

Environmental Assessment, Finding of No Significant Impact

Watershed Plan For Eastern Duchesne Watershed Duchesne County, Utah

Agency Role and Responsibility

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In accordance with CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) and NRCS regulations (7 CFR 650) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NRCS has prepared an environmental document for the Proposed Action. The environmental document was initiated using the 40 CFR 1500-1508 (May 1, 2024) and 7 CFR 650 regulations. These regulations have recently been rescinded and replaced with USDA regulations found under 7 CFR 1b. However, in a good-faith effort to fulfill NEPA’s requirements, including Congressional timeline and considerations of fiscal restraints, the agency decided to continue to use 40 CFR 1500-1508 (May 1, 2024) and 7 CFR 650. This is permissible per the USDA policy guidance issued in the Interim Final Rule’s preamble. The Federal Register notice said: “To ensure an orderly transition without undue impact on the USDA mission, USDA subcomponents have discretion to continue using the versions of USDA and agency-specific NEPA regulations in place before publication of this interim final rule, as well as the 2020 version of the CEQ NEPA regulations, where it makes sense for proposals that are at a certain stage in the applicable NEPA process (categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement).” 90 FR 29644 (July 3, 2025). In the NRCS’s expert opinion, it has thoroughly considered the factors mandated by the statute and the regulatory frameworks it used; and that, in the responsible federal official’s judgment, the analysis contained herein is adequate to inform and reasonably explain findings regarding the proposed action and selected alternative.

The Proposed Action is anticipated to be implemented in the fall of 2026. It includes lining segments of two earthen irrigation canals, and installing pipelines to replace five open irrigation canals in the Eastern Duchesne Watershed as described below:

- Site 1 (Yellowstone Feeder Canal): Line ten sections of the Yellowstone Feeder Canal with concrete, totaling approximately 13,926 linear feet (2.64 miles).
- Site 2 (Coyote Canal): Pipe approximately 4,413 linear feet (0.84 miles) of open channel, replace the headgate at the pipe intake, and install a dissipation structure at the pipe outfall. Grade and place riprap as needed for grade stabilization along approximately 477 linear feet of open canal.

- Site 3 (South Boneta Canal): Pipe approximately 12,883 linear feet (2.44 miles) of open canal, modify an existing diversion and headgate as needed, and install a new pipe intake at the headgate.
- Site 4 (Dry Gulch Class B Canal System): Install approximately 79,293 linear feet (15.02 miles) of HDPE pipe to replace open canal systems, construct three pipe inlets structures, and install a new control structure.
- Site 5 (Dry Gulch Class C Canal System): Install approximately 33,292 linear feet (6.31 miles) of HDPE pipeline to replace the open canal system and install an inlet structure at the pipe intake.
- Site 6 (Red Cap Extension Canals/Laterals): Install approximately 106,161 linear feet (20.11 miles) of HDPE pipeline to replace open canal systems, install a new pipe inlet structure at the pipeline intake, and reconstruct the wasteway adjoining the intake.
- Site 7 (Gray Mountain Canal): Line three sections of the Gray Mountain Canal with concrete, totaling approximately 10,475 linear feet (1.98 miles).

NRCS Decision to be Made

As the delegated Responsible Federal Official for compliance with NEPA, I must make the following decision:

I must determine if the agency's Proposed Action (Action Alternative) will or will not be a major Federal action that requires the issuance of an Environmental Impact Statement. The Eastern Duchesne Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment (EA) accompanying this finding has provided the analysis needed to assess the significance of the potential impacts from the selected alternative. As per NEPA, all supporting data leading to this decision is incorporated by reference and presented in the Eastern Duchesne Watershed Plan-EA.

Conclusion

Based on the information incorporated by reference and presented in the attached Eastern Duchesne Watershed Plan-EA, I find in accordance with NEPA, that the selection of the agency Proposed Action is not a major Federal action that will have a reasonably foreseeable significant impact on the quality of the human environment requiring preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Thus, a Finding of No Significant Impact has been created for this Federal action.

For information regarding this finding, contact: Emily Fife, State Conservationist, U.S.
Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service-Utah, 125 South State
Street, Room 6416, Salt Lake City, UT 84138; (801) 524-4550.

Signed

Emily Fife
State Conservationist

Date