

BASIN AND RANGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Resource Management Plan (RMP): Public scoping concluded in July 2016. The final scoping report is available at <http://bit.ly/29nU5BT>. The BLM is currently completing the analysis of the management situation (AMS) and will be developing alternatives that will be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The BLM expects to make a draft RMP/EIS available for public review and comment in late summer 2017.

Conservation Easement: The BLM in December 2016 accepted the donation of a 1,316-acre conservation easement on private lands in Garden Valley containing artist Michael Heizer's earth art "City." The BLM received the easement from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). LACMA received it from the non-profit Triple Aught Foundation, which owns the land on which the sculpture is built. Under the agreement, Triple Aught retains fee title to the land. The BLM has the ability to prevent development incompatible with protection of the artwork and surrounding area.

ELY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA) in September 2015 amended the Ely District Resource Management Plan (RMP) signed in 2008. Changes to the Ely RMP from the ARMPA, as well as two other amendments, have been incorporated into the RMP.

ENERGY

Electrical Transmission Development –

TransCanyon Cross-Tie Project: The BLM Ely District and West Desert (Utah) District, Fillmore Field Office are coordinating on the TransCanyon, LLC application to construct a 500kV transmission line between the Robinson Summit (500 kV) substation west of Ely and the Mona/Clover (345kV) substation near Mona, Utah. The proponent expects to submit an application in late spring or summer 2017. The Fillmore Field Office is leading the project.

TransWest Express Project: The 60-day appeal period for the TransWest Express Transmission Project Record of Decision closed Feb. 15, 2017. The Decision was published in the Federal Register in December 2016. The 730-mile transmission line project will extend from Wyoming, through Colorado and Utah, to southern Nevada through the southeast corner of Lincoln County and deliver up to 3,000 megawatts of electric power generated by wind energy to major load centers, including Las Vegas and San Diego, Calif. The BLM Wyoming State Office is leading the project.

Natural Gas-fired Energy Development -

Toquop Energy Project: The BLM has issued a Notice to Proceed to Toquop Energy, Inc., for a natural gas-fired power plant. Construction can start once the proponent satisfies conditions outlined in the Notice.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

Solar Energy Development -

Dry Lake Valley North Solar Energy Zone: The BLM in March 2016 issued the Final Regional Mitigation Strategy for the 25,069-acre Dry Lake Valley North Solar Energy Zone (SEZ) located in Lincoln County, Nev. The Dry Lake Valley North SEZ is the largest of the five SEZs in Nevada and, when fully built, could produce up to 4,000 MW of renewable energy. It is located about 15 miles west of Pioche and 15 miles northwest of Caliente. The SEZ is framed by the North Pahroc Range to the west, and the West Range, Bristol Range, Highland Range, Ely Springs Range, Black Canyon Range, and Burnt Springs Range to the east.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation –

The Ely District and Nevada Department of Wildlife in February 2017 finished aeri ally seeding a mixture of grasses, forbs, shrubs and legumes on acreage burned in 2016's Line, Overland, Pinto, and Strawberry fires.

- Line Fire: Completed 833 acres of aerial seeding. The district is scheduled in spring 2017 to chain 340 acres.
- Overland Fire: Completed 7690 acres of aerial seeding. The district is scheduled in spring 2017 to chain 900 acres.
- Pinto Fire: Completed 780 acres of aerial seeding. The district is scheduled in spring 2017 to chain 300 acres. Fire rehabilitation fence is under construction.
- Strawberry Fire: Completed 1768 acres of aerial seeding. The district is scheduled in spring 2017 to conduct 300 acres of ground-applied seeding and 300 acres of herbicide treatments to help with the control of non-native invasive species.

Fuels Reduction/Habitat Restoration –

Ward Mountain Restoration Project: The Ely District expects in mid-April 2017 to issue its Decision Record. The Forest Service has already issued its Decision. The federal agencies and Ely Shoshone Tribe are partnering to restore vegetative health and improve wildlife habitat, and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire on Ward Mountain, adjacent to Ely, Nev., through the use of manual and mechanical treatments and prescribed fire. Approximately 42,670 acres of the 100,000-acre project area would be treated over a 10 year period.

