



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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**DEC 31 2009**

In Reply Refer to:

1677/1792 (NV025.07)

### Decision Record

#### **BLM Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-W030-2010-002-EA Black Rock National Conservation Area Administrative Facility**

#### **Background**

The project area is located about 0.7 miles north of Gerlach in northern Washoe County, Nevada. The Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (NCA) included several decisions that supported development of administrative and visitor services facilities to increase management efficiency and improve visitor services. In 2009, the funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) became available to allow development of an administrative facility with included visitor services that would implement the RMP decisions.

#### **Decision**

It is my decision to implement the Black Rock National Conservation Area Administrative Facility project described as the proposed action of the attached environmental assessment (EA) number, DOI-BLM-W030-2010-002-EA, subject to the environmental measures committed to in the design of the proposed action and the standard terms and conditions associated with each ROW grant. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared and accompanies this Decision. The FONSI demonstrates that an environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to Section 102(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act is not required.

#### **Mitigation Measures**

The ROW holders would be required to follow the standard terms and conditions of the ROW grants.

## **Rationale**

1. The proposed action is in conformance with and is consistent with the Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan (MFP), the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA Resource Management Plan (RMP) and has complied with the National Historic Preservation Act, and other laws that govern the proposed project.
  - a. The MFP reserves the location of the proposed administrative site and surrounding public lands *“for community expansion and for recreation and public purposes”*.
  - b. The RMP includes decisions that support the development of administrative facilities and visitor centers to support the management of the NCA and other public lands: *“An administrative site would be developed near the NCA. The administrative site would serve as a public information outlet, and may also serve as BLM employee residence.”*
2. Funding is being provided through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Development of the Administrative Facility will to increase economic activity and increase employment in the Washoe County, Nevada and surrounding areas and meet the intent of ARRA.
3. The administrative facility is would improve the ability of BLM to manage public lands within the NCA and adjacent areas. Management intensities would improve for activities associated with recreation, wild horse, minerals, livestock grazing and other resources and uses.
4. The Visitor Center component of the Administrative Facility would improve distribution of visitor services, provide much more space and interpretive opportunities than the existing visitor contact trailer that would be replaced by this project, and increase the number of visitors served through installation of a public interest radio station serving visitors to the area.
5. The issuance of Rights-of-Way for power, water, phone, road access and surface protection would allow for orderly development of the site, while providing legal status for the holders of the Rights-of-Way.
6. Based on the environmental analysis in the EA, including compliance with the environmental measures in the design of the proposal, I have determined that the proposed action will not result in any unnecessary or undue environmental degradation of public lands, has addressed public comments, and is consistent with federal, state and local laws, regulations and plans.
7. The proposed action would not impact any threatened or endangered species or significant scientific resources. The proposed action resulted in no measureable

impacts to archaeological sites determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Environmental Assessment including maps and figures can be viewed online at:  
<http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/wfo.html>

**Appeal**

If you feel you are adversely affected by this decision, you may appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals per the appeal form 1842-1. You must file your appeal along with a statement of reasons within 30 days of the date of this decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Hays". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" and "H".

Dave Hays, Field Manager

Attachments:

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)  
EA# DOI-BLM-W030-2010-002-EA

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR  
Black Rock National Conservation Area Administrative Facility**

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-W030-2010-002-EA, dated December, 2009. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the proposed action with the project design specifications identified in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

I have determined the proposed action is in conformance with the approved Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plan and the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (NCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP). The proposed action is also consistent with the plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state, tribal and federal agencies and governments. This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context: The project is located on just north of Gerlach in northern Washoe County, Nevada. The Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (NCA) included several decisions that supported development of administrative and visitor services facilities to increase management efficiency and improve visitor services. In 2009, the funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) became available to allow development of an administrative facility with included visitor services that would implement the RMP decisions.

Intensity:

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

The environmental assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the administrative facility and associated infrastructure development. Beneficial impacts include improved management of public lands in northwestern Nevada, particularly those lands within the Black Rock-High Rock NCA. Additionally the facility will increase employment and purchasing in the northern Nevada area, provide increased visitor services in the Gerlach area, and extend utility services to the GGID solid waste transfer station. On the negative side, development of the administrative facility will create a new permanent facility that will occupy about two acres of public land, change the landscape characteristics from primary natural to one with additional human development, and remove a few acres of land from a large geothermal lease.

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

The proposed action will indirectly improve public safety by increasing opportunities for visitors to learn of hazardous weather or environmental conditions of the public lands of northwestern Nevada. There will be no impacts to public health.

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 project area contains several historic and pre-historic archaeological sites. Cultural resource inventories associated with this project reveal the presence of three sites eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. However, the project will not adversely affect sites eligible for the NRHP. The project area also lies near, but outside the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA.

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

The proposal to develop and administrative facility, including visitor services, was included in the 2004 RMP for the NCA. This proposal was included in several alternatives considered in the planning process and was evaluated as a part of an EIS prior to being selected for inclusion in the RMP approved in 2004. Over 6,000 comments were received by BLM in that process and none of the handful of RMP protests mentioned this project. During public scoping and a comment period for this Assessment, a request for comments was sent to about 90 individuals, groups, tribes, and other agencies. Eleven comments were received, eight in favor and two opposed. Therefore there is no indication that the project is 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 known effects of the proposed action identified in the EA which are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. All design specifications and construction techniques 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. Construction associated with an administrative facility does remove options for certain other multiple uses that would require occupancy of the site of the facility. However, at this time there are no foreseeable demand for these uses that might require removal of the facility.

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. Due to the relative small size of the project area, the large area of adjacent public land and the lack of private development projects in the vicinity; large surface disturbing projects are not anticipated. This project and others envisioned in the foreseeable future seen together with other land uses on-going in the area would not result in cumulatively significant impacts at the local or watershed scale.

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

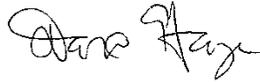
Three sites eligible for listing in the NRHP were identified in the project area and EA. Disturbances associated with proposed action will either occur outside eligible sites in portions of the sites considered as non-contributing elements. Therefore there would be no adverse impacts to the NRHP eligible sites. No additional actions are foreseen that would result in the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic 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 ESA of 1973.*

There are no threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat present within the project area. Therefore the proposed action will not likely adversely affect any listed species or their critical habitat.

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

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



December 31, 2009

**Dave Hays, Field Manager**