
**FINAL PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
FOR
VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM
STATE OF IDAHO**



**United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency**

February 2011

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program State of Idaho

February 2011

INTRODUCTION

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in the State of Idaho. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the State or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

The State of Idaho, through the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds to expand its existing public access program, *Access Yes!*, to provide the public with more opportunities to hunt, fish, and watch wildlife on private lands. Idaho's *Access Yes!* program was designed to improve access to private land for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-related recreation by compensating willing landowners who provide access to their lands. The program is completely voluntary with an ultimate goal of providing sportsmen access to over 1,000,000 acres of private land, as well as allowing access to otherwise inaccessible public lands.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

With VPA-HIP grant funds the IDFG proposes to expand enrollment into a modified form of *Access Yes!* by offering a flat rate monetary compensation to qualified landowners of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre, depending on location, rather than utilizing the current competitive bid process. Southwestern Idaho is targeted to receive higher payout rates due to the large population and increased demand for recreational access. IDFG would also target any lands already enrolled in the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program for *Access Yes!* enrollment.

REASONS FOR FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

In consideration of the analysis documented in the Programmatic Environmental Assessment (EA) and in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations 1508.27, the preferred alternative would not constitute a major State or Federal action affecting the human and natural environment. Therefore, this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. This determination is based on the following:

1. Long-term beneficial impacts and short-term localized impacts would occur with the preferred alternative. Neither of these impacts would be considered significant.
2. The preferred alternative would not affect public health or safety.
3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area (cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, and ecologically critical areas) would be preserved with implementation of the preferred alternative.
4. The potential impacts on the quality of the human environment are not considered highly controversial.
5. The potential impacts on the human environment as described in the Programmatic EA are not uncertain nor do they involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The preferred alternative would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. Cumulative impacts of the preferred alternative in combination with other recent, ongoing, or foreseeable future actions are not expected to be significant.
8. The preferred alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
9. The preferred alternative would have long-term beneficial impacts to wildlife and their habitats, including endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
10. The preferred alternative does not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law imposed for the protection of the environment.

DETERMINATION

On the basis of the analysis and information contained in the Programmatic EA and FONSI, it is my determination that adoption of the preferred alternative does not constitute a major Federal action affecting the quality of the human and natural environment. Barring any new data identified during the public and agency review of the Final Programmatic EA that would dramatically change the analysis presented in the EA or identification of a significant controversial issue, the Programmatic EA and this FONSI are considered Final 30 days after date of initial publication of the Notice of Availability.

APPROVED: 
Signature

February 4, 2011
Date

Cover Sheet

Proposed Action: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the State of Idaho have agreed to implement a new Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). USDA is provided the statutory authority by the provisions of the Food Security Act of 2008, and the Regulations at 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1410. VPA-HIP provides grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation, and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the State or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

Type of Document: Programmatic Environmental Assessment

Lead Agency: USDA, FSA

Sponsoring Agency: Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Cooperating Agency: None

Comments: This Programmatic Environmental Assessment was prepared in accordance with USDA FSA National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementation procedures found in 7 CFR 799, as well as the NEPA of 1969, Public Law 91-190, 42 United States Code 4321-4347, 1 January 1970, as amended.

A Notice of Availability was released on February 16, 2011 announcing a 30-day public comment period. A copy of the document can be found on the USDA FSA website: www.fsa.usda.gov. Comments will be accepted until March 16, 2011. Comments may be submitted via e-mail to: dhbanwart@tecinc.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in the State of Idaho. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation, and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the State or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

The State of Idaho, through the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds to expand its existing public access program, *Access Yes!*, to provide the public with more opportunities to hunt, fish, and watch wildlife on private lands.

Idaho's *Access Yes!* program was designed to improve access to private land for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-related recreation by compensating willing landowners who provide access to their lands. The program is completely voluntary with an ultimate goal of providing sportsmen access to over 1,000,000 acres of private land, as well as allowing access to otherwise inaccessible public lands.

Proposed Action

With VPA-HIP grant funds the IDFG proposes to expand enrollment into a modified form of *Access Yes!* by offering a flat rate monetary compensation to qualified landowners of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre, depending on location, rather than utilizing the current competitive bid process. Southwestern Idaho is targeted to receive higher payout rates due to the large population and increased demand for recreational access. IDFG would also target any lands already enrolled in the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Program or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program for *Access Yes!* enrollment.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to use VPA-HIP grant funds to increase the total acres of private land available for public access through enrollment in *Access Yes!*. The need for the Proposed Action is to: increase availability of hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related recreational opportunities in Idaho; increase access to landlocked public lands; and to meet the high demand for enrollment in *Access Yes!*.

Environmental Consequences

This Programmatic Environmental Assessment has been prepared to analyze the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) or the No Action Alternative. Under the Proposed Action, IDFG would utilize VPA-HIP funds to expand enrollment in *Access Yes!*. Under the No Action Alternative, *Access Yes!* would continue as it is currently administered. The potential environmental consequences of implementing the Proposed Action would be beneficial overall to the natural environment and increase wildlife-related recreational opportunities in the state. A summary of environmental consequences is provided in Table ES-1.

Table ES-1 Summary of Environmental Consequences

Resource	Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)	No Action Alternative
Biological Resources (Wildlife and Protected Species)	Expanding hunting opportunities could potentially result in increased pressure on game populations. However, these impacts would be minimized through current IDFG hunting permitting and regulation. No adverse impacts to protected species are anticipated. Increasing land available for wildlife-related recreation would result in additional land maintained in its natural state, thereby improving wildlife habitats.	The current public access program would continue; however, the additional benefits associated with expanding acreage in the program would not occur.
Recreation	Potential for increased private land enrollment would lead to increased recreational opportunities for hunting and fishing. Only positive beneficial impacts would occur to recreational resources.	No impacts to recreational resources would occur. However, beneficial impacts from expanded recreational opportunities from the Proposed Action would not occur.
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	Potential for slight direct economic benefits for those landowners with eligible lands that voluntarily enroll. Slight indirect economic benefits to the local economies from traveling sportsmen and any purchase of necessary goods and/or services near enrolled lands. No environmental justice impacts would occur.	No socioeconomic or environmental justice impacts would occur. However, the slight beneficial impacts from the Proposed Action would not be realized.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality	NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	PEA	Programmatic Environmental
CREP	Conservation Reserve		Assessment
	Enhancement Program	U.S.	United States
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program	USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
EO	Executive Order	USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
FSA	Farm Service Agency	USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
IDFG	Idaho Department of Fish and Game	VPA-HIP	Voluntary Public Access and
LSC	Landowner Sportsman Coordinator		Habitat Incentive Program

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CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) proposes to implement a new program authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) in the State of Idaho. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) provides grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting, fishing, and other compatible recreation, and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. The VPA-HIP is administered by the State or tribal government that receives the grant funds.