Overland Pass Habitat Improvement Project: The BLM and Nevada Department of Wildlife in January 2017 aeri ally seeded a mix of grasses, forbs, shrubs and legumes on most of the 7,695 acres burned in 2016's Overland Fire, south of the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge. A one-way chaining is scheduled this spring. Hand-thinning and mastication of pinion-juniper is scheduled in fall 2017 on the Ruby Valley portion of the project area. The wildlife habitat improvement project is a collaborative effort between the BLM, NDOW and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The agencies expect to treat about 18,500 acres of a 45,200-acre project area over a 10 year period.

Egan and Johnson Basins Restoration Project: The BLM in spring 2017 will release for public review and comment a preliminary environmental assessment for a project to reduce catastrophic

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

wildfire risk and improve Greater Sage-grouse habitat in the Egan and Johnson basins, five miles west of Cherry Creek. The project would treat up to 65-percent of a 35,000-acre project area. Proposed treatments include manual and mechanical pinion-juniper tree-thinning, treating invasive plant species, e.g., cheatgrass; and prescribed fire use.

Duck Creek Basin Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project: The BLM in fall 2017 will release for public review and comment a preliminary environmental assessment for a project that would improve Greater Sage-grouse habitat and create fuels breaks in the urban interface areas of Duck Creek Basin. The proposed project would complement already-completed work on the neighboring Forest Service and private lands.

Coombs Creek: The BLM in late winter 2017 will renew mastication of pinion-juniper and continue through the summer. The multi-year pinion-juniper tree-thinning project calls for treating between 4,500 to 7,000 acres of the public lands in south Butte Valley, about 20 miles northwest of Ely, to improve Greater Sage-Grouse habitat. The BLM, Great Basin Institute and Nevada Conservation Corps have so far hand-thinned or masticated about 1,450 acres. Acreage masticated to date has been seeded with assistance from the Nevada Department of Wildlife, which is providing Heritage Fund Program dollars for the project through the White Pine County Wildlife Advisory Board.

Patterson Pass Sage Grouse Habitat Improvement Project: The Ely District is collaborating with Utah State University, BLM Color Country (Utah) District and Nevada Department of Wildlife to monitor Greater Sage-grouse populations to determine the project's effectiveness.

Shingle Creek Aspen Restoration Project: Weather permitting, the BLM in winter 2016-2017 will burn slash piles of white fir. Removing the conifers promotes aspen regeneration and health. The project area is in the Snake Range near Great Basin National Park, about 40 miles southeast of Ely.

North Antelope Habitat Restoration Project: The BLM in fiscal year 2017 will masticate pinion-juniper on about 300 acres of the 12,000-acre project area. The habitat improvement project at the north end of the Antelope Range, 70 miles northeast of Ely, is approximately 85-percent complete.

South Steptoe Valley Watershed Restoration Project: A contractor is scheduled in July 2017 to begin masticating pinion-juniper on approximately 400 acres of the project area, and hand thinning will resume near Cattle Camp Wash in fall 2017.

Bald Mountain Restoration Project: The BLM has awarded contracts to begin treatments in the Bald Mountain Treatment Unit of the Newark and Huntington Watershed Restoration Plan. Work will begin in this project area in summer 2017. The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act-funded project will treat approximately 1,600 acres of the public lands to benefit wildlife, as well as restore about 25 acres of aspen.

Newark and Huntington Watershed Restoration Project: The sage-grouse habitat improvement project is in the planning phase. The BLM is currently mapping treatment areas in the southern portion of Newark Valley. Plans call for hand-thinning of pinion-juniper on about 3,000 acres of the public lands near the southern part of the Pancake Range in fall/winter 2017 with additional mastication treatments scheduled in 2017-2018.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

LANDS & REALTY

Public Land Sales: The Ely District, Caliente Field Office is reviewing comments received on a proposal to offer through competitive sale 14 parcels totaling approximately 427 acres of public lands in Lincoln County, Nevada. The 30-day public review and comment period concluded on March 27, 2017. All of the parcels are located within five miles of the following communities; Alamo, Caliente, Panaca and Pioche. The proposed sale would be conducted in accordance with the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/2IDT6RB>.

