FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
for
US-20, Junction SH 87 to the Montana State Line
Key No. 14054 and 19913

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that the selected alternative will have no significant impact on the human or natural environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based on the Environmental Assessment (EA), which FHWA and ITD have determined to adequately and accurately discuss the need, environmental issues, and impacts of the selected alternative and to identify appropriate mitigation measures. It provides sufficient evidence that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Approved by:

__________________________________  ____________________
John A. Perry          Date
Field Operations Engineer
FHWA Idaho Division

The Idaho Transportation Department intends to publish a notice in the Federal Register, pursuant to 23 USC §139(l), indicating that one or more Federal agencies have taken final action on permits, licenses, or approvals for a transportation project. If such notice is published, claims seeking judicial review of those Federal agency actions will be barred unless such claims are filed within 150 days after the date of publication of the notice, or within such shorter time period as is specified in the Federal laws pursuant to which judicial review of the Federal agency action is allowed. If no notice is published, then the periods of time that otherwise are provided by the Federal laws governing such claims will apply.
Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate risks, benefits, opportunities, and costs associated with reconstruction of U.S. Highway 20 (U.S. 20) at Targhee Pass, specifically, the section of U.S. 20 between its junction with Idaho State Highway 87 (S.H. 87) and the Montana state line (mile post 402.1 to 406.3). The project vicinity is shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 provides a more detailed view of the project location, including the existing highway right-of-way and easement on the National Forest-portion of the corridor.

What has been done since the Environmental Assessment (EA) was published?

The EA was released for public review on January 2, 2019 and comments were solicited through February 28, 2019. A public hearing was held during the comment period, on January 17, 2019. Following the comment period, ITD and FHWA developed responses to comments and completed necessary clearances with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (Idaho SHPO). The final EA has been updated based on these processes.

What changes have been made to the EA?

Chapter 6 (Response to Comments) has been added. Where comments resulted in changes to the EA, those changes are included in the other chapters of the final EA. The following appendices were also added to the final EA: the noise study (Appendix B), an index of comments received (Appendix C), reproduction of comments (Appendix D), documentation of the Programmatic Biological Assessment and consultation with the USFWS (Appendix E), and no effect statements for proposed threatened and candidate species (Appendix F). The final EA, including appendices, is incorporated into this FONSI by reference.

What comments were received on the EA?

Numerous public and agency comments were received during the draft EA comment period. Comments were accepted by mail and email, and on hand-written comment forms. Oral testimony comments were also accepted at the public hearing and were transcribed by a court reporter. Some printed comments were hand delivered to the ITD District 6 office. The text of comments totaled over 1,800 pages. For efficiency purposes, comment letters were reproduced 2-per-page in Appendix D of the final EA document; personal contact information (street addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers) was redacted. Comments received were both positive and negative. All comments are important and were given equal consideration in determining the changes that have been made to the EA.
U.S. 20 Targhee Pass
Project Vicinity Map

Basemap: Bing Roadmap/ESRI Streets
Projection: Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Map Date: 7/14/2018

Figure 1. Project Vicinity
Figure 2. Project Location and Existing Right-of-Way/Easement
Which alternative is being selected?

Six alternatives were evaluated in the EA, including the No-Build Alternative. One of the action alternatives (Alternative 3) was identified as the preferred alternative in the public review draft of the EA that was released in January 2019. Alternative 3 is identified as the selected alternative in this FONSI.

For the selected alternative, ITD is planning to implement roadway and safety improvements for the Targhee Pass segment of U.S. 20 between the intersection with S.H. 87 and the Montana state line (mile post 402.5 to 406.3). ITD plans to:

1. Add an additional travel lane in the uphill direction from S.H. 87 to the Montana State line.
2. Widen the shoulder on each side, up to 8-feet; Figure 3 illustrates the existing typical cross section and the planned cross section for the selected alternative.
3. Increase hill cuts between mileposts 404.2 and 404.7 to improve stopping sight distance; Figure 4 illustrates the planned hill cuts in that vicinity.
4. Add left- and right-turn lanes into the two Big Horn Hills Estates entrances (Figure 5).
5. Conduct tree clearing within the right-of-way/easement to reduce pavement shade that contributes to icy road surface conditions.
6. Reconstruct the road subsurface and improve drainage.

