



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Burley Field Office
15 East 200 South
Burley, ID 83318
(208) 677-6600



In Reply Refer To:

3200 (IDT020)P
DOI-BLM-ID-T020-2014-0020-CX
IDI-37772

July 17, 2014

Dear Interested Parties:

The Bureau of Land Management, (BLM) Twin Falls District, Burley Field Office, is soliciting comments, concerns, or issues specific to a geophysical 3D seismic survey proposed by Agua Caliente LLC in the Raft River Valley. An application was received by the Burley Field Office on June 6, 2014 for the geophysical survey of 3,953 acres of public land; the BLM is soliciting your comments regarding this survey.

The Proposed Action includes the placement of seismic receivers, or “geophones,” approximately three inches into the ground across the survey area. The geophones monitor vibrations, seismic activity through the ground. After the geophones are placed, three vibroseis trucks would traverse the survey area, equipped with pads that are lowered to the ground to vibrate the ground, creating seismic waves which are recorded by the geophones as they reflect off of underground geologic structure. The total time frame from initial ground survey to completion and reclamation is about 42 days.

The BLM is preparing a categorical exclusion (CX) and will be looking at potential impacts to the environment, and ways to mitigate these impacts. Special stipulations will be developed for the project where any resource concerns or issues are identified. The Scoping/Information package for this project can be found at the following website: <https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/projectSummary.do?methodName=renderDefaultProjectSummary&projectId=39514>. Your comments are specifically requested on concerns or issues specific to the 3D seismic survey that is proposed. Comments made on this proposal would be most helpful if they are received on or before August 17, 2014, and are directly relevant to the proposal and project area. Feedback will be accepted beyond this date, however, such comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner.

If you have difficulties obtaining this document from the internet, to request a hardcopy, or for questions and concerns, please contact Steve Lubinski, Geologist, Burley Field Office, at (208) 677-6600 or via email at Slubinski@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/Jim Tharp
James Tharp
Field Manager (Acting)

SCOPING/INFORMATION PACKAGE
Agua Caliente 3D Seismic Survey

Project # IDI-37772 NEPA # DOI-BLM-ID-T020-2014-0020-CX

The information in this package summarizes a Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Burley Field Office action in response to an application to conduct a geophysical, 3D seismic survey near Bridge, in the Raft River Valley. The purpose of this scoping document is to inform you and other interested parties of the proposed action, to solicit comments regarding the project, and specifically, to identify resource issues and recommended stipulations if the action is authorized. The BLM Burley Field Office is currently preparing a categorical exclusion (CX) to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The application is on lands open to geophysical survey under the Cassia Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Proposed Action

The proposed survey is for lands within the Raft River Valley, Cassia County, Idaho, and is located in T15S, R26E and T15S R27E. The total BLM managed area of the proposed survey is 3,953 acres. The surface and mineral estates are public land administered by the BLM, Burley Field Office.

The Proposed Action includes the placement of seismic receivers, or “geophones,” approximately three inches into the ground across the survey area. The geophones would be placed on parallel east-west lines that are spaced approximately 660 feet apart. The geophones on the east-west lines and are spaced 165 feet apart on each line. The geophones monitor vibrations, seismic activity through the ground. After the geophones are placed, three vibroseis trucks would traverse the survey area, equipped with pads that are lowered to the ground to vibrate the ground, creating seismic waves which are recorded by the geophones as they reflect off of underground geologic structure. The vibroseis trucks would follow parallel lines oriented in a northeast to southwest direction, spaced approximately 990 feet apart. The total time frame from initial ground survey to completion and reclamation is about 42 days.

Purpose of and Need for Proposed Action

The Burley Field Office received a Notice of Intent to Conduct Geothermal Resource Exploration Operations (Notice) on June 6, 2014. The lands within the Notice are open to geophysical exploration under the Cassia RMP.

In accordance with 43 CFR 3200, BLM needs to process the Notice. If approved, the Notice would authorize the applicants to conduct geothermal exploration activities on the lands specified in the Notice.

