

**Bureau of Land Management
Ely District
District Manager's Update
April 2024**



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ENERGY

Electrical Transmission Development

TransCanyon Cross-Tie Project

The BLM Fillmore (Utah) Field Office is responding to comments received during the public comment period and preparing a final environmental impact statement. The 45-day comment period for the proposed 214-mile 500-kV transmission project closed Jan. 9, 2024, following a 14-day extension.

The proposed project would connect the Clover Substation in central Utah with the Robinson Summit Substation in White Pine County. Responding to Tribal concerns, one 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, avoiding Spring Valley. More information, including maps and other planning documents, are available at <https://bit.ly/ePlanningCrossTie>.

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.

Robinson Substation Expansion

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 was held in October 2023 to prepare an environmental assessment. LS Power is preparing a preliminary EA. Cooperating agency invitation letters were sent on March 21, 2024.

Green Link North



The BLM is re-scoping the Greenlink North Transmission Project to evaluate a new 201 mile long by three-mile-wide utility corridor in which the project would be located. There is currently no designated utility corridor between Ely and Yerington, Nev. There is no change to NV Energy's stated need for the project. The 30-day scoping period ends April 10, 2024. Additional details are available 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, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, White Pine County, rPlus Energies 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.

The BLM in October 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.



A public meeting was held in January 2024 to receive input to be incorporated into the Variance Factor Analysis Report (VFAR). Additional presentations were conducted in February 2024 before the White Pine County Commission and White Pine County's Natural Resources Committee. The public input period concluded March 29, 2024. The applicant will submit the final VFAR to BLM for review and to assess whether the project may move forward for NEPA analysis.

Stagecoach Wind LLC Type 3

The BLM in September 2023 set 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.

The announcement set 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 was taken prior to the BLM beginning the environmental analysis of the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act. If completed, the proposed 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. 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

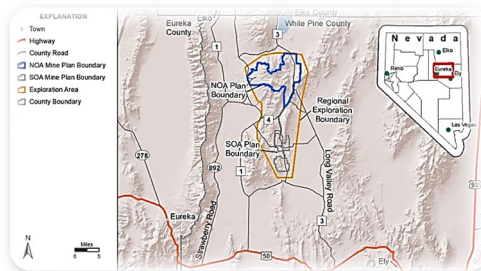
Lincoln County Water District Rights-of-Way

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 BLM is analyzing 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. The BLM is preparing a final Environmental Impact Statement and draft Record of Decision for a second Notice of Availability for the proposed Bald Mountain Mine Plan of Operations Amendment Juniper

Project. The 45-day public review and comment period on the draft EIS concluded in October 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. Maps and planning documents are available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xAm2g>.

KGHM Robinson Mine, North Tripp EA

The Bristlecone Field Office on Feb. 27, 2024 signed a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact beginning a 30-day appeal period for the KGHM-proposed 70-acre expansion of the North Tripp Waste Rock site at the Robinson Mine west of Ely. The 30-day public review and comment period on the preliminary environmental assessment concluded in January 2024.

Ridgeline Minerals, Selena Exploration EA

The Bristlecone Field Office has finished reviewing comments received during the 30-day public review and comment period that concluded in January 2024 and is finalizing the environmental assessment. 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.

NevGold USA, Limousine Butte EA

The BLM interdisciplinary team and cooperating agencies are reviewing the preliminary environmental assessment before releasing it to the public for review and comment, tentatively scheduled in April 2024. The 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 June 2024 lease sale includes parcels in northern Lincoln County. Parcels in Nye County were eliminated due to their proximity to the Kirch Wildlife Management Area. Parcels and maps 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).

White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act – public land sales

The Ely District may offer for competitive sale up to three parcels from Round 3 and 4 as early as Fiscal Year 2024. Lands for disposal were identified in the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan.

Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative

The Archaeological Resource Team is reviewing proposals received in Round 14. The BLM accepted Round 14 proposals through mid-January 2024. Proposals under the initiative focus on the inventory, evaluation, protection, and management of unique archaeological resources in Lincoln County, Nevada. Lincoln County Implementation Agreement guidelines are located at <https://www.blm.gov/LCAI>.



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 February, the ESR program completed implementation of the following treatments:



- As part of the fires' five-year ESR plans, the Ely District aerially seeded 2,094 acres of the 2022 Kinsley and 4,371 acres of the 2022 Becky Peak fires in White Pine County. The Nevada Department of Wildlife and Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition oversaw implementation. The seedings will help stabilize soils, increase desirable perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs and decrease invasive annual grasses and other weed species. The treatments are part of the fires' five-year ESR plans.

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 691 acres of the public lands in the Smith Valley area, about 15 miles northwest of Ely. The area has been seeded with a grass and forb mixture. The Nevada Department of Wildlife is overseeing this contract in coordination with the Ely District’s fuels program. The treatment is part of the multi-year Smith Valley Mastication and Hand Thinning Project that will ultimately treat up to 10,000 acres of public lands.

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan

The Bristlecone Field Office is in the engineering and design process. Construction is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2025. The field office released a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan and final Environmental Assessment in November 2023. The 30-day appeal period concluded in December 2023.



The field office is improving both of 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 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

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 July 2023. The following September, National Public Lands Day volunteers installed initial trail signage. 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.



Multipurpose Sagebrush Discovery Trail Travel and Transportation Management Plan

Design and Engineering are scheduled for summer 2024 with construction likely to occur in fiscal year 2025. The Bristlecone Field Office in September 2023 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., and consist 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.

WILD HORSE MANAGEMENT



The Caliente Field Office on or around April 1 will begin gathering and removing approximately 350 wild horses from in and around the Caliente Complex, in Lincoln County, Nev. The BLM will conduct gather operations utilizing temporary bait and water traps.

The purpose of the gather is to prevent undue or unnecessary degradation of the public lands associated with excess wild horses and to 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.

The Complex has nine herd areas encompassing over 911,890 acres of public and private lands. The BLM manages the Complex for zero wild horses due to insufficient forage and water to sustain healthy and viable herds long-term. The BLM in February 2024 documented 1,022 wild horses within and directly outside the herd areas.

Animals identified for removal will be transported to the Axtell off-range corrals, in Axtell, Utah; Delta Wild Horse and Burro Facility, in Delta, Utah; and Sutherland off-range corrals, in Sutherland, Utah.

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

