

**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 REVIEW SHEET
Agua Caliente Seismic Survey
NEPA No. DOI-BLM-ID-T020-2014-0020-CX**

Project Description

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.

Consideration of Extraordinary Circumstances:

This CER Sheet documents the review of the Proposed Action to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 46.215 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 significant impacts on public health or safety.

Rationale: There are no known safety or health risks to the public associated with the Proposed Action.

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.

Rationale: There are no park recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, national natural landmarks, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, national monuments, or other ecologically significant or critical areas within the project area. The Proposed Action would not have any impacts on aquifers. The project will avoid harming migratory birds by implementing outside the nesting season.

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)].

Rationale: Impacts from seismic surveys are well known and have been demonstrated on public lands many times, including a seismic survey that was conducted in the Burley Field Office recently.

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

Rationale: The effects from conducting a seismic survey are known and would be similar to driving a large rubber-tired truck off road in a grid pattern. Seismic surveys have been conducted on public lands in the past with little effect.

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.

Rationale: The Proposed Action would not establish a precedent. There have been previous seismic surveys authorized in the Raft River Valley and elsewhere on public lands. All future actions will be analyzed for significant environmental effects individually and without regard to this action.

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

Rationale: Other actions occurring in or adjacent to the project area on public lands include 1 authorized and 5 pending Geothermal Drilling Permits, existing geothermal leases, and existing Right of Ways. The cumulative effects from these actions and the Proposed Action are not expected to be significant.

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 the bureau.

Rationale: A class 3 pedestrian survey was conducted by Tetra Tech under a Cultural Resources Use Permit. The vibroseis trucks would avoid all areas where cultural resources have been identified.

If there are any future or inadvertent historic, cultural or paleontological property discoveries made during project operation, there will be an immediate cessation of project activities and the Burley Field Manager and Archaeologist will be contacted for further investigation (see also 36 CFR 800.11 and SPA). In the event that American Indian human remains, unassociated funerary objects, or grave goods are encountered, work in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will cease, and BLM shall comply with NAGPRA as outlined in 43 CFR 10 by consulting with the SHPO and implementing appropriate mitigation.

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.

Rationale: There are no known Threatened or Endangered animal or plant species which may be affected by this project. Greater sage grouse which is a Candidate species may move across the project area and may be temporarily disturbed by the use of the equipment and presence of workers. Effects are not expected to be significant because the birds could easily move away from the operations without harm and the project would not affect any suitable sage-grouse habitat.

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.

Rationale: The Proposed Action would not violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. Migratory birds could be present and nest in the area, however, a stipulation which requires operations to work outside of nesting season would prevent any harm to migratory birds or their nests.

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

Rationale: The Proposed Action will have no adverse impact on low income or minority populations, or any population.

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).

Rationale: The project will not limit any access either to the project area, or any outlying areas.

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).

Rationale: All trucks and equipment entering the site would be required to be washed. There are four known occurrences of salt cedar within the project area that have been treated. Salt cedar typically inhabits streams, canals, reservoirs, and rivers. Since there are no riparian areas within the project area it is unlikely the vehicles will encounter salt cedar. Cheatgrass is known to exist throughout the project area. Since the Proposed Action would cause minimal ground disturbance, the potential for cheatgrass to spread into previously unaffected areas is low.

Participating Staff

Name of Participant	Position Title or Resource Expertise	Comments Provided (Initial One) None / Attached		Date
Jeremy Bisson	Wildlife Biologist	/s/ JB		9/17/2014
Jason Theodozio	Para-Botanist	/s/ JT		9/17/2014
Suzann Henrikson	Cultural Resources	/s/SH		9/22/2014
Steve Lubinski	Geologist	/s/ SL		9/18/2014