

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
Conveyance to Nevada System of Higher Education
for Great Basin College**

DOI-BLM-NV-S010-2015-0073-EA



N-78324-02

PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas Field Office
Las Vegas, Nevada



Introduction

Identifying Information:

Title, EA number, and type of project:

Conveyance of Public Land to the Nevada System of Higher Education for the Great Basin College

Location of Proposed Action:

Public lands located Southeast of Pahrump, Nevada

Legal Description:

Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada, T. 21 S., R. 54 E, sec. 2, lots 1, 2 and 5, S½NW¼, and S½NE¼.

Name and Location of Preparing Office:

Las Vegas Field Office, LLNVS01000

Identify the subject function code, lease, serial, or case file number:

Casefile number N-78324-02

Applicant Name:

Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education

Purpose and Need for Action:

The need for the action is BLM's responsibility to satisfy Public Law 113–291, bill H.R. 3979 (h), which allows for the conveyance of public lands to the Nevada System of Higher Education for construction of a college campus for the Great Basin College. And, to abide by the provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) and the Recreation and Public Purposes Act of June 14, 1926, as amended (43 U.S.C. 869 et. seq.) which allows for the conveyance of public lands for recreational and educational purposes.

Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues:

The BLM Southern Nevada District Office conducted internal scoping for this action. The conveyance proposal has been reviewed by BLM resource team members and other interested parties. Effects the proposed action may have on our resources were addressed for air quality, invasive species, noxious weeds, hydrologic conditions, paleontology, threatened, endangered or candidate animal and plant species, and other types of resource issues. Comments providing substantial information relevant to the analysis and mitigation measures to reduce impacts to natural resources were analyzed and included in this environmental assessment (EA).

The proposal for a college in this area was evaluated in 2004. Consultants Knight & Leavitt Associates, Inc. performed a cultural resource inventory in 2004 and a Botanical Inventory in 2005. A DRAFT EA was initiated in 2004, but never finalized and a Decision was never signed.

Potential issues identified for the proposed action include:

- Location of the proposed college is close to BLM Pahrump Fire Station and heliport (helipad), which could cause problems with helicopter landings. Therefore, a right-of-way (ROW) will be developed for the fire station, heliport, and access road, for protection of the fire station and heliport.
- Northeast corner of the parcel has a corridor running through it which was obtained by BLM through public law.
- Solar proposed project located east of the proposed college campus.
- Biological Opinion will need to be obtained.
- Threatened and Endangered Species in the area.
- Impacts to soil erosion could occur and hydrology impacts such as altering storm flow patterns.
- Water rights may be a problem — no new water rights are available from the Nevada Division of Water Resources for this area.

A summary of the proposed EA DOI-BLM-NV-S010-2015-0073-EA is available for review on the internet BLM NEPA Register website: https://www.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Description of the Proposed Action, Alternative No. 1:

To satisfy Public Law 113-291 (P. L. 113-291), H. R. 3979, Sec. 3092(h), which was enacted on December 19, 2014, the BLM proposes to convey to the Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education (System), approximately 285 acres of public land for construction of a college campus in Pahrump, Nevada. The Nevada System of Higher Education plans to use the property to construct a satellite campus in the town of Pahrump, Nye County, for the Great Basin College, which is headquartered in Elko, Nevada. The satellite campus will benefit Pahrump and the local community by expanding higher educational opportunities in the region.

The conveyance action will satisfy the public law which states: “Notwithstanding section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712) and section 1(c) of the Act of June 14, 1926 (commonly known as the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) 43 U.S.C. 869(c), and subject to all valid existing rights and such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be necessary, the Secretary shall not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section, convey to the System, without consideration, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the Federal land identified on the map entitled: Great Basin College Land Conveyance...”

The public law also states that: “The System may use the Federal land conveyed ... for any public purposes consistent with uses allowed under the Act of June 14, 1926 commonly known as the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, 43 U.S.C. 869 *et. seq.*” The System plans to use the land for educational purposes for a college campus, which is in accordance with the Act.

HISTORY: In 2004, the Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education applied for a Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) lease to construct a college campus in this parcel area. An environmental analysis (EA) was performed and a DRAFT EA initiated (document number NEPA 2005-74). In 2004, a cultural resource inventory was done by Knight & Leavitt Associates, Inc., and in 2005, a Botanical Inventory of plants was performed by Knight & Leavitt Associates, Inc. The EA was never completed or finalized, and no Decision was signed. The Board of Regents never received a lease. In 2013, the Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education submitted a revised plan of development and design drawings to the BLM for the proposed college campus. On December 19, 2014, P. L. 113-291 was enacted, as mentioned above, for the BLM to convey approximately 285 acres of public land to the Nevada System of Higher Education for construction of a college campus.

On May 16, 2005, Public Land Order (PLO) 7636 withdrew 15 acres of public lands for the BLM for construction of a Pahrump Fire Station. The Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and water well lie adjacent, and in close proximity to the proposed parcel for the Great Basin College. The Fire Station is located about ½ mile east of the town of Pahrump, on the north side of Carpenter Canyon Road. Carpenter Canyon Road is utilized by local residents, recreationists and OHV users to access the west side of Mount Charleston and the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area.

The picture below shows the proposed parcel area for the Great Basin College. Picture taken standing in the center of the parcel looking east to west toward the town of Pahrump. Pahrump Fire Station is the red buildings shown on the right.



The construction of a college campus in the area would create a positive affect and benefit Pahrump, Nye County and other rural communities in the region. It would also benefit larger cities such as Las Vegas, Henderson and Summerlin, and Indian Reservations in the southern Nevada area. An educational facility in the area would be a valuable resource in the community both for local residents, families, and students who are in need of an education.

An influx of college students in the town of Pahrump could provide a “boost” to the local economy. Students would need lodging, housing and daily provisions. The increase in the population in Pahrump would benefit the local stores, shops and restaurants and increase economic development and growth for the town of Pahrump.

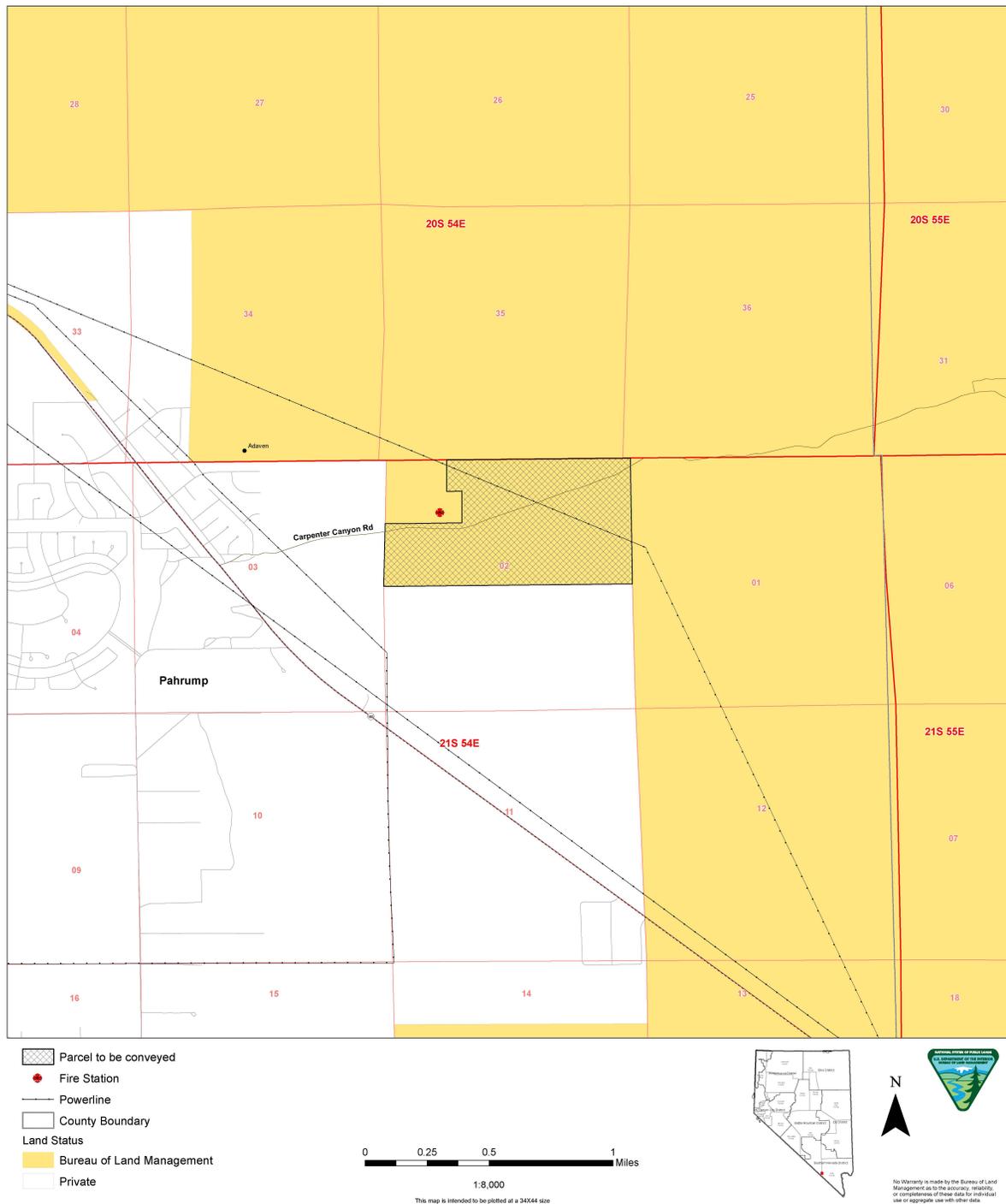
PROBLEMS/ISSUES: Although construction of a college campus in the area would benefit the town of Pahrump and neighboring communities in the area, there are a few issues which may possibly need to be addressed (see “Scoping, Public Involvement and Issues”). Some of these issues are:

- 1) After review of the maps and location of the sale parcel in Pahrump, it was noted that there is a discrepancy in the Public Law. The map mentioned in P. L. 113-291, H. R. 3979, Sec. 3092(h) for the Great Basin College is incorrect and the acres described are incorrect. The BLM

therefore created a revised map. A copy of the revised map dated May 6, 2015 is shown below in reduced size. The hatched shaded area on the map shows the proposed conveyance area.

Great Basin College Land Conveyance May 6, 2015

Revision to the map entitled Great Basin College Land Conveyance.
Prepared at the request of Senator Harry Reid and Senator Dean Heller, dated June 26, 2012.



The original map which is dated June 26, 2012, and which is attached to P.L. 113–291, is incorrect since it overlaps and encroaches onto PLO 7636 for the Pahrump Fire Station. And also, according to a BLM survey, the parcel area is approximately 274.43 acres - not 285 acres. Therefore, a revised map, as shown on the previous page, had to be created. The revised map dated May 6, 2015, and the acreage included within this EA document are correct and have been reviewed and approved by the BLM cadastral surveyor and the System. A truer copy of the official revised map shown above titled “Great Basin College Land Conveyance” dated May 6, 2015, is attached to this document as Exhibit C.

- 2) In order to satisfy the EA assessment, various resource assessments may have to be performed. A Tortoise Survey will have to be performed of the area and a Biological Opinion by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the Desert Tortoise. Also, a Weed Plan will have to be created for protection of plant life in the area. These will have to be addressed before the patent can be issued. The System is aware of these assessments and is working with the BLM to complete them.
- 3) Another problem which may need to be addressed is that the college proposal is located adjacent to the Pahrump Fire Station and helipad. This could create safety issues for the Fire Station, helicopter landings and emergency services. These issues are analyzed below in this EA under “Fuels/Fire Management”. These issues may need to be addressed and rectified before a patent may be issued. The BLM will be creating a ROW for the Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and access road to the Fire Station which may alleviate the situation by providing protection for the fire station and helipad (see paragraph below describing the Pahrump Fire Station).
- 4) Water rights for construction of a college campus could be a problem since no new water rights are available from the Nevada Division of Water Resources for the Pahrump area (see “Water Resources” below in EA). The System may have to purchase water rights from existing municipalities or existing ground water rights.
- 5) There are two (2) rights-of-way which run along the north border of the parcel, and one which runs through the center of the parcel; and there is a BLM corridor (the West Wide Corridor) which is located in the northeast corner of the parcel which encompasses approximately 500 feet X 300 feet of the parcel.

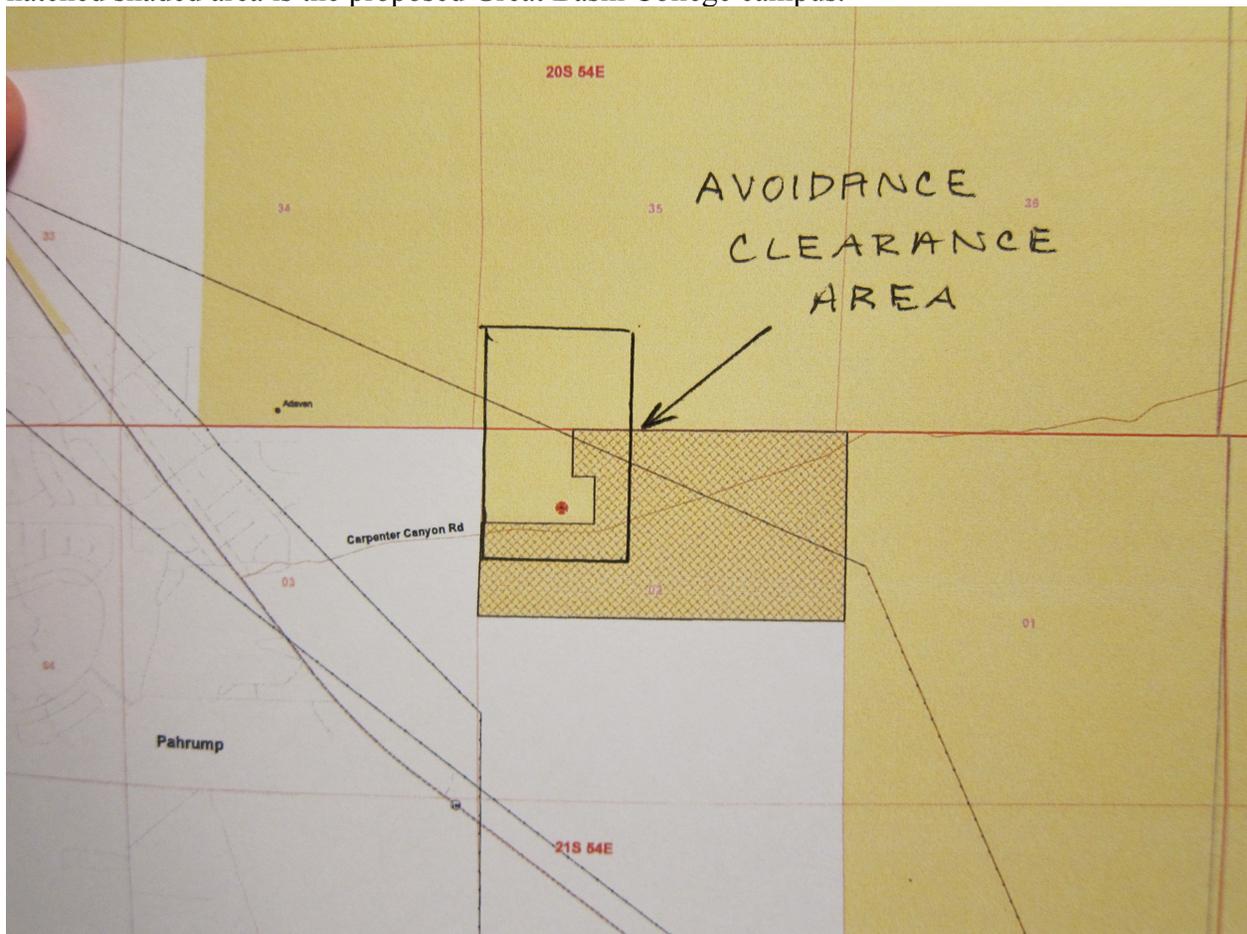
May 16, 2005, Public Land Order (PLO) 7636 withdrew 15 acres of public lands for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for construction of a Pahrump Fire Station. The Pahrump Fire Station was constructed in 2006 and it consists of a fire station building, maintenance building, helipad, water well, parking lot, access road, and facilities in support of the fire station. The Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and water well lie adjacent, and in close proximity to the proposed parcel for the Great Basin College. The close proximity of the proposed college campus to the fire station may cause direct impacts to the normal operations, helicopter landings/taking off, and emergency fire operations. Road access to the fire station and the helipad could be directly impacted by the huge influx of college students in the area. In order to aid in alleviating these problems, the BLM is creating a ROW for the Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and access road.

The ROW will be developed for the existing fire station and its facilities, the helipad, and access road. For protection of the helicopter landings, the ROW will include an avoidance clearance area which will surround the heliport area by 500 feet south and east, 2640 feet north, and 1320 feet west of the heliport area (see picture below). The avoidance clearance area has a construction height restriction of two (2) feet, thereby allowing for natural grasses, shrubs, cacti, and desert fauna to grow and also allow for the System to construct landscaping, plants, and shrubs around

and within the college campus area. The height restriction in the clearance area will prohibit the construction of tall buildings to occur close to the helipad. The patent to the System will include language that the System will be subject to the ROWs for the Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and access road. This should aid in protecting the normal operations and emergency services performed by fire station personnel and helicopter services.

