be conducted such that surface waters will not freely flow into the trench.

The replacement Project will cross the American Fork River three-quarter mile west of the mouth of American Fork Canyon and the American Fork Canyon Ditch at the eastern edge of Highland City. No controls or structural changes to the stream channel or irrigation ditch are anticipated. The construction work will be performed during the low flow period utilizing "dry" crossing techniques to minimize water quality impacts and sedimentation. BMPs will be followed with no impacts to surface water quality expected. All necessary stream/wetland crossing permits will be obtained prior to construction. Permit term and conditions will describe methods and stipulation required to mitigate any impacts to water quality.

Pipe stringing

Pipe would be stockpiled at staging areas and transported to the ROW. Where space permits, the pipe would be strung along the edge of the ROW. Pipe would be brought in one joint at a time where space is confined.

Stringing operations will be coordinated with trenching and installation activities in order to properly manage the construction process. As construction proceeds, some of the pipe and stringing equipment will be temporarily stored at staging areas within the ROW.

Bending

After the joints of pipe are strung along the trench but before the joints are welded together, individual joints of the pipe will be bent to accommodate horizontal or vertical changes in direction. Such bends will be made using an approved cold, smooth bending machine having a hydraulically operated shoe that makes the bend.

Welding and Coating

After the pipe joints are bent, the pipe will be lined up end-to-end and clamped into position. The pipeline will then be welded in conformance with 49 CFR Part 192, Subpart E, "Welding of Steel in Pipelines" and API 1104, "Standard for Welding Pipelines and Related Facilities," latest edition. Welds will be visually inspected by a qualified inspector and will be subject to radiographic inspection in conformance with DOT requirements. A specialized contractor qualified to perform radiographic inspection will be employed to perform this work. Any defects will be repaired or removed as required under the specified regulations and standards.

The pipeline will be externally coated prior to delivery. After welding, field joints will be coated with either a tape wrap or shrinkable sleeve wrap. Before the pipe is lowered into the trench, the pipeline coating will be visually inspected and any defects or scratches will be repaired.

Pipe laying

Once the pipe has been welded and inspected, it will be lowered into the trench. Side-boom tractors will be used to lift the pipe, position it over the trench, and lower it in place. Inspection will be conducted to verify that minimum cover is provided, the trench bottom is free of rocks and other debris that could damage the pipe, external pipe coating is not damaged, and the pipe is properly fitted and installed into the trench.

Backfilling

Backfilling will begin after the pipeline has been successfully placed in the trench and final inspection has been completed. Backfilling will be conducted using a bulldozer or other suitable equipment. Backfill will generally consist of the material originally excavated. In some cases, backfill material from other areas (borrow material) may be needed. In rocky areas, padding material or a rock shield will be used to protect the pipe. Backfill will be graded and compacted, where necessary for ground stability, by being tamped or walked in with a wheeled or track vehicle. Sub-soils will be backfilled first, followed by replacement of the stockpiled topsoil. Any excess excavated materials, or materials unfit for backfill, will be properly disposed of in conformance with applicable laws or regulations, and landowner or jurisdictional agency requirements. Where possible, these surplus materials will be spread out over the ROW to avoid off-site disposal. The American Fork River channel crossing will be restored to near pre-construction conditions.

Pipeline Testing

After completion of pipeline construction, the pipeline will be integrity tested in compliance with DOT pipeline safety regulations (49 CFR 192). Prior to testing, the pipeline will be cleaned by passing reinforced poly "pigs" through the interior of the pipeline. The pipeline segment will then be filled with nitrogen, pressurized, and held for the specified duration of the test.

Phase 3 - Clean-up, Restoration, Reclamation, and Commissioning

Following completion of reclamation, all trash, debris, and other solid wastes will be removed from the ROW. All material will be disposed of in the appropriate manner in existing authorized sanitary landfills. No solid waste will be buried along the ROW. After reclamation and cleanup, the Project area will be inspected to verify that reclamation and cleanup have been satisfactorily completed.

Following installation of the pipeline and backfilling of the trench, all disturbed areas will be re-contoured to their pre-construction condition as closely as practicable. Permanent erosion control structures (e.g., waterbars) will be installed, as needed, and all disturbed areas will be reseeded with those species designated in a seed mix approved by the Forest Service, and certified as weed free by the USDA seed lab.

In order to prevent rutting and subsequent erosional problems, measures will be taken to prevent unauthorized use of the ROW as a roadway. After seeding, trees, brush, and other woody material cleared from the ROW may be randomly scattered over the ROW. Rocks removed from the trench excavation will be used to block the ROW to future vehicular traffic, or randomly scattered across the ROW. Placement of the trees, brush, woody material and rocks would be done in such a manner as to not interfere with water diversions.

Upon completion of the testing of the pipeline and auxiliary facilities and receipt of all required approvals, the pipeline will be purged of air and charged with natural gas and the facilities will be placed in service.