The Ely District, Bristlecone Field Office is processing a Round 2 land sale in White Pine County, in accordance with the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2006. There are three parcels. Parcel one is 111 acres located adjacent to the Ely KOA, parcel two is 80 acres located alongside Lackawanna Road, about five miles north of Ely; and parcel three is 240 acres located west of and adjacent to U.S. Highway 93, about five miles north of Ely.

Land Conveyances: The Ely District has conveyed public lands in Lincoln County to the Nevada Division of Lands to expand the Cathedral Gorge and Kershaw-Ryan state parks. The BLM is processing a conveyance for Beaver Dam State Park. The district has also conveyed BLM-administered lands to expand the Ward Charcoal Kilns State Park in White Pine County and is processing conveyances for the Steptoe Wildlife Management Area and White Pine Industrial Park.

Rights-of-Ways in progress:

- Beehive Telco upgrade of eight miles of buried cable
- Lincoln Co. Tel. System – renew buried phone line (Pioche to Cathedral Gorge State Park)
- ANTC – Communication site assignment to SBA
- SNWA – renew Evapotranspiration sites
- New Cingular Wireless PCS – reissue communication site leases at Highland and Alamo

Desert Land Entries (DLE): The Ely District has completed the Kathy Smith DLE. The Decision Record was signed on February 23 and the Entry Allowed Decision sent on Feb. 27, 2017.

MINERALS

Active Mining Plans –

Robinson Mine Plan Amendment: The Ely District, Bristlecone Field Office signed the Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact in December 2016 and approved the reclamation cost estimate in February 2017.

Bald Mountain Mine (BMM): The Ely District, Bristlecone Field Office is reviewing a proponent-proposed modification to the North Operations Plan, submitted to the BLM in October 2016. The field office issued the Record of Decision for the Barrick Gold U.S., Inc. project in August 2016. The decision allows the mining operator to expand existing gold mine facilities and construct and operate new facilities at Barrick's BMM North and South Operations Area projects.

Gold Rock Mine Project: The BLM expects to make the Gold Rock Mine Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) available to the public in summer 2017. The proposed

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

project would be located in western White Pine County, in the same geographic area as the reclaimed and closed Easy Junior Mine. The project area consists of a total of 18,745 acres of BLM-administered lands with the majority of the mine facilities located within a fenced mine area totaling 8,757 acres. A total of 3,946 acres of disturbance would be authorized. The majority of the area would be reclaimed. The action alternatives were developed to help reduce project-related impacts to greater sage-grouse and mule deer. The projected mining period is 10 years, with associated construction, closure, reclamation and post-closure monitoring periods extending the project life to approximately 48 years. GRP Inc. estimates that the project would create between 150-250 jobs.

Pan Mine: GRP Minerals has assumed ownership of the Pan Mine, formerly owned by Midway Gold. A new reclamation bond has been obligated and the operator is conducting exploratory drilling.

Mineral Materials –

The Ely District, Caliente Field Office is coordinating with the Nevada Department of Transportation to obtain rights-of-way for a community gravel pit to serve Panaca, Nev., and surrounding area. The previously-used pit is located on public lands identified for disposal in the Ely Resource Management Plan. Lands identified for disposal are withdrawn from mineral entry in accordance with the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004.

Oil & Gas –

December Oil & Gas Lease Sale: The Ely District expects in April 2017 to complete the biological assessment (BA) that begins reinitiation of consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on the Ely Resource Management Plan (RMP).

The FWS expressed concern for impacts to listed fish from oil and gas exploration and development in parcels listed in the December 2016 Lease Sale. The FWS asked that all of the parcels be deferred based on the inadequacy of the biological opinion. The BLM Nevada State Director approved the request to defer the parcels and the December sale was postponed to December 2017.

