

Twin Falls Management Framework Plan

Record of Decision

Decision: It is my decision to implement the Preferred Alternative and amend the Twin Falls Management Framework Plan to designate the Playas as ACEC. Two separate Playas, each 30 acres in size, are included in this amendment. Both areas shall be designated ACEC.

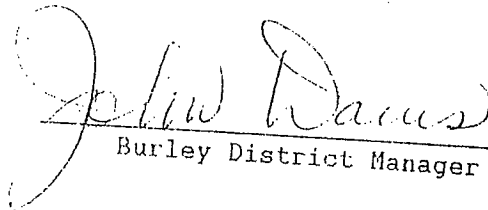
Rationale: The subject lands meet the planning criteria for ACEC designation. These Playas have been found to be important habitat for the Davis playa mustard, Lepidium davisii. ACEC designation of these Playas will protect these endangered plants.

Finding of No Significant Impact: The Environmental Assessment has been analyzed and a finding of no significant impact has resulted. It is concluded that the proposed action will not adversely affect the quality of the human environment. Preparation of an environmental impact statement pursuant to Section 102 (2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 is not required for this action.

Recommended:

9-18-87

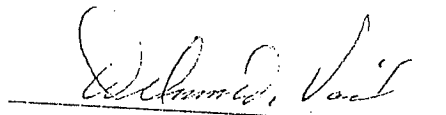
Date


Burley District Manager

Approved:

1-21-88

Date


Idaho State Director

I-255-192

Twin Falls Management Framework Plan
Area of Critical Environmental Concern
Amendment and Environmental Analysis

I. Introduction

A. Purpose and Need

The Twin Falls Management Framework Plan (MFP) was completed on September 16, 1982. The plan made no decisions to designate Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.

A Burley District Range Conservationist has recommended that an area called the Playas be given ACEC designation to protect a candidate threatened species, Lepidium davisii.

In order for the Playas to be designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, the Twin Falls MFP will need to be amended.

B. Location

Appendix 1 shows the general and specific locations. The Playas are located within the Snake River Resource Area, Burley District.

The specific location is as follows:

The two playas are located in T14S, R15E, Section 31, NE 1/4 and Section 32 SW 1/4. The boundary for each area is 330 feet from the outer most edge of the playa structures. The playas are approximately 30 acres in size each.

C. Planning Process

The Twin Falls MFP was prepared in accordance with BLM manual procedures and involved public participation. The MFP was approved by the Idaho State Director on September 16, 1982 and has been published and distributed to all interested parties.

The MFP made no specific recommendations for the subject lands regarding ACEC designations. These lands are presently being managed in a manner which offers some protection. These are items WS-6.2 and CRM-1.5 (Appendix 2).

Upon concurrence of this plan amendment by the State Director, a public notice summarizing the amendment and probable environmental impacts will be published in the local newspaper. If no protests are filed, the decision will be made part of the Twin Falls MFP, clearly identified as an amendment and implementation will follow.

D. Conformance:

This Twin Falls MFP amendment is consistent with Twin Falls County's Comprehensive Plan. This amendment meets the "consistency" requirements found in 43 CFR 1610.3-2.

II. Planning Issues and Criteria

A. Planning Issues

The planning issue here is whether the proposed areas meet the criteria for ACEC designation.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) defines ACECs as "areas within the public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards." (Section 103 (a).)

B. Planning Criteria

To be considered as an ACEC an area must meet the Relevance and Importance criteria as defined by the CFR. 43 CFR 1610.7-2 defines "Relevance" and "Importance" as follows:

"(1) Relevance. There shall be present a significant historic, cultural, or scenic value; a fish and wildlife resource or other natural system or process; or natural hazard."

"(2) Importance. The above described value, resource, system, process, or hazard shall have substantial significance and values. This generally requires qualities of more than local significance, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern. A natural hazard can be important if it is a significant threat to human life or property."

This area has been determined to meet the "relevance" and "importance" requirements as outlined in 43 CFR 1610.7-2.

The Playas

Relevance

The Playas are the habitat for the Davis playa mustard, Lepidium davisii. This plant is a candidate for Federal Category II list-threatened species. This species has not been processed and listed to date due to the limited funding the Fish and Wildlife Service received for this purpose. In the State of Idaho, this species is listed as threatened.

Importance

Lepidium davisii is known to exist in only nine populations in Oregon and Idaho. The playas, proposed in this document, represent two of the Idaho populations. The distribution of this plant is uneven and spotty. The present land use plan may not adequately protect Lepidium davisii.

III. Justification and Analysis

The two Playas, nearly level areas at the bottom of a desert basin, sometimes temporarily covered with water, lay near Salmon Falls Creek Reservoir. These playas are the habitat of Davis' playa mustard, Lepidium davisii. A Burley District Range Conservationist nominated these two playas for ACEC designation in February 1987.

The primary concern on these playas is the Davis playa mustard. This plant was proposed as an endangered species on June 16, 1976; however, it was later dropped as a candidate. Currently, nine populations are known. These occur in Oregon and Idaho. The distribution of this plant is uneven and spotty. No playa known to support Davis' playa mustard is intact. Protection of these playas is necessary to protect this species. ACEC designation of these playas is needed to assure protection of the small population of mustard plant.

IV. Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action

A. Alternative 1- Preferred Alternative (Amend the Twin Falls MFP)

This alternative would amend the Twin Falls MFP and designate the Playas as an ACEC.

