

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Environmental Assessment

**Term Grazing Permit 2703638 Renewal on the Railroad
Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm Springs
Trail, Corta, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotments
(DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2011-0018-EA)**

August, 2011

Location: Eureka, Nye, and White Pine Counties, NV

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Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm
Springs Trail, Corta, South
Pancake, and Sand Springs
Allotments (DOI-BLM-NV-
L010–2011–0018–EA)**

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Chapter 1. Introduction

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This document identifies issues, analyzes alternatives, and discloses the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed term grazing permit 2703638 renewal on the Railroad Pass (00601), Newark (00608), Duckwater (00701), Cold Creek (00603), Warm Springs Trail (00622), Corta (10033), South Pancake (00615), and Sand Springs (10086) Allotments. The project area occurs in western White Pine, eastern Eureka, and northeastern Nye Counties, Nevada (Figure A.1, “Grazing Allotments and Use Areas” (p. 55)).

1.1. Background

Current management practices have been implemented since the following Final Multiple Use Decisions were issued:

- Railroad Pass Allotment on November 9, 1995
- Newark Allotment on April 13, 1992
- Duckwater Allotment on June 9, 1995
- Cold Creek Allotment on January 23, 1992
- Corta Allotment on December 6, 1999
- South Pancake Allotment on April, 1991

This grazing permit is used to trail sheep south in the fall, over winter in the Duckwater and Sand Springs Allotments, and trail back north in the spring. Around November 1, they start south by trailing through the Railroad Pass and Cold Creek Allotments. After that they follow the Warm Springs Sheep Trail into the Newark Allotment. They graze sheep along the eastern edge of the Newark Allotment. From there, they move into the Six Mile Allotment (under a separate grazing permit) and the South Pancake Allotment. They winter some sheep in the Duckwater Allotment while others trail through the Duckwater Allotment into the Sand Springs Allotment. In the spring, they reverse through these allotments back to Railroad Pass. They get back to the Railroad Pass Allotment around April 15. They lamb in the Railroad Pass Allotment and hold a group of yearling lambs in the Cold Creek Allotment in the spring. The Corta Allotment is used in conjunction with the Railroad Pass Allotment in the spring. They generally leave these allotments around June 1. This grazing route covers over 300 miles annually.

In addition to this grazing authorization, these allotments are also grazed by cattle and other sheep operators, with the exception of the Corta and South Pancake Allotments.

Monitoring data were reviewed and assessments of the rangeland health of each allotment were completed in 2008-2009 through Standards Determination Documents (SDDs); see Table 1.1, “Summary of Standards Achievement by Allotment” (p. 2).

Table 1.1. Summary of Standards Achievement by Allotment

ALLOTMENT	STANDARD 1	STANDARD 2	STANDARD 3
NORTHEASTERN GREAT BASIN STANDARDS			
Allotment	Upland Sites	Riparian and Wetland Sites	Habitat
Railroad Pass (00601)	Standard achieved	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, but making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor
Newark (00608)	Standard achieved	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, but making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor
Cold Creek (00603)	Standard achieved	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, but making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor
Warm Springs Trail (00622)	Standard achieved	Not applicable (no riparian or wetland areas)	Not achieving the Standard, but making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor
Corta (10033)	Standard achieved	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor	Standard achieved
South Pancake (00615)	Standard achieved	Not applicable (no riparian or wetland areas)	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor
Duckwater Allotment (00701) Bull Corner Use Area ^a	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not applicable (no riparian or wetland areas)	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor
Duckwater Allotment (00701) Little Smoky Valley Use Area ^a	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not applicable (no riparian or wetland areas)	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor
Duckwater Allotment (00701) North Sand Springs Valley Use Area ^a	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not applicable (no riparian or wetland areas)	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor
Duckwater Allotment (00701) Pancake East Bench Use Area ^a	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor

ALLOTMENT	STANDARD 1	STANDARD 2	STANDARD 3
NORTHEASTERN GREAT BASIN STANDARDS			
Allotment	Upland Sites	Riparian and Wetland Sites	Habitat
Duckwater Allotment (00701) Pogues Station Use Area ^a	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor	Not applicable (no riparian or wetland areas)	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Sheep grazing is not a contributing factor
Duckwater Allotment (00701) South Sand Springs Valley Use Area ^a	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor	Not achieving the Standard, not making significant progress; Livestock are not a contributing factor
MOJAVE-SOUTHERN GREAT BASIN STANDARDS			
Allotment	Soils	Ecosystem Components	Habitat and Biota
Sand Springs (10086)	Standard achieved	Standard achieved	Not achieving the Standard, but making significant progress; Livestock grazing is not a contributing factor

^athe Duckwater Allotment was assessed by use area

BLM prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in February 2010 (DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2009-00008-EA) which considered this action. The subsequent Final Grazing Decision, dated April 1, 2010, was appealed by Western Watersheds Project (WWP v. BLM; NV-L010-10-03). The Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) issued an Order on February 11, 2011 that remanded that decision to BLM to conduct further NEPA review. This EA is to comply with the OHA Order.

1.1.1. Location of Proposed Action

Also see Figure A.1, “Grazing Allotments and Use Areas” (p. 55)

The Railroad Pass Allotment encompasses approximately 27,025 public land acres. The grazing permit area occurs entirely within White Pine County, and is situated approximately 75 miles northwest of Ely, Nevada. The western portion of this allotment borders the Battle Mountain BLM District and the northern portion borders the Elko BLM District. The allotment reaches from the ridge of the Diamond Mountain Range in the west to approximately Huntington Creek in the east. It is bounded in the north by the Elko-White Pine County Line and stretches approximately 12 miles south. This allotment occurs entirely within the Huntington Watershed.

The Newark Allotment encompasses approximately 218,105 public land acres. The grazing allotment occurs entirely within White Pine County, and is situated approximately 45 miles west of Ely, Nevada. The western portion of this allotment borders the Battle Mountain BLM District. The permit use area within this allotment occurs east of Barrel Springs Road to the Antelope Mountains and south of Barrel Springs and Beck Pass to Highway 50. This allotment occurs within Newark Valley Watershed.

The Duckwater Allotment encompasses approximately 807,662 public land acres. The allotment occurs within White Pine and Nye Counties. It surrounds Duckwater, Nevada. The western portion of this allotment borders the Battle Mountain BLM District and the eastern portion of

this allotment borders Forest Service lands. The Duckwater Indian Reservation is within the Duckwater Allotment. This allotment is divided into 12 use areas of which six are permitted for use under this grazing permit. These use areas occur in the western portion of the Duckwater Allotment and include the Pancake Range, Little Smoky Valley, and Big Sand Springs Valley.

The Cold Creek Allotment encompasses approximately 62,103 public land acres. The grazing allotment occurs entirely within White Pine County, and is situated approximately 65 miles northwest of Ely, Nevada. The northeast portion of this allotment borders Forest Service lands and the western portion borders the Battle Mountain BLM District. The permitted use areas within this allotment are located along the Diamond Mountains and lower benches of this range. This area occurs on the border of Newark and Huntington Watersheds.

The Warm Springs Trail is a designated, mile-wide sheep trailing route which includes approximately 100 miles of trail, of which about 35 miles are regularly used with this grazing permit. The trail area is situated in western White Pine County. This trail crosses the Huntington and Newark Valley Watersheds.

The Corta Allotment encompasses approximately 1,130 public land acres. The grazing allotment occurs entirely within Eureka County, and is situated approximately 45 miles north of Eureka, Nevada. This grazing allotment is within the Battle Mountain BLM District and borders the Elko and Ely BLM Districts. An interdistrict agreement gives the Ely District responsibility for grazing administration of this allotment. This allotment reaches from Railroad Pass in the north Diamond Range out into Diamond Valley.

The South Pancake Allotment encompasses approximately 31,088 public land acres. The grazing permit area occurs entirely within White Pine County, and is situated approximately 45 miles west of Ely, Nevada. The allotment reaches from the top of the Pancake Range out into south Newark Valley. This allotment occurs entirely in the Newark Valley Watershed.

The Sand Springs Allotment encompasses approximately 213,040 public land acres. The grazing allotment occurs entirely within Nye County and is situated approximately 75 miles southwest of Ely, Nevada. This grazing allotment is within the Battle Mountain BLM District and borders the Ely BLM District. The Ely District administers this grazing permit on this allotment. This allotment reaches across Big Sand Springs Valley and over the Pancake Range into Railroad Valley.

1.2. Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need for this proposal is to manage livestock grazing on public lands to provide for a level of grazing consistent with multiple use, sustained yield, and watershed function and health; to authorize grazing use in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and land use plans; to improve conditions on the allotments in order to continue to meet or make progress towards the standards for rangeland health.

Additionally, there is a need to fully process permit 2703638 as the current permit was issued under the Appropriations Act (“Grazing Rider”).

1.3. Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues

This project proposal was scoped by the Egan Field Office ID Team/Resource Specialist on March 14, 2011 to identify any preliminary issues. The Mt. Lewis and Tonopah Field Offices were notified of this project proposal and provided input throughout the process.

A summary of this term grazing permit renewal project was posted on the National NEPA Register web page for a 15 day public scoping period. Letters notifying interested publics of this web page and scoping period were sent on March 15, 2011. No comments were received.

Potential issues identified with this proposal, during previous NEPA analysis and through above scoping, were special status species habitats, bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions, rangeland health, crucial mule deer summer range, and noxious and invasive weeds.

BLM also worked with Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) regarding bighorn sheep in the project area.

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Chapter 2. Proposed Action and Alternatives

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2.1. Description of the Proposed Action

The BLM proposes to issue and fully process a new term grazing permit to authorization 2703638 and authorize grazing on the Railroad Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm Springs Trail, Corta, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotments (Figure A.1, “Grazing Allotments and Use Areas” (p. 55)). The terms and conditions of this grazing permit further defines use areas within some allotments.

The issuance of the term grazing permit will be for a period of up to 10 years. If this grazing preference is transferred during the ten year period with no changes to the terms and conditions the new term permit would be issued for the remaining term of this term permit.

Based on the Management Recommendations of the SDDs, the proposed term permit 2703638 and terms and conditions are as follows:

Table 2.1. Proposed New Grazing Permit 2703638

Allotment Name and Number	Pasture	Livestock Number/ Kind	Grazing Period	% Public Land ^a	Type Use	AUMs ^b
Railroad Pass 00601		467 Sheep	04/05 to 11/15	100	Active	691
Cold Creek 00603	Diamond #3 & Diamond #4	170 Sheep	04/15 to 11/15	100	Active	240
Newark 00608		595 Sheep	11/01 to 04/15	100	Active	649
South Pancake 00615	East	403 Sheep	11/01 to 04/15	100	Active	440
South Pancake 00615	West	655 Sheep	11/01 to 04/15	100	Active	715
Warm Springs Trail 00622		1040 Sheep	11/1 to 12/15	100	Active	308
Duckwater 00701		1785 Sheep	11/01 to 03/31	100	Active	1772
Sand Springs 10086		2132 Sheep	11/01 to 03/31	100	Active	2117
Warm Springs Trail 00622		1040 Sheep	04/1 to 05/015	100	Active	308
Corta 10033		640 Sheep	05/01 to 05/31	100	Active	128
Railroad Pass 00601	Corta Seeding	365 Sheep OR 73 Cattle	04/05 to 11/15	100	Active	540
Allotment AUMs Summary						
Allotment Name	ACTIVE AUMS	SUSPENDED AUMS	GRAZING PERMITTED USE			
Railroad Pass	1231	0	1231			
Cold Creek	242	0	242			
Newark	648	0	648			
South Pancake	1155	0	1155			
Warm Springs Trail	615	0	615			
Duckwater	1770	1768	3538			
Sand Springs	2116	0	2116			
Corta	128	72	200			

^a% Public Land is the percent of public land for billing purposes.

^bAUMs may differ from Active Permitted Use due to a rounding difference with the number of livestock and the period of use.

Other Terms and Conditions

1. Annual grazing will be completed with consultation, coordination, and cooperation between the BLM and the grazing permittee.
2. Flexibility in sheep numbers will be allowed, not to exceed the active AUMs. Grazing use will occur within the identified grazing periods.
3. Sheep will not be trailed or bedded in winterfat bottoms. Sheep camps will be a minimum of ½ mile from winterfat bottoms. Sheep camps will be moved at least every seven days. No two sheep camps will locate in the same area in a grazing season. Sheep camps and bedding grounds will be located a minimum of ½ mile from springs. If sheep must water at springs, they must move to and from the area in a timely manner.
4. Any water hauling will occur on existing roads, be in accordance with Nevada State Water Law, and be in accordance with other laws and regulations as applicable.
5. Livestock will be moved to another authorized pasture or removed from the allotment before utilization objectives are met or no later than 5 days after meeting the utilization objectives. Any deviation in livestock movement will require authorization from the authorized officer.

