

July/August 2014

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ely District Public Safety and Nuisance Gather Preliminary Environmental Assessment: The BLM Ely District is soliciting public comment on the Ely District Public Safety and Nuisance Gather Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzes the district's need to address potential environmental consequences associated with wild horse management in order to reduce and mitigate public safety concerns along major roadways in and outside HMA/HA boundaries, decrease nuisance animal complaints on private lands, and address management issues of wild horses that reside outside HMA/HA boundaries, in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. The comment period concludes **Wednesday, July 30, 2014.** *(See Page 13 for more information)*

Oil and Gas Exploration and Development: The BLM Ely District is asking the public to review and provide comment on parcels of public land nominated for potential oil and gas exploration and development. The 30-day public comment period concludes **Friday, July 11, 2014.** *(See Page 11 for more information)*

Ash Springs Recreation Site: The closure of a spring-fed soaking pool and the area around it at the Ash Springs Recreation Site, about 100 miles north of Las Vegas, will continue for 2 years, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced in a *Federal Register* notice published **Friday, June 6, 2014.** *(See Page 12 for more information)*

ELY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Ely Resource Management Plan (RMP) is expected to undergo review as a result of a November 2012 Idaho District Court decision on a Western Watershed Project (WWP) challenge of 18 RMPs across six western states. The court examined as "test cases" the Pinedale and Craters of the Moon RMPs prepared by the BLM Pinedale and Twin Falls districts, in Wyoming and Idaho, respectively. The court ruled that BLM must amend the two RMPs to address identified deficiencies. The court dismissed challenges to two other RMPs, leaving 14 RMPs in place pending the outcome of the "test cases." The Ely RMP is one of the 14 remaining RMPs.

Although the RMPs identify major factors in the loss of sagebrush habitat (including energy development and livestock use), WWP is questioning whether the challenged RMPs sufficiently address declining Greater Sage Grouse populations. WWP contends that the RMPs in question do not reference or follow guidance from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the BLM National Sage Grouse Strategy, BLM Special Status Species Policy and conservation assessments. The suit also contends that BLM did not consider/analyze alternatives calling for reduced or no livestock grazing, despite the fact that grazing was found to be a "major contributing factor" to the decline of sage grouse habitat.

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WWP has also filed a motion to consolidate their appeal of the Ely RMP and their appeal of the Cave and Lake Valley Watershed Restoration Environmental Assessment in District Court in Idaho (*see Watershed Analysis*).

The BLM Ely District has begun a scheduled five-year review of the Ely RMP, per the direction of the BLM Nevada State Office.

WATERSHED ANALYSIS

The Western Watershed Project (WWP) in December 2012 appealed the Cave and Lake Valley Watershed Restoration Environmental Assessment's Decision Record for vegetation projects and Final Decision for range projects. In June 2013, WWP withdrew their appeals regarding the watershed restoration plan and instead filed a complaint with the District Court in Idaho, asking that it be consolidated with their case against the Ely District Resource Management Plan. On March 13, 2014, the District Court in Idaho denied WWP's Motion to Consolidate, and transferred the case to the District Court in Nevada.

The Ely District is preparing a watershed restoration plan for the South Spring Valley and Hamblin Valley watersheds. A preliminary environmental assessment (EA) is expected to be released for public comment in spring 2014 and a decision issued in summer 2014.

The BLM is evaluating comments received during the 45-day public comment period for the Newark and Huntington Watershed Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment. The public comment period concluded in December 2013.

The BLM expects in 2014 to release for public review the proposed watershed restoration plans for Toquop Wash and Tule Desert, and Beaver Dam Wash.

Watershed analysis has been completed on the Cave Valley, Lake Valley, Antelope Valley, North Antelope, Gleason Creek, North Spring Valley, Smith Valley, Steptoe A and South Steptoe watersheds.

