

**Bureau of Land Management
Ely District**

District Manager's Update

September 2023



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ENERGY

Electrical Transmission Development

Transcanyon Cross-Tie Project



The BLM has finalized alternatives to be considered in the draft environmental impact statement. In response to tribal concerns, an additional alternative has been developed that avoids Spring Valley. The alternative provides for a southern route through northern Lincoln to Nye county where it will follow the SWIP South corridor northward to the

Robinson substation in White Pine County. The BLM Fillmore (Utah) Field Office is the designated lead for the proposed 1,500 MW, 500 kV HVAC line that would connect central Utah and east-central Nevada. The line would be located within the existing Western Electric Coordinating Council-designated corridor or BLM utility corridors. It would strengthen the interconnection between PacifiCorp and NV Energy's transmission systems while supporting interregional power transfers by linking the Northern Tier Transmission Group and WestConnect planning regions.

SWIP North Project

The BLM Elko District is the designated lead for an authorized 1,500 MW 500 kV transmission line connecting the Midpoint substation north of Twin Falls, Idaho, to the Robinson substation northwest of Ely, where the line would connect with SWIP South. The LS Power line would extend 257 miles on BLM-administered lands in the Twin Falls, Elko, and Ely districts. The project is awaiting a notice to proceed pending cultural inventories, sage grouse mitigation, and ethnographic studies.

The Bristlecone Field Office on Jan. 19, 2023 received an application from the same proponent for a 1.3-mile transmission line connecting SWIP North and the Robinson substation.

Green Link North

The BLM Nevada State Office on May 26 published in the Federal Register a Notice of Intent for the proposed project, beginning a 45-day public scoping period that concludes July 10, 2023. The NV Energy-proposed 525 kV line would span approximately 235 miles from Ely to Yerington, Nev. A combination of virtual and in-person public workshops are scheduled to garner public input.

Details are at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2017033/510>



Renewable Energy Development

White Pine Pumped Storage

White Pine Waterpower, LLC, a subsidiary of rPlus Hydro, has filed a final license application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a closed-loop pumped storage hydropower facility. The proposed facility, which would be constructed in White Pine County north of Ely, received FAST 41 authority from FERC in March 2023. The White Pine Pumped Storage facility would provide up to 1,000 megawatts (MW) of electrical generating capability with an overall energy storage capacity of 8,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) per day by moving water between an upper and a lower reservoir to store the energy for later use. A new 25-mile, 345-kV single-circuit transmission line would extend from the project to the Robinson Summit substation. FERC will begin an environmental review and licensing process for the project with local, state, and federal agencies. The Bristlecone Field office is developing a Technical Working Group for wildlife, which will consist of representatives from the BLM, Nevada Department of Wildlife, White Pine County, and Sagebrush Ecological Technical Team.

Stagecoach Wind LLC Type 3

Arevia Power in March 2023 filed an application with the Department of the Interior under FAST-41 authority. The Arevia-proposed Stagecoach Wind Project would be located in south Newark Valley, about 40 miles west of Ely or 18 miles east of Eureka, Nev. U.S. Highway 50 would cross through the northern portion of the project area. When complete, the 600-megawatt (MW) project would be the second and largest wind generation facility in Nevada. More at <https://www.permits.performance.gov/permitting-project/fast-41-covered-projects/stagecoach-wind>

A segregation notice suspending the entry of any/all other applications and/or claims within the project area for a two-year period was approved on Aug. 4, 2023.

Wind and Solar Applications

The Bristlecone Field Office continues receiving applications for solar and wind testing, and development. Development is prohibited under the 2015 Greater Sage Grouse Amendment within Greater Sage Grouse Priority Habitat. Testing is allowed on small, individual sites. Disposition of applications is starting with subsequent NEPA being developed and decision process on testing applications beginning. Projects include:

1. Arevia Power, Pantheon Solar Project. Jakes Valley. App rec'd 8/6/2020, Amended App rec'd 4/1/2021. Solar Type 2. Pantheon amended application back to Type 3. Decision issued for Type 3 11/29/2022. The BLM is working with the proponent on the Variance Factor Analysis, which is outlined in the October 2012 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/ Record of Decision (ROD) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States.
2. Connect Gen Northwestern Wind II. Jakes Valley. App Rec'd 8/28/2020, Amended App rec'd 11/5/2020. Solar Type 2. Requesting one solar monitoring site, 3700-acre area. A decision is anticipated in August 2023.
3. Connect Gen Northwestern Wind II. Robinson Wind Project. Jakes Valley. App Rec'd 8/28/2020, Amended App rec'd 10/23/2020. Wind Testing. Requesting four met towers, 34,000 acres. Informed if towers under

200 ft CX otherwise an EA. Waiting for the proponent to decide. BLM Nevada State Office processing application as of 6/28/2022. A decision for five met towers is anticipated in August 2023.

4. Scout Clean Energy. Spring Valley. App rec'd 10/7/2021. Wind Testing. Requesting 3: 100-meter Met Towers, 2,965 acres project area, adjacent to Bashawabe TCP Review for level of NEPA required.
5. Balanced Rock Power Type 3. Sage City Solar Project. Jakes Valley. Amended App rec'd 12/29/21. POD submitted. Requesting 800MW PV solar plant, 500 KV line, 6,790-plus acres, being reviewed. Resubmitted a modified type three on 8/10/22.
6. Arevia Power. Aquilo Wind LLC. Snake Valley/UT border. App rec'd 2/7/2022. (Majority project area located in Utah). Amended/corrected App rec'd 6/8/2022 and application fee. Requesting nine MET towers, four in WP County, five in Utah. Coordinating app review w/Fillmore, Utah office. Revised app for NV emailed 8/29/2022. Working to re-site due to proximity to private land.
7. Pending. Great Basin Geo power. App rec'd pending. Requesting permit to drill to re-enter an existing well on the geothermal lease north of Cherry Creek to determine, depth, temperature and quantity of geothermal water sources.
8. Amerisco reached out on 10/4/22 requesting a preapplication meeting for solar energy application in Newark Valley approximately 40 miles west of Ely and along the proposed Greenlink North line.
9. NVN-101620 Sawtooth DevCo. Digital app rec'd 12/2/22. Type III. Requesting 45-year ROW for construction and operation of Tromso Solar Project. Solar energy generation and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to connect into the Robinson Summit Substation. The application is in a non-variance area.

LANDS & REALTY

White Pine Water Power, LLC

The proponent has a Bristlecone Field Office-issued temporary right-of-way to drill bore holes and test bedrock on public lands in Steptoe Valley and Duck Creek Basin. In Steptoe Valley, work has been completed on boreholes #1 and #2 adjacent to the upper railroad tracks. No work has been accomplished on borehole #3 in Duck Creek Basin due to the proponent's inability to obtain the permission required to cross private property, which is necessary to access the authorized site.

The field office has reviewed an application to drill test wells for the study of hydrologic resources and is working with the proponent to gather additional information for the application.

Lincoln County Water District Rights-of-Way

The Caliente Field Office in fiscal year 2024 will begin work on a Lincoln County Water District Plan of Development for a main pipeline and delivery lines to transport groundwater to Lincoln County Lands Act disposal lands near Mesquite. The Lincoln County Power District has also proposed access roads and a power line to support the water project. The field office will conduct

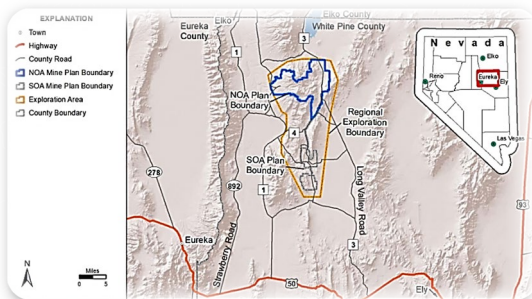
public scoping for an environmental assessment to amend existing, or issue new rights-of-way, in accordance with the Lincoln County Lands Act Groundwater and Utility Development Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (2008).

