

**Bureau of Land Management
Ely District**

District Manager's Update

September 2024



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ENERGY

Electrical Transmission Development

TransCanyon Cross-Tie Project

The BLM Fillmore (Utah) Field Office is preparing a final environmental impact statement scheduled for release in fall 2024. The 45-day comment period for the proposed 214-mile 500-kV transmission project closed Jan. 9, 2024, following a 14-day extension.

The proposed project would connect the Clover Substation in central Utah with the Robinson Summit Substation in White Pine County. Responding to Tribal concerns, one alternative provides for a southern route through northern Lincoln and Nye counties where it will follow the SWIP South corridor northward to the Robinson Summit substation, avoiding Spring Valley. More information, including maps and other planning documents, are available at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2018636/510>.



SWIP North Project

The BLM Elko District is the designated lead for an authorized 1,500 MW 500 kV transmission line connecting the Midpoint substation north of Twin Falls, Idaho, to the Robinson substation northwest of Ely, where the line would connect with SWIP South. The LS Power line would extend 257 miles on BLM-administered lands in the Twin Falls, Elko, and Ely districts. The project is awaiting a notice to proceed pending cultural inventories, sage grouse mitigation, and ethnographic studies. The review of Terracon's Geotech Cultural Report is complete. The BLM is reviewing the main cultural report and site forms. The BLM has responded to the Bio Characterization report.

Robinson Substation Expansion

Third-party contractor POWER Engineers is preparing a preliminary environmental assessment analyzing proposals to construct a 1.3-mile transmission line connecting SWIP North to the Robinson substation west of Ely, Nev., and expand the substation by 55 acres to accommodate future electrical transmission. A preliminary EA is expected this Fall.

LS Power applied for the 1.3-mile transmission line in January 2023. In June 2023, LS Power subsidiary Great Basin Transmission, LLC applied to expand the substation. The BLM in September 2023 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Great Basin Transmission for the Robinson Summit Expansion / Interconnect Project. Cooperating agency invitation letters were sent in March 2024. POWER Engineers has completed a cultural resource inventory. Raptor Nest Inventory Results and Habitat Characterization Report have been submitted to the BLM. Acoustic monitoring was completed in July, and dark and pale kangaroo mouse surveys are on-going.

Burnt Springs Distribution Service Line

The BLM has received an application and revised proposed Plan of Development from Great Basin Transmission for a 500 kV Fixed Series Capacitor and a half-mile long 7.2kV distribution service line on approximately 15 acres of federally managed land, about 18 miles west of Panaca, Nev. The project has been pre-scoped internally and Raptor Nest inventory results received. The Project has been pre-scoped internally and an IDT established.

Green Link North



A draft Environmental Impact Statement and Resource Management Plan Amendments are expected to be published in mid-September 2024. The BLM Nevada State Office on July 16, 2024 conducted formal government-to-government Tribal coordination. The 30-day public scoping period concluded April 10, 2024. A Tribal Working Group meeting held August 6. The BLM re-scoped the Greenlink North Transmission Project to evaluate a new 201 mile

long by three-mile-wide utility corridor in which the project would be located. There is currently no designated utility corridor between Ely and Yerington, Nev. There is no change to NV Energy's stated need for the project. Additional details are available at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2017033/510>

Renewable Energy Development

Lonely Road Solar Project

The BLM in mid-August received an application from Engie Energy for the proposed Lonely Road Solar Project to be constructed on 7,854 acres of the public lands in White River Valley. The Project proposes a fenced 600MW solar facility with BESS, substation, and O&M building and a 17.5-mile 345kV Gen-Tie line.

White Pine Pumped Storage

White Pine Waterpower, LLC, a subsidiary of rPlus Hydro, has filed a final license application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for a closed-loop pumped storage hydropower facility. The proposed facility, which would be constructed in White Pine County north of Ely, received FAST 41 authority from FERC in March 2023. The White Pine Pumped Storage facility would provide up to 1,000 megawatts (MW) of electrical generating capability with an overall energy storage capacity of 8,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) per day by moving water between an upper and a lower reservoir to store the energy for later use. A new 25-mile, 345-kV single-circuit transmission line would extend from the project to the Robinson Summit substation. FERC will begin an environmental review and licensing process for the project with local, state, and federal agencies.