Reinitiation of Consultation is expected to take up to 135 days from the date the BA is accepted by the FWS. This may affect the timing and the list of parcels available for the December 2017 lease sale.

Other: The Ely District is reviewing comments received during a 30-day public review and comment period for the Black Point East #1 Preliminary Environmental Assessment that concluded Thursday, March 23, 2017. The Envy Energy-proposed exploration and development well would be located at the northern end of Railroad Valley, in White Pine County, Nev.

Following consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Ely District, Bristlecone Field Office in February 2017 signed a Sundry Notice allowing Bright Sky Energy and Minerals to perform hydraulic fracturing on a previously-drilled exploration well in White River Valley.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

Nevada Native National Land Act: Signed in October 2016 by President Obama, the Nevada Native Nations Lands Act transfers about 71,000 acres of land under federal control to six Great Basin Indian Tribes, including the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe that is receiving 31,269 acres of BLM Ely District-administered lands. The tribes plan to use the land to address housing, economic development and other needs in their communities.

The Ely District and Tribe meet in March 2017 to discuss their grazing permit. District resource management specialists are reaching out to other effected permittees and verbally informing them of the expansion. The district is researching minerals permits to determine the effected holders. Research into effected Rights-of-Ways is complete and letters notifying the holders mailed.

Snake Creek Indian Burial Cave: The Ely District anticipates that the re-patriated remains will be re-interred in the Snake Creek Indian Burial Cave in fall 2017. The BLM Nevada State Director in February 2017 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ely Shoshone Tribe as the lead for the three local tribes. They are the Ely Shoshone Tribe of Nevada, Duckwater Shoshone Tribe of Nevada, and the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation of Utah and Nevada.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Rangeland Monitoring/Term Permit Renewals: Grazing allotments scheduled for monitoring in 2017 are Chin Creek, North Steptoe, North Steptoe Trail, Becky Creek, Lovell Peak, Whiteman Creek, Second Creek, Becky Springs, Sampson Creek, Tippet Pass, Cave Valley Ranch, Sacramento Pass, Stephens Creek, Connors Summit, Willow Springs, and Geyser Ranch. The District in 2017/2018 will begin the rangeland health evaluation and complete the standards determination document for each of the allotments. Monitoring is conducted in coordination with livestock permittees and in accordance with the Sage grouse Habitat Assessment Framework and the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-grouse Approved RMP Amendment. Monitoring priorities include sage grouse priority habitat management areas, wild horse herd management areas and riparian areas.

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Ash Springs Recreation Site: The Ely District, Caliente Field Office expects in spring 2017 to release for public comment a preliminary environmental assessment for a plan to manage the Ash Springs Recreation Site, located alongside U.S. Highway 93 about 100 miles north of Las Vegas. The plan would provide management direction for the BLM-administered portion of Ash Springs, addressing visitor usage and public safety, endangered and sensitive species habitat, water quality, and compliance with existing local, state and federal laws. The site is temporarily closed to the public. The closure was published in the *Federal Register* in April 2016.

BLM Analyzing Potential Additional Lincoln County Trails: The Ely District, Caliente Field Office is reviewing comments received during the 30-day public input period that concluded Feb. 13, 2017. The BLM is analyzing expanding motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities in Lincoln County. Funding is provided through Round 16 of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

Lincoln County Partners Multi-Purpose Non-Motorized Trail System: The Ely District, Caliente Field Office anticipates beginning trail construction as early as mid-spring 2017. When completed, the system will enhance access to public lands by constructing new multi-purpose hiking and mountain biking trails on public lands around Caliente, in Lincoln County.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

Ely District Cave Management Plan: The Plan establishes direction for the long-term management, planning, and oversight of the Ely District's cave resources, e.g., cultural, biological, hydrological, or geological. It also identifies specific management actions for recreational use, scientific research, and management of cave resources. The Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Final Ely District Cave and Karst Plan & Environmental Assessment was signed in April 2016.