The VPA-HIP is a competitive grants program that is only available for State and tribal governments. The grant funding may be used to expand existing public access programs or create new public access programs, or provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on enrolled lands. Overall program objectives are to:

- Maximize participation by landowners;
- Ensure that land enrolled in the program has appropriate wildlife habitat;
- Provide incentives to improve wildlife habitat on Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) lands, if available;
- Supplement funding and services from other Federal, state, or tribal government or private resources; and
- Inform the public about the location of public access land.

The State of Idaho, through the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds to expand its existing public access program, *Access Yes!*, to provide the public with more opportunities to hunt, fish, and watch wildlife on private lands.

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Existing Public Access Program

Idaho's *Access Yes!* program was designed to improve access to private land or through private land to access public lands for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-related recreation by compensating willing landowners who provide access to their lands. The program is completely voluntary with an ultimate goal of providing sportsmen access to over 1,000,000 acres of private land, as well as allowing access to otherwise inaccessible public lands.

Access Yes! was developed by the Idaho Fish and Game Advisory Committee in 2002 and has shown a steady increase in private land owner interest in subsequent years. Utilizing input from landowners and sportsmen, IDFG developed guidelines for a competitive bid process for landowners willing to enroll. This allowed the most beneficial habitat types on private lands to be enrolled in the program with its limited funds. Table 1-1 shows the number of private acres enrolled in *Access Yes!* since 2003.

Table 1-1. Private Lands Enrolled in Access Yes! and Payment

Year	Private Acres	Payment (per acre)
2003	108,040	\$1.08
2004	226,377	\$1.09
2005	356,038	\$1.14
2006	622,495	\$0.79
2007	638,190	\$0.79
2008	444,735	\$1.87
2009	434,353	\$0.93

Currently IDFG provides approximately \$160,000 from hunting license sales and \$180,000 in Federal excise taxes to fund *Access Yes!*. These funds are used for payments to landowners, as well as for signage and any needed infrastructure improvements to allow access to enrolled parcels (parking lots, gates, sign-in boxes). These two funding sources alone are not enough to cover the program costs. IDFG uses other funding sources, including private funding, to assist with the funding shortfall.

1.1.2 Current Access Yes! Enrollment

As shown in Table 1-1, the program has grown, with a peak in acreage in 2007. IDFG has seen an increase in demand for enrollment that far outweighs the available funds. For administrative purposes, Idaho is divided into eight regions by IDFG and each region is assigned a Landowner Sportsman Coordinator (LSC) (see Figure 1-1). A portion of the LSC responsibilities are to administer *Access Yes!* within the region and to assist landowners in enrolling their lands. Enrollment is accomplished through the submission of a bid application, where the landowner provides a description of the lands to be enrolled along with how they would like the land utilized through the program. This may include habitat improvement projects that IDFG also funds if they are appropriate. For each bid, an IDFG private lands biologist makes an assessment of the lands to be enrolled, noting habitat types and quality, types of wildlife that may occur, and any possible habitat improvements that could occur.

After the bid has been submitted it is reviewed by that region's Sportsmen Review Committee. The committee is made up of five members with diverse sporting interest. The committee members are nominated by the Regional Supervisor, approved by the Commission, and serve as the Director of the Commission sees fit. The Committee reviews and evaluates bids and recommends to IDFG which bids should be selected. Committee members are barred from having their own lands enrolled in *Access Yes!*. The Committee bases their enrollment recommendations on the following criteria:

- Amount of Access;
- Diversity of Opportunity;
- Cost;
- Availability of Wildlife;
- Access to Public Lands;
- Regional Recreational Needs;
- Species Management Objectives;
- Past Experience with Landowner/Land Manager;
- Past Habitat Improvement Projects on Property; and
- Other Considerations.