The Bristlecone Field office is leading a Technical Working Group for wildlife that consists of representatives from the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife, White Pine County, rPlus Energies and Sagebrush Ecological Technical Team. rPlus Hydro on July 19, 2024, submitted a revised Plan of Development for a hydrogeologic investigation. The BLM will prepare an environmental assessment for public review and comment.

White Pine Pumped Storage Hydrogeologic Evaluation

White Pine Waterpower, LLC, a subsidiary of rPlus Hydro, has applied to conduct an hydrogeologic evaluation that would inform the larger White Pine Pumped Storage project (see above). The Bristlecone Field Office is preparing a preliminary environmental assessment.

Pantheon Solar Development Project



The BLM in October 2023 segregated for two-years public lands proposed for use by the Pantheon Solar Development Project, preventing the land from being sold or subject to new mining claims while BLM processes the application. The project proposes the use of 2,751.5 acres of Bristlecone Field Office-managed lands south of U.S. Highway 50 in Jakes Valley, about 15 miles west of Ely, Nev. If approved, the project could generate up to 400 megawatts of solar energy.

The BLM is working with the proponent on a Variance Factor Analysis Report (VFAR) as outlined in the October 2012 Approved Resource Management Plan Amendments/ Record of Decision (ROD) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States. The proponent conducted a public meeting in January 2024 with follow-up presentations to the White Pine County Natural Resources Committee and county commissioners. The public input period concluded in March 2024. The BLM Nevada State Director has reviewed the Final VFAR package, recommending its approval, and forwarded it to the BLM Renewable Energy Coordination Office for review and approval.

The Bristlecone Field office is leading a Technical Working Group for wildlife that consists of representatives from the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Nevada Department of Wildlife. Wildlife survey reports are under review with the BLM. The BLM has issued a fieldwork authorization to conduct a paleontological survey.



Pantheon 2 Solar Development Project

Arevia Power in August 2024 submitted an application proposing a fenced 200-megawatt solar facility across two sites with an O&M building, MET tower, five-mile road, and 230kV or 500kV Gen-tie line to the proposed Pantheon Solar substation. The Project proposed on 1,293 acres in Jakes Valley is adjacent to the Pantheon Solar Development Project (see above).

Stagecoach Wind LLC Type 3

Processing of the application is currently on pause per request of Arevia Power. In September 2023, the BLM set aside lands for Arevia Power's proposed Stagecoach Wind Project, a planned 600-megawatt installation that would be located in south Newark Valley, about 40 miles west of Ely or 18 miles east of Eureka, Nev.

The announcement set aside nearly 70,000 acres in the project area for two years from appropriation under the public land laws, including location under the Mining Law, but not the Mineral Leasing Act or the Materials Act, to prevent new mining claims from interfering with project review or development. Existing claims are not affected. The action was taken prior to

the BLM beginning the environmental analysis of the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act. If completed, the proposed project would be the second and largest wind generation facility in Nevada. More at <https://www.permits.performance.gov/permitting-project/fast-41-covered-projects/stagecoach-wind>

Paleontology and cultural resource inventories are complete. The paleontology survey found nothing of note.

Samantha Solar (Balanced Rock)



The BLM in July 2024 segregated for two-years public lands proposed for use by the Samantha Solar Development Project, preventing the land from being sold or subject to new mining claims while BLM processes the application. The project proposes the use of 2,893.30 acres of Bristlecone Field Office-managed lands south of U.S. Highway 50 in Jakes Valley, about 15 miles west of Ely, Nev. If approved, the project could generate up to 600 megawatts of solar energy.

A Tribal coordination meeting was held in April 2024 at the Ely District Office. A public meeting was conducted in August 2024. The Bristlecone Field office is leading a Technical Working Group for wildlife that consists of representatives from the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Nevada Department of Wildlife.



Wind and Solar Applications



The Bristlecone Field Office continues receiving applications for solar and wind testing, and development. Development is prohibited within Greater Sage Grouse Priority Habitat under the 2015 Greater Sage Grouse Amendment. Testing is allowed on small, individual sites. Disposition of applications is starting with subsequent NEPA being developed and decision process on testing applications beginning.

LANDS & REALTY

Lincoln County Water District Rights-of-Way

The Caliente Field Office in fiscal year 2024 will begin work on a Lincoln County Water District Plan of Development for a main pipeline and delivery lines to transport groundwater to Lincoln County Lands Act disposal lands near Mesquite. The Lincoln County Power District has also proposed access roads and a power line to support the water project. The field office will conduct public scoping for an environmental assessment to amend existing, or issue new rights-of-way, in accordance with the Lincoln County Lands Act Groundwater and Utility Development Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision (2008).