SPECIAL LEGISLATION

Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative (LCAI) –

Round 10 Nominations: The nomination period for project proposals closed March 17, 2017. Proposals under the initiative focus on the inventory, evaluation, protection and management of unique archaeological resources in Lincoln County. Projects must be on public land within Lincoln County and address the priorities outlined in the solicitation. Proposals are being solicited through grants.gov, solicitation #L17AS00010, or through fedconnect.net, solicitation #L17PS00104. Funding for LCAI comes from revenues generated through the sale of public lands identified for disposal in the Lincoln County Lands Act and existing land-use plans.

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) –

Round 17 Nominations: The nomination period for project proposals closes **May 5, 2017**.

Ely District Round 16 Funded Conservation Projects:

- Atlanta Road Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Continuation Project: The Ely District is proposing to conduct vegetation restoration on approximately 2,000 to 2,500 acres within the Lake Valley Watershed to improve habitat for the Greater Sage-grouse by reducing conifer expansion within the Southern Great Basin Priority Area for Conservation (PAC). The treatments would expand Greater Sage-grouse Priority Habitat into adjacent General Habitat, expand General Habitat into adjacent transitional habitat, and restore and enhance sagebrush ecological communities. The proposed project area is located within Lake Valley in northeastern Lincoln County.
- South Spring Valley and Hamblin Valley Watershed Restoration Plan: The BLM Ely District is proposing to complete the South Spring Valley and Hamblin Valley Watershed Restoration Plan Environmental Assessment that would outline management objectives and actions to restore vegetative communities where they have departed from historic reference conditions, and to improve vegetation community resistance and resilience to disturbance or drought. Most actions would focus on reducing fuels to prevent large-scale wildfires, improving soil stability and vegetative communities including habitat for Greater sage-grouse.
- The district also received funding for a possible non-motorized multipurpose trail system in Lincoln County. (*See Recreation & Travel Management Planning, page 6*)

WATERSHED ANALYSIS

The Ely District continues to develop and implement watershed-level planning to identify high priority habitat improvement projects for Greater Sage-Grouse and other wildlife species, hazardous fuels reduction projects, and other actions needed to improve public land health. The

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

district has completed the watershed analysis process for 27 of 61 priority watersheds. Implementation plans have been completed for nine watersheds. The district is currently conducting watershed planning for, Long Valley / Ruby Marshes and Butte Valley.

WILD HORSES

Water Canyon Wild Horse Growth Suppression Pilot Program: The Ely District and Volunteer Project Coordinator Jeanne Nations continue to monitor wild horses in the Water Canyon area of the Antelope Herd Management Area, 60 miles north of Ely, as part of the Water Canyon Wild Horse Growth Suppression Pilot Program. The 10-year program will provide the BLM the opportunity to determine the effectiveness of GonaCon-Equine on a small group of wild horses in a controlled environment with the possibility of expanded usage in future years, depending on the results.

The district in 2016 gathered approximately 65 wild horses from Water Canyon, using hay and water. The district released 25-30 horses back into the project area. Mares selected for release were treated with the fertility-control vaccine. Treated mares will be given a booster every 20-24 months to maintain the vaccine's effectiveness. When the population exceeds 40 animals, approximately 5-10 primarily young horses born within the project area, will be offered to the public through a trap-site adoption.

Wild Horse Gatherers: The Ely District is coordinating with the BLM Elko District on an environmental assessment that would provide for the gather and removal of excess wild horses from the Antelope and Triple B Complexes.

The Ely District, Caliente Field Office is developing a gather plan for the Silver King Herd Management Area.

Flight Inventories: Flight inventories have been completed for the Moriah Herd Area, and Antelope, Eagle and Silver King Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in Nevada, and Chokecherry and Mt Elinor HMAs in Utah. The BLM is awaiting the final numbers from the statistician.

WILDERNESS

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics: The BLM is performing project by project inventory updates for Lands with Wilderness Character. A Lands with Wilderness Character inventory was completed for the Basin and Range National Monument.

###

*This report was last updated on **March 24, 2017**. Contact Chris Hanefeld, BLM Ely District public affairs specialist, at (775) 289-1842 or chanefel@blm.gov for more information on these and other projects/programs in the District.*