

# Becky Peak and Government Peak

Final Wilderness Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

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

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## 1.0. Introduction

On December 20, 2006, Congress passed the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006 (WPCCRDA) (Public Law 109-432), Subtitle B specifically addresses Wilderness. Section 323(a) of the WPCCRDA designated citizen proposed Becky Peak Wilderness at 18,119 acres and Government Peak Wilderness at 6,313 acres in White Pine County, Nevada. The two wilderness areas total 24,432 acres. Map 1 in Appendix A provides a general overview of the two wilderness areas.

The WPCCRDA states that designated wilderness areas shall be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136). Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act sets forth BLM's responsibilities in administering wilderness areas, with the primary mandate being the preservation of wilderness character. In relevant part, the Wilderness Act states: "Except as otherwise provided..., each agency administering any area designated as wilderness shall be responsible for preserving the wilderness character of the area."

### Wilderness Background

The Wilderness Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System to ensure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas of the United States. The Wilderness Act defines wilderness characteristics, the uses of wilderness, and the activities prohibited within its boundaries.

Congress designates wilderness areas to protect and preserve the lands in their natural state. As such, wilderness areas provide a contrast to lands where human activities dominate the landscape.

Wilderness areas are managed for the use and enjoyment of the American people in a manner that will:

- leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness,
- protect and preserve wilderness character, and
- allow for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness.
- Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act describes uses that are generally prohibited in order to preserve wilderness character, as follows:
- "Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area."
- Because the above-described uses are prohibited as a rule, limited (rare and occasional) exceptions to the rule must meet the rigorous test of being the minimum necessary to administer the areas for the purposes of the Wilderness Act, and must occur in a manner that preserves wilderness character. A Minimum Requirements

Analysis (MRA) is used in conjunction with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. The MRA is described in BLM Manual 6340, Management of BLM Wilderness, Appendix B-1 Minimum Requirements Analysis (and the MRDG). It is used to assist in documenting any decisions involving uses and is organized around answering two fundamental questions: 1) Is any action necessary (regardless of the tool or other use employed); and 2) if so, what is the minimum amount of a prohibited use necessary to address the issue at hand.

## **1.1. Purpose of and Need for the Wilderness Management Plan**

BLM Manual 8561 (Wilderness Management Plans) requires that wilderness areas be managed pursuant to a specific management plan. In fulfillment of the above requirement, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District has prepared this Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) to address future management of the two wilderness areas. A consolidated plan was determined appropriate for the areas due to their relative proximity, comparable natural and cultural resources and values, and similar management issues.

The need for the Proposed Action stems from Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act, which requires administering agencies to preserve wilderness character. Further, Section 1.4.C. of BLM Manual 6340 (Management of BLM Wilderness) requires BLM District and Field Managers, among other things, to develop and implement land use and activity-level plans addressing wilderness areas that conform to the Wilderness Act, the establishing legislation WPCCRDA and BLM wilderness policies and guidance.

Based on the analysis herein, the BLM will decide whether to manage the wilderness areas strictly according to legislative and regulatory requirements, or whether to implement a management plan that provides additional management actions to manage approved uses while ensuring adequate protection and preservation of resources and values, as well as mitigation for potential impacts to those resources and values.

This WMP describes the existing environment in the wilderness, defined in various sections. The plan proposes management actions to address specific management issues or concerns. The Environmental Assessment (EA) that follows the WMP describes and analyzes potential effects of imposing different levels of management to wilderness character. This WMP is analyzed as the Proposed Action, which is compared to the Minimal Management Alternative because it incorporates the maximum land use restrictions considered necessary to protect and preserve wilderness character. The Minimal Management Alternative does not include optional management actions. The Proposed Action includes directives from BLM Manual 6340.

## **1.2. Wilderness Overview**

### **Wilderness Character**

The Wilderness Act defines wilderness and mandates that the primary management direction is to preserve wilderness character. The definition of wilderness is found in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act, and the qualities of wilderness character are commonly described as follows (Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, 2011):

- **Untrammeled** - The "earth and its community of life" are essentially unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation in wilderness areas, "in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape." This quality is important because it helps insure that wilderness management respects the autonomy of nature that allows a place to be wild and free. This quality is impaired by human activities or actions that control or manipulate the components or processes of wilderness ecological systems.
- **Natural** - Wilderness ecological systems are substantially free from the effects of modern civilization. Preserving this quality ensures that indigenous species, patterns and ecological processes are protected and allows us to understand and learn from natural features. This quality is impaired by human actions or activities that leave scars on the landscape that would not be there naturally, like roads, trails, and seeded areas.
- **Undeveloped** - Wilderness retains its "primeval character and influence," and is essentially "without permanent improvements" or modern human occupation. Preserving this quality keeps areas free from "expanding settlement and growing mechanization" and "with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable" as required by the Wilderness Act. Human developments, such as fences, water troughs, developed springs, degrade this quality.
- **Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation** - The Wilderness Act provides individuals with opportunities to experience primitive recreation, natural sights and sounds, solitude, freedom, risk, the physical and mental challenges of self-discovery and self-reliance, and to use traditional skills free from the constraints of modern culture. This quality is impaired by settings that reduce these opportunities, such as visitor encounters, signs of modern civilization, recreation facilities, and management restrictions on visitor behavior.
- **Unique, Supplemental, or Other Features** - The Wilderness Act states that wilderness areas "may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value." Though these supplemental values need not be present for an area to meet the definition of wilderness, where they are present they are part of that area's wilderness character, and must be protected as rigorously as any of the four required qualities.

### **Descriptions of the Wilderness Areas**

The two wilderness areas lie within the Central Basin and Range, a mosaic of basins, scattered low and high mountains, and salt flats. The area contains diverse landforms and vegetation types, ranging from sagebrush-covered valleys to pinyon and juniper in higher elevations. Becky Peak Wilderness spans 18,119 acres and ranges in elevation from 6,000 feet to 10,000 feet in the northern Schell Creek Range. Government Peak Wilderness encompasses 6,313 acres and ranges from 5,800 feet to 7,800 feet in the northern Snake Creek Range. See Map 1 Overview, Appendix A. These wilderness areas are generally located within a two-hour drive from Ely, Nevada. They are located in White Pine County in Nevada.

The areas exhibit characteristics valued for wilderness designation. The two areas have retained their natural and wild characteristics but parts of all four wilderness characteristics are present. These areas in White Pine County are at the heart of the Great Basin, where majestic mountain ranges tower over wide valleys of sagebrush. The rugged and scenic landscape supports diverse

plant and wildlife species, including elk, mule deer, cougar, pronghorn, sage grouse, raptors, and a host of other birds, mammals, and reptiles.

Visitors will experience very low levels of human impacts, abundant solitude, and may enjoy several primitive recreational opportunities, such as hiking, hunting, camping, scenic viewing and nature study. The wilderness areas provide opportunities to experience a sense of remoteness and isolation. The numerous draws, ravines, rocky outcrops, and ridges create secluded locales that provide outstanding opportunities for solitude, when combined with the remoteness of the wilderness areas and the low visitor numbers. Wilderness is managed under Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class I Management Objectives, generally defined as pristine landscape with few or no human developments, contributing to its undeveloped quality.

Wildlife populations that are characteristic of the Basin and Range are supported by the diverse habitat types found in these wilderness areas. Key habitats include sagebrush steppe, cliffs and canyons, riparian areas, and montane woodlands. The big game species that occupy these wilderness areas are Rocky Mountain elk and mule deer; and pronghorn in the foothills and benches. There are numerous small game and furbearers in the project area such as black-tailed jackrabbit, gray fox, bobcat, mountain lion, and coyote. Raptors are commonly found nesting and foraging in the wilderness areas, and these areas provide habitat for non-game species of numerous small mammals, reptiles, and birds.

Preliminary primary habitat and preliminary general habitat for the greater sage-grouse, a candidate species for federal listing, has been documented in the high mountain sagebrush communities of the Becky Peak Wilderness, and along the lower benches of the Government Peak and Becky Peak Wilderness Areas. Other special status species that may occupy or utilize these wilderness areas are Swainson's hawk, golden eagle, Northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, sage thrasher, brewer's sparrow, pinyon jay, black rosy-finch, and numerous bat species.

Water sources include a few developed and undeveloped springs in Becky Peak Wilderness. There are no developed or undeveloped water sources in Government Peak Wilderness. The region's varying climate and elevation provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Both of the wilderness areas support livestock grazing. Active grazing permits existed at the time of wilderness designation and are authorized to continue under the direction of the Congressional Grazing Guidelines.

Six cherry-stem routes provide public access to the Becky Peak Wilderness. Cherry-stem routes are usually defined as dead-end routes where the boundary of the wilderness extends up one side of the route, around its terminus, and down the other side. Government Peak Wilderness has no true cherry stem routes. However, one route bisects the Government Peak Wilderness, effectively splitting the wilderness in half. To ensure that wilderness areas are not impacted by vehicular use of cherry-stem routes, turn-arounds at the end of cherry-stem routes will be limited to the total width of the cherry-stem.

### **Wilderness Issues Being Addressed**

This WMP was prepared to address issues identified through internal agency and public scoping. Interested publics were involved in this process during public meetings and through letters, email, the BLM website, and personal contact. Initial public scoping meetings were held during

the summer of 2013 in Ely, Nevada. Issues and concerns raised during scoping were considered during development of this WMP and are described in the following sections.

### **Protecting and preserving the untrammeled, undeveloped, and natural appearance of wilderness areas**

- Long boundary perimeters increase the amount of wilderness that may be impacted by human-influenced changes to vegetative structure and composition in areas immediately adjacent to the wilderness areas.
- Wildfire suppression and post-fire rehabilitation may affect the natural and undeveloped wilderness character by disturbing soil and changing vegetative composition and structure.
- Human activities may increase the establishment of noxious and invasive plant species, the following in particular: cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) and Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*).
- Numbers of visitors to wilderness areas may increase, which could result in site-specific impacts to wilderness character.

### **Management of non-conforming land uses allowed by Section 4(d) of the Wilderness Act**

- Continued livestock grazing-related activities, including access to and maintenance of existing structures (i.e., developed springs, pipelines, fences, reservoirs), may adversely affect naturalness and undeveloped wilderness character.

## **1.3. Wilderness Management Strategy**

The management strategy for designated wilderness is to manage human use in a manner that protects and preserves the natural, untrammeled, and undeveloped wilderness character, as well as the opportunities for solitude and primitive experience, and protecting the unique and supplemental features of wilderness. All these qualities are present in some way in Becky Peak and Government Peak Wilderness and therefore will be managed to protect them from the effects of human-caused disturbances. This WMP considers existing resource and management issues within the wilderness to develop management strategy.

### **Wilderness Management Goals and Objectives**

This section outlines the goals and objectives that guide this WMP. The goals, along with related laws, regulations, and BLM policies, provide broad management direction and are refined into specific objectives. Standard Wilderness Goals are identified in BLM Manual 8561, and are required to be part of Wilderness Management Plans. The Wilderness Act suggests overall objectives as retaining primeval character, preserve natural conditions and maintaining untrammeled by man. Objectives herein are aimed at following the Wilderness Act and are statements of desired conditions stemming from current situations and assumptions about the future.

The Wilderness Act states that wilderness ecosystems should retain their “primeval” character. The dictionary definition of primeval, “of or relating to the earliest ages,” suggests that the Act is directing managers to maintain wilderness ecosystems in a state that existed at some time in the past. The Wilderness Act also states that wilderness ecosystems are to be preserved “in their

natural condition.” There is general agreement that preserving natural conditions means ensuring that the current composition, structure and/or functioning of ecosystems are consistent with the conditions that would have prevailed in the absence of humans. Adherence to this direction would mean allowing natural ecosystem change to occur, while avoiding or compensating for changes caused by the activities of people. The Wilderness Act provides for managing wilderness ecosystems that is untrammled by man. Synonymous with unconfined, unfettered and unrestrained, however, “untrammled” actually suggests freedom from human control rather than lack of human influence. They qualify as wilderness because they are wild and uncontrolled, despite substantial human influence. Managing for natural conditions—allowing ecosystems to evolve in novel ways, as long as the source of innovation is not human caused—is a more appropriate goal than managing for primeval conditions—freezing conditions at a certain state (Cole 2000). All goals and objectives must conform to the qualities of wilderness character.

### **Wilderness Goal 1**

To provide for the long-term protection and preservation of the areas’ wilderness character under a principle of non-degradation. The areas’ natural condition, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and any ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic value present will be managed so that they would remain unimpaired.

#### **Objectives**

- Avoid restoration activities that influence the entire wilderness and/or must be continued indefinitely. Including restoration activities in which the wilderness goals of naturalness and wildness are clearly in conflict, such as a program of scheduled management fires set to replace natural fire.
- Protect and preserve wildlife habitat to support healthy and viable wildlife populations to retain the wilderness areas’ natural and undeveloped character.
- Maintain the natural wilderness character by reducing or eliminating infestations of noxious weeds and non-native invasive species.

### **Wilderness Goal 2**

To manage the wilderness areas for the use and enjoyment of visitors in a manner that would leave the areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. The wilderness resource will be dominant in all management decisions where a choice must be made between preservation of wilderness character and visitor use.

#### **Objectives**

- Utilize education and interpretation as a proactive approach to address agency decisions and visitor activities that may impact wilderness character.
- Prevent unauthorized use of motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment by managing vehicle access points, posting appropriate boundary and informational signs, and blocking and rehabilitating unauthorized routes.

### **Wilderness Goal 3**

To manage the wilderness areas using the minimum tool, equipment, or structure necessary to successfully, safely, and economically accomplish the objective. The chosen tool, equipment, or structure should be the one that least degrades wilderness values temporarily or permanently.

Management will seek to preserve spontaneity of use and as much freedom from regulation as possible.

#### **Objective**

- Implement proposed actions as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the areas as wilderness and to have the least impact to wilderness character.
- Utilize the MRA to determine actions necessary and the minimum necessary, methods and tools while preserving wilderness character to the greatest extent practicable.

#### **Wilderness Goal 4**

To manage nonconforming but accepted uses permitted by the Wilderness Act and subsequent laws in a manner that would prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the areas' wilderness character. Nonconforming uses are the exception rather than the rule; therefore, emphasis is placed on maintaining wilderness character.

#### **Objectives**

- Close or limit access to specific areas when resources, such as soils, vegetation, sensitive plant or animal populations or habitat, or cultural resources are being negatively affected by visitor activities.
- Maintain or enhance the natural wilderness character by removing unnecessary facilities and minimizing or reclaiming human-caused surface disturbances.

### **1.4. Wilderness Management Actions**

#### **Education and Interpretation**

General interpretive information regarding natural and cultural resources and recreation opportunities in wilderness would be located on kiosks outside of wilderness, in brochures, on BLM recreation maps, and on the BLM Ely and State Office websites. Wilderness maps would include area descriptions, designated trails, interpretive information, and information on wilderness ethics and *Leave No Trace* principles. *Leave No Trace* ethics would also be emphasized in classes and workshops presented at local schools and in the field. Interpretive trails would not exist in wilderness areas.