Railroad Pass Allotment (00601):

1. Livestock grazing capacity for the Corta Seeding within the Railroad Pass Allotment is established at 540 AUMs to be used exclusively within the seeding and may be either 365 sheep or 73 cattle use from 04/05 to 11/15.
2. From 06/01 to 10/31, sheep grazing will be in the native range of the higher elevations of the Diamond Mountains above Dora Spring, Little Joe Spring, and Portuguese Spring.
3. Maximum allowable use levels will be established as follows:
 - a. Perennial native grasses: 50% current year's growth by weight
 - b. Perennial shrubs and half-shrubs: 50% use on current annual production by weight
 - c. Perennial non-native seedings: 65% current year's growth by weight

Newark Allotment (00608):

1. Use is authorized from Beck Pass, west to Barrel Springs, south along the Barrel Springs Road to Highway 50, and east to the Newark Allotment boundary. The east face of the Pancake Range, east of Sulfur Springs, is also authorized.
2. Maximum utilization levels on the Newark Allotment will be established as follows:
 - a. Perennial native grasses: 50% current year's growth by weight
 - b. Perennial shrubs and half-shrubs: 50% use on current annual production by weight
3. Sheep will not be held in the winterfat bottom south of Carter (Smith) Well.

Duckwater Allotment (00701):

1. Grazing is permitted in the Bull Creek Corner/Poison Patch, North Sand Springs, Pancake East Bench, South Sand Springs, Pogues Station, and Little Smoky Valley Use Areas.

2. In the Bull Corner/Poison Patch Use Area, sheep will be grazed along the main Poison Wash (Road 4106) and west of the wash.
3. In the Pancake East Bench Use Area, sheep grazing will not be concentrated east of the Big Louie Road, so as not to conflict with cattle grazing.
4. In the South Sand Springs Use Area, sheep use will not be concentrated in the winterfat flats or stringer meadows on the valley bottom and lower benches but will be distributed to the west slopes of the Pancake Mountains on the east side of the valley or the Dry Lake Hills on the west side of the valley.
5. No motorized access is permitted within the designated wilderness and wilderness study areas without approval of the District Manager. Motorized access may be permitted for emergency situations, or where practical alternatives for reasonable grazing management needs are not available and such motorized use would not have an adverse impact on the natural environment.
6. Maximum allowable use levels will be established as follows:
 - a. An allowable use level will be established as 40% of the current year's growth by weight for any spring use (3/1 – 5/31) of the key native cool season perennial bunchgrass species Indian ricegrass, needleandthread, bluebunch wheatgrass, or bottlebrush squirreltail (or other cool season native perennial bunchgrass determined to be a key species for livestock, wild horses, or wildlife) in any native pasture evaluated by this SD in the Duckwater Allotment. An allowable use level will be established as 50% of the current year's growth by weight for yearlong use of these species. Utilization will be measured at established key grazing areas or other sites representative of the dominant vegetation in the allotment.
 - b. An allowable use level will be established as 35% of the current year's growth by weight for any spring use (3/1 – 5/31) of the key shrub winterfat. An allowable use level will be established as 50% of the current year's growth by weight for any spring use (3/1 – 5/31) of the key shrubs sickle saltbush, black sagebrush, four wing saltbush, (or other shrub determined to be a key species for livestock, wild horses, or wildlife) in any native pasture evaluated by this SD in the Duckwater Allotment.
 - c. An allowable use level will be established as 60% of the current year's growth by weight for winterfat, black sagebrush, sickle saltbush, four wing saltbush, (or other appropriate shrub) for fall/winter grazing in any pasture evaluated by this SD in the Duckwater Allotment. Utilization will be measured at established key grazing areas or other sites representative of the dominant vegetation in the allotment.

Cold Creek Allotment (00603):

1. Use is authorized only in the Diamond #3 and Diamond #4 Pastures.
2. Maximum allowable use levels will be established as follows:
 - a. Perennial native grasses: 50% current year's growth by weight
 - b. Perennial shrubs and half-shrubs: 50% use on current annual production by weight
 - c. Perennial non-native seedings: 65% current year's growth by weight

Warm Springs Trail (00622):

1. Sheep will be moved five miles per day unless otherwise approved by the authorized officer.

Corta Allotment (10033):

1. Maximum allowable use levels will be established as follows:
 - a. Perennial native grasses: 50% current year's growth by weight
 - b. Perennial shrubs and half-shrubs: 50% use on current annual production by weight

South Pancake Allotment (00615):

1. The South Pancake Allotment will be grazed in two use areas—the East Pasture and the West Pasture—divided by Barrel Springs Road. Use on each half includes a ½ mile buffer strip on either side of the road.
2. On the South Pancake Allotment, four water haul sites will be located at the following location and will be at least ½ mile away from riparian areas, cultural sites, and special status species locations:
 - T18N R56E Section 34 SW1/4
 - T17N R56E Section 22 NE1/4
 - T16N R56E Section 10 NE1/4 (for winter use only)
 - T16N R56E Section 8 SW1/4
3. Full use in the West Pasture will be dependent on the use of water haul sites and the availability of snow.
4. Maximum allowable use levels will be established as follows:
 - a. Perennial native grasses: 50% current year's growth by weight
 - b. Perennial shrubs and half-shrubs: 50% use on current annual production by weight

Sand Springs Allotment (10086):

1. Maximum utilization levels on the Sand Springs Allotment will be established as follows:
 - a. Perennial native grasses: 50% current year's growth by weight
 - b. Perennial shrubs and half-shrubs: 50% use on current annual production by weight
 - c. Winterfat: 35% by weight from February 1 to June 1
2. If drought conditions (less than 75% of normal precipitation) persist through the winter, grazing will not occur in the spring. If drought conditions persist through the current year, the allotment will be closed to grazing the following year.
3. Water haul sites on the Sand Springs Allotment will be approved by the Tonopah Field Office. Requests for temporary water haul sites will be made two weeks prior to the onset of grazing.

Terms and Conditions Common to All Grazing Allotments:

1. Livestock numbers identified in the Term Grazing Permit are a function of seasons of use and permitted use. Deviations from those livestock numbers and seasons of use may be authorized on an annual basis where such deviations are consistent with multiple-use objectives. Such deviations will require an application and written authorization from the authorized officer prior to grazing use.
2. The authorized officer is requiring that an actual use report (Form 4130-5) be submitted within 15 days after completing your annual grazing use.

3. Grazing use will be in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration. The Standards and Guidelines have been developed by the respective Resource Advisory Council and approved by the Secretary of the Interior on February 12, 1997. Grazing use will also be in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 4180 - Fundamentals of Rangeland Health and Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration.
4. If future monitoring data indicates that Standards and Guidelines for Grazing Administration are not being met, the permit will be reissued subject to revised terms and conditions.
5. The permittee must notify the authorized officer by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon discovery of any hazardous or solid wastes as defined in 40 CFR Part 261.
6. The permittee is responsible for all maintenance of assigned range improvements including wildlife escape ramps for both permanent and temporary water troughs.
7. When necessary, control or restrict the timing of livestock movement to minimize the transport of livestock-borne noxious weed seeds, roots, or rhizomes between weed-infested and weed-free areas.
8. The placement of mineral or salt supplements will be a minimum distance of ½ mile from known water sources, riparian areas, winterfat dominated sites, sensitive sites, populations of special status plant species, and cultural resource sites. Mineral and salt supplements will also be one mile from active sage-grouse leks. Placing supplemental feed (i.e. hay, grain, pellets, etc.) on public lands without authorization is prohibited.

2.1.1. Invasive, Non-Native Species and Noxious Weeds

A Weed Risk Assessment was completed for this grazing permit renewal on May 12, 2011 (Appendix B, *Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds* (p. 61)). The measures listed in the Weed Risk Assessment will be followed when grazing occurs under this proposed grazing permit to minimize the impacts to invasive, non-native species and noxious weeds.

2.1.2. Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Interactions

To minimize the potential for bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions, the following best management practices (BMPs) will be followed when grazing on public lands (USDI-BLM 1998, WAFWA-WSWG 2010):

- Domestic sheep will be carefully managed and vigilantly herded to minimize potential association with wild sheep.
- A herder will accompany domestic sheep at all times.
- Guard dogs trained to repel foreign animals will accompany domestic sheep.
- Sick or diseased domestic sheep will be promptly removed from public lands.
- Domestic sheep will be counted periodically to detect the possibility of strays, especially at the beginning and end of training routes or when an event occurs that causes considerable scattering of the domestic sheep herd.
- Any stray domestic sheep will be promptly removed or returned to the herd by the permittee upon detection.
- Any direct association observed between domestic sheep and wild sheep by the permittee or any representative (i.e., herder, other ranch employee) will be promptly reported to the NDOW or BLM.
- BLM will conduct on-site use compliance to ensure these safeguards are observed.

- Coordination meetings will be held with the permittee, BLM, and NDOW to share new/updated habitat information, discuss trailing/grazing patterns, and encourage communication.

2.1.3. Monitoring

The Ely District Approved Resource Management Plan (August 2008) identifies monitoring to include, “Monitoring to assess rangeland health standards will include records of actual livestock use, measurements of forage utilization, ecological site inventory data, cover data, soil mapping, and allotment evaluations or rangeland health assessments. Conditions and trends of resources affected by livestock grazing will be monitored to support periodic analysis/evaluation, site-specific adjustments of livestock management actions, and term permit renewals. Monitoring will determine when grazing will be authorized in burned areas, and will contribute to the selection of prescribed burn treatments or other types of treatments based on attainment of resource objectives” (pg. 88). Similar monitoring on the Corta and Sand Springs Allotments would continue in coordination with the Battle Mountain BLM District.

2.2. Description of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

2.2.1. No Grazing Alternative

Grazing permit 2703638 would be terminated and associated grazing use on the Railroad Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm Springs Trail, Corta, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotments would be eliminated. Also see Alternative D throughout the Ely RMP/EIS.

2.2.2. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative for livestock grazing permit renewals is defined as “continuing to graze under current terms and conditions” by IM-2000–022, Change 1 (reauthorized by IM-2010–063). The current grazing permit for 2703638 is summarized below.

Table 2.2. Summary of the Current Grazing Permit for 2703638

Allotment Name and Number	Livestock Number/ Kind	Grazing Period	% Public Land ^a	Type Use	AUMs ^b
Sand Springs 10086	2132 Sheep	11/01 to 03/31	100	Active	2117
Railroad Pass 00601	467 Sheep	04/05 to 11/15	100	Active	691
Cold Creek 00603	1182 Sheep	04/15 to 04/30	100	Active	124
Cold Creek 00603	1200 Sheep	11/01 to 11/15	100	Active	118
Newark 00608	1642 Sheep	04/01 to 04/30	100	Active	324
Newark 00608	1642 Sheep	11/01 to 11/30	100	Active	324
South Pancake 00615	2268 Sheep	03/15 to 04/30	100	Active	701
South Pancake 00615	1114 Sheep	11/15 to 01/15	100	Active	454
Warm Springs Trail 00622	2750 Sheep	04/15 to 05/01	100	Active	307
Warm Springs Trail 00622	2754 Sheep	11/15 to 12/01	100	Active	308
Duckwater 00701	1572 Sheep	12/15 to 03/31	100	Active	1106
Duckwater 00701	1122 Sheep	01/01 to 03/31	100	Active	664
Corta 10033	640 Sheep	05/01 to 05/31	100	Active	128
Railroad Pass 00601 Corta Seeding	365 Sheep	04/05 to 11/15	100	Active	540
Allotment AUMs Summary					
Allotment Name	ACTIVE AUMS	SUSPENDED AUMS	GRAZING PERMITTED USE		
Railroad Pass	1231	0	1231		
Cold Creek	242	0	242		
Newark	648	0	648		
South Pancake	1155	0	1155		
Warm Springs Trail	615	0	615		
Duckwater	1770	1768	3538		
Sand Springs	2116	0	2116		
Corta	128	72	200		

^a% Public Land is the percent of public land for billing purposes.

^bAUMs may differ from Active Permitted Use due to a rounding difference with the number of livestock and the period of use.

Other Terms and Conditions

Terms and Conditions for the South Pancake Allotment:

438 sheep AUMs will be used east of Barrel Springs Road, by one band at a time, to be licensed separately as the “East Pasture”. The remainder of authorization (716 AUMs) will be used and licensed west of Barrel Springs Road as the “West Pasture”. Use on each half includes a 1/2 mile buffer strip on either side of the road, and as shearing sites for both bands. Four water haul sites will be located at (for more specifics see South Pancake Decision dated 4/19/91):

T18N R56E Section 34 SW1/4

T17N R56E Section 22 NE1/4

T16N R56E Section 10 NE1/4

T16N R56E Section 8 SW1/4

The haul site at T16N R56E Section 10 will be for winter use only. Full use of the 716 AUMs west of Barrel Springs Road will be dependent on use of these sites or available snow.

Sheep will not be trailed or bedded in winterfat bottoms. Sheep camps will be a minimum of 1/4 mile from winterfat bottoms.

Terms and Condition for the Railroad Pass Allotment:

Use on the Railroad Pass Allotment will be in accordance with the Final Multiple Use Decision issued November 9, 1995. 540 AUMs of authorized use from 04/05 through 11/15 may be either sheep or cattle for the Corta Seeding within the Railroad Pass Allotment. There will be no sheep use in native range identified in Map 1 of the Final Decision, including the seeded burns, from June 1–October 31. Livestock grazing capacity for the Corta Seeding is established at 540 AUMs, to be used exclusively within the seeding. There will be no fall sheep use in the burn areas.