The BLM Ely District, in collaboration with the USDA Agriculture Research Station and National Resource Conservation Service, is developing Ecological Site State and Transition Models for Major Land Resource Areas 28A and 28B, which will benefit watershed planning and grazing strategies, and vegetation treatments. Trainings are scheduled in spring 2014 to teach agency personnel and the public how to effectively use the models. The project is funded by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

SAGE GROUSE PLANNING

The BLM and Forest Service (FS) are addressing comments received from the cooperating agencies on the Draft Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-regional Greater Sage-grouse Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment and Draft Final Environmental Impact Statement (PDLUP/DFEIS). ~~The Administrative Draft of the Final Environmental Impact Statement is tentatively scheduled to be sent to the cooperating agencies, BLM and FS offices for review in mid-June 2014. The~~

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PLUP/Final EIS is should be available scheduled for release to the public in summer October-November 2014. The Record of Decision is expected in January-February 2015.

The ~~DLUP~~PLUP/DEIS-FEIS considers six possible management alternatives for maintaining and increasing habitat for Greater Sage-~~grouse~~Grouse on BLM and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest lands in Nevada and Northeastern California. More than 17 million acres of Greater Sage-~~grouse~~Grouse habitat are managed by the BLM and Forest Service within the sub-regional area.

In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that listing the Greater Sage-~~grouse~~Grouse as a threatened or endangered species was “warranted, but precluded.” The FWS determined that current and potential threats to Greater Sage-~~grouse~~Grouse habitat and inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms pose “a significant threat to the Greater Sage-Grouse now and in the foreseeable future.”

The Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-~~grouse~~Grouse EIS is one of 15 EISs that are being conducted as part of BLM’s and Forest Service’s west-wide National Greater Sage-Grouse planning effort, to provide additional measures to maintain and increase Greater Sage-~~grouse~~Grouse habitat on public lands to preclude the birds listing.

ENERGY

Natural Gas-fired Energy Development -

Toquop Energy Project: The BLM has issued a Notice to Proceed to Toquop Energy, Inc., for a natural gas-fired power plant. Construction can start once the proponent satisfies conditions outlined in the Notice. The BLM is currently working on a right-of-way (ROW) application for project-related water development in the Tule Valley. The ROW is expected to be completed by late summer 2014.

The BLM issued rights-of-way (ROW) for a natural gas-fired plant in 2003. The following year, Toquop Energy, Inc. filed an application to amend the 2003 grant to allow for construction of a coal fired plant, instead. In January 2010, Toquop Energy, Inc. notified the BLM that the company intended to withdraw the application to amend the ROW and proceed with the gas-fired plant. Project partner Sithe Global withdrew from the project in August 2012. The new partner is EWP Renewable Corporation.

Toquop Energy, Inc. is simultaneously pursuing purchasing lands necessary to construct the plant and ancillary facilities. The Ely Resource Management Plan provides for the disposal of up to 640 acres for power plant development. The BLM will dispose of no more than 200 acres because of a conflict with the Western Wide Energy Corridor.

Wind Energy Development -

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Ely Wind Mountain: Cherry Creek Wind is rewriting their Plan of Development for a proposed project in the Robinson Summit area following an April 10, 2014, pre-application meeting with the BLM.

In March 2011 Cherry Creek Wind purchased from Nevada Wind the monitoring rights-of-way for five project sites located in the Antelope, Cherry Creek, Schell Creek, Robinson Summit and North Egan mountain ranges. Nevada Wind is retaining five-percent of the project, which could be sold to another company. The right-of-way grants for the Schell Creek and North Egan project sites have expired. Processing of any new requests will be deferred until the sage grouse land use plan amendments are accomplished in fall 2014.

Wilson Creek Wind Project: The Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) on April 28, 2014, affirmed the BLM decision rejecting a Wilson Creek Wind Company, LLC, application to develop a wind generation project on public lands in Lincoln County, about 20 miles northeast of Pioche. The IBLA also denied Wilson Creek Wind's request for stay. Consequently, the BLM will continue to close the case file.

Spring Valley Wind: The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is reviewing the first year of operation mortality data to analyze if the project is exceeding mortality thresholds and mitigation measures need to be implemented. The TAC provides advice and recommends to the BLM on the development and implementation of effective measures to monitor, avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to avian and bat species.

