

Bureau of Land Management Ely District Manager's Update

(Last revised April 6, 2022)



ENERGY

Electrical Transmission Development –

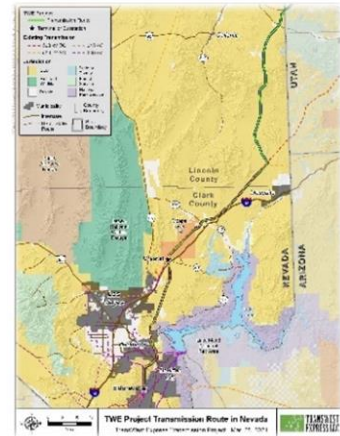


Transcanyon Cross-Tie Project: The BLM Fillmore (Utah) Field Office expects in April to publish a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register for a proposed transmission line connecting central Utah and east-central Nevada. The 1,500 MW, 500 kV HVAC line would be located within the existing Western Electric Coordinating Council-designated corridor or BLM utility corridors. It would

strengthen the interconnection between PacifiCorp and NV Energy's transmission systems while supporting interregional power transfers by linking the Northern Tier Transmission Group and WestConnect planning regions. Sixty-four miles of the proposed 214-mile line would cross Bristlecone Field Office-administered lands for a disturbance of 1,939 acres.

TransWest Express Transmission Project: The BLM Wyoming State Office is the designated lead for a proposed 735-mile 500kv transmission line that would extend from Wyoming through Colorado, Utah, and southeast corner of Lincoln County to southern Nevada, delivering up to 3,000 megawatts of wind-generated electricity to major load centers that include Las Vegas and San Diego, Calif.

TransWest Express (TWE) is currently in the Ely District conducting geotechnical investigation/bore holes along the proposed route. The district is working with TWE contractors on the Notice to Proceed Plan of Development for mitigation, avoidance, and compliance resolutions.



SWIP North Project: The BLM Elko District is the designated lead for a proposed 1,500 MW 500 kV transmission line connecting the Midpoint substation north of Twin Falls, Idaho, to the Robinson substation northwest of Ely, where it would connect with SWIP South. The proposed line would extend 257 miles, 191 miles on BLM-administered lands in the Twin Falls, Elko, and Ely districts.



Green Link North: The BLM Nevada State Office is the designated lead for the NV Energy-proposed 525 kV line, which would span approximately 235 miles from Ely to Yerington, Nev. The BLM in January held virtual public workshops to get input on topics and issues to be considered in developing a draft environmental impact statement. The BLM expects to publish a Notice of Intent in May 2023.

Renewable Energy Development –

White Pine Pumped Storage: Gridflex Energy, LLC has filed a notice of intent with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a license application to construct a 600-750 megawatt (MW) closed-loop pumped storage hydropower facility on public lands, about seven miles northeast of Ely. The proposed project would include three 250-MW reversible pump-turbines and a single-circuit 345-kV or double-circuit 230-kV transmission line extending one-plus miles to the Gondor substation. The project would generate annually an estimated 1,970 gigawatt-hours for sale to southern Nevada and surrounding states. An environmental impact statement would be prepared beginning in late 2022 or early 2023, provided the project moves forward.

Dry Lake Valley North Solar Energy Zone: The Dry Lake Valley North Solar Energy Zone encompasses 25,069 acres of Ely District-administered lands available for lease in Dry Lake Valley, in Lincoln County. The BLM in December 2021 published in the *Federal Register* a Call for Nominations or Expressions of Interest for Solar Leasing Areas on public lands in Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada. The 30-day period concluded January 20. The Caliente Field Office received two expressions of interest.

Great Basin Geopower: The Bristlecone Field is reviewing a Great Basin Geopower application to reenter an abandoned well in Steptoe Valley north of Cherry Creek to determine the depth, temperature and quantity of geothermal water sources in the lease area. Due to re-entry the level of NEPA is to be determined.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Fuels Reduction/Habitat Restoration – *Landscape scale fuels reduction projects restore watershed health and improve wildlife habitat while reducing catastrophic wildfire risk. Treatment methods include, but are not limited to, hand-thinning, chaining, mastication, and prescribed fire use followed by aerial and/or ground seeding. The District often partners with federal and state agencies, Native American tribes, and private landowners. Some projects receive Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act funding. The district this spring:*

- Burned slash piles of pinyon-juniper on 47 acres of the public lands in Sawmill Canyon and six acres of BLM-administered lands near Quaky Spring in south Steptoe Valley, approximately 10 and 25 miles south of Ely, respectively. The piles are remnants of tree-thinning treatments that reduced pinyon-juniper establishment within the Steptoe Valley watershed. The treatments are part of the multi-year South Steptoe Valley Watershed Restoration Project
- Finished masticating established pinyon-juniper on 550 acres of the public lands in Johnson Spring Basin, about 65 miles northwest of Ely. The acreage was aerially seeded in January. The treatment is part of the multi-year Egan and Johnson Basins Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 24,346 acres of an 84,675-project area.