Terms and Conditions for the Newark Allotment:

Use in the Newark Allotment will be in accordance with the Final Multiple Use Decision issued April 13, 1992. Use is authorized from Beck Pass west to Barrel Springs, south along the Barrel Springs Road to Highway 50, and east to the Newark Allotment boundary. The east face of the Pancake Range, east of Sulfer Springs, is also authorized. Sheep will not be held in the winterfat bottom south of Carter (Smith) Well.

Terms and Conditions for the Duckwater Allotment:

Grazing use will be in accordance with the Final Multiple Use Decision for the Duckwater Allotment issued June 9, 1995.

1,106 AUMs of authorized sheep use with a season of use from 12/15 - 03/31 will be used in four use areas, as follows: Bull Corner/Poison Patch, Pancake East Bench, Sand Springs North, Sand Springs South.

664 AUMs of authorized use with a season of use 01/01 - 03/31 will be used in the following four use areas: Bull Corner/Poison Patch, Pogues Station, Little Smoky Valley, Pancake East Bench.

In the Bull Corner/Poison Patch Use Area, the permittee will graze lands along the main Poison Wash (Road 4106) and west of the wash.

The permittee will be allowed a sheep trailing window of approximately 20 days south through the allotment from 12/15 to 02/15 and 20 days north through the allotment from 03/01 to 03/31.

Sheep camp locations in the Pogues Station and Little Smoky Valley Use Areas will be determined by the authorized officer on an annual basis.

In the Pancake East Bench Use Area, the permittee will not concentrate sheep grazing to the east of the Big Louie Road, so as not to conflict with cattle grazing. In the Sand Spring South Use

Area sheep use will not be concentrated in the winterfat flats or stringer meadows on the valley bottom and lower benches but will be distributed to the west slopes of the Pancake Mountains on the east side of the valley or the Dry Lake Hills on the west side of the valley.

Terms and Conditions for the Cold Creek Allotment:

Grazing use in the Cold Creek Allotment will be in accordance with the Final Multiple Use Decision for the Cold Creek Allotment issued January 23, 1992.

Sheep Preference will remain at 242 AUMs tied to the Diamond #3 and Diamond #4 Pastures.

Flexibility in sheep number will be allowed up to a maximum 6600 head, not to exceed the maximum preference. Flexibility in period of use will be allowed from 3/1 to 11/31.

2.3. Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

2.3.1. Reduced Grazing Alternative

An alternative to eliminate grazing in all special status species habitats, including a nine-mile buffer around occupied bighorn sheep habitats and a one-mile buffer around documented special status plant species, was considered. This alternative would essentially eliminate sheep grazing in the entire project area, therefore would not be significantly distinguishable from the no grazing alternative and would have substantially similar consequences as the no grazing alternative.

2.4. Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan

Date Approved: August 20, 2008

Grazing Allotments Included: Railroad Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm Springs Trail, and South Pancake

This action is in conformance with the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan signed August 20, 2008, which states, "Manage livestock grazing on public lands to provide for a level of livestock grazing consistent with multiple use, sustained yield, and watershed function and health." In addition, "To allow livestock grazing to occur in a manner and at levels consistent with multiple use, sustained yield, and the standards for rangeland health (p 85-86)."

This land use plan specifically provided for the following Management Decisions:

- Management Action LG-1 states, "Make approximately 11,246,900 acres and 545,267 animal unit months available for livestock grazing on a long-term basis."
- Management Action LG-5 states, "Maintain the current grazing preference, season-of-use, and kind of livestock until the allotments that have not been evaluated for meeting or making progress toward meeting the standards or are in conformance with the policies are evaluated. Depending on the results of the

standards assessment, maintain or modify grazing preference, seasons-of-use, kind of livestock and grazing management practices to achieve the standards for rangeland health. Changes, such as improved livestock management, new range improvement projects, and changes in the amount and kinds of forage permanently available for livestock use, can lead to changes in preference, authorized season-of-use, or kind of livestock. Ensure changes continue to meet the RMP goals and objectives, including the standards for rangeland health.”

Land Use Plan Name: Tonopah Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: October 6, 1997

Grazing Allotments Included: Sand Springs

This action is in conformance with the Tonopah RMP because this land use plan specifically provided for the following Management Decision:

- 1.b. Manage livestock at initial stocking levels of 134,355 animal unit months for the Tonopah East area... Adjustments in use for each allotment will be based on short-term and/or long-term monitoring data methods as outlined in the Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook and other BLM technical references. Monitoring will be in consultation with the grazing permittee and other publics. If the desired trend does not occur, the responsible class of animal (where it can be determined) will be reduced or excluded. In allotments where monitoring data do not distinguish use between livestock and wild horses and/or burros, the stocking level for livestock will be based on a proportion derived from previous planning documents.

Land Use Plan Name: Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan Amendment and Record of Decision

Date Approved: November 6, 1987

Grazing Allotments Included: Corta

This action is in conformance with the Shoshone-Eureka RMP Amendment because this land use plan specifically provided for the following Resource Decisions:

- 1.b.(1) Livestock use may be licensed up to active preference (300,572 AUMs). However initial licensed use by livestock is anticipated to continue at the 5-year (1977-1981) average licensed use levels (239,717 AUMs), which is 20 percent below active preference.
- 1.b.(2) Continue existing rangeland monitoring studies and establish new studies as necessary to determine what adjustments in livestock use and wild horse numbers are needed to meet the objectives of this amendment. Actions could include, but will not be limited to, change in seasons-of-use, implementation of deferment and rest rotation grazing systems, change in

livestock numbers, correction of livestock distribution problems, alteration of the number of wild horses, and development of range improvements...

Furthermore, the Shoshone-Eureka Rangeland Program Summary (December 1988) identifies that “implementation of the Rangeland Management Program for allotments located within the Shoshone-Eureka Resource Area boundary, but administered by other BLM resource areas or districts, will be based on the administering district’s established priorities.” The Agreement for Administration of Resources between Ely and Battle Mountain Districts (1976) identifies the Corta Allotment as one of the “grazing allotments located within the Battle Mountain District having intradistrict use, [that] will be administered by the Ely District.”

2.4.1. Tiering

This document is tiered to the Ely Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, dated November 2007 (Ely RMP/EIS). The majority of the project area is covered by the planning area of the Ely RMP/EIS, however the Corta and Sand Springs Allotments are outside of this planning area.

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Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Effects

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3.1. Project Area Description

The project area is defined by the Corta, Railroad Pass, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotment Boundaries; the Diamond #3 and Diamond #4 Use Areas of the Cold Creek Allotment; the Paris Use Area of the Newark Allotment; the Bull Corner/Poison Patch, Pogues Station, Little Smoky Valley, North Sand Springs, Pancake East Bench, and South Sand Springs Use Areas of the Duckwater Allotment; and the mile wide Warm Springs Trail (see Figure A.1, “Grazing Allotments and Use Areas” (p. 55) and Section 1.1.1, “Location of Proposed Action” (p. 3)). This area is typical of the Great Basin with elevations ranging from approximately 5,500 feet in the valley bottoms to approximately 8,500 feet in the mountain ranges. Precipitation ranges from five to over 16 inches varying with elevation.

3.2. Resources/Concerns Considered for Analysis

The following items have been evaluated for the potential for significant impacts to occur, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively, due to implementation of the proposed or alternative action. Consideration of some of these items is to ensure compliance with laws, statutes or Executive Orders that impose certain requirements upon all Federal actions. Other items are relevant to the management of public lands in general and to the Ely BLM in particular.

Resource/Concern Considered	Issue(s) Further Analyzed	Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis
Air Quality	No	No affect to air quality
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	No	Resource not present
Cultural Resources	No	A Cultural Needs Assessment was completed (8111[NV_040] NANV04FY09-74) for this project. In cumulative 97,299 acres have been inventoried within the project area. There are 105 sites that are either unevaluated or potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Portions of the project area have been inventoried to Class III standards with recordings of culture resources. None of the allotments have been completely inventoried and unknown cultural resources may be present. All eligible historic resources that have the potential to be affected will be monitored for impacts. Mitigation and treatment will be applied as concerns are identified to eliminate affects. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS pages 4.9–5 and 4.9–13.
Forest Health	No	Livestock grazing within the project area does not affect the health of forests or woodlands. Grazing near riparian areas is only for brief periods of time and therefore aspen stands in the project area will not be affected.
Rangeland Health	Yes	Rangeland Health requires a detailed analysis to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, see Section 3.3, “Rangeland Health” (p. 26)
Migratory Birds	No	There is habitat for a number of migratory bird species within the project area. The grazing management practices outlined in the proposed and alternative actions would minimize any potential for effect to migratory bird habitats.

Resource/Concern Considered	Issue(s) Further Analyzed	Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis
Native American Religious Concerns and other concerns	No	No traditional religious or cultural sites of importance identified during tribal coordination
FWS Listed or proposed for listing Threatened or Endangered Species or critical habitat.	No	Resource not known to be present
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	No	Resource concern not present
Water Quality, Drinking/Ground	No	No effect to ground water; no surface water in the project area is used for human drinking water; and no impaired waters of the State of Nevada are present in the project area. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS pages 4.3–5 and 4.3–11 to 4.3–12.
Wilderness	No	Grazing is an allowable action within the Park Range WSA and would not impact the wilderness character.
Environmental Justice	No	No disproportionately high adverse human health or environmental effects to minority or low-income populations
Floodplains	No	Resource not present
Watershed Management	No	The physical, biological, and chemical components which define a watershed in terms of its function, health, and vegetative resilience would not be affected by the proposed or alternative actions. The interrelationships between the physical constituents in the watersheds and affects to vegetative components would not be altered. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS on pages 4.19–5 and 4.19–13.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	No	Under this grazing permit, sheep use snow and hauled water as their main water sources and rarely utilize riparian areas. If sheep do use a riparian area, it is for a very short duration only to allow the animals to drink water and move on being controlled by herding techniques. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS pages 4.3–5 and 4.3–11 to 4.3–12.
Noxious and Invasive Weed Management	Yes	Livestock grazing has the potential to spread noxious and invasive weeds, therefore a detailed analysis is required to determine environmental effects, see Section 3.8, “Noxious and Invasive Weed Spread” (p. 33)
Special Status Plant Species, other than those listed or proposed by the FWS as Threatened or Endangered	Yes	Currant milkvetch, Eastwood milkweed, Railroad Valley globemallow, and Needle Mountains milkvetch occur in the project area and require a detailed analysis to determine environmental effects, see Section 3.4, “Special Status Plant Species” (p. 28). These species have been designated as BLM Sensitive Species.

Resource/Concern Considered	Issue(s) Further Analyzed	Rationale for Dismissal from Analysis or Issue(s) Requiring Detailed Analysis
Wild Horses	No	The project area is within portions of the Diamond Hills South, Diamond, Triple B, Pancake, and Sand Springs West HMAs. The grazing management practices outlined in the proposed and alternative actions would minimize any potential for effect to wild horse habitats in the project area. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS on pages 4.8–6 and 4.8–14.
Soil Resources	No	The design of the proposed and alternative actions lessen the intensity of any potential soil compaction and erosion minimizing overall affects to soil resources and allowing for their resiliency to grazing effects in the project area. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS on pages 4.4–4 and 4.4–12.
Prime and Unique Farmlands	No	There is approximately 61,839 acres of prime farmland in the project area. The Corta Allotment is in the Diamond Valley Soil Survey Area which did not identify prime farmland. Livestock grazing will not impact prime farmland characteristics.
Special Designations other than Designated Wilderness	No	Resource not present
VRM	No	No affect to visual resources
Special Status Animal Species, other than those listed or proposed by the FWS as Threatened or Endangered	Yes	Newark Valley tui chub, greater sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, desert bighorn sheep, and Railroad Valley skipper habitats require a detailed analysis to determine environmental effects, see Section 3.5, “Special Status Animal Species Habitats” (p. 29). These species have been designated as BLM Sensitive Species.
Fish and Wildlife	Yes	Bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions and sheep grazing in crucial summer mule deer habitat requires a detailed analysis to determine environmental effects, see Section 3.6, “Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Interactions” (p. 31) and Section 3.7, “Crucial Summer Mule Deer Habitat” (p. 32). The grazing management practices outlined in the proposed and alternative actions would minimize any potential for effect to general fish and wildlife habitats in the project area. Also see the Ely RMP/EIS on pages 4.6–10 to 4.6–13 and 4.6–31.
Lands and Realty	No	No affect to lands and realty
Recreation Uses	No	No affect to recreational uses
Paleontological Resources	No	Resource not present
Mineral Resources	No	No affect to mineral resources
Vegetative Resources	No	Site specific examination of the project area did not reveal any concerns above those addressed in the Ely RMP/EIS on pages 4.5–9 and 4.5–27 and under Section 3.3, “Rangeland Health” (p. 26).
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No	Resource not present

3.3. Rangeland Health

3.3.1. Affected Environment

Rangeland health assessments have been completed on an allotment basis as Standards Determination Documents (SDDs). These assessments determined the achievement of standards for rangeland health and identified whether or not livestock grazing was a contributing factor to any non-attainment. The following SDDs evaluated rangeland health in the project area:

- Railroad Pass Allotment SDD, November 2008
- Newark Allotment SDD, April 2009
- Duckwater and Monte Cristo Allotments SDD, September 2009
- Cold Creek, Warm Springs, Dry Mountain, and Warm Springs Trail Allotments SDD, June 2009
- Corta and South Pancake Allotments SDD, April 2009
- Sand Springs Allotment SDD, October 2009

The results of these assessments are summarized in Table 1.1, “Summary of Standards Achievement by Allotment” (p. 2). The SDDs for all of these allotments provide recommendations to continue livestock grazing in a manner that allows for achievement of or progress towards the respective standards for rangeland health.

