

Resolution: #20
Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs

Ruby Pipeline Route across Northern Nevada

Submitted by: Susan Saul, the Toyabe Chapter of Sierra Club, and Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Background: The largest intact sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the United States and home to pronghorn antelope, sage grouse and bighorn sheep is under threat by a proposed natural gas pipeline that could go right through its center.

Ruby Pipeline, L.L.C. has proposed constructing and operating a 678-mile natural gas pipeline from Wyoming to Oregon that would cut across the fragile sagebrush habitat either within the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge or immediately south of the refuge boundary, impacting the larger ecosystem. The proposal also involves the expansion and use of several roads within the refuge for access to the pipeline, including two roads that are currently undeveloped and under consideration for permanent closure by the refuge.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Ruby Pipeline. Although northern Nevada does not need the natural gas from this pipeline, all of the routes go through northern Nevada and would have a devastating effect on important habitat for pronghorn, sage grouse and pygmy rabbits. This preferred route is opposed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife and every conservation organization in the state.

Even more troubling is the proposal to construct an alternate route running directly through the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge. The Sheldon NWR was established in 1931 and represents the last large, intact and unspoiled sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the United States. Its mission to provide habitat for pronghorn antelope, to conserve threatened and endangered species and to be a migratory bird sanctuary reflect its enormous importance in this fragile and endangered landscape. Refuges are the only federal lands with a “wildlife first” mandate and its designation as a refuge instead of other federal land designation exemplifies its high wildlife value.

No routes through southern Idaho or along the I-80 corridor were considered. No adequate ecological or cultural studies were conducted before the DEIS was issued.

Resolution: The Federation of Western Outdoor Clubs opposes the routing the Ruby Pipeline through the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge and the proposed corridor immediately south the the Refuge in Northwest Nevada.

The FWOC asks that the No Action alternative for the DEIS be selected unless or until a less environmentally damaging alternative route is proposed and adequately studied.

The FWOC further urges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to complete Compatibility Determinations, as required by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997, before any road construction, development or expansion is allowed on the refuge.

Contact: Marjorie Sill, msill@juno.com
Susan Saul, susan103saul@gmail.com