

Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails Project

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0028-EA

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Carson City District
Sierra Front Field Office
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, NV 89701
775-885-6000

August 2013



Background

Beginning in 2007 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sierra Front Field Office and the Carson Valley Trails Association (CVTA) entered into discussions about the opportunities for non-motorized trails in the Pine Nut Mountains, located in Douglas, and Carson City Counties. The Pine Nut Mountains, east of Carson City and the Minden/Gardnerville area of western Nevada, consists of approximately 400,000 acres of public lands, private lands, and Indian Trust Lands. Although there are extensive routes throughout the area ranging from single track trails to maintained dirt roads, no designated non-motorized trail currently exists within the Pine Nut Mountains.

In October of 2010 the CVTA submitted a proposal to the BLM for a 45-mile trail system, running from the area of Ruhensroth Dam near Highway 395, north to Hot Springs Mountain. Initially conceived as the *Carson Valley Discovery Trail*, the non-motorized trail system would have included four loop trails, and one connecting trail running north to south along the western edge of the Pine Nut Mountains. The trail would have been developed with opportunities to connect to non-motorized trails on Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (USFS) lands to the east and lands owned by the City of Carson to the north. In April of 2013 the Project was revised into two loop trails, approximately six miles each, and the name was changed to the *Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails Project* (Project). The entire Project area is located in Douglas County.

The CVTA, based in Minden, Nevada, is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that works with partners to provide opportunities for non-motorized recreation for the public. The CVTA currently maintains the Fay-Luther Trail System on public lands in Alpine County, California. Fay-Luther is one of the most popular and heavily used trail systems in the Sierra Front. The CVTA has worked with the Nevada Conservation Corps and Professional Trail Builders Association on past projects, and these groups may assist with implementation of this Project.

Douglas County has identified outdoor recreation as a major amenity for strategic development in the County's future. Outdoor recreation and designated trails are consistently mentioned as a top attraction from community members and organizations. The proposed Project would create strong community character and pride, provide a local and inexpensive recreational trail resource, increase community marketability, and improve the overall quality of life. The CVTA would seek funding for implementation of the Project from local donors, the National Recreational Trails Program, American Hiking Society, and other sources. Under the Federal Land Management Policy Act (FLPMA), the BLM has a mandate to provide for multiple uses, including opportunities for the public to use non-motorized trails.

Determination

On the basis of the information contained in the *Juniper and Pinyon Loop Trails Project Draft Environmental Assessment* (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2012-0028-EA), I have preliminarily 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) would not be 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 draft EA.

Context

The Project area is on the western edge of the Pine Nut Mountains, an area of about 400,000 acres. Land ownership is mixed, including public, private and Indian Trust Assets. Elevations range from 5,100 feet above sea level (asl) to 5,400 feet asl for the Juniper Loop Trail, and 5,400 feet to 6,100 feet asl for the Pinyon Loop Trail. The Project area is located east of the urban interface in the Stephanie Way and Pine Nut Road areas.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Providing opportunities for non-motorized recreation would be beneficial. The Project would result in the permanent loss of approximately four acres of sagebrush and annual grasses, a negligible effect. Removal of trees would be avoided.

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

The construction of non-motorized trails and a trailhead would have no effect on public health or safety. The ensure the safe by the public, targetshooting from and into the trailheads would not be permitted.

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.

There are no unique or sensitive resources 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 environmental effects from trail and trailhead construction are well known.

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

There are no known effects of the Proposed Action which are considered uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

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 does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future actions within the Project or planning area, if they were to occur, would be subject to separate environmental analysis.

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

No significant cumulative effects were identified in the draft EA. Any other actions proposed in the Allotment would be evaluated as to whether the actions effects added to the Proposed Action would cause cumulatively significant effects.

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.

Based on the completion of a Class III cultural resources inventory of the area of potential effect, there are no historic properties in the Project area. On June 24, 2013 the BLM sent a letter to the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California to provide information on this project. No concerns have been raised to date, and consultation with the Tribe would continue through implementation.

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 occurs within the Project area.

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 (2001). 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.

Leon Thomas
Field Manager
Sierra Front Field Office

Date