Generally major plant communities across the project area show a tendency for shrub dominance with a limited herbaceous understory. This is believed to be a stable state for these plant communities. The transition into this state was due largely to heavy grazing that occurred throughout the west in the early 20th century (pre-Taylor Grazing Act). Altered natural disturbance regimes (fire cycles, etc.) and climate conditions also have played a role in this transition. Over the past 100 years, livestock grazing has been significantly reduced to current levels. Current grazing management is focused on improving conditions to meet or make progress towards the standards for rangeland health while providing for multiple use, sustained yield, and watershed function and health.

3.3.2. Environmental Effects

Also see Section 4.16 of the Ely RMP/EIS

3.3.2.1. Proposed Action

The proposed action is based largely on the recommendation of the SDDs completed for these allotments. This alternative is designed to allow for continued achievement of or progress towards the standards for rangeland health. The proposed action calls for mostly winter grazing when plants are dormant and less susceptible to grazing impacts. Limited spring grazing, when plants are most susceptible to grazing impacts, is allowed under this alternative, however adequate rest periods are given for the vegetation to recover and complete the normal growth cycle. Under proper grazing management, timing, intensity, duration, and frequency can successfully manage vegetation to maintain desired vegetation states (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.5–9).

The proposed action also incorporates maximum allowable use levels. Allowable use levels allow for desirable key species to retain above ground biomass to continue photosynthetic processes and develop roots to improve carbohydrate storage for vigor, reproduction, and improve/increase desirable perennial cover as well as to contribute to litter cover for soil protection and health. It has been suggested that the amount of forage removed is not nearly as important as the amount of residue that remains to permit photosynthesis, plant recovery and soil protection (McGinty et al. 2009). The establishment of these levels allows for better management of rangeland resources because they are tied to forage availability rather than a set AUM amount. These levels allow for flexibility to accommodate annual range conditions; prevent overgrazing; and safeguard residual forage for wildlife habitat, plant recovery and productivity, and watershed function.

The proposed action also calls for general seasons of use, especially on the Cold Creek, Warm Springs Trail, Newark, South Pancake, and Duckwater Allotments. These seasons of use allow for greater flexibility in the overall grazing operation. This flexibility allows for adjustment to annual conditions (i.e. forage availability, snow cover, etc.) and allows the permittee flexibility to make business decisions. Flexibility is limited by the maximum AUMs of the permit; maximum allowable use levels; and through annual consultation, coordination, and cooperation between the BLM and the grazing permittee.

Given the spatial and temporal scope of this project, the level of grazing use under the proposed action is conservative. Sheep are continually moved throughout the project area covering over 300 miles which equates to approximately one mile per day.

3.3.2.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative terminates this grazing permit and causes associated grazing use to cease. Courtois et al. (2004) found that 65 years of protection from grazing on 16 exclosures at different locations across Nevada resulted in relatively few differences between vegetation inside the exclosures and that exposed to moderate grazing outside the exclosures. Where differences occurred, total vegetation cover was greater inside the exclosures while density was greater outside the exclosures. Protection from grazing failed to prevent expansion of cheatgrass into the exclosures (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.5–27). Another literature review by Anderson (1993) suggests that after a period of time, ungrazed herbaceous, fibrous-rooted plant species become decadent and stagnant. This results in reduced annual above-ground growth and a reduction in essential features of vegetational cover, including the replacement of soil organic matter and surface residues, and optimum capture of precipitation (Anderson 1993). Therefore, this alternative would impact rangeland health as described above over the long-term.

3.3.2.3. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative continues current grazing management under this permit. Current grazing management has not been identified as a contributing factor to the non-attainment of any standards for rangeland health. Therefore, this alternative would allow for continued achievement of or progress towards the standards for rangeland health. Rangeland health environmental effects of the no action alternative would be similar to those described under the proposed action, except maximum allowable use levels would not be spelled out and seasons of use would continue to be somewhat limited.

3.4. Special Status Plant Species

3.4.1. Affected Environment

These special status plant species have been documented on the Duckwater and/or Sand Springs Allotments of the project area and are potentially susceptible to grazing (Figure A.4, “Other Special Status Species Map” (p. 58)). The current status of these populations is unknown.

Currant Milkvetch (*Astragalus uncialis*)

Current milkvetch is endemic to the Great Basin (Welsh et al. 1993) with seven documented occurrences in Nevada (NNHP 2010). This species also occurs in Utah. It is found on dry, open, sparsely-vegetated flats and gentle slopes with calcareous sandy-clay soils. This species flowers in May and June (Morefield 2001). This species occurs in shadscale-budsage plant communities (Welsh et al. 1993). In Utah, this species is considered not very threatened, however impacts and major threats are unknown in Nevada (Morefield 2001).

Eastwood Milkweed (*Asclepias eastwoodiana*)

Eastwood milkweed is endemic to Nevada with 32 documented occurrences in the state (NNHP 2010). It is found in open areas on a wide variety of basic soils, including calcareous clay knolls, sand, carbonate or basaltic gravels, or shale outcrops. It generally occurs in areas that are barren and lacking competition. This species is frequently in small washes or other moisture-accumulating microsites and in the shadscale, mixed-shrub, sagebrush, and lower pinyon-juniper zones. This species flowers in late spring. The U.S. Forest Service has concluded that trampling by cattle and habitat loss due to mining and road construction are major threats to this species (Morefield 2001).

Railroad Valley Globemallow (*Sphaeralcea caespitosa* var. *williamsiae*)

Railroad Valley globemallow is endemic to Nevada with six documented occurrences in the state (NNHP 2010). It is likely found on Sevy Dolomite rock calcareous soil with mixed shrub, pinyon-juniper, and grass communities (Morefield 2010). Changes in land use, industrial expansion, and mineral exploration are threats to this taxon (NatureServe 2011).

Needle Mountains Milkvetch (*Astragalus eurylobus*)

There are six documented occurrences of Needle Mountains milkvetch in Nevada (NNHP 2010). It is generally found on deep, barren, gravelly, or clay soils derived from sandstone or siliceous volcanics, frequently in or along drainages. This species flowers from late April to early July (Morefield 2001).

3.4.2. Environmental Effects

3.4.2.1. Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, grazing in the Duckwater and Sand Springs Allotments occurs during the winter period (November 1 to March 31) when these plant species are dormant. Dormancy makes plants less susceptible to grazing impacts. Grazing effects to special status plant species is further reduced by the maximum allowable use levels set by the proposed action which will

ensure a proper level of grazing. Progress towards or achievement of standards for rangeland health will also improve conditions for these species. The proposed action will not affect special status plant species.

3.4.2.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative will eliminate sheep grazing under this grazing permit therefore eliminate any potential for affects to special status plant species (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.7–80).

3.4.2.3. No Action Alternative

Effects of the no action alternative are the same as those described for the proposed action, except the no action does not spell out maximum allowable use level.

3.5. Special Status Animal Species Habitats

3.5.1. Affected Environment

Newark Valley Tui Chub (*Gila bicolor newarkensis*)

The Newark Valley tui chub is found in one public land spring pond and four private land spring ponds in the project area (Figure A.4, “Other Special Status Species Map” (p. 58)). The private land spring ponds are all fenced and not grazed under this permit. Tui chubs are found to inhabit a wide variety of habitats in Newark Valley including spring ponds, pothole springs, spring brooks (outflows), terminus ponds, and man-made ponds and reservoirs. This species is highly adaptable and very resilient. Wide variances in habitat conditions have no bearing on the persistence of this species. The number of populations and relatively large population sizes ensure that this species is secure within its native range (NDOW 2005).

Pygmy Rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*)

There is one documented occurrences of pygmy rabbit on the Railroad Pass Allotment (Figure A.4, “Other Special Status Species Map” (p. 58)). There are likely additional populations throughout suitable habitat in the project area. This species is found primarily in areas of big sagebrush dominated plains and alluvial fans where sagebrush plants occur in tall and dense clumps and the soil is relatively deep and friable. While this species is apparently secure, its range has decreased as shrub-steppe habitats have been lost and degraded as a result of fire, grazing, invasion of exotic annuals, and agricultural conversion (NaturServe 2011).

Desert Bighorn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*)

Desert bighorn sheep habitat occurs in the project area in the Pancake Range and adjacent to the project area in the Duckwater Hills (Figure A.3, “Bighorn Sheep Habitats Map” (p. 57)). According to NDOW’s Bighorn Sheep Management Plan (2001), it is important that bighorn sheep habitats are maintained in good to excellent ecological condition because livestock directly compete with bighorns for forage, water, and space. The current condition of this habitat in the project area is unknown.

Railroad Valley Skipper (*Hesperia uncas fulvapalla*)

The Railroad Valley skipper has been documented on private lands within the Sand Springs Allotment (Figure A.4, “Other Special Status Species Map” (p. 58)). Little is known of the life history, habitat needs, or distribution of this species (NatureServe 2011).

Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*)

The Greater Sage-Grouse is a high-profile, sensitive species currently considered to be warranted for listing as Threatened or Endangered but listing is precluded by other species of higher priority (USDI 2010). It has been identified as an “umbrella” species by the Ely District BLM, and chosen to represent the habitat needs of the sagebrush (*Artemisia spp.*) obligate or sagebrush/woodland dependent guild (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.7-10).

There are 31 sage-grouse leks within a three mile buffer of the project area (Figure A.2, “Sage-Grouse Habitat and Leks Map” (p. 56)). Sage-grouse habitat has been identified throughout the area, however the Duckwater and Sand Springs Allotments are on the southern edge of the range for these birds therefore only provide marginal habitat.

Sage-grouse often nest in suitable habitat within three miles of a lek site. The sage-grouse breeding and nesting period is generally considered to be approximately March 15 through May 31. The brood-rearing period is generally considered to be June 1 through October 31. The wintering period is generally considered to be November 1 through March 14.

General guidelines for managing sage-grouse habitats recommend maintaining at least 15 percent herbaceous cover and 15 to 25 percent sagebrush cover. Due to the high variability among sagebrush habitats, these guidelines are not realistic in all cases (Connelly et al. 2000). Key area monitoring data from across the project area was compared to these guidelines in 2009 (BLM unpublished report). This analysis found that sagebrush plant communities across the project area show a tendency for shrub dominance with limited herbaceous understory. Sheep grazing has not been identified as a contributing factor to these conditions (also see SDDs Standard 3).

3.5.2. Environmental Effects

3.5.2.1. Proposed Action

Also see Ely RMP/EIS page 4.6–11 and 4.7–30

Newark Valley Tui Chub

Under this grazing permit, sheep use snow and hauled water as their main water sources and rarely utilize surface water sources. If sheep do use surface water sources, it is for a short duration only to allow the animals to drink water and move on being controlled by herding techniques. Therefore, the proposed action will have minimal to no affect to tui chub habitats.

Pygmy Rabbit

The grazing management practices outlined in the proposed action are designed to maintain or move the vegetative conditions toward the standards for rangeland health (including habitat). This alternative will therefore improve wildlife habitat and have no affect upon or may benefit pygmy rabbit habitat within the project area.

Desert Bighorn Sheep

Chapter 3 Affected Environment and Environmental Effects
Environmental Effects

August, 2011

The proposed action is designed to promote good to excellent ecological condition therefore will have no affect upon or may benefit desert bighorn sheep habitat in the project area.

Railroad Valley Skipper

The grazing management practices outlined in the proposed action are designed to maintain or move the vegetative conditions toward the standards for rangeland health (including habitat). This alternative will therefore improve wildlife habitat and have no affect upon or may benefit Railroad Valley skipper habitat in the project area.

Greater Sage-Grouse

The proposed action has the greatest potential to affect sage-grouse nesting habitat. Maximum allowable use levels included in the proposed action will ensure that adequate residual forage remains for nest concealment as well as maintaining or improving long term productivity of the plant communities. Also achievement of or progress towards rangeland health standards (including habitat) would improve sage-grouse habitat across the project area.

3.5.2.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative will eliminate sheep grazing in project area therefore eliminate any potential effect on special status animal species habitats (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.6–31 and 4.7–80).

3.5.2.3. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative will have affects similar to the proposed action, except that maximum allowable use levels would not be spelled out.