CalTech DSA-2000 Radio Telescope Array Project

The Bristlecone Field Office has established a wildlife working group to analyze a CalTech proposal to erect a Radio Telescope Array Project (DSA-2000) on approximately 63,250 acres of the public lands in north Spring Valley, about 15 miles north of the proposed Bahsahwahbee National Monument boundary. Wildlife working group members are the Nevada Department of Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team, and California Institute of Technology (CalTech)

CalTech submitted the Right-of-Way application in September 2023. An amendment to the Plan of Development was submitted in January 2024. The BLM conducted formal Tribal Consultation with the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe and the Ely Shoshone Tribe during a site visit in May 2024.

The Bristlecone Field office is leading a Biological Working Group for wildlife that consists of representatives from the BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Nevada Department of Wildlife. Biological study plans and wildlife survey reports are under review with the BLM. A cultural resource inventory is underway.

MINERALS

Mining

Kinross Bald Mountain Mine (KG-BM)

The BLM on July 8, 2024, signed the Record of Decision. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) signed the Record of Decision a day later. The USFWS issued an Eagle Take Permit on Aug. 8 and the BLM signed a Notice to Proceed on Aug. 20, 2024.

The KG Mining Inc. Juniper Project modifies and expands operations on BLM-administered lands within the North Operations Area (NOA) of the existing Bald Mountain Mine, resulting in approximately 4,000 acres of new surface disturbance and extension of the NOA mine life by 11 years.



The BLM's selected and preferred alternative, Alternative A, was developed in close coordination with the Nevada Department of Wildlife and USFWS. It minimizes and avoids impacts to existing mule deer migration corridors within the expansion area and provides mitigation measures for impacts to Greater Sage Grouse. The USFWS intends to issue an Eagle Take Permit. The final EIS is available online at <https://go.usa.gov/xAm2g>.

NevGold USA, Limousine Butte EA

The BLM is preparing a final environmental assessment. The 30-day public comment period on the preliminary EA concluded in June 2024. The proposed project would be located on public land in White Pine County, about 65 miles north of Ely. NevGold USA is proposing a project

area of 16,455 acres with 200 acres proposed for disturbance. The proposal calls for up to eight open exploration holes at any one time. The preliminary environmental assessment is available online at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2027207/510>.

Oil and Gas

Applications for Permit to Drill

Western Oil Exploration Company has not finished drilling the Scott Federal #35-1 exploratory well. The BLM issued a decision on Dec. 16, 2022, informing Western Oil that their lease has expired and they are no longer authorized under diligent drilling. Western Oil and the lease holder have filed an Appeal and Petition for Stay.

SPECIAL LEGISLATION

Lincoln-White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act Land Sales

- The BLM on July 12, 2024 published in the Federal Register a [Notice of Realty Action](#) beginning a 45-day public comment period on a proposal to sell seven parcels of public land, totaling 571 acres, in Lincoln and White Pine counties. The comment period concludes Aug. 26, 2024. The proposed sales comply with the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004 and White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006.

The BLM proposes to offer the parcels by modified competitive sale at no less than each parcel's fair market value on September 12, 2024, at 8 a.m. Pacific Time via the [EnergyNet](#) website. Fair market values will be posted on EnergyNet no later than 30 days prior to the sale. Parcels may be viewed on EnergyNet approximately 10 business days after the *Federal Register* notice publishes. Written comments may be emailed to m1peters@blm.gov (preferred) or delivered to the BLM Ely District Office, Attn: Ely District Manager, 702 N. Industrial Way, Ely, NV 89301.

- The Caliente Field Office is preparing an environmental assessment for a proposed multi-phase sale of 67 parcels of public land, totaling 5,445 acres in Lincoln County, Nev. The Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004 directs the Ely District to dispose of up to 90,000 acres of public land within the county. Parcels identified by Lincoln County and BLM for rounds 5 through 11 may be offered for public sale annually through competitive auctions.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Rangeland Monitoring/Term Permit Renewals

The Bristlecone Field Office has completed the proposed decision for the Indian George and is reviewing the protests received.

