

U.S. Bureau of Land Management Nevada Groundwater Projects

Southern Nevada Water Authority Right-of-Way Project Update

May 2011 – Newsletter No. 7

OBJECTIVE

Interested parties are invited to continue their participation in the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development (GWD) Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

This newsletter presents an overview of the Draft EIS and the EIS process, with a focus on upcoming public involvement. The Draft EIS structure is defined here and suggestions on finding resource information to help you submit effective comments are offered. This newsletter highlights opportunities for you to participate in the process.

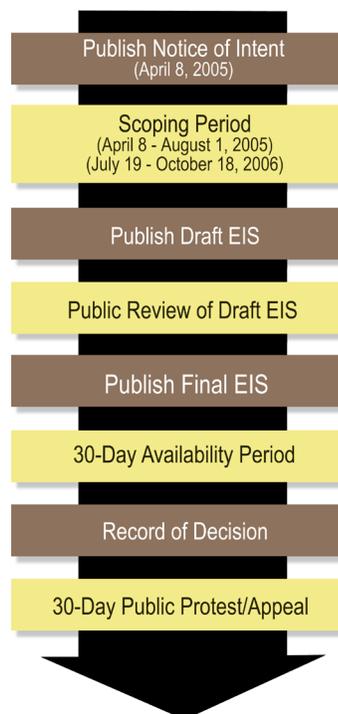
Initial public input was gathered during the two public scoping periods held in 2005 and 2006. As part of this process, scoping meetings were held in nine cities in Nevada and Utah in 2005.

The Groundwater Projects Office has provided multiple opportunities for public involvement in various communities by engaging local, state, and federal government, non-governmental groups, the general public, and tribes with an interest in the project or project area. Six previous newsletters have been distributed to the almost 1,500 people or entities on the mailing list maintained by the Groundwater Projects Office. A summary of past activities and important project documents and past newsletters are available on our website (www.blm.gov/5w5c).

The Groundwater Projects Office plans to publish the GWD Project Draft EIS in early Summer 2011.



Environmental Impact Statement Process



Yellow box = Public Involvement Opportunities



HOW TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The availability of the Draft EIS will be announced through news releases and by publishing a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>). Information also will be available on BLM's website (www.blm.gov/5w5c). Because the Draft EIS is over 1,200 pages, all parties on the mailing list maintained by the Groundwater Projects Office will receive a paper copy of the Executive Summary accompanied by an electronic version of the entire Draft EIS. (If you received this newsletter through a mailing, you are on the Groundwater Projects Office mailing list and will receive the Executive Summary/electronic copy of the Draft EIS. If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, please see the footnote at the bottom of the table). The Draft EIS will also be posted in .pdf format by chapter/section/appendix on the BLM website. A limited number of paper copies of the entire Draft EIS will be printed. Please forward your request to the Groundwater Projects Office. "Reading Room" copies of the Draft EIS will also be made available at the locations shown in the table below.