3.6. Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Interactions

3.6.1. Affected Environment

There are some disease agents that occur in both domestic sheep and goats and native wild sheep. There is evidence that if native wild and domestic sheep are allowed to be in close contact, health problems and die offs may occur. Some disease agents maybe transmitted between both species. Also there are native wild sheep die offs that occur in the absence of reported contact with domestic sheep or goats. Also see Ely RMP/EIS Section 4.1.4.4.

In the project area, occupied desert bighorn sheep habitat occurs in the Pancake Range north of Highway 6 in the Sand Springs Allotment. Also, occupied desert bighorn sheep habitat occurs in the Duckwater Hills immediately adjacent to the project area in the Duckwater Allotment (Figure A.3, “Bighorn Sheep Habitats Map” (p. 57)). These small populations of desert bighorn sheep have occupied these ranges unintentionally despite domestic sheep grazing in the area (Podborny 2011). NDOW considers these colonized herds as experimental and are managed as an opportunity to enhance recreational uses. These herds are not managed as baseline resident bighorn herds (Cox 2011). Occupied Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep habitat occurs in the Ruby Mountains within nine miles of the Railroad Pass Allotment and the northern portion of the Warm Springs Trail.

3.6.2. Environmental Effects

3.6.2.1. Proposed Action

Potential for bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions exist in and around occupied bighorn sheep ranges in the Pancake Range, the Duckwater Hills, and the Ruby Mountain area. The greatest risk of contact between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep would occur on the Sand Springs Allotment during the winter. Bighorn sheep from the Pancake Herd have been observed within this allotment. Domestic sheep use in this area coincides with bighorn sheep use of the area which is year round habitat. The BMPs that are incorporated into the proposed action (see Section 2.1.2, “Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Interactions” (p. 13)) would minimize the risk of bighorn/domestic sheep interactions throughout the project area.

3.6.2.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative will eliminate domestic sheep grazing in the project area therefore eliminate any potential for conflict with bighorn sheep (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.6–31).

3.6.2.3. No Action Alternative

Potential for bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions exist in and around occupied bighorn sheep ranges in the Pancake Range, the Duckwater Hills, and the Ruby Mountain area. The no action alternative does not address this risk or include any management actions to minimize this risk.

3.7. Crucial Summer Mule Deer Habitat

3.7.1. Affected Environment

The eastern slope of the Diamond Mountains has been identified by NDOW as crucial summer range for mule deer. The vegetation community of this area is typified by stands of mountain sagebrush with scattered aspen stands particularly in drainages. The western portions of the Cold Creek and Railroad Pass Allotments are located within this crucial summer habitat.

3.7.2. Environmental Effects

3.7.2.1. Proposed Action

The proposed action provides for sheep grazing in this crucial summer mule deer habitat from early April through mid-November. Therefore sheep grazing would overlap with mule deer populations summering in the higher elevations of the Diamond Mountains. Little information exists regarding dietary overlap between domestic sheep and mule deer in this area, but MacCracken and Hansen (1981) reported dietary overlap during late spring/summer between domestic sheep and mule deer in south–central Colorado to be 15 percent, a relatively low amount. A small amount of monitoring data has been collected in this area and suggests that this habitat is in good to excellent condition. Where livestock use is managed in line with available forage and wildlife populations are managed consistent with available habitat, this competition

would be minimal (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.6–11). Design features of the proposed action serve to improve grazing management and allow for the achievement of or progress towards standards for rangeland health (including habitat) therefore minimizing any potential affect.

3.7.2.2. No Grazing Alternative

Under the no grazing alternative, sheep grazing would be eliminated in this crucial summer mule deer habitat therefore this alternative would have no effects (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.6–31).

3.7.2.3. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would have the same effects as the proposed action.

3.8. Noxious and Invasive Weed Spread

3.8.1. Affected Environment

No field weed surveys were completed for this project. Instead the Ely District and Battle Mountain District weed inventory data were consulted. These areas were last inventoried in 2003 and 2008. Knapweeds, thistles, tall whitetop, hoary cress, black henbane and various other weeds are found throughout the project area (Appendix B, *Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds* (p. 61)).

3.8.2. Environmental Effects

3.8.2.1. Proposed Action

A Noxious and Invasive Weed Risk Assessment was completed for this project and can be found in Appendix B, *Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds* (p. 61). The Risk Rating is moderate for this project. Since there are currently many weed infestations within the project area the proposed action could increase the populations of the noxious and invasive weed species already present and could aid in the introduction of weeds from surrounding areas. If new weed infestations establish within the project area, this could have an adverse impact on those native plant communities. Also, increases of cheatgrass could alter the fire regime in the area.

These impacts would be less than the No-Action Alternative due to establishing maximum allowable use levels for native vegetation. This will allow for more vigorous native plant communities that could better compete against non-native, invasive plant invasion. Also, effects from weeds would be minimized by following the measures listed in the Weed Risk Assessment (design features of the proposed action; Section 2.1.1, “Invasive, Non-Native Species and Noxious Weeds” (p. 13)).

3.8.2.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative would remove livestock as a weed vector, but would not eliminate weed spread or establishment since other vectors, such as vehicles, wind, wildlife, and water, would still spread weeds (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.21–10).

3.8.2.3. No Action Alternative

Effects of the no action alternative would be similar to the proposed action, except the no action lacks the design features of the proposed action to prevent noxious and invasive weed spread.

Chapter 4. Cumulative Effects

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The National BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1; 2008) states, “determine which of the issues identified for analysis may involve a cumulative effect with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions. If the proposed action and alternatives would have no direct or indirect effects on a resource, you do not need a cumulative effects analysis on that resource” (p. 57). Also, a comprehensive cumulative impacts analysis can be found in section 4.28 of the Ely RMP/EIS. The cumulative effects study area (CESA) for this project is defined by the Railroad Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Corta, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotment Boundaries as well as the Warm Springs Trail corridor. Privately owned land and the Duckwater Indian Reservation occur within this CESA.

Also see Figure A.5, “CESA and Interrelated Projects Map” (p. 59)

4.1. Past Actions

Livestock grazing operations in the planning area developed during the mid- to late-1800s. The Ely RMP/EIS summarizes livestock grazing history in the region on pages 3.16–1 to 3.16–3. Range improvements have occurred on all allotments to improve grazing management and include fencing, stockwater developments, and vegetation treatments.

The Ely Proposed RMP/EIS summarizes wild horse history in the west, specifically on the Ely District, on pages 3.8–1 to 3.8–7. Wild horse use has occurred throughout the project area since the 1800s.

Nevada is subject to variable precipitation with frequent drought periods. Figure 4.1, “Precipitation Data (1978-2009) from Western Regional Climate Center from Jiggs, NV” (p. 37), Figure 4.2, “Precipitation Data (1980-2010) from Western Regional Climate Center from Eureka, NV” (p. 38), and Figure 4.3, “Precipitation Data (1980-2010) from Western Regional Climate Center from Blue Eagle Ranch, NV” (p. 38) depict the precipitation history across the area.

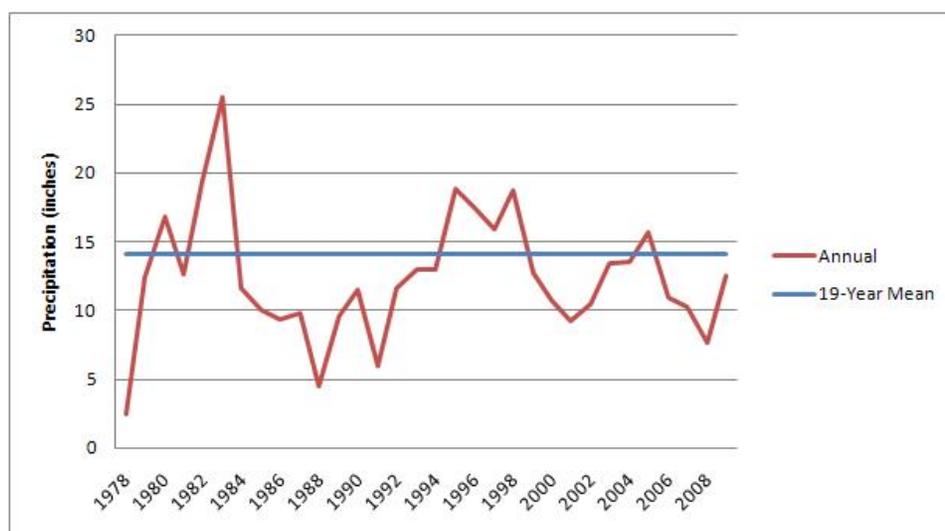


Figure 4.1. Precipitation Data (1978-2009) from Western Regional Climate Center from Jiggs, NV

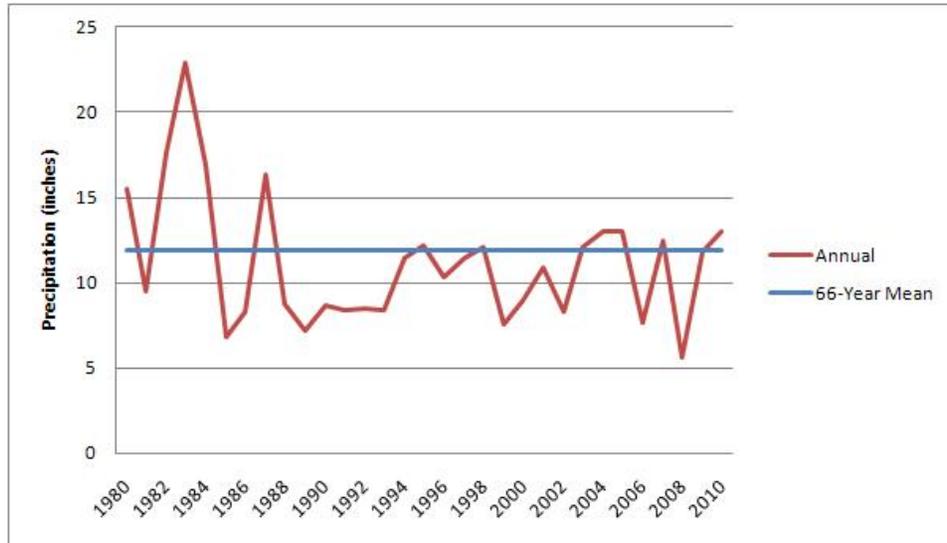


Figure 4.2. Precipitation Data (1980-2010) from Western Regional Climate Center from Eureka, NV

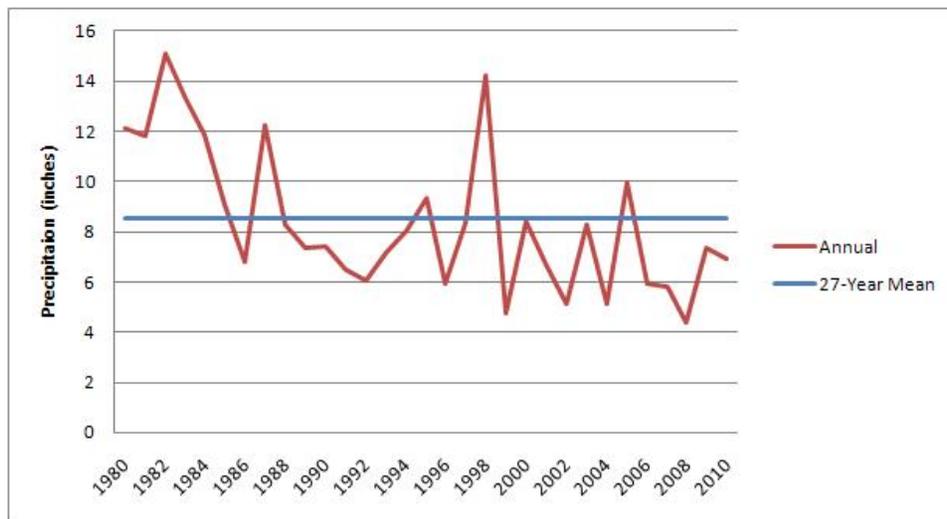


Figure 4.3. Precipitation Data (1980-2010) from Western Regional Climate Center from Blue Eagle Ranch, NV

Periodic fire events occur in the area, mainly in the mountain ranges and along the benches. Ten fires have burned in the CESA since the mid-1970s (Table 4.1, “Summary of Wildfires in CESA” (p. 38)). Rehabilitation efforts have varied including natural revegetation or re-seeding.

Table 4.1. Summary of Wildfires in CESA

Fire Year	Fire Name	Total Acres	Acres within CESA
2001	Antelope	103	103
2000	Railroad	827	185
2000	Strawberry	1,604	195
1996	unnamed (Q732)	226	226
1986	unnamed (K094)	2,438	2,438

Fire Year	Fire Name	Total Acres	Acres within CESA
1985	unnamed (K255)	658	658
1983	unnamed (4078)	159	159
1983	unnamed (4035)	271	271
1974	Big Burn	1,305	1,305
1974	Small Burn	296	296
TOTAL:			5,836

Several oil and gas exploration wells have been drilled across the CESA however none of these wells have gone into production. The Ely RMP/EIS summarized the history of oil and gas exploration on page 3.18–7 to 3.18–9.

Historical mining activities have occurred throughout the CESA.

