

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment NV-043-08-009
August, 2008

Ward Recreation Area Trail Re-routes

Location:

Ward Recreation Area, White Pine County, Nevada

Applicant/Address:

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Ely District Office
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1. INTRODUCTION

This document identifies issues, analyzes alternatives and identifies impacts for re-routing a non-motorized trails at Ward Recreation Area located approximately 6 miles west of Ely, Nevada.

1.1 Project Location

The proposed project is located in the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) Ely District Office, Egan Field Office, in White Pine County, Nevada. The proposed project would be located at Ward Recreation Area off of Highway 6 approximately 6 miles west of Ely, Nevada.

The legal description of the project is as follows: T 16 N, R 62 E, Sections 26 and 27.

1.2 Need for the Proposal

The action is proposed in response to providing better recreation opportunities at an existing recreation site. One small section of existing trail that is south facing does not hold snow for long periods of time requiring cross-country skiers to travel across dirt for a short period, diminishing the recreation experience. By re-routing this short section of trail onto a north facing slope the trail would maintain continuity for cross-country skiing and better meet the needs of the public.

1.3 Land Use Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the following plans:

A) The Ely District Resource Management Plan, 2008 under Recreation states, “provide quality settings for developed and undeveloped recreation experiences and opportunities while protecting resources.”

And is consistent with the following plans:

B) the BLM’s Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services (Purple Book) 2003, Goal 2: Ensure a Quality Experience and Enjoyment of Natural and Cultural Resources on DOI Managed or Partnered Lands and Waters. Objective 1: Manage public lands and waters for enhanced recreation experiences and quality of life.

C) the Ely Field Office Recreation Plan of 2001 states “The Goal” “Provide quality sustainable recreation experiences on public lands in Eastern Nevada while maintaining the health of the ecosystem.”

1.4 Issues Identified

Resource issues identified for this proposed action included:

1) Cultural, Paleontological, and Historical Resource Values and the disturbance of sites through the installation of structures and associated recreation use.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVE(S)

Proposed Action

The Ely Field Office Bureau of Land Management is proposing to re-route a section of trail at Ward Recreation Area. The re-route would be approximately .5 mile in length and would entail mowing sagebrush, pruning trees, and benching in a trail where required. New trail construction would follow sustainable design practices and follow US Forest Service trail design and construction guidelines. Construction would be performed using hand tools. The trail would be approximately 4' in width. Monitoring of the trail system would identify areas of erosion or other concerns associated with use and would be maintained accordingly.

A complete cultural resource inventory would be performed prior to ground disturbing activities. All cultural resources would be avoided within the project area. If cultural resources are encountered during the construction phase of the project all work would be halted within 100 meters of the discovery. The discovery would be protected and the Ely BLM archeologist would be contacted.

Any construction activities for all alternatives in known or potential migratory bird habitat during the nesting season of birds known to be in that area would be surveyed for the presence of migratory bird breeding or nesting activities. No construction activities would take place in areas where breeding or nesting activities were taking place.

Prior to construction, the re-route would be inventoried for the presence of noxious weeds. The re-routed trail would be located to avoid infestation sites. Monitoring of the course would include noxious weeds and adaptive management strategies would follow established best management practices.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative represents the status quo – not approving or implementing the Proposed Action. The re-route of the trail would not occur. The existing trail would continue to be used for both winter and summer recreation uses.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Analysis

No other alternatives were considered due to the short duration of the re-routes and the limited amount of available topography that would meet the need of the re-route to be in a location that would hold snow for longer periods.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The affected environment section of an EA describes the existing condition and trend of issue related elements of the human environment that may be affected by implementing the proposed action or alternative.

<u>Resources/Concerns Considered for Analysis</u>	<u>Not Present or Negligible Impact</u>	<u>Present and Not Affected</u>	<u>Present and Affected</u>	<u>Rationale</u>
Area of Critical Environmental Concern	Not Present			
Air Quality	Negligible Impact			The nature of the proposed action and the associated use is anticipated to have a negligible impact to air quality.
Cultural		X		Design Features in the proposed action would result in no impacts to cultural resources.
Environmental Justice	Not Present			
Floodplains	Not Present			
Waste (Hazardous or Solid)	Not Present			
Invasive, Non-Native Species	Negligible Impact			Minimal levels of ground disturbance activities combined with few noxious weeds in proximity to the project site would result in negligible impacts in

