

**Bureau of Land Management
Ely District
District Manager's Update
December 2023**



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ENERGY

Electrical Transmission Development

Transcanyon Cross-Tie Project



The BLM seeks public review and comment on a draft environmental impact statement for the proposed 214-mile Cross-Tie 500-kV Transmission Project that would connect the Clover Substation in central Utah with the Robinson Summit Substation in White Pine County. The 45-day public comment period ends Dec. 26, 2023.

The BLM conducted a public comment meeting in Ely on Nov. 30, 2023. A virtual meeting will be held Dec. 5, 2023.

In response to Tribal concerns, alternatives include one that avoids Spring Valley. The alternative provides for a southern route through northern Lincoln and Nye counties where it will follow the SWIP South corridor northward to the Robinson Summit substation.

More information, including maps and other planning documents, are available at <https://bit.ly/ePlanningCrossTie>. Submit written comments to the BLM Fillmore Field Office, 95 East 500 North, Fillmore, UT 84631 or via email to blm_ut_fm_cross-tie_project@blm.gov. Verbal comments may also be submitted by telephone at 1-888-674-0962. For additional information, contact Project Manager Clara Stevens at 435-743-3119.

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 in January 2023 received an application from the same proponent for a 1.3-mile transmission line connecting SWIP North and the Robinson substation. The BLM has since received an application to expand the Robinson Substation by 55 acres to accommodate future electrical transmission. The BLM in September 2023 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Great Basin Transmission for the Robinson Summit Expansion / Interconnect. A kick-off meeting for the environmental assessment was held in October 2023.

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 concluded 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 leading a Technical Working Group for wildlife that consists of representatives from the BLM, Forest Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, White Pine County, and Sagebrush Ecological Technical Team.

Pantheon Solar Development Project

The BLM is working with the project proponent on Variance Factor Analysis as outlined in the October 2012 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/ Record of Decision (ROD) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States. A Tribal consultation meeting is scheduled Dec. 15, 2023 and a public meeting is to be scheduled in mid-January.

The BLM on Oct. 31, 2023, segregated for a two-year period public lands proposed for use by the Pantheon Solar Development Project, preventing the land from being sold or subject to new mining claims while BLM processes the application. The project proposes the use of 2,751.5 acres of Bristlecone Field Office-managed lands in Jakes Valley south of Highway 50, about 15 miles west of Ely, Nev. If approved, the project could generate up to 400 megawatts of solar energy.

Stagecoach Wind LLC Type 3

The BLM has announced it is setting aside lands for Arevia Power's proposed Stagecoach Wind Project, a planned 600-megawatt installation that would be located in south Newark Valley, about 40 miles west of Ely or 18 miles east of Eureka, Nev.

September's announcement sets aside nearly 70,000 acres in the project area for two years from appropriation under the public land laws, including location under the Mining Law, but not the Mineral Leasing Act or the Materials Act, to prevent new mining claims from interfering with project review or development. Existing claims are not affected. The action is being taken prior to the BLM beginning the environmental analysis of the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act. When complete, the 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>

The paleontology and cultural resource inventories are complete. The paleontology survey found nothing of note. The BLM is recording archaeological sites. Site recordation is expected to be completed by mid-November 2023. Wildlife inventories are ongoing.

Wind and Solar Applications

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



LANDS & REALTY

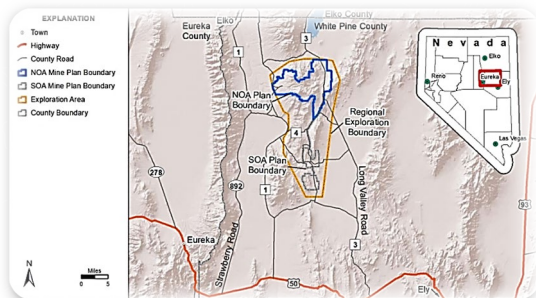
Lincoln County Water District Rights-of-Way

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

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.

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

KGHM Robinson Mine, North Tripp EA

The Bristlecone Field Office is preparing a preliminary environmental assessment for public review and comment. The 30-day public comment period is expected to begin in mid-December. KGHM is proposing a 70-acre expansion of the North Tripp Waste Rock site at the Robinson Mine, west of Ely.

Ridgeline Minerals, Selena Exploration EA

The Bristlecone Field Office is preparing a preliminary environmental assessment for public review and comment. The 30-day public comment period is expected to begin in mid-December. Ridgeline is proposing an exploration project in Butte Valley that would 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.

Nev Gold, Limousine Butte EA

The Bristlecone Field Office is preparing a preliminary environmental assessment for public review and comment. The 30-day public comment period is expected to begin in mid-December. The NevGold USA, Inc.-proposed Limo Butte Exploration Project would be located on public land in White Pine County, about 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.

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. The mine has been operating for several decades.

Oil and Gas

Oil and Gas lease sales

The BLM seeks public input on two oil and gas parcels totaling 2,320 acres that could be included in a June 2024 lease sale. The 30-day public scoping period concludes Dec. 27, 2023.

The parcels, as well as maps and instructions on how to comment are available on ePlanning at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2030088/510>

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.

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 67 parcels of public land, totaling 5,445 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 that purpose.

Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative



The BLM will accept proposals for Round 14 of the Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative through January 11, 2024. Proposals under the initiative focus on the inventory, evaluation, protection, and management of unique archaeological resources in Lincoln County, Nevada. Project proposals must be on lands within Lincoln County, Nevada and meet all guidelines in the Lincoln County Implementation Agreement which can be found at <https://www.blm.gov/LCAI>.

