ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

BLM, Bishop Field Office
351 Pacu, Suite 100
Bishop, CA 93514

EA Number: CA170-07-01 Supplement to Environmental Assessment CA-170-05-04 Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline Project.

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: Geothermal Lease CA-11672 & CA-14408.

Proposed Action Title: Winter Access Route, Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline Project.

Location of Proposed Action: T. 3 S., R. 27 E., Section 5 & 36.

Applicant: Mammoth Pacific L.P.

Plan Conformance: The proposed action is subject to the Bishop Resource Management Plan, approved March 25 1993. The proposed action has been reviewed and is in conformance with the plan.

INTRODUCTION

This EA is being prepared to address a preferred winter access route to the Sawmill Road that was addressed in the Basalt Canyon Environmental Assessment. This EA supplements the Basalt Canyon EA and covers winter access. This winter access route is considered a better alternative than the use of Sawmill Road and is therefore analyzed within this supplement document.

Public Scoping: A joint BLM/Forest Service public news release was completed on September 11, 2006. Copies of the news release were sent to 130 interested parties and included tribal governments. The BLM requested that written comments for this proposal be received by September 29, 2006. No comments were received during the scoping period.

Proposed Action: Mammoth Pacific, L.P. (MPLP) has been approved to access and maintain the pipeline and wells through the winter months. They are approved to use the Sawmill Road for access and maintenance once each 12 hour work period. The difficulty of maintaining winter access on Sawmill Road was identified by both the Forest Service and MPLP. MPLP has proposed an alternative route for winter access for two geothermal wells and the Basalt Canyon geothermal pipeline because of the concerns for erosion and sedimentation from Sawmill Road runoff. The new winter access route would begin from the snow disposal area east of the Mammoth Visitor Center from about 1,200 feet of new overland route and approximately 2,300 feet of existing roads east of Shady Rest Park. The proposed route would replace the Sawmill Road route discussed in the Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline EA and is analyzed in this supplement document.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Description of Proposed Action: Mammoth Pacific, L.P. (MPLP), is requesting winter access to existing production wells 57-25 and 66-25 and the Basalt Canyon production pipeline via approximately 2,300 feet of existing roads and about 1,200 feet of new overland route from the gated road to the Town of Mammoth Lakes snow disposal area located east of the Mammoth Visitor Center off State Route 203 (see attached figure).

The proposed winter access route would be used daily to access via snowmobile the two wells, and from there the production pipeline, to conduct required inspections when snow conditions prevent access to these areas by road vehicles on Sawmill Road (Forest Road 3S25). This same access route would also be used instead of Sawmill Road should winter access to the well sites by road vehicles be required to complete critical project maintenance operations, such as the replacement of a well pump. In these circumstances this route would be plowed by MPLP to remove snow and allow access by the road vehicles required to conduct the maintenance activities.

The proposed route would start from the Town of Mammoth Lakes snow disposal area and run overland north approximately 1,200 feet (see attached figure). No road would be graded or otherwise constructed over this section of the route. Instead, existing vegetation (consisting principally of sagebrush, bitterbrush and grasses) would be cut down to less than one foot in height over an approximately 12-foot width. All cut vegetation would be removed from the site and disposed. Few if any of the Jeffrey pines scattered along this overland route would need to be cut, although some may need to be trimmed. Decisions regarding the exact alignment of the overland route and which if any trees would be trimmed or removed would be made in the field with the direct involvement of U.S. Forest Service staff.

At its northern end this overland route would connect with existing road N1118 (see attached figure). The route would continue north on N1118 for about 450 feet, then north on to existing road N1117 for about 900 feet, which then connects to Sawmill Road (3S25). The route would continue east on Sawmill Road for about 200 feet, then turn northeast along about 250 feet of an existing unnamed road to well site 57-25 and the existing road which parallels the Southern California Edison transmission line (known as “Pole Line Road” or Z1241). After traveling east on “Pole Line Road” about 300 feet the route turns north on existing road Z1238 for about 200 feet before reaching well site 66-25.

Snowmobiles would be used for winter access over this route for daily inspections and small maintenance activities which could be accomplished with equipment carried by snowmobile. Snow wands would be placed along the route to mark the selected overland path. The route would also be maintained by MPLP as necessary so that it could be quickly plowed or blown to provide winter access to either of the well sites by road vehicles should critical project maintenance operations be required. Winter maintenance of this route would consist of removing all but approximately one foot of snow on the route, using a loader or other appropriate equipment. Snow would not be simply pushed off of the route, but be deposited on top of the snow adjacent to the route at designated points by ramping off of the route up over the adjacent snow.