Document Viewing		
Vicinity	BLM Offices	Libraries
Washoe County, NV	Nevada State Office Public Room Contact: Kim Dow; 775-861-6681 1340 Financial Blvd, Reno, NV 89502	Nevada State Library 100 North Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89701
		Washoe County Library, Sierra View (Reno Town Mall) 4001 S. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 89501
White Pine County, NV	Ely District Office Public Room Contact: Dan Netcher; 775-289-1872 702 North Industrial Way, Ely, NV 89301	White Pine County Library 950 Campton Street, Ely, NV 89301
Lincoln County, NV	Caliente Field Office Public Room Contact: Victoria Barr; 775-726-8100 U.S. Highway 93, Building #1 Caliente, NV 89008	Lincoln County Library, Caliente 100 Depot Avenue, Caliente, NV 89008
		Lincoln County Library, Alamo 100 North 1st East Street, Alamo, NV 89001
Clark County, NV	Southern Nevada District Office Public Room Contact: Phil Rhinehart; 702-515-5182 4701 North Torrey Pines Drive Las Vegas, NV 89130	Mesquite Library 121 West 1st North Street, Mesquite, NV 89027
		Clark County Library 1401 E. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV 89119
Elko County, NV		Elko County Library 720 Court Street, Elko, NV 89801
Salt Lake County, UT	Utah State Office Public Room Contact: Justin Jimenez; 801-539-4073 440 West 200 South, Suite 500, Salt Lake City, UT 84101	Utah State Library 250 North 1950 West Salt Lake City, UT 84116
	West Desert District Office Public Room Contact: Jill Silvey 2370 South 2300 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84119	
Millard County, UT	Fillmore Field Office Public Room Contact: Randy Beckstrand 35 East 500 North, Fillmore, UT 84631	Delta City Library 76 North 200 West, Delta, UT 84624
Iron County, UT	Color Country District Office Public Room Contact: Craig Egerton 176 East D.L. Sargent Drive, Cedar City, UT 84721	Cedar City Library 303 North 100 East, Cedar City, UT 84720
Washington County, UT	St. George Field Office Public Room Contact: Dave Corry 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, UT 84790	Washington County Library 88 West 100 South St. George, UT 84770
Tooele County, UT		Tooele City Library 128 West Vine Street, Tooele, UT 84074
Juab County, UT		Nephi Library 21 East 100 North, Nephi, UT 84648
Beaver County, UT		Beaver Library 55 West Center Street, Beaver, UT 84713

¹ E-mail (nvgwproject@blm.gov) or call Kim Dow (775-861-6681) to request additional copies of the Draft EIS, a copy in a different format, or to obtain electronic versions of selected background documents. You may also use this contact information to request additions or deletions to the project mailing list or for other inquiries. The Groundwater Projects Office does not maintain an electronic mailing list; you must supply a postal or physical address to receive documents or background information.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The GWD Project Draft EIS has three main parts: the Executive Summary, the Main Body, and the Supplemental Appendices.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary provides a thorough, but concise overview of the GWD Project and its impacts, including those that would be associated with future groundwater production. Included are key points of the analysis and conclusions about the GWD Project, providing readers a foundation of knowledge, allowing them to understand the project and prioritize and focus any further review to specific sections of the assessment.

Main Body

The Main Body is divided into six chapters, briefly described below:

CH	TITLE	DESCRIPTION
1	Purpose and Need for the Action	Describes the legal purpose and need for BLM to process the SNWA's Right-of-Way (ROW) application, the decisions that will be made at the process's conclusion, laws and policies BLM must consider in its decision making, and BLM's involvement of the public and agencies.
2	Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives	Describes in detail the proposed action and alternatives analyzed, and past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions. Provides a summary of the environmental impacts. Readers should understand the proposed action and alternatives before reviewing the impact analyses section.
3	Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences	Introduction provides a framework for all of the resource sections in Chapter 3. For each resource, describes the environment potentially affected by project construction and operation and the foreseeable and potential impacts (environmental consequences) of the proposed action and alternatives on the affected environment (including mitigation measures and residual impacts). An understanding of chapter organization is critical to following the presentation of potential impacts. For each resource, descriptions of the affected environment are presented first. The impact analysis follows, divided into two major subsections. The first addresses the impacts associated with the main conveyance system and ancillary facilities in the current ROW applications -- the primary subject of this EIS. The second conceptually (programmatically) describes the environmental effects related to future groundwater withdrawal, including additional future facilities to pump and transport groundwater to the main pipeline.
		ROW and Ancillary Facilities
		The affected environment and potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects from the construction and operation of the main conveyance ROW. Examples of construction activities include burying pipelines, building facilities and installing power lines; examples of operational activities include driving on roads and maintenance of facilities. This assessment concerns issues on a localized scale and from direct and indirect effects, not activities or impacts related to the long-term pumping of groundwater. Depending on the resource, impacts from construction (direct impacts) may or may not extend beyond the construction site (indirect impacts). Examples of direct impacts include wildlife disruption from construction activities; examples of indirect impacts include job and population effects from project construction and operation.
		Groundwater Development and Groundwater Pumping
		The affected environment and potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects from constructing future facilities (e.g. groundwater wells) and groundwater drawdown caused by SNWA pumping. As noted, on pages 2 and 3 of newsletter #4, this portion is described conceptually based on assumptions about the quantity and location of future groundwater production wells, collector pipelines, and distribution power lines. Groundwater modeling is used as a basis for the groundwater pumping impact assessment.
4	Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources	Explains whether the proposed action or alternatives could limit opportunities for resource development, or if building the project could eliminate the availability of a resource to future generations.
5	Public Participation and Coordination	Describes opportunities for public participation and BLM's coordination with other agencies.
6	Preparers and Reviewers	Provides information on individuals involved in document preparation and review.