4.2. Present Actions

In addition to this grazing permit (2703638), other livestock grazing occurs on these allotments as summarized in Table 4.2, “Summary of Livestock Grazing Permitted in the Project Area” (p. 39).

Table 4.2. Summary of Livestock Grazing Permitted in the Project Area

	Grazing Authorization	Active AUMs
Railroad Pass Allotment		
	2703638	1231
	2704502	1800
	2704520	511
Newark Allotment ^a		
	2703638	648
	2704520	6681
	2700101	1960
	2703499	420
Duckwater Allotment		
	2703638	1770
	2700067	2356
	2703175	2814
	2703244	305
	2703461	2124
	2704608	4619
	2704617	4375
	2702915	2481
Cold Creek Allotment ^a		
	2703638	242
	2702966	5561
Warm Springs Trail ^a		
	2703638	615
	2702966	1865
Corta Allotment		
	2703638	128
South Pancake Allotment		
	2703638	1155
Sand Springs Allotment		
	2703638	2116

Grazing Authorization	Active AUMs
2700104	5727
Warm Springs Allotment ^a	
2702966	7709

^aThe Warm Springs Trail overlaps with Cold Creek, Warm Springs, and Newark Allotments

The Ely RMP established wild horse HMAs and initial AMLs across the Ely District (WH-4 and WH-6). The Diamond Hills South, Pancake, Triple B, Sand Springs West, and Diamond HMAs occur in the project area. Table 4.3, “Summary of Wild Horses in the Project Area” (p. 40) summarizes wild horse population information in the project area. The Triple B HMA is scheduled to be gathered in 2011.

Table 4.3. Summary of Wild Horses in the Project Area

HMA	AML (# of horses)	Current Population Estimate (# of horses)
Diamond Hills South	10–22	205
Pancake	240–493	1,291
Triple B	250–518	1,217
Sand Spring West	49	285
Diamond	151	287 ^a

^aincludes 2011 estimated foal crop

The Newark/Huntington Watershed Analysis is currently being completed. A large portion of the CESA occurs in these two watersheds. This process involves the assessment and evaluation of the watersheds and recommending changes to improve management of the area. Implementation of recommended practices will follow.

A riparian protection fence is planned for construction during the summer of 2011 at an unnamed spring in Newark Valley. This spring source occurs on the Warm Springs Trail and provides Newark Valley tui chub habitat.

Gold exploration is on-going in the CESA, occurring primarily in the northern portion of the Pancake Range.

Active oil and gas leases occur throughout the CESA. An oil and gas lease sale is scheduled for September 2011 and includes several parcels within the CESA. The Emergent Value Group exploration well FLT-1 is currently being drilled in the Pancake Range.

The Falcon to Gondor Utility Corridor crosses the CESA in Newark Valley north of Highway 50. This is a half mile wide corridor interconnecting with the Ely-to-Utah State Line portion of the Southwest Intertie Project corridor (see Ely RMP, LR-34 B).

Recreational opportunities in the CESA are mostly dispersed and include hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing. An annual reenactment of the Pony Express Trail offers recreational opportunity to experience the historical and open spaces aspects of the area. The Loneliest Highway Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) is to provide recreational opportunities along Highway 50 (Ely RMP/EIS page 4.15–2)

4.3. Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

Livestock grazing will continue under existing grazing permits on these allotments. As they expire, these permits will be considered for renewal through site-specific NEPA analysis.

Wild horses will continue to be managed at the established AMLs throughout the CESA with periodic gathers and/or other population control measures.

Midway Gold Company is planning to move from exploration into production in the Pancake Range (Pan Project). Construction of this mining facility will occur over the next several years. This gold mine will be on an approximately 8,700 acres parcel and will involve interim reclamation.

The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe is proposing to expand their reservation in the Duckwater Allotment portion of the CESA by approximately 235,200 acres.

4.4. Cumulative Effects Summary

4.4.1. Rangeland Health

4.4.1.1. Proposed Action

Other livestock grazing permits in the CESA and wild horse use also effect the overall rangeland health of the area. All grazing permits are designed to allow for progress towards or achievement of rangeland health standards. If existing livestock grazing management practices are found to be significant factors in failing to achieve the standards for rangeland health, appropriate action is taken as soon as practicable or no later than start of the next grazing season (43 CFR 4180.2(c)). Where the SDDs for the allotments within the CESA found that rangeland health standards were not being met due to cattle grazing, changes have been made to the related grazing permit. Wild horse use has also been identified as a contributing factor to the non-attainment of rangeland health standards in some places within the CESA. As wild horse AMLs are achieved and maintained, effects to rangeland health should be minimized. The proposed action, in combination with these actions, will cumulatively benefit rangeland health.

4.4.1.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative, in combination with interrelated projects, will have no cumulative effect on rangeland health

4.4.1.3. No Action Alternative

Same cumulative effect as the proposed action.

4.4.2. Special Status Plant Species

The proposed action, the no grazing alternative, or the no action alternative, in combination with interrelated projects, will have no cumulative effects to special status plant species.

4.4.3. Special Status Animal Species Habitats

4.4.3.1. Proposed Action

Fencing of the unnamed spring in Newark Valley will improve Newark Valley tui chub habitat and exclude all livestock grazing, including the proposed action, from this spring pond. The proposed action, other livestock grazing permits, and wild horse management across the CESA are all designed to promote rangeland health and improve wildlife habitat, including pygmy rabbit, Railroad Valley skipper, desert bighorn sheep, and sage-grouse habitats. Other interrelated projects are designed to minimize impacts to special status species habitats. The proposed action, in combination with these actions, will cumulatively have minimal effect to special status species habitats.

4.4.3.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative, in combination with interrelated projects, will have minimal effect to special status species habitats.

4.4.3.3. No Action Alternative

Same cumulative effect as the proposed action.

4.4.4. Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Interactions

4.4.4.1. Proposed Action

The proposed action, in combination with the other domestic sheep grazing permits (2703461, 2703175, 2704617, 2704520, 2700101, and 2702966) in the Pancake Range, the Duckwater Hills, and the Buck and Bald Mountain areas, will contribute to the risk of bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions. Domestic sheep have also be known to occur on private lands near the Duckwater Hills. The BMPs included in the proposed action (Section 2.1.2, “Bighorn Sheep/Domestic Sheep Interactions” (p. 13)) will minimize this risk in association with this grazing permit.

4.4.4.2. No Grazing Alternative

Potential for bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions will continue under the no grazing alternative because other grazing permits authorize domestic sheep grazing in the area.

4.4.4.3. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative, in combination with the other domestic sheep grazing permits (2703461, 2703175, 2704617, 2704520, 2700101, and 2702966) in the Pancake Range, the Duckwater Hills, and the Buck and Bald Mountain areas, will contribute to the risk of bighorn sheep/domestic sheep interactions. Domestic sheep have also be known to occur on private lands near the Duckwater Hills.

4.4.5. Crucial Summer Mule Deer Habitat

4.4.5.1. Proposed Action

The proposed action, in combination with interrelated projects, will have minimal cumulative effect on crucial summer mule deer habitat in the Diamond Mountains. This habitat is inaccessible to the cattle permits that authorize livestock grazing in that area (2704520, 2704502, and 2702966) due to topography. Wild horse use also occurs within this habitat.

4.4.5.2. No Grazing Alternative

The no grazing alternative would reduce effects to this habitat to only those potentially occurring from wild horse use.

4.4.5.3. No Action Alternative

Same cumulative effect as the proposed action.

4.4.6. Noxious and Invasive Weed Spread

Transportation activities, including existing road maintenance, grazing, recreation, and wildland fires within the CESA can contribute to the chance of spreading noxious and non-native, invasive weeds. Past activities have facilitated the spread of non-native, invasive species, especially along transportation routes and drainages.

Establishment of non-native, invasive species would likely occur under the proposed action and other interrelated projects. The spread of non-native invasive species would be minimized through the measures listed in the Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds for this project (Appendix B, *Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds* (p. 61)) and for other interrelated projects. In addition, the active BLM Ely District Weed Management Program would minimize the spread of weeds throughout the CESA

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Chapter 5. Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted

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The Mt. Lewis and Tonopah Field Offices were first contacted February 28, 2011 and were involved throughout the process.

Tribal Coordination letters were sent on March 10, 2011. No responses were received.

Table 5.1. List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
The Little Paris Sheep Company	Proponent	Provided input throughout the process
Mt. Lewis Field Office, BLM	Agreement for Administration of Resources between Ely and Battle Mountain Districts (specifically regarding the Corta Allotment)	Provided input throughout the process
Tonopah Field Office, BLM	Agreement for Administration of Resources between Ely and Battle Mountain Districts (specifically regarding the Sand Springs Allotment)	Provided input throughout the process
Ely Shoshone Tribe	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Confederate Tribes of the Goshute Indian Reservation	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Battle Mountain Band Council	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Te-Moak Tribe of the Wester Shoshone Indians of Nevada	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Wells Band Council	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
South Fork Band Council	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Elko Band Council	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Yomba Shoshone Tribe	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Skull Valley Band of Goshutes	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe	Executive Order 13175: Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments	No comments were received
Mike Podborny	Nevada Department of Wildlife	Cooperation and coordination regarding occupied desert bighorn sheep habitat in the Duckwater Hills and Pancake Range
Rory Lamp, Ken Gray, and Caleb McAdoo	Nevada Department of Wildlife	Cooperation and coordination regarding Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep habitat in the Buck and Bald Mountain area
Mike Cox	Nevada Department of Wildlife	Provided additional comments regarding bighorn sheep

Chapter 6. List of Preparers

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Table 6.1. List of Prepares—BLM Egan Field Office Resource Specialists

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Amanda Anderson	Rangeland Management Specialist/Project Lead	Alternatives, Rangeland Resources
Mark D'Aversa	Hydrologist	Soil, Water, Riparian/Wetland Areas
Mindy Seal	Natural Resource Specialist	Vegetation, Invasive, Non-native Species
Lisa Gilbert	Archeological Technician	Archeological, Historic, and Paleontological Resources
Ruth Thompson	Wild Horse Specialist	Wild Horses
Marian Lichtler	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Special Status Species
Dave Jacobson	Wilderness Planner	Wilderness Character
Erin Rajala	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation, VRM
Miles Kreidler	Geologist	Minerals
Elvis Wall	Native American Coordinator	Native American Religious Concerns, Tribal Coordination
Gina Jones	Ecologist/Planning & Environmental Coordination	Environmental Justice, Land Use Planning, NEPA
Zach Peterson	Forester	Forest Health
Chris Mayer	Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist	

