

Worksheet
Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: Winnemucca District, Black Rock Field Office

TRACKING NUMBER: DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0008-DNA

CASEFILE: 8520

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Sage Grouse Research and Collaring in Wilderness

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: All Designated Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) within the confines of the Black Rock Field Office (See Figure 1)

APPLICANT (if any): Summit Lake Paiute Tribe, University of Nevada (Reno)

A. Description of the Proposed Action with attached map(s) and any applicable mitigation measures.

Multiple proposals have been submitted to study sage grouse leks where the animals have the potential to inhabit the Summit Lake Indian Reservation, surrounding areas and designated Wilderness managed by the BRFO (see figure 1, note specific names of areas addressed). The goal of the study is to obtain data on sage grouse population networks in order to validate metapopulation dynamics and movement of sage grouse in the region.

This data would then be used to guide managers (Federal, State and Tribal) in habitat management on and off the reservation to improve sage grouse habitat. Data would be shared with neighboring land managers (Forest Service, Tribal Governments, etc.).

Proponents would use NDOW's data collected from aerial surveys to locate leks. Once leks are located, observing teams of two - four would count the number of birds. This would occur one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunrise. Counts of the same lek may be performed on different days. Observing teams would walk to lek locations within wilderness areas. Observing teams would stay on existing ways in the ISA/WSA's if using motorized vehicles to access these leks.

Teams would capture sage grouse and fit them with radio transmitters over the monitoring period, which would generally be between the months of March through July. Individual sage grouse would be captured at the lek site by teams led by qualified personnel and/or volunteers. Teams would not consist of more than four people per team and no more than three teams would be operating at the same time. The birds would be approached on foot and spotlighted with a hand-held spotlight during the night (1 hour post dusk to 1 hour pre-dawn). Portable audio devices for 'white noise' would be used to

mask the sound of approaching humans and to distract the bird. The volume would be at a level sufficient to cover the footsteps of approaching netters and would occur periodically throughout the night while capture is being attempted. Disturbance post dawn and pre-dusk would be avoided to allow the birds to move to leks uninterrupted. Birds on nests would not be targeted, nor would juvenile birds less than 10 weeks old. Capture efforts could occur on consecutive nights on either the same or different leks. Net guns or long-handled game bird catching nets would also be used.

Once the bird is captured, biological data (age, sex, weight, location) would be collected and the bird would be fitted with a radio transmitting collar and metal leg band. Capture efforts would be conducted during the new moon phases. Capture attempts prior to dawn would be avoided.

Subsequent monitoring would continue for appropriate time frames. Monitoring includes tracking of each sage grouse for the life of the radio transmitter (approximately 18 months) or a mortality sensor is detected. If a mortality sensor is detected, a concentrated effort would be made to retrieve the radio transmitter and data, both would be collected and information relating to the animals (specifically) location and suspected cause of death would be interpreted. Sage grouse would be tracked monthly by technicians using radio-receivers. Tracking within the Wilderness or WSA/ISA boundaries would be conducted on foot. During the winter when access is limited or when carrying out field methods in inclement weather becomes difficult, fixed-wing aircraft surveillance would be conducted to locate sage grouse. Video cameras mounted on drones may be used in lieu of aircraft surveillance. Flights would take place once per month and for six months per year.

The use of radio transmitters is identified as an installation in BLM Manual 6340. This portion of the proposed action is the only activity that can be classified as a prohibited use under Section 4c of the Wilderness Act. A minimum tool analysis was conducted for the proposed installation of radio transmitters in wilderness. It was determined the action is needed for the administration of the wilderness area. Little is currently known about sage grouse habitat use within this wilderness and surrounding area. Lacking such information restricts BLM's ability to manage important habitat use areas and prioritize areas in need of restoration. The same is true for a multitude of other Federal and State agencies and Native American Tribes who are currently seeking ways to improve sage grouse habitat which borders designated wilderness managed by the BRFO. Through the minimum tool analysis, the use of the radio transmitters is considered to be the minimum tool needed to complete the project.

The proposed action in the WSA/ ISA meets the non-impairment standard. The activities are temporary and non-surface disturbing.