When feasible, interpretive and informational materials would be developed in collaboration with other agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and interested individuals.

Wilderness boundary signs would be simple installations (e.g., carsonite or metal posts) used to delineate wilderness boundaries from adjacent non-wilderness, and would be located in accordance with BLM Manual 6340.

Key entrance signs would identify the name of the wilderness and would be placed where visitors are likely to contact the wilderness boundary. Entrance signs are large, BLM-brown signs. One key entrance sign is placed at each main road access to the wilderness. There are three at Becky Peak and one at Government Peak Wilderness.

Information boards containing one-panel informational and interpretive signs would exist at access points, or at staging areas. These signs would provide local and regional information

about wilderness, natural and cultural resources, regulatory information, and interpretation. There is one information sign at Becky Peak. Additional signs would be installed, as visitor needs warrant (see Maps 2 & 3).



### **Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation**

The overall goal of the wilderness Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R) program is to maintain the natural wilderness character by facilitating the natural recovery of burned areas, while minimizing or precluding noxious weed and non-native invasive species infestations.

No ES&R treatments have occurred in either wilderness since designation.

Pursuant to BLM Manual 6340, ES&R activities should be conducted as part of the fire incident and in accordance with current Department of Interior policy (Departmental Manual 620 DM 3 - Wildland Fire Management Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation) and BLM ES&R policy (H-1742-1 - Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook). Stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration activities may be intensive when post-fire processes threaten ecological integrity or wilderness character. ES&R activities within wilderness must follow the guidance below:

1. Natural recovery of native plant species is preferable to all other treatments.
2. Seeding or planting would be used when objectives for natural recovery cannot otherwise be accomplished and there is a threat to wilderness character and values if no action is taken. The use of native material, preferably of local or regional genetic stock, would be first priority.
3. Non-native species may be seeded or planted if no native species are available and or the non-native species are part of an assisted succession program, which promotes the rehabilitation of native vegetation. The proposed action must meet at least one of the following criteria:
  - a. the natural biological diversity of the treated area would not be diminished; or
  - b. exotic and naturalized species can be confined within the treated area, or
  - c. ecological site inventory information indicates that a site would not support reestablishment of a species that was historically a part of the natural environment.

The District Manager may approve prohibited uses for ES&R projects on a case-by-case basis subject to a MRA. These may include:

- Standard erosion control techniques that prevent or minimize soil movement and loss (i.e. straw bales, wattles, mulch)
- Stabilize and mitigate post-fire related degradation to cultural resources
- Sling loading materials into or out of wilderness using a helicopter
- Helicopters or other aircraft used for aerial seeding

## **Fire Management**

The overall goal of wilderness fire management is to emphasize protection and preservation of wilderness character. This goal requires BLM to facilitate the operation of natural processes and ecological change by allowing fire to function in its natural role of disturbance and succession, except where life, property, and/or high value resources are threatened. An integral part of this process is ensuring that Fire Management Plans (FMPs) are consistent with Wilderness legislative requirements and BLM management policies, as well as the goals and objectives of this WMP. The goals and objectives of this WMP would be incorporated into future FMP revisions.

Only one fire has occurred since designation in Becky Peak Wilderness. The Dolans Trap fire (2008) caused by natural ignition, was managed as fire for resource benefit at 80.8 acres. No fires have been recorded in Government Peak Wilderness.

In addition to the Wilderness Act, fire suppression and rehabilitation activities would be consistent with current National Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NIFC 2011), FMP and RMP. Fire management activities within wilderness areas would utilize Minimum Impact Strategies and Tactics (MIST) (USDI 2010b). The intent of MIST is to manage a wildland fire with the least impact to natural and cultural resources. By minimizing impacts of fire management actions, unnecessary resource damage is prevented and cost savings can be realized.

Response to a wildland fire in or near wilderness would consider the full range of fire management strategies and tactics to achieve multiple objectives (ranging from monitoring to full suppression). BLM staff would define the set of multiple objectives to protect and/or enhance wilderness character, while considering situational factors, such as fuel loading, fire behavior, and threats to human life and property.

## **Fire Suppression Actions**

Pursuant to Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act, otherwise prohibited uses may be authorized in wilderness areas only when they are determined to be "...necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act..." While administrative activities should always be accomplished with economic efficiency, both the Wilderness Act and the agency's wilderness policy direct managers away from using either the cost or the time required for implementation as over-riding considerations when evaluating the potential use of otherwise prohibited activities.

An evaluation and approval template for emergency actions that functions as a Minimum Requirements Analysis is in Appendix B-1 of BLM Manual 6340. Revisions to this approval process would be consistent across BLM District boundaries, as well as with this WMP.

The following process would be used to evaluate the following actions (and any others) that may be considered during development of a proposed emergency fire response.

- Assign a resource advisor with knowledge and experience in wilderness stewardship to the firefighting team to assist in identifying and protecting wilderness character.
- Prevent the establishment of noxious weeds and invasive species to preserve the natural wilderness character thus:
  - Inspect and wash all suppression equipment prior to wilderness entry, but locate wash-down sites outside of wilderness areas.
  - Locate camps and other assembly points outside of wilderness areas and away from areas infested by noxious weeds and invasive species.
  - Avoid using water sources containing invasive species for suppressing fires in wilderness.
- Use MIST when feasible, as long as the safety of firefighters, human life and property is protected.
- Locate support operations, such as helispots, fire camps, and staging areas outside of wilderness.
- Remove or rehabilitate evidence of human intervention to the maximum extent possible.
  - Repair fire suppression-related resource damage immediately
  - Plan and implement actions prior to the suppression incident organization demobilization.
- Repairs to damaged sites or resources may occur with the same type of equipment that was used for suppression. For example, if motorized, earth-moving equipment was used to construct fire lines, then the same type of equipment may be used to contour and rehabilitate.

The District Manager, as the delegated authority must document their approval of otherwise prohibited uses, and the documentation must be included in the wilderness fire activity reports.

#### Type of Prohibited Use:

- Motorized Water Pumps
- Aerial Retardant Application
- Air Transport/Personnel Shuttle (landings) and Supply Drops
- Fence (Facility) Repair or Temporary Fence Installation
- Chainsaws
- Motor Vehicles
  - Engines
  - Helicopter Transports
  - Crew Trucks
  - UTV/ATV
- Helispot Construction (major ground disturbance)
- Heavy Equipment (equipment associated with major ground disturbance, i.e. bulldozers, excavators)

## Livestock Management

The overall goal of livestock management is to provide for continued livestock grazing in wilderness areas in a manner that minimize impacts to the natural, undeveloped, and untrammled wilderness character.

Section 4(d)(4)(2) of the Wilderness Act provides for continued livestock grazing where it existed prior to wilderness designation, subject to reasonable regulations deemed necessary by the Secretary of Interior.

A total of ten grazing allotments are located partially within the two wilderness areas. Livestock grazing is currently authorized within the wilderness portions of the allotments.

**Table 1. Grazing Allotments Located Partially Within Wilderness.**

Allotment Name	Approximate Acres within Wilderness	Approximate Range Developments	Wilderness
Becky Creek	7,320	1	Becky Peak
Becky Springs	314	0	Becky Peak
Cherry Creek	3,323	1	Becky Peak
Chin Creek	846	0	Becky Peak
North Steptoe	67	0	Becky Peak
Sampson Creek	2,821	1	Becky Peak
Tippett	3,116	0	Becky Peak
Devils Gate	221	1	Government Peak
Indian George	1,516	0	Government Peak
Muncy Creek	4,576	3	Government Peak

*Acres calculated using GIS.*

Becky Creek, Cherry Creek and Sampson Creek allotment developments are troughs. Devils Gate and Muncy Creek allotment developments are portions of fences that originate outside wilderness.

Planning related to grazing operations would be guided by the Congressional Grazing Guidelines (House Report 105-405 Appendix A, 1990) and BLM Manual 6340. Livestock grazing in wilderness areas will be administered pursuant to the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Standards so long as the grazing does not conflict with the preservation of wilderness character.

Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act requires activities in wilderness areas to be accomplished without motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment unless truly necessary to administer the area, or when specifically permitted by other provisions of the Wilderness Act.

Section 2 of the Congressional Grazing Guidelines (Appendix A of House Report 101-405, 1990) provides the following direction for maintenance of livestock grazing-related facilities and the occasional use of motorized equipment in wilderness:

“The maintenance of supporting facilities, existing in an area prior to its classification as wilderness (including fences, line cabins, water wells and lines, stock tanks, etc.) is permissible in wilderness. Where practical alternatives do not exist, maintenance or other activities may be accomplished through the occasional use of motorized equipment...Such occasional use of motorized equipment should be expressly authorized in the grazing permits for the area involved. The use of motorized equipment should be based on a rule of practical necessity and reasonableness...Moreover, under the rule of reasonableness, occasional use of motorized equipment should be permitted where practical alternatives are not available and such use would not have a significant adverse impact on the natural environment. Such motorized equipment uses will normally only be permitted in those portions of a wilderness area where they had occurred prior to the area’s designation as wilderness or are established by prior agreement.”

Routine livestock management activities in wilderness areas, including project inspection and maintenance (e.g. minor fence repairs or small quantity salt distribution) would normally be accomplished by non-motorized, non-mechanized means. Motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment would be authorized on a limited basis on existing administrative access routes only for major project maintenance or repair, when needed to transport equipment or supplies that cannot reasonably be accomplished by foot, pack stock, or other non-motorized or non-mechanized means.

Requests by grazing permittees for occasional use of motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis through a MRA to determine whether they are the minimum tool necessary for administration of the area as wilderness.

#### Removal

The viability and usefulness of existing wilderness range projects would be evaluated in consultation with the permittee during the permit renewal process. Prior to removal of any structure by the permittee, BLM staff, or authorized volunteers, an evaluation would take place. If a range project or other structure is determined by an Ely District Cultural Resource Specialist to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, it will be recorded. All activities that would impact or affect cultural resources would be subject to prior National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Section 106 process.

#### New Developments

Proposals for new livestock water or other developments would not be approved unless they are determined to be the minimum necessary to protect or preserve wilderness character. New project proposals would require both an environmental analysis and a MRA.

#### Existing Operations

Specific wilderness access requirements and schedules would be included as terms and conditions in affected grazing permits, during renewal periods. Terms and conditions would specify the timeframe during which vehicular access would be authorized, as well as the specific administrative route(s) and the type(s) of vehicles to be used.

Prior to a motorized, mechanized vehicle or equipment entry, a MRA must be conducted and a BLM letter of authorization must be issued to the permittee for the conditions described below:

1. Salt and mineral supplement may be delivered into wilderness areas via motor vehicle in quantities sufficient to ensure only one motorized entry annually. Subsequent distribution of stockpiled salt would be accomplished by foot, horseback, or pack stock.
2. Motorized and mechanized inspection and maintenance for troughs and pipelines in Becky Peak Wilderness may occur one time per year prior to livestock entry. Maintenance would be identified or accomplished during inspection. For large repair or reconstruction projects, such as pipeline or trough replacement, a one-time motorized equipment entry under this plan, would be authorized in conjunction with a MRA to determine the equipment necessary.
3. Fence repair or replacement in Government Peak Wilderness would be accomplished by foot or pack stock as there is very little fence inside the wilderness boundary.

Administrative access routes would not be maintained or repaired except on a site-specific basis with BLM authorization. Prior to authorizing route maintenance, the BLM would complete a MRA to ensure that the minimum tool necessary was to be used to accomplish the objective. If necessary, a gate or bollard, signed as administrative access, would be installed at the entrance to an administrative route to prevent unauthorized motorized access.

Permittees would be authorized to use motorized vehicles during emergencies, such as rescuing sick or stranded animals. A permittee would not need prior authorization for emergency vehicular access, though they would be required to notify the BLM authorized officer immediately afterward. Authorization for emergency access would be included as a term and condition of the grazing permit.

Pursuant to Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act, the use of motor vehicles for livestock monitoring, herding, and gathering is prohibited, as are off-road and over-snow travel and development of new routes.

### **Recreation Management**

Solitude and primitive and unconfined recreational opportunities exist in both wilderness areas. One of the main goals of wilderness management is to provide for visitor use and enjoyment in a manner that leaves wilderness areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment. Thus, the protection and preservation of wilderness character, and the protection and enhancement of wilderness supplemental values that are of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value would be dominant in all decisions regarding the promotion or management of visitor use.

Although annual visitation is difficult to quantify across such a large area, visitor encounters are infrequent. Year round visitation is possible, but the wilderness areas' remoteness and ruggedness have historically prohibited high levels of human use and development.

BLM would use public outreach and education about *Leave No Trace* land use ethics to encourage minimum impact practices to accomplish wilderness recreation goals.

No permits are required for the public to visit the wilderness. The BLM would aim to minimize limitations or controls on visitor use in wilderness areas, while still reducing effects to resources and maintain compliance with wilderness policy.

## Camping

No heavily used campgrounds or campsites exist in the area and would not be developed or improved in wilderness areas. Therefore, the following restrictions would be imposed on dispersed and unmanaged camping to minimize potential effects to wilderness character, including impacts to soils, vegetation, and water quality, and conflicts with wildlife and livestock.

- The BLM Nevada occupancy rule: A person may not occupy undeveloped public lands or designated sites or areas for more than 14 days within a 28 consecutive day period. Following the 14 days, a person and their personal property must relocate to a site outside of at least a 25-mile radius from the occupied site for a period of 14 days. An occupancy limitation rule was established to reduce user conflicts caused by long-term occupancy that may hamper reasonable opportunities for other members of the public to camp in or use the same area. Additionally, long-term occupancy can result in vegetation trampling, erosion, wildlife disruption and improper waste disposal. BLM established occupancy limits for camping with the publication of a notice in the Federal Register on Oct. 5, 1993.
- Campers must be 300 feet from natural springs or developed upland water sources (e.g., troughs, reservoirs) to limit potential conflicts with wildlife and livestock.
- Campers are encouraged to use *Leave No Trace* principles and bury human waste in catholes dug at least 6” to 8” deep and 200 feet from water, trails, and campsites. Proper disposal of human waste will minimize pollution of water sources, avoid the possibility of someone else finding it, and minimize the potential to spread disease.
- Campers must use pack-in/pack-out land use ethics, including toilet paper, to reduce noxious odors, insects and/or unwanted animal encounters.

## Hunting and Trapping

Hunting and trapping are allowed in wilderness. They are not a common activity in Becky Peak and Government Peak; all federal and state regulations apply.

- Pursuant to Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act, commercial trapping is prohibited in wilderness areas. Commercial trapping is defined as trapping that involves the sale of furs, hides, or other animal body parts. Persons having state issued permits to trap may do so on designated wilderness lands. However, any person of any age who sells raw furs of any kind, whether taken by trap or firearm from a designated wilderness area is in violation of Section 4c of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and 43 CFR 6302.20(a). The BLM manual specifically states that the “sale of wildlife products gathered from wilderness is prohibited. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to: the sale or barter of fish or meat; sale or barter of skull, skins, or mounts; sale or barter of antlers, either as collected or “value-added furniture”; sale or barter of any trapped animals or their fur.”
- Personal, non-commercial trapping would be permitted, subject to applicable State and Federal laws and regulations. Access to traps would be limited to foot or horseback.
- Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act precludes structures and installations in wilderness areas. As such, permanent blinds for hunting, photography, or other purposes are prohibited.