The Bristlecone Field Office and Basin and Range National Monument are preparing a term permit renewal for John Uhalde and Company's outcome-based grazing allotments. Invitation letters to cooperating agencies have been mailed. A preliminary environmental assessment is anticipated to be available for public comment in fall 2024.

The BLM is conducting a Land Health Assessment for the Duckwater allotment. The assessment is being organized by Use Area and be used for the allotment's Term Permit Renewals. Coordination with the livestock grazing permit holders is ongoing.

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Fire suppression

Firefighters in August responded to 61 wildfires within the Ely District. Most were lightning-ignited and contained and controlled at eight acres or less.

- **Hobson Fire:** Firefighters on Aug. 23, 2024, fully contained the 1,080-acre Hobson Fire, about 45 miles northwest of Ely, Nev. The lightning-ignited fire was first reported at approximately 2:40 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 18.
- **Grassy Mountain Fire:** Firefighters on Aug. 24, 2024, fully contained the 268-acre Grassy Mountain Fire west of Pony Springs, about 30 miles northwest of Pioche, Nev. The lightning-ignited fire was first reported shortly after 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 21.



Fuels Reduction and Habitat Restoration

Multi-year, 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. Current projects are:

- **Free Well/Gouge Eye Lop and Scatter:** Lop and scatter on 4,000 acres of the public lands within Lake Valley, about 55 miles south of Ely. The project is in a previously chained area where the regrowth is being treated. The treatment is part of the Cave and Lake Valley Watershed Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 165,000 acres of a 583,832-acre project area.
- **South Steptoe Chaining Maintenance:** Lop and scatter on 2,864 acres of the public lands along the west side of the Schell Creek Range, about 25 miles southeast of Ely. The project is in a previously chained area where the regrowth is being treated. The treatment is part of the South Steptoe Watershed Restoration Plan that will ultimately treat up to 54,000 acres of a 201,322-acre project area.

- South Steptoe Chaining Maintenance: Lop and scatter on 8,525 acres of the public lands along the west side of the Schell Creek Range and east side of the Egan Mountain Range, about 25 miles southeast of Ely. The project is in a previously chained area where the regrowth is being treated. The treatment is part of the South Steptoe Watershed Restoration Plan(see above).
- South Steptoe Fuelwood: Fuelwood harvest on 56 acres of the public lands along the east side of the Egan Mountain Range, about 10 miles south of Ely. Fuelwood will be sold to the public in early October. The treatment is part of the South Steptoe Watershed Restoration Plan that will ultimately treat up to 54,000 acres of a 201,322-acre project area.
- Pony Springs Mastication: Masticating pinyon-juniper from 987 acres of the public lands south of Pony Springs along Highway 93, about 25 miles north of Pioche. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The treatment is part of the Cave and Lake Valley Watershed Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 165,000 acres of a 583,832-acre project area.
- Becky Peak Green Tree Chaining: Chaining of pinyon-juniper from 1,150 acres of the public lands on the east slope of the Schell Creek Mountain Range in North Spring Valley, about 52 miles north of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow the first pass. The treatment is part of the 2022 Becky Peak Fire Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation EA that will ultimately treat up to 11,504 acres.
- Waking Spring Lop and Scatter: Lop and scatter on 2,334 acres of the public lands near Sacramento Pass, about 30 miles north of Ely. Portions of the project are in a previously chained area where the regrowth is being treated. The treatment is part of the Waking Spring Fuel Reduction Project that will ultimately treat up to 4,485 acres near Sacramento Pass.
- Water Canyon Mastication: Rangelands Restoration Services, LLC, a local contractor, is masticating pinyon-juniper from 1,413 acres of the public lands on the west slope of the Egan Range in the Ward Mountain area, about 20 miles south of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The first phase of the treatment was completed in 2023 treating 710 acres leaving 703 acres to be treated in 2024. The treatment is part of the Ward Mountain Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 42,670 acres within a 100,000-acre project area.

The following treatments are part of the Duck Creek Basin Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Habitat Improvement Project that will ultimately treat up to 12,900 acres of a 30,000-acre project area.

- Duck Creek Cut and Pile: Cut and pile of 125 acres of the public lands within Duck Creek Basin near Berry Creek, about 15 miles northeast of Ely. The piles will be burned within the next 1-3 years.