This environmental assessment is being performed in order to satisfy the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and to analyze the issues mentioned above. An EA was prepared previously for the fire station and helipad, NEPA #2002-85, and 2004-320.

The image below shows the avoidance clearance area for the ROW for the Pahrump Fire Station, helipad and access road. The red dot shows the location of the fire station and helipad. The hatched shaded area is the proposed Great Basin College campus.



Description of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail:

Only one alternative, the “No Action” has been identified for this project.

Alternative No. 2, the ‘No Action’ Alternative

Under a “No Action” alternative, the BLM would not be abiding by the public law. An amendment to the public law to allow for the “No Action” would probably need to occur. A “No Action” would mean no conveyance of land would be issued to the Nevada System of Higher Education. No college then would be constructed. The land area would remain undisturbed and un-changed. A “No Action” alternative would allow the BLM Pahrump Fire Station to continue operating their normal day to day routines, fire emergency services and helicopter landings safely and efficiently as they have been doing for years without worrying about the possible conflicts that a college campus could create.

Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

Alternative No. 3

No other alternatives were considered since there is no other area in Pahrump which the Nevada System of Higher Education is interested in purchasing or which is available for disposal for use as a college campus. Other alternatives for a college campus may exist in the nearby Las Vegas area, however, those alternatives will be evaluated under separate EAs.

Conformance

The conveyance action will satisfy the public law which states: “Notwithstanding section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1712) and section 1(c) of the Act of June 14, 1926 (commonly known as the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) 43 U.S.C. 869(c), and subject to all valid existing rights and such terms and conditions as the Secretary determines to be necessary, the Secretary shall not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section, convey to the System, without consideration, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the Federal land identified on the map entitled: Great Basin College Land Conveyance...” The public law also states that: “The System may use the Federal land conveyed ... for any public purposes consistent with uses allowed under the Act of June 14, 1926 commonly known as the Recreation and Public Purposes Act, 43 U.S.C. 869 *et. seq.*”

Although the public law uses the language “notwithstanding”, the conveyance is however, in conformance with Section 202 (conformance with land use plan) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1712.

The conveyance action is in conformance with the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), approved October 5, 1998. It is in conformance with LD-1 and LD-2 of the ROD (pages 16-18), which allows for land disposal through sale, exchange or R&PP patent. The land described in this proposal is within a designated disposal boundary area in Pahrump.

The Proposed Action is also in conformance with the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP Act) of June 14, 1926, as amended (43 U.S.C. 869 *et. seq.*)

The proposal is also in conformance with Section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, 43 U.S.C. 1712; whereas the Secretary determines that the sale of the parcel meets the following disposal criteria: (3) disposal of such tract will serve important public objectives,

including but not limited to, expansion of communities and economic development. The System plans to use the land for educational purposes for a college campus, which is in accordance with the Act

Affected Environment:

This chapter describes the existing conditions of the environmental resources within the Proposed Project Area. The affected environment is the physical area that bounds the environmental, sociological, economic, or cultural features of interest that could be impacted by the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative.

The table below summarizes the environmental attributes that have been reviewed, whether they may be affected by the Proposed Action, and the rationale for that determination. Elements that may be affected are further described in the EA. Rationale for those elements that would not be affected by the Proposed Action and alternative is listed in the table below.

Table 1. Affected Resources

Supplemental Authority	Not Present	Present/Not Affected	Present/May be Affected	Rationale
Air Resources		X		Ensure dust control permit is obtained from DAQ for all soil disturbing activities of .25 acres or greater, in the aggregate and all permit stipulations are in compliance for the duration of the project(s).
Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)	X			The proposed project area is not within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
Cultural Resources	X			The project area was surveyed in 2004. No historic properties will be effected in either the direct or the indirect areas of potential effect.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions		X		Currently, there are no emission limits for suspected greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, for this project, and no technically defensible method for predicting potential climate change contributions from GHG emissions during construction of the proposed action. However, there are, and would continue to be, several efforts to address GHG emissions from federal activities, including BLM authorized uses in future planning documents.
Environmental Justice		X		The proposed action of land conveyance for the purpose of constructing and operating an educational campus is unlikely to displace or disproportionately affect any minority or low-income communities in the Pahrump Valley region.

Farmlands (Prime or Unique)	X			There are no prime or unique farmland designations in the District.
Fish and Wildlife (excluding Federally Listed Species)			X	The project has the potential to impact wildlife species in the area. See EA analysis below.
Floodplains	X			There are no FEMA designated floodplains present in the project area.
Fuels/Fire Management			X	There are potential impacts to Fuels/Fire Management that will need to be carried forward in the EA for analysis. See analysis below.
Geology / Mineral Resources / Energy Production		X		No mining claims or mining operations present. If excavation that produces mineral materials within the ROW is necessary, the mineral materials must be used within the ROW or stockpiled on site for disposal by the BLM. If mineral materials are to be stockpiled on site for a future disposal, specific BLM use authorization in the form of a contract, free use permit or material site right-of-way will be necessary before the stockpiled mineral materials can removed from the ROW.
Hydrologic Conditions			X	This project will impact the hydrologic conditions of the local hydrographic basin. See analysis below in EA.

Invasive Species / Noxious Weeds			X	Due to the large footprint, volume of vehicle/equipment traffic and soil disturbance, the proposed action introduces considerable risk of spreading infestations or establishing new invasive species / noxious weeds. The applicant will be responsible to ensure that all standard BLM weed stipulations and BMP's are followed throughout project activities. In addition, the applicant will be required to conduct a preliminary weed inventory of the proposed project area and develop a weed management plan to mitigate the spread and establishment of invasive species in the area. The weed management plan must be completed and signed before any new disturbance occurs. Contact Sean McEldery or Ben Klink for information on the weed inventory and development of the associated Weed Management Plan.
Livestock Grazing		X		A portion of the proposed action area is located in the Wheeler Wash grazing allotment. There are no permittees authorized within the allotment; therefore, no impacts to livestock grazing are expected.
Migratory Birds			X	The project has the potential to impact migratory birds in the area. Analysis below in EA.
Native American Religious Concerns		X		Consultation letters will be sent to the Pahrump Band of Paiutes, the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, The Moapa Band of Paiutes, Chemuhuevi Tribe, The Colorado River Indian Tribes, and Fort Mojave Indian Tribes.
Paleontology	X			No likely paleontological areas will be effected.
Rangeland Health Standards		X		
Recreation		X		Recreation activity is present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required.

Socio-Economics		X		The proposed action of land conveyance for the purpose of constructing and operating an educational campus may provide social benefit in education for students and the community as well as economic benefit with jobs during construction and during the operational life of the campus and may provide economic growth for the region, but with the campus design still in development stage exact figures for employment and economic benefits are not available, and is unlikely to be to a degree that detailed analysis is required.
Soils			X	The proposed action will disturb native soils through the mining activity itself. Local soils, including areas with desert pavement and or biological soil crust, will be significantly altered, potentially leading to increases in local erosion. These impacts need to be evaluated in detail within this EA. Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be implemented to minimize impacts beyond the project footprint.
Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Plant Species	X			

Threatened, Endangered or Candidate Animal Species.			X	<p>The project has a may affect, likely to adversely affect determination for the threatened desert tortoise and no effect for its designated critical habitat, as it is outside the range. Carry forward for analysis. The project will have no effect on any other federally listed species or critical habitat.</p> <p>As this project plans to disturb 274.43 acres of tortoise habitat for the R&PP lease to patent, it exceeds the acreage of disturbance the Southern Nevada District Office’s Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO) (File No. 84320-2010-F-0365.R003); therefore, part A of the Request to Append Action Form (Appendix A of this PBO, uploaded to ePlanning) will need to be completed by the proponent and submitted to the BLM for review. Pre-project desert tortoise surveys are required to determine the extent of effects to the species prior to initiating formal consultation under the Endangered Species Act. Surveys are to be carried out according to most current U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) guidelines (http://www.fws.gov/ventura/species_information/protocols_guidelines/index.html) by a qualified authorized desert tortoise biologist.</p> <p>After the BLM reviews the completed Appendix A form and desert tortoise survey report and determines the information is sufficient, the BLM will submit it to the USFWS to initiate formal consultation, which will take approximately 135 days to complete. Once consultation is complete, BLM Wildlife Biologist will provide final comments on the project.</p>
Wastes (Hazardous or Solid)	X			Not present, however do include the standard stipulations into the grant document(s).
Water Resources/Quality (Drinking/Surface/Ground)			X	This project will alter surface water resources, mainly surface run-off patterns, and will cause increased erosion, etc. These impacts are evaluated below in the EA.