Additionally, ITD will work with a vendor to design and install a series of pole-mounted, solar-powered animal-detection radar systems and activated driver warning signals. A series of line-of-sight radar systems (requiring as many as 12–14 poles) would be necessary to cover the 4-mile segment, with the exact number and placement to be determined in design. The poles would be mounted with a typical pole foundation (2-foot diameter by 4-foot depth). The poles would have a breakaway base to protect drivers during impact. These detection systems could potentially be moved at a later date if gaps in zone coverage are found or if other technical issues arise following the initial installation. The poles would be installed in areas previously disturbed by the road construction (e.g., within the roadway prism). System effectiveness will be adaptive, requiring adjustments over a period of several years after the system is installed. Evaluating system effectiveness will require working with a qualified research organization/consultant with experience evaluating animal-detection systems. The recommended benchmarks (performance norms) for an animal-detection system are: the system should detect 91–95 percent or more of all large animals that approach the road; the false detection rate should not be greater than 6–10 percent; the system should result in a reduction of 71–80 percent or more in wildlife-vehicle collisions (Huijser, et al., 2009). If performance norms are not being met after an evaluation period (5-7 years), then ITD will consider system modifications or alternatives.

![Radar activated animal-detection system example installation near Elko, British Columbia, Canada](Photo Copyright: Marcel Huijser, used with permission)
Island Park U.S. 20
Targhee Pass Environmental Assessment

Figure 3. Typical Cross Sections

Existing and No-Build Alternative:
- One 12-foot lane each direction
- 5-foot shoulder each side
- Total 34-feet of pavement

Selected Alternative:
- Three 12-foot lanes
- 8-foot shoulder each side
- Total 52-feet of pavement

U.S. 20 Targhee Pass
Typical Cross Sections

Basemap: 2017 LiDar Ortho Images
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Map Date: 2/21/2020

Figure 3. Typical Cross Sections
U.S. 20 Targhee Pass

Hill Cut and Road Realignment
Mile Post 404.1 to 404.7

Edge of Pavement
- Existing and No-Build
- Selected Alternative

Hill Cut
- Cut-Fill Line

Basemap: Bing Roadmap/ESRI Streets
Projection: Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Map Date: 7/6/2018

Figure 4. Hill Cut and Road Realignment
U.S. 20 Targhee Pass

Turn Lane Additions

Selected Alternative

Aerial Imagery: DigitalGlobe, ESRI (07/15/2016)
Projection: Mercator Auxiliary Sphere
Map Date: 7/7/2019

Figure 5. Turn Lane Additions
The planned improvements will be completed within the existing right-of-way and National Forest easement. No property purchases will be required.

What are the impacts associated with the no-build alternative and the selected alternative, including mitigation commitments?