- Finished masticating established pinyon-juniper on 433 acres of the public lands in the Kern Mountain Range, about 50 miles northeast of Ely. The acreage was aerially seeded in January. The treatment is part of the landscape-scale Kern Mountains Landscape Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 12,580 acres of a 15,725-acre project area.



- Finished masticating established pinyon-juniper on 1,154 acres of the public lands along Ward Mountain, about 20 miles south of Ely. The acreage was aerially seeded in January. A chaining on approximately 3,024 acres on the west side of Ward Mountain has been postponed due to weather and limited access. The treatments are part of the landscape-scale Ward Mountain Restoration Project that will ultimately treat 42,670 acres of a 100,000-acre project area.

LANDS & REALTY

Schena Land Sale: The Bristlecone Field Office expects in April to issue a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact for a Resource Management Plan (RMP) amendment and associated environmental assessment analyzing a proposal to sell one 0.66-acre parcel of public land in White Pine County. The BLM is proposing to amend the 2008 Ely District RMP to identify a specific 0.66-acre parcel for disposal and provide the proposed recipient a patent for the parcel. The proposal meets land sale criteria as described in Section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The 45-day public scoping and review period concluded March 21.

White Pine Water Power, LLC: The proponent has a Bristlecone Field Office-issued temporary right-of-way to drill bore holes and test bedrock on public lands in Steptoe Valley and Duck Creek Basin. In Steptoe Valley, work has been completed on borehole #2 but not on Borehole #1 adjacent to the upper railroad tracks. No work has been accomplished on borehole #3 in Duck Creek Basin due to the proponent's inability to obtain the permission required to cross private property, which is necessary to access the authorized site.

Lincoln County Water District Rights-of-Way: The Caliente Field Office is working with the Lincoln County Water District on a Plan of Development for a main pipeline and delivery lines to transport groundwater to Lincoln County Lands Act disposal lands near Mesquite. The field office will subsequently conduct public scoping for an environmental assessment to amend their right-of-way, in accordance with the Lincoln County Lands Act Groundwater and Utility Development Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (2008).

AT&T Round Springs Cell Tower Rights-of-Way: The Bristlecone Field Office in March issued a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact approving a 30-year rights-of-way (ROW) for an AT&T, Inc.-proposed cellular tower to be erected

approximately 40 miles west of Ely. Construction is expected to begin this summer in conjunction with a previously approved ROW grant for the construction and operation of a cellular tower to be located near Cherry Creek, Nev.

MINERALS

Mining –



Kinross Bald Mountain Mine (KG-BM): The Bristlecone Field Office on March 31 published a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on a proposal to expand the Bald Mountain Mine North Operations Area (NOA) located about 60 miles northwest of Ely. Publication of the Notice of Intent initiated a 30-day public scoping period that concludes **Monday, May 2, 2022.**

KG-BM is proposing to expand the NOA Plan boundary in five areas from 31,572 acres to 34,997 acres, expand and/or deepen six authorized open pits and develop two new pits, develop three and modify seven authorized rock disposal areas, add inter-pit disturbance to seven mine areas and modify inter-pit disturbance in six mine areas, add ancillary disturbance to three mine areas and modify disturbance in five areas, add process disturbance to the Mooney Mine Area, and develop and modify haul roads within the NOA.

The proposed activities would result in a total increase of approximately 3,969 acres of surface disturbance within the project area boundary for a new end of mine life total surface disturbance of 14,752 acres. The project would affect golden eagle nests and territories. KG-BM is preparing an Eagle Conservation Plan and requesting an incidental take permit for golden eagles in the area they plan to conduct operations. The draft environmental impact statement will analyze any potential impacts to golden eagles.

Virtual public scoping meetings are scheduled from 5pm to 7pm PDT, April 19 and April 21. Registration and other information is available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xAm2g>.