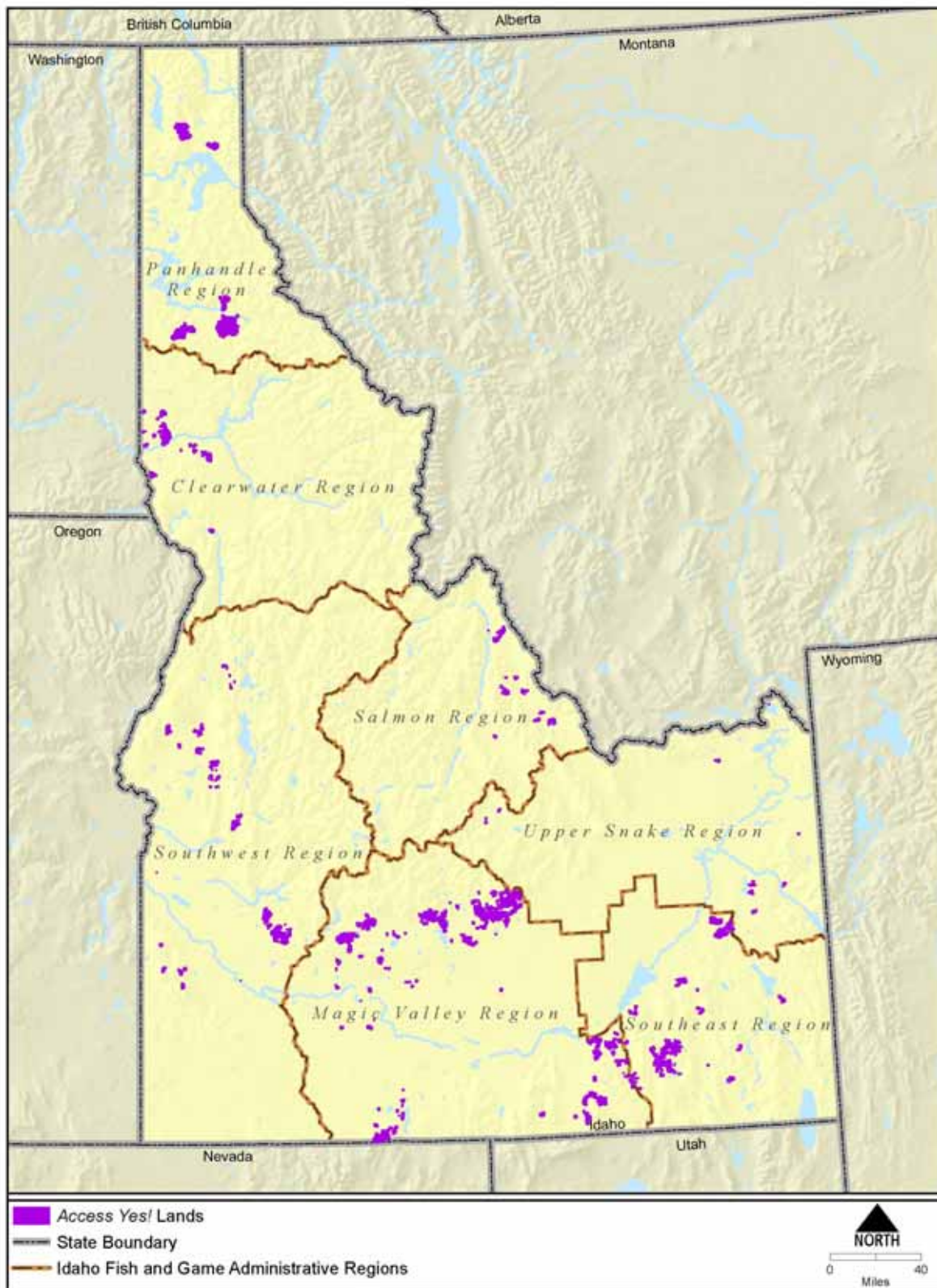


Figure 1-1. Current *Access Yes!* Lands and Administrative Regions

Cooperative lease agreements are prepared after the bids are selected for enrollment. Compensation for allowing public access can be made to the landowner in a number of ways: 1) direct monetary compensation, 2) habitat improvement projects, 3) access development projects, or 4) other agreed upon forms.

Currently IDFG receives some Federal funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for habitat improvement projects undertaken by IDFG. IDFG has a cooperative agreement with the USFWS showing that these habitat improvement activities have minimal impacts to the natural environment and therefore are categorically excluded from any further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis (see Appendix A). It is important to note however, that VPA-HIP funding would not be used for habitat improvement projects, only for monetary payment to landowners that qualify for *Access Yes!*.

After leases are agreed upon and signed, the property is then listed on IDFG's website in the *Sportsman's Guide to Access Yes!*. The list is updated annually and includes location and contact information for participating lands, as well as any restrictions that are placed on the lands.

1.2 THE PROPOSED ACTION

With VPA-HIP grant funds IDFG proposes to expand enrollment into a modified form of *Access Yes!* by offering a flat rate monetary compensation to qualified landowners of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre, depending on location, rather than utilizing the competitive bid process. Southwestern Idaho is targeted to receive higher payout rates due to the large population and increased demand for recreational access. IDFG would also target any lands already enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or CREP for enrollment.

1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to use VPA-HIP grant funds to increase the total acres of private land available for public access through enrollment in *Access Yes!*. The need for the Proposed Action is to: increase availability of hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related recreational opportunities in Idaho; increase access to landlocked public lands; and to meet the high demand for enrollment in *Access Yes!*.

1.4 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

This Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of NEPA (Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq.); implementing regulations adopted by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508); and FSA implementing regulations, Environmental Quality and Related Environmental Concerns – Compliance with NEPA (7 CFR 799). The intent of NEPA is to protect, restore, and enhance the natural and human environment through well-informed Federal decisions. A variety of laws, regulations, and Executive Orders (EOs) apply to actions undertaken by Federal agencies and form the basis of the analysis presented in this PEA.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF EA

This PEA assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative on potentially affected environmental and economic resources.

- Chapter 1.0 provides background information relevant to the Proposed Action, and discusses its purpose and need.
- Chapter 2.0 describes the Proposed Action and alternatives.
- Chapter 3.0 describes the baseline conditions (i.e., the conditions against which potential impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives are measured) for each of the potentially affected resources and the potential environmental impacts to those resources.
- Chapter 4.0 describes potential cumulative impacts and irreversible and irretrievable resource commitments.
- Chapter 5.0 discusses mitigation measures utilized to reduce or eliminate impacts to protected resources.
- Chapter 6.0 contains a list of the persons and agencies contacted during the preparation of this document.
- Chapter 7.0 lists the preparers of this document.
- Chapter 8.0 contains references.
- Appendix A provides USFWS concurrence for habitat improvement activities utilizing USFWS funding.
- Appendix B provides agency correspondence.

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CHAPTER 2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The IDFG proposes to use VPA-HIP grant funds of \$1,200,000 (\$400,000 per year, over three years) and supplemental State, private, and other Federal funds totaling \$2,340,000 over three years to expand enrollment in *Access Yes!* thereby increasing hunting, fishing, and wildlife related recreational opportunities in Idaho. Specifically, IDFG would use VPA-HIP funds to enroll qualified properties (privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land) into a modified version of the existing *Access Yes!* by allowing for a flat-rate monetary payment of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre of land enrolled, instead of using the current competitive bid process. IDFG also would give priority enrollment to those lands already participating in FSA's CRP and CREP in Idaho. VPA-HIP funds would only be used for monetary compensation for lands, not for any habitat improvement projects. Availability of grant funds could allow the reallocation of other funding sources to be used for approved habitat improvement projects on *Access Yes!* enrolled lands.

The public would be made aware of all *Access Yes!* lands through IDFG's *Sportsman's Guide to Access Yes!*, available on their website. This guide gives the locations and contact information for the lands enrolled in *Access Yes!*. IDFG also has plans to use various media outlets to inform the public of *Access Yes!* expansion. Other than listing enrolled properties on the web, IDFG would utilize standard press releases, posters, and local LSCs and FSA staff to promote the program through meetings with landowners.

2.2 ALTERNATIVES

CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1502.14) require the lead agency to identify all reasonable alternatives for implementing a Proposed Action. The Federal Register notice announcing the rule for VPA-HIP (Vol. 75(130), page 39135) explicitly states the purpose of VPA-HIP is to provide grants to State and tribal governments to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, and to improve fish and wildlife habitat on their land. Each VPA-HIP application received by USDA FSA underwent a selection screening process to identify those proposals that met the program objectives (listed in Introduction Section 1.0).

IDFG considered other alternative strategies for the VPA-HIP in which the funds would be used for habitat management as well as *Access Yes!* enrollment expansion. However, it was determined that the best use of these funds would be to expand enrollment only which would assist IDFG in reaching its goal of providing 1,000,000 acres of private lands for hunting and fishing access and providing maximized recreational opportunities on private lands. Additionally, by utilizing grant funds for enrollment only IDFG could reallocate other funds for habitat improvements. Targeting CRP and CREP lands that have already had approved conservation practices applied to them eliminates the need for habitat

improvements, thereby allowing IDFG to efficiently utilize the grant funds as incentive for new enrollment in *Access Yes!*. Also, by removing the competitive bid process for enrollment, IDFG would decrease the administrative costs of the program, allowing more funding for enrollment. Therefore, the Proposed Action best meets the purpose and need of the program and is the only reasonable action alternative.