Wetlands/ Riparian Zones	X			No permanent surface waters or wetlands exist in or near the project area.
Wild & Scenic Rivers	X			Not present.
Wilderness /Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)	X			Resources are not present.
Woodland / Forestry			X	The project has the potential to impact woodland/forestry in the project area. Analysis below in EA.
Vegetation (excluding Federally Listed Species)			X	The project has the potential to impact vegetation in the project area. Analysis below in EA.
Visual Resources		X		The location is a VRI Class III. The location does not have a management class. The location is surrounded by private land to the south and west and is VRM Class III to the north and east. The objective of Class III VRM is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the landscape can be moderate. Management activities may attract attention, but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Change should repeat the basic elements found in the natural landscape of form, line, color and texture. The project may attract minor attention, but will not dominate the view of the casual observer, who would mostly be drivers along Hwy 160.
Wild Horses and Burros			X	The proposed location of the Great Basin College is in the Wheeler Pass Herd Management Area (HMA), bordering the Johnnie HMA. Analysis below in the EA.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	X			There are no lands managed for wilderness characteristics in the project area.

Affected Environment

This section provides a brief description of the affected environment for those resources that were identified as “present and may be affected”.

1. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species

The proposed project area supports and is adjacent to lands that support wildlife characteristic of the Mojave Desert. Biological diversity varies according to topography, plant community, and proximity to water, soil type, and season. For a comprehensive discussion of potential wildlife species that may be present, refer to the most recent Resource Management Plan for the BLM Southern Nevada District.

BLM Sensitive Wildlife Species

BLM sensitive species are species that require special management consideration to avoid potential future listing under ESA and that have been identified in accordance with procedures set forth in BLM Manual 6840 – Special Status Species. A complete list of BLM sensitive species within the area can be found in the Resource Management Plan. Many of these species as well as other wildlife species of concern are also discussed in the Nevada State Wildlife Action Plan (NDOW 2012) and the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Sensitive bird species are also provided protection by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and thus are discussed in the Migratory Bird Section. The following sensitive species could potentially be impacted by the proposed action:

Chuckwalla (*Sauromalus obesus*)

Chuckwalla occur in rocky desert, lava flows, hillsides, talus slopes, and rock outcrops mostly below 5000 feet, where creosote bush is typically the dominant plant species. Chuckwalla will seek shelter in rock crevices and bask on rocks during the day. They are herbivorous, preferring annuals, but they will also eat perennial vegetation. Chuckwallas are relatively common throughout their Nevada range and likely occur within the project area, but would be localized on rock outcroppings.

Banded Gila monster (*Heloderma suspectum*)

Gila monsters occur in desert washes and rocky upland desert scrub at elevations below 5,000 feet. Banded Gila monsters frequently utilize lower slopes of mountains and nearby plains. They will use and are occasionally encountered out in gentler terrain of alluvial fans. Hence, Gila monster habitat overlaps habitats of both the desert tortoise and chuckwalla. Threats to this reptile include illegal collection, traffic fatalities, and habitat destruction from urban and agricultural development.

Mojave shovel-nosed snake (*Chionactis occipitalis occipitalis*)

The Mojave shovel-nosed snake is a burrowing, nocturnal snake frequenting washes, dunes, sandy flats, loose soil, and rocky hillsides in sandy gullies or pockets among the rocks throughout the Mojave Desert.

Desert glossy snake (*Arizona elegans*)

The desert glossy snake is a burrowing, nocturnal snake that occurs in a variety of habitat throughout the Mojave Desert including light shrubby to barren desert, grasslands and woodlands. The desert glossy snake generally prefers open areas where the ground is sandy to loamy.

Nevada shovel-nosed snake (*Chionactis occipitalis talpina*)

The Nevada shovel-nosed snake is a nocturnal burrowing snake that typically stays underground in the daytime and occurs in washes, dunes, sandy flats, loose soil and rocky hillsides with sandy gullies of pockets of sand. Their habitat consists of sparse vegetation including creosote bush, desert grasses, cactus and mesquite.

Mojave Desert Sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes cerastes*)

The Mojave Desert sidewinder is a nocturnal snake hiding in the day in animal burrows or coiled camouflaged in a shallow self-made pit at the base of a shrub. This species is most common where there are sand hummocks topped with creosote bushes, mesquite, or other desert plants but may also occur on flats, barren dunes, hardpan, and rocky hillsides.

2. Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703 *et. seq.*) protects migratory birds and their nests. A list of MBTA protected birds are found in 50 C.F.R. 10.13. The list of birds protected under this regulation is extensive and the project site has potential to support many of these species, including BLM sensitive species, and their nests. Typically, the breeding season is when these species are most sensitive to disturbance, which generally occurs from February 15th through August 31st. The following sensitive bird species could potentially be impacted by the proposed action:

Western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*)

The Western burrowing owl is a diurnal bird of prey specialized for shrub-steppe habitats. Burrowing owl habitat in the Mojave Desert typically consists of open, dry, treeless areas on the desert floor. Burrowing owls most frequently use mammal burrows created by other animals such as ground squirrels (*Spermophilus* spp.), coyotes (*Canis latrans*), or desert tortoises (*Gopherus agassizii*). The burrows are used for nesting, roosting, cover, and caching prey. In recent decades, the range and species count have been declining primarily due to agricultural, industrial, and urban development that reduce burrow availability.

Bendire's thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*)

In Southern Nevada, Bendire's thrashers occur mostly in Joshua tree woodlands with dense grass, but they can also occur in desert scrub habitats with cholla or mesquite or in sagebrush with scattered junipers. They normally avoid dense woodlands and areas with very sparse vegetation. They typically nest in mesquite, cholla, juniper, Joshua trees, and other yucca species. Their population trend in Southern Nevada is unknown, but they are declining in other parts of their range.

LeConte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*)

LeConte's thrasher is a year-round resident in the Mojave Desert of Southern Nevada. In Nevada, they are associated with saltbush flats and wash systems and nest in cholla cactus, sagebrush, small

trees, or shrubs. This thrasher prefers open habitats for foraging with sparse vegetation for cover and is a good indicator of habitat quality. Their population trend in Southern Nevada is unknown.

Loggerhead shrike (***Lanius ludovicianus***)

This species prefers open country with nesting habitat preference toward scattered trees and shrubs. They are commonly found in shrub habitat types comprising savanna, desert scrub, and occasionally, open woodland. Perches are an important habitat component used for hunting. If natural perches are unavailable, they will perch on poles, wires or fence posts. Population trend data in Nevada has shown an unexplained 5 percent decline per year since 1966.



3. Fuels/Fire Management

May 16, 2005, Public Land Order (PLO) 7636 withdrew 15 acres of public lands for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for construction of a Pahrump Fire Station. The Pahrump Fire Station consists of a Fire Station building, maintenance building, helipad, water well, access roads, parking lot and related facilities in support of Fire Station operations. The Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and water well lie adjacent and in close proximity to the proposed Great Basin College land conveyance parcel and project. Currently, the Fire Station is surrounded by undisturbed desert lands and small rolling hills with a view of Mount Charleston in the distance. It is located about ½ mile east of the town of Pahrump, on the north side of Carpenter Canyon Road, on the west side of the Spring Mountain Range.

The Pahrump Fire Station provides area wildfire response to multiple BLM fire management units on the west side of the BLM Southern Nevada District, on the west and south side of the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area to the California border, in accordance to the 2004 Las Vegas Fire Management Plan and the 1998 Las Vegas/Pahrump Resource Management Plan. Wildfires in this response area have ranged in size from less than one acre to over 20,000 acres; a result of both human and natural (lightning) caused fires. Historically, wildfires in the immediate vicinity of the Fire Station and the proposed Great Basin College have been small and infrequent.

The fire response area includes wildland urban interface (WUI) localities in southern Nye County and western Clark County, desert tortoise habitat, wilderness and wilderness study areas; several

major mesquite stands; Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; and the Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. Firefighting resources stationed at the BLM Fire Station also provide wildfire support and mutual aid to Pahrump Valley Fire and Rescue, Nye County, Clark County, USFWS, USFS, NPS, NAFB/NTTR, and DOE NNSS. The Fire Station is staffed at all times by at least one employee and/or BLM Law Enforcement Officer. It's fully staffed during fire season.

The Carpenter Canyon Road is utilized by the BLM for both fire and administrative purposes. The Carpenter Canyon Road is also used by the US Forest Service, local residents, recreationists and OHV users to access the west side of Mount Charleston and the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area. Though travel on the road is frequent, the ingress and egress to Fire Station is not currently impacted.