Appendices

The appendices include supplementary technical information, including additional detailed maps, figures, tables, and background information. Some supplementary information, such as the water model output files, is too large and/or thought to be of limited interest to the general public due to its technical nature. These supplementary materials are not provided in the Draft EIS but are available upon request from the Groundwater Projects Office.

REVIEWING THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

When reviewing the Draft EIS, we recommend you begin with the Executive Summary to gain an understanding of the proposed project and BLM's decision framework. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires BLM to identify the expected impacts from the project and a full range of reasonable alternatives, including those that BLM has no authority to mitigate or enforce. Chapters 1 and 2 provide the background and alternative descriptions for the GWD Project. Chapter 3 describes the affected environment and explains the potential impacts to the resource or resources.

For each resource, the discussion is presented in four parts:

- 1) a description of the affected environment;
- 2) an effects analysis of constructing and operating the main pipeline and associated facilities (this section does not include discussion of impacts from groundwater pumping);
- 3) conceptual analysis for constructing and operating the pipeline, future groundwater wells and related facilities, and pumping groundwater; and
- 4) conceptual analysis of the long-term environmental effects of groundwater pumping and associated drawdown.

For several resources, the effects of construction and operation of the main pipeline ROW are very local and do not extend beyond the construction footprint, whereas the future groundwater development facilities and groundwater pumping and drawdown effects cover a broader region. These two analysis areas and impacts are spatially and/or temporally different, so it is important to understand which portion of the analysis you are reading.

COMMENTING

The public review and comment phase is your next opportunity to be involved in this decision. The BLM must consider the environmental effects on social, cultural, economic, natural, and other resources. Comments from the public and local, state, and federal agencies as well as tribal governments are considered and influence the decisions.

The law doesn't provide for public votes on proposals or specific alternatives but rather what steps can be taken to protect the environment when and where projects occur. The most useful public comments focus on the proposed action and alternatives, the assessment of the environmental impacts of the action and alternatives, and the proposed mitigation. Following are key considerations:

- Please scan the draft document, beginning with the table of contents and Executive Summary. If you are concerned about pumping impacts in specific areas, it may be helpful to review the Water Resources section as background information.
- Please be as succinct as possible. Organize comments beginning with general or reference comments and then moving on to specific document sections including page numbers. Please be specific. Comments supported by logic and rationale are more useful than opinions. Please state suggestions and recommendations clearly with an expectation of what you would like the agency to do.
- To the extent possible, please make specific, solutions-oriented recommendations for environmental mitigation.
- If you comment on project alternatives, please tell us what you believe the trade-offs and differences are between alternatives. If you provide alternate interpretations of science, please support your analysis with appropriate references.
- If possible, please coordinate your comments with other like-minded individuals and organizations. This can strengthen the comment and help us understand of the depth of concern.

The law doesn't allow BLM to make decisions based on the popularity of proposed projects but it does allow the agency to take steps to protect the environment when projects occur.

Additional resources are available to help prepare productive comments. We recommend *A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA: Having Your Voice Heard* by the Council on Environmental Quality. This document is available on our website and provides an overview of the NEPA process, explains how agencies use and process comments, and makes suggestions on providing comments that better influence decisions.

HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS

The Comment Period

Due to the scope and complexity of this project and length of the documents, the BLM is extending the comment period to 90 days. The dates of the comment period will be announced on our website, through local media, and mailings.