Table 1 summarizes impacts for the no-build alternative and the selected alternative, including mitigation commitments associated with the selected alternative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource/Issue</th>
<th>No-Build Alternative</th>
<th>Selected Alternative</th>
<th>Commitments/ Mitigation Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geologic Hazards and Soil Disturbance</td>
<td>• No impacts to geologic resources would occur and no geological impacts to the road are anticipated. No new impacts to soil resources would occur. Total existing disturbed area is 32.4 acres.</td>
<td>• Expanded and realigned road prism will create new cut and fill slopes. Total disturbed area of 44.8 acres (an increase of 12.4 acres).</td>
<td>During the design phase, ITD or the design contractor will:  - Avoid unstable areas and minimize soil disturbance for the roadway final design.  - Include design for erosion control and rockfall prevention for larger hill cut areas.  - Develop a revegetation plan during final design in consultation with USFS. Include best management practices to protect the soil and revegetate disturbed areas. During construction, the contractor will:  - Clean earth disturbing equipment of all plant materials, dirt and material that may carry noxious weed seeds prior to use on the project.  - Provide the ITD engineer with an opportunity to inspect the equipment prior to unloading the equipment at the construction site. If upon inspection, dirt, debris, and seeds are visible, the equipment shall be immediately removed from the site and washed. The equipment shall then be reinspected upon return to the site to ensure the equipment is clean.  - Use regular application of dust control water on all haul roads and areas of active construction.  - Practice street sweeping regularly to reduce tracking and fugitive dust.  - Implement other dust abatement Best Management Practices (BMPs) as directed by the ITD engineer.  - Salvage disturbed soils for use in reclamation of disturbed areas.</td>
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<td>Water Resources and Wetlands</td>
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<td>During the design phase, ITD or the design contractor will:</td>
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<td>Pavement would be periodically repaired or replaced without improvements to road base and subsurface drainage.</td>
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<td>• Determine appropriate wetland plant species for revegetation, in consultation with the USFS and will include wetland restoration in the project revegetation plan. The revegetation plan will include a minimum of 0.023 acres of wetland mitigation to compensate for the permanent wetland impact, and will need to be approved by FHWA.</td>
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<td>Total existing impervious surface is 17 acres.</td>
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<td>• Coordinate with Fremont County Planning and Zoning to determine and complete floodplain development permitting requirements.</td>
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<td>Poor drainage would continue to cause seasonal groundwater to pool on and around roadway (safety concern).</td>
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<td>• Submit Joint Permit Application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Idaho Department of Water Resources.</td>
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<td>The existing roadway encroaches in the 100-year floodplain. The FEMA-mapped floodplain shows portions of the existing highway intruding in the floodplain, between approximately mile posts 404.1 and 404.8; however, the floodplain mapping is not based on a measured Base Flood Elevation and does not match with the current path of Howard Creek in some locations.</td>
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<td>Prior to construction, the contractor will:</td>
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<td>• Prepare a Spill Prevention and Control Countermeasures Plan.</td>
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<td>• Develop Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and Obtain Construction General Permit.</td>
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<td>During construction, the contractor will:</td>
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<td>• Appropriately place fiber wattles and/or silt fence. Use straw bales or similar measures to minimize potential sediment delivery to the aquatic resource.</td>
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<td>• Check equipment for damaged hoses, fittings, lines, or tanks that have the potential to release pollutants into any waterway.</td>
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<td>• Keep equipment used in stream beds or on structures adjacent to or over water bodies leak-free.</td>
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<td>• When possible, complete work from the existing bridge or roadway shoulder rather than in the river channel.</td>
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<td>• Prevent turbidity from exceeding Idaho Water Quality Standards.</td>
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<td>• Locate all staging, fueling and storage areas away from and buffered from aquatic areas.</td>
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<td>• Store construction equipment away from concentrated flows of stormwater, drainage courses, and inlets.</td>
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<td>• Park equipment over plastic sheeting or equivalent when possible; plastic is not a substitute for drip pans or absorbent pads.</td>
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<td>• Locate borrow and fill areas outside of the 100-year floodplain and greater than 300 ft from fish-bearing streams.</td>
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<td>• Place all removed materials in an approved upland location.</td>
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<td>• Place rip-rap armor at the toes of the gabion (if any) in a way that does not constrict the channel or restrict natural hydraulics.</td>
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<td>• Schedule project work in riparian areas during low flow conditions.</td>
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<td>• Minimize stream crossings</td>
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<td>• Reclaim disturbed areas consistent with the revegetation plan.</td>
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- Construction disturbance will cause potential for erosion, sedimentation, and water pollution.
- Impervious surface area in the watershed will be 26.1 acres (an increase of 9.1 acres).
- Improved road surface drainage.
- Additional floodplain encroachment due to highway widening. However, none of the project actions would directly or indirectly encourage floodplain development. Access to private property would not be improved except entrances to the Big Horn Hills Estates subdivision, which is not located in the floodplain.
- Permanent wetland impact of 0.023 acres.
- Potential temporary wetland and/or stream impacts for constructing retaining walls and replacement of culvert at Howard Spring Picnic Site.