Solar Energy Development -

Dry Lake Valley North Solar Energy Zone: The BLM Ely District, Caliente Field Office is reviewing comments received on a draft assessment of unavoidable impacts associated with the development of the 25,069-acre Dry Lake Valley North Solar Energy Zone (SEZ) in Lincoln County, Nev.

The assessment, which will help in the development of a regional mitigation strategy for the Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, is available at the BLM Caliente Field Office, 1400 South Front Street, Caliente; BLM Ely District Office, 702 North Industrial Way, Ely, and online at

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office/blm_programs/energy/dry_lake_valley_north/project_documents.html

The Dry Lake Valley North SEZ Regional Mitigation Strategy is expected to be completed in summer 2014 and will guide actions designed to compensate for the long-term loss of resource values in the SEZ.

The 25,069-acre Dry Lake Valley North SEZ, located in north Dry Lake Valley about 45 miles northeast of Alamo, is one of five solar energy zones in Nevada. In all, there are 17 SEZ in six western states, Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah. If fully built, projects within the designated zones could produce as much as 23,700

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megawatts of solar energy, sufficient to serve approximately 7 million homes. The SEZ program also provides for solar development on about 19 million acres outside the zones or within so-called “variance zones,” on a case-by-case basis. The program includes a framework for regional mitigation plans and excludes nearly 79-million acres of public lands deemed inappropriate for solar development to protect key natural and cultural resources.

Hydro Energy -

White Pine Pumped Storage Project: Gridflex Energy, LLC, in September 2013 submitted a preliminary permit application for the White Pine Pumped Storage Project facility. Gridflex and White Pine Water Power, LLC, are proposing through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to construct a stored water pumping facility north of Ely, Nev. The proposed White Pine Pumped Storage Project would generate utilize three generators with 300 MW total capacity to generate 919,800 megawatt-hours, annually.

A permit is issued only to allow the permit holder to investigate the feasibility of the project while the permittee conducts investigations and secures necessary data to determine the feasibility of the proposed project and to prepare a license application. FERC has given the initial approvals to begin working with the BLM to develop a plan of development, begin the NEPA process, and develop natural resource and economic data. FERC will lead the project.

Electrical Transmission Development -

ON Line Project: Reclamation is in the final phases and development of a restoration monitoring plan is underway. The high-voltage line was formally dedicated in January 2014. The line connects NV Energy’s northern and southern electrical grids and provides for the transmission of renewable energy was.

Trans West Express Project: The BLM expects to make the final environmental impact statement available to the public in late 2014. The proposed 500 kilovolt electrical transmission line would extend from south-central Wyoming, through Colorado and Utah, to southern Nevada. The power line would enter Nevada through the southeast corner of Lincoln County. Three routes are proposed. The BLM Wyoming State Office is the lead office for the project.

The Zephyr Project: The BLM is scheduling public meetings and selecting a contractor to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Electric Transmission Line Project that would originate in the Wheatland/Chugwater area of Wyoming and extend 950-plus miles to Eldorado Valley, south of Las Vegas. BLM Wyoming received the application and Plan of Development in March 2012.

FIRE

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Fire Management –

Abnormally dry conditions are occurring statewide. Ely District Fire Management reminds area residents to prepare their home for wildfire and to recreate fire-safely. Learn more at www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/ely_field_office.html or www.livingwithfire.info/.

Fuels Reduction and Restoration –

Pleasant Valley Prescribed Burn: The BLM Ely District is continuing a 3,900-acre prescribed burn in Pleasant Valley, about 80 miles northeast of Ely, weather conditions permitting. Smoke from the fire will be visible to residents of Pleasant Valley, Nev., and Ibapah, Gandy, and Partoun, Utah, and there will be an increase in fire vehicle traffic. The burn will target approximately 750 acres of the total 3,900-acre project. Since 2010, the BLM has completed 2,100 acres of the project. The Pleasant Valley Prescribed Burn is part of the larger Kern Mountains Landscape Restoration Project that combines prescribed fire with mechanical treatments to improve watershed health and native habitat, which benefits area wildlife such as elk, mule deer and sage grouse. The project also reduces the risk of a catastrophic wildfire. The project is being implemented in accordance with the BLM Ely District Resource Management Plan.