Mackie/Tenacity Mine: The Caliente Field Office has received a complete mine Plan of Operations for the perlite mine located near the South Pahroc Range, about 27 miles west of Caliente. The field office will begin scoping for an environmental assessment after the operator posts an updated bond. The plan update is required by federal regulation. The mine has been operating for decades.

Oil & Gas –

Applications for Permit to Drill: Western Oil Exploration Company has not completed drilling of the Scott Federal #35-1 exploratory well due to Sage grouse timing restrictions.

Geyser Petroleum: The Bristlecone Field Office expects in May to release for 30-day public review and comment a preliminary environmental assessment prepared by Geyser Petroleum, Inc. for an Application for Permit to Drill. The proponent made application to conduct exploratory drilling at #20-1 Pipeline Canyon-Federal oil well located on public lands near Pipeline Canyon, about 12 miles southwest of Ely.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Wilson Creek Term Permit Renewal: The BLM in December 2020 issued 10 final grazing decisions, nine for permittees and one for the Dry Lake Valley Use Area. All 10 decisions received petitions for stay. An Administrative Law Judge granted a stay on one decision, the Dry Lake Valley Use Area which is awaiting a final ruling. The Caliente Field Office in September 2021 issued revised grazing permits in accordance with the final decisions to all permittees. The permit portions for the Dry Lake Valley Use Area remain unchanged pending Administrative Law Judge reviews.

Rangeland Monitoring/Term Permit Renewals: The Caliente Field Office is processing term permit renewals (TPRs) for the Black Hills and Uvada allotments and nearing completion on a preliminary environmental assessment. The field office will begin collecting data for the Lime Mountain allotment TPR later this year. Range staff are conducting field work for drought effects on the following allotments: Rainbow, Lower Riggs, Boulder Spring, Grapevine, Lower Lake East, Buckhorn, Delmar, Pahrnagat East, Mormon Peak, Gourd Spring, Henrie Complex, South Hiko Six Mile.

The Bristlecone Field Office has completed Standards Determination Documents for the Indian George, Stephens Creek, and Sacramento Pass allotments. The Standards Determination for Cave Valley Ranch is anticipated to be completed in summer 2022. The Bristlecone Field Office and Basin and Range National Monument are preparing a TPR for the John Uhalde and Co. outcome-based grazing allotments. Land Health Assessments and Standards Determination Documents for the outcome-based grazing project are anticipated to be completed in spring 2022.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): NRCS-funded projects continue on allotments within the Clover Creek watershed, including fencing, pinyon-juniper tree-thinning, and water improvements.

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Lincoln County Partners Multi-Purpose, Non-Motorized Trail System: The Caliente Field Office is scheduled in summer 2022 to complete both connector and Ella Mountain trails. The trails system is a partnership between the City of Caliente, Lincoln County, Nevada Division of State Parks, BLM Ely District, and the non-profit organizations American Conservation Experience and International Mountain Biking Association.

Highland Range Non-Motorized Trail: The proposed single-track, multi-purpose trail connecting Pioche and Cathedral Gorge State Park is in the pre-contracting phase. Project funding is provided by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.



Multipurpose Sagebrush Discovery Trail Travel and Transportation Management Plan: The Bristlecone Field Office is reviewing input received during the 30-day public review and scoping period. The proposed 2.2-mile, non-motorized trails system would be located on public lands adjacent to Baker, Nev. It would consist of up to two miles of existing two-track roads, closed to motorized vehicles and improved to make them available for hiking, biking, skiing, and walking; construction of approximately 400 feet of new trail and two trailheads, and installation of informational kiosks and interpretive signs, and benches and shade structures. The travel plan and phase one of the project is funded by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

SPECIAL LEGISLATION



Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative: The Partners Working Group in late March reviewed the Archaeological Resources Team's Round 13 rankings. The proposals will now go before the Executive Committee which will make its recommendations to the BLM Nevada State Director. Proposals under the initiative focus on the inventory, evaluation, protection and management of unique archaeological resources in Lincoln County, Nev.

Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act: The Caliente Field Office is reviewing for possible sale eligible parcels previously nominated by Lincoln County. The Notice of Realty Action is planned for publication in the Federal Register this August.

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Contact Chris Hanefeld at (775) 289-1842 or chanefel@blm.gov for more information on these and other projects/programs in the district.