- Temporary, portable or “pop-up” blinds would be permitted for hunting, photography, wildlife observation or similar purposes for a 14-day use period. They must be attended or occupied at least some portion within the 14 days or will be subject to removal.

### Trails and Routes

Hiking to the summits of Becky and Government Peaks are current recreational activities. The peak summit registers consisting of paper and pencil in a container would remain. Pedestrian or equestrian trails would not be constructed within the wilderness; there is not the need to facilitate visitor use or reduce impacts to wilderness character and resources. Signs and structures related to recreational use would not be placed in wilderness unless a MRA determined that they are the minimum necessary for administration of the area as wilderness. They may be justified due to an extraordinary hazard or to protect naturalness where it is being impacted from visitor use, but not for visitor convenience.

Remnant two-track roads and user-created trails would be considered part of the wilderness experience and would not be marked or signed, would not receive routine maintenance, and would not be displayed on BLM recreation maps or brochures. As time and funding allow, BLM may take action to rehabilitate surface disturbances with actions similar to those discussed in the fire rehabilitation and weed control sections of this document. Otherwise, trails and two-track roads would be allowed to revegetate naturally unless their continued use causes excessive soil erosion, poses an unacceptable public safety hazard, or adversely affects wilderness character.

Access points are defined as locations along wilderness boundaries where focused entry occurs. Over time, these and other areas used for parking along boundary roads may be impacted to the point at which improvements should be made in order to protect wilderness character. These access points and parking areas may be defined by creating a vehicle turn-around at or before the wilderness boundary and would not extend into wilderness. As necessary, BLM appropriate land use authorization or right-of-ways would be obtained.

### **Other Visitor Use**

- Traditional geocaching and letterboxing are prohibited to reduce soil and vegetation disturbance caused by object burial and leaving items in wilderness.
- To reduce weed transport and infestation within the wilderness areas, supplemental feed for riding and pack stock should be certified weed-free. Recommend 96 hours before entering public lands, feed pack animals only certified weed free feed. Remove weed seeds from pack animals by brushing them thoroughly and cleaning their hooves.
- Casual collection on foot or horseback (surface only, no digging) of small quantities (<25 lbs.) of renewable and mineral resources would be permitted (i.e., wood, fruit, vegetation, rock and mineral specimens, petrified wood, and common invertebrate and plant fossils).
- To reduce impacts to the natural wilderness character and protect the area for future generations, individuals may not cut, break, or otherwise destroy standing live and dead trees or shrubs for firewood or clear an area for a campsite, visitor convenience, or comfort (RMP FP-5, 9).
- To preserve the area’s history, vertebrate fossils and cultural, archaeological, and historic sites and artifacts may not be damaged or removed without BLM authorization. Prior to

any action in wilderness, the potential effects on cultural resources will be evaluated per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, per Ely District guidelines and the BLM Nevada State Protocol Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office.

## **Vegetation Management**

### Restoration of Vegetation

Manipulation of vegetation through any one or a combination of prescribed fire, chemical application, mechanical treatment, or introduced biological agents may be permitted in wilderness areas only to preserve wilderness character and values. Robert C. Lucas, Wilderness Research Social Scientist asserts, "The object is not to stop change, nor to recreate conditions as of some arbitrary historical date, nor to strive for favorable change in big game populations or in scenic vistas. The object is to let nature 'roll the dice' and accept the results with interest and scientific curiosity." (1978) Further, "... once large-scale restorations have been implemented, it will be impossible to evaluate their success. All wildlands will be consciously constructed, so there will no longer be any examples of unmanipulated systems to serve as reference areas. Ecosystem manipulations in wilderness will ultimately be experiments without controls." (Cole 2000)

Thus, for these two areas, over the life of this plan, in terms of active restoration, the "hands-off" approach will be the management direction for vegetation restoration. The hands-off strategy, refrains from actions that manipulate, control, or hinder the conditions (e.g., habitat), components (e.g., species), or processes (e.g., fire) of an ecological system. This approach furthers the mandate of untrammled nature and requires only that the area be free from intentional manipulation, not that the area be free from all human influence. By willfully not manipulating or intervening in ecological systems, the hands-off approach is a way to foster greater respect and humility toward the autonomy of nature (Cole 2010).

Therefore, the management direction will be focused primarily on preservation of the untrammled character of wilderness within these two areas. This type of management would provide control areas for interventions and would provide scientists with a place to monitor the dynamics of an unrestrained ecosystem.

### Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Invasive Plants

The goal of weed management is to protect and preserve the natural wilderness character by sustaining native plant communities, and reducing or eliminating infestations of noxious weeds and non-native invasive species.

The Restoration and Vegetation Management section (Section 1.6.C.15.) of BLM Manual 6340 outlines the protocol and approval process for vegetation treatments in wilderness. Current noxious weeds and invasive plant infestations in wilderness areas include, but are not limited to Bull thistle, Canadian thistle, Musk thistle and cheatgrass. The potential exists for further infestations of these and other species from surrounding areas.

The Becky Peak and Government Peak Wilderness have long perimeters compared to the area within their boundaries. These long wilderness boundaries increase the potential for the spread of noxious weeds and non-native invasive plants from surrounding areas. The wilderness areas must be managed to maintain the degree of wilderness character that existed at the time of designation.

If, through a MRA, the BLM authorized officer determines that weed treatment is necessary, emphasis would be placed on controlling small (<0.1 acre) infestations of noxious and invasive weeds that have the potential to spread and displace native plants. Larger infestations would be considered separately, since they could involve several treatment applications or associated tactics. Post-treatment seeding and/or transplant projects would follow guidelines contained in the ES&R section of this plan. BLM Ely District weed management protocols (BLM 2010) would guide the use of herbicides. Determination of the following treatments, following an MRA, would be prioritized in the following order, though it is likely that treatment combinations would be necessary in some situations:

1. Manual removal with hand tools if weeds can be controlled or eradicated without causing re-sprouting, without undue soil disturbance leading to expansion of infestations, and where infestations are of a size manageable by hand crews.
2. Herbicides applied by backpack or pack stock (horse, mules, or llamas).
3. Biological control approved by APHIS or US Fish and Wildlife Service.
4. Herbicides applied aerially or with motorized equipment, where control is feasible, where control impacts may be quickly and readily rehabilitated, and where the infestation is of such size that herbicide(s) cannot be effectively applied without motorized equipment.
5. Alternative treatments, including targeted grazing by livestock.

For treatments involving herbicides, Standard Operating Procedures, the manufacturer's label, and mitigation and conservation measures listed in the Record of Decision for the Vegetation Treatments Using Herbicides Programmatic EIS (USDI 2007) (or more current decision), as well as the Ely District Integrated Weed Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2009-0010-EA) (or more current decision) would be followed. Treatments would be designed to facilitate movement toward native vegetative composition and structure. Actions to rehabilitate the effects from fire or other natural disasters are considered emergency actions and could be authorized in locations where natural seed sources are inadequate to compete with non-native vegetation and/or where substantial unnatural soil loss is expected (also see ES&R Section above). Managers would adjust the level of response by considering current ecological health and vigor against the potential for invasion by undesirable species.

Chemical treatment may be necessary to prepare habitat for the reestablishment of native species, to protect or recover habitat that supports Federally-listed threatened, endangered, or candidate species, or to correct unnatural conditions resulting from modern human influence. Management actions must comply with label directions and regulatory requirements for chemical application near water bodies.

## **Wildlife Management**

The overall goal of wildlife management in wilderness areas is to protect, preserve, and where appropriate, enhance habitat to retain the wilderness areas' natural character at the time of

designation, and to support healthy wildlife populations. To facilitate these efforts, the current BLM-Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU 6300-NV-930-0402(2012)), as amended, would be adhered to. Under this agreement, NDOW annually submits a letter of proposed projects. In addition, the forthcoming Nevada and Northern California Greater Sage – Grouse Land Use Plan Amendment and EIS guidance would be adopted.

According to the BLM-NDOW MOU (2012), wildlife relocation may be permitted if necessary: 1) to perpetuate or recover a threatened or endangered species; or 2) to restore the population of indigenous species eliminated or reduce by human influence. Additionally, NDOW may submit requests for use of helicopter in wilderness areas in order to retrieve data from radio telemetry collars which have dropped off study animals or from animals that have died.

While NDOW has the primary and critical role in fish and wildlife population management (43 CFR 24), fish and wildlife management activities in wilderness would be administered in conformance with the Wilderness Act's purpose of securing an "enduring resource of wilderness" for the American people through the preservation of wilderness character. It is expected that nature, not human intervention, would play the dominant role. Therefore, to be authorized in wilderness areas, proposed wildlife actions would need to be determined necessary to protect or preserve wilderness character.

Any ground disturbing activities in wilderness would be restricted by the following wildlife timing stipulations:

- Sage grouse – within four miles of active leks from March 1 – July 15 during breeding, nesting, and early brood-rearing seasons.
- Migratory birds – during the migratory bird nesting season from April 15 - July 15. If disturbance occurs during this time, a bird nest survey must be completed one week prior to disturbance.
- Raptors – within a half-mile of active raptor nests and one mile from eagle nests from April 15 – July 30; unless the nest has been determined to be inactive for at least 5 years.
- Big Game – within big game calving/fawning/kidding grounds from April 15 – June 30.

Although wilderness overflights are not precluded by the WPCCRDA, every effort would be made to coordinate with wildlife managers and researchers so that overflights minimize disturbance to both wildlife and visitors. For requests, involving only the management of a wildlife population(s) and/or that involve no ground disturbance, the MRA and a letter of authorization with associated terms and conditions would suffice as approval.

#### Wildlife-Related Facilities

Similar to livestock permittees, NDOW, or other State or Federal agency may request administrative access into a wilderness with motorized vehicles and/or equipment for wildlife management. There are no existing water developments inside either wilderness. There are two developments adjacent to Government Peak Wilderness (see Map 3).

Water developments for wildlife in wilderness would only be considered to replace existing natural sources lost because of human influence. Restoration of existing natural water sources is preferred and will be analyzed for wildlife benefit prior to considering artificial water developments. Any new facilities would be considered outside of wilderness first.

The BLM Wilderness Specialist would work with the requesting agency to complete a MRA that documents the evaluation of the agency's request. An environmental analysis, MRA and associated decision document would be needed for proposals involving ground disturbance, or motorized/mechanized use.

The effects of non-ground disturbing operations for wildlife management in wilderness areas are analyzed in the accompanying environmental analysis for this WMP. A NDOW report would be included in an annual report to be completed by the BLM to document any landings and other motorized and mechanized access for maintenance and repairs.

### **Wild Horse Management**

The goal within a Herd Management Area (HMA) is to “maintain and manage healthy, self-sustaining wild horse herds ... within appropriate management levels ... to ensure a thriving natural ecological balance” (RMP, 2008b). Management of wild horses is accomplished by activity plans created by the BLM Wild Horse Burro Specialist. Becky Peak Wilderness is within the Antelope HMA. Government Peak is not in a HMA. There are no burros in the wilderness areas.

For wilderness, if the minimum requirement analysis results in motorized means for horse gathers, aircraft, including helicopters, may be used to survey, capture, and monitor wild horses. However, aircraft may not land inside wilderness boundaries except in cases of emergency nor will capture pens be allowed. In cases where impacts to springs and riparian systems result from wild horses, mitigation measures may be employed to prevent further degradation or to restore wilderness character.

### **1.5. Management Action Tables**

One of BLM's goals for wilderness management is to provide opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation by limiting the number and type of land use restrictions that visitors must follow, while still maintaining compliance with wilderness policy. To that end, and pursuant to the discussions of the affected environment, Table 2 contains a consolidated list of legislatively-required actions and proposed visitor use restrictions, and indicates whether a use: 1) is authorized without further requirements, 2) is authorized, but restricted in some manner, 3) requires prior BLM authorization, or 4) is prohibited. Table 3 contains BLM wilderness management decisions not specifically related to use regulation.

All wilderness actions are subject to a MRA, to determine the action necessary. Some actions may require site specific NEPA.

**Table 2. Proposed Wilderness Use Restrictions.**

Use is authorized	Motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment may be used in wilderness areas during emergencies involving search and rescue, the health or safety of individuals, or the rescuing of sick or stranded animals. Individuals must notify the BLM authorized officer immediately following completion of emergency activities. The removal of downed airplanes or other vehicle accidents, associated equipment, parts, or debris is not considered an emergency, and would require prior BLM authorization subject to a MRA.
Use is authorized	Only temporary, portable or “pop-up” blinds would be permitted for hunting, photography, wildlife observation or similar purposes for a 14-day use period. They must be attended or occupied at least some portion within the 14 days or will be subject to removal.
Use is authorized	Casual non-commercial surface collection (no digging) of small quantities (<25 lbs.) of renewable and non-renewable resources would be permitted (i.e., dead and down wood, fruit, vegetation, rock and mineral specimens, petrified wood and common invertebrate and plant fossils).
Use is authorized	Personal, non-commercial trapping on foot or horseback would be permitted subject to State and Federal regulations.
Use is restricted	Backcountry camping would be limited to 14 days in any one location. After 14 days, camps must be moved at least 25 miles from the previous campsite.
Use is restricted	Campers must pack-in/pack-out all trash.
Use is restricted	Campers may not cut, break, or otherwise destroy standing live and dead trees or shrubs for firewood (or clear an area for a campsite, visitor convenience, or comfort, such as cutting out poison ivy). Firewood collection permits are not issued for wilderness.
Use is restricted	Campers must bury human waste in catholes dug at least 6” to 8” deep and 200 feet from water, trails, and campsites.
Use requires authorization	Administrative access routes for permittee use may not be maintained or repaired without BLM authorization.
Use requires authorization	Motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment may be authorized in wilderness areas following a MRA for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wildlife management projects</li> <li>b. Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation</li> <li>c. Weed control projects</li> </ul>
Use requires authorization	The scientific study of paleontological resources, such as vertebrate fossils, or cultural resources, such as archaeological and historic sites and/or artifacts, will be permitted through a fieldwork authorization in instances where mitigation measures are determined to be necessary.
Use requires authorization	Reclamation of surface disturbances associated with mining claims would be authorized subject to Federal regulations at 43 CFR 3809.