- Axehandle Mastication: Masticating pinyon-juniper on 997 acres of the public lands along the east side of the Duck Creek Range in Duck Creek Basin, about 15 miles north of Ely. Seeding with a grass and forb mixture will follow. The first phase of the treatment was completed in 2023 treating 552 acres leaving 445 acres to be treated in 2024. The project is being completed by local contractor Rangelands Restoration Services, LLC.

The following treatments are part of the Egan and Johnson Basins Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 24,346 acres of the 84,675-project area.

- Egan and Johnson Lop and Scatter: Lop and scatter on 2,846 acres of the public lands in Egan and Johnson Basins, about 45 miles north of Ely.
- Egan and Johnson Basin Thinning: Lop and scatter on 2,426 acres of the public lands in Egan Basin, about 40 miles north of Ely.
- Egan and Johnson Mastication: Mastication on 1,217 acres of the public lands in Egan Basin, about 40 miles north of Ely.

The following treatments are part of the South Spring and Hamlin Watersheds Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 123,969 acres of a 637,140-acre project area.

- Limestone Lop and Scatter: Lop and scatter on 1,500 acres of the public lands near the Limestone Hills, about 70 miles southeast of Ely.
- Hub Basin Lop and Scatter: Lop and scatter on 3,623 acres of the public lands near shingle creek, about 30 miles southeast of Ely.

The following treatments are part of the Long Valley and Ruby Valley Watersheds Restoration Project that will ultimately treat up to 136,000 acres within a 509,252-acre project area.

- Tognini Mastication: Mastication of 460 acres of the public lands in the Tognini Mountains, about 55 miles northwest of Ely.
- North Long Valley Lop and Scatter: Lop and scatter on 6,351 acres of the public lands in Long Valley about 48 miles northwest of Ely.

RECREATION & TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan

Contracts have been awarded for the Design of the Recreation Areas, as well as Design & Construction of motorized and non-motorized trail systems. Construction is scheduled to begin in fiscal year 2025. The Bristlecone Field Office released a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management



Plan and final Environmental Assessment in November 2023. The 30-day appeal period concluded in December 2023.



The field office is improving both the Garnet Hill Recreation Area and Egan Crest trail systems west of Ely. The Plan addresses how the BLM will manage and maintain the new recreation area, and anticipated increase in public visitation. Improvements include upgrading roadways, enlarging existing trailheads, adding overnight campgrounds, and constructing signed motorized and non-motorized trails systems. All facilities and some trails will be ADA accessible. Funding for the capital improvement project is provided through Round 18 of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act.

The Decision Record, Finding of No Significant Impact, and Garnet Hill Recreation Area Management Plan and final Environmental Assessment are available online at <https://bit.ly/3VdC38R>.

Highland Range Non-Motorized Trail

An International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) design team has finished almost 10 miles of single-track hiking and mountain biking trails connecting Pioche with Cathedral Gorge State Park. Trail construction is scheduled to be completed by midyear 2025. Project funding is provided by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act through the Caliente Field Office.



Mount Irish Cultural Resource Protection and Visitor Enhancements Project

The BLM is developing interpretive materials for camping areas and walking trails. Construction establishing four primitive camp areas, a vault toilet, walking trails connecting to rock art sites, and interpretive kiosks began in July 2023. The initial trail signage was installed the following September by National Public Lands Day volunteers.

Mount Irish's diverse collection of cultural resources have attracted visitors for decades. Increased visitation and lack of amenities have resulted in trash, rock campfire rings, and human refuse in close proximity to the rock art. The project will enhance the visitor experience and protect rock art areas.

National Public Lands Day event at Basin and Range National Monument



The Basin and Range National Monument will celebrate National Public Lands Day on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024. Volunteers will help staff install boundary signs at various Monument entry points. The project will involve assembling signs, digging holes, mixing and pouring concrete, and set-up. Afterwards, the Friends of Basin and Range will present evening interpretive programs about night photography and nature journaling. To learn more, contact the Basin and Range National Monument at 775-726-8100.

Multipurpose Sagebrush Discovery Trail Travel and Transportation Management Plan

The BLM is reviewing quotes and proposals for project design and construction. Design, engineering and construction are likely to occur in fiscal year 2025. The Bristlecone Field Office issued a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact in September 2023. Due to public comment received the field office selected an adjusted Alternative C that incorporated changes to the trail's layout. The non-motorized trail would be located on public lands adjacent to Baker, Nev., and 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.

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