				regards to the spread of invasive, non-native species. See the Weed Risk Assessment.
Native American Religious		X		No concerns were identified through consultation.
Prime or Unique Farmlands	Not Present			
Riparian – Wetland Zones	Not Present			
Special Status Plant and Animal Species	Not Present			
Water Quality	Not Present			
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Not Present			
Wilderness Study Areas	Not Present			
<u>Resources/Concerns Considered for Analysis</u>				
Land Use Authorizations		X		There would no modifications to land use authorizations through the proposed action therefore no impact would occur.
Paleontological Resources	Not Present			Currently paleontological resources are not identified within the project area.
Minerals		X		There would be no modifications to minerals resources through the proposed action therefore no

				impact would occur.
Visual Resources		X		The proposed action would fall within VRM classifications for the area therefore no impact to visual resources would occur.
Soils	Negligible Impacts			Project design would result in negligible impacts to soil resources.
Recreation	Negligible Impacts			Due to the minimal level of development proposed, impacts to recreation resources beyond those described in Section 1.2 are anticipated to be negligible.
Range	Negligible Impacts			Due to the minimal level of improvements and ground disturbances proposed, impacts to range resources are anticipated to be negligible.
Vegetation	Negligible Impacts			Design features of the proposed action combined within minimal levels of ground disturbance activities would not result in

				more than negligible disruption of any particular vegetative community.
Wildlife	Negligible Impacts			Minimal levels of improvements and ground disturbances proposed combined with the location of the site within a already established recreation area, impacts to wildlife resources are anticipated to be negligible.
Woodland Resources		X		No woodland resources would be removed from the project area in association with the proposed action.
Socioeconomics	Negligible Impacts			Due to the minimal level of development proposed, impacts to socioeconomic resources are anticipated to be negligible.
Migratory Birds		X		Design features of the proposed action combined with minimal ground disturbance activities would result in

				negligible impacts to migratory bird resources.
Wild Horses and Burros	X			

For all of the critical and non-critical elements impacts are anticipated to be either negligible, no impacts are anticipated, or the element is not present. Therefore, a more thorough detailed analysis of environmental consequences is not warranted.

4. CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts could result from individually minor, but collectively significant actions, taking place over a period of time (Council on Environmental Quality, Regulations for Implementation of NEPA, 1508.7).

According to the BLM publication, Guidelines for Accessing and Documenting Cumulative Impacts (1994), the analysis can be focused on those issues and resource values identified during scoping that are of major importance. No major issues were identified during scoping, therefore no cumulative impacts are anticipated and a more detailed analysis is not warranted.

5. PROPOSED MITIGATION AND MONITORING

As previously outlined mitigation measures incorporated into the proposed action are sufficient and based on the analysis of environmental consequences no additional mitigation is proposed.