Use requires authorization	BLM would continue to issue SRPs to the following entities, as long as they provide services deemed necessary for realizing the recreational values of the wilderness, and as long as they operate within the terms and conditions of their SRP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Licensed commercial outfitters and guides for activities involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hunting</li> <li>2. Pack trips</li> <li>3. Hiking</li> <li>4. Camping</li> <li>5. Nature viewing</li> </ol> </li> <li>b. Entities whose mission includes the promotion of wilderness ethics, <i>Leave No Trace</i>, or environmental education, and</li> <li>c. Entities whose primary purpose is to support individuals with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Use requires authorization	Research and monitoring activities and devices may be authorized subject to a MRA if the information cannot be collected outside of wilderness.
Use requires authorization	New water or other developments could be permitted for livestock management or wildlife purposes if they are determined to be the minimum necessary to protect and preserve; or enhance wilderness character.
Use requires authorization	Wildlife management proposals may be authorized subject to a MRA.
Use is prohibited	Motor vehicles are prohibited for livestock monitoring, herding, and gathering.
Use is prohibited	Motorized and mechanized travel and equipment are prohibited in wilderness areas, including, but not limited to: off-highway, over-snow, and other vehicles, chainsaws, power drills, suction dredges, generators, motorboats, bicycles, game carts, wagons, and wheelbarrows. Development of new access routes is also prohibited.
Use is prohibited	Livestock grazing is prohibited in burned areas until vegetative recovery objectives are met.
Use is prohibited	Motorized vehicles, helicopter landings and trap sites would not be constructed in wilderness during wild horse gathers.
Use is prohibited	Unattended personal property not associated with an active campsite may not be left.
Use is prohibited	Traditional geocaching and letterboxing activities are prohibited.
Use is prohibited	Collection of any resource for the purpose of commercial sale is prohibited.
Use is prohibited	Ground-based military maneuvers and associated activities are prohibited except in support of emergency actions, as previously described.

**Table 3. Proposed BLM Wilderness Management Decisions.**

<p>BLM would continue to authorize livestock grazing in wilderness, and grazing would be administered subject to the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Standards. Planning related to grazing operations would be guided by the Congressional Grazing Guidelines (House Report 105-405 Appendix A, 1990) and BLM Manual 6340. BLM would authorize the livestock-related administrative access according to guidelines defined in Livestock Management section of the WMP. Authorizations would be subject to a MRA, and if approved, would be added as terms and conditions to existing grazing permits.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Salt and mineral supplement may be delivered into wilderness areas via motor vehicle in quantities sufficient to ensure only one motorized entry annually. Subsequent distribution of stockpiled salt would be accomplished by foot, horseback, or pack stock.</li> <li>2. Motorized and mechanized inspection and maintenance for troughs and pipelines in Becky Peak Wilderness may occur one time per year prior to livestock entry. Maintenance would be identified or accomplished during inspection. For large repair or reconstruction projects, such as pipeline or trough replacement, a one-time motorized equipment entry under this plan would be authorized in conjunction with a MRA to determine the equipment necessary.</li> <li>3. Fence repair or replacement in Government Peak Wilderness would be accomplished by foot or pack stock as there is very little fence inside the wilderness boundary.</li> </ol>
<p>BLM would temporarily close or limit access to specific campsites or areas (at its discretion) when recreational or other activities are negatively affecting wilderness character.</p>
<p>BLM would consider commercial enterprises proper for realizing wilderness recreational purposes if the enterprises: 1) are wilderness-dependent, 2) contribute to <i>Leave No Trace</i> or environmental education, and 3) do not degrade wilderness character. Enterprises currently meeting these criteria include commercial outfitting and guide services, and therapy pack trips.</p>
<p>BLM would not place signs and structures in wilderness unless a MRA determines that they are the minimum necessary for administration of the area as wilderness.</p>
<p>BLM would not maintain, repair, or enhance any routes along old road beds or game trails.</p>
<p>BLM managers may consider the full range of fire management strategies and tactics (ranging from monitoring to full suppression) to protect multiple values.</p>
<p>Repairs to burned facilities or resources may be accomplished with the same or similar type of equipment that was authorized for suppression.</p>
<p>The following activities may be authorized during ES&amp;R subject to a MRA, site-specific NEPA analysis and District Manager approval:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Install temporary emergency structures (i.e., fences, hydrologic monitoring devices).</li> <li>b. Install erosion control (i.e., straw bales, wattles, mulch).</li> <li>c. Repair or replace burned or damaged facilities (i.e., fences, boundary signs, trails).</li> <li>d. Stabilize and mitigate post-fire related degradation to cultural and historic sites and resources.</li> </ol>

BLM would remove existing structures and installations if they: 1) are not associated with a valid existing right, 2) are not of historical or cultural value, or 3) are not the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness.

BLM would treat surface disturbances subject to a MRA, using methods that have the least impact to wilderness character.

## **1.6. Monitoring Program**

### **Wilderness Monitoring**

The current wilderness monitoring strategy (BLM Manual 6340, Appendix C) evaluates impacts to the four wilderness qualities identified in the Wilderness Act - “untrammeled,” “natural,” “undeveloped,” and “solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” These wilderness characters form the foundation of the monitoring protocol, and each character is divided into monitoring questions, indicators, and measures to allow measurement of trends.

Wilderness monitoring activities would assess the effects to wilderness character from visitor use, activities conducted under a valid existing right, activities conducted under BLM permit, natural events (i.e., wildfire, floods, insects), and management decisions. A single activity may affect several wilderness qualities. Monitoring the effects of activities to multiple qualities of wilderness character would improve understanding of the overall effects on wilderness character.

The monitoring program would provide a greater understanding of the condition of each wilderness area. Effects of intentional, unintentional, and unauthorized activities would be captured. Information generated during wilderness monitoring would help managers determine:

- the current state of wilderness character;
- if and how wilderness character is changing over time;
- if and how stewardship actions are affecting wilderness character; and
- what stewardship priorities and decisions would best preserve and sustain wilderness character.

If monitoring reveals that visitor use is damaging cultural resources, BLM staff, in consultation with Native American tribes and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, would develop a management strategy to minimize further damage, including, but not limited to education, signage, and natural barriers.

All field reports, photographs, and monitoring data, with the exception of archaeological reports, photographs, and data would be maintained in the official file for each wilderness at the BLM Ely District Offices. All archaeological information is considered proprietary and confidential and will be kept in a separate file for each wilderness area at the BLM Ely District cultural records repository. Monitoring will also provide wilderness managers with more complete information, which will improve the evaluation of future proposed activities.

### **Law Enforcement**

BLM law enforcement rangers would enforce Federal laws and regulations in wilderness areas. State and local law enforcement, BLM staff, contractors, and volunteers may indirectly assist BLM law enforcement by providing information regarding wilderness-related violations. Law

enforcement rangers and other BLM staff would patrol the wilderness perimeter with motorized vehicles, and would conduct patrols within wilderness on foot or horseback. Motorized vehicles and equipment, including helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, may be used for temporary emergencies involving search and rescue operations, violations of law, and/or the pursuit of fugitives, and would be immediately followed up with notification to the appropriate BLM District manager and subsequent incident report.

## **1.7. Plan Evaluation**

The WMP will be revised when the management actions or a change in the existing situation no longer meets wilderness management objectives. If the decision were made to revise this plan, it would be accomplished with public input. Where it would not conflict with the enabling legislation or other pertinent laws and regulations, the WMP may be revised if necessary to conform to future land use planning documents or revisions.

## **1.8. Activities Associated with Plan Implementation**

The following list reflects the implementation priority for management actions identified in this WMP. Actual implementation would be subject to staff and funding availability outside the control of this plan.

### **Ongoing Activities**

- Maintenance of boundary and road closure signs
- Visitor information and education
- Wilderness monitoring:
  - Visitor use monitoring
  - Resource condition monitoring
  - Wilderness character monitoring

### **Future Activities**

- Reclamation:
  - Vehicle routes not used for authorized administrative access
  - Undesirable or highly impacted campsites
  - Unauthorized vehicular impacts
- Signs:
  - Vehicle access points
  - Off-site information signs
- Modify or remove unused or unnecessary livestock developments or other structures
- Control infestations of noxious weeds and non-native invasive plant species
- Monitor noxious weeds and non-native invasive plant infestations and proactively treat small infestations to prevent large-scale landscape changes
- Issue an unlimited number of Special Recreation Permits to licensed outfitters and guides for hunting, fishing, and other commercial and group activities on an as-needed basis

### **Subsequent Environmental Analysis**

If in the future, conditions change sufficiently to warrant subsequent actions not already addressed in this WMP, additional environmental analysis may be required.

# **Environmental Assessment**

## **Becky Peak and Government Peak Wilderness Management Plan**

**DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2013-0006-EA**



## **2.0. Introduction and Background**

Section 1503 (a) of the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006 (WPCCRDA) (Public Law 109-432) designated approximately 24, 432 acres of wilderness in White Pine County, Nevada, as Becky Peak and Government Peak Wilderness Areas. The WPCCRDA requires the wilderness areas to be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 7202).

Wilderness management actions described in the Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) form the Proposed Action analyzed herein. The Proposed Action will be analyzed against an alternative that would normally be considered a continuation of current management; however, Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act requires administering agencies to preserve wilderness character. Land uses and activities that are inconsistent with this legislative guidance are prohibited within the designated areas.

BLM is required to manage the wilderness areas according to standards that were not in effect when the lands were previously managed under FLPMA for multiple use. As such, a No Action Alternative (continuation of current management) does not exist, since new requirements were imposed through wilderness designation. As such, Alternative A is being termed the Minimal Management Alternative because it contains the minimum land use restrictions deemed necessary to protect and preserve wilderness character and to comply with applicable laws and regulations. The Proposed Action contains most of the management actions.

The analysis in this EA will focus mainly on the Proposed Action's management actions to determine: 1) whether the actions individually and cumulatively fulfill legislative requirements to protect and preserve wilderness character, and 2) whether the actions individually or cumulatively involve significant environmental effects.

### **Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Action**

The purpose of the WMP is to implement guidelines and actions designed to preserve wilderness character by identifying conditions and opportunities that will be managed for over at least the next ten years, or as changes in wilderness character and/or resource conditions require.

The need for the Proposed Action stems from Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act, which requires administering agencies to preserve wilderness character. Further, Section 1.4.C. of BLM Manual 6340 (Management of Designated Wilderness Areas) requires BLM District and Field Managers, among other things, to develop and implement land use and activity-level plans addressing wilderness areas that conform to the Wilderness Act, the establishing legislation, and BLM wilderness policies and guidance.

Based on the analysis herein, the BLM will decide whether to manage the wilderness areas strictly according to legislative and regulatory requirements, or whether to implement a management plan that provides management and additional management actions to ensure adequate protection and preservation of resources and values, as well as mitigation for potential impacts to those resources and values.

## **Compliance with Existing Laws and Regulations**

The WMP complies with the Wilderness Act and the enabling WPCCRDA, as well as numerous other applicable laws, regulations, and executive orders, including 43 CFR Parts 6300 and 8560.

The WPCCRDA states, “the boundary of any portion of a wilderness area designated by subsection (a) that is bordered by a road shall be at least 100 feet from the edge of the road to allow public access.” Further, subsection 324(d) states “Nothing in this subtitle--shall affect any water rights in the State (including any water rights held by the United States) in existence on the date of enactment of this Act;”

Neither of the designated wilderness areas contain private and/or State-owned inholding properties within their boundaries. There is a private parcel on the southwest perimeter of Becky Peak Wilderness. No authorized Right of Ways (ROW) are inside the designated wilderness and no active mining claim exists in Becky Peak Wilderness or Government Peak Wilderness.

## **Conformance to Existing BLM Land Use Plan**

This WMP has been analyzed within the scope of the Ely District Approved Resource Management Plan (2008) and has been found to be in conformance with the goals, objectives, and decisions of the Decision Summary and Record of Decision.

BLM planning regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations 1610.3.2[a]) require that BLM resource management plans be consistent with officially approved plans of other federal, state, local, and tribal governments to the extent those plans are consistent with federal laws and regulations applicable to public lands. Although this regulation does not apply to other official plans created after the land use plan is implemented, the BLM strives for management decisions to be consistent with other official plans.

Specific management actions from the RMP (listed below) provide direction to meet the goals and objectives of wilderness management.

- Visual Resources: VR-1: Manage designated wilderness...for scenic qualities under Visual Resource Management Class I objectives.
- Communication Sites: LR-37: Establish designated wilderness as exclusion areas.
- Land Use Authorizations: LR-41: Establish designated wilderness as exclusion areas.
- Renewable Energy: RE-5: Establish designated wilderness as exclusion areas.
- Travel Management: TM-1: Close designated wilderness to motorized and mechanized travel according to policy and enabling legislation.
- Recreation: REC-5: Manage for recreation facilities and services such as trails, trailheads, staging areas, and associated structures in extensive recreation management areas following activity-level plans and NEPA analysis for the management of designated wilderness...for management of recreational impacts to natural and cultural resources.
- Fuelwood Collection:
  - FP-5: Allow collection of fuel wood from both live and dead trees for personal use (pinyon, juniper, and mountain mahogany) and commercial use (pinyon and juniper) throughout the planning area, except in closed areas (e.g., wilderness study areas, designated wilderness).

- FP-9: Make pinyon, juniper, and white fir available for personal use throughout the planning area, except in closed areas (e.g., wilderness study areas, designated wilderness).
- Minerals:
  - MIN-7: Closed to leasing – Close approximately 1.5 million acres to leasing including designated wilderness and wilderness study areas.
  - MIN - 12: Closed to leasing – Close approximately 1.6 million acres to solid mineral leasing. This includes designated wilderness and wilderness study areas.
- Special Designations: SD-5: Manage 22 designated wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964; the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989; the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004; the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2006. Twenty-two designated wilderness areas totaling approximately 1.1 million acres have been designated by Congress in this decision area. This includes six citizen-proposed areas of wilderness quality that were not managed by the Ely District Office as wilderness study areas.
- Monitoring – Special Designations Management - Areas managed as a special designation (such as ACECs, backcountry byways, and designated wilderness) will be monitored annually to determine if the resource values for which the area was designated are stable. Monitoring will focus on threats to resource values and the effectiveness of management provisions in protecting and preserving those resource values. Monitoring will assist the BLM in tracking resource conditions and making effective decisions to improve conditions for the special resource over time. Where necessary, the monitoring strategy for special designation areas will be refined during activity level planning, e.g.,...designated wilderness management plans.

### **Consistency with State and Local Plan**

The WMP is consistent with the management direction contained in the 2007 White Pine County Public Lands Policy Plan.

### **Consistency with BLM Policy Manuals and Handbooks**

The WMP is consistent with the requirements and management direction contained in the following BLM and Departmental policy manuals and handbooks:

- BLM Manual 1626 - Travel and Transportation Manual
- BLM Manual 6340 - Management of Designated Wilderness Areas
- BLM Manual 8100 – The Foundations for Managing Cultural Resources
- BLM Manual 8140 – Protecting Cultural Resources
- BLM Manual 8150 – Permitting Uses of Cultural Resources
- BLM Manual 8400 – Visual Resources Management
- BLM Manual 8561 - Wilderness Management Plans
- BLM Handbook H1742-1 - Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation
- BLM Handbook 1790-1 – National Environmental Policy Act

## **Decisions to be made**

The WMP implements legislative and regulatory direction from the Wilderness Act and the WPCCRDA. Management actions common to both alternatives consist of restrictions on activities that could potentially affect wilderness character. Use restrictions common to both alternatives that implement legislative and regulatory direction to preserve wilderness character will not be analyzed herein.