The BLM is soliciting proposals through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), Notice of Funding Opportunity Announcement # L24AS00149 [grants.gov/search-results-detail/350859](https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/350859), or through sam.gov solicitation #140L3924Q0001 [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov). For more information, contact Program Manager Melanie Peterson at (775) 289-1896 or mlpeters@blm.gov



RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Rangeland Monitoring/Term Permit Renewals

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. A preliminary environmental assessment is anticipated to be available for public comment in early 2024.

The BLM is conducting 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.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

The Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) program takes emergency actions to stabilize and prevent unacceptable damage to natural and cultural resources and to minimize threats to life and property resulting from the effects of fire. The program also makes efforts to repair or improve fire-damaged lands unlikely to recover naturally to management approved conditions. During the month of November, the ESR program implemented the following treatments:

- Aerially re-seeded 4,516 acres of the 2020 Miller and 12,716 acres of the 2020 Stewart Canyon fires. Seeding over multiple years helps overcome challenges posed by highly variable interannual climate conditions. Both fires were in Lincoln County on Caliente Field Office-managed lands.
- Conducted contour tree felling and establishing log erosion barriers on 12 acres of the Beck Peak Fire. The treatment helps to keep topsoil in place and slow erosion, preventing sediment movement and washouts from impacting roadways and reducing water quality. It protects loose soils prior to vegetation establishment and creates microsites for



vegetation establishment. The fire was in White Pine County on Bristlecone Field Office-managed land.

- Aerially seeded 5,791 acres of the 2022 Becky Peak and 3,210 acres of the 2022 Kinsley fires. The seedings will help recovery by increasing desirable perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs and decreasing invasive annual grasses and other weed species. Both fires were in northern White Pine County on Bristlecone Field Office-managed lands.



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 is currently:

- Masticating pinyon-juniper on 1,217 acres of the public lands in Egan Basin and Johnson Spring Basin, about 60 miles northwest of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The treatment is part of the multi-year Egan and Johnson Basins Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 24,346 acres of the 84,675-project area.
- Masticating pinyon-juniper on 1,063 acres of the public lands in the Kern Mountain Range near the Utah state line, about 80 miles northeast of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act-funded treatment is part of the multi-year Kern Mountains Landscape Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 12,580 acres of a 15,725-acre project area.
- Masticating pinyon-juniper on 997 acres of the public lands along the east side of the Duck Creek Range in Duck Creek Basin, about 15 miles north of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. 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. The project is being completed by local contractor Rangelands Restoration Services, LLC.
- Masticating pinyon-juniper from 1,136 acres of the public lands near Ruby Marshes in the Ruby Mountains, about 80 miles northwest of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The treatment is part of the multi-year Overland Pass Habitat Improvement Project and the Long and Ruby Watershed Restoration Plan. Overland Pass will ultimately treat up to 18,500 acres within a 45,200-acre project area. The Long and



Ruby Watersheds Restoration Plan will restore landscapes covering 136,000 acres within a 509,252-acre project area.



- Rangelands Restoration Services, LLC, a local contractor, is masticating pinyon-juniper from 1,413 acres of the public lands on the west slope of the Egan Range in the Ward Mountain area, about 20 miles south of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The treatment 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.

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan

The Bristlecone Field Office on Nov. 17, 2023 released a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan and final Environmental Assessment.

The field office is improving the Garnet Hill Recreation Area and Egan Crest trail systems west of Ely. The Plan addresses how the BLM will manage and maintain the new recreation area, and anticipated increase in public visitation. Improvements include upgrading roadways, enlarging existing trailheads, adding overnight campgrounds, and constructing signed motorized and non-motorized trails systems. All facilities and some trails will be ADA accessible. Funding for the capital improvement project is provided through Round 18 of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

The 30-day appeal period concludes December 17, 2023. The Decision Record, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan and final Environmental Assessment are available online at <https://bit.ly/3VdC38R>.

Highland Range Non-Motorized Trail

An International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) design team has begun flagging lines for 12-15 miles of single-track mountain biking and hiking trails that will enable Pioche to connect with Cathedral Gorge State Park. Construction is scheduled to begin in spring 2024 with completion slated by midyear 2025. Project funding is provided by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act through the Caliente Field Office.

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. The following September, volunteers installed initial trail signage for National Public Lands Day.

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.

Christmas tree-cutting permits

The Ely District is making Christmas tree-cutting permits available to the public. Permits cost \$5 each with a limit of 10 per purchaser. Purchase permits in-person at the Ely District and Caliente Field offices, online, or by telephone.



The offices will conduct over-the-counter sales through noon on Friday, Dec. 22. The Ely District Office is at 702 North Industrial Way, in Ely. The Caliente Field Office is at 1400 S. Front Street, in Caliente. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Permits will also be available at the Great Basin National Park Lehman Caves Visitor Center during regular business hours through Saturday, Dec. 23. Visitor Center hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., seven days a week, excluding Thanksgiving Day.

Permits are available for purchase online 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the BLM Special Forest Products Online Permit Sales Pilot Program. To purchase a permit online, go to <https://forestproducts.blm.gov/>.

To learn more or to purchase a permit(s) over the phone using a credit or debit card, call the Ely District Office at 775-289-1800 or Caliente Field Office at 775-726-8100.

WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT

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

WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Golden Gate Range Water Developments

The Nevada Department of Wildlife is proposing the construction of three wildlife water developments in the northern Golden Gate Range within the Basin and Range National Monument. The proposed water developments would provide a critical source of water for a migrating mule deer herd while benefiting many other wildlife species throughout the year. A preliminary environmental assessment was released for public review and comment in November 2023.

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

