

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Twin Falls District
Shoshone Field Office
400 West F Street
Shoshone, Idaho 83352

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2014-0012-CX

A. Background

BLM Office: Shoshone Field Office. Lease/Serial/Case File No.: IDI-37698

Proposed Action Title/Type: Bell Mountain Lookout Removal and Communication Facility

Location of Proposed Action:

Boise Meridian, Idaho
T. 1 N., R. 20 E.,
sec. 7, NE1/4SE1/4.

(For further detail refer to Attachment A, Location Map)

B. Proposed Action

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to remove the existing building and other facilities developed in association with the Bell Mountain Lookout. In conjunction with the removal of the lookout the BLM is proposing to replace the lookout facility with a building and a self-supporting tower so that the area can continue to be used as a BLM communications facility.

The Bell Mountain Lookout was developed in 1962/1963 to fulfill BLM's need for reliable radio communication and fire surveillance. The Bell Mountain Lookout building was occupied by fire lookout personnel during fire seasons from 1964 through 2001 and is currently still being used to house radio communication equipment. After the BLM discontinued occupying the building during the fire season only limited maintenance has been completed. The building has fallen into disrepair, is prone to vandalism, and it has been recommended that the building be removed.

The BLM will continue to have a need for reliable radio communication supplied by this site. To continue to meet this need the BLM is proposing to replace the existing building with a 10 ft. by 12 ft. prefabricated building and a lattice self-supporting tower. The building and tower would be placed in the footprint of the existing lookout building and would be surrounded by a security fence (see Attachment B, Site Layout)

C. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Sun Valley Management Framework Plan (MFP)

Date Approved: December 14, 1981

The project location falls within the Big Wood Analysis Unit of the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan (MFP, 1981). Communication uses are not specifically provided for within the MFP. However, the Big Wood Analysis Unit, Lands, Decision Number 2 (p. BW-2) states “(a)llow rights-of-way for utility and transportation purposes (both public and private), provided the uses comply with all requirements of this plan. Right-of-way applications will be examined on a case-by-case basis to determine routes, impacts, and mitigating measures.”

The Bell Mountain Communication Site Plan was initially developed in 1985. A revision of the plan was approved on May 11, 2007. The plan provides an outline for the orderly development of the communication site in accordance with the Sun Valley MFP. The current communication facility operated by the BLM as part of the lookout is specifically described within the communication site plan and the proposed amendment is within the parameters set within the plan.

D. Compliance with NEPA

The proposed action is excluded from further documentation under NEPA in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 E (12) “(g)rants of right-of-way wholly within the boundaries of other compatibly developed rights-of-way” and 11.9 J (10) “(r)emoval of structures and materials of no historical value, such as abandoned automobiles, fences, and buildings, including those built in trespass and reclamation of the site when little to no surface disturbance is involved.”

Based on my review of the proposal and field office staff recommendations, I have determined that the proposal is in conformance with the applicable land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

A Decision Record will be prepared to document the decision to remove the existing lookout tower and associated facilities. Additionally, a right-of-way reservation will be prepared and issued to document the decision to authorize the construction, operation, and maintenance of the replacement communication facility.

E. Signature

Authorizing Official: Elizabeth Maclean Date: 7/3/14
Name: Elizabeth Maclean
Title: Field Manager