The following management categories contain management actions that address issues identified during scoping related to the following uses:

- Fire management
- Livestock management
- Noxious weed and non-native invasive plant management
- Hunting and trapping
- Other visitor use
- Wildlife management
- Wild Horse management

The EA will focus on the potential environmental effects of management actions, as well as their effect on wilderness character. Based on their potential effects, the authorized officer will decide whether to implement some or all of the proposed actions.

## **Scoping and Alternative Development**

Public meetings were held in August and September 2013 in the Ely District Office, to present Wilderness and BLM management objectives for these areas. The meetings provided a forum for public input regarding specific wilderness issues. BLM also posted information on its website about the planning process, which provided the public with another venue for submitting comments or information regarding their use of and interest in these areas. Additionally, BLM staff consulted directly with affected livestock operators and other individuals and organizations interested in wilderness. The proposed action addresses relevant internal and public issues and concerns.

Based on an analysis of the issues raised during public and internal scoping, the BLM Interdisciplinary Team identified five issues:

- Management actions associated with wildfire may affect wilderness characteristics.
- Long boundary perimeters increase the amount of wilderness that may be impacted by human-influenced changes to vegetative structure and composition in areas immediately adjacent to the wilderness areas, especially following large-scale wildfires.
- Continued livestock grazing-related activities, including access to and maintenance of existing structures (i.e., springs, pipelines, fences), may adversely affect naturalness and undeveloped wilderness character.
- Human activities may increase noxious weed and invasive plant infestation and spread.
- Visitor use activities may affect wilderness character.

Management guidelines for resolution of these issues are included in Proposed Action.

## **2.1. Descriptions of Alternatives**

Wilderness areas are designated by Congress for the purpose of protecting and preserving wilderness character. BLM must manage various land uses and activities consistent with the purposes for which the Wilderness Areas were designated. Land uses and activities that are inconsistent with guidance provided by the Wilderness Act, the WPCCRDA, and House Report No. 101-405 are prohibited within the affected areas.

Based on the above guidance, a true No Action Alternative does not exist, since BLM is required to manage designated wilderness areas according to standards that were not in effect prior to their designation. Alternative A is described as the Minimal Management Alternative because it contains the minimum land use restrictions deemed necessary to protect and preserve wilderness character and to comply with applicable laws and regulations. Alternative A contains no discretionary management actions. Most of the land use restrictions are also incorporated in Alternative B - Proposed Action. The difference between the two alternatives is that the Proposed Action includes management actions designed to preserve wilderness character including: 1) addressing the effects of past human activities, 2) managing or responding to natural processes, such as wildfire, and their effects on wilderness character, and 3) providing limited authorizations for otherwise prohibited activities.

### **Management Actions Common to Both Alternatives**

The following management actions are either expressly authorized by the enabling legislation or are standard land use authorizations and/or restrictions deemed necessary for the proper management of the designated wilderness areas. As such, the actions are incorporated in both alternatives. Table B in the WMP contains a consolidated list of legislatively-required actions and proposed visitor use restrictions, and indicates whether a use: 1) is authorized without further requirements, 2) is authorized, but restricted in some manner, 3) requires prior BLM authorization, or 4) is prohibited. Table C in the WMP contains BLM wilderness management decisions not specifically related to use regulation.

Management Actions Common to Both Alternatives:

1. Pursuant to WPCCRDA Section 324(b), livestock grazing would continue to be authorized in allotments located wholly or partially in wilderness areas that existed prior to designation, consistent with Section 4(d)(4) of the Wilderness Act and the guidelines in Appendix A of House Report 101-405. Grazing would continue to be administered subject to the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Standards.
2. Motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment may be used in wilderness areas during emergencies involving search and rescue, the health or safety of individuals, or the rescuing of sick or stranded animals. Individuals must notify the BLM authorized officer immediately following completion of emergency activities. The removal of downed airplanes (or other vehicle accidents) and associated equipment, parts, or debris is not considered an emergency, and would require prior BLM authorization subject to a MRA.

3. Pursuant to Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act, the use of motor vehicles for livestock monitoring, herding, and gathering is prohibited.
4. Livestock grazing would be prohibited in burned areas until vegetative recovery objectives are met.
5. Existing structures and developments would be removed if they: 1) are not associated with a valid existing right, 2) are not of historical or cultural value, or 3) are not the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness. Eligible structures and installations would be retained in accordance with BLM Manual 6340, Section 5.d.
6. Traditional geocaching and letterboxing would be prohibited.
7. Casual non-commercial surface collection (no digging) of small quantities (<25 lb.) of renewable and non-renewable resources would be permitted (i.e., wood, fruit, vegetation, rock and mineral specimens, petrified wood, shed antlers, and common invertebrate and plant fossils) unless or until it results in unacceptable effects to wilderness character.
8. Vertebrate fossils and cultural, archaeological, and historic sites and artifacts, may not be damaged or removed without prior BLM authorization.
9. Temporary, portable or “pop-up” blinds would be permitted for 14 days only while occupied.
10. BLM would continue to issue SRPs to the following entities, as long as they provide services deemed necessary for realizing the recreational values of the wilderness areas, and as long as they operate within the terms and conditions of their SRP:
  - a. Licensed commercial outfitters and guides for activities involving:
    1. Hunting,
    2. Fishing,
    3. Pack trips,
    4. Hiking,
    5. Camping, and
    6. Nature viewing.
  - b. Entities whose mission includes the promotion of wilderness ethics, *Tread Lightly!*, *Leave No Trace*, or environmental education, and
  - c. Entities whose primary purpose is to support individuals with disabilities.
11. Commercial filming is considered a “commercial service”, and is not permitted in wilderness unless it is necessary for realizing the recreational or other wilderness purposes of the area and does not otherwise utilize a prohibited use.
12. Campers must pack-in/pack-out all trash.

### **Alternative A – Minimal Management**

The Minimal Management Alternative represents the baseline condition of managing designated wilderness areas with the fewest restrictions possible consistent with legislatively authorized activities, as well as those deemed necessary to protect and preserve wilderness character. Requirements or restrictions imposed in this alternative are

those that are either: 1) specifically mandated by legislation, or 2) are designed to preclude or minimize, but not treat, the impacts of human use on wilderness.

Alternative A includes the following management actions in addition to the common management actions identified in the previous section:

1. Off-road and over-snow travel and development of new routes would be prohibited, and existing administrative routes would not be maintained or repaired.
2. Motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment would not be authorized for:
  - a. Project or facility inspection, maintenance, or repair;
  - b. Delivery of livestock salt and/or supplement;
  - c. Wildlife management proposals;
  - d. Wildfire suppression;
  - e. Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation; and
  - f. Weed control projects.
3. Pedestrian or equestrian trails would not be designated, maintained, or repaired.
4. No new water or other developments would be permitted for livestock or wildlife purposes.

### **Alternative B – Proposed Action**

The WMP is the Proposed Action and incorporates the common management actions identified in sections of the WMP. In addition, the Proposed Action incorporates management actions to address otherwise prohibited uses in a manner that best preserves wilderness character. Future proposals not discussed herein would be evaluated through a MRA and possible site-specific NEPA, to determine if they utilize the minimum tools needed to protect or enhance wilderness character.

Alternative B includes the following management actions in addition to the common management actions identified in the previous section:

1. BLM would continue to authorize livestock grazing in wilderness, and grazing would be administered subject to the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Standards.
2. BLM would authorize the livestock-related administrative access according to guidelines defined in Livestock Management section of the WMP. Authorizations would be subject to a MRA, and if approved, would be added as terms and conditions to existing grazing permits.
3. BLM would temporarily close or limit access to specific campsites or areas (at its discretion) when recreational or other activities are negatively affecting wilderness character.
4. BLM would consider commercial enterprises proper for realizing wilderness recreational purposes if the enterprises: 1) are wilderness-dependent, 2) contribute to *Leave No Trace* or environmental education, and 3) do not degrade wilderness character. Enterprises currently meeting these criteria include commercial outfitting and guide services, and therapy pack trips.
5. BLM would not place signs and structures in wilderness unless a MRA determines that they are the minimum necessary for administration of the area as wilderness.

6. BLM would not maintain, repair or enhance any routes along old roadbeds or game trails.
7. BLM managers may consider the full range of fire management strategies and tactics (ranging from monitoring to full suppression) to protect multiple values.
8. Repairs to burned facilities or resources may be accomplished with the same or similar type of equipment that was authorized for suppression.
9. Temporary structures, erosion control, repair of facilities and cultural site stabilization may be authorized during ES&R subject to a MRA, site-specific NEPA analysis and District Manager approval.
10. BLM would remove existing structures and installations if they: 1) are not associated with a valid existing right, 2) are not of historical or cultural value, or 3) are not the minimum necessary for the administration of the area as wilderness.
11. BLM would treat surface disturbances subject to a MRA, using methods that have the least impact to wilderness character.

## **2.2. Affected Environment and Environmental Effects**

The Wilderness Act requires land managers to preserve wilderness character. As such, both alternatives contain basic and requisite land use restrictions designed to carry out this legislative direction by precluding or minimizing, but not treating, the effects of human use on wilderness. The Proposed Action includes measures designed to manage approved uses on these areas.

This environmental analysis focuses on the environmental effects of the management actions described in Alternative B, while also describing their effect on wilderness character. Since wilderness character reflects the natural and undeveloped nature of designated areas, they are representative of the resources that would normally be considered in the effects analysis section of an environmental document.

The cumulative effects analysis considers the past, current, and potential future conditions of resources affected by a given action as the result of past, ongoing, and future foreseeable actions. The enabling legislation limits the management of wilderness character to the areas incorporated within the designated boundaries.

The effects analysis for wilderness analyses proposed actions on wilderness character. Specifically, the analysis will determine if actions proposed in the WMP will affect the natural, untrammeled, and undeveloped character of wilderness, including associated opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

### **Resources/Concerns Considered for Analysis**

The following table identifies issues that have been evaluated for potential direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts due to implementation of the Proposed Action. Some of these items are being considered to ensure compliance with laws, Executive Orders, or regulations that impose requirements on all Federal actions. Other items are relevant to the management of public lands in general, and to the BLM Ely District in particular.

**Table 4. Resources/Concerns Considered for Analysis.**

<b>Resource or Concern</b>	<b>Analyzed (Y/N)</b>	<b>Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis</b>
Air Quality	N	Proposed action would not increase air pollutant concentrations.
Cultural Resources	N	Proposed projects that have the potential to affect cultural resources would be subject to a MRA, as well as a National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 review, including SHPO and Tribal consultation. Affected areas would be inventoried to identify cultural resources, and if approved, activities must avoid adversely affecting cultural resources. Cultural resources within the designated wilderness areas and extending out to a one mile buffer of the wilderness boundaries were analyzed in Cultural Resource Inventory Needs Assessment number 8111 NANV040FY13-099, completed in September 2013.
Environmental Justice	N	No minority or low-income groups would be affected by disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects.
Federally Threatened and Endangered Species	N	No federally listed plants or animals in wilderness.
Fire Management	Y	Fire suppression and management actions may affect wilderness character through suppression actions. Under the proposed action, management tools that would otherwise be prohibited within the wilderness areas may be allowed for fire management.
Fish and Wildlife	Y	The proposed action through NDOW proposals (collar retrieval, overflights, facilities) may affect fish and wildlife populations or habitat.
Floodplains	N	Resource is present but not affected.
Forest and Rangeland (HFRA only)	N	The proposed action and minimal action would not have a direct impact to Forests and Rangelands. Project does not meet HFRA criteria.
Grazing Uses	Y	The WPCCRDA provides for continued livestock grazing in wilderness areas. Appendix A of House Report 101-405 describes allowable uses and maintenance of range developments in wilderness.
Invasive Non-native Plant Species (includes noxious weeds)	Y	The proposed action may allow tools when necessary to potentially reduce the risk of increased invasive annual grasses, reduce the potential need for ES&R treatments and protect wilderness character where it is determined that it is being threatened.
Land Uses	N	Land uses are affected by Wilderness designation, not the WMP.

<b>Resource or Concern</b>	<b>Analyzed (Y/N)</b>	<b>Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis</b>
Migratory Birds	N	Following BLM's management guidance for the Migratory Bird Treaty Act would prevent or diminish impacts.
Mineral Resources	N	No open mine claims existed at the time of wilderness designation.
Native American Religious Concerns	N	No specific concerns are known.
Paleontological Resources	N	No sites of high scientific value are known.
Recreation Uses	N	No visitor use restrictions proposed.
Special Designations Other Than Wilderness	N	None present.
Special Status Animal Species	Y	The proposed action does not affect special status animal species in the Wilderness Areas. However, special status animal species are present and future activities may modify habitat.
Special Status Plant Species	N	There are no documented special status plant species in the Wilderness Areas.
Vegetation/Soils/Watershed	Y	Constructing staging areas and route decommissioning would affect small areas of vegetation. Soils would not be destroyed or removed and watershed function would not be affected. Fire management, weed management, reclamation, and recreational activities may affect soils and vegetation.
Vegetative Resources (Forest or Seed Products)	N	The Wilderness Act does not allow forest or seed products to be sold. It is not possible to track or measure individual gathering impacts.
VRM	N	The proposed action is consistent with VRM Class I management objectives for wilderness. The proposed action would not result in a level of change to the landscape that would be noticeable from access roads.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	N	No hazardous or solid wastes are known or anticipated.
Water Quality, Drinking/Ground	N	No action to affect.
Water Resources (Water Rights)	N	BLM is subject to State of Nevada water right laws.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	N	Intermittent springs are not affected.
Wild Horses	N	Resource is not affected.
Wilderness	Y	Proposed actions seek to maintain, restore, or enhance wilderness character.

## Fire Management

### Proposed Action

Fire management objectives in these wilderness areas would be structured in accordance with the Ely District Fire Management Plan (FMP) as updated. Following fire, Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R) activities may be undertaken in accordance with current Department of Interior policy (620 DM 3 Wildland Fire Management Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation) and Bureau of Land Management policy (H-1742-1 Burned Areas Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook). BLM Manual 6340 provides detailed categories related to fire management are as follows:

- Fire Use Guidelines
- Fire Suppression Guidelines
- Suppression Activity Damage
- Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Activities

### Minimal Management Alternative

Fire management activities would occur without the guidance of a comprehensive wilderness management and only to enhance wilderness character.

### Affected Environment

The Becky Peak Wilderness area occurs within the Northern Mountains and Northern Benches Fire Management Units (FMUs) as designated within the Ely District Fire Management Plan (FMP). The Government Peak Wilderness area occurs within the Kern/Snake/Cherry Creek/Park Mtn and the Northern Benches FMUs. The categorization of these FMUs as well as the corresponding acres by wilderness area is presented in the table below. All of these FMUs allow for the use of wildland fire for resource benefit as an option for fire management. In the past 30 years, there have been two ignitions reported within the Becky Peak Wilderness and no ignitions within the Government Peak Wilderness. The only fire of notable size is the Dolan's Trap fire (2008) that was managed as a wildland fire for resource benefit and burned 80.8 acres.