6. CONSULTATION, COORDINATION, AND LIST OF PREPARERS

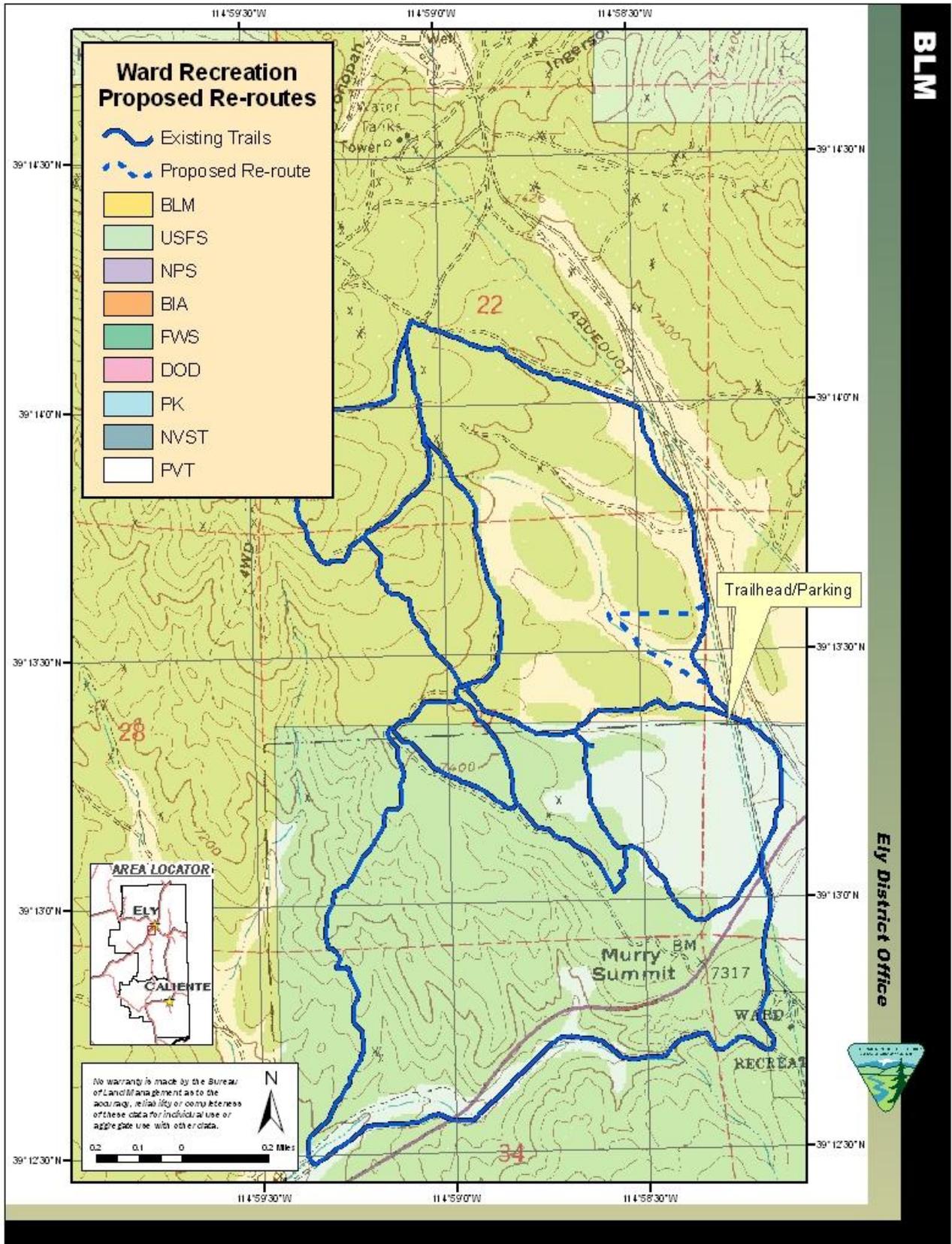
The project was scoped internally on 8/18/2008. No issues were identified during scoping. A 15 day public comment period was held, starting on 9/11/2008. The EA was posted on the website for public comment. No additional comments or concerns were identified at the meeting.

List of Preparers

The following persons participated directly in the preparation of this document:

Internal District Review

Jeffrey Weeks	Field Manager	Egan Field Office
Kalem Lenard	Recreation/VRM	Egan Field Office
Lisa Gilbert	Archeologist	Egan Field Office
Elvis Wall	Native American Coordination	Egan Field Office
Gina Jones	NEPA Coordination	Egan Field Office
Cameron Collins	Wildlife Biologist	Egan Field Office
Bonnie Million	Weeds Specialist	Ely District Office
Mark Lowrie	Range	Egan Field Office
Zach Peterson	Forest Resources	Ely District Office
Ruth Thompson	Wild Horses and Burros	Egan Field Office
Lynn Bjorklund	Minerals	Egan Field Office
Doris Metcalf	Lands	Egan Field Office
Melanie Peterson	Hazardous Waste	Egan Field Office



RISK ASSESSMENT FOR NOXIOUS & INVASIVE WEEDS

Ward Recreation Area Trail Re-route White Pine County, Nevada

On July 30th, 2008 a Noxious and Invasive Weed Risk Assessment was completed for the Ward Recreation Area trail re-route project located in White Pine County, NV. The re-route would be approximately .5 mile in length and would entail mowing sagebrush and benching in a trail where required. New trail construction would follow sustainable design practices and follow US Forest Service trail design and construction guidelines. Construction would be performed using hand tools. The trail would be approximately 4' in width. Monitoring of the trail system would identify areas of erosion or of other concerns associated with use and would be maintained accordingly. Prior to construction, the re-route would be inventoried for the presence of noxious weeds. The re-routed trail would be located to avoid infestation sites. Monitoring of the course would include noxious weeds and adaptive management strategies would follow established best management practices.

No field surveys were completed for this project. Instead, the Ely District weed inventory data was consulted. There are no known infestations along the proposed re-route. The following non-native, invasive species are found along the existing trail and along roads and drainages leading to the project area:

<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	Russian knapweed
<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>	Spotted knapweed
<i>Lepidium draba</i>	Hoary cress
<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>	Tall whitetop

Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), bur buttercup (*Ceratocephalus testiculatus*), halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*) more than likely occur in the area. This area of the Ely District was last inventoried for noxious weeds in 2006.