The Fire Station helipad is utilized to support the takeoff and landing of Type 2 (medium) or Type 3 (light) helicopters in support of BLM fire and aviation operations. The helipad is used occasionally or as needed for fire emergencies as an improved "helispot". However, the use can change depending on the need or the agency mission.

The BLM's policy is that:

BLM aviation management and operations will be conducted within policies contained in the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), DOI 350-354 Departmental Manuals (DM), Operational Procedures Memorandums (OPM) and Handbooks (HB), and BLM Manual 9400. In addition, the current version of the following Handbooks, Plans and Guides constitute BLM Aviation policy as specified in the BLM Manual 9400. (BLM National Aviation Plan, 2015, 1.6 Policy, p.3)

And,

All BLM aviation support facilities will be constructed, maintained, and operated in compliance to applicable regulations/direction of DOI, BLM, FAA, OSHA and lease agreements... Aviation facilities must comply with safety regulations described in DOI manuals, guides and handbooks, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). (BLM National Aviation Plan, 2015, 9.0 Aviation Facilities, p. 74)

4. Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

Invasive plants and noxious weeds are managed on public lands by the BLM under the direction of the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) established in 1999 (Executive Order [EO] 13112). This statute defines invasive species as "...an alien (non-native) species whose introduction does, or is likely to cause, economic or environmental harm or harm to human health" (NISC 2008). In addition, much of the management of invasive plants and the listing of noxious weeds are regulated by the USDA under the Federal Noxious Weed Act (7 U.S.C. 2801 et seq. 1974).

Executive Order 13112 outlines the federal responsibility to "prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause..." Additionally, Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapter 555.05 defines "noxious weeds" and mandates the extent that land owners and land management agencies must control specific noxious weed species on lands under their jurisdiction.

Southern Nevada lands are impacted by the presence of noxious and invasive, non-native vegetation. The Las Vegas Field Office (LVFO) has prepared the LVFO Weed Plan that provides guidance for an active integrated weed management program using Best Management Practices (BMP).

The proposed project area has not been previously inventoried for the presence of invasive, non-native species. However, the site may be impacted by various noxious and/or invasive weeds that are known to occur within the Southern Nevada District. A list of some of the weed species that are a concern includes; Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*), camelthorn (*Alhagi maurorum*), perennial pepper weed (*Lepidium latifolium*), several knapweeds, malta starthistle (*Centaurea melitensis*) and yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*), Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*), puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*) and tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*).

5. Hydrologic Conditions

The Great Basin College campus land is located within the Carpenter Canyon watershed. Small ephemeral washes cross the project area and convey flows only during storm events. The hydrologic conditions just below the proposed campus location have been altered over time by development, including sand and gravel operations, roads, and urban residential expansion.

6. Soils

Site-specific soils within the Project area formed in alluvium and derived from limestone and dolomite. The project area contains very gravely fine sandy loam. Soil horizons are weakly developed. A moderately well-developed desert pavement covers stable surfaces. None of the soils identified by the NRCS meets the criteria to be considered prime or unique farmlands.

7. Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)

No perennial surface water resources exist within the immediate vicinity of the Project Area. Therefore, only stormwater runoff from the Project area will be impacted as far as any water resources are concerned. Water for use at the college will have to be either purchased from existing municipalities or existing groundwater rights will have to be purchased, as the Pahrump Valley Basin is a closed basin, which is over appropriated by 4:1 and no new water rights are available from the Nevada Division of Water Resources.

8. Threatened, Endangered Animal Species

Threatened and endangered species are placed on a federal list by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and receive protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The only federally protected species known to occur in the vicinity of the project area is the threatened Mojave desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). The proposed project is not within desert tortoise critical habitat.

The Mojave desert tortoise occurs primarily on flats and bajadas with soils ranging from sand to sandy-gravel. They are also found on rocky terrain and slopes. Tortoises occur in saltbush scrub, creosote scrub, and blackbrush scrub habitat types. Within these vegetation types, desert tortoises can potentially survive and reproduce provided their basic habitat requirements are met. These requirements include a sufficient amount and quality of forage species; shelter sites for protection from predators and environmental extremes; suitable substrates for burrowing, nesting, and overwintering; various plants for shelter; and adequate area for movement, dispersal, and gene flow.

Historical survey data indicate that the area surrounding the project site is low density tortoise habitat. Desert tortoise survey data show tortoise burrows within 1 mile of the project site.
SURVEY INFORMATION WILL BE INSERTED AFTER BO IS OBTAINED

9. Woodland/Forestry

BLM administers the sale of forest products and other vegetative resources under 43 CFR 5400. In Nevada IM-NV-2010-055 and draft IM-NV-2014-013 clarify and provide guidance to the disposal, sale and pricing of forest products on BLM lands in the state. Cactus and yucca plants are considered government property and are regulated under the Nevada BLM forestry program. A botanical inventory of this area was completed in 2004 which estimated the number of cactus and yucca to be impacted is approximately 7500 individuals. The project area is expected to include cactus and yucca including cottontop (*Echinocactus polycephalus*), hedgehog (*Echinocereus engelmannii*), beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris*), silver cholla (*Opuntia echinocarpa*), Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*), and Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) and other species.



10. Vegetation

BLM Sensitive Plant Species are species that require special management consideration to avoid potential future listing under ESA and that have been identified in accordance with procedures set forth in BLM Manual 6840. A botanical survey of the project area was completed in 2004 and there are no known occurrences of BLM sensitive species within the area; therefore, no impacts to BLM sensitive plant species are expected. BLM uses vegetation mapping and community classifications developed by the U.S. Geological Survey for the Southwest Regional

Gap Analysis Project (SWReGAP) (Lowry et. al. 2005). SWReGAP mapping and vegetation communities are based on ecological systems which are defined as a group of plant community types (associations) that tend to co-occur within landscapes with similar ecological processes, substrates, and/or environmental gradients . The proposed action is within the Sonora-Mojave Creosote bush-White Bursage Desert Scrub SWReGAP land cover classification. This vegetation community is the most abundant vegetation type in the Las Vegas and Pahrump Field Offices, occupying roughly 70 percent of the vegetation cover. In this vegetation community creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) and bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*) are generally the most conspicuous plant species present. This vegetation community generally occurs below 4,000 feet and is the primary habitat for the desert tortoise.

There have been declines of this vegetation type since 1998 because of BLM realty actions and congressionally mandated land transfers (land sales, patents, and rights-of-way authorizations). This decrease has predominantly been on multiple-use lands within designated disposal boundaries and utility corridors. Important threats to this ecosystem include direct and indirect impacts resulting from anthropogenic activity, invasion by non-native annual grasses and increased fire frequency. Anthropogenic activities include grazing; development; highway and road construction; utility corridor construction; and recreational activity (casual OHV, concentrated OHV activities, and competitive races). Disturbances associated with these activities have fragmented habitat, increased edge effects, and created conditions that facilitate establishment on non-native annual grasses.

Since 1998, a significant portion of creosote bursage scrub in the planning area has burned due to colonization by non-native grasses. Compared to historic conditions, the quality of creosote bursage scrub in the planning area has also decreased because of non-native grasses. Due to the presence of non-native annual grasses, currently most of this vegetation category is classified as condition Class 2 at a moderate risk of losing key ecosystem components (see Wildland Fire Ecology and Management section). Higher densities of non-native annual grasses and increased fire frequency lead to decreased ecosystem functioning, a higher risk of wildfire, and result in lower quality habitats for wildlife. Historically, the Sonora-Mojave creosote bush-white bursage desert scrub ecosystem burned infrequently and contained substantial bare interspaces between shrubs with only low densities of annual grasses present. Currently, non-native annual grasses, including red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp *rubens*), cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), and Mediterranean grass (*Schismus* sp.), grow in significant densities under and between shrubs and create standing dead material that carries fire between shrubs and increases fire return intervals.

Temporary impacts to vegetation in this category can take decades to centuries to recover depending on the impact. Scott Abella (2010) estimates that without active restoration, it takes the Mojave Desert 76 years for re-establishment of perennial plant cover and 215 years for re-establishment of perennial and annual species cover. If disturbance is too frequent, recovery may be delayed or prevented entirely as soils become eroded or severely compacted. Slow recovery from disturbance means most impacts to this vegetation community will accumulate over time. The BLM restoration program is designed to facilitate natural recovery and reduce cumulative impacts to this vegetation type. Because this vegetation category does not recover quickly from disturbance, conservation actions may conflict with some multiple use management objectives.

11. Wild Horses and Burros

The proposed action could directly effect wild horses and burros within the project area. Generally, the wild horses and burros would avoid the project area as much as possible because of

vehicle noise and the presence of humans. Wild horses and burros would not be restricted from forage or water due to the multiple locations of those resources throughout the Wheeler Pass and Johnnie HMAs. There will be a loss of forage in the disturbed area, this loss will not be significant enough to require an adjustment of the appropriate management level of these HMAs. The current estimated population of the Wheeler Pass HMA is 402–532 wild horses and 131–197 wild burros, the Johnnie HMA has an estimated 114–150 wild horses and 200–298 wild burros.