Black Rock Field Office

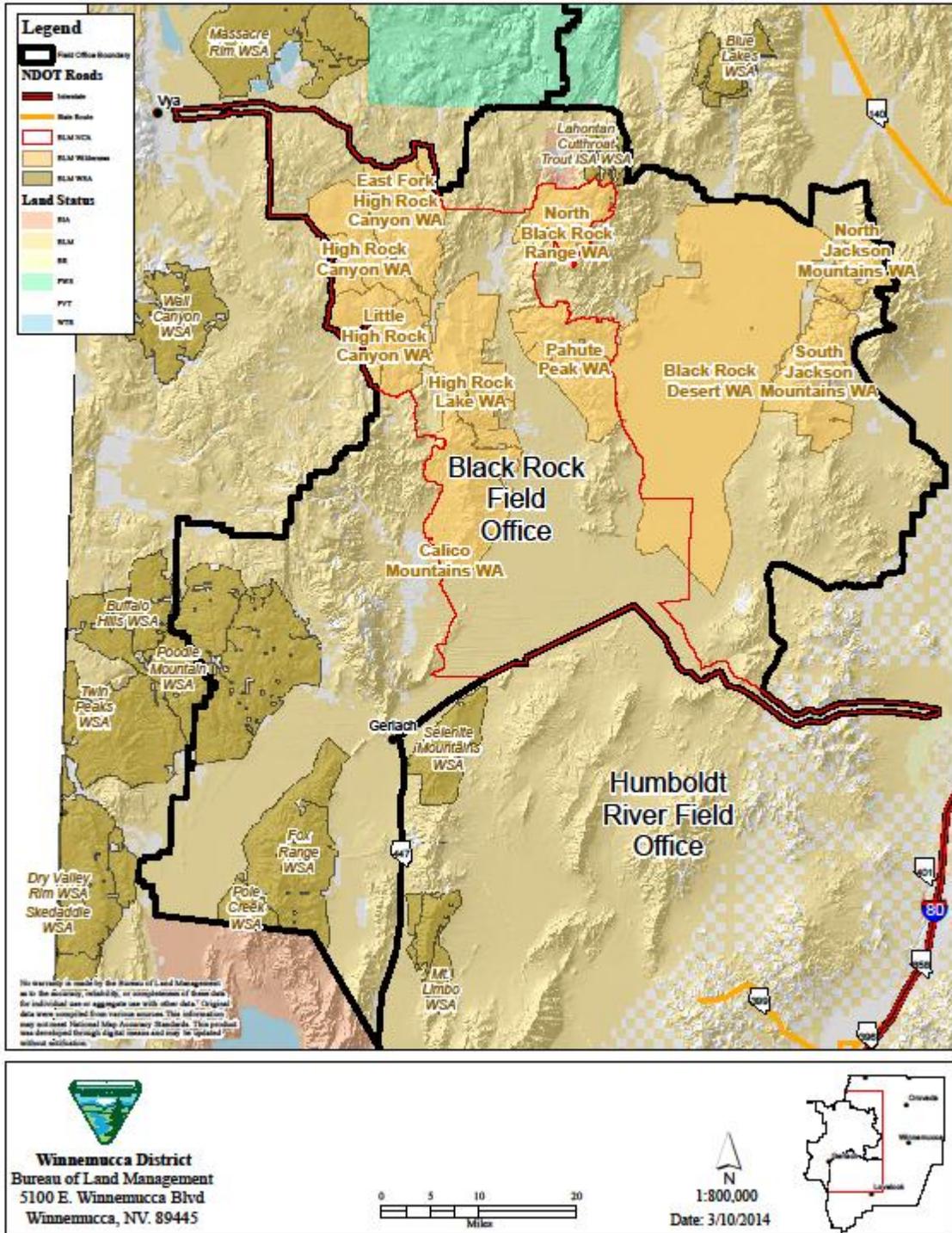


Figure 1: Overview of Project Area

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area,
Associated Wilderness and Other Contiguous Lands: BLM/WN/PL-03/27+1793
Date Approved: July 2004

The proposed action is in conformance with the Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area, Associated Wilderness and Other Contiguous Lands LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decisions (objective, terms, and conditions) as identified in the aforementioned document Chapter 2 Section 2.2.12 pgs 2-31 through 2-33:

To provide high-quality habitats for sagebrush-dependent species, including sage-grouse, in the sagebrush steppe portions of the planning area. All existing lek, breeding, brood rearing, and winter sage-grouse habitats will be conserved during the life of the plan.

