

single copy requests at the above address. Basic data developed during the environmental assessment are on file and may be reviewed by contacting Lincoln E. Burton.

No administrative action on implementation of the proposal will be taken until 30 days after the date of this publication in the **Federal Register**. The Environmental Assessment will then be signed and funding authorization requested. All plans will be written within five years, and implementation will continue for up to ten years.

Dated: March 21, 2003.

**Lincoln E. Burton,**  
*State Conservationist.*

(This activity is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under NO. 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention, and is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.)

### **Finding of No Significant Impact for Lingle-Ft. Laramie Water Quality Project; Goshen County, Wyoming**

#### *Introduction*

The Lingle-Ft. Laramie Water Quality Project is a federally assisted action authorized for planning under Pub. L. 83-566, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act. An environmental assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the development of the watershed plan. This assessment was conducted in consultation with local, state, and federal agencies, including section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (50 CFR 402.13) consultation, as well as with interested organization and individuals. Data developed during the assessment is available for public review at the following location: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Room 3124 Federal Building, 100 East B Street, Casper, Wyoming 82601-1969.

#### *Recommended Action—Alternative 2: Accelerated Land Treatment*

Proposed is the development of about 48 conservation plans that will provide for land treatment and wildlife habitat improvement measures to be applied on farms for the reduction of the agricultural contribution to nitrate contamination of the groundwater and habitat improvement. The proposed plan will treat 8,300 acres with increased irrigation efficiency to reduce the amount of nitrogen available to be leached to the groundwater. Twenty-five animal waste management facilities and application practices will be installed in

the watershed. Thirty-five abandoned wells will be decommissioned. Wildlife habitat units will be increased by 1,100 units.

Costs were updated from 2000 Draft EA to 2003 costs, due to a change in discount rates. Federal cost share will be at 65 percent for a total financial assistance of \$3,534,020. Average annual benefits equals \$1,017,170, with average annual costs equal to \$801,333, for a benefit: cost ratio of 1.27:1. FT 2003 Water Resources discount rate at 5.785 percent.

#### *Effect of Recommended Action*

The recommended action will improve groundwater quality, improve human health and safety, improve irrigation efficiency, reduce irrigation labor, and increase wildlife habitat. Nitrates available for leaching will be reduced through installation of fertilizer injection systems, nutrient management, and irrigation water management.

The proposed action will reduce the amount of nitrogen available to be leached. It is estimated at full implementation, there will be a 33 percent reduction of nitrate leached below the root zone, which equals about 81 pounds of nitrate per acre each year over the entire project area at a 60 percent participation rate. Nitrogen reduction is considered not to be a controversial issue.

The proposed action will install 25 animal waste management systems to collect and store run-off from feed lots until it can be safely applied to the agricultural fields.

The proposed action will improve on farm irrigation efficiency, which will increase the water available to meet crop consumptive use.

The proposed action will increase the number of wildlife habitat units by about 1,100 units as treatments are installed.

A literature review and search of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) records were conducted for the project area. The effect of project installation will be determined for each individual project contract according to Natural Resource Conservation Service, Northern Plains Region procedures.

It is likely that more sites will be discovered during the planning and installation of the accelerated land treatment practices. Since project practices will be installed on a "voluntary participation" basis, location of ground disturbances is presently unknown. Most surface disturbances below the plow zone will occur as a result of installing ag waste facilities, pipelines, land leveling, grading, and shaping. NRCS cultural resources

procedures, as described in the NRCS Northern Plains Region procedures, will be followed when ground disturbances are planned.

Compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) protection rules for each farm will follow the procedures in the NRCS General Manual, Section 190 and 420, respectively.

The proposed action will have little or no effect on wetlands. With on farm improved irrigation efficiencies some reduction in tail water run-off will occur, but with the sandy soils in the watershed most of the run-off has gone to groundwater and not surface water. Wetland restoration, creation and enhancement will increase a total of about 24 acres as operator's contracts are developed. A 2 acre-foot depletion will be offset by a debit from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation account.

No wilderness areas are in the watershed.

There is potential habitat for the threatened Ute ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) and Preble's meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*), but none have been identified within the watershed, the determination of "may affect, but not likely to adversely affect" for both species, was arrived at with section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (50 CFR 402.13) consultation. The habitat will not be adversely impacted. There are no known resident threatened or endangered animals within the watershed area.

The proposed action will increase vegetative cover suitable for wildlife as a result of the application of conservation practices that include vegetative components. Wildlife habitat units will increase by about 1,100 units. Fish habitat will not be effected.

The proposed action will not disproportionately affect any protected groups.

No significant adverse environmental impacts will result from installation of the proposed action.

#### **Alternatives**

Based on the above summary of effects (as discussed in the EA), I have determined the alternative that I have selected, will not have significant affect on the human environment. For that reason, no environmental impact statement needs to be prepared.

The planned action is the most practical means of reducing the agricultural contribution of nitrate to the groundwater. Because no significant adverse environmental impacts will