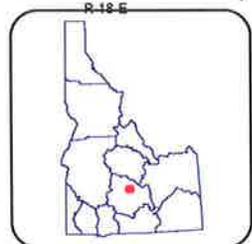
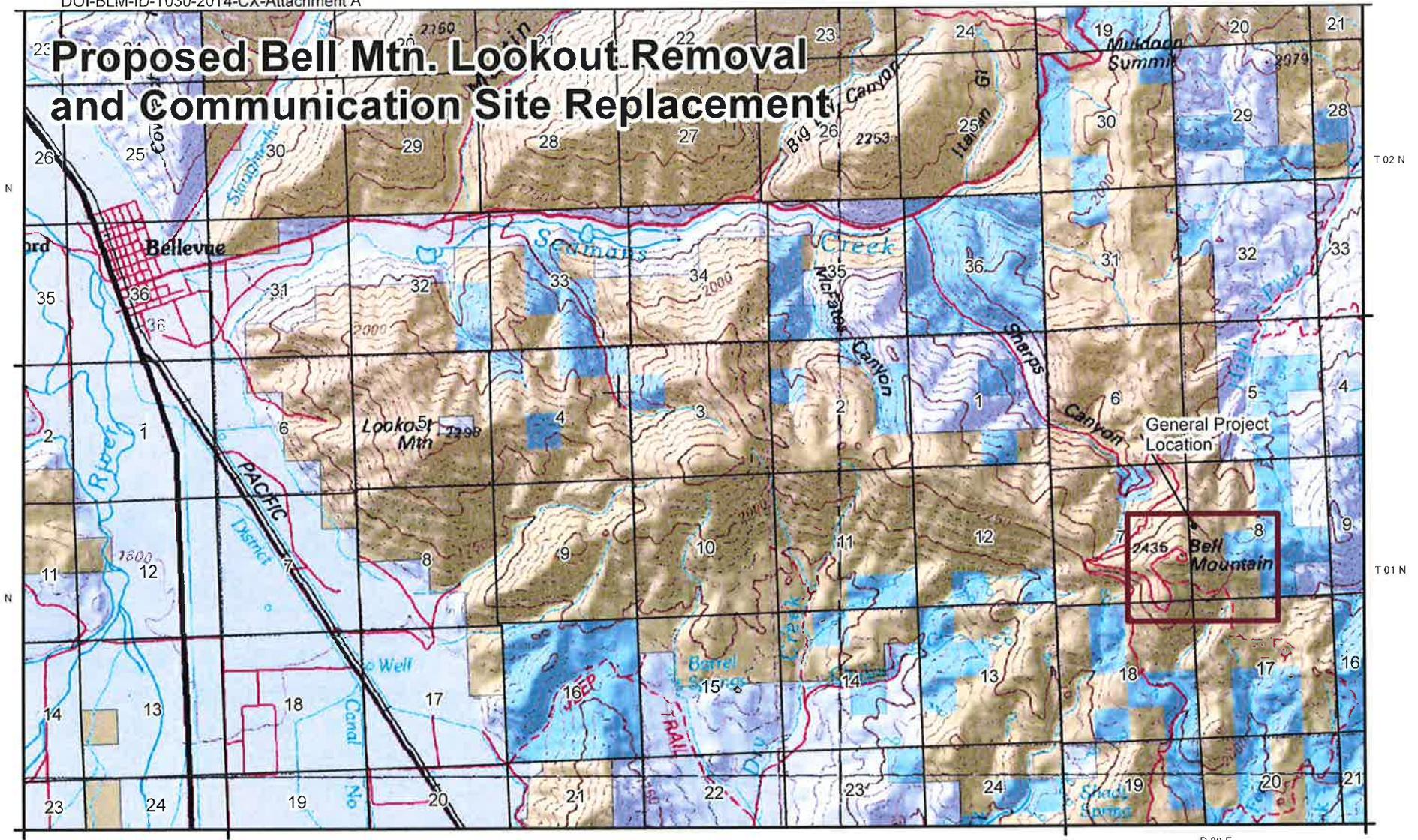
F. Contact

For additional information concerning this Categorical Exclusion, contact Kasey Prestwich, Realty Specialist, at 732-7204 or at 400 West F Street, Shoshone, Idaho 83352.

G. Attachments

- Attachment A, Bell Mountain Site Layout
- Attachment B, Sit Layout Diagram
- Attachment C, Categorical Exclusion Review Sheet

Proposed Bell Mtn. Lookout Removal and Communication Site Replacement

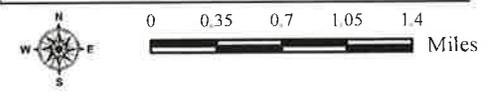


US Dept. of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Twin Falls District, Idaho

Legend

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Bureau of Land Management | Private; other |
| Forest Service | State |
| National Park Service | State Fish and Game |

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management. The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed.