<p>| Biological Resources | • No changes in available habitat caused by the project. | • Area of additional pavement removed from vegetated areas. Conversion of some trees to grass/forb/shrub habitat. No adverse effects of habitat changes due to nearby available habitat. | | Prior to construction, ITD or its designated contractor will: | • Prepare landscaping plans in consultation with the USFS which will: | o Utilize native plant species that minimize competition with existing vegetation. | o Include as much existing vegetation as possible and state proper care during and after construction. | o Identify areas to be clearly marked, flagged, or fenced where vegetation should be preserved. | • Survey the areas where trees will be cut for migratory bird nests. If nests are found, the tree with a nest cannot be removed until after August 1st to account for most re-nesting attempts. Nests that may be used in sequential years cannot be removed (e.g. raptor nests). | • Consult with IDFG regarding approved work windows for in-stream work related to fish. | • Obtain environmental clearances for staging and source material areas. | During construction, the contractor will: | • Comply with the Caribou-Targhee National Forest food storage order requirements of the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. | • Not remove any whitebark pine trees (5-needle pines), if found. | • Not locate construction staging areas, waste areas etc. where significant adverse impact on existing vegetation may occur. | • Stage all materials and equipment adjacent to the project and situated as not to disturb any adjoining slopes or vegetation. | • Establish appropriate buffer zones to protect riparian corridors and natural drainage paths; maintain and protect dense vegetation in these areas and retain vegetated buffers in their natural state wherever possible. | • Maximize the undisturbed area within project boundaries whenever possible to retain vegetation for erosion control purposes. | • Consult with IDFG regarding fish handling stipulations. | • Implement cofferdam or other appropriate dewatering device where practicable, if needed. | • Install rock apron inlet and outlet protection including geotextile separation fabric on all new culverts and extensions. Replant disturbed areas following ITD's revegetation plan. | Following construction, ITD will: | • Complete Form ITD 0290 (Programmatic Biological Assessment Construction Monitoring) and submit it to the USFWS within 45 days of project completion. | | • Increased traffic noise, ongoing human presence near highway. | • Increased traffic noise, ongoing human presence near highway. | • Increased effect of traffic volume to migration, dispersal, and daily movements of wildlife. | | • No project actions to reliably reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. | • Increased effect of traffic volume to migration, dispersal, and daily movements of wildlife. | • Animal detection system included in selected alternative. | • No adverse effect on fisheries. | • No adverse effect on fisheries. |</p>
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| Land Use and Transportation Planning | • Consistent with general and specific area management direction and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Travel Management Plan.  
• Does not address objectives of the State Wildlife Action Plan and Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve highway permeability for wildlife movement.  
• The roadway design and accesses are consistent with Fremont County General Plan.  
• The roadway design is consistent with City of Island Park zoning and does not affect business or residential access.  
• Does not address ITD safety, operational, or bicycle goals for the U.S. 20 Corridor Plan.  
• No changes in designated accesses to private or public land access.  
• No right-of-way acquisitions or easements. | • Consistent with general and specific area management direction and the Caribou-Targhee National Forest Travel Management Plan.  
• Addresses objectives to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions; does not improve highway permeability for wildlife movement.  
• The roadway design and accesses are consistent with Fremont County General Plan.  
• The roadway design is consistent with City of Island Park zoning and does not affect business or residential access.  
• Addresses safety and operational goals of the U.S. 20 Corridor Plan.  
• No changes in designated accesses to private or public lands.  
• No right-of-way acquisitions or easements. | During the design phase, ITD or the design contractor will:  
• Complete a timber purchase/assessment from the USFS for trees that would be removed within the National Forest.  
• Due to proximity to the Henrys Lake Airport, complete Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Form 7460-1 and submit to the ITD Aeronautics Division and Fremont County. The Aeronautics Division and Fremont County would then determine if the project plan would require notification to the FAA and response from the FAA prior to proceeding with construction.  
Prior to construction, the contractor will:  
• Develop a Traffic Management Plan to minimize travel delays. |
| Noise | • Unnoticeable increase - average increase of 2.0 dBA across project corridor due to estimated increase in traffic volumes. | • Slightly noticeable increase, average 3.7 dBA increase across project corridor, with the greatest residential receptor increasing by 5.6 dBA (a noticeable increase).  
• Abatement for traffic noise was not determined to be reasonable to implement. | During construction, the contractor will:  
• Incorporate low-cost, easy-to-implement noise reduction measures into project plans and specifications (e.g., equipment muffler requirements, work-hour limits).  
• Conduct construction activity near residences between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays, to the extent practicable; this limitation could be adjusted if approved by the resident engineer. |
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| Visual              | • No change to the long-term visual character or visual quality.                      | • No significant change to the long-term visual character or visual quality.          | During construction, the contractor will:  
  • Conduct construction activities during daylight hours. If there is need for nighttime construction at any point, the contractor will be directed to minimize fugitive light from portable sources used for construction by using color-corrected halide lights that would be operated at the lowest allowable wattage and height. Direct all lights downward toward work activities and away from nearby residents to the maximum extent possible.  
  Following construction, the contractor will:  
  • Restore construction staging areas to minimize the impact on visual quality and landscape character.  
  • Replant following the revegetation plan developed by ITD in consultation with the Forest Service. |
| Recreation          | • No changes to recreation resources in the project corridor.                         | • No changes to recreation resources in the project corridor.                         | Prior to construction, the contractor and ITD will:  
  • Coordinate with the U.S. Forest Service, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Fremont County to minimize travel delays and closure of the Howard Spring Picnic Site. |
| Social and Economic | • Traffic volume increases without adding turning lanes would increase risk of crashes. | • Positive social and economic effects as a result of transportation improvements to increase safety and mobility in the area, decreasing risk of crashes and improved access.  
  • No residential takes, no business relocations, no community facilities affected.  
  • Community cohesion and social interaction patterns unaffected. | None. |
| Cultural            | No effects to historic properties.                                                    | No effects to historic properties.                                                   | During construction:  
  • Animal-detection system components will only be installed in ground previously disturbed by construction (e.g., within the roadway prism) and will not be installed in environmentally-sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands or cultural sites).  
  • Inadvertent discovery of human remains and other cultural materials during construction will require immediate reasonable protection of the items and suspension of construction activity. The contractor will notify ITD upon discovery and ITD will consult with the Idaho SHPO to determine the appropriate course of action prior to resuming construction activity. |
| Section 4(f)        | No 4(f) use.                                                                           | No 4(f) use.                                                                           | None. |
What is the basis for finding no significant impact of the selected alternative?