Egan and Johnson Basins Restoration Project: The BLM is reviewing the public's input on a proposed fuels reduction and habitat improvement project in Egan and Johnson basins, about 5 miles west of Cherry Creek, Nev. A preliminary environmental assessment is expected in September 2014. The proposed project would provide for vegetative diversity and improve habitat for wildlife, such as greater sage-grouse, as well as reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire by selectively thinning pinion-pine and juniper. Up to 50-percent of the approximately 14,000-acre project area would be treated using manual and mechanical treatment methods, and prescribed fire. The project is consistent with the BLM Ely District Resource Management Plan.

Duck Creek Basin Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project: The BLM is reviewing public input on a proposed fuels reduction and habitat improvement project in Duck Creek Basin, about 15 miles northeast of Ely, Nev. A preliminary environmental assessment is anticipated in fall 2014. The proposed project would provide for vegetative diversity and improve habitat for wildlife, such as greater sage-grouse, mule deer, and elk, as well as reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire by selectively thinning pinion-pine and juniper, and treating sagebrush communities. Up to 13,000 acres of the approximately 29,000-acre project area would be treated using manual and mechanical treatment methods, and prescribed fire. The project is consistent with the BLM Ely District Resource Management Plan.

Overland Pass/Big Wash: A preliminary environmental assessment is anticipated in late summer 2014. The project, which would be implemented in the Overland Pass area of the Ruby Mountains about 80 miles northwest of Ely, is a collaborative effort by the BLM Ely District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Ruby Mountain Ranger District; and Nevada Department of Wildlife. The project would provide for vegetative

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diversity and improve habitat for Greater sage-grouse, mule deer, elk and pronghorn antelope, as well as reduce the risk of catastrophic wildland fire by selectively thinning pinion-juniper from sagebrush communities. Approximately 17,000 acres of the 40,000-acre project area would be treated using prescribed fire, and manual and mechanical treatments.

Aspen and Sagebrush Steppe Joint Restoration Project with Great Basin National Park: Implementation of the collaborative project between the BLM and Great Basin National Park began in November 2013. When completed, the project will have restored about 1,000 acres of Aspen and sagebrush communities in and around Box Canyon and Kiouas Basin, in White Pine County, Nev. It will have combined prescribed fire use with mechanical treatments. Project funding comes from Round 11 of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

Combs Creek: The White Pine County Wildlife Advisory Board has received funding through NDOW's heritage fund program and implementation is expected in mid-July 2014. The project would be located in south Butte Valley, about 10 miles northwest of Ely, Nev., and would reduce fuel loading and improve Greater sage-grouse habitat by selectively thinning pinion-juniper from sagebrush communities. In all, the BLM would treat 4,500 to 7,000 acres of the 23,000-acre project area.

Pioche and Caselton Wildland Urban Interface Project: All major project components have been completed. Remaining slash piles will be burned in fall 2014, as weather conditions allow. The 11,300-acre project designed to improve habitat and protect area residents from catastrophic wildfire was funded by the fuels program and Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

Patterson Pass Sage Grouse Habitat Improvement Project: Hand thinning is expected to resume in summer 2014 and will be followed in the fall by chaining. Approximately 3,500 acres of the nearly 4,800 acre thinning area have been treated so far. Project completion is expected by October 2014. The project is the first implementation of the Cave and Lake Valley Watershed Restoration Plan. The project is funded through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, Health Land Initiative, Lincoln County Game Board, and the Mule Deer Foundation.

Jakes Valley Sagebrush Restoration Project: The project is on hold. The project is designed to improve or restore sagebrush communities, livestock and wildlife habitat, and watershed health while reducing fuel loading by restoring Wyoming sagebrush sites in and around Jakes Wash, 20 miles west of Ely, Nev. The BLM would restore land health by mowing up to 2,000 acres of the total project area, and thinning pinion and juniper across the project area, creating a mosaic that provides for wildlife edge areas. The BLM would seed about 60-percent of the treated area with a mix of perennial grasses and forbs.