2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the VPA-HIP would not be implemented in the State of Idaho. Expansion of enrollment in *Access Yes!* and the creation of a flat-rate monetary payment would not occur. *Access Yes!* would continue to be funded at the current rate, but would not be able to realize the overall program goal of achieving 1,000,000 acres of enrolled private lands. Under the No Action Alternative, IDFG would not be able to meet the overwhelming demand for enrollment, nor could they offer a competitive price for compensation to enrolled landowners. *Access Yes!* enrollment would ultimately be reduced under the No Action Alternative due to ever increasing administrative costs, while the compensation rate per acre would decrease due to limited funding. Opportunities for hunting and fishing would not be maximized, especially in the southern portion of Idaho, where most of the population and privately owned land exists. The No Action Alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the Proposed Action, but is being carried forward in accordance with CEQ regulations to serve as the baseline against which potential impacts of the Proposed Action are measured.

2.4 RESOURCES ELIMINATED FROM ANALYSIS

CEQ regulations (40 CFR §1501.7) state that the lead agency shall identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not important or which have been covered by prior environmental review, narrowing the discussion of these issues in the document to a brief presentation of why they would not have a dramatic effect on the human or natural environment.

As described above, the Proposed Action consists of expanding *Access Yes!* enrollment by offering a flat-rate monetary compensation of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre, depending on the geographic location of the proposed lands, and the priority enrollment of those lands already enrolled in CRP and CREP. The overall impacts to the human and natural environment would be from increased human presence on private lands for hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related recreation. No habitat improvement projects would be funded with VPA-HIP grant funds; therefore, there would be no ground disturbing activities undertaken by this Proposed Action. Thus, from a programmatic level, the Proposed Action would have little to no impact on the following resource areas:

Air Quality. The Proposed Action would have little potential for impacts to regional or local air quality. Increasing the land available for enrollment into *Access Yes!* would not require any activities that impact air quality.

Noise. The Proposed Action would not create any new permanent sources of noise to the environment. Expanding *Access Yes!* enrollment to new areas may introduce gunfire noise on lands where public hunting may not occur. This noise would be intermittent and occur during daylight hours during specified

hunting seasons. In addition, the requisite size of land needed for safe hunting would reduce the potential for gunfire noise to be heard outside the property.

Human Health and Safety. No components of the Proposed Action would directly impact human health or safety. The goal of the Proposed Action is to increase public access to privately-held land that supports an abundance of wildlife, thereby allowing hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. While hunting does pose a slight safety risk, this activity would occur on private land with controlled access. Idaho hunting regulations require hunters to receive the appropriate education and meet minimum age requirements before a permit can be issued.

Land Use. The Proposed Action would not result in any changes to land use designations. The Proposed Action would occur on private lands on a voluntary basis and would not require the alteration of land use.

Transportation. No aspect of the Proposed Action entails any alteration of the current transportation system in the State of Idaho. Increasing acreage available for enrollment in *Access Yes!* could cause an increase in the number of vehicles traveling to a new *Access Yes!* area. However, it is highly unlikely this would be considered an impact to the transportation system, but rather a redistribution of vehicular traffic.

Cultural Resources. The Proposed Action would not directly or indirectly impact any cultural resources, either architectural or archaeological. The Proposed Action does not allow for purposeful destruction of any cultural resources and no ground disturbance would occur. Therefore, no impacts to cultural resources would occur.

Soils. Under the Proposed Action, no direct soil disturbance would occur. Increasing enrollment in *Access Yes!* could increase foot traffic through new areas, but this impact to soils would be extremely minimal. The *Access Yes!* program stipulates that no new roads or trails would be constructed and that vehicular travel would occur only on existing roads and trails. Therefore, no direct adverse impacts to soils would occur.

Water Resources (Surface Water Quality, Wetlands, Groundwater, and Floodplains). The Proposed Action would have no direct impacts to water resources. The Proposed Action would target lands already participating in CRP and CREP. Both of these programs seek to improve native habitat and water quality and reduce soil erosion. Increasing public access to private lands for hunting, fishing and wildlife-related recreational purposes would not have any direct, adverse impacts on water resources.

Coastal Zones. The State of Idaho has no coastal zones, as it is a land-locked state. However, lakes and reservoirs do exist. IDFG manages the Idaho Watershed Initiative, a program that works to provide grant funds to private landowners to improve and restore Idaho's ecosystems and waterways. No direct impact to coastal zones would occur.

Other Formally Classified Lands. The Proposed Action can only be implemented on privately owned lands. The only formal classification applicable on private land would be Prime and Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Proposed Action would not include removing these lands from agricultural production. Therefore, there would be no impacts to any other formally classified lands.

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CHAPTER 3.0 **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

This chapter provides a description of the existing environmental conditions that have the potential to be affected from implementation of the Proposed Action and the potential environmental impacts that may occur to those resources. Resource areas potentially impacted by the Proposed Action and covered in this PEA include:

- Biological Resources (Wildlife and Protected Species)
- Recreation
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice

As described in Chapter 2, this PEA describes the potential impacts from implementing VPA-HIP funds in the State of Idaho on a programmatic level. Site-specific evaluation of all proposed properties would be undertaken by an IDFG biologist. The site-specific evaluation in combination with the programmatic level analysis provided in this PEA serves as the full NEPA documentation.

Environmental consequences to each resource area are described for the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) and the No Action Alternative:

- **Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative):** utilize VPA-HIP funds to expand enrollment of *Access Yes!* by offering a flat rate monetary compensation for enrolled lands.
- **No Action Alternative:** continuation of *Access Yes!* as it is currently administered. No expansion or additional financial incentives for enrollment would occur.

3.1 **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

Biological resources are any living features of the natural environment that add to the intrinsic value of the local area. In this PEA, biological resources include wildlife and protected species. Biological resources are included in this PEA because an increase in enrollment acreage throughout the state has the potential to result in long-term positive improvements to the natural environment. Also, expanding the public access program and increasing hunting and fishing opportunities may increase the potential for impacting game populations. As such, wildlife species discussed are only those game species that may be potentially impacted through increased hunting and fishing.

3.1.1 **Affected Environment**

The Proposed Action covers the entire state. A brief overview of the wildlife that could potentially be impacted by increased hunting is described in Section 3.1.1.1 and protected species that could be impacted are described in Section 3.1.1.2.