We currently use the helipad at the BLM Pahrump Fire Station to stage our population inventory flights for the western side of the Spring Mountains Complex, it is critical that we are still able to use that location in the future to continue managing and monitoring the wild horses and burros in that area.

Environmental Effects

1. Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species

Wildlife species would be displaced 274.43 acres of habitat are disturbed within the project area. The primary direct impacts of the proposed action on wildlife would be killing or maiming of ground dwelling animals, displacement of individuals, the permanent loss and fragmentation of habitat, and increased potential for harassment of wildlife. Indirect impacts could include increased noise, introduction and spread of weeds, and increased erosion potential. Wildlife species in the general area are common and widely distributed throughout the area and the loss of some individuals and/or their habitat should have a negligible impact on populations of the species throughout the region. Impacts to BLM sensitive species are not anticipated to lead to further decline of the species range-wide. Any impacts to sensitive species could be avoided and/or minimized if best management practices (BMP) and careful consideration of the animals are carried out during the construction process.

BLM Sensitive Wildlife Species

Chuckwalla, Mojave shovel-nosed snake, desert glossy snake, Nevada shovel-nosed snake, and desert Sidewinder

Potential impacts to these species from the proposed action would be similar to those discussed above for general wildlife.

2. Migratory Birds

Migratory birds in the project area may be disturbed and/or displaced 274.43 acres of habitat removal and/or noise on the project site. Depending on the time of year for construction, operation, or maintenance, there is the potential to disturb nesting birds within or immediately adjacent to the proposed action. The proponent must comply with the MBTA and avoid potential impacts to protected birds within the project area. The proponent should adhere to mitigation measures to be in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and protect BLM sensitive bird species in the project area.

Habitat-altering projects or portions of projects should be scheduled outside of the bird breeding season which generally occurs between February 15th and August 31st. If a project has to occur during the breeding season, then a qualified biologist must survey the area for nests immediately prior to commencement of construction activities. This shall include burrowing and ground nesting species in addition to those nesting in vegetation. If any active nests are found, an appropriately-sized buffer area must be established and maintained until the young birds fledge. The buffer area must connect to suitable, undisturbed habitat. As the above dates are a general guideline, if active nest are observed outside this range they are to be avoided as described above.

3. Fuels/Fire Management

The proposal to establish the college campus on Carpenter Canyon Road adjacent to the Pahrump Fire Station could impact normal and emergency Fire Station operations which would reduce wildfire response capabilities in the area. Reduced wildfire response capabilities could result in increased wildfire impacts to WUI and sensitive natural and cultural resources.

Construction activities, operations and maintenance activities, and increased human activities in the area could result in increased human caused fires. The environmental effects of a wildfire are

damage or destruction of native Mojave Desert plant species and habitat. Most if not all native Mojave Desert plant species are not fire adapted. The listed desert tortoise is not fire adapted. Wildfire could threaten the nearby WUI, human safety, and public and private property. Fires that ignite and burn in ephemeral annual grass such as *Bromus tectorum* (cheatgrass) or *Bromus rubens* (red brome) may increase fire occurrence once an annual grass fire cycle has become established.

Direct and Indirect Impacts

Direct impacts from proposed action could result in increased human caused fires.

Indirect impacts from human caused fires may result in the loss of native vegetation and habitat. Depending on a fire's location and size, fire can damage or destroy property or infrastructure as well as threaten human safety and communities. Conditions that support wildland fire spread can occur any time of the year in Southern Nevada.

The close proximity of the proposed action to the Fire Station may cause direct impacts to the normal operations, aviation operations, and emergency fire operations of the Fire Station and Fire Station facilities. Public and fire fighter safety would be impacted in and around the Fire Station and helipad due to the increased presence of the public and students. Increased human activities in and around fire and aviation operations or activities could result in decreased safety. Increased Fire Station personnel may be needed year round.

Vehicle traffic on Carpenter Canyon Road would increase and this could cause problems for emergency fire response as well as normal day to day activities due to traffic congestion or related issues. In particular, road access to the Fire Station and the helipad may be directly impacted.

The proposed action may limit or preclude the use of the helipad for aviation operations. Buildings, infrastructure, landscaping or other developments constructed too close to the helipad could directly impact aviation operations and make it difficult for a helicopter to land and take off. Development could limit or prohibit the use of helicopter external loads. Aviation safety could be impacted.

Indirect impacts could be increased fire size due to increased response times or decreased capabilities or capacity of firefighting resources.

4. Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

The Proposed Action has the potential to permanently impact 274.43 acres by introducing and/or exacerbating current weed populations.

Actions associated with project may involve activities such as clearing, digging and tilling have the potential to decrease native plant cover and increase soil disturbance. The bare ground resulting from the vegetation removal provides opportunity for non-native invasive weed species to colonize the project area. If weeds are established on the site there is potential for species to out-compete native plants for resources. Noxious and/or invasive weeds effectively compete with native species for sunlight, soil, water, nutrients, and space, thereby reducing forage productivity. Additionally, soil disturbance could reduce the native seed bank associated with the site.

Increased vehicle traffic during all phases of the Proposed Project will also impact noxious and/or invasive weed. Vehicles are effective at introducing and/or spreading weeds by disbursing weed seed along roadways. More specifically the increased vehicular activity at the site has the potential to spread non-native invasive annual grasses. Studies suggest that the Mojave Desert is

threatened by the spread of non-native, invasive annual grasses which results in increased fire and loss of natural resources (Brooks 1999). The increase of fine fuels may result in ignitions and ultimately increase the number of wildfires.

Mojave Desert wildfires are occurring at historically unprecedented frequencies and extents and have the potential to dramatically change the species composition in affected areas (Brooks and Matchett 2006).

Therefore in addition to competing with native plant species, and reducing the productivity of rangelands, forest lands, riparian areas, and wetlands, the spread of invasive weed infestations, cheat grass in particular, increase fine fuels, thereby increasing the likelihood of fire.

Although the non-native annual grasses are not legally designated as noxious by the State of Nevada, their role within the Mojave desert ecosystem is increasingly important with respect to their relationship to fire and future disturbance.

Aggressively managing invasive or noxious species will limit residual effects to manageable levels. This is made possible by maintaining discontinuous, dispersed native vegetation, nonflammable native species, propagation and planting of native species, or complete removal of all vegetation.

If the following stipulations and BMPs are integrated throughout the Proposed Project development the introduction and spread of noxious and/or invasive weeds may be mitigated and the impacts less significant to the project site and adjacent lands.

5. Hydrologic Conditions

For the project not to have an adverse effect to the overall hydrologic conditions or storm flow patterns in the area, the design of the campus will need to include drainage structures to perpetuate the stormwater runoff safely downstream and into proposed and/or existing flood control conveyance systems. Alterations to storm flow patterns are necessary to protect the investment in and continued safe operations of the college.

6. Soils

The Proposed Action includes removal of up to 285 acres of vegetative cover and soil material through earth-moving activities such as grading and excavation. Vegetation removal and ground disturbance would leave soils exposed to wind and water, two key components of erosion. However, the disturbed areas would either be developed or landscaped. Impacts to soils related to erosion would occur under the Proposed Action. Erosion would be reduced through the use of BMPs.

7. Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)

Surface water runoff patterns will be affected by the proposed action. Construction excavations are not expected to intercept groundwater. A construction stormwater discharge permit should be obtained and a Stormwater Pollutant Prevention Plan should be prepared prior to construction. The Plan should specify best management practices to control erosion and runoff from the construction areas to protect water quality.

8. Threatened, Endangered Animal Species

The proposed project must comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) for consultation with the USFWS on effects to federally listed species. The proposed action has a may affect, likely to adversely affect determination for the federally threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and no effect for its designated critical habitat, as the project is outside of this range. The proposed project will have no effect on any other federally protected species or designated critical habitat due to absence of the species and/or habitat.