Only if critical project maintenance operations were required to be conducted would the route be plowed or blown to remove snow sufficient to allow access by the road vehicles. Possible critical maintenance operations which would require access by road vehicles may include repair or replacement of:

- Well pumps;
- Well pump motors;
- Well pump motor switch gear or control components;
- Well head control valves
- Wellhead flow sensors
- Damaged well casing; and
- Any other well or pipeline components whose failure could threaten worker or public safety or environmental damage.

To protect the underlying roads, and the soil and vegetation roots in the overland portion of the route, about two to six inches of snow would be left on the route for the road vehicles to drive over.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative the original approved route for winter access evaluated in the Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline Project would remain in effect.

Alternatives Evaluated but not Considered:

MPLP developed the proposed action with direct consultation with the Forest Service. Routes that directly affected groomed ski trails were not evaluated.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

Forest Service staff members have reviewed the location of the proposed route to determine if there are any additional impacts that were not previously analyzed for the Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline Project Environmental Assessment. Resource specialist reports, weed risk assessment, and Biological Evaluations have been completed and are part of the project record. Resource area's which have been identified as having additional impacts beyond what was previously analyzed are discussed in this document. Resource areas with no additional impacts are not reviewed. The table below identifies the resource areas that were evaluated in this assessment and whether there was a change in environmental impacts.

RESOURCE AREA	NO CHANGE	CHANGE
Soils, Geology, and Mineral Resources	X	
Hydrologic and Geothermal Resources	X	
Air Quality	X	
Visual Resources	X	
Vegetation	X	

Noxious Weeds	X	
Wildlife	X	
Grazing	X	
Recreation		X
Noise	X	
Cultural Resources	X	
Transportation/Public Services		X
Socioeconomics	X	
Health, Safety, and Hazardous Materials	X	

Transportation/Public Services: The entrance to the proposed route is in the snow storage area under Special Use Permit to **t**he Town of Mammoth Lakes (TML). TML uses this site for long-term storage of snow that is cleared from town streets by a variety of local contractors. The snow storage area is a hub of activity during winter storms and there can be a large number of trucks using the site. MPLP will access the snow storage area twice a day during normal maintenance activities and no significant impacts or residual effects to the existing snow disposal activities are anticipated. During critical project maintenance activities it may be necessary to bring in larger road vehicles. Impacts to TML's snow storage activities will be limited to the length of time a vehicle is driving through the snow storage site to the access route. The adverse effects of this impact are minor and there are no residual effects. There would be no effects if the No Action Alternative is selected.

Recreation: The proposed action will not affect developed recreation sites or summer dispersed recreation activities. The proposed access route is outside the area closed to motorized use in the winter and will not impact existing groomed cross-country ski trails. Other dispersed winter recreational activities that occur in project area are walking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snow shoeing and they may need to traverse across the proposed route. The snow wands will identify the route to dispersed winter recreation users. The presence of the excavated route may potentially impact dispersed winter recreation users by creating an obstacle that will need to be traversed. The adverse effects of the proposed action are minor but can be mitigated to a "no effect" by creating ramps on both sides of the route that will allow recreation users to traverse from the natural snow level, to the surface of the excavated route, and then back onto the natural snow level. There are no residual effects to recreation resources. There would be no effects to recreation resources if the No Action Alternative is selected.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are direct or indirect effects that result from an action when considered with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions of the agency and other agencies or private parties. The proposed action changes the previously approved winter access route to another location. There is no change to the cumulative effects analysis for Transportation/ Public Services and Recreation resources that were analyzed in the Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline Project Environmental Assessment (2005). There is no potential for cumulative adverse effects, indirect adverse effects, and no potential for a cumulative residual impact from the proposed action.

MITIGATION MEASURES

All existing mitigations previously established and approved for the Basalt Canyon Geothermal Pipeline Project Environmental Assessment and FONSI would remain in affect. This activity is bonded through MPLP's California Geothermal lease bond held and administered by the BLM. Upon completion of the proposed pipeline project the winter access route will be restored to its original condition as described in a site reclamation plan approved by the authorized officer. Additional feasible mitigation measures which could minimize adverse effects are listed below.

> REC Measure 2: Access ramps will be placed every 500 feet along the winter access route to allow dispersed winter recreation users to traverse down from the natural snow level, to the surface of the excavated route, and then back onto the natural snow level.
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> TPS Measure 1: Inspections will be completed during the winter and the summer. If additional impacts are identified the authorized officer may require MPLP to fund or implement actions to mitigate these impacts.

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED

This Environmental Assessment was prepared in cooperation with the Inyo National Forest.

PREPARER(S)

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Date:

Reviewed By: Joe Pollini
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Mammoth Pacific Winter Access Route