Two playas, each approximately 30 acres in size, as described in Fig. 2, Appendix 1, shall be designated an ACEC.

The Twin Falls MFP WS-6.2, shall be amended to read:

"Multiple Use Recommendation:
Accept WS-6.2-

Designate the playas ACEC. No surface occupancy or ORV use will be permitted on the playas. No vegetation manipulation will be permitted unless biological studies indicate the replacement vegetation will provide suitable habitat for Davis playa mustard pollinizing insect life.

Reasons:

ACEC designation is necessary to adequately protect the populations of Davis' Playa Mustard. This species is listed as "threatened" in the State of Idaho. This species is also being processed and listed as a Federal Category II- threatened species.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Reject WS-6.2

Decision:

Accept the recommendation."

B. Alternative 2- (No Action)

This is the no action option. The Twin Falls MFP requires the protection of the playas as discussed in this document. The Draft ORV plan should be amended to include the closure of the playas year-round. If this change is made in the Draft ORV plan, no further designations of the areas will be needed at this time. The MFP provides for ACEC designation in the event that Lepidium davisii is placed on the threatened and endangered list again. At this time, it is felt that the provisions in the Twin Falls MFP and the amended ORV plan will adequately protect the playas and the Davis' playa mustard from destruction.

V. Affected Environment

Botanic: The Lepidium davisii plant is known to exist in only nine populations. They occur in Oregon and Idaho. The elevational range of this plant is 2900 feet to 5125 feet. No playa that is known to support Davis' playa mustard is intact. The playas are being used for things like: irrigation holding ponds, race tracks, cattle reservoirs and reservoirs to water feral horses. Multiple use of the playas constitutes a threat to the Davis' playa mustard. Continued use of the playas may cause the mustard to become endangered in the near future.

Grazing: The playas are part of a rest-rotation or a deferred-rotation on some of the allotments. No range land treatments are identified for the vicinity of the playas.

Watershed: Twin Falls MFP decision 6.1 calls for the protection of playas that support Lepidium davisii. This is to be accomplished by allowing no developments or improvements and no ORV use in the playas or surrounding area in Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32, T14S, R15E.

The rationale, as discussed in the MFP, is that Lepidium davisii can withstand a moderate amount of disturbance. The multiple use recommendation and decision is to allow no future improvements near the playas that would endanger Davis' playa mustard.

Cultural: The MFP CRM 1.5 multiple use recommendation and decision is to restrict ORV use when monitoring shows that cultural sites are being seriously threatened or damaged.

Small lithic scatters have been found in the vicinity of the playa in section 31, on a preliminary inspection. The District Archaeologist expects to find more sites with a more detailed inspection. The playas attract waterfowl and animals when they hold water. The Archaeologist feels that the local Indians who occupied this area used the playas for hunting game and waterfowl.

VI. Environmental Consequences

A. Preferred Alternative 1- Amend Plan

Grazing: The playas are in two allotments; one has a rest-rotation and the other has a deferred-rotation grazing system. The Twin Falls MFP excludes chemical treatment and seeding within one-half mile of these areas. Designating these playas will have little impact on the livestock users. These areas do not provide forage for the animals. However, if a spray program were to be implemented in the vicinity, Davis' playa mustard would be adversely affected.

Recreation: The MFP requires that a plan for ORV use be developed for the planning unit. This plan is to designate ORV use areas and to write an environmental assessment of the plan. The archaeologist is to provide input for the environmental assessment and provide monitoring of these sites to determine ORV impacts.

Presently, the ORV plan is in the draft stage for this area (see Appendix 3). The draft ORV plan for area C, excludes the playas from ORV use. The purpose for the closure is said to be due to critical winter habitat for sage grouse. "The limitation on wheeled vehicles from mid-March to mid-June protects sage grouse when they are nesting and broodrearing." In addition to the protection of sage grouse, the closure is necessary year around to protect the Davis' playa mustard. ACEC designation is expected to have a negative affect on ORV use in this area.

Watershed: The MFP decision 6.1 calls for the protection of playas that support Lepidium davisii. This is to be accomplished by allowing no developments or improvements and no ORV use in the playas or surrounding area in Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32, T14S, R15E.

ACEC designation will not have an adverse affect on the playas watershed program.

Cultural: The MFP CRM 1.5 multiple use recommendation and decision is to restrict ORV use when monitoring shows that cultural sites are being seriously threatened or damaged. ACEC designation will have a positive affect on the protection of cultural resources.

A. Alternative 2- (No Action)

This alternative will allow the current Twin Falls MFP to guide management of the Playas. A decline in the populations of Lepidium davisii may result.

VII. Management Guidelines

A. Alternative 1- Preferred Alternative, Amend Plan

Management plans for this area includes the possible construction of a barbed wire fence around both playas. These fences will also require the posting of signs. Fences may be required to protect the playas from disturbance by ORVs, cattle and other animals.

B. Alternative 2- No Action Alternative

No further management guidelines will be required for this alternative.

VIII. Coordination, Consistency, and Public Participation

A Notice of Intent to amend the Twin Falls MFP was published in the Federal Register on April 23, 1987. Local newspapers ran advertisements during the last two weeks of April as well.

IX. List of Prepares

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Melanie La Chapelle, Editor

X. Consultants

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Terry Costello, Snake River Area Manager
Linda Parsons, Wildlife Biologist
Bill Boggs, Recreation Planner
Sharon LaBrecque, Realty Specialist
Pete Laudeman, Archaeologist