3.1.1.1 **Wildlife**

Idaho contains an abundance of wildlife species that are spread throughout the diverse habitats found throughout the state. For planning and management purposes, Idaho is divided into five main ecological

regions: the Canadian Rocky Mountains, the Middle Rockies-Blue Mountains, the Columbia Plateau, the Utah-Wyoming Rocky Mountains, and the Wyoming Basins (IDFG 2005).

These five ecological regions support a wide variety of terrestrial wildlife, which include numerous game species. Some of these species occur throughout the state, while others are limited to certain types of habitat. Game species in Idaho are categorized as big game, trophy, waterfowl, upland game, or furbearer species. Big game species in Idaho include deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, and pronghorn antelope. Trophy species are moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat. Waterfowl species include various ducks, geese, coots, and snipe. Upland game species include turkey, pheasant, grouse, partridge, quail, rabbits, hares, sandhill cranes, and mourning doves. Furbearing species found in Idaho are river otter, badger, beaver, fox, marten, mink, bobcat, muskrat, and raccoon (IDFG 2010).

3.1.1.2 Protected Species

The State of Idaho contains numerous species that are protected under the Federal or state Endangered Species Act. The Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy lists the protected species that occur in the state and details the actions being taken in the state to protect both protected species and their habitats (IDFG 2005). The only group of protected species that can be hunted in Idaho are migrating waterfowl. The hunting of these protected species in the state is controlled through strict permitting and is regulated by IDFG (IDFG 2010).

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences

Impacts to biological resources would be considered significant if activities resulted in reducing the wildlife or fisheries populations to a level of concern or the incidental take of a protected species or its habitat.

3.1.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

Wildlife

Under the Proposed Action, IDFG would use VPA-HIP funds to expand enrollment of *Access Yes!* by offering a flat rate monetary payment. The increase in land enrollment in the *Access Yes!* program would open more private land in Idaho to public hunting, which also ensures that the land is maintained as natural habitat. IDFG works closely with USFWS, which supports the *Access Yes!* program. An increase in hunting on public land is not likely to impact game species populations because of their abundance. The hunting of less abundant species is regulated by IDFG through controlled hunt tags, which only allow the take of a certain number of individuals each year based on population sizes. There would be no negative impact to wildlife under the Proposed Action, and there is the potential for long-term positive benefits to wildlife due to the increase in maintained natural habitat on private lands.

Protected Species

Under the Proposed Action, IDFG would use VPA-HIP funds to expand enrollment of *Access Yes!* by offering a flat rate monetary payment. The increase in land enrollment in the *Access Yes!* program would

open more private land in Idaho to public hunting. Federal and state laws prohibit the killing of most protected species, so these species would not be impacted by the Proposed Action. The hunting of some migratory birds is allowed in the state; however, a specific permit is required to hunt migratory birds, which allows IDFG to regulate the number of these birds that can be hunted in a given year. There would be no negative impact to protected species under the Proposed Action, and there is the potential for long-term positive benefits to protected species due to the increase in maintained natural habitat on private lands.

3.1.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no use of VPA-HIP funds to increase enrollment in *Access Yes!*. There would be no expansion of *Access Yes!* related hunting opportunities on private lands in Idaho; therefore, under the No Action Alternative there would be no impacts to biological resources. *Access Yes!* would continue as it is currently administered.

3.2 RECREATION

Recreation includes those outdoor activities that take place away from the residence of the participant. The State of Idaho offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities to its residents. Recreational activities that are common in Idaho include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, snowmobiling, horseback riding, boating, skiing, hiking, biking, and using off-road vehicles (Idaho State Parks and Recreation 2010). For this PEA, recreation focuses on hunting and fishing opportunities and other wildlife-related recreational activities available to the public in the State of Idaho.

3.2.1 Affected Environment

Hunting in the State of Idaho is regulated by IDFG, and a valid hunting license is required to hunt within the state. These licenses are only valid during the calendar year in which they were purchased and expire on December 31. To engage in certain types of hunting (e.g., archery or trapping) or to hunt certain types of animals (e.g., migratory birds), separate permits are required. Idaho also requires the purchase of controlled hunt tags in order to limit the take volume of certain game species. Licenses and permits can be obtained online, through an IDFG office, or at local retail stores. Each year, some controlled hunt tags can only be acquired through public drawings. Species that require tags or controlled hunt tags include deer, elk, black bear, turkey, antelope, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, and mountain lion (IDFG 2010).

Like hunting, fishing is also regulated by IDFG. To legally fish in Idaho, anyone who is 14 years of age or older is required to purchase a fishing license. These licenses last for one day or for the calendar year, expiring on December 31, and can be obtained online, through an IDFG office, or at local retail stores. Common types of fish that can be fished for in Idaho are steelhead, trout, salmon, bluegill, catfish, crappie, bass, muskie, walleye, perch, and pike. In order to fish for salmon and steelhead, a separate permit in addition to the generic fishing license is required (IDFG 2010).

Other wildlife related recreational opportunities in Idaho include wildlife viewing. Idaho contains numerous State parks and national forests that can be utilized for wildlife viewing. There are also

currently over 430,000 acres of public land enrolled in *Access Yes!* that could potentially be accessed for wildlife viewing during the hunting off-season (see Figure 1-1).

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

Impacts to recreation would be considered significant if they drastically reduced, increased, or removed available public lands designated for recreation or significantly degraded the quality of the recreation. Impacts to environmental conditions such as air, water, or biological resources within or near public recreational land in such a way to affect its use would also be considered significant.

3.2.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

The Proposed Action has the potential to provide long-term, beneficial impacts to recreational resources in the State of Idaho. Increasing enrollment in *Access Yes!* would allow more opportunities and venues for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing on private property. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have long-term, beneficial impacts to recreational resources in Idaho.

3.2.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, VPA-HIP funds would not be used to increase *Access Yes!* enrollment. There would be no expansion of *Access Yes!* related recreational opportunities in Idaho; therefore, under the No Action Alternative there would be no change to existing recreational resources. Without VPA-HIP funds, Idaho would not be able to meet its enrollment goal for *Access Yes!*; furthermore, recreational opportunities in the southeast of Idaho would not increase to meet current demand. *Access Yes!* would continue as it is currently administered.

3.3 SOCIOECONOMICS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Socioeconomics for this PEA includes an investigation of population and demographic statistics as well as a discussion on the potential income from enrollment in *Access Yes!*.

EO 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires a Federal agency to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” A minority population can be defined by race, by ethnicity, or by a combination of the two classifications.