Stonehouse Prescribed Burn: The BLM Ely District this spring burned 444 acres of slash piles remaining from a pinion-juniper tree-thinning project near Lages Junction and Schellbourne Pass in the Schell Creek Range, about 70 miles north of Ely. The

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Stonehouse Prescribed Burn reduced hazardous fuels accumulations to protect the watershed from potentially large, lethal wildfires; treated fuels to improve health and restore ecological stability, reduced or halted the encroachment of pinion-pine and Utah juniper trees to restore and promote wildlife habitat resiliency, and recycled nutrients and enhanced species diversity of fire-adapted and fire-dependent vegetation.

Shingle Creek Aspen Restoration Project: Weather permitting, the BLM is scheduled to burn white fir slash piles in winter 2014-2015. The aspen restoration project is located on the west slope of the Snake Range near Great Basin National Park, about 40 miles southeast of Ely, Nev. Removing the conifers will promote aspen regeneration and health.

North Antelope Habitat Restoration: The 12,000-acre habitat improvement project located on the north end of the Antelope Range, about 70 miles northeast of Ely, Nev., is nearly 60-percent complete. Lop and scatter pinion-juniper thinning is scheduled to continue in mid-July 2014.

Cold Springs Project: Pinion-juniper thinning is ongoing, time and funding permitting. The BLM completed approximately 80 acres of thinning during summer 2013, and sold nearly 100 cords of firewood from the project by competitive auction in September 2013. The BLM burned the remaining slash this winter. BLM expects to continue the project over the next three years through a contract where the contractor may have the option to utilize the firewood or make it available to the public. . The project goal is to provide a hazardous fuel break and demonstration area depicting various pinion-juniper thinning densities.

LANDS & REALTY

Sacramento Pass Withdrawal Extension: The Public Land Order extending the withdrawal for 20 years was signed on May 29, 2014, by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Lands and Minerals. The withdrawal excludes the 464.93 acres of public land from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the United States mining laws. The extension continues the protection of the resource value and capital investment made by the BLM in developing and improving the area for outdoor recreation and for public health and safety.

The Sacramento Pass Recreation Area was initially withdrawn in 1994 for 20 years by Public Land Order No. 7060. That withdrawal will expire on June 2, 2014, unless a withdrawal extension is approved.

Lincoln and White Pine County Land Disposals identified in the Lincoln and White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Acts, and Ely Resource Management Plan:

- White Pine County Land Disposals: Two Federal Register Notice packages are currently being processed at NSO: Squaw Peak land sale (Egan FO) and Mosier Canyon land sales (Schell FO).

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- Lincoln County Land Disposals: The Ely District, Caliente Field Office is working with Lincoln County representatives to streamline land disposals to those that are most saleable. Several land sales are currently being processed by the Caliente FO, as well as Round 3 for the Lincoln County Commissioners.

MINERALS

Active Mining Plans –

Gold Rock Mine Project: The BLM is reviewing public input and developing a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The BLM expects to make the DEIS available for public review and comment in July 2014. The 30-day public comment period will include public meetings.

The Midway Gold U.S., Inc.-proposed Gold Rock Mine Project would be located on BLM-administered lands and consist of an open pit; a heap leach pad and associated ponds, process facility, and refinery; a mill; a carbon-in-leach (CIL) plant; waste rock dumps; a tailings storage facility; and ancillary facilities. Electrical power would be obtained from Mt. Wheeler Power. For the Gold Rock Project, a 69-kV transmission line would be extended from the Pan Mine approximately 6 miles across the valley to tie into the west side of the Gold Rock Project electric system. A county road that currently passes through the project area would be relocated onto existing county and BLM roads. The proposed project's total surface disturbance would be approximately 3,749 acres. The BLM has identified the following preliminary issues: loss of habitat for wild horses and wildlife, including greater sage-grouse and mule deer; socioeconomics; air quality; cultural resources; impact on view shed; and loss of access to hunting.