The ROW will be inspected to monitor the effectiveness of the reclamation efforts and to identify any problem areas, including any new infestations or the spread of existing infestations of noxious and invasive weed species. Inspections will be conducted until 70 percent of the surrounding vegetation has established within the ROW. Remedial actions will be taken for any problem areas identified, including noxious and invasive weed treatment and as detailed in Questar's FL 24 Noxious and Invasive Weed Management Plan (Appendix B).

5. DECISION RATIONALE

In making my decision to authorize the Questar Feeder Line 24 Highland, Utah Replacement Project, I have reviewed the existing environmental conditions and the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects for both of the alternatives. I have also considered comments received from the public. I gave careful consideration of how well each alternative met the 1) purpose and need, and 2) responded to public concerns and the issues, as follows.

Purpose and Need

My decision to authorize the project meets the purpose and need for the Forest Service. The proposed alternative studied in the EA met the Questar purpose and need to replace a section of Questar's FL 24 old natural gas pipeline with new larger diameter pipe that adds increased capacity and meets current safety standards. This upgrade is intended to meet new residential development and associated residential customer demands.

Response to Public Concerns and the issues

Based on comments received during the scoping and comment period, the Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team developed the list of issues for the proposed project. The issues were then used in development of alternatives and in the analysis of environmental effects. In making my decision I considered how well each of the alternatives address and resolve the issues. The issues considered in the analysis included the following:

1. Migratory Bird: Assess potential impacts to migratory birds and establish measures to avoid and minimize ground disturbance impacts to birds,

Response: The proposed action is scheduled to commence after the generally recognized migratory bird nesting period (July15) to avoid disturbance.

2. Threatened and Endangered Species: review the proposed action to determine if it will affect any ESA listed species or critical habitat that may occur in the project area, with a focus on Ute ladies'-tresses and Yellow-billed cuckoo.

Response: A biological survey was conducted in late summer 2013 to determine the presence of any existing raptor nests, Ute ladies'-tresses and Yellow-billed cuckoo or suitable habitat. No suitable habitat or species presence was observed and impacts were analyzed in previous sections.

2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)

The EA describes the applicable goals, management prescriptions and standards and guidelines of the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) that are applicable to the proposed project. The Forest Service worked closely with the 3rd Party Contractor

(Cardno Entrix) during preparation of the EA and as discussed in the EA, the selected alternative is consistent with the plan. The EA contains mitigation measures intended to minimize potential project effects on NFS land and that are related to the plan's standards and guidelines. The applicable mitigation measures address special status species, fisheries, vegetation disturbance, noxious weeds, and heritage resources.

In conclusion, I have reviewed the 2003 Uinta National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and based on the discussions provided in the EA, I have concluded my decision is consistent with provisions of the plan, including its goals, management prescriptions and standards and guidelines.

6. OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

No Action Alternative

Analysis of the No Action alternative is necessary to provide an accurate contrast with the Proposed Action. Under the No Action alternative, the segment of the FL 24 pipeline would not be replaced and no ground disturbing activities would occur. Customers along the Wasatch Front rely on natural gas, primarily for heating homes in the winter. FL 24 is a primary supplier of natural gas for the Highland and Cedar Hills region, but the pipeline is nearly 50 years old and is scheduled for replacement in accordance with standard system maintenance practices. If this pipeline was not replaced, this critical peak demand supply would be at continually increasing risk for safety and reliability concerns. Should this source be interrupted during the peak demand months, a significant loss of natural gas service would be experienced in this region. I did not select this alternative because it did not meet the purpose and need.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detail Study

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). No other alternatives requiring in-depth analysis were suggested through interdisciplinary review and scoping on this Proposed Action, or identified through the initial analysis of environmental effects. The existing pipeline is located within an existing ROW on land that the UWCNF acquired through land acquisition and there are no management prescriptions for this site. The area is treated as an Administrative site and follows Highland City land use guidelines.

The project as proposed will not have any significant adverse effects. Moving the pipeline off Forest Service administered lands is not a reasonable alternative that would meet the purpose and need of the project. Relocating the pipeline from its current location is not economically and technically feasible given the surrounding land uses.

7. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions beginning on July 1, 2013. On June 24, 2013 the PGRD issued a public scoping notice that summarized the Proposed Action and invited comments regarding the scope of this EA. The notice was mailed to 108 agencies, organizations, and individuals (adjacent stakeholders) on the PGRD's project scoping mailing list. The notice was published in the Provo Daily Herald on June 27, 2013.

The 30-day scoping period closed on July 27, 2013. Two comments specific to the Project undertaking and four inquires for additional information were received as a result of this publication.

The scoping notice and legal notice was also posted on the UWCNF website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/uwcnf/landmanagement/projects> and made available on CD or in hard-copy form to anyone requesting it.

8. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After careful consideration of the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined my decision will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). I base my findings on the following statements from the EA:

1. The beneficial effects of the action do not bias my finding of no significant environmental effects.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health and safety.
3. There will be no significant effects on the unique characteristics of the area. There will be no impact on historic or cultural features.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of this project (EA, Chapter 3).
5. The environmental analysis shows the effects are not uncertain (EA, Chapter 3), and do not involve unique or unknown risk.
6. This decision will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects (EA, Chapter 3).
7. The cumulative impacts are not significant (EA, Chapter 3).
8. This decision will have no significant adverse effects on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. This action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources (EA, Chapter 3).
9. This decision will not adversely affect any threatened or endangered species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (EA, as well as the Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation available in the Project Record).
10. This decision will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

9. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

My decision to authorize the Proposed Action is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan standards and incorporates appropriate land use and resource management plan guidelines.

My decision is consistent with the following key laws, regulations, and requirements:

National Environmental Policy Act: This act requires public involvement and consideration of potential environmental effects. This Decision Notice is in compliance with NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1500 to 1508) for implementing

NEPA. The effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives were analyzed and were disclosed in the EA which was available for public review.

Clean Water Act of 1977: My decision will not affect the existing high quality water flowing through the area.

Executive Order 11990: My decision will have no adverse effects to wetlands and therefore complies with this executive order.

Executive Order 11988: My decision will have no adverse effects to floodplains and therefore complies with this executive order.

Endangered Species Act of 1973: Based on information disclosed in the Biological Assessment it has been determined that this decision will have no adverse effects to populations of endangered or threatened species of fish, wildlife and plants.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act: The Wild and Scenic River Suitability Study for National Forest System lands in Utah Record of Decision and Forest Plan Amendments did not recommend any rivers or segments within the analysis area as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Therefore, there will be no effect and my decision is in compliance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Executive Order 13186: My decision complies with this executive order.

Executive Order 13112: This decision incorporates the implementation of a weed management plan. My decision will therefore not increase the spread of invasive plant species.

American Antiquities Act of 1906 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966: There would be no effects to a historic property relative to this decision.

Prime Farmland, Rangeland and Forest Land: There is no prime farmland or grazing allotments affected by the project.

Civil Rights Act of 1964 – There would be no adverse effects to groups or individuals protected under the federal Civil Rights Act.

Executive Order 12898: No minorities or low-income populations were identified during public involvement activities that would be affected by this decision.

Violating Federal, State and Local Laws: My decision does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

10. OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT

This proposed project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218 subparts A and B, and is not subject to appeal under 36 CFR 215. Objections will be accepted only from persons who have previously submitted specific written comments regarding the proposed project either during scoping or during other designated opportunity for public comment (36 CFR 218.5). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after designated opportunities.

Individual members of organizations must have submitted their own comments to meet the requirements of eligibility as an individual, objections received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only. If an objection is submitted on behalf of a number

of individuals or organizations, each individual or organization listed must meet the eligibility requirement of having previously submitted comments on the project (36 CFR 218.7). Names and addresses of objectors will become part of the public record.

Incorporation of documents by reference in the objection is permitted only as provided for at 36 CFR 218.8(b). Minimum content requirements of an objection are identified in 36 CFR 218.8(d) and include:

- Objector's name and address with a telephone number if available; with signature or other verification of authorship supplied upon request;
- Identification of the lead objector when multiple names are listed, along with verification upon request;
- Name of project, name and title of the responsible official, national forest/ranger district of project, and
- Sufficient narrative description of those aspects of the proposed project objected to, specific issues related to the project, how environmental law, regulation, or policy would be violated, and suggested remedies which would resolve the objection.
- Statement demonstrating the connection between prior specific written comments on this project and the content of the objection, unless the objection issue arose after the designated opportunities for comment.

Written objections, including any attachments, must be sent via regular mail, fax, email, hand-delivery, or express delivery within 45 days following the publication date of this legal notice in the *Provo Daily Herald* to:

Objection Reviewing Officer
USDA-Forest Service Intermountain Region
324 25th Street
Ogden, UT 84401

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered objections are: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic objections must be submitted in a format such as an email message, pdf, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc or .docx) to: objection-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Faxed appeals should be sent to (801) 625-5277. Objectors are responsible for ensuring that their objection is received in a timely manner (36 CFR 218.9).

The publication date in the *Provo Daily Herald*, which is the newspaper of record, is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection of this project. Persons wishing to object to this proposed project should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Extensions of the objection period are not permitted.

When the objection filing period has ended and responses have been made to all objections by the reviewing officer, the responsible official may make a final decision on the proposed project. The reviewing officer shall issue a written response to objectors within 45 days following the end of this objection-filing period (this may also be extended by the reviewing officer up to 30 days).

When no timely objections are filed, a decision can be made on the 5th business day following the close of the filing period. Implementation may begin immediately after the decision is made.

11. CONTACT

For additional information about this project or anyone wishing to obtain copies of the EA and Draft DN/FONSI, contact Anne Hansen, Supervisor's Office, 857 West South Jordan Parkway, South Jordan, UT 84095, (801) 999-2158, email: annehansen@fs.fed.us. For information about the objection process, contact Nelson Gonzalez-Süllow, email: nelsongonzalezsullow@fs.fed.us; phone: (801) 999-2171.



DAVID C. WHITTEKIEND
Forest Supervisor



Date

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