

4 January 2022



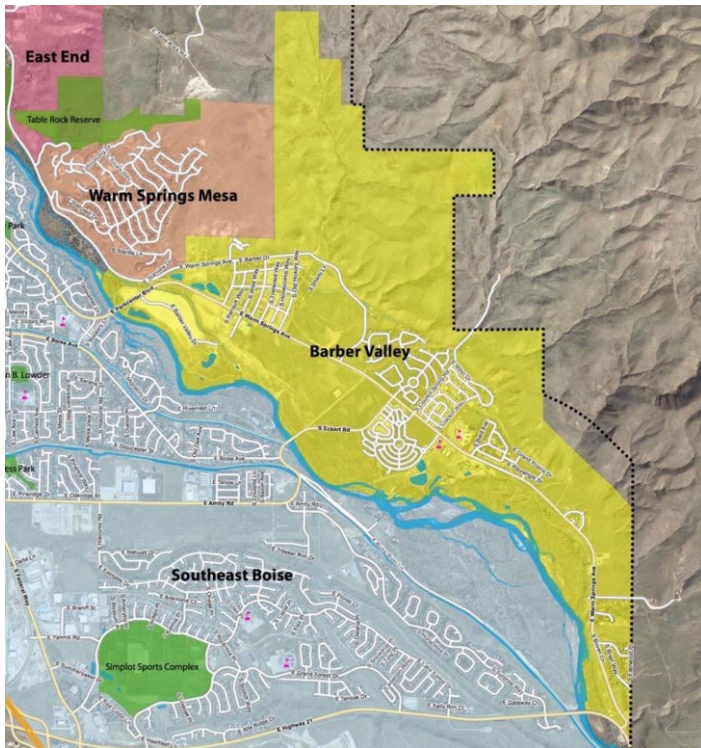
Email Transmission to:

blm_id_fourrivers@blm.gov

TO: Brent Ralston, Manager, Four Rivers Field Office
FROM: Barber Valley Neighborhood Association
SUBJECT: Barber Valley Neighborhood Association Comments on Harris Ranch LWCF Acquisition Proposal
IDI-03934/DOI-BLM-ID-BO10-2022-0006-EA

The Barber Valley Neighborhood Association (BVNA) is very much in favor of the proposed BLM acquisition of the 275-acre foothills parcel from the Alta Harris Foundation. The BVNA is one of two nearest neighborhood associations most affected by this proposal (the other is the Warm Springs Neighborhood Association). As such, the BVNA represents approximately 25 distinct neighborhoods, many Homeowner's Associations, and approximately 5000 residents. The BVNA has 10 elected board members from various parts of the Barber Valley and does regular outreach to almost 800 email addresses. Areas of focus includes parks and trails; transportation; development; wildlife mitigation; and open space. We hold monthly public meetings and present detailed information on topics of interest. Regular interaction and formal testimony with the City of Boise, Ada County, Idaho Fish and Game, Harris Ranch Wildlife Mitigation Association, and many public and private organizations enhances our ability to inform the neighborhood on development and ongoing initiatives. Community information and meeting minutes are regularly updated on our website: <http://www.BVNABoise.org>

The foothills meet the river in the Barber Valley and this is a special place for conservation. We are fortunate to live between two significant wildlife reserves. The foothills above us are part of the



Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Boise Front Wildlife Management Area. During winter, deer and elk migrate all the way from the Sawtooth Mountains to enjoy our temperate climate by the river. The SP-01 and SP-02 plans clustered development in certain areas and left other areas as open space to allow room for wildlife. Corridors are provided through our subdivisions for wildlife passage from the foothills to the river. We're also home to the Barber Pool Conservation Area, a wildlife reserve managed by the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands. While the Barber Valley is densely developed, access to the wild areas, for recreational activities such as mountain biking and hiking are of paramount interest to most residents. New urban developments include houses in Harris Ranch with smaller lots, condos, and townhouses are offset by the great access to outdoors amenities in the nearby foothills and along the river.

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www.BVNABoise.org
Board@BVNABoise.org

As a result of this location, the BVNA strongly supports this acquisition for the following reasons:

1. To **exclude more residential foothills development** in the Boise Foothills Area of Critical Environmental Concern;
2. To support a **healthy habitat** and migration corridors for deer and elk and other wildlife;
3. To make available additional foothills area for **trail** development, connections with the existing Ridge to Rivers trail system, and **non-motorized recreational activities** as hiking and mountain biking to serve the growing recreational needs of the community;
4. To **protect fragile soils** and rock formations from erosion and slope instability; and
5. To protect the **watershed** and possibly enhance native plant vegetation.

With these lands under BLM multiple-use management, wildlife and recreational use can be balanced. While existing trails on the WMA provide good access, most trails were not developed with mountain biking in mind, thus most are very steep. If trails were developed, we would favor mitigation of the impact of recreational trail access by restricting access to trails in the winter where necessary to avoid impacts on wildlife from higher elevations seeking forage in the foothills. In the summertime, where most deer and elk return to higher elevations and vegetation is abundant, these trails could be open to the public for hiking and mountain biking. Given the rapid population growth in the Barber Valley and Boise in general, more outdoor recreation opportunities are necessary to keep pace with the demand.

The BVNA would welcome interaction and partnership with BLM to educate our neighborhood and facilitate action. Please contact us and we can schedule some time at an upcoming meeting.

Thank You for the opportunity to comment.

Barber Valley Neighborhood Association Board

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