Additional information is available online at https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do. For more information, contact Dan Netcher, BLM Ely District Project Manager - Renewable Energy, at (775) 289-1872 or dnetcher@blm.gov

Pan Mine Project: The BLM-Ely District, Egan Field Office on Friday, Dec. 20, 2013, issued the Record of Decision for Midway Gold U.S., Inc.'s Pan Mine Project to be located in the Pancake Mountain Range in White Pine County, Nev., about 50 miles west of Ely or 22 miles southeast of Eureka. The decision allows the mining operator to construct and operate a new heap leach gold mine that would consist of two primary open pits, three satellite pits, one heap leach pad, three rock disposal areas and a transmission line. The total surface disturbance would be approximately 3,301 acres.

The BLM decision was to select the Southwest Power Line and Waste Rock Disposal Site Design alternatives with applicant-committed environmental protection measures and the mitigation measures specified in Sections 4.2 through 4.18 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Southwest Power Line Alternative was developed to avoid potential impacts to Greater Sage-Grouse from the Proposed Action

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power line. The Waste Rock Disposal Site Design Alternative would involve a conventional waste rock disposal design and move waste rock away from more important Greater Sage-Grouse habitat in order to minimize impacts.

An appeal and petition for stay were filed by the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation on Jan. 21, 2014. The BLM filed their opposition to the petition for stay on Jan. 30, 2014.

Bald Mountain Mine: The BLM is finalizing alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a Barrick Gold US, Inc., proposal to expand the Bald Mountain Mine located in White Pine County, about 70 miles northwest of Ely and 30 miles northeast of Eureka, Nev. The DEIS is expected to be released for public review later this year. The proposal calls for the expansion of existing mine facilities in the North Operations Area Project, expansion of the existing Casino/Winrock Plan of Operations and incorporating it into the North Operations Area Project, and establishment of a South Operations Area Project that would encompass and expand the existing Yankee and Alligator Ridge mine sites. Expanding the North Operations Area Project and incorporating the Casino/Winrock Plan of Operations into the North Operations Area Project would increase the total surface disturbance from 9,124 acres to 13,704 acres and add four new heap leach pads. Establishing the South Operations Area Project would increase the total surface disturbance from 960 acres to 3,643 acres. The South Operation Area Project Plan of Operations would include an electrical transmission line and an access road between the North and South operations areas.

Hogum Mining District: Two small mine operators are mining for gold on the slopes of Hogum disturbing approximately 15 acres.

Notices and Exploration –

The Meadow Bay Gold Corporation Plan of Operation for Exploration was approved on March 19, 2014. The Environmental Assessment (EA) was finalized and the Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact were also signed. Meadow Bay plans to drill 69 exploratory holes in and around the Atlanta Mine site.

The BLM is reviewing comments received on the preliminary environmental assessment (EA), which analyzed impacts of Aurion Gold's intended exploration for gold at Logan Pass in the Mt. Irish Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The comment period concluded in March 2014.

The BLM has reviewed comments received on the preliminary environmental assessment (EA) for the Gold Springs Exploration Project. The public comment period concluded in February 2014. Gold Springs, LLC, a subsidiary of High Desert Gold in May 2013 submitted a Plan of Operations. The plan proposes to disturb up to 100 acres. Gold Springs is currently conducting disturbance on two sites of 4.9 and 2.7 acres, respectively.

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The BLM in January 2014 authorized Midway Gold, U.S., to expand their gold exploration at the Gold Rock Project in southern Newark Valley. The decision allows Midway to increase its authorized exploration disturbance from 140 acres to up to 267 acres of public lands.

American Vanadium US Inc. has submitted to the BLM Battle Mountain District a Plan of Operations to mine vanadium for the Gibellini Mine in the Fish Creek (Mountain) Range. The Battle Mountain District is initiating the EIS process.

Infrastructure Materials Corporation (IMC) withdrew their Blue Nose Peak Plan of Operations in December 2013. IMC was previously approved to conduct 88 acres of exploration of a limestone deposit at Blue Nose Peak, in southern Lincoln County. IMC is currently bonded for the 12.8 acres of existing disturbance and is no longer authorized for any new disturbance or activity.

Mineral Materials –

The Ely District sells mineral materials from 14 Community pits and through exclusive sale permits.