To implement management actions for all uses and programs that sustain or improve sage-grouse winter, breeding, nesting, and brooding habitats. Activities that have a high risk of disturbing breeding or brooding sage-grouse will not be allowed within suitable habitats.

Use of aircraft to survey and monitor wildlife populations will continue, but flights will be scheduled to avoid high-visitor-use periods.

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Arizona Game And Fish authored for BLM EA-AZ-025-94-057; Transplant of Desert Bighorn Sheep into the Artillery Mountains; DR/FONSI dated 11/22/1994; this documents specifically references the collaring of animals in designated Wilderness

DOI-BLM-AZ-C0101-2013-0038-DNA; Black Mountains & Poachie Mountains Bighorn Capture and Release 2013; DR FONSI dated 6/17/2013; this documents specifically references the collaring of animals in designated Wilderness

DOI-BLM-AZ-030-2001-0035-EA; Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the Reintroduction and Supplemental Releases of Desert Bighorn Sheep in Mohave, Yavapai, Coconino, and La Paz counties; this documents specifically references the collaring of animals in designated Wilderness

DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2011-0001-EA; Black Rock Desert- High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area Wilderness Management Plan Environmental

Assessment; DR/FONSI dated 12/21/2012; this document specifically references wildlife monitoring within the immediate geographic area and designated wilderness.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA documents(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes. Similar projects have been analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s), furthermore; BLM policy applies to all wilderness managed by the BLM, this is also addressed in the existing NEPA

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA documents(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?

Yes. The alternatives analyzed in the existing documents are appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, as no new circumstances or concerns have been identified.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Yes. At this time there is no new information that would indicate the conclusions reached regarding the proposed action are different from those made in the existing NEPA documents.

There has been a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) review regarding the status of the greater sage grouse and a BLM policy change regarding management of sage grouse. The highest status described for greater sage is "BLM Sensitive".

In April 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) determined that the Greater Sage-Grouse warranted protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but that listing the species was precluded by the need to address other, higher-priority species first. The FWS Greater Sage-Grouse decision placed the species on the candidate list for future regulatory action. Because of a court-ordered settlement, the FWS has until 2015 to make a final determination on listing the Greater Sage-Grouse under the ESA. BLM has developed draft guidance for the protection of sage-grouse habitats. BLM IM 2012-043 and IM 2012-044 provide guidance on how the BLM is to protect sage grouse habitat.

The current proposed action is located within Greater Sage Grouse Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH). The previous NEPA (dated 1994, 2001, 2011, 2013 (see section B.)) analyzes collaring animals within wilderness; however the NEPA documents do not analyze activities in Sage Grouse habitat. The proposed action is not ground disturbing and temporary in duration. The FWS finding and the designation of PPH does not substantially change the analysis of collaring Sage Grouse in wilderness.

BLM Nevada has further developed guidance for the protection of sage grouse habitats encompassing 75 percent of the breeding population in each state. However, there have been no legal changes in the status of sage-grouse since the "warranted but precluded" finding by FWS (IM-NV-2012-056).

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes. The approaches used in the existing documents are still appropriate to address any possible impacts from this proposed action.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes. The public involvement and interagency review associated with the existing NEPA documents was adequate with regards to the complexity of the current proposed action. Each of the previously mentioned NEPA documents as identified in section C underwent both public scoping and interagency review. A Notice of Proposed Action (NOPA) specific to this DNA was sent out March 5th, no comments were received. Additional proposals will require further NOPA's to be prepared and submitted at that time.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Name /Title	Resource/Agency Represented	Signature/Date	Comments (Attach if more room is needed)
Mark Hall (NAC, NEPA coordinator)	NAC/ P&EC	/s/ Mark E Hall	No comments
Kathy Ataman (Archaeologist)	/s/ Kathryn Ataman	3/18/14	
Kathy Cadigan (Wildlife Biologist)	/s/ K. Cadigan	3/18/14	
Zwaantje Rorex (Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness)	/s/ Zwaantje Rorex	3/18/14	

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.

Conclusion *(If you found that one or more of these criteria is not met, you will not be able to check this box.)*

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM' compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

/s/ Josh Chase AFM BLACK ROCK FO
Signature of Project Lead

/s/ Mark E Hall
Signature of NEPA Coordinator

/s/ Gene Seidlitz
Signature of the Responsible Official

3/21/14
Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.