**Table 5. Fire Management Units by Wilderness.**

Becky Peak Wilderness	Northern Mountains FMU	Vegetation (Pinyon and Juniper)	17,617 acres
	Northern Benches FMU	High Value Habitat – High Constraints	510 acres
Government Peak Wilderness	Kern/Snake/Cherry Creek/Park Mtn FMU	High Value Habitat – Low Constraints	6,091 acres
	Northern Benches FMU	High Value Habitat – High Constraints	222 acres

Fuels within the Becky Peak Wilderness area are typical of Great Basin fuel models. The fuel types vary with elevation moving from sagebrush communities on the lower benches transitioning to pinyon-juniper (PJ) woodlands, mountain sagebrush and mixed conifer as you increase in elevation. Fuels within the Government Peak Wilderness are predominantly sagebrush communities and pinyon and juniper woodlands.

Fuel trends within the wilderness areas are typical of most of the northern Ely District where due to past influences on the historic fire regime vegetation has shifted to later seral communities

dominated shrubs and/or conifers. Fuels in this state have the potential to support large higher severity fires than is thought to have occurred within these vegetative communities prior to human influence. Fire behavior that occurs at these levels combined with the presence of invasive annual grasses can lead to an increased potential for invasions and vegetative conversions as evidenced by the Sampson Creek Fire (adjacent to the Becky Peak Wilderness). Fires that occur at moderate to low intensity and severity has less of a chance of promoting invasive species while promoting early seral vegetation with good representation of native species.

The overall emphasis of managing fire in wilderness is to allow the frequency and intensity of an ecosystems natural fire regime to play its inherent role in that system.

#### Impacts of Proposed Action

The environmental impacts associated with Alternative A, would include a reduced capacity to manage wildland fires regardless of the potential impacts. These restrictions on fire management may result in fires being able to grow larger and burn at higher severity levels than would occur if the management tools were available. This would only impact fires where the Ely District would engage in suppression or fire management activities where the potential impacts of the fire would outweigh the impacts to the untrammled character of the wilderness areas. These impacts also extend outside of the wilderness boundaries. Fires have the potential to grow to a more complex level prior to crossing outside of the wilderness where these tools would then become available for suppression and fire management.

Under the proposed action, management tools that would otherwise be prohibited within the wilderness areas may be allowed for fire management. These tools would provide the authorized officer greater ability to respond with either suppression or other management actions once the potential risks and benefits of the fire have been evaluated. Suppression tactics would continue to follow MIST standards and thereby attempt to minimize the impacts of the actions upon wilderness character. The ability of managers to utilize these tools when necessary would potentially reduce the risk of increased invasive annual grasses, reduce the potential need for ES&R treatments and protect wilderness character where it is determined that it is being threatened.

There is potential for vegetation treatments to occur within the wilderness areas as reference within the proposed action. Any proposed treatments would be conducted in accordance with all applicable laws, policies and regulations. Proposed treatments would be subject to site specific NEPA and would be covered in additional analysis. At this point, there are no proposals within the wilderness and therefore no impacts to fuels or fire management.

The re-introduction of fire to the landscape using prescribed fire and allowing naturally ignited fires to burn would further enhance the naturalness of the wilderness. The implementation of prescribed fires would minimize the risk of negative impacts resulting from wildfire as well as increase the rate at which the desired future condition would be achieved.

#### Impacts of Minimal Management Alternative

The Minimal Management Alternative would not allow prohibited uses in wilderness, which would eliminate the impacts associated with normal suppression tactics. However, limiting suppression to the use of MIST could substantially increase fire size, which could increase the spread of invasive species or noxious weeds.

## **Fish and Wildlife**

### Proposed Action

Management of wildlife is the responsibility of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) and management of wildlife habitat is the responsibility of the BLM. Over the life of this plan, it may be necessary to implement wildlife or habitat management activities to prevent degradation or enhance wilderness characteristics by promoting healthy, viable and more naturally distributed wildlife populations. Under the NDOW MOU, specific proposed projects are submitted annually for review. No new water developments are proposed. Detailed guidelines are found in the Wildlife section of the WMP.

### Minimal Management Alternative

A comprehensive wilderness management plan would not guide wildlife or habitat related management actions. Activities within these wilderness areas would be conducted in conformance with the current and subsequent BLM-NDOW Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and guided by the BLM Manual 6340.

### Affected Environment

Wildlife species characteristic of the Great Basin are supported by the diverse habitat types found in these wilderness areas. Key habitats, as defined in the Nevada Wildlife Action Plan (2006), can be used to infer likely occurrences of wildlife species assemblages when survey data is lacking, as is the case for many species in these wilderness areas. Key Habitats include primarily lower montane woodlands and sagebrush, and Inter-mountain conifer forests and woodlands (Nevada Wildlife Plan Action Team 2006).

The big game species that occupy these wilderness areas are Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer and pronghorn in the foothills and benches. There are numerous small game and furbearers in the project area such as black-tailed jackrabbit, gray fox, bobcat, mountain lion and coyote. Raptors are commonly found nesting and foraging in the wilderness areas, and these areas provide habitat for non-game species of numerous small mammals, reptiles, and birds. There two small game water developments near the border of Government Peak Wilderness.

### Impacts of Proposed Action

Authorized livestock activities and ground-disturbing methods relating to fire management activities, vegetation treatments, noxious and invasive weed treatments, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, and route conditioning could have short-term impacts on behavior and movement of individuals. Wildlife would be temporary displaced, however once these actions have concluded, wildlife may return to area. Wildlife timing stipulations outlined in the WMP will lessen these impacts.

Vegetation treatments, noxious and invasive weed treatments, and emergency stabilization and rehabilitation would improve habitat for all wildlife by increasing native plant composition for forage and cover, as well as increasing habitat diversity. Vegetation treatments that remove encroaching trees from riparian areas, sagebrush communities, and aspen stands will improve habitat for all wildlife. Route decommissioning and restoration will reduce habitat fragmentation in the wilderness for all wildlife species.

### Impacts of Minimal Management Alternative

Under the Minimal Management Alternative, wildlife habitat quality has the potential to deteriorate without limiting or direction to exclude the use motorized and mechanized vehicles

and equipment for wildfire suppression, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, and weed control. While certain areas may benefit from wildfire, large and intense fires could remove important wildlife habitat and may take longer to naturally recover.

## **Grazing Uses**

### Proposed Action

Both alternatives prohibit the use of motorized or mechanized vehicles and equipment for livestock monitoring, herding, and gathering. As such, livestock grazing that meets rangeland health standards is consistent and compatible with the protection and preservation of wilderness character. However, constraints on vehicles and equipment would not prohibit maintenance of existing facilities or response to emergencies, both alternatives would inhibit the trend toward mechanization in livestock monitoring and management. The Proposed Action would allow for the minimum motorized access needed for livestock grazing-related purposes and specific guidance for the maintenance and repair of livestock grazing-related facilities. Regular maintenance of range improvements and facilities would be distinguished from emergency operations.

### Minimal Management Alternative

No difference from the proposed action except all requests would be required to have a site-specific EA for each repair or maintenance action.

### Affected Environment

There are 10 grazing allotments partially located within the wilderness areas. Livestock grazing allotments in the wilderness are managed entirely by the Ely District Office and the Schell Field Office. Livestock numbers may vary based on rotational grazing systems and the terms and conditions of the individual term grazing permits. Range developments currently exist in support of rangeland health and the management of livestock grazing. Existing range developments identified through administrative records and field reconnaissance within the wilderness areas are depicted in Maps 2 & 3. The grazing permittee is responsible for maintenance of all livestock grazing facilities in the wilderness areas by cooperative agreements. Detailed descriptions are found in the Livestock Management section of the WMP.

### Impacts of Proposed Action

The Proposed Action for management of livestock grazing provides specific guidance for the maintenance of facilities and activities in support of a livestock-grazing program. Administrative access routes would be clearly defined and regular maintenance of structures in support of livestock grazing would be distinguished from emergency operations. This may enhance the ability of the BLM to manage livestock grazing activities within wilderness and eliminate time delays in approval for access to maintain range developments and respond to emergency situations. The proposed action may create temporary localized impacts to other resources. The proposed action intent is to minimize the potential to increase the spread of invasive, non-native plant species. Wildlife may benefit from the maintenance of rangeland water developments as they provide additional sources of water.

### Impacts of Minimal Management Alternative

Administrative access and maintenance needs for livestock grazing operations would occur on a case-by-case basis. Site specific NEPA for developments would be required for all inspection,

maintenance and repair. Impacts to and from other resources would not differ from the proposed action.

## **Invasive Non-Native Invasive Plant Species**

### Proposed Action

Current noxious and invasive weeds in or near wilderness include, but may not be limited to, Bull thistle, Canadian thistle, Musk thistle and cheatgrass. Management emphasis in wilderness would be placed on controlling small infestations with the potential to spread and displace native plants. Treatments for large infestations (defined by the BLM Ely District Weeds Program) would be considered separately. Treatment methods include hand pulling, herbicides, biological control, reseeding, and alternatives such as targeted grazing would be considered for small infestations.

### Minimal Action Alternative

Noxious weeds would be treated on a case-by-case basis as per the District Noxious Weed Plan and BLM Manual 6340. When a vegetation treatment is deemed appropriate following an environmental analysis and a MRA, management activities would emphasize protection and enhancement of wilderness character.

### Affected Environment

Noxious and non-native invasive weeds are frequent obstacles to managing wilderness character in the Central Basin Ecoregion. The ongoing recreational activities may contribute to the spread of noxious and invasive species. Rehabilitating small-scale surface disturbances would include methods such as soil decompaction, scarification, and pitting that could stimulate the growth of noxious and invasive weeds. Vegetation restoration projects may cause small, local disturbances that increase noxious and invasive weed populations. Motorized access could be authorized for ES&R, wildlife management, range project maintenance, or fire-management; all of which could exacerbate weed establishment and spread.

The adaptive management provided for in the Proposed Action for managing weeds and invasive plants, combined with proper grazing management, would optimize the protection and restoration of wildlife habitat. Vegetation treatments and proper grazing management would help re-establish and maintain a balanced mixture of vegetation stages (age classes) and types essential for the habitat needs of wildlife species within the wilderness areas.

### Impacts of Proposed Action

In general, the management actions outlined in the proposed action, apply best management practices and standard operating procedures that are focused on preventing the spread of weeds by vectors such as vehicles or equipment. Weed treatment procedures within these areas would be clearly defined and compatible with limiting or eliminating noxious and invasive weeds. The continued presence and anticipated increase of recreational activities, including hunting, camping, hiking, and horse packing, may contribute to the spread of noxious and invasive species as a result of trampling of native species and the possibility of spreading noxious and invasive seeds into wilderness. Allowable motorized access could occur through emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, wildlife management and livestock access projects may cause small, local disturbances that could increase local noxious and invasive weed populations.

### Impacts of Minimal Management Alternative

Weed introduction from individuals hiking and from vehicles along cherry-stemmed routes and wilderness boundary roads may occur. Compared to the proposed action, weed treatment would be sporadic and would not occur in a timely manner. Additionally, when weeds are found, site specific NEPA would be guided by the noxious weed program as outlined in the RMP without the additional benefit of specific wilderness guidance provided by the WMP, further slowing down the ability to treat weeds in a timely manner.

## **Special Status Animal Species**

### Proposed Action

Over the life of this plan, it may be necessary to implement wildlife or habitat management activities to prevent degradation or enhance wilderness characteristics by promoting healthy, viable, and more naturally distributed populations of special status species. Future Nevada and Northern California Greater Sage – Grouse Land Use Plan Amendment guidance would be adopted.

### Minimal Management Alternative

Wildlife activities would rely solely upon the (2012) BLM-NDOW Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) (BLM-MOU-6300-NV-930-0402), as amended and the RMP, without specific wilderness oriented guidance that the WMP provides. Activities within these wilderness areas would be conducted in conformance with the current and subsequent and guided by the BLM Manual 6340.

### Affected Environment

The wilderness areas provide habitat for numerous special status species. Preliminary primary habitat (PPH) and preliminary general habitat (PGH) for the greater sage-grouse, a candidate species for federal listing, has been documented in the high mountain sagebrush communities of the Becky Peak Wilderness, and along the lower benches of the Government Peak and Becky Peak Wilderness Areas. Other BLM special status species that may occupy or utilize these wilderness areas are Swainson's hawk, golden eagle, Northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, sage thrasher, brewer's sparrow, pinyon jay, black rosy-finch, and numerous bat species.

### Impacts of Proposed Action

The impacts of the Proposed Action to special status species are the same as fish and wildlife. None of the actions outlined in the WMP would cause a special status species to become listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Greater sage-grouse and migratory bird timing stipulations outlined in the WMP will lessen impacts to these species.

### Impacts of Minimal Management Alternative

The impacts of the Minimal Management Alternative to special status species are the same as fish and wildlife. Important greater sage-grouse habitat could be lost without adequate wildfire suppression. This alternative would not cause a special status species to become listed under the ESA.

## **Vegetation/Soils/Watersheds**

### Proposed Action

The proposed action outlines management actions designed to protect wilderness character near access points, cherry stem roads and old vehicle routes. Trails and two tracks would be allowed to regenerate. Parking areas would be defined as necessary.

### Minimal Management Alternative

Visitors would be able to park their vehicles and access wilderness from any public point outside of the wilderness boundary. No vehicle staging areas would be designated or defined to direct recreational use to most desired and suitable access points.

### Affected Environment

These wilderness areas lie entirely within the Central Basin and Range Ecoregion (Great Basin). (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2007). Biophysical setting (BPS) models have been developed for most major vegetation types. These models describe the vegetation, geography, biophysical characteristics, succession stages, disturbance regimes, and assumptions for each vegetation type.

### Impacts of Proposed Action

These actions are proposed on relatively disturbed sites, thus, there would be nominal impacts to vegetation communities. Vehicle barriers would be constructed outside of wilderness to prevent vehicles from unauthorized travel inside wilderness, thus further limiting impacts to vegetation. Very small amounts of vegetation may be temporarily impacted along cherry-stemmed or administrative access routes from authorized motorized access that may occur through future emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, wildlife management, grazing permittee administrative access, or fire management actions. Rehabilitating decommissioned routes will reduce or eliminate further unauthorized incursions and new plant growth will enhance the vegetation communities in proximity to these former routes. Small areas of vegetation could be disturbed or destroyed if vegetation is cut back or removed to protect sensitive archaeological and historic resources, such as prehistoric rock art, from wildland fire.

Approved research on native plant communities or wildland fire for resource benefit and monitoring could improve and restore vegetation communities within wilderness. The prohibition of geocaching would prevent disturbance to vegetation that could occur through object burial and the development of social trails relating to geocaching.

### Impacts of Minimal Management Alternative

Without the guidance of a management plan and subsequent monitoring, altered vegetation communities may persist or further degrade impacting wildlife habitat and increasing fire frequency and severity. Unmonitored recreational use of the wilderness areas could result in impacts to vegetation on foot-worn paths and at campsites. Not designating administrative access routes, staging areas, or pullouts, could lead to degradation of vegetative communities through an increase in motorized trespass and poor wilderness ethics from recreational users.