Preliminary Issues and Stipulations

Issues are generated through the internal and public scoping process, a review of the RMP and the PEIS, and/or generated from a need for compliance with laws or regulations. Preliminary issues that have been identified include:

- Migratory Birds – Migratory birds are known to exist and utilize the project area for nesting.
- Sage Grouse – Sage grouse are known to occupy the project area.
- Pygmy Rabbit – Pygmy rabbits have been known to occur in the project area, one borrow was identified through a preliminary wildlife survey.
- Soils – The project could have impacts to soils due to driving cross country.
- Vegetation – Cross country driving could crush or disturb vegetation.
- Noxious Weeds – Noxious weed seed could be transported to the project area by vehicles.
- Existing Facilities – Fences, roads, and other infrastructure could be damaged accidentally by the equipment working in the project area.

The following stipulations have already been identified to be incorporated as design features based on the issues identified through internal scoping.

Migratory birds/Sage Grouse

Migratory birds and sage grouse occupy the project area. Any activities that may destroy or disturb nesting habitat, including driving cross-country, may not take place during the nesting season from March 15 to July 31.

Pygmy rabbit

All known pygmy rabbit burrow complexes shall be avoided by at least 50 feet.

Fire Hazard

Any portable generators or other small engines used in the project area shall be equipped with spark arresters.

In the event of a wildland fire, the operator will coordinate with appropriate fire-fighting personnel in the BLM Burley Field Office and local authorities.

The operator would discuss fire prevention during crew orientation and provide protocol on how to report a fire.

Daily crew meetings would be conducted to facilitate communication and to keep the crew informed of any special areas of concern in the vicinity of that day's operation, including days with high fire danger (i.e., red-flag days).

All vehicles would be equipped with fire extinguishers and a shovel to assist with first fire response in case of a fire, as well as a radio to facilitate communication on the Project site. Crews would only act on fires if they are small and manageable with the equipment available on their vehicles.

Fueling of vibroseis trucks and helicopters would only occur on roads or within areas with no or minimal vegetation; fueling trucks would be equipped with fire extinguishers.

No vehicles would be parked in direct contact with vegetation; all vehicles would be parked where there is no or minimal vegetation.

All vehicles, with the exception of vibroseis trucks, would be parked within the staging areas overnight. Vehicles would be parked in areas with no or minimal vegetation.

Soils

No truck traffic will be operated in areas of saturated ground when surface rutting could occur.

Low impact tires will be used to reduce ground surface disturbance. These tires, sometimes called balloon tires, reduce the force on the ground to less than that of a standard pickup truck. Additionally these tires have little tread which also limits the potential surface disturbance.

Layout of source and receiver lines will follow existing disturbance (roads / two-tracks) whenever possible. Receiver line equipment will be deployed mostly with line trucks (pickups), where necessary, and quads. Actual deployment must be done on foot - connecting cables and using feet to insert the geophones.

Vegetation

If operations cause unplanned surface rutting or have otherwise removed all surface vegetation, the areas will be reclaimed and reseeded with a BLM approved seed mix.

Noxious Weeds

The operator will clean all equipment and vehicles prior to going from private land to public lands in the project area to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

Existing Facilities

Any facilities damaged in connection with this Project will be immediately restored to original condition or replaced with a similar facility.

Fences will be avoided and gates will be used whenever possible. Gates will remain in the position found after going through them. If a fence must be crossed, it will be laid down or cut (as determined by the owner), crossed, and immediately put back up.

Public Input Needed

Your comments are specifically requested for the identifying of additional resource issues and development of stipulations for this project. Comments would be most helpful if they are received by August 17, 2014, and are directly relevant to the project area. The BLM will accept public feedback outside of established public involvement timeframes. However, such comments may be considered secondary to comments received in a timely manner and may only be assessed to determine if they identify concerns that would substantially alter the assumptions or analyses presented in the RMP and PEIS.