According to CEQ, a minority is defined as being one of the following groups: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, not of Hispanic origin, or Hispanic. A minority population is defined as one of these groups exceeding 50 percent of the population in an area or the minority population percentage of the affected area is meaningfully greater than the minority population percentage in the general population (CEQ 1997). The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) defines ethnicity as either being of Hispanic origin or not being of Hispanic origin. Hispanic origin is further defined as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race” (USCB 2001).

Each year the USCB defines the national poverty thresholds, which are measured in terms of household income and are dependent upon the number of persons within the household. Individuals falling below the poverty threshold are considered low-income individuals. USCB census tracts where at least 20 percent of the residents are considered poor are known as poverty areas (USCB 1995). When the percentage of residents considered poor is greater than 40 percent, the census tract is considered an extreme poverty area.

3.3.1 Affected Environment

3.3.1.1 Population and Demographics

The State of Idaho had an estimated population of 1.54 million as of July 2009. According to the USCB, From 2000 to 2008 Idaho consistently ranked as one of the fastest growing states, with population growing nearly 18 percent over that time period. Idaho remains the 39th most populous state but ranked 18th in net in-migration from mid-2007 to 2008. This accounted for almost 55 percent of the population growth for that year. As with most other states, as the economy has slowed in recent years, so has population in-migration to the state (Idaho Department of Labor 2009).

The State of Idaho's population is predominantly white, with 92.1 percent residents claiming this ethnicity. American Indian or Alaskan Native persons rank second at 1.2 percent, with Asian persons and Black or African Americans making up 1.1 and 0.6 percent, respectively. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander persons only accounted for 0.2 percent, while 2.4 percent of residents claimed Other race status. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin ranked the greatest minority making up 10 percent of Idaho's population in 2009 (USCB 2011).

In 2009, Idaho had a poverty rate of 13.5 percent, which was equal to the U.S. as a whole. Of the current population in Idaho, 87.7 percent have attained a high school degree with 23.7 percent of persons over 25 having attained a bachelor's degree (USCB 2011).

3.3.1.2 Private Landowner Income from *Access Yes!*

In June of 2009, Idaho had an unemployment rate of 8.3 percent, slightly better than the 9.5 percent unemployment for the nation as a whole. Household median income for 2009 was estimated at \$46,183 as compared to \$51,425 for the nation. Per capita personal income was \$22,262 for 2009 (USCB 2011).

The Proposed Action has the potential to directly impact Idaho's privately-held farms, ranches, and forest land. In 2007 there were 25,349 farms in Idaho, comprising 11,497,383 acres within the state, which yields an average farm size of 454 acres (USDA 2007). Landowners that are eligible for *Access Yes!* enrollment would receive a flat rate monetary payment of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre of suitable land. In 2009, *Access Yes!* paid out \$405,124 to 103 participants statewide. Due to population concentrations in southern Idaho, approximately 40 percent of the payout went to the Magic Valley administrative region. Distribution of the *Access Yes!* payouts are shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3.1. Regional Participation, Acreages, and Payouts from Access Yes! in 2009

IDFG Region	Number of Participants	Enrolled Acres	Cost
Panhandle	5	92,110	\$30,036
Clearwater	6	25,081	\$40,592
Southwest	16	38,163	\$71,011
Magic Valley	39	184,464	\$154,146
Southeast	22	63,425	\$49,848
Upper Snake	6	13,616	\$22,257
Salmon	9	17,115	\$37,234
Total	103	433,974	\$405,124

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

Significance of an impact to socioeconomics varies depending on the setting of the Proposed Action, but 40 CFR 1508.8 states that effects may include those that induce changes in the pattern of land use, population density, or growth rate.

Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and has equal access to the decision-making process. Significant environmental justice impacts would result if access to decision-making documents was denied or if any adverse environmental effects occurred that would disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations.

3.3.2.1 Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, a total of \$2,340,000 in State, private, and Federal funds over three years would be used to expand enrollment in *Access Yes!*. Specifically, IDFG would use \$1,200,000 (\$400,000 per year over three years) in VPA-HIP grant funds to increase enrollment in a modified *Access Yes!* program that would offer a flat rate monetary compensation of \$1.00 to \$1.50 per acre enrolled. This program would only enroll suitable habitat on privately held farms, ranches, forest lands, and lands owned by private timber companies in Idaho.

Ultimately, the additional flat rate monetary compensation would offer a very slight, direct economic benefit to eligible landowners. The amount of monetary compensation would of course depend on the total acreage enrolled. Indirectly, increased hunting and fishing on these private lands would be beneficial to local economies where ever these new enrolled lands may be. Traveling sportsmen would spend dollars at local eateries, hotels for lodging, gas stations, and for any other goods and supplies that might be necessary for the hunting trip. Also, utilizing private lands that allow access to large tracts of landlocked public lands may draw in out of state sportsmen, thereby bringing in more economic gain for local communities and the State of Idaho. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have a long-term beneficial impact on socioeconomics in Idaho.

Under the Proposed Action, there would be no disproportionate impact to minorities or low income populations in Idaho. *Access Yes!* is voluntary and would only target landowners with suitable habitat. Once enrolled, participants in *Access Yes!* must give equal access to all sportsmen with a valid hunting and/or fishing license.

3.3.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, IDFG would not receive funding under the VPA-HIP. The No Action Alternative would not allow for any of the positive economic impacts from the introduction of the VPA-HIP funding into the economy, nor would it allow for the expansion of hunting opportunities on private lands, which also brings economic benefit via lodging and purchase of goods and supplies.

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CHAPTER 4.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

4.1 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

CEQ regulations stipulate that the cumulative impacts analysis within an EA should consider the potential environmental impacts resulting from “the incremental impacts of the action when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 1508.7). Recent CEQ guidance in considering cumulative impacts involves defining the scope of the other actions and their interrelationship with the Proposed Action. The scope must consider geographical and temporal overlaps among the Proposed Action and other actions. It must also evaluate the nature of interactions among these actions.

Cumulative impacts are most likely to arise when a relationship or synergism exists between the Proposed Action and other actions expected to occur in a similar location or during a similar time period. Actions overlapping with or in proximity to the Proposed Action would be expected to have more potential for a relationship than those more geographically separated.

