

# CHAPTER 3

## AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

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### ***Introduction***

This section presents the existing environment for lands potentially affected by geothermal drilling in the project area (Figure 1-2). The project area is located in Vulcan Power leases in the Salt Wells Lease Area, Churchill County. The project area is approximately 13 miles southeast of the City of Fallon, Nevada.

### ***Scoping and Issue Identification***

In accordance with FLPMA and NEPA, this document has been prepared with input from and coordination with interested agencies, organizations, and individuals within the region. During the scoping process for this EA, input was solicited from key agencies or groups with special expertise, interest, or administrative responsibility pertaining to the general geographical area. A public presentation of the proposed project was conducted at the Churchill County Commissioners meeting on November 2, 2006 in Fallon, Nevada. At that time, the public and commissioners were invited to comment on the project. The commissioners stressed their support for energy development in the county and asked to be kept informed of the progress of all energy projects.

### ***Resources Present and Brought Forward for Analysis***

Based on recommendations of BLM resource specialists and issues raised during scoping, and the known occurrence of specific resources in the area, it has been determined that the following resources could be affected by the proposed action and are carried forward for analysis:

- Land use;
- Soils/geology/minerals;
- Water resources;
- Vegetation/riparian habitat/invasive plant species/sensitive habitat types;
- Wildlife/fisheries/migratory birds;

- Federally listed endangered and threatened species and BLM sensitive species;
- Range;
- Visual;
- Noise;
- Public health and safety;
- Air quality;
- Recreation/special designations;
- Socioeconomics and environmental justice;
- Cultural (including Native American consultation); and
- Tribal Trust assets.

Appendix 5 of the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1, 1988) identifies Critical Elements of the Human Environment. The appendix lists resources that are subject to requirements specified in statutes or executive orders and must be considered in all BLM environmental documents. Table 3-1 lists the designated critical elements, where they are addressed in the EA, and provides reasons why certain elements are not carried forward for detailed analysis.

**Table 3-1 Critical Elements of the Human Environment**

<b>Critical Element</b>	<b>Corresponding EA Section</b>
Air Quality	Air Resources
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	Currently there are no ACECs in Churchill County.
Cultural Resources	Cultural Resources
Environmental Justice	Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
Farmland (prime or unique)	No prime or unique farmland is present or under production on public lands within the project area.
Floodplains	Water Resources
Hazardous Materials	Hazardous Materials
Invasive and Nonnative Species	Vegetation and Invasive Plant Species
Migratory Birds	Wildlife Resources
Native American Religious Concerns	Cultural Resources
Threatened and Endangered Species	Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Species and BLM Sensitive Species
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	Water Resources
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Wetlands are addressed in the Vegetation section.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No wild and scenic rivers or potentially eligible rivers are within the project area.
Wild Horse and Burros	No federal herd management areas occur within the project area.
Wilderness	No designated wilderness or wilderness study areas are within the project area.

The following sections of Chapter 3 provide an overview of the above resources within the project area.