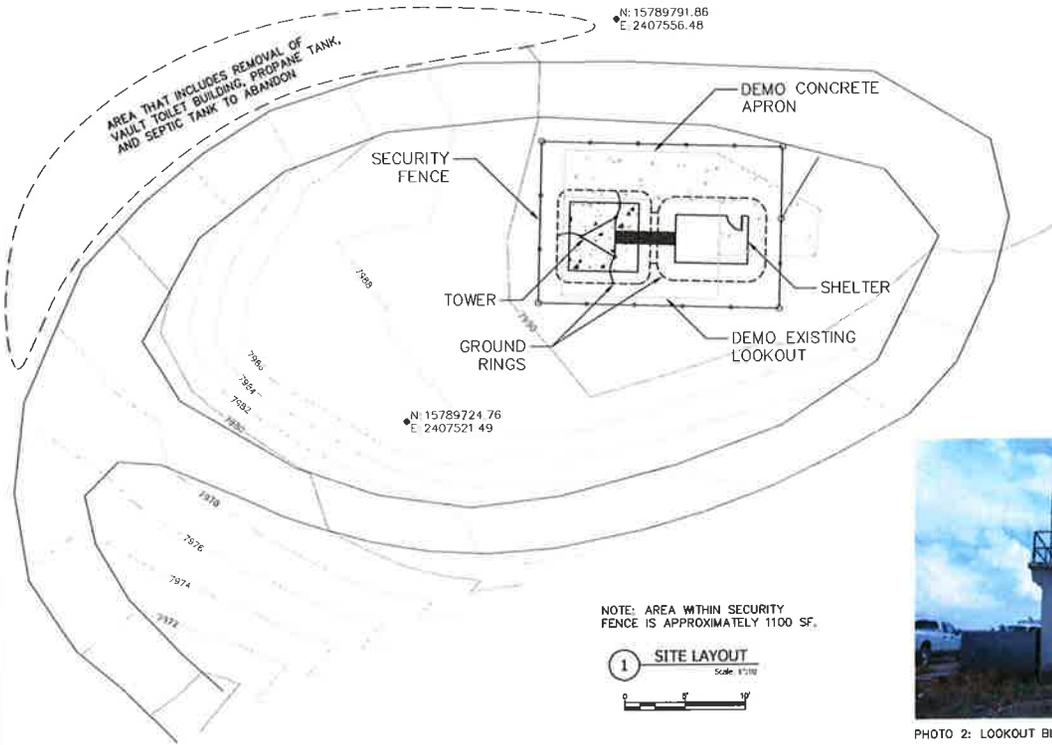


PHOTO 1: LOOKOUT BLDG (FRONT)



PHOTO 2: LOOKOUT BLDG (BACK)



PHOTO 3: LOOKOUT BLDG (LEFT)



PHOTO 4: ABANDON SEPTIC SYSTEM (COORDINATE WITH HEALTH DEPT.)



PHOTO 5: HAUL AWAY TOILET BUILDING / ABANDON VAULT



PHOTO 6: PROPANE TANK TO BE REMOVED



PHOTO 7: LOOKOUT BLDG (RIGHT)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT
BELL MOUNTAIN COMM SITE

ID44D

TWIN FALLS DISTRICT

PROJECT NO.	MARK	DESCRIPTION	DATE	APPROVED
DESIGN OFFICE: LUDRASSOOD				
DESIGNED BY: K. DONLEY				
DRAWN BY: K. DONLEY				
CHECKED BY: T. PARDY				
APPROVED BY: C. KORNALCZYK				
DATE: DECEMBER 2013				

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Twin Falls District
Shoshone Field Office
400 West F Street
Shoshone, Idaho 83352**

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW SHEET
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T030-2014-0012-CX**

A. Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to remove the existing building and other facilities developed in association with the Bell Mountain Lookout. In conjunction with the removal of the lookout the BLM is proposing to replace the lookout facility with a building and a self-supporting tower so that the area can continue to be used as a BLM communications facility.

B. Consideration of Extraordinary Circumstances

This Categorical Exclusion Review Sheet documents the review of the proposed action to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply. If any of the extraordinary circumstances apply to the proposed action, then an EA or EIS must be prepared. Any evidence or concerns that one or more of the exceptions may apply must be brought to the attention of the manager who is authorized to approve the proposed action.

1. The proposed action would not have any significant impacts on public health or safety.

The removal of the existing Bell Mountain Lookout building and the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new building for communication purposes would not have any significant impacts on public health and safety. The operation of the new communication facility will comply with Federal and State standards for public health and safety and environmental protection. The BLM authorized officer has the ability to suspend or terminate in whole or in part the operation and maintenance of the new communication facility if unforeseen conditions arise which result in the inadequate protection of public health and safety or undue degradation to the environment.

2. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

There are no natural resources and unique geographic characteristics such as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; national monuments; or other ecologically significant or critical areas that would be significantly impacted by the proposed action.

A cultural clearance for the Bell Mountain Communication Site was completed in September 2012. A record search identified that there were no previous sites recorded in this area and a field examination did not discover any new sites. It was determined with concurrence from SHPO that the removal and construction of a communication site would not have an effect on cultural resources eligible to be listed or listed on the National Register.

A wildlife review of the proposal found that the project area would be located within habitat known or suspected to support one or more life cycle activities of five migratory birds species of concern (this does not include bird species that are also listed as BLM sensitive species). However, the implementation of the proposed project would result in no discernible increase in human caused impacts to the local populations of the five migratory birds of Conservation Concern.

3. The proposed action would not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

The proposed action is in conformance with the Sun Valley Management Framework Plan (MFP). This plan established the land use allocation and goals for the affected public land; as such, there are no unresolved conflicts regarding other uses of the available resources.

A letter was sent to interested parties on March 07, 2014 informing them of the proposal and no responses were received.

4. The proposed action would not have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

The proposed action does not involve highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. The proposal includes uses that have been occurring in the project area without resulting in highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks. Additionally, the removal of buildings and the construction of similar buildings on public lands have not resulted in impacts that have been found to be highly uncertain, potentially significant, unique or have unknown risks.

5. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

The proposed action does not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principal about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. The proposed action is not connected to another action that would require further environmental analysis and it would not set a precedent for future actions that would normally require environmental analysis. The decision to move forward with the proposal as described would only allow that action to occur. Any proposed future projects must be evaluated for their own merits and effects.

6. The proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

The proposed action does not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. The approval of the removal of the existing lookout and issuing an authorization to allow the construction, operation, and maintenance of a communication facility does not have a direct relationship with other actions.

7. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.

A cultural clearance for the Bell Mountain Communication Site was completed in September 2012. A record search identified that there was no previous sites recorded in this area and a field examination did not discover any new sites. It was determined with concurrence with SHPO that the communication site did not have an effect on cultural resources eligible to be listed or listed on the National Register.

8. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species.

A wildlife review of the proposal and the project area identified that listed or candidate species may occur in the proposed area and include: Canada lynx (a Threatened species), wolverine (a Proposed Threatened species), and greater sage-grouse (a Candidate species).

The Canada lynx and wolverine may use the project area, but not regularly and only during the winter months. The proposed project is not expected to result in a measurable effect in the use of the habitat or area by the Canada lynx or the wolverine.

Greater sage-grouse, may occur within the project area. A review of the areas sage-grouse inhabit identified that the implementation of the project is not an action that would result in alterations of existing sage-grouse habitat or detectible impacts to the local sage-grouse population that uses the adjacent habitat. Greater sage-grouse habitat within the project area would be cumulatively maintained or enhanced and the proposal is likely to reduce or mitigate impacts to the extent practical.

9. The proposed action would not violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

The BLM issues right-of-way reservations in accordance with Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and the BLM regulations at 43 CFR 2800. Under these regulations the proposed right-of-way grant would specify that all applicable Federal, State and local laws be adhered to. The BLM has the ability to suspend and/or terminate the right-of-way if a Federal, State or local laws is violated. There are no tribal laws in effect for the project area.

10. The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

Impacts to minority or low income populations have not occurred as a result of granting other similar rights-of-way and impacts are not expected to occur as a result of authorizing the removal of the existing building and the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new communication facility.

11. The proposed action would not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

Authorizing the removal of the existing building and the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new communication facility will not change access to the public lands within the area.

12. The proposed action would not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

Some noxious weeds were discovered within the area of the communication site. It is planned to reseed the areas disturbed by the removal of the existing lookout building. The area will be reviewed and recommended for weed treatments as determined necessary to control noxious weeds.

C. Consultation and Preparation

Resource reports/surveys and reviews of potential impacts of the proposed action were completed by the following:

Kasey Prestwich, Realty Specialist/Project Lead

Gary Wright, Wildlife Biologist

Lisa Cresswell, Archeologist/Shoshone Field Office NEPA Coordinator