Submitting Comments

Comments may be submitted in person at one of the public comment meetings to be held after the Draft EIS becomes available, or by surface delivery, e-mail, or fax. Anonymous comments are not considered. Comments submitted by surface delivery must be post-marked no later than the announced comment closure date. Those submitted by e-mail or fax must be sent by midnight on the date the comment period closes. Comments received after the closing date may not be considered in Final EIS preparation.

A standard comment form is provided as part of this newsletter. A copy of the comment form will also be



included with the Executive Summary and can also be downloaded from the project website. You are not required to use this form. All Draft EIS comments received within the comment period will be published in their entirety in the Final EIS along with a BLM response. Depending on the similarity to/with comments, BLM may respond to an individual comment or provide a single comprehensive response to similar comments. All comments become part of the official public record and are available to anyone who requests a copy.

If you use the standard comment form, you may instruct BLM to not provide your name and address in the Final EIS and to those who request copies. For those comments not submitted on the standard form, commenters must indicate that they want their name and address withheld. If this is indicated on the comment form, only the text of the comment will be published in the Final EIS. Please note: the Draft and Final EIS and associated materials are public documents, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and while we will do our best to withhold personal information, this may not be possible.

There's a new "short-cut" to the BLM NV Groundwater Projects' website that's quicker, easier to remember, and less prone to entry error. Type www.blm.gov/5w5c into your browser and you'll automatically be redirected to the correct web page. If you've bookmarked the original URL, it still works.

Previous Newsletters

#1 January 2007 PROJECT OVERVIEW	#2 November 2007 EIS UPDATES	#3 December 2008 PROJECT ACTIVITIES	#4 March 2009 NEPA	#5 November 2009 WATER RIGHTS	#6 December 2010 EIS UPDATES AND ALTERNATIVES
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Note: As with any long-term project, the information provided in earlier newsletters often becomes outdated. Our goal for subsequent newsletters is to provide project updates and additional information on project progress.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Dates and locations of public meetings will be announced on the BLM website (www.blm.gov/5w5c) and through local media. The Groundwater Projects Office will also send a mailing to those on the mailing list that will include meeting dates, times, locations, and format. There will be several public meetings held in Nevada and Utah. At each location there will be an open house where questions may be answered in an informal setting, as well as an opportunity for oral comments that will be taken down verbatim by a court reporter.

BLM'S NEXT STEPS

Following the close of the comment period, BLM will review and categorize all comments. Specialists will review and respond to each substantive comment and make any associated changes necessary for the Final EIS. Issues frequently cross areas of expertise, so several specialists may discuss comments and coordinate changes for the Final EIS. Not all comments are likely to warrant extensive review, responses, and modification, but all comments will be published in an appendix of the Final EIS.

Once the Final EIS is complete it will be released to the public. The expected release date will be provided in a subsequent newsletter, announced on our website and in the *Federal Register*, and through local media. After publication of the Final EIS, there is a 30-day availability

period (not a formal public comment period) when the BLM will accept and consider comments identifying significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns that affect the proposed action.



BLM Groundwater Projects Office

Phone: 775-861-6681 Fax: 775-861-6689 email: nvgwprojects@blm.gov
 Website: http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/prog/planning/groundwater_projects/eis_home_page/snwa_groundwater_project.html

Cooperating Agencies

Central Nevada Regional Water Authority	U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
National Park Service	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Nellis Air Force Base	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Nevada Counties: Clark, Lincoln, White Pine	U.S. Forest Service
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Utah Counties: Juab, Millard, Tooele
State of Utah	

Fold 2



Bureau of Land Management
Groundwater Projects Office
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, NV 89520-0006

Fold 1

Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project Mailing List

To have your name removed from our mailing list or to update your address information for this project, please check the appropriate box and complete the contact information section on page 7. If changes are needed, check the box below. If you do not ask us to remove your name from our mailing list, we will send you future EIS-related correspondence.

- Please remove my name from your mailing list

- Please correct/modify my contact information