After considering the environmental effects described in the final EA, FHWA has determined that the selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human or natural environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). This finding is based on the following:

1. The impacts of the selected alternative, on balance, are not significantly positive or negative based on the impact analyses provided in the EA and as summarized in Table 1, inclusive of required commitments/mitigation measures.

2. The selected alternative will not cause significant adverse effects on public health or safety. Based on ITD’s safety assessment, included in Appendix A of the final EA and discussed in Section 2.2.3, the selected alternative will increase safety over the No-Build Alternative.

3. The selected alternative will not have significant effects on unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

4. The selected alternative would not have disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low-income populations. Additionally, the benefits for safety, mobility, and economic opportunity resulting from the project alternatives would benefit all equally; therefore, there also would not be an unequal distribution of benefits.

5. ITD and FHWA provided opportunities for comment at all stages of the process (scoping, alternatives development, and public release of the draft EA). Details regarding public meetings, attendance, and number of comments received are described in Chapter 4 of the EA. Numerous comments were received at each stage, representing a broad range of interests and contrasting viewpoints/controversy. While controversy was evident during the EA process, all comments were given equal consideration in determining changes that were made to the process and the final EA document. Responses to comments on the draft EA are included in Chapter 6 of the final EA, and copies of comments received are reproduced in Appendix D of the final EA. Many commenters communicated preference for an alternative that would provide wildlife overpass(es) and wildlife fencing (Alternative 2 or 4 in the EA); other commenters expressed opposition to those alternatives or preference for a different alternative. ITD and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (ITD-IDFG, 2015) to work collaboratively in meeting respective agency objectives. The MOU, in part, was a reason for including wildlife overpasses in project alternatives. In providing comments on the draft EA, however, IDFG (2019) indicated willingness to work collaboratively with ITD in implementing Alternative 3 (identified as the Preferred Alternative in the EA and the selected alternative in this FONSI), which includes an animal detection system and does not include a wildlife overpass or wildlife fencing.

6. The effects of the selected alternative do not involve unique or unknown risks. Impacts are addressed in the EA, and will be mitigated with best management practices and other commitments identified in Table 1 to avoid significant impacts.

7. The selected alternative does not set a precedent; the selected alternative would have independent utility and future projects on other segments of U.S. 20 and nearby S.H. 87 would be individually evaluated.

8. The EA does not identify significant cumulative effects of the selected alternative.

10. Actions that would be taken under the selected alternative are covered under ITD’s Statewide Road Maintenance Programmatic Biological Assessment (#14420-2010-F-0287) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS, 2019) has concurred that the project actions are not likely to adversely affect federally-listed threatened or endangered species.

11. The project consists only of actions that are legal at the Federal, State, and local levels and is in compliance with all environmental protection requirements.

References


[IDFG] Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Letter from James E. White, Regional Supervisor to Jason Minzghor, Idaho Transportation Department District 6 Engineer regarding the draft EA for Targhee Pass, 1/31/2019.


[USFWS] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Email from Erin Kenison, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Boise, ID to the Idaho Department of Transportation. Acknowledging receipt of required information supporting applicability of the Idaho Transportation Department’s Statewide Road Maintenance Programmatic Biological Assessment and determination that proposed project actions are not likely to adversely affect grizzly bear or Canada lynx, 12/6/2019.