Factor 1 assesses the likelihood of noxious/invasive weed species spreading to the project area.

None (0)	Noxious weed species are not located within or adjacent to the project area. Project activity is not likely to result in the establishment of noxious weed species in the project area.
Low (1-3)	Noxious weed species are present in the areas adjacent to but not within the project area. Project activities can be implemented and prevent the spread of noxious weeds into the project area.
Moderate (4-7)	Noxious weed species located immediately adjacent to or within the project area. Project activities are likely to result in some areas becoming infested with noxious weed species even when preventative management actions are followed. Control measures are essential to prevent the spread of noxious weeds within the project area.
High (7-10)	Heavy infestations of noxious weeds are located within or immediately adjacent to the project area. Project activities, even with preventative management actions, are likely to result in the establishment and spread of noxious weeds on disturbed sites throughout much of the project area.

For this project, the factor rates as Moderate (4) at the present time. As with any ground disturbing project there is a chance of introducing noxious or invasive weeds to an area. The equipment must be properly cleaned prior to entering the project area.

Factor 2 assesses the consequences of noxious weed establishment in the project area.

Low to Nonexistent (1-3)	None. No cumulative effects expected.
Moderate (4-7)	Possible adverse effects on site and possible expansion of infestation within the project area. Cumulative effects on native plant communities are likely but limited.
High (8-10)	Obvious adverse effects within the project area and probable expansion of noxious weed infestations to areas outside the project area. Adverse cumulative effects on native plant communities are probable.

For this project, the factor rates as High (8). The existing trail and the proposed re-route are currently considered to be weed-free. Any new weed infestations in this area could have adverse effects on the native vegetation. If cheatgrass becomes heavily established it could alter the fire regime of the area.

The Risk Rating is obtained by multiplying Factor 1 by Factor 2.

None (0)	Proceed as planned.
Low (1-10)	Proceed as planned. Initiate control treatment on noxious weed populations that get established in the area.
Moderate (11-49)	Develop preventative management measures for the proposed project to reduce the risk of introduction of spread of noxious weeds into the area. Preventative management measures should include modifying the project to include seeding the area to occupy disturbed sites with desirable species. Monitor the area for at least 3 consecutive years and provide for control of newly established populations of noxious weeds and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.
High (50-100)	Project must be modified to reduce risk level through preventative management measures, including seeding with desirable species to occupy disturbed site and controlling existing infestations of noxious weeds prior to project activity. Project must provide at least 5 consecutive years of monitoring. Projects must also provide for control of newly established populations of noxious weeds and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.

For this project, the Risk Rating is Moderate (24). Based on this risk rating, preventative management measures are needed for this project. Preventative measures to help mitigate the possible effects of the race on the native plant communities include:

- To eliminate the transport of vehicle-borne weed seeds, roots, or rhizomes all vehicles and heavy equipment used for the completion, maintenance, inspection, or monitoring of ground disturbing activities or for authorized off-road driving will be free of soil and debris capable of transporting weed propagules. All such vehicles and equipment will be cleaned with power or high pressure equipment prior to entering or leaving the work site or project area. Cleaning efforts will concentrate on tracks, feet and tires, and on the undercarriage. Special emphasis will be applied to axels, frames, cross members, motor mounts, on and underneath steps, running boards, and front bumper/brush guard assemblies.

Reviewed by:


Bonnie M. Million

Ely District Noxious & Invasive Weed Coordinator

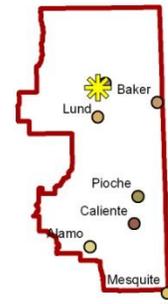
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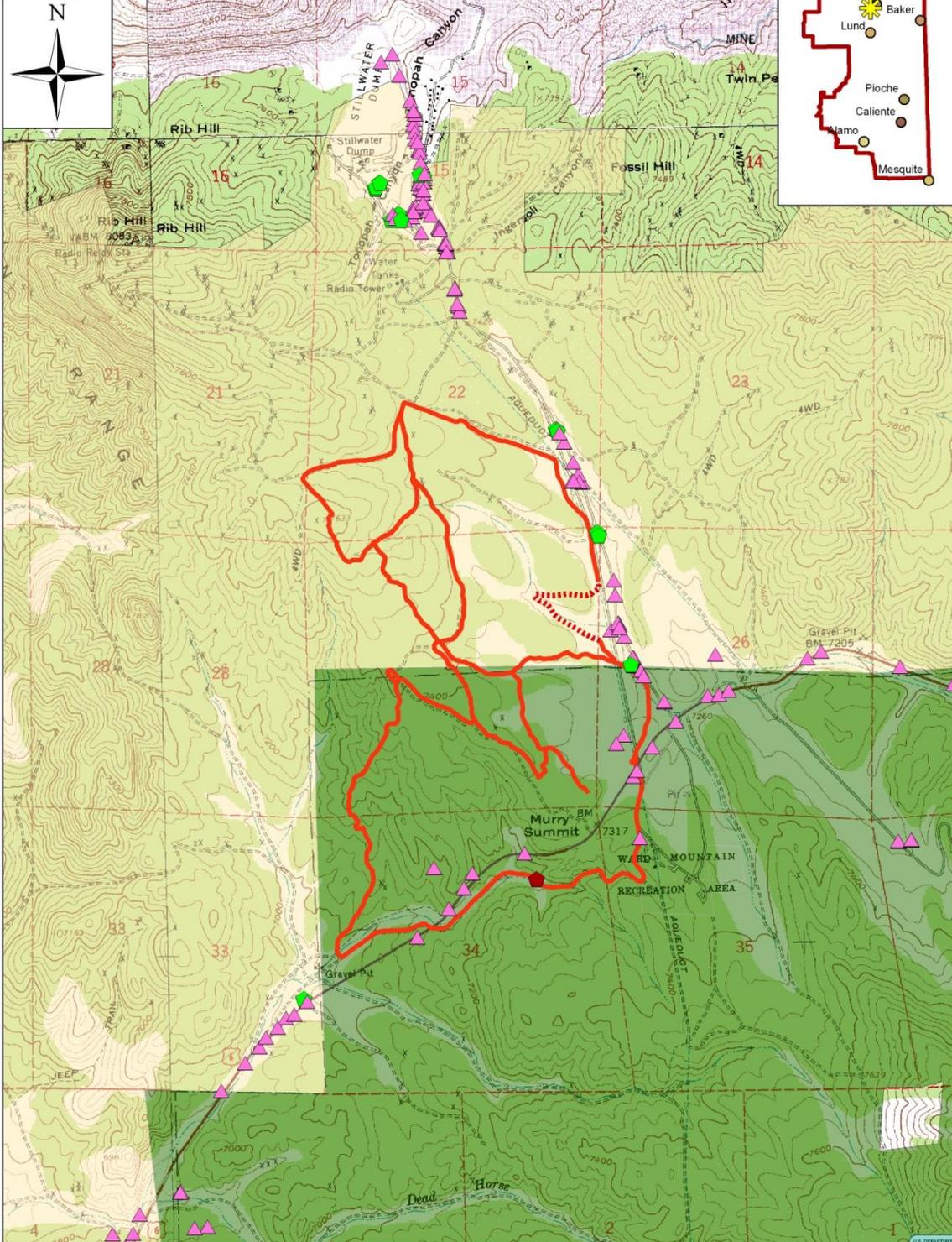
Ward Recreational Area Re-route

Documented Noxious & Invasive Weed Infestations

Location within the Ely District boundary



BLM



Ely District Office

Legend

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|------------------|--|----------------------|
| | Existing Trail | | FOREST SERVICE | | SPOTTED KNAPWEED |
| | Proposed Re-route | | PRIVATE | | TALL WHITETOP |
| | BLM | | RUSSIAN KNAPWEED | | WHITETOP/HOARY CRESS |



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data.

Map Produced by: Bonnie M Million
Noxious & Invasive Weeds Specialist
07/30/2008



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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DECISION RECORD (DR)

AND

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

Ward Recreation Area Trail Re-routes

Egan Field Office

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NV 043-08-009

Introduction

The Ward Recreation Area Trail Re-routes Environmental Assessment (EA) NV-043-08-009 was completed to analyze the affects of constructing an approximately .5 mile re-route of an existing trail at Ward Recreation Area in White Pine County, Nevada approximately 6 miles West of Ely, Nevada.

