

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

Twin Falls District
Burley Field Office
15 East 200 South
Burley, ID 83318

**Categorical Exclusion Documentation Format When Using Categorical Exclusions Not
Established by Statute**

NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T020-2014-0020-CX

A. Background

BLM Office: Burley Field Office. Lease/Serial/Case File No.: IDI-37772

Proposed Action Title/Type: Agua Caliente Seismic Survey

Location of Proposed Action: T. 15 S., R. 26 E. and 27 E., Various Sections

Description of Proposed Action: Agua Caliente has applied to conduct a geophysical (seismic) survey on approximately 3,953 acres of public land. This would involve the placement of receivers, or geophones, that are laid out in a grid on the surface of the Earth. The geophones are spikes about 6" long with receivers that will be connected via seismic lines that transmit the recorded data. The data is gathered as vibroseis trucks vibrate the ground at pre-determined surface locations to generate seismic signals. The seismic signals are composed of ground vibrations that the geophones record.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Cassia Resource Management Plan (RMP) Date Approved/Amended: 1985

 X The Proposed Action is in conformance with the applicable Land Use Plan (LUP) because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): Page 32, section A of the Cassia RMP states,

“Energy Resources

Open to leasing, subject to the following stipulation: Protect ferruginous hawks between March 1 and July 15 by prohibiting activity within the shorter of the following two distances – 2,000 feet or the visible range of active nesting sites. No exploration/development work in sage grouse strutting/brood-rearing habitat from April 1 through June 15.”

 The Proposed Action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s), objectives, terms, and conditions:

C. Compliance with NEPA:

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with Oil Gas and Geothermal Energy CX number

6, "Approval of Notices of Intent to conduct geophysical exploration of oil, gas, or geothermal pursuant to 43 CFR 3250, when no temporary or new road construction is proposed.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The Proposed Action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

I have considered the timing of this Proposed Action (three to five weeks in fall/winter of 2014 and the cultural resource, special status plant, and sensitive animal clearances provided by our archeologist and biologists. I have found that there is no potential for significant impacts if the terms and conditions of the Notice filed and the following stipulations are observed:

- 1) Avoid driving vehicles, ATV's, and vibroseis trucks overland in wet conditions to prevent excessive tracks/ruts on the surface. If ruts greater than three (3) inches occur, overland travel must cease until the ground surface dries. 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.
- 2) Low impact tires will be used to reduce ground surface disturbance, no deep lugged tires may be used. 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.
- 3) Exploration should only occur from between July 15 and March 1 to avoid potential effects to BLM sensitive birds.
- 4) The undercarriage of all vehicles, ATV's, and vibroseis trucks will be washed clean of all soil and plant material prior to beginning work in the project area to minimize any potential transfer of noxious weed seeds or plants.
- 5) Should any future or inadvertent historic, cultural or paleontological property discoveries, or American Indian human remains, unassociated funerary objects, or grave goods be encountered during project implementation, project activities will immediately cease and the Burley Field Manager will be notified to coordinate further investigation.
- 6) All resource protection areas identified on the accompanying map will be avoided by vehicles, ATV's, and vibroseis trucks.
- 7) Layout of source and receiver lines and vibroseis truck lines will follow existing disturbance (roads / two-tracks) whenever possible.
- 8) Fuel trucks will not travel down the source or receiver lines; fueling of the vibroseis trucks will occur at established roads.
- 9) Agua and their contractors will clean up diesel, hydraulic fuel, or other spills, including contaminated soils. All spill related material will be hauled to an approved disposal site.
- 10) 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, crossed, and immediately put back up.
- 11) Portable generators and other equipment used in the project area will have spark arresters.
- 12) In the event of a wildland fire, Agua will immediately contact Southern Idaho Dispatch at (208) 886-2373 and the Burley Field Office at (208) 677-6667 to report the fire.

- 13) 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.
- 14) Agua will discuss fire prevention during crew orientation and provide protocol on how to report a fire.
- 15) 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 operations, including days with high fire danger, resource avoidance areas, or wet, thawing, or changing soil conditions.
- 16) Smoking is only permitted in areas that are already cleared of vegetation or in vehicles.
- 17) No vehicles will be parked in direct contact with vegetation; all vehicles would be parked where there is no or minimal vegetation.

D. Signature

Authorizing Official: /s/Scott Sayer for Jim Tharp Date: September 23, 2014

Name: Jim Tharp

Title: Burley Field Manager (Acting)

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Steve Lubinski, Geologist, (208)677-6667, or at the Burley Field Office, 15 East, 200 South, Burley, ID 83318.

Walker Ranch Energy 3D Seismic