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Appendix A. Maps

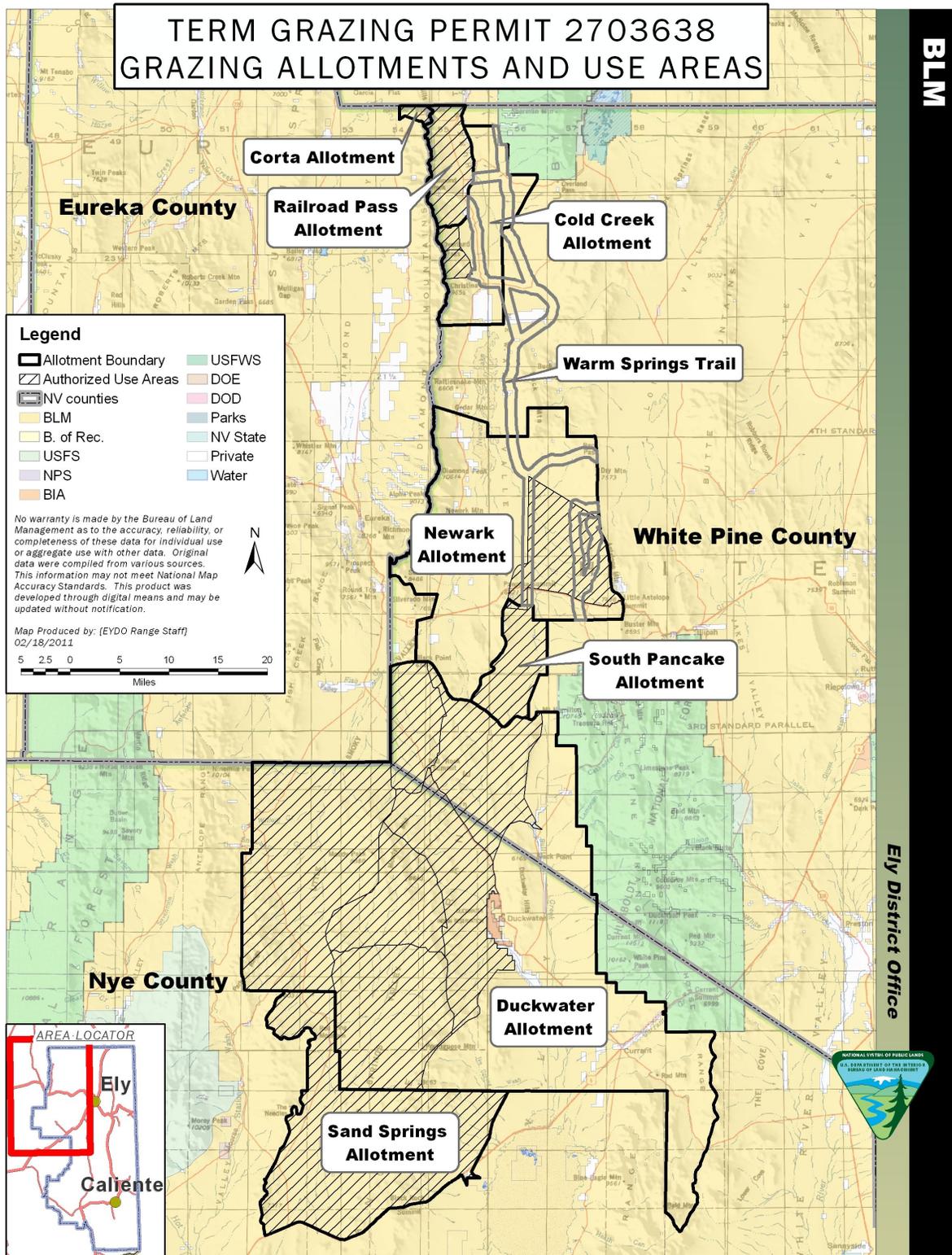


Figure A.1. Grazing Allotments and Use Areas

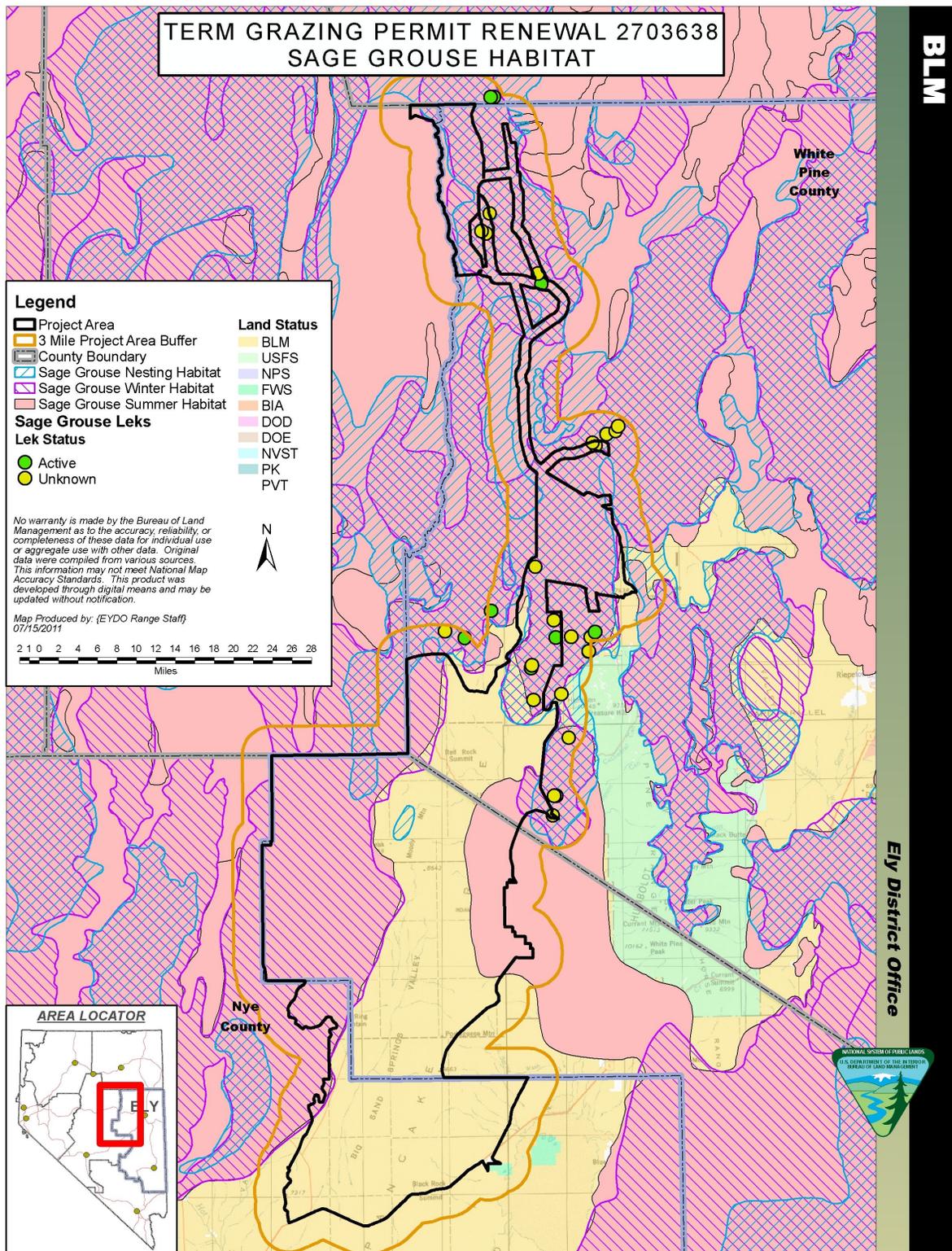


Figure A.2. Sage-Grouse Habitat and Leks Map

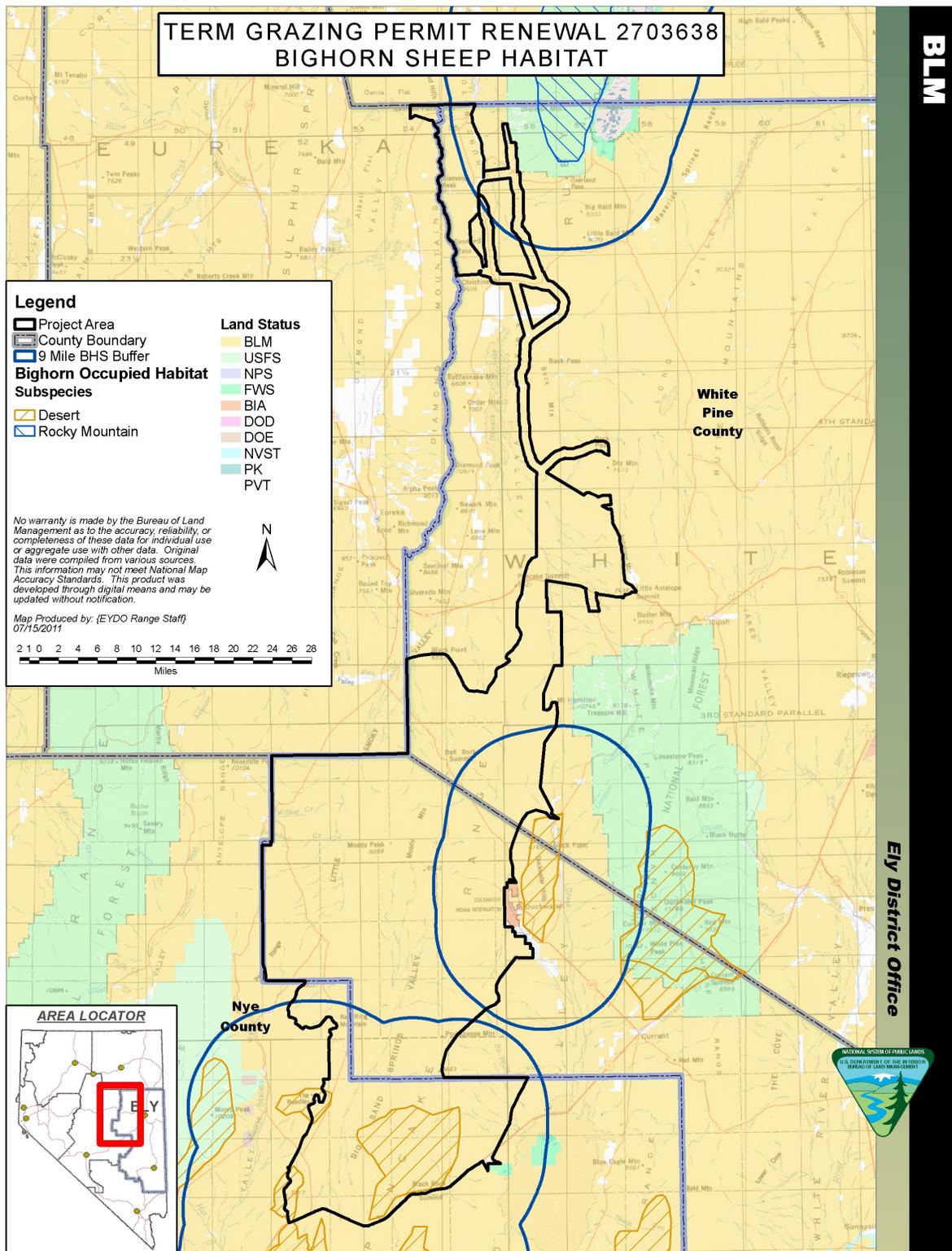


Figure A.3. Bighorn Sheep Habitats Map

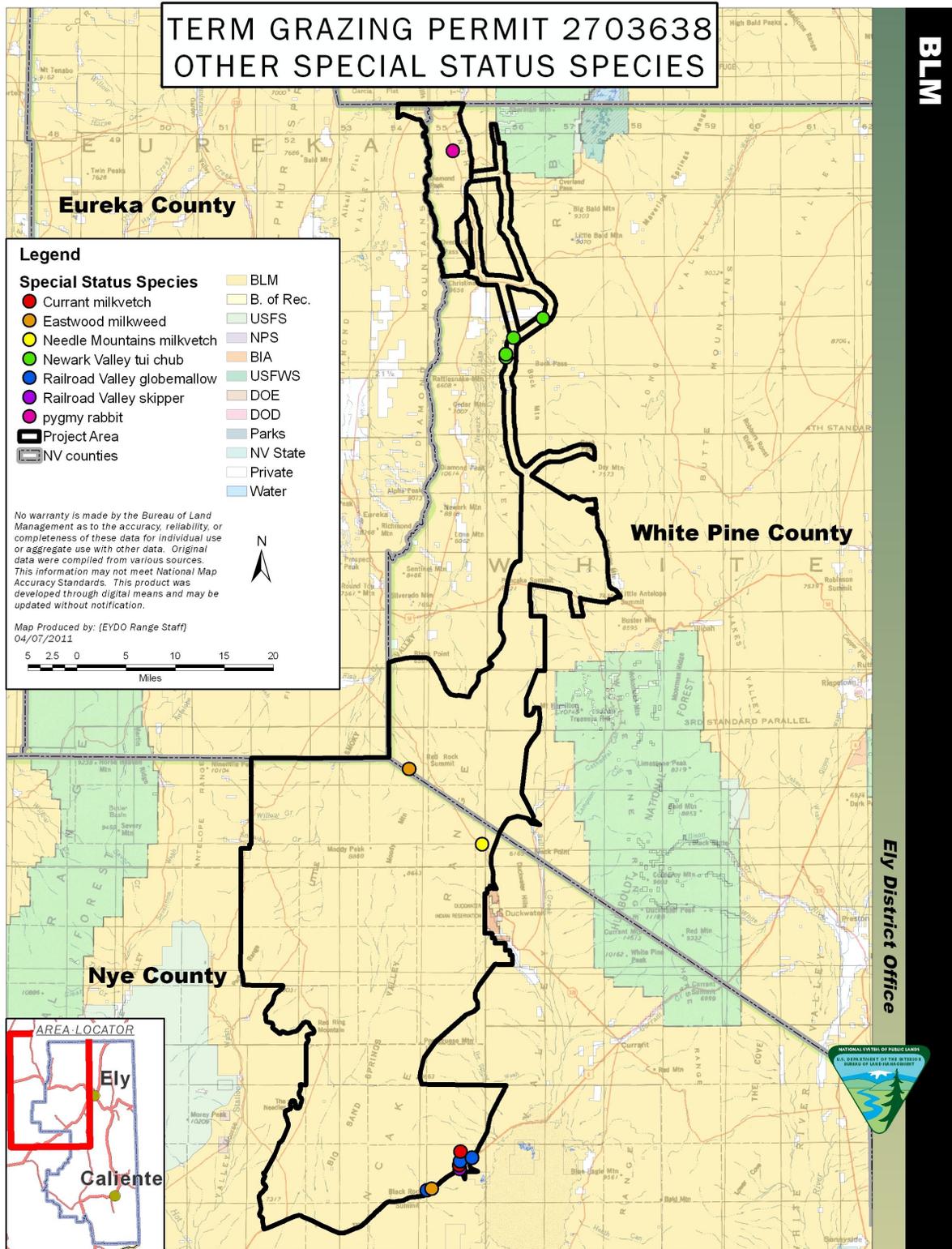


Figure A.4. Other Special Status Species Map

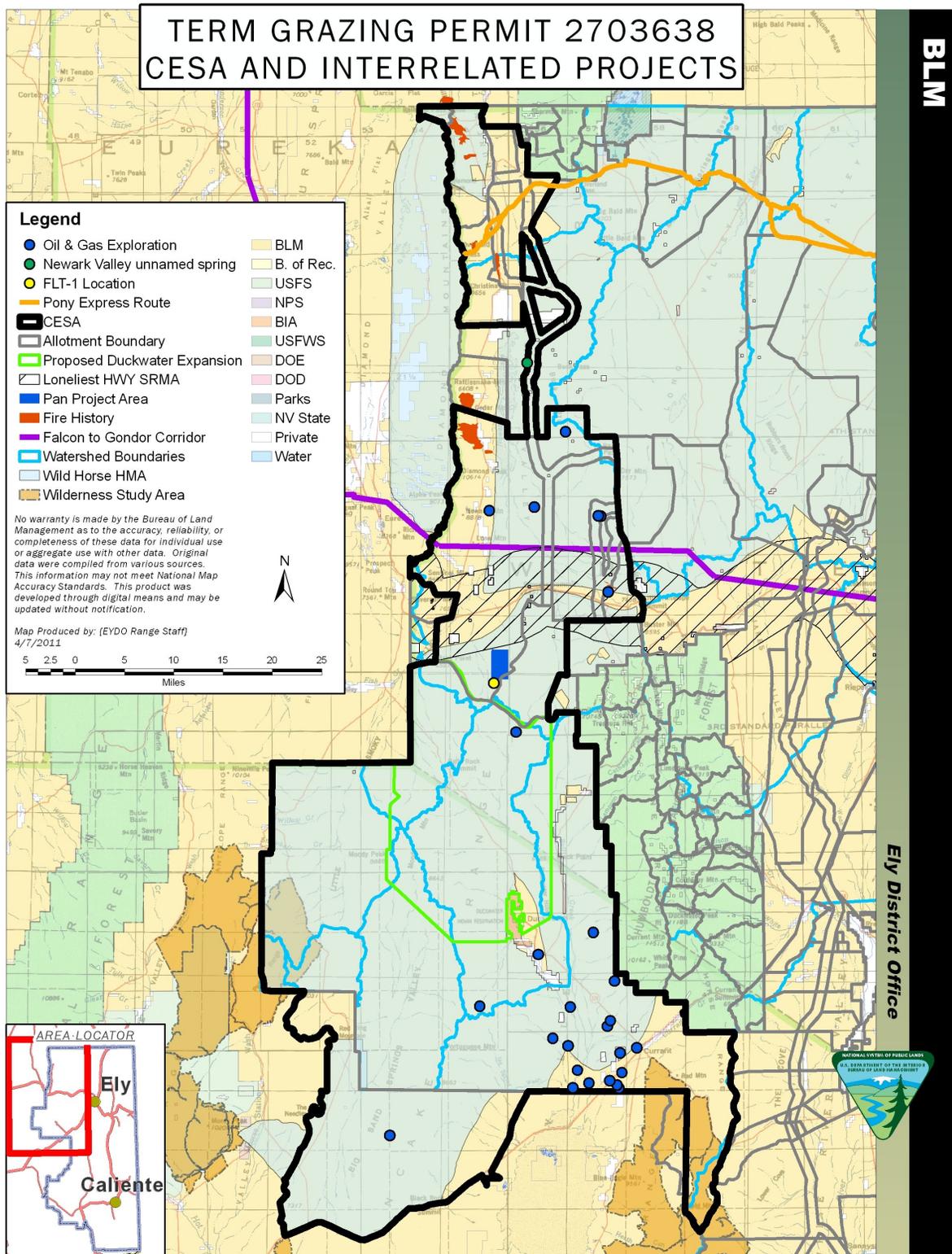


Figure A.5. CESA and Interrelated Projects Map

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Appendix B. Risk Assessment for Noxious and Invasive Weeds

Term Grazing Permit 2703638 Renewal on the Railroad Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm Springs Trail, Corta, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotments

Eureka, Nye, and White Pine Counties, Nevada

On May 12, 2011 a Noxious & Invasive Weed Risk Assessment was completed for term grazing permit 2703638 renewal on the Railroad Pass, Newark, Duckwater, Cold Creek, Warm Springs Trail, Corta, South Pancake, and Sand Springs Allotments. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Egan Field Office proposes to fully process and issue a term grazing permit. The proposed grazing permit is summarized as follows:

The proposed action also requires that stipulations identified in this Weed Risk Assessment be followed. Details of the permit are included in the proposed action of the EA.

No field weed surveys were completed for this project. Instead the Ely and Battle Mountain District weed inventories data was consulted. These areas were last inventoried in 2003 or 2008. The following species are found within the boundaries of the permitted area:

<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	black henbane
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	bull thistle
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Canada thistle
<i>Euphorbia esula</i>	leafy spurge
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	musk thistle
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	poison hemlock
<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	Russian knapweed
<i>Tamarix sp.</i>	salt cedar
<i>Onopordum acanthium</i>	scotch thistle
<i>Centaurea stoebe ssp. micranthos</i>	spotted knapweed
<i>Lepidium latifolium</i>	tall whitetop
<i>Lepidium draba</i>	whitetop/hoary cress

Additionally, the following species are found along roads and drainages leading to the permitted area:

<i>Centaurea vigata spp. squarrosa</i>	squarrose knapweed
<i>Cicuta maculata</i>	water hemlock

While not officially documented the following non-native invasive weeds probably occur in or around the allotments: cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), halogeton (*Halogeton glomeratus*), horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*).

Factor 1 assesses the likelihood of noxious/invasive weed species spreading to the project area.	
None (0)	Noxious/invasive weed species are not located within or adjacent to the project area. Project activity is not likely to result in the establishment of noxious/invasive weed species in the project area.
Low (1-3)	Noxious/invasive weed species are present in the areas adjacent to but not within the project area. Project activities can be implemented and prevent the spread of noxious/invasive weeds into the project area.

Moderate (4-7)	Noxious/invasive weed species located immediately adjacent to or within the project area. Project activities are likely to result in some areas becoming infested with noxious/invasive weed species even when preventative management actions are followed. Control measures are essential to prevent the spread of noxious/invasive weeds within the project area.
High (8-10)	Heavy infestations of noxious/invasive weeds are located within or immediately adjacent to the project area. Project activities, even with preventative management actions, are likely to result in the establishment and spread of noxious/invasive weeds on disturbed sites throughout much of the project area.

For this project, the factor rates as Moderate (4) at the present time. Grazing can increase the populations of the noxious and invasive weeds already within the permitted areas and could aid in the introduction of weeds from surrounding areas. Also, the movement of sheep across the trail system could introduce new weed species to the permitted areas. This risk is minimal since the sheep have moved to the same areas for the past century. If new sheep are brought in this risk increases.

