

# Virginia City Grand Prix

## Finding of No Significant Impact

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0032-EA

January 2013



## **Background**

The Virginia City Motorcycle Club (VCMC) is a domestic non-profit corporation in the State of Nevada, as well as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The VCMC is comprised entirely of volunteer members who serve in various elected offices (as specified in club bylaws) and as workers on club events.

The VCMC was formed in 2001 for the primary purpose of organizing the Virginia City Grand Prix (VCGP) off-road motorcycle race. This event was conducted for 30 years by the founding organization, Western State Racing Association (WSRA), and now for the past 11 years by the VCMC.

The VCGP is a two-day competitive event that is tightly integrated with the small historic tourist town of Virginia City, Nevada. The event's registered participants, with a combined two-day count ranging from 800 to 1,100 racers, are predominantly from out of state and most stay in Virginia City for multiple days during the event by patronizing the local hotels or by camping through the use of personal recreational vehicles (RVs).

The event's spectators are not regulated or counted, but reasonable estimates are of 3,000 to 5,000 additional town visitors over each race weekend who arrive to view the event or to support the individual race participants. The event is scheduled for the last weekend of April, which provides a significant economic impact at the beginning of the town's annual tourist season. The races importance to the region and the tourist-based economy of Virginia City is underscored by the strong support the local business community and the municipal government have demonstrated each year.

The event utilizes a racecourse that begins/ends in the middle of town and loops through the nearby mountainous areas. A course is normally 20 to 30 miles in length, with the specific route altered each year to provide variety for the racers and to reduce impact to roads and trails by the rotating use.

The racecourse crosses a combination of public and private land, as well as municipal streets and state highways. The most intensely utilized land during the event, including the start/finish line, pits and designated refueling area, vendor areas, and official spectator locations, are all located on private lands within Virginia City.

The VCMC has worked in close coordination with local municipal agencies, including law enforcement, fire, medical and emergency responders, and the public works department, to ensure the event is effectively integrated with critical local services.

In March 2012 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sierra Front Field Office determined that the previously written environmental assessment (EA) in 2003 was inadequate for future motorcycle race events in the Virginia City area. The BLM and VCMC executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined their respective responsibilities for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The MOU further stipulated the cost recovery required on the part of VCMC to reimburse the BLM for costs associated with administration of this EA process.

## **Determination**

On the basis of the information contained in the *Virginia City Grand Prix Final Environmental Assessment* (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0032-EA), I have determined that the Proposed Action does not constitute a federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the *context* and *intensity* of the impacts described in the EA.

## **Context**

The VCGP occurs in Storey County, Nevada. The current population estimate for the Virginia City and Gold Hill area is approximately 1,220 people. Events such as the VCGP have been occurring in Storey County for more than 30 years. The race matrix involves privately-owned and BLM-managed lands and a combination of paved and dirt roads, and two-track trails. An estimated 600,000 people visit the area each year. Special events occur throughout the year in Virginia City, at times drawing in thousands of visitors per day. The race matrix is utilized by a variety of motorized vehicles including large semi-trucks on the paved portions.

## **Intensity**

*1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.*

The VCGP is supported by the local community for its beneficial recreational, tourism and economic values. During the event, there would be an increase in traffic congestion, noise (especially in downtown Virginia City), and some increased contribution of dust and vehicle emissions. These adverse effects are short-term. During the VCGP there would be short-term negligible effects to wildlife in the project area, primarily through displacement, but no long-term effects would occur.

*2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

The VCMC works closely with local officials in providing traffic management during the two-day event. The Storey County Sheriff Department temporarily closes sections of primary roads to prevent accidents. Although a motorcycle race has some inherent risk to public safety, the VCMC executes measures that ensures that safety risks are minimal.

*3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The project area is located within the Virginia City National Landmark and Register District. There are no farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas in the project area.

*4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The VCGP has strong community support; no controversies were identified during the 30-day scoping period that was held between June 26 and July 26, 2012.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

There are no highly uncertain or unique or unknown risks in implementation of the Proposed Action.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The Proposed Action would not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. Any other actions would be subject to separate analysis under NEPA.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

The Proposed Action does not relate to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss of destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

The project area is located within the Virginia City National Landmark and Register District. In accordance with the State Protocol Agreement with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Officer, the BLM has made a determination that the project would not affect historic resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA or 1973.*

No federally listed species under the ESA, or its critical habitat for such species, are present on, or in the vicinity of, the VCGP and therefore would not be impacted by the Proposed Action.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan. Implementation of the Proposed Action would not violate or threaten to violate any federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

*For*   
Leon Thomas  
Field Manager  
Sierra Front Field Office

11/4/2013  
date