Oil & Gas Exploration/Development –

The BLM Ely District is asking the public to review and provide comment on parcels of public land nominated for potential oil and gas exploration and development. The 30-day public comment period concludes **Friday, July 11, 2014.**

The BLM received requests to lease 193 nominated parcels of public land, totaling 406,653 acres. The parcels have been analyzed for potential impacts in the preliminary environmental assessment (EA), in accordance with the Oil & Gas Leasing Reform mandated in 2010. Lease stipulations identified in the Ely Resource Management Plan (2008) are attached to some parcels to help protect certain resources. The preliminary EA is available for public review at: <https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage¤tPageId=52317>.

Interested individuals should address all written comments to the BLM Ely District Office, HC 33 Box 33500, Ely, NV 89301, Attn: Travis Young or fax them to Young at (775) 289-1910. Comments may also be submitted electronically at <https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/planAndProjectSite.do?methodName=dispatchToPatternPage¤tPageId=52318>.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at

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any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

A Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale is scheduled on December 9, 2014. Additional information about the sale is available at

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/prog/minerals/leasable_minerals/oil_gas/oil_and_gas_leasing.html

For more information, contact Travis Young, at the BLM Ely District, at (775) 289-1845.

NOXIOUS/INVASIVE WEED MANAGEMENT

The BLM Ely District is implementing the 2010 Integrated Weed Management Plan that provides for the inventory, treatment, and monitoring of non-native and noxious invasive weeds. The plan includes weed prevention procedures and treatment options, including herbicides, for use in and outside of Wilderness; as well as outreach and education measures. (Use of herbicides in threatened and endangered species habitat requires consultation.) The BLM works with private landowners, non-profit organizations and local, state and federal agencies through 10 Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs).

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

District staff continues to monitor and assess rangeland conditions associated with forage and water availability and coordinate with permittees regarding grazing management actions associated with drought conditions.

The field offices in January 2014 sent drought information letters to grazing permittees. The letters inform permittees about the abnormally dry conditions, in addition to providing an opportunity to plan for changes in the 2014 grazing season, if necessary.

Staff continues to fully process and renew term grazing permits (TPR), plan range improvement projects (riparian and spring developments, fences, and more), and process grazing applications and transfers. Links to documents are located on the BLM website at: https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Ash Springs Recreation Site: The closure of a spring-fed soaking pool and the area around it at the Ash Springs Recreation Site, about 100 miles north of Las Vegas, will continue for 2 years, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced in a *Federal Register* notice published Friday, June 6, 2014.

The temporary 2-year closure of the area along U.S. Highway 93 in Lincoln County is necessary because extensive modification of the man-made pool by public users has made it unsafe and is degrading habitat for endangered species.

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During the closure period the BLM will consider the possibilities for managing the recreation site, whether repairs to the pool are feasible and if traditional uses are impairing habitat for the Federally-listed endangered White River springfish and three listed BLM Nevada Sensitive Species. Substantial repairs to the site would require additional funding, planning and coordination, which the BLM would analyze in an environmental assessment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act incorporating public comments.

The area was closed on an emergency basis last summer. The closure is necessary to allow BLM the time to assess the damage and determine the best course of action. The publication of the Notice of Temporary Closure in the Federal Register signals the start of the 2-year closure.

Sacramento Pass Recreation Area: The Sacramento Pass Recreation Area will remain closed to the public until late summer 2014 as improvements are made to improve visitor access and safety. The popular area, located alongside U.S. Highway 6/50, about 45 miles east of Ely, was closed in July 2013. Improvements to the site include new campsite designs and furnishings, sun shelters and toilet facility, re-graded roadways and a reconstructed fishing pond that will feature an accessible fishing deck. The improved facilities will more closely comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and be designed to be environmentally friendly, where practical.

The recreation area was initially constructed in 1993 with federal highway funding obtained through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A legacy for Users program. It is being reconstructed through Round 12 of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, or SNPLMA. The reconstruction is expected to cost about \$375,000.

Travel Management Planning: The BLM Ely District, Egan Field Office is preparing a plan for approximately 1,428,000 acres within the Huntington, Jakes, Long, Newark and Ruby valleys, in White Pine County. The BLM will release the draft plan for public comment.