The R&PP congressional lease to patent is in accordance with Public Law 113-291. Sale of the parcel will change land ownership, causing no direct physical change to the land or to the existing land use. However, once the proponent acquires the land, they will likely be developed. Therefore, it is the eventual development after the transfer of land ownership that would cause physical impacts to the land and in turn to the species associated with them both directly and indirectly on the sale parcel. Potential impacts to tortoise from the proposed action would be similar to those described in the Fish and Wildlife section including loss of 285 acres of habitat. If not noticed and avoided during construction, operation, or maintenance activities, desert tortoises could be either injured or killed (by crushing) or harassed (by being moved out of harm's way). Potential impacts to this species includes loss of connectivity, increased predators, increased human presence leading to death or harm to individuals or collection, Increased weeds, increased encounters with domestic pets, and increased access to area by general public. INSERT LANGUAGE AFTER BO IS RECEIVED

9. Woodland/Forestry

The project would directly impact cactus and yucca regulated under the BLM forestry program. Public Law 113-291 (P. L. 113-291). Sec. 3092 of P. L. 113-291 (h) conveys approximately 274.43 acres of public land to the Nevada System of Higher Education for construction of a college campus in Pahrump, Nevada. This conveyance includes cactus and yucca that are regulated under the forestry program. Under the forestry program, prior to ground disturbing activities, BLM typically conducts a salvage sale of all cactus and yucca present with the proceeds going to the general treasury. Using current salvage sale pricing set by the Nevada State Office and the 2004 density estimate, approximately \$375,000.00 in salvage sale revenue would not be collected under the proposed action. The proponent would be encouraged to salvage the cactus and yucca present and incorporate them into landscaping for the proposed college. Additionally, BLM may be able to assist in salvage and use of plants on BLM lands.

10. Vegetation

The proposed action would directly affect approximately 274.43 acres of creosote bursage scrub vegetation. Of the impact 274.43 acres are expected to be permanent and 0 acres are expected to be temporary, the result of trampling during construction and drive and crush associated with parking vehicles and staging supplies. Creosote bursage scrub vegetation is widespread in the Las Vegas and Pahrump Field Office area; however, it is a limited and finite resource. When combined with other reasonably foreseeable actions in the Las Vegas and Pahrump field offices, and impacts from fire, non-native, competition with non-native annual grasses, BLM reality and minerals actions and casual recreation, the proposed action would result in an incremental addition to current declines in the quality and quantity of creosote bursage scrub in the Las Vegas Field Office area.

11. Wild Horses and Burros

There would be a loss of forage in the disturbed area, this loss would not be significant enough to require an adjustment of the appropriate management level of HMAs in the area. During construction, the following mitigation measures would aid in the management of the wild horses and burros and the preservation of the resources in the area: Vehicle speeds should not exceed 25 mph throughout the HMA, especially from March to June, this is the primary foaling season. Individuals should also remain at least 0.25 miles from the water sources in the HMA. The construction areas that would not be permanently disturbed need to be restored to the native vegetation that was found in the area. Individuals will not harass (feed, pet, chase, etc.) wild horses and burros if encountered on or near the construction areas or equipment parking/staging areas. The final perimeter of the school must be fenced to exclude the wild horses and burros and discourage them from foraging and watering on the school grounds and creating a potential public safety and nuisance issue.

Cumulative Impacts

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ON RESOURCES

1. Cumulative Effects on Fish and Wildlife Excluding Federally Listed Species

Wildlife species would be displaced 285 acres of habitat are disturbed within the project area. Wildlife species in the general area are common and widely distributed throughout the area and the loss of some individuals and/or their habitat should have a negligible impact on populations of the species throughout the region. Impacts to BLM sensitive species are not anticipated to lead to further decline of the species range-wide. Any impacts to sensitive species could be avoided and/or minimized if best management practices (BMP) and careful consideration of the animals are carried out during the construction process.

2. Cumulative Effects on Migratory Birds

Migratory birds in the project area may be disturbed and/or displaced 285 acres of habitat removal and/or noise on the project site. If the proponent complies with the MBTA to avoid potential impacts to protected birds within the project area, the future and cumulative impacts should be minimal.

3. Cumulative Effects on Fuels/Fire Management

Cumulative effects are changes to the area's fire regime condition class and loss of ecosystem function, native plant species, and habitat due to natural and human caused wildfires. Repeat fires are likely to perpetuate the annual grass fire cycle and degrade environmental conditions over time. Overall increased human activities in the area could result in increased human caused fires.

New, continued or increased developments and infrastructure would increase the WUI foot print and increase the area's fire response complexity and costs. Further, new developments and infrastructure could be at risk to wildfire.

The establishment of a college campus in this public land area and continued area development could affect the BLM Pahrump Fire Station's normal day to day operations. Combined recreational/public, administrative, emergency, and college vehicle traffic on Carpenter Canyon Road would increase which could cause congestion or traffic problems for normal and emergency access. Fire fighter and public safety in and around the Fire Station could be decreased. Increased overhead hazards may decrease aviation safety, especially where existing ROW or corridors are developed or expanded.

The following minimization measures and/or requirements would aid in the reduction of potential impacts to fire and aviation management. These are:

1. Work to improve fire fighter, public, and student safety with regards to wildfire risk and fire and aviation operations.
2. Use best management practices to prevent wildfires. Provide information to students, faculty, and staff on wildfire prevention utilizing education, mitigation, and outreach strategies.
3. Maintain defensible and/or survivable space to protect human safety and infrastructure from wildfire as appropriate or as needed. Utilize roads or similar developments as fuel breaks.

4. Allow for the continued safe use of the BLM Pahrump Fire Station, helipad, and related facilities.
5. Minimize impacts to the Fire Station, Fire Station operations and activities when and where possible.
6. Maintain access to the Fire Station, facilities, roads, and helipad.
7. Minimize traffic impacts on Carpenter Canyon Road and/or maintain it as a frontage road.
8. Improve or increase Fire Station and helipad security.
9. Fence the helipad and/or take appropriate measures to increase helipad safety.
10. Maintain helicopter helipad access and use by applying the following except where a higher standard or requirement would apply (see 11):
 - a. Remove or reduce construction improvements within 500 feet of the helipad area.
 - b. Subject to/ reservation of lands to the BLM for 500 feet distance north, east and south of the helipad area for helicopter operations (no construction at all within 500 feet of helipad).
 - c. Maintain height restrictions on construction improvement plans for the Great Basin College either on buildings or infrastructure within a minimum of 500 feet of the helipad, or as required by 14 CFR 77.
 - d. Allow for approach and take off at an 8 to 1 gradient from the edge of the helipad, or safety circle.
 - e. Allow for clear approach and departure. Safety is increased if the paths are widened to a 20° angle from the center of the landing pad.
 - f. Do not allow obstructions to be placed, accumulate, or remain where not authorized, designed, or required within 500 feet of the helipad.
 - g. Post warning and informational signs (helispot, no smoking, etc.) as appropriate.
 - h. Allow a path for transport of external loads where possible.
11. Meet or maintain BLM policy, regulatory, and safety requirements for the helipad and its use in aviation operations to include the following where appropriate and applicable:
 - a. 14 CFR 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace.
 - b. 14 CFR 157, Notice of Construction, Alteration, Activation, and Deactivation of Airports.
12. All potential impacts or actions affecting the helipad, any aviation facilities or related fire aviation operations will be reviewed and approved by the BLM Unit Aviation Officer, Fire Management Officer and all other authorities where applicable.

Suggested standards affecting the helipad and its use can be found:

- FAA Advisory Circular No. 150/5390-2C *Helipad Design* (2012); available online.

- NWCG *Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide* (2013); available online.

Further information on BLM Aviation Policy can be found in:

Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations (NIFC 2015); *2015 National Aviation Plan*, DOI BLM; *2015 National, Nevada State and Southern Nevada District Aviation Plan* (on file at BLM SNDO); BLM Manual 9400 – *Aviation Management* (2008); BLM Manual 9100 – *Engineering* (2008); BLM Manual 9111 – *Aviation Facilities* (1993); BLM Manual 9110 – *Transportation Facilities* (1993); DOI 351 DM 1 *Aviation Operations* (2011); DOI 352 DM 5 *Aviation Safety* (2011); and *Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide* (NWCG 2013, PMS-510).