In this PEA, the affected environment for cumulative impacts includes all of the State of Idaho since the *Access Yes!* program is available statewide; therefore, the new lands for enrollment could occur anywhere in the state on private land. In addition to VPA-HIP, several other Federal and state programs in Idaho focus on conservation. Federal programs include the CRP, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Wetlands Reserve Program. Wildlife conservation in the State of Idaho is a multi-agency coordinated effort. Though wildlife conservation and management is generally administered by IDFG, there are many conservation partners that work with IDFG to promote conservation. These partners include Federal, State, and non-governmental organizations and agencies across the state that all have an interest in promoting environmental stewardship. As previously mentioned, IDFG has partnered closely with USFWS for habitat improvement initiatives throughout Idaho.

By utilizing VPA-HIP funds solely for enrollment in *Access Yes!*, IDFG could allow reallocation of other non-VPA-HIP funding sources to be used for habitat improvement projects throughout the state. Ultimately this could provide increased quality habitat and therefore overall long-term benefits to wildlife in the State of Idaho. VPA-HIP funding would provide for environmental benefits greater than the simple program goal of providing sportsmen access to private lands. Cumulative impacts are expected to be beneficial to the natural environment.

4.2 IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES

Irreversible and irretrievable commitments are related to the use of nonrenewable resources and the effect that the use of these resources has on future generations. Irreversible effects primarily result from the use or destruction of a specific resource that cannot be replaced within a reasonable time frame. Irretrievable resource commitments involve the loss in value of an affected resource that cannot be restored as a result

of the action. Under the Proposed Action, long-term beneficial impacts are expected to wildlife populations and their habitats. There would be no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

CHAPTER 5.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

The purpose of mitigation is to avoid, minimize, or eliminate significant negative impacts on affected resources. CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.20) state that mitigation includes:

- Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.
- Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

CEQ regulations state that all relevant reasonable mitigation measures that could avoid or minimize significant impacts should be identified, even if they are outside the jurisdiction of the lead agency or the cooperating agencies. This serves to alert agencies or officials who can implement these extra measures, and will encourage them to do so. The lead agency for this Proposed Action is FSA. The state partner agency is IDFG.

There are no expected long-term, significant negative impacts associated with implementation of the VPA-HIP in Idaho; therefore, no mitigation measures are required. State employed biologists or representatives would complete site specific environmental evaluations prior to all private land enrollment which would identify any protected resources on the property. In those site specific instances where the biologist determined a potential threat to a wetland, threatened or endangered species, or a cultural resource, consultation with the appropriate lead agency would identify specific mitigation measures required to eliminate or reduce the negative impacts to an acceptable level.

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CHAPTER 6.0 PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONTACTED

Idaho Association of Conservation Districts

Idaho Cattlemen's Association

Idaho Department of Agriculture

Idaho Farm Service Agency

Idaho Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Nature Conservancy- Idaho

Pheasants Forever - Idaho

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CHAPTER 7.0 REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 8.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

USDA Farm Service Agency

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Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Sal Palazzolo, Private Lands and Farm Bill Manager

TEC, Inc.

Dana Banwart, Project Manager

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12 years related experience

Michael Harrison, Environmental Planner

M.S. Environmental Science

6 years related experience

Stephen Anderson, Technical Analyst

B.A. Environmental Science

3 years related experience

Sharon Simpson, Administrative Support

A.S. Science

7 years related experience

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APPENDIX A – USFWS CONCURRENCE

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**FEDERAL AID IN WILDLIFE RESTORATION
IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
PROJECT STATEMENT**

GRANT NUMBER: W-173-D

SEGMENT NUMBER: 26

AMENDMENT NUMBER: 1

GRANT TITLE: Idaho Wildlife Habitat Management Program

AGREEMENT PERIOD: July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2011

PROGRESS REPORT DUE: September 30, 2010

LOCATION: Statewide

PROJECT VI – *ACCESS YES!*

I. NEED

Scarcer access to hunting opportunities is a trend that slowly is pulling apart the American sporting tradition. Acutely true in the west, urban development and lack of planning, among other factors, are making it increasingly difficult for sportsman to find access to hunting and fishing. This is particularly significant where federal public land provides the only place to hunt and fish, as is true in many locations in the west.

The Department is working to increase the participation of landowners in *Access Yes!*, our access program for sportsmen- providing landowners with the mechanism to voluntarily open their private ground to access by hunters and anglers. Engaging private landowners in making their private land accessible to hunters also opens up access to public lands which were blocked because of that private land. By providing further incentives, making it worthwhile, and in fact advantageous, to landowners to allow access either to or across their private ground to public lands, we are helping landowners, sportsman, and wildlife.

II. OBJECTIVES

Due to increased pressure for land development and private hunting club leasing, the Department is endeavoring to increase the variety and distribution of sportsmen access to private land for wildlife recreation by providing financial incentives and services to landowners who allow public access, and collaborating with landowners and commercial operators to provide public recreation opportunities on private lands

1. Provide up to 145,000 acres of sportsmen access to private land, statewide in lease agreements between the Department and Private Landowners (estimated \$1.25 per acre cost).
2. Provide field technician to assist with landowner sportsmen relations in support of private land access.

III. APPROACH

Regional field staffs provide technical assistance to landowners to manage public access to and through private land. Operating funds will also provide financial incentives to encourage private landowners to provide hunting access.

Bids for participation in the *Access Yes!* program will be solicited. Successful applicants will sign lease agreements with the Department in each year and receive payment as dictated in the agreement.

Field staffs assist landowners with posting land use rules, monitoring fences and littering, help with design of small habitat projects, assist with finding funds for habitat projects, provide direction for appropriate parking and sign-in for visitors. Idaho's *Access Yes!* program is flexible matching the needs of the landowner. This helps interest landowners into making their private land accessible for hunting and fishing.

IV. EXPECTED RESULTS AND BENEFITS

Additional acres of access for the sportsmen and women of Idaho will be made available. These acres also maintain and improve wildlife habitat by keeping working lands working.



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

911 NE 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181



In Reply Refer To:
MBSP/WSFR

February 17, 2010

Brad Compton, Wildlife Restoration Coordinator
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707

Subject: Notice of Federal Assistance Award for **W-173-D-26, Amendment #1**

Dear Mr. Compton:

The enclosed Application for Federal Assistance, **W-173-D-26, Amendment #1** Statewide Habitat Management, increase of funds and time extension, is approved **effective December 24, 2009**. The increase in the Federal share of 2,371,201.00 brings the total Federal share of this award to \$4,509,975.00. The performance period of this award is July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2011.