MINERALS

Mining

Kinross Bald Mountain Mine (KG-BM)

The Bristlecone Field Office seeks public review and comment on the Bald Mountain Mine Plan of Operations Amendment Juniper Project draft environmental impact statement. The draft EIS analyzes a KG Mining Inc., proposal to expand the North Operations Area by approximately 3,969 acres of new surface disturbance on private and public lands and extend the life of the mine by 11 years. **The 45-day public comment period closes Oct. 5, 2023.**



KG-BM is proposing to expand the NOA Plan boundary in five areas from 31,572 acres to 34,997 acres, expand and/or deepen six authorized open pits and develop two new pits, develop three and modify seven authorized rock disposal areas, add inter-pit disturbance to seven mine areas and modify inter-pit disturbance in six mine areas, add ancillary disturbance to three mine areas and modify disturbance in five areas, add process disturbance to the Mooney Mine Area, and develop and modify haul roads within the NOA.

The proposed activities would result in a total increase of approximately 3,969 acres of surface disturbance within the project area boundary for a new end of mine life total surface disturbance of 14,752 acres. The project would affect golden eagle nests and territories. KG-BM is preparing an Eagle Conservation Plan and requesting an incidental take permit for golden eagles in the area they plan to conduct operations.

The BLM will conduct a public comment meeting from 5 pm to 7 pm, Tuesday, Sept. 19, at the Ely District Office, 702 North Industrial Way, in Ely. A virtual public comment meeting using the Zoom application is scheduled from 5 pm to 7 pm, Thursday, Sept. 21. The BLM is also offering a phone-only option. Register online at

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cC51UwtgStKII2tgm7BJJg.

Maps and planning documents are available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xAm2g>.

KGHM Robinson Mine

The Bristlecone Field Office is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) analyzing a KGHM-proposed 70-acre expansion of the North Tripp Waste Rock site at the Robinson Mine west of Ely. The field office anticipates releasing a preliminary EA for public review and comment in summer 2023.

Ridgeline-Selena exploration

Ridgeline is proposing an exploration project in Butte Valley that will be conducted in phases over an estimated 10 years. The plan submitted is for a proposed phase 1 of operations, with future planning to be submitted for subsequent phases. Construction of 43,224 feet of new road and 48.5 acres of pad construction with 200 to 1000 exploratory holes are proposed for phase 1, with 6 drillholes being open at any given time. A plan amendment in the form of an annual work plan would be submitted annually prior to any work being authorized as part of the proposal. A preliminary Environmental Assessment for public comment is anticipated to be available in September 2023.

Limousine Butte

The NevGold USA, Inc., proposed Limo Butte Exploration Project would be located on public lands in White Pine County, approximately 65 miles north of Ely. NevGold USA is proposing a project area of 16,455 acres with 200 acres proposed for disturbance. The proposal calls for up to eight open exploration holes at any one time. The environmental assessment would be phased.

Mackie/Tenacity Mine

The Caliente Field Office has received a complete mine Plan of Operations for the perlite mine located near the South Pahroc Range, about 27 miles west of Caliente, and is preparing an environmental assessment as required by federal regulation. The mine has been operating for several decades.

Oil and Gas

Applications for Permit to Drill

Western Oil Exploration Company has not finished drilling the Scott Federal #35-1 exploratory well. The BLM issued a decision on Dec. 16, 2022, informing Western Oil that their lease has expired and they are no longer authorized under diligent drilling. Western Oil and the lease holder have filed an Appeal and Petition for Stay.

Oil and Gas Lease Sale

The Ely District prepared an environmental assessment analyzing parcels of public lands in Railroad and White River valleys to be offered in a lease sale that was held in July 2023.

SPECIAL LEGISLATION

Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act – public land sales

The Caliente Field Office will prepare an environmental assessment for the proposed multi-phase sale of 49 parcels of public land, totaling 9,700 acres in Lincoln County, Nev. The Ely District is directed by the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004 to dispose of up to 90,000 acres of public land within the county. Parcels identified by Lincoln County and BLM for rounds 5 through 11 may be offered for public sale annually through competitive auctions. Additionally, the Ely District may offer for competitive sale up to four

parcels from Round 4 as early as Fiscal Year 2024 or 2025. Lands for disposal were identified in the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (2008).

Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act – land conveyance

Lincoln County has requested a conveyance of up to 415 acres of public land near Pioche, Nev., for parks and open space, in accordance with the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation Development Act. The Act provides for the conveyance of up to 15,000 acres to the county for the purpose.

Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative

The BLM Nevada State Director under Round 13 has awarded \$1,672,726 in funding for seven projects. Proposals under the initiative focus on the inventory, evaluation, protection, and management of unique archaeological resources in Lincoln County, Nev.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Wilson Creek Term Permit Renewal

The BLM in December 2020 issued 10 final grazing decisions, nine for permittees and one for the Dry Lake Valley Use Area. All 10 decisions received petitions for stay. An Administrative Law Judge granted a stay on two decisions, the Dry Lake Valley Use Area, and Blackrock (Thorley) which are awaiting a final ruling. The Caliente Field Office in September 2021 issued revised grazing permits in accordance with the final decisions to all permittees. The permit portions for the Dry Lake Valley Use Area and Black Rock (Thorley) remain unchanged pending Administrative Law Judge reviews.

Rangeland Monitoring/Term Permit Renewals

The Caliente Field Office is processing term permit renewals (TPR) for the Black Hills and Uvada grazing allotments. The environmental assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact will be issued to the public in coming weeks. Staff are conducting field work for long term effects from the prolonged exceptional drought conditions. The area received varying amounts of summer and winter precipitation (rain and snow), some of which has been substantial.



The Bristlecone Field Office has completed Standards Determination Documents for the Indian George, Stephens Creek, and Sacramento Pass allotments. The Indian George Environmental Assessment was available for a 30-day public comment period. The BLM is currently analyzing the comments received and finalizing the EA.

The Standards Determination for Cave Valley Ranch was completed in September 2022. Initiation of the environmental assessment is on hold due to staffing shortages.

The Bristlecone Field Office and Basin and Range National Monument are preparing a TPR for the John Uhalde and Co. outcome-based grazing allotments. Land Health Assessments and Standards Determination Documents for the outcome-based grazing project are being finalized.

The BLM is initiating a Land Health Assessment for the Duckwater allotment. The assessment is being organized by Use Area and be used for the allotment's Term Permit Renewals. Coordination with the livestock grazing permit holders is ongoing.

South Spring Valley/Hamblin Valley Watershed

The Bristlecone and Caliente field offices on September 28 issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record for a 30-day appeal period and a Proposed Grazing Decision for a 15-day protest and 30-day appeal period. The field offices selected the modified proposed action based on public comment. The Decision will treat vegetation resources, primarily pinyon-juniper encroachment, in South Spring and Hamblin valleys as well as authorize numerous range improvement projects. Both decisions are for actions designed to improve watershed functionality. The Center for Biological Diversity and Western Watersheds have filed an injunction in district court asking for the decision to be set aside.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Fuels Reduction and Habitat Restoration

Landscape scale fuels reduction projects restore watershed health and improve wildlife habitat while reducing catastrophic wildfire risk. Treatment methods include, but are not limited to, hand-thinning, chaining, mastication, and prescribed fire use followed by aerial and/or ground seeding. The District often partners with federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and private landowners. Some projects receive Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act funding. The district currently is:

- Masticating pinyon-juniper and treating sagebrush on 1,413 acres of the public lands near Water Canyon, about 20 miles south of Ely. Seeding with a mix of grasses and forbs is scheduled this fall. The treatment south is part of the multi-year Ward Mountain Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 42,670 acres within a 100,000-acre project area.
- Masticating pinyon-juniper on 997 acres of the public lands in Duck Creek Basin, about 15 miles north of Ely. Seeding with a mix of grasses and forbs is scheduled this fall. The treatment is part of the multi-year Duck Creek Basin Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project that will ultimately treat up to 12,900 acres of a 30,000-acre project area.
- Masticating pinyon-juniper on 1,063 acres of the public lands in the Kern Mountain Range, about 80 miles northeast of Ely. Seeding with a mix of grasses and forbs is scheduled this fall. The treatment, funded by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, is part of the Kern Mountains Landscape Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 12,580 acres of a 15,725-acre project area.



- Is scheduled in mid-September to offer cord units of mixed pinyon-juniper firewood to the public for \$85 per cord. The wood is cut in rounds that vary in length from approximately 12-20 inches and in diameter from 3-36 inches. Purchasers are limited to five cords until September 25. The BLM may make additional cords available after September 25, provided any wood remains. Permits are available between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, at the BLM Ely District Office, 702 North Industrial Way, in Ely.