4. Cumulative Effects on Invasive Species/Noxious Weeds

The Proposed Action would result in cumulative impacts on native vegetation communities, including the potential spread of noxious and/or invasive weeds with the potential to adversely affect the Project area and adjacent lands. The cumulative affects would be considered negligible if the following stipulations are met to identify, prevent, and treat the spread of noxious and or invasive species:

Stipulations:

- (1) At the onset of project planning in the NEPA analysis phase, the project proponent or the project lead shall complete a Weed Management Plan (WMP) which would be prepared and submitted to the BLM for review and approval prior to construction. The Weed Management Plan is a planning document that acknowledges, assesses, and provides an inventory of weed infestations for treatment. The Weed Management Plan will recognize the project's impact on vegetation and define the expected treatments and activities necessary to both maintain the determined desired condition for the vegetation community, and control the weeds that may occur within the project area. . Should the weed spread beyond the project foot print then these weeds will be treated as a part of the project. This will include access routes.
- (2) The project proponent shall coordinate project activities with the BLM Weed Coordinator (702-515-5000) regarding any proposed herbicide treatment. The project proponent shall prepare, submit, obtain and maintain a pesticide use proposal (PUP) for the proposed action.
- (3) The project proponent shall limit the size of any vegetation and/or ground disturbance to the absolute minimum necessary to perform the activity safely and as designed. The project proponent will avoid creating soil conditions that promote weed germination and establishment.
- (4) The project proponent shall begin project operations in weed free areas whenever feasible before operating in weed-infested areas.
- (5) The project proponent shall locate equipment storage, machine and vehicle parking or any other area needed for the temporary placement of people, machinery and supplies in areas that are relatively weed-free. The project proponent shall avoid or minimize all types of travel through weed-infested areas or restrict major activities to periods of time when the spread of seed or plant parts are least likely.
- (6) BLM or the project proponent shall determine equipment-cleaning sites (if equipment is infested with weed seeds, plant parts or mud and dirt). Project related equipment and machinery (this especially includes the nooks and crannies of undercarriages) will be cleaned using compressed air or water to remove mud, dirt and plant parts before moving into and from

relatively weed-free areas. Seeds and plant parts will be collected, bagged and deposited in dumpsters destined for local landfills, when practical.

(7) Project workers shall inspect, remove, and dispose of weed seed and plant parts found on their clothing and personal equipment, bag the product and dispose of in a dumpster for deposit in local landfills. Disposal methods may vary depending on the project. If you have questions consult with the LVFO Noxious Weed Coordinator.

(8) The project proponent shall evaluate options, including area closures, to regulate the flow of traffic on sites where native vegetation needs to be established.

5. Cumulative Effects on Hydrologic Conditions

Future development within the vicinity of the college would continue to alter storm flow patterns and hydrologic conditions. Construction of flood control facilities to safely convey stormwater runoff and protect private and public infrastructure and property investments have had a cumulative effect on the historic hydrology throughout the valley.

6. Cumulative Effects on Soils

The disturbed areas from construction would either be developed or landscaped. Erosion would be reduced through the use of BMPs.

7. Cumulative Effects on Water Resources/Quality (drinking/surface/ground)

Surface water runoff patterns will be affected by the proposed action. Construction excavations are not expected to intercept groundwater. May increase water shortage problems in the Pahrump valley.

8. Cumulative Effects on Threatened, Endangered Animal Species

The proposed project must comply with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) for consultation with the USFWS on effects to federally listed species. Potential impacts to tortoise from the proposed action would be similar to those described in the Fish and Wildlife section including loss of 285 acres of habitat. If not noticed and avoided during construction, operation, or maintenance activities, desert tortoises could be either injured or killed (by crushing) or harassed (by being moved out of harm's way). Potential impacts to this species includes loss of connectivity, increased predators, increased human presence leading to death or harm to individuals or collection, Increased weeds, increased encounters with domestic pets, and increased access to area by general public. As long as the proponent complies with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, effects to the Desert Tortoise would be reduced. The proposed project will have no effect on any other federally protected species or designated critical habitat due to absence of the species/or habitat in the area.

9. Cumulative Effects on Woodland/Forestry

The project would directly impact cactus and yucca regulated under the BLM forestry program. The proponent is encouraged to salvage the cactus and yucca present and incorporate them into landscaping for the proposed college. This would reduce some of the impact to the resources in the area.

10. Cumulative Effects on Vegetation

The proposed action would directly affect approximately 274.43 acres of creosote bursage scrub vegetation. Creosote bursage scrub vegetation is widespread in the Las Vegas and Pahrump Field office areas; however, it is a limited and finite resource. When combined with other reasonably foreseeable actions in the Las Vegas and Pahrump Field Office, and impacts from fire, non-native, competition with non-native annual grasses, BLM realty and minerals actions and casual recreation, the proposed action would result in an incremental addition to current declines in the quality and quantity of creosote bursage scrub in the Las Vegas Field Office area.

11. Cumulative Effects on Wild Horses and Burros

The development of public lands would increase human use in this area. With increased human use there is the potential for more essential habitat loss, increased interactions with the wild horses and burros, and the potential to alter their normal foraging and watering behaviors. However, there should be minimal cumulative impacts to the wild horses and burros as a result of the specific activities associated with this conveyance because of the small portion of the overall HMAs and total habitat that is available in the Wheeler Pass and Johnnie HMA area.



CUMULATIVE IMPACTS ON THE GENERAL AREA

The general area was analyzed in the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), approved October 5, 1998. The area was analyzed for its resources, and compatibility for future land disposal through sales. The conveyance (sale) proposal is in conformance with LD-1 and LD-2 of the Record of Decision for the EIS (pages 16-18), which allows for land disposal through sale, exchange or R&PP patent. The land described in this proposal is within a designated disposal boundary area in Pahrump as approved in the EIS.

The general parcel area is located east of Pahrump. It is undisturbed with desert shrubs and fauna, consisting of a dirt access road known as Carpenter Canyon Road, which is utilized by local residents and recreationists to access the west side of Mount Charleston and the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area. The Pahrump Fire Station is located approximately 1/2 mile east of Pahrump on Carpenter Canyon Road, and lies adjacent, and in close proximity to the proposed sale parcel for the Great Basin College.

Existing rights-of-way:

There are four (4) rights-of-way which travel along the edge and through the parcel area. The BLM has a right-of-way for the Pahrump Fire Station helipad which protects it from construction occurring too close or too high to the helipad area. Two other rights-of-way lie along Carpenter Canyon Road, on the north edge of the parcel: (1) a right-of-way for a transmission line granted to Valley Electric Association; and (2) a right-of-way for an underground telephone line granted

to Nevada Bell. These two (2) supply electricity and power to the Pahrump Fire Station. Another right-of-way for a 230 kV transmission line granted to Valley Electric Association, runs through the center of the parcel area. The BLM has established a right-of-way for the Fire Station, access road, and helipad area. Also, a large corridor area encompasses approximately 570 feet on the northeast corner of the parcel and it is reserved to the United States. There would be no cumulative impact to these rights-of-way or corridor as the proponent would be “subject to” these rights-of-way in the patent, and the corridor would be reserved to the United States.

The cumulative impact for establishment of a college campus in this area, could possibly affect the BLM Pahrump Fire Station (see Cumulative Impacts, No. 3, Fuels/Fire). Vehicle traffic on Carpenter Canyon Road could possibly increase and this could cause problems for fire truck transportation to and from emergencies. Buildings constructed too close to the helipad and too high could make it extremely difficult for the helicopter to land and take off during emergencies. The BLM has developed a right-of-way for the Fire Station, access road, and helipad. The right-of-way establishes a clearance area around the Fire Station and helipad which would not allow for construction of tall buildings too close to the helipad (see Description of the Proposed Action, page 6). The right-of-way clearance area around the helipad should aid in the protection and safety of the helicopter crew when trying to land and take off. Once construction of the college campus is complete, and as time passes by, the cumulative effects should lessen and be reduced or minimal as Fire Station crew, local residents, and students get established and adjusted to the daily activities in and around the college campus, recreation area, and the nearby Fire Station.

There are positive cumulative impacts which could occur by having a campus in the area. Construction of a college campus would benefit the town of Pahrump, Nye County, and surrounding communities by allowing more educational opportunities in the area. It would also benefit larger cities such as Las Vegas, Henderson and Summerlin, and Indian Reservations in the southern Nevada area. An educational facility in the area would be a valuable resource in the community both for local residents, families, and students who are in need of a higher education.

An influx of college students in the town of Pahrump would provide a “boost” to the local economy. Students would need lodging, housing and daily provisions. The increase in the population in Pahrump would benefit the local stores, shops and restaurants and increase economic development for the town of Pahrump

Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, or Agencies Consulted

Table 2. List of Persons, Agencies and Organizations Consulted

Name	Purpose & Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Board of Regents of the Nevada System of Higher Education	Conveyance applicant.	Applied for this public law.
Fish and Wildlife Service	Prepared biological opinion.	Prepared biological opinion.
Valley Electric Association	Electric lines run through the parcel area.	Letter response.
Nevada Bell	Telephone lines run along border of parcel.	Letter response.
Pahrump Band of Paiutes	Consultation to local tribes.	Consultation
Las Vegas Paiute Tribe	Consultation to local tribes	Consultation
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Consultation to local tribes	Consultation
Chemuhuevi Tribe	Consultation to local tribes	Consultation
Colorado River Indian Tribe	Consultation to local tribes	Consultation
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe	Consultation to local tribes	Consultation

List of Preparers

Table 3. List of Preparers

Name	Title	Responsible for the Following Section(s) of this Document
Dorothy J. Dickey	Realty Specialist	Project lead for Environmental Assessment and NEPA documents, Edit EA