

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND DECISION TO CONSTRUCT A BUNKHOUSE

BEAR RIVER MIGRATORY BIRD REFUGE

Brigham City, Utah

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (Refuge) has limited staffing to complete various management goals and objectives. To offset shortages in staffing, the Refuge offers housing opportunities for residential volunteers and interns. The Refuge partners with youth organizations to provide career development opportunities at the Refuge, while at the same time providing much needed assistance to the Refuge. Currently the Refuge has a three-bedroom, 1,800-square-foot doublewide mobile home, located on the Refuge that serves as the bunkhouse. A 2021 Comprehensive Condition Assessment (USFWS 2021) states that the mobile home does not contain adequate safety provisions such as fire sprinklers, proper emergency egress, and multiple other safety and a lack of accessibility standards in accordance with the American with Disability Act (ADA) issues.

The proposed action is for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) to demolish the existing bunkhouse and build a new bunkhouse in a new location. The new location will be adjacent to existing Refuge infrastructure and include essential safety and ADA accessibility features.

Selected Action

Alternative B – Construct New Bunkhouse/New Location

Under Alternative B, a new bunkhouse will be constructed, and the existing bunkhouse demolished. The new bunkhouse will be approximately 2,100 square feet and contain four bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room, and a mud room accessible from a backdoor entrance, along with a front entrance as well. Utilities would be added by utilizing an existing power pole that serves the neighboring Refuge infrastructure, or equipment barn. The entry road would also use the same road as the Refuge barn that is next door, but a gravel driveway would need to be constructed leading off the road to the house itself. Essential safety and ADA accessibility features, such as an entry ramp and accessible bathroom, would also be incorporated into the design. Current residents would continue residing in the existing bunkhouse until the new one is ready. Upon completion, these residents would transition to the new bunkhouse, leading to the demolition of the existing bunkhouse.

Other Alternatives Considered and Analyzed

Alternative A – No Action Alternative

Under Alternative A (the No Action Alternative), no action would be taken, and the existing bunkhouse would continue to be utilized to provide temporary housing to interns, volunteers, seasonal staff, and others. Ongoing deferred maintenance and safety needs would be addressed as funding and capacity allowed.

Summary of Effects of the Selected Action

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide decision-making framework that (1) explored a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives; (2) evaluated potential issues and

impacts to the Refuge, resources, and values; and (3) identified mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts. The EA evaluated the impacts associated with the proposed action and the other alternative. It is incorporated as part of this finding.

Implementation of the Service's decision would be expected to result in the following environmental, social, and economic impacts:

- Short-term, direct impacts of ground disturbance from construction machinery and resulting concrete foundation supporting the new building.
- Short-term, minor effects due to construction disturbance to small birds, insects, and herptiles that utilize the existing non-native vegetation.
- Short-term, temporary impacts of increased noise from the sound of heavy equipment during construction. However, there would be no long-term impacts after construction is completed.
- Long-term positive impacts to Refuge operations and capacity by enabling the refuge to accommodate more individuals in housing.

Public Review

A news release and a Facebook and website announcement occurred to announce the availability of the Draft EA for a 15-day public review and comment period from August 1 to August 15, 2024. A total of one comment was received during this period. The Draft EA was available electronically on the Refuge's website, by request via bearriver@fws.gov, and a hard copy was available at the Refuge's Visitor Center.

The proposal has been thoroughly coordinated with all interested and/or affected parties. Parties contacted include:

- Brigham City Planning Department

Additionally, one Tribal affiliation was identified as having ancestral connections to the area that the Refuge is located. The Tribe is the Northwest Band of the Shoshone Nation.

On July 30, 2024, the Communication and Public Relations Director for the Tribe was notified of the bunkhouse project and invited to consult on the EA in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA (54 USC § 306108) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800). To date, no concerns were communicated by the Tribe. The Utah State Historic Preservation office also provided written concurrence on August 21, 2024.

The Service conducted a biological evaluation in compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act on June 4, 2024, and determined that the proposed action would have no effect on any federally listed threatened and endangered species or candidate species.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA as well as other documents and actions of record affiliated with this proposal, the Service has determined that the proposal to construct a bunkhouse at the Refuge does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment under the meaning of section 102

(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), Department of Interior Regulations (43 CFR. Part 46), Department of the Interior Policy (516 DM 1-4; 516 DM 8), and the Service's Policy (550 FW 3). As such, an environmental impact statement is not required.

Decision

The Service has decided to proceed with Alternative B to construct a new bunkhouse.

The action is consistent with applicable laws and policies.

Assistant Regional Director

Date