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan



The 30-day public scoping period for the SNPLMA Round 18-funded plan concluded April 26. The BLM is planning to improve the Garnet Hill Recreation Area and Egan Crest trail systems located about 10 miles west of Ely.

Improvements include upgrading roadways, enlarging existing trailheads, constructing an educational pavilion, adding overnight campgrounds, and constructing signed motorized and non-motorized trails systems. All facilities and some trails would be ADA accessible. The BLM will

also develop a Recreation Area Management Plan addressing the management and maintenance of the new recreation area, and future visitor use. Additional information is available online at <https://bit.ly/3VdC38R>

Highland Range Non-Motorized Trail

The Caliente Field Office expects this fiscal year to provide funding to qualified non-profit organizations to design and construct single-track, multi-purpose trails connecting Pioche and Cathedral Gorge State Park. Once complete, the public will have access to 12-24 new miles of non-motorized trails. Project funding is provided by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

Multipurpose Sagebrush Discovery Trail Travel and Transportation Management Plan

Design and Engineering are scheduled for fall 2023 with construction likely to occur the following summer. The Bristlecone Field Office on September 30 issued a Finding of No Significant Impact and Decision Record. Due to public comment received the field office selected an adjusted Alternative C that incorporated changes to the trail's layout. No appeals were received. The non-motorized trail would be located on public lands adjacent to Baker, Nev. The project consists of up to two miles of existing two-track roads, closed to motorized vehicles and improved to make them available for hiking, biking, skiing, and walking; construction of approximately 400 feet of new trail and two trailheads, and installation of informational kiosks and interpretive signs, and benches and shade structures. The travel plan and phase one of the project is funded by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

Mount Irish Cultural Resource Protection and Visitor Enhancements Project

Mount Irish is a diverse collection of cultural resources that have drawn visitors to the area for years. Increased visitation and lack of amenities have resulted in trash, rock campfire rings, and human refuse in close proximity to rock art at this location within the Basin and Range National Monument. The project will enhance the visitor experience at the site and protect rock art areas. Project construction to establish a vault toilet, four primitive camp areas, walking trails that connect the public rock art areas, and interpretive kiosks on cultural resource protection began in late July 2023.

WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT

Antelope Complex-South Wild Horse Gather

The Bristlecone Field Office on July 25, 2023 concluded the Antelope Complex-South wild horse gather in and around the Antelope and Antelope Valley (east of U.S. Highway 93) Herd Management Areas north of Ely. The BLM gathered and removed 1,107 excess wild horses from the public lands.

The purpose of the gather was to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands associated with excess wild horses and restore a thriving natural ecological balance and multiple-use relationship on public lands, consistent with the provisions of Section 1333(b) of the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Removing excess animals supports significant progress toward achieving the Standards for Rangeland Health identified by the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council.



The BLM transported the animals removed from the range to the Palomino Valley Wild Horse and Burro Center, in Reno, Nev., to be readied for the BLM's wild horse and burro Adoption and Sales program. Wild horses not adopted or sold will be placed in long-term pastures where they will be humanely cared for and retain their "wild" status and protection under the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.

BLM offers reward for information on wild horse shootings

A \$25,000 reward is being offered (BLM, \$5,000; American Wild Horse Campaign, \$5,000; National Mustang Association, \$10,000, Wild Horse Education, \$5,000) for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) responsible for shooting and mortally wounding five wild horses in mid-November 2021 in Jakes Valley, about 30 miles west of Ely, Nev. The Ely District, Bristlecone Field Office on Nov. 16, 2021, was contacted by a member of the public who had discovered five mortally-wounded wild horses in Jakes Valley, approximately two miles south of U.S. Highway 50. The remains were located within 600 yards of each other. An aborted fetus was attached to one of the dead animals. One horse was still alive but wounded so severely that it had to be humanely euthanized. A necropsy revealed that the animals ranged in age from about 18 months to six years. The horses were killed on or about the day they were

reported. Anyone with information about the incident are encouraged to call the BLM crime hotline at 1-775-861-6550.

Contact Chris Hanefeld at (775) 289-1842 or chanefel@blm.gov for more information on these and other projects/programs in the district.