Terms of Acceptance: Per <http://www.doi.gov/pam/TermsandConditions.html>, acceptance of a Federal Financial award from the Department of the Interior (DOI) carries with it the responsibility to be aware of and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Acceptance is defined as the start of work, drawing down funds, or accepting the award via electronic means. Awards are based on the application submitted to, and as approved by DOI and are subject to the terms and conditions incorporated either directly or by reference to the following:

- Program legislation/regulation.
- Special terms and conditions.
- Code of Federal Regulations/Regulatory Requirements, as applicable

43 CFR 12(A) Administrative and Audit Requirements and Cost Principles for Assistance Programs

43 CFR 12(E) Buy American Requirements for Assistance Programs

43 CFR 12(C) Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local

43 CFR 12(F) Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, other Non-Profit and Commercial Organizations

43 CFR 43 Governmentwide Requirements for a Drug-Free Workplace

43 CFR 42 Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement)

43 CFR 18 New Restrictions on Lobbying

Special Conditions and Provisions:

*Approved: Subject to the availability of Federal Assistance Funds.

*Annual Federal Financial Reports, SF-425, and Performance Reports will be due beginning **September 28, 2010** and on that date every year until the completion of the grant. Final Reports will be due 90 days from the ending date of the grant. For report due dates please refer to the "Reports due by Period" report located under "Grantee Reports", on the IFAIMS website at: <http://faims.fws.gov>. For further information regarding reporting requirements and sanctions please see the reporting guidance issued May 15, 2009 in the Federal Assistance Toolkit located at: <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/subpages/toolkitfiles/intgdrpt.pdf>.

*Activities proposed for funding after 02/17/2010 were not included in the approval of Amendment 1 and must undergo compliance reviews prior to approval and becoming eligible for reimbursement under this grant. An amendment will be required if such activities change the scope, cost or duration of the grant.

Please contact me at 503-231-6128, or Dan Edwards at 503-231-2261, if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,



J. Frederick Caslick, PhD, Chief
Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program

Enclosure

NEPA COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

State: Idaho Federal Financial Assistance Grant/Agreement/Amendment Number: W-173-D-26
Grant/Project Name: Statewide Habitat Management

This proposal ☒ is; ☐ is not completely covered by categorical exclusion _____ in 516 DM 2, Appendix _____; and/or 516 DM 6, Appendix _____. DOI 1.6, 1.7, 1.11, & USFWS B1, B2, B3, B4, B7, B8, E1 and E2
(check (✓) one) (Review proposed activities. An appropriate categorical exclusion must be identified before completing the remainder of the Checklist. If a categorical exclusion cannot be identified, or the proposal cannot meet the qualifying criteria in the categorical exclusion, or an extraordinary circumstance applies (see below), an EA must be prepared.)

Extraordinary Circumstances:

Will This Proposal (check (✓) yes or no for each item below):

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 1. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 2. Have significant adverse effects on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas under Federal ownership or jurisdiction. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 5. Have a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 7. Have significant adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office, the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, or a consulting party under 36 CFR 800. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 8. Have significant adverse effects on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 9. Have the possibility of violating a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 10. Have the possibility for a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 11. Have the possibility to limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 12. Have the possibility to significantly contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112). |

(If any of the above extraordinary circumstances receive a "Yes" check (✓), an EA must be prepared.)

☐ Yes ☐ No This grant/project includes additional information supporting the Checklist.

Concurrences/Approvals:

Project Leader: _____ Date: _____

State Authority Concurrence: _____ Date: _____

(with financial assistance signature authority, if applicable)

Within the spirit and intent of the Council of Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and have determined that the grant/agreement/amendment:

- ☐ is a categorical exclusion as provided by 516 DM 6, Appendix 1 and/or 516 DM 2, Appendix 1. No further NEPA documentation will therefore be made.
- ☐ is not completely covered by the categorical exclusion as provided by 516 DM 6, Appendix 1 and/or 516 DM 2, Appendix 1. An EA must be prepared.

Service signature approval:

RO or WO Environmental Coordinator: Daniel K. Edwards Date: _____
Staff Specialist, Division of Federal Assistance: _____ Date: 09/18/2009
(or authorized Service representative with financial assistance signature authority)

NOTICE

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501et seq.), please be advised that:

1. The gathering of information from potential grant recipients is authorized by The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347). NEPA requires that a number of items be considered prior to any activity under a grant.
2. The submission of requested information is required for entities competing for federal assistance grants . This completed checklist is a record that these NEPA issues were considered prior to commencing grant activity.
3. You are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.
4. This information collection has been approved by OMB and assigned clearance number 1018-0110.
5. The requested information may be subject to disclosure under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

The public reporting burden for the information collected on this form is 30 minutes. This burden estimate includes time for reviewing instructions, gathering data, and completing and reviewing form. Comments on this form should be mailed to the Information Collection Officer, Mail Stop 222, Arlington Square, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240. Thank you.

APPENDIX B – AGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

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February 16, 2011

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Farm and Foreign
Agricultural
Services

Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts
132 SW 5th Ave, Suite 102
Meridian, ID 83642

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation and the State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

A copy of the Final PEA/FONSI has been provided on CD for your convenience. The Final PEA is also available at the following website:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=ecrc&topic=nep-cd>.

The agency is accepting comments until **March 16, 2011**.

Comments may be e-mailed to: Dana Banwart at dhbanwart@tecinc.com

Written comments may be mailed to:

TEC Inc.
11817 Canon Blvd., Suite 300
Newport News, VA 23606

We appreciate your review and look forward to receiving your comments.

Matthew T. Ponish

Enclosure: 1 CD

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February 16, 2011

**United States
Department of
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Farm and Foreign
Agricultural
Services

Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Idaho Cattlemen's Association
PO Box 15397
Boise, ID 83715

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

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Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Idaho Department of Agriculture
PO Box 790
Boise, ID 83701-0790

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

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Farm and Foreign
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Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Idaho Farm Service Agency
9173 West Barnes Drive
Boise, ID 83709-1573

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation and the State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

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Farm and Foreign
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Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Idaho Natural Resources Conservation Service
9173 W. Barnes Drive, Suite C
Boise, ID 83709-1574

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation and the State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

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Farm and Foreign
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Farm Service
Agency

1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: The Nature Conservancy- Idaho
950 Bannock Street, Suite 210
Boise, ID 83702

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

The United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation and the State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game has prepared a Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) to examine the potential environmental consequences associated with implementing a Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho. The PEA examines the Proposed Action and the no action alternative environmental baseline on natural and socioeconomic resources.

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1400 Independence
Ave, SW
Stop 0513
Washington, DC
20250-0513

TO: Pheasants Forever - Idaho (Ryan Storm, regional rep.)
164 Long Island Avenue
Twin Falls, ID 83301

FROM: Matthew T. Ponish
United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency
National Environmental Compliance Manager

SUBJECT: Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact for Voluntary Public Access Habitat Incentive Program in the State of Idaho

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