Written comments must be submitted to the BLM, Burley Field Office, 15 East 200 South, Burley, ID 83318. The office business hours for submitting hand-delivered comments are 7:45 am through 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or portable document format (.pdf) to blm_id_burleyoffice@blm.gov. E-mails submitted to e-mail addresses other than the one listed, in other formats than those listed, or containing viruses will be rejected. To be most helpful, comments sent electronically should include the title of this project in the subject line. Please identify whether you are submitting comments as an individual or as the designated spokesperson on behalf of an organization. Issues that are outside the scope of the lease issuance will not be addressed at this planning level.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

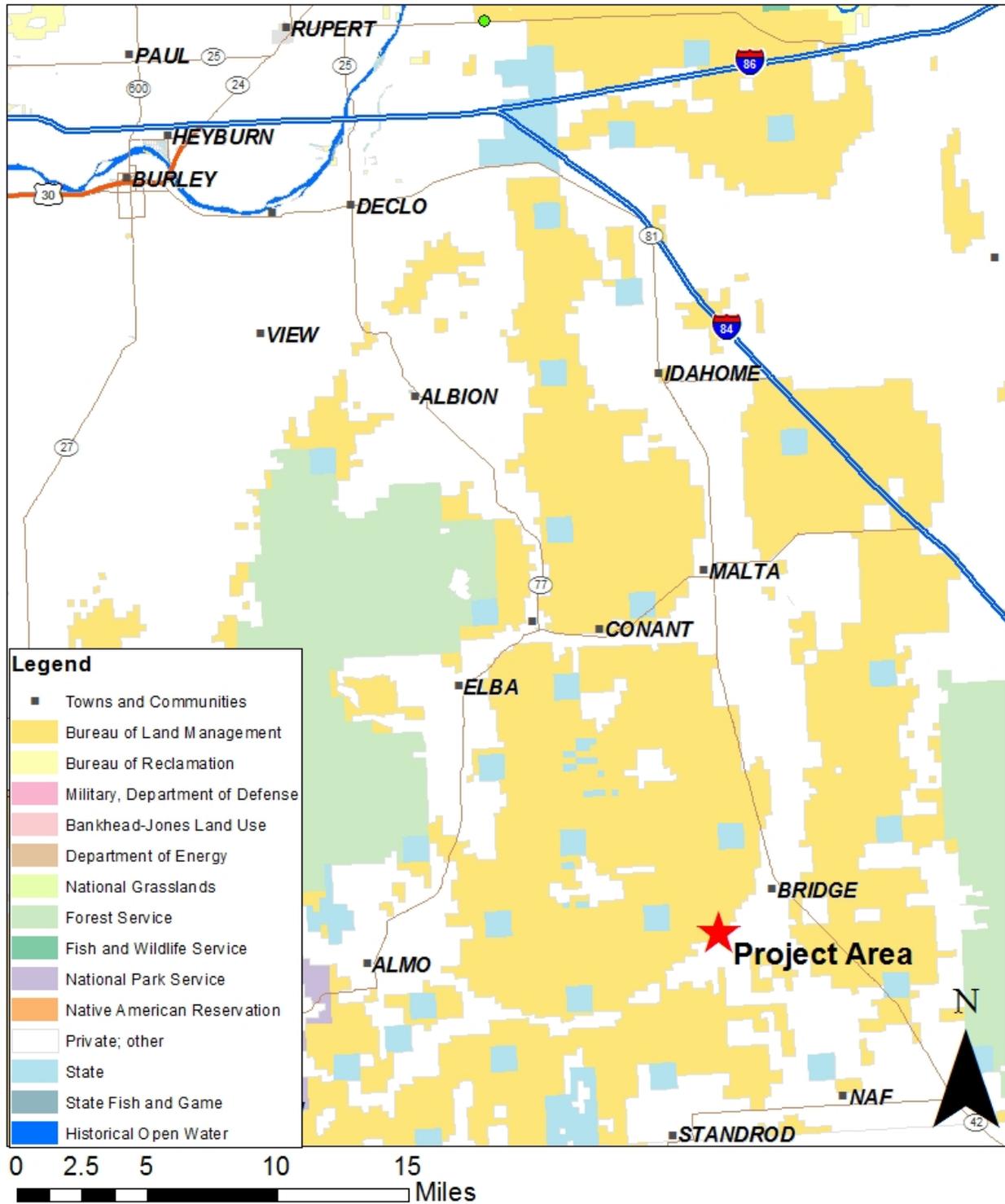
The primary contact for questions and comments for this project is Steve Lubinski, Geologist, Burley Field Office, (208) 677-6667, or email at Slubinski@blm.gov.

Attachments

Figure 1 - Project Location Map

Figure 2 - Project Topographic Map

Proposed Agua Caliente 3D Seismic Survey Project Location Map



Proposed Agua Caliente 3D Seismic Survey Project Map

