

recreation direction provided by the Forest Plan. In my opinion, the EA adequately discloses the effects of the proposed well on these resources and the North Unit of TRNP. Additionally, the District Ranger included modifications to the SUP to mitigate and minimize effects to TRNP (DN, p. 2). The rationale for his decision (DN, p. 3) demonstrates consideration of the trade-offs in authorizing the SUP.

Objection 2: The mitigation measure to defer drilling until after July 4 will not be effective because the highest use of TRNP wilderness is the four to six weeks after July 4.

Response: The District Ranger specifically included the modification to the SUP to delay drilling until after the July 4th holiday to minimize noise and visual effects to TRNP visitors. He provides rationale for this modification (DN, p. 3) which I find to be reasonable and within his discretion.

Objection 3: The EA fails to consider the effects of the well on a pair of golden eagles in the area.

Response: The Biological Evaluation prepared by BlueStem, Inc. concluded that the project will have no impact on golden eagles (Doc. 13, p. 22). The Interdisciplinary Team's Forest Service biologist concurred with this conclusion.

Objection 4: The impacts of the project on the Bennett-Cottonwood Roadless Area and bighorn sheep are not justified in the selection of Alternative 1.

Response: The EA adequately discloses the effects of the proposed well on the roadless area and wildlife, particularly bighorn sheep (EA, Ch. III, pp. 3-4). The District Ranger included modifications to the SUP to mitigate the impacts of the project on bighorn sheep (DN, p. 2). In my opinion, the District Ranger's decision is supported by the information provided in the EA and project file.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend the District Ranger's decision be affirmed and the Appellant's requested relief be denied.

/s/ Katherine Q. Solberg

KATHERINE Q. SOLBERG
Reviewing Officer
Director, Human Resources