## **Wilderness**

### Fire Management

*Natural:* Fire suppression detracts from the natural role of fire as an ecological process.

Suppression activities affect soils, vegetation, wildlife, and possibly cultural resources. Fireline

construction, even using MIST, would disturb soils and displace vegetation, and would change the natural course of a wildfire. Although, fire suppression and fireline construction degrade the natural character, the activity could reduce the infestation and spread of noxious weeds and non-native invasive plants. The degree of effect would depend on the current ecological condition of the affected area(s), fuels and climatic conditions at the time. The use of MIST would limit suppression-related impacts to soil and vegetation, and thus better balance the degradation to naturalness by minimizing the spread and density of noxious or invasive weeds and maintaining native vegetation diversity. Motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment would have localized, short-term impacts to naturalness. The use of retardant would be less of an impact than motorized/mechanized equipment.

*Untrammelled:* Activities associated with fire suppression cause trammeling. When compared to the range of possible trammeling actions, the use of MIST would be the minimum requirement once a decision to suppress a fire to preserve other wilderness characteristics is made. A reduction in ground-disturbing actions that aggressively manipulate ecological processes would minimize trammeling effects. Prohibited uses, including vehicles and equipment, are more efficient, but aggressively manipulate ecological processes that cause longer-term trammeling effects.

*Undeveloped:* Preserving this quality prevents a noticeable imprint from “man’s work”. The use of any prohibited, motorized, or mechanized activity degrades this characteristic. Using MIST would minimize or eliminate the use of equipment that would modify the environment. The undeveloped character would not be substantially affected by managing fire using MIST.

*Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation:* The presence of fire suppression resources, even those using MIST, would reduce solitude in the short-term. Impacts to wilderness would occur to recreation and solitude after the conclusion of suppression activity. Recreationists would tend to avoid burned areas for areas untouched by fire. The use of motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment adversely affect solitude and primitive experiences in the short-term. These actions would also be a movement away from the use of traditional skills. Prohibited uses (specialized equipment) would be more efficient at minimizing the intensity and size of the fire, which in turn, would minimize the exposure of visitors to an interruption in their solitude and primitive wilderness experience.

## Fish and Wildlife

*Natural:* In general, wildlife management activities, including transplants (i.e., removal, augmentation, or reintroduction) would have a short-term effect on the natural wilderness character. Wildlife actions, however, would be designed to preserve the diversity of wildlife and the resilience of special status species, and as such, would serve to protect and preserve the natural character in the long-term.

*Untrammelled:* Habitat alteration needed to address adverse impacts of human activities on wildlife populations would cause trammeling effects. The extent of the impacts would depend on the type of alteration and how quickly the affected area responded to the treatment. The use of motorized equipment and landing of aircraft would also cause short-term trammeling.

*Undeveloped:* The use of motorized equipment, the landing of aircraft, and the development of any facility would degrade the undeveloped character in the short- or long-term, depending on the type of facility or structure.

*Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation:* The use of motorized equipment, landing of aircraft, or the temporary use of a structure would adversely affect wilderness solitude in the short-term. Noise, visual impact and disruption of unconfined recreation experience would result in the short-term. Installations would affect the primitive wilderness experience of visitors.

### Grazing Uses

*Natural:* Livestock grazing conducted within rangeland health standards should have minimal effects to naturalness, except for the long-term effects around livestock concentration areas, such as salt licks and water sources. Under either alternative, livestock grazing could result in overgrazing of vegetation, incised “cow paths”, manure-strewn slopes and trampling, all of which degrade recreation and scenic values. There is a potential for livestock to contribute to the spread of invasive weed seeds into wilderness. The Proposed Action would seek to treat weed infestations. The use of motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment for salt delivery and range project maintenance on existing administrative routes would cause short-term, localized, and minor impacts to the natural character by leaving tire tracks and ruts, and by suppressing vegetative establishment in the tracks. Vehicles would introduce non-native and weedy species into the wilderness, which could aggravate ongoing long-term and region-wide ecological impacts to native plant communities and habitat. Although, the Minimal Management Alternative would provide an avenue for weed infestation and spread through the use of horses, the level of influence on natural vegetation would be less (possibly much less) than the Proposed Action. Horses would also cause less soil compaction than vehicles.

*Untrammelled:* Livestock grazing, salt delivery and project maintenance manipulate the environment and cause trammeling effects, especially along administrative travel routes and at livestock concentration points. Although legislatively permitted, livestock management reflects man’s influence on the landscape. Since grazing occurred long before wilderness designation, trammeling should not increase substantially, but the effect would be greater in the Proposed Action due to more vehicular use.

*Undeveloped:* Under either alternative, grazing should not affect the undeveloped wilderness character; however, the presence of grazing-related structures and improvements (i.e., fences, springs, reservoirs, pipelines, water troughs) detracts from the undeveloped wilderness character. Permanent structures and projects would have the same adverse effect in both alternatives. The continued use of motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment for salt delivery and range project maintenance under the Proposed Action would maintain ongoing temporary and short-term effects to the undeveloped character for as long as permittees continue their current operations. The Minimal Management Alternative would have less short- and long-term impact due to much more limited use of motorized/mechanized vehicles and equipment.

*Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation:* Livestock are regarded by some individuals as being unnatural intruders on the native ecosystem, and thus, an impact to their solitude. These effects would be similar in both alternatives and would be considered localized, temporary, and recurring effects specific to the grazing season and to the

affected allotments. Temporary effects would include livestock-related impacts that detract from both solitude and unconfined primitive recreation. The Proposed Action's allowance of motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment would result in localized short-term and recurring effects to wilderness solitude. Limiting the use of motorized and mechanized vehicles and equipment to the minimum necessary would increase the reliance on primitive skills, including the use of riding and pack stock. The Minimal Management Alternative would protect this character more than the Proposed Action, although the use of motorized/mechanized equipment may still occasionally influence these values.

#### Invasive non-native plants Species

*Natural:* The Proposed Action incorporates guidelines to minimize or prevent the spread of noxious weeds and invasive species in wilderness areas. Successful implementation of these guidelines should substantially minimize the effects of modern civilization, thus preserving the natural wilderness character. Under the Minimal Management Alternative activities would still be conducted under the RMP, but may not be as effective in the short term preservation of naturalness because the manner of treatment would not be as wilderness friendly as under the proposed action and therefore, would not preserve the natural wilderness character.

*Untrammelled:* Noxious and invasive weed control activities would cause trammeling. The greatest and longest-lasting trammeling effects would occur from projects that include ground disturbance, such as drill seeding, planting or motorized herbicide application. Aerial seeding and herbicide application would have a smaller trammeling effect.

The Minimal Management Alternative would cause few or no trammeling effects because prohibited uses identified in the Wilderness Act would be precluded.

*Undeveloped:* The Proposed Action would allow for larger treatment areas, thus having a greater positive effect on controlling weed and invasive plant populations. Motorized or mechanized activities, including motorized aerial and ground-based herbicide delivery, and mechanized equipment, would degrade the undeveloped character. Weed treatments that use backpack or horse pack delivery would not degrade this character. While the Minimal Management Alternative would not adversely affect the undeveloped character, it would limit the number of acres that could be treated, due to non-motorized delivery. This would likely result in a greater influx of noxious and invasive weeds, thus requiring more aggressive methods at a later date that include prohibited uses, which would further degrade the undeveloped character.

*Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation:* Noxious weed and invasive species treatments would temporarily impair opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The use of any detect and destroy methods would include employees and/or equipment in the wilderness, which would degrade this character.

### 2.3. Cumulative Effects

The purpose of the cumulative effects analysis for the Proposed Action is to evaluate the combined, incremental effects of human activity within the scope of the project. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations define scope and state that connected actions, cumulative actions, and similar actions should be included in the effects analysis (40 CFR 1508.25). With the exception of wildfire suppression, noxious weed and invasive species management, and emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, the scope of the cumulative effects analysis will be restricted to an area that includes a one-mile buffer around each of the wilderness areas. The one-mile distance equates to the proximity of human activities that may affect wilderness character. This distance was chosen to represent the visual and sound intrusion that could be carried to and from, due to topography, as well as the heightened risk of wildfire, weed invasion, and non-native seedlings that are currently in close proximity to the wilderness.

The 1997 CEQ Handbook Guidelines for Assessing and Documenting Cumulative Impacts states that the cumulative effects analysis can be focused on issues and resource values identified during scoping that are of major importance. Relevant issues identified for this project include the following:

Past actions (includes activities that have occurred since designation in 2006):

- Large wildfires that threaten wilderness and non-wilderness,
- Fire Suppression and ESR in wilderness,
- Fence construction and repair,
- Livestock grazing operations,
- Sign installation.

Current and ongoing activities:

- Livestock grazing operations,
- Pine nut collection
- Fuels treatments adjacent
- Monitoring,
- Commercial outfitting and guiding,
- Hunting.

Future actions (includes those that are reasonably foreseeable within the project area):

- Large wildfires that threaten wilderness and non-wilderness values.
- Water development.
- Vegetation treatments and fire breaks.
- Travel Management Plan for valley.
- Maintenance and repair of access routes.

There are few activities in the Proposed Action that, when combined with other activities, result in a cumulative impact. These include:

1. Actions that may include motorized incursions.
2. Actions that may disturb soils, vegetation, or other natural or cultural resources.

Motorized wilderness incursions may cause direct and indirect effects usually associated with noise and/or visitor experience and may affect untrammled, undeveloped, solitude, and primitive wilderness character. Such operations pertain to grazing, emergency access situations, wildfire suppression, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, treatment of large weed infestations, or vegetation manipulation. An example of the direct effect would be a permittee entering a pasture to repair fence damage or for a large salt delivery. Incursions would occur in the wilderness and the impact would be localized or limited in scope to the affected pasture(s) and area adjacent to the pasture (effects would not be noticeable outside of an estimated one-mile radius from the motorized activity, and no more than one mile from the wilderness boundary).

Cumulative impact may result from activities that occur simultaneously even when separated by space (up to one mile). However, there is a low probability for this cumulative impact to occur due to the low frequency of motorized incursions into the wilderness. The impact is considered negligible and is related mostly to authorized livestock operations. An example of the cumulative impact would be a hunter traveling within a mile from the permittee at the same time and just outside the wilderness. The combined actions would result in an annual cumulative effect within a localized portion of wilderness allotment.

Authorized actions in wilderness may involve disturbance to soils, vegetation, or other natural or cultural resources. Actions considered for their contribution to cumulative impacts to natural resources include wildfire suppression, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation, large weed treatments, and livestock concentration areas. An example of the direct effect would be the application of sagebrush seed to 200 acres of wilderness to improve naturalness, which would secondarily support habitat for greater sage grouse.

A cumulative impact commonly occurs when two activities overlap in both time and space. However, cumulative impacts can be separated by time and space, as the impacts are occurring to the same resource as the direct and indirect effects are influencing. There is a low probability for that to occur because such actions occurring within wilderness must be authorized by BLM. In addition, livestock grazing operations must adhere to Rangeland Health Standards designed to prevent effects to vegetation community and ecosystem health. The cumulative effect could be described through an example in which a livestock concentration area is located within the same 200-acre seeding project area.

In conclusion, cumulative impacts associated with past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions within the analysis area would have an estimated negligible, but positive effect. When added to other foreseeable actions in the analysis area, management actions included in the Proposed Action Alternative would preclude, minimize, or mitigate natural and human-caused impacts to natural resources and wilderness character.

## **2.4. Consultation and Coordination**

### **Public Involvement**

Public meetings were hosted by the BLM in the summer of 2013 to inform the public of the policies and regulations associated with Wilderness management. Input was solicited during these meetings and for several weeks afterward concerning wilderness-related issues and concerns, as well as the development of alternatives and management actions proposed in the WMP.

Additionally, the BLM consulted with affected livestock grazing permittees regarding their needs for access to manage livestock and maintain currently authorized range improvement projects in wilderness allotments. These meetings resulted in the proposed actions associated with Livestock Management in the WMP.

### **List of Preparers**

S. Gus Malon, Planning and Environmental Coordinator (Wilderness), Ely District Office  
Emily Simpson, Wilderness Specialist, Ely District Office

### **List of Reviewers**

Ben Noyes, Wild Horse Specialist, Schell Field Office  
Chris McVicars, Natural Resource Specialist, Ely District Office  
Craig Hoover, Rangeland Management Specialist, Schell Field Office  
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### **Agencies and Groups Consulted**

The following agencies, organizations, and individuals were briefed or consulted with during preparation of the Final WMP:

Shoshone Tribes

U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Park Service

Nevada Department of Wildlife

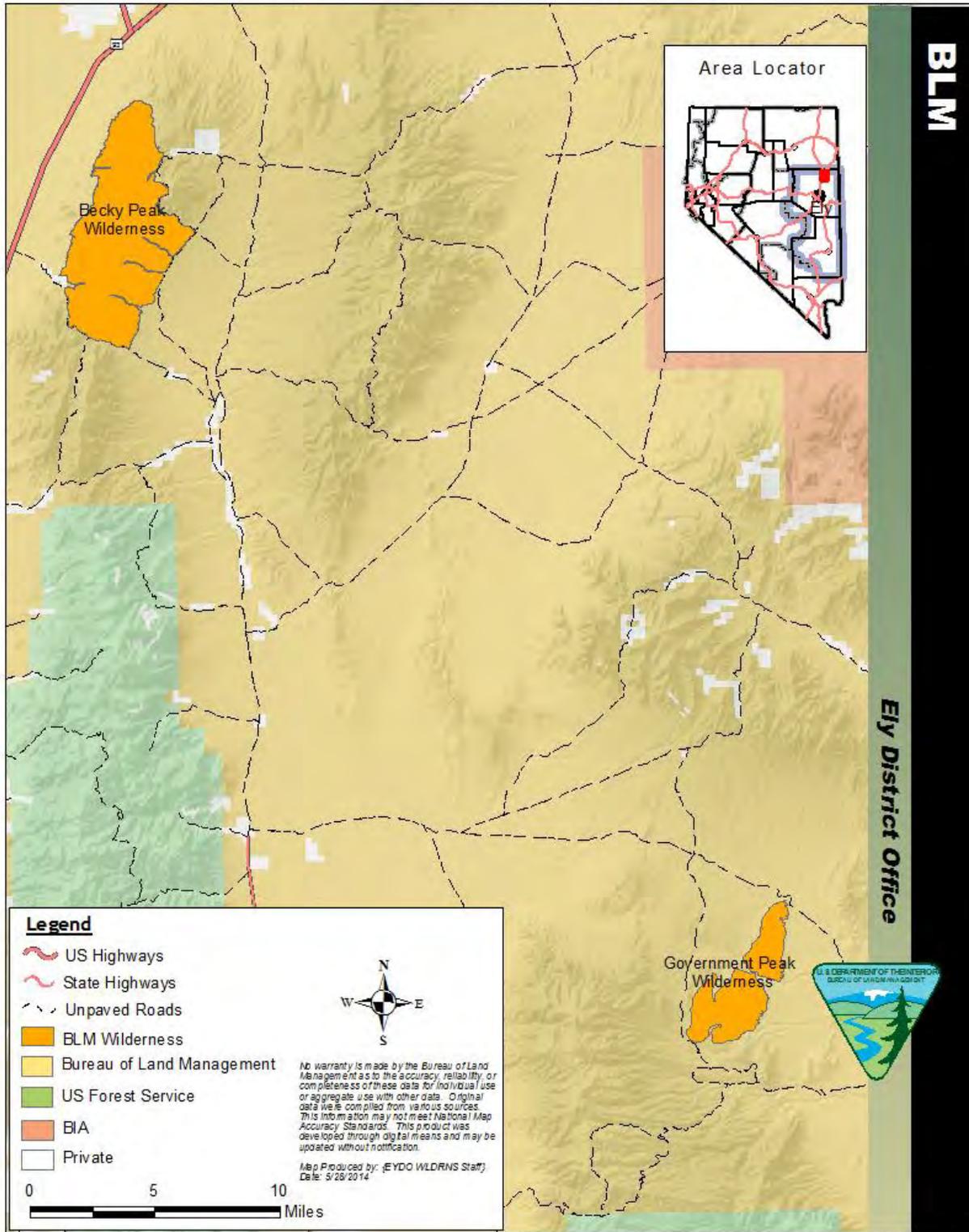
Southern Nevada Water Authority

White Pine County

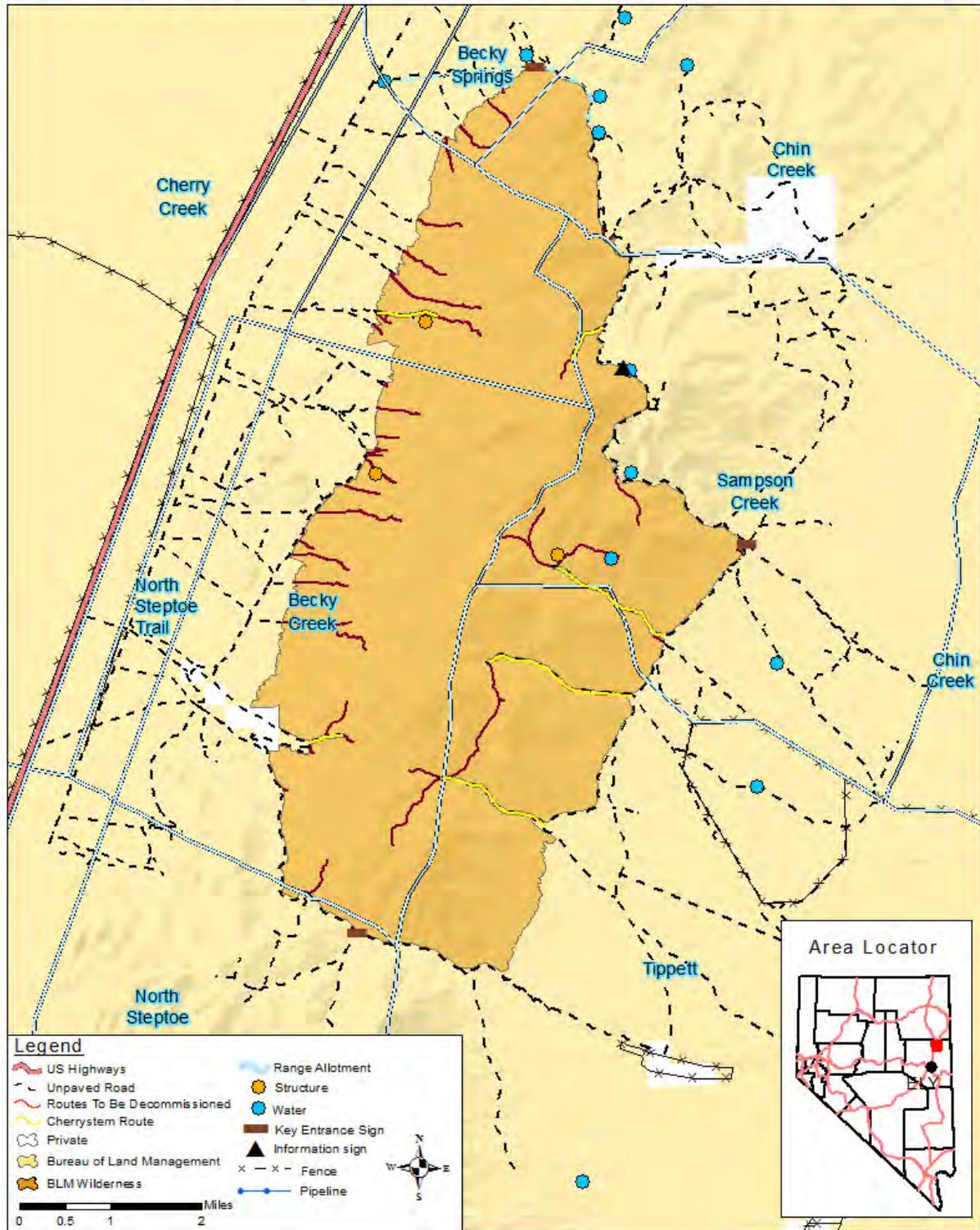
Nevada Outfitter & Guide Association

# Appendix A. Maps

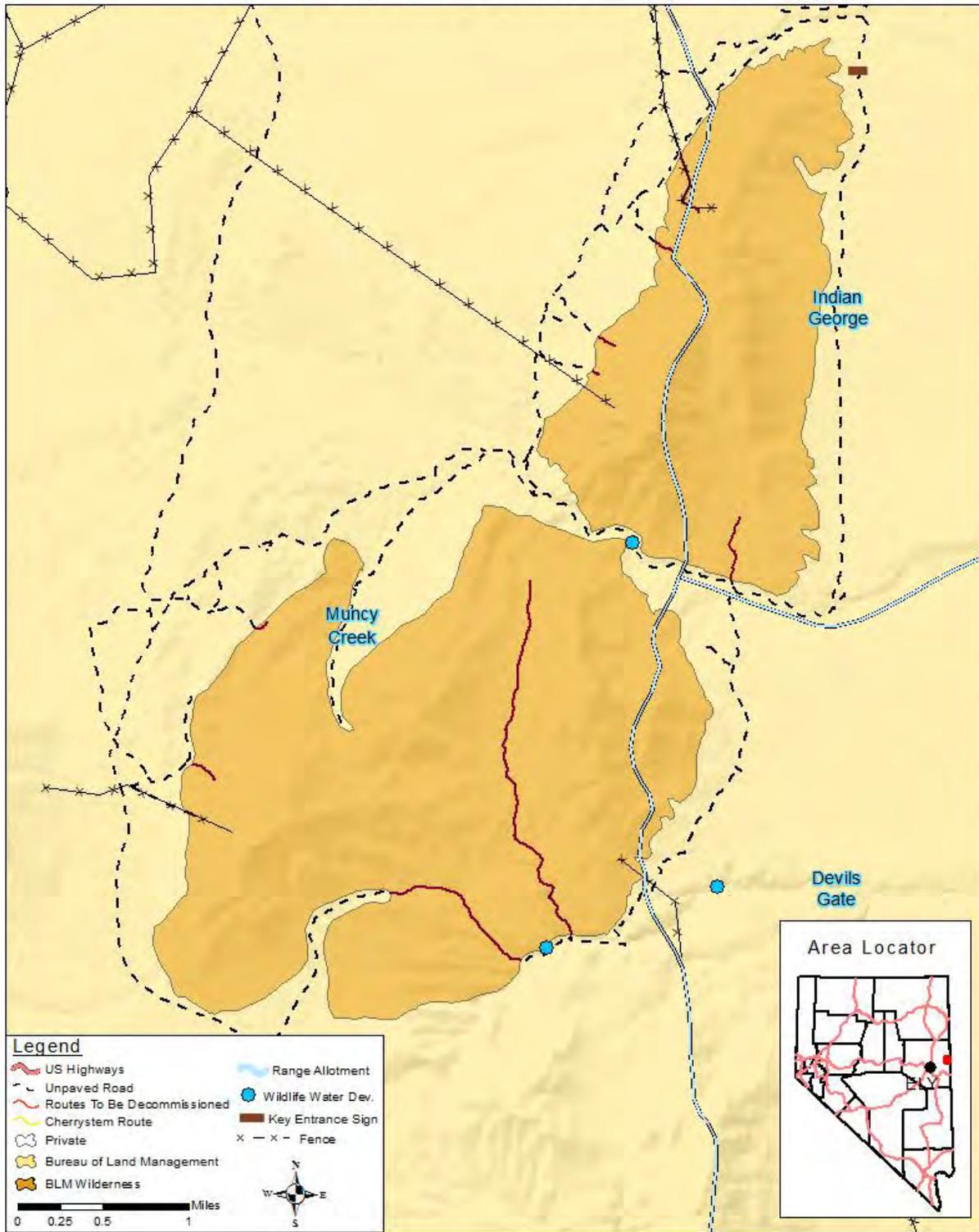
MAP 1. OVERVIEW WILDERNESS



MAP 2. CURRENT CONDITIONS BECKY PEAK WILDERNESS



MAP 3. CURRENT CONDITIONS GOVERNMENT PEAK WILDERNESS



## Appendix B. References

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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**For the**  
**Becky Peak and Government Peak**  
**Wilderness Management Plan**

**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2013-0006-EA**

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA), dated May 28, 2014. After consideration of the environmental impacts as described in the EA, which is incorporated herein, I have determined that the proposed action (wilderness management plan) 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. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

**Context**

The Becky Peak and Government Peak Wilderness areas are part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. These areas are of most interest to residents in Nevada, California and Utah.

**Intensity**

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

The environmental assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the wilderness management plan. Overall, the plan will result in enhancements to the wilderness character, which includes untrammeled, naturalness, undeveloped, and outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation, and various special features including cultural resources. Preserving a more natural system is considered improving the quality of the human environment through proactive management, and is not considered a significant effect both in the short or long term.

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

Implementation components of the proposed wilderness management plan will 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.

The action areas are within and adjacent to designated wilderness. These two areas were designated for their unique characteristics including high scenic qualities, diverse cultural resources, important wildlife habitat, and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreational pursuits.

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

The effects of implementing decisions of the wilderness management plan are well known and documented and not highly controversial in that wilderness management plans are essential to maintaining the natural condition of wilderness as required by the Wilderness Act. The methods chosen to complete implementation actions are accepted methods to meet resource and management objectives and are not considered highly controversial.

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

There are no effects of the proposed action identified in the EA which are considered uncertain or involve unknown risks. All actions proposed to be employed are accepted standard practices.

- 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 does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

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

No significant cumulative impacts have been identified in the EA.

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

The proposed action will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

- 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 of 1973.

There are no known federally listed species in these two wildernesses.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Approved by: Rosemary Thomas 5/30/14  
Rosemary Thomas Date  
District Manager  
Ely District Office

**DECISION RECORD**  
**For the**  
**Becky Peak and Government Peak**  
**Wilderness Management Plan**

**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Environmental Assessment # DOI-BLM-NV-L000-2013-0006-EA**

**Decision**

It is my decision to approve and implement the wilderness management plan for the Becky Peak and Government Peak Wildernesses (which is the proposed action and contains all identified mitigation measures). The proposed action is in conformance with the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (2008).

**Legal Compliance**

- The Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. §§ 1131-1136, September 3, 1964, as amended 1978).
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. §§ 1701-1782, October 21, 1976, as amended 1978, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990-1992, 1994 and 1996).
- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended 1975 and 1994).
- The White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2006 (public Law 109-432).
- The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531-1544, December 28, 1973, as amended 1976-1982, 1984, and 1988).
- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 668-668d, June 8, 1940, as amended 1959, 1962, 1972, and 1978).
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712, July 3, 1918, as amended 1936, 1960, 1968, 1969, 1974, 1978, 1986 and 1989).
- Executive Order 13186—Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds (2001).
- Management of Designated Wilderness Areas (43 CFR Part 6300).
- Recreation Management Restrictions: Occupancy Stay Limitation (43 CFR 8365.1-2(a) and Federal Register Notice NV-930-4333-02).
- Unlawful Manner of Camping Near Water Hole (Nevada Revised Statute 503.660).

## Public Involvement

A Notice of Proposed Action was mailed to known interested parties on July 17, 2013. Public scoping workshops were held in Ely, NV on August 20, 2013. A meeting specifically for livestock grazing permittees was held on September 10, 2013. A 45-day public comment period for the Final Plan and EA was initiated on March 20, 2014.

## Public Comment

No written comments were received during the comment period. Comments received during the public meetings and with specialists during the management plan process were given serious consideration. Some comments related to associated programs were not incorporated as they are beyond the scope of this plan. Changes were made to the plan based on significant public comments including, but not limited to:

- Commercial enterprises in wilderness degrading wilderness values.
- Natural fire for resource benefit.
- Livestock grazing activities.

## Rationale for Decision

The purpose of creating a Wilderness Management Plan is to preserve the areas' wilderness character by identifying the conditions and opportunities that will be managed for within the wilderness areas over a ten-year span. Wilderness Management Plans must be prepared for all wilderness areas on public lands. Management direction must be based on the pertinent objectives of the BLM wilderness management policy as identified in BLM Manual 6340.

The need for the plan stems from the Wilderness Act of 1964, which defines wilderness and mandates that the primary management direction is to preserve wilderness character. The plan creates specific management guidance addressing resources and activities in these wilderness areas. Wilderness character is a complex idea and is not explicitly defined in the Wilderness Act; however wilderness character is commonly described as:

- **Untrammeled** — area is unhindered and free from modern human control or manipulation.
- **Natural** — area appears to have been primarily affected by the forces of nature.
- **Undeveloped** — area is essentially without permanent improvements or human occupation and retains its primeval character.
- **Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation** — area provides outstanding opportunities for people to experience solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, including the values associated with physical and mental inspiration and challenge.

- **Supplemental values** — complementary features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historic values.

***The proposed action (wilderness management plan) was selected over the alternative because it met the need and objectives outlined in the plan. The proposed action has been analyzed and determined that there is no significant impact as referenced in the (FONSI) attached to the EA. The proposed plan will guide management so that the preservation objectives of the Wilderness Act can be met. The decision is also based on the fact that there was a finding of no significant impact.***

### **Appeal Opportunities**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4 and Form 1842-1 (enclosed). If an appeal is taken, a notice of appeal and/or request for stay must be filed in writing, on paper, in this office, either by mail or personal delivery. Notices of appeal and/or request for stay that are electronically transmitted (e.g., email, facsimile, or social media) will not be accepted as timely filed. The notice of appeal is considered filed as of the date our office receives the hard copy and places our BLM date stamp on the document.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4939, January 19, 1993) (request) for a stay (suspension) of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office. If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

#### Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulation, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,

- (2) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

Approved by: Rosemary Thomas      5/30/14  
Rosemary Thomas      Date  
District Manager  
Ely District Office