WILD HORSES

The BLM Ely District is soliciting public comment on the Ely District Public Safety and Nuisance Gather Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA). The comment period concludes **Wednesday, July 30**.

The EA analyzes the district's need to address potential environmental consequences associated with wild horse management in order to reduce and mitigate public safety concerns along major roadways in and outside HMA/HA boundaries, decrease nuisance animal complaints on private lands, and address management issues of wild horses that reside outside HMA/HA boundaries, in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

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The Ely District Public Safety and Nuisance Gather Preliminary Environmental Assessment is available for public review at <http://on.doi.gov/1lx856K>.

Interested individuals should address all written comments to the BLM Ely District Office, HC 33 Box 33500, Ely, NV 89301, Attn: Rosemary Thomas, Ely District Manager, or fax them to Thomas at (775) 289-1910. Comments may also be submitted electronically at BLM_NV_EYDO_NuisanceHorsesEA@blm.gov. Email comments sent to any other email address will not be considered.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

For more information, contact Ben Noyes, BLM Ely District wild horse and burro specialist, at (775) 289-1800.

WILDERNESS

Wilderness Plans: The Draft Bristlecone and Goshute Canyon Wilderness Management Plan is available for public comment through August 7, 2014.

The Becky Peak and Government Peak Wilderness Management Plan was signed on May 30, 2014.

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics: The BLM is performing project by project inventory updates for Lands with Wilderness Character (e.g. Oil & Gas Lease Sale).

SPECIAL LEGISLATION

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA): The SNPLMA Partners Working Group (PWG) and Executive Committee (EC) in fall 2013 reviewed comments received from the public regarding preliminary recommendations for SNPLMA Round 14 expenditures and a proposed expenditure of Lincoln County Land Act (LCLA) funds for an environmentally-sensitive land acquisition in Elko County. The PWG and EC, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, accepted the preliminary recommendation and forwarded it to the Secretary of the Interior for approval. The Secretary signed a Decision Memorandum on Nov. 12, 2013, approving \$8,731,949 in Round 14 funding. Round 15 will be open for nominations in September 2014. The Executive Committee includes the regional directors of the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester, and the BLM Nevada State Director.

Two projects were approved in the BLM Ely District: 1) A Conservation Initiative project entitled *Environmentally Responsible Closure of Abandoned Mine Safety Hazards in Lincoln County* (\$400,000), and 2) an Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project entitled *South Steptoe Valley Sagebrush Habitat Restoration* (\$588,000).

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District Update

Lincoln County Archaeological Initiative (LCAI): The Archaeological Resources Team (ART) is scheduled to meet on July 9, 2014, to finalize Round 8 priorities. The priorities will be presented to the Partners Working Group (PWG) and Executive Committee (EC) in fall 2014. A request for proposals is scheduled to be published in January 2015.

ART in March 2014 ranked Round 7 proposals and developed a recommendation for funding. The PWG reviewed and approved the recommendation on April 29, 2014. The EC approved the recommendation on June 10, 2014. Proposals under this initiative focus on the inventory, evaluation, protection and management of unique archaeological resources in Lincoln County.

Funding for LCAI comes from revenues generated through the sale of public lands identified for disposal in the Lincoln County Lands Act and existing land-use plans. The Act created a special account in which 85-percent of the revenues from land sales are deposited. Funds in the special account may be used for a number of activities, including the study of archaeological resources in Lincoln County. The remaining funds are distributed to the State of Nevada (5-percent) and Lincoln County (10-percent).

To date the BLM has approved \$6,115,992 for archaeological projects in Lincoln County. Expenditures approved include documenting Paiute and Shoshone rock art sites, and oral histories and practices; archaeological site inventories; obsidian toolstone research; settlement pattern studies; educational brochures and websites; and upgrade of archaeological collections by inventorying, re-marking and repackaging of artifacts collected from public lands in Lincoln County.

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Contact Chris Hanefeld, BLM Ely District public affairs specialist, at (775) 289-1842 or chanefel@blm.gov for more information on these and other projects/programs in the BLM Ely District.