



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Challis Field Office
801 Blue Mountain Road
Challis, Idaho 83226
<http://www.id.blm.gov/offices/challis>



In Reply Refer To:
9230 (084)

July 16, 2004

Idaho Department of Water Resources
1341 Fillmore Street, Suite 200
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301-3380

Dear Idaho Department of Water resources:

The Bureau of Land Management is withdrawing its protest to Transfer No. 69678 filed by Wayne and Melodie Baker. The trespass case against them has been settled and the BLM will proceed with processing their Right of Way application for the pipeline using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

We expect to analyze at least three alternatives including but not limited to leaving the pipeline in as is, removing the pipeline with rehabilitation, and leaving the pipeline in place with mitigation. Your agency will be placed on the NEPA mailing list to receive the opportunity to comment on this project, and will subsequently be notified of the final decision regarding the pipeline.

I have attached two letters which describe the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Idaho Fish and Game observations of the pipeline and that its chief benefit is water conservation for your information and/or action.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at 208-879-6250.

Sincerely,

RECEIVED

JUL 19 2004

Department of Water Resources
Southern Region

Gail O'Neill
Field Manager

Enclosure

cc: Wayne and Melodie Baker



31 Hwy 93 N, Ste. D, Salmon, ID 83467

April 27, 2004

To: Gail O'Neill, Acting District Manager
From: Mark Olson, District Conservationist
Subject: Pine Creek pipeline project

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Department of Water Resources
Southern Region

APR 28 2004

Bureau of Land Mgt.
Challis, Idaho

Gail,

Please accept this letter to support the pipeline installation project on Pine Creek. This pipeline project as installed resulted in several resource benefits as well as benefits to the Baker Ranch.

This pipeline was installed approximately 1,200' upstream of the existing diversion point. The installation consisted of a structure for water control, a bubble screen structure, and a buried pipeline. The bubble screen has the effect of not only screening debris from the pipeline, but also screening for fish. Fish are returned to the stream channel via a return ditch.

Water conservation is the main benefit that resulted from the installation of this project. I have estimated the irrigation efficiencies were approximately 20% prior to installation. The resulting irrigation efficiencies are approximately 70%. This increase in efficiency resulted in additional water being left in the stream.

This new system allows for water control in the pipeline. The previous system was susceptible to cloud burst, etc. filling the ditch. The ditch would overtop, sending sediment from the hillside into the stream.

This new system consolidated two irrigation diversions into one. This significantly reduced the need to enter the creek with equipment to maintain the diversion. This also results in less streambed disturbance and sedimentation.

Additional benefits of this system are as follows:

1. The electric pumps are no longer needed, resulting in power conservation.
2. The ranch is now a more economical entity without having to pay the power bill, along with increased crop production.
3. As a result of this project, Pine Creek can now potentially connect with the East Fork of the Salmon River. This will benefit aquatic species in the watershed.

Again, please accept this letter as supporting the Baker pipeline project on Pine Creek. Please feel free to call me if you need additional information or have questions.

Sincerely,

Mark Olson, District Conservationist
USDA-NRCS



IDAHO FISH AND GAME

99 Hwy 93 N
P.O. Box 1336
Salmon, Idaho 83467
208-756-2271

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Department of Water Resources
Southern Region

Dirk Kempthorne/Governor
Steve Huffaker/ Director

April 21, 2004

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APR 22 2004

Bureau of Land Mgt.
Challis, Idaho

To whom it may concern:

On February 26th, 2004 I toured the Pine Creek diversion complex with Wayne Baker. Wayne explained the situation regarding the pipeline and the issues that have resulted from the placement of the pipeline. I toured the site with the specific objective of determining the biological benefits and drawbacks of the pipeline. From my perspective the pipeline provides several notable benefits to Pine Creek. Namely, the pipeline as designed will allow the Bakers to improve water conveyance from Pine Creek to their point of use. This in turn will result in water savings to Pine Creek. Prior to the placement of the pipeline the Bakers needed to divert large amounts of water to deliver the water needed to meet their agriculture needs. With the new pipeline and improved conveyance, the Bakers need only to divert the water necessary for actual use and not supplemented flows to make up the balance lost to conveyance. Another notable benefit is that the water is now conveyed in a stable system, not one prone to erosion as were the two ditches the Bakers historically used. During the course of my tour I observed obvious evidence of past ditch failure which assuredly has contributed to sedimentation to Pine Creek and the mainstem East Fork Salmon River in the past. The East Fork Salmon River below Pine Creek is an important spawning and rearing area for spring and summer chinook salmon and any reduction in sedimentation is a positive benefit. Although it is unfortunate the Bakers did not follow the appropriate processes to construct and deploy their Pine Creek pipeline, I feel that the project itself is certainly a net benefit to Pine Creek and to the Mainstem East Fork. This flow savings, or reconnection project, is the type of restoration project that our Department is pursuing throughout the Upper Salmon River Basin. It is my desire that this project be allowed to remain in place. Reverting to the old conveyance system of open ditches will result in a net loss of water to Pine Creek possible seasonally dewatering the channel, and increase the likelihood of erosion into the East Fork Salmon River. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tom Curet
Regional Fisheries Manager, IDFG