Summary of Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct an approximately .5 mile re-route of an existing trail at Ward Recreation Area. Construction of the re-route would entail mowing sagebrush and benching in a trail where required. New trail construction would follow sustainable design practices and follow US Forest Service trail design and construction guidelines. Construction would be performed using hand tools and/or mechanized equipment. The trail would be approximately 4' in width. Monitoring of the trail system would identify areas of erosion of other concerns associated with use and would be maintained accordingly.

A No Action Alternative was also analyzed. Under this Alternative the re-route would not be constructed but use of the existing trail would continue.

Context:

The action is proposed in response to providing better recreation opportunities at an existing recreation site. One small section of existing trail that is south facing does not hold snow for long periods of time requiring cross-country skiers to travel across dirt for a short period, diminishing the recreation experience. By re-routing this short section of trail onto a north facing slope the trail would maintain continuity for cross-country skiing and better meet the needs of the public.

Intensity:

1) *Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The EA considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

Resources are either not present, would not be affected, or are anticipated to be negligible due to the minimal levels of disturbance associated with the project, project design, mitigation outlined in the proposed action and monitoring.

None of the environmental impacts disclosed above and discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA are considered significant.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

Implementation components of the Proposed Action would not result in potentially substantial or adverse impacts to public health and safety.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There are no unique, park lands, prime or unique farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas in the vicinity. As outlined in the EA, the Project would avoid cultural resources and therefore these resources would not be impacted. In addition, the EA did not identify any significant impacts to unique species or their habitats that occur in the analysis area, or historical or cultural resources.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The Proposed Action is not expected to be highly controversial. A 15-day public comment period with information provided on the BLM website resulted in no comments.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no known effects of the Proposed Action identified in the EA that are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. This is demonstrated through the effects analysis in the EA.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The proposed action of re-routing trails at Ward Recreation Area would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision about future consideration. Any future proposed activities in the area would be analyzed under their own merits and impacts would be analyzed in a site-specific environmental analysis document.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered in the cumulative impacts analysis within the EA in Chapter 4 and are not considered cumulatively significant. In addition, for any actions that might be proposed in the future, further environmental analysis, including assessment of cumulative impacts, would be required prior to surface disturbing activities.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The activities would be located within areas of existing disturbance or in areas where Class III cultural resource surveys have been completed. All National Register eligible cultural sites would be avoided. The action complies with the National Historic Preservation Act. Implementation of the proposed action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. (EA Chapter 3). The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant cultural, or historical resources (EA Chapter 3).

There would not be loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources. The cultural resource surveys performed to date have resulted in negative findings for eligible sites.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as amended, of 1973.*

The action complies with the ESA, in that potential effects of this decision on listed species have been analyzed and documented. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973, as amended.

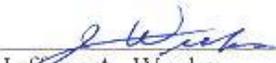
10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action would not violate or threaten to violate any federal, state, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Decision Record

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) NV-043-08-009, dated August 2008. After consideration of the environmental effects of the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) preferred alternative (Proposed Action) described in the EA and supporting documentation, I have determined that the Proposed Action with the project design specifications identified in the EA is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as described in 40 CFR 1508.27. Therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

I have determined the Proposed Action is in conformance with the approved Ely District Resource Management Plan, 2008, and is consistent with the plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state, tribal and federal agencies and governments. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.



Jeffrey A. Weeks
Field Manager
Egan Field Office

9-29-08
Date

**Finding of No Significant Impact
for Ward Recreation Area Disc Golf Course in White Pine County, Nevada**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

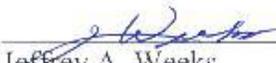
I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) NV-043-08-009, dated August 2008. After consideration of the environmental impacts as described in the EA, and incorporated herein I have determined that the proposed actions as described in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact statement (EIS) is not required to be prepared. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA. I have determined the proposed action is in conformance with the Ely District Resource Management Plan, 2008. This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with 43 CFR part 4 (see attachment).

Rationale:

The determining factors weighed by the Bureau of Land Management in reaching this Finding of No Significant Impact are provided below

- There are no unique characteristics within the project area to be affected (e.g., park lands, wetlands, prime farm lands.)
- No threatened or endangered species nor their habitat within the project area would be negatively impacted by any of the trails.
- The project and its potential effects on the quality of the human environment are neither controversial nor do they involve unique or unknown results.

The proposal is in conformance with all Federal, State, and local requirements, planning and laws, imposed for the protection of the environment. Appropriate mitigation has been incorporated into the proposed action. There would be no effect to the human health or environment of minority and low income populations.



Jeffrey A. Weeks
Field Manager
Egan Field Office

9-29-08

Date