Factor 2 assesses the consequences of noxious/invasive weed establishment in the project area.	
Low to Nonexistent (1-3)	None. No cumulative effects expected.
Moderate (4-7)	Possible adverse effects on site and possible expansion of infestation within the project area. Cumulative effects on native plant communities are likely but limited.
High (8-10)	Obvious adverse effects within the project area and probable expansion of noxious/invasive weed infestations to areas outside the project area. Adverse cumulative effects on native plant communities are probable.

This project rates as Moderate (5) at the present time. If new weed infestations establish within the permitted areas this could have an adverse impact those native plant communities however, the proposed action includes measures to increase native plants and to help prevent weeds from establishing. An increase of cheatgrass could alter the fire regime in the area.

The Risk Rating is obtained by multiplying Factor 1 by Factor 2.	
None (0)	Proceed as planned.
Low (1-10)	Proceed as planned. Initiate control treatment on noxious/invasive weed populations that get established in the area.
Moderate (11-49)	Develop preventative management measures for the proposed project to reduce the risk of introduction of spread of noxious/invasive weeds into the area. Preventative management measures should include modifying the project to include seeding the area to occupy disturbed sites with desirable species. Monitor the area for at least 3 consecutive years and provide for control of newly established populations of noxious/invasive weeds and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.
High (50-100)	Project must be modified to reduce risk level through preventative management measures, including seeding with desirable species to occupy disturbed site and controlling existing infestations of noxious/invasive weeds prior to project activity. Project must provide at least 5 consecutive years of monitoring. Projects must also provide for control of newly established populations of noxious/invasive weeds and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.

For this project, the Risk Rating is Moderate (20). This indicates that the project can proceed as planned as long as the following measures are followed:

- To eliminate the introduction of noxious weed seeds, roots, or rhizomes all interim and final seed mixes, hay, straw, hay/straw, or other organic products used for feed or bedding will be certified free of plant species listed on the Nevada noxious weed list or specifically identified by the BLM Ely District Office.
- Prior to entering public lands, the BLM will provide information regarding noxious weed management and identification to the permit holders affiliated with the project. The importance of preventing the spread of weeds to uninfested areas and importance of controlling existing populations of weeds will be explained.

- The range specialist for the allotments will include weed detection into project compliance inspection activities. If the spread of noxious weeds is noted, appropriated weed control procedures will be determined in consultation with BLM personnel and will be in compliance with the appropriate BLM handbook sections and applicable laws and regulations.
- Grazing will be conducted in compliance with the Ely District BLM noxious weed schedules. The scheduled procedures can significantly and effectively reduce noxious weed spread or introduction into the project area.
- When necessary, control or restrict the timing of livestock movement to minimize the transport of livestock-borne noxious weed seeds, roots, or rhizomes between weed-infested and weed-free areas.
- Any newly established populations of noxious/invasive weeds discovered will be communicated to the Ely District Noxious and Invasive Weeds Program for treatment.

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Date

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Date

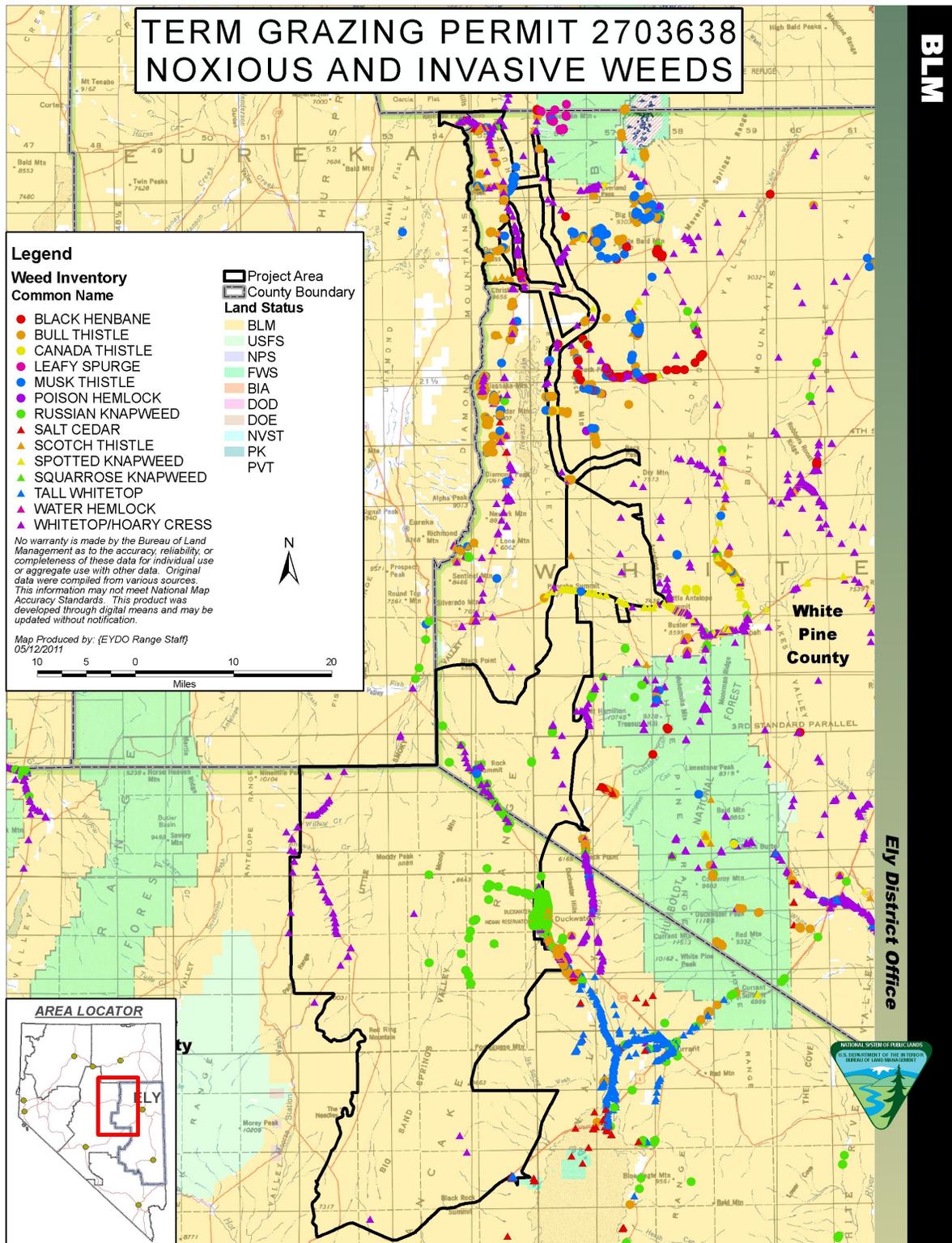


Figure B.1. Noxious and Invasive Weeds