

Dated: March 8, 1995.

Susan K. Feldman,

Committee Management Officer, NIH.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[CO-070-5101-CO12]

Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Notice To Scoping Meetings, and, if Determined To Be Necessary, Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a Proposed Replacement Raw Water Pipeline in Mesa County, CO

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), and Notice to Scoping Meetings, and, if determined to be necessary, prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a Proposed Replacement Raw Water Pipeline in Western Colorado.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Grand Junction Resource Area Office, Grand Junction District, will be directing the preparation of a NEPA document. The NEPA document will be initiated as an EA, with the understanding that it may be upgraded to an EIS. The document will be prepared by a third party contractor, and will address impacts of the Plateau Creek Pipeline Replacement project proposed by the Ute Water Conservancy District (Ute Water). The project is a raw water conveyance system proposed on private and public lands in Mesa County, Colorado to replace a deteriorated and under sized pipeline currently approved under BLM ROW grant C 081282.

DATES: Written comments will be accepted until 4:00 p.m., MST, on April 13, 1995. A public scoping meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on March 29, 1995, at the Two Rivers Convention Center, 159 Main Street, Grand Junction, Colorado.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to the Grand Junction Area Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 2815 H Road, Grand Junction, CO 81506, ATTN: Plateau Creek Pipeline Replacement Project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dave Stevens, (303) 244-3009.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The existing Plateau Creek Pipeline is an essential part of the Ute Water system

which provides water to more than 55,000 Grand Valley residents. The Ute Water service area includes most of the Grand Valley area surrounding the City of Grand Junction, Colorado, and extends from east of the Town of Palisade to within 5 miles of the Colorado-Utah stateline. Ute Water is a political subdivision of the State of Colorado formed under the Water Conservancy Act of 1937, and is considered to be a quasi-municipal entity.

The existing prestressed concrete pipe was installed in the early 1960s. A pipeline consisting of 42-inch and 36-inch diameter pipe carries raw water for approximately 4.5 miles from the Lower Molina Power Plant tail race to two storage reservoirs. From the reservoirs, water is conveyed via a 24-inch-diameter pipeline approximately 14 miles along Plateau Creek Canyon and adjacent to Interstate Highway 70 to Ute Water's treatment plant located on Rapid Creek, near the Town of Palisade. As of 1994, the pipeline was no longer able to provide an adequate flow rate to meet the peak day customer demands. The pipeline is presently subject to frequent breaks due to deteriorated pipe condition, and is unreliable due to its location within geologic hazards and stream erosion areas. In order for Ute Water to meet its commitment of providing a reliable, cost effective, high quality water source, replacement of the pipeline is necessary. The pipeline size and capacity will be determined from independent water demand projections based on population estimates to be generated and documented as part of this effort.

Ute Water has preliminary scoping to: (1) identify interested stakeholders and agencies, (2) define key issues, and (3) identify initial alternatives. On the basis of the preliminary scoping, 16 alternatives were developed. These include seven alternatives along the Plateau Creek corridor, three different alternatives involving use of water from nearby utilities, a Colorado River pump station alternative, two alternatives for supplying water from the Kannah Creek watershed, two alternatives for supplying water from the Whitewater Creek watershed, and a No Action alternative. Groundwater alternatives and conservation actions will be addressed in the EA. Four of the initially considered alternatives, selected on the basis of screening criteria described in Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act, are proposed for evaluation in the EA. These are:

Alternative A—Replacement of the pipeline on an alignment parallel to

Plateau Creek such that impacts to all resources are minimized.

Alternative B—Replacement of the pipeline parallel to Plateau Creek entirely within the existing state highway 65 and 330 rights-of-way.

Alternative C—Replacement of the pipeline in either alignment A or B with a smaller pipeline. This alternative includes provisions for construction of a booster station at the mouth of Plateau Canyon to be built at a future date to meet long-term demands.

Alternative D—A "no federal action" alternative.

Major issues identified during the preliminary scoping include: (1) wetlands and riparian areas, (2) threatened and endangered species, (3) wildlife habitat, (4) need for demand projections, and (5) water depletion issues. Preliminary review by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) indicates that the anticipated impacts may be entirely mitigable, and may be limited to temporary disturbance. However, there is a potential that significant impacts may be identified during the EA process and it may be necessary to convert this documentation effort into an EIS. Therefore, it is also the intent of this NOI to provide for public notice and review necessary for an EIS pursuant to NEPA.

The tentative project schedule is:

Begin Public Comment Period—March 1995
Complete Final EA—January 1996
EA Finding—March 1996
Complete Final Design—January 1997
Begin Construction—March 1997

The BLM's scoping process will include: (1) Identification of additional issues to be addressed; (2) Identification of additional viable alternatives, and (3) Notification of interested groups, individuals and agencies so that additional information concerning these issues can be obtained.

The scoping process will be initiated by publication of this NOI in the **Federal Register** and issuance of a news release announcing the start of the process; letters of invitation to participate in the scoping process, and distribution of a scoping document describing the proposed action, alternatives and significant issues being considered is available upon request.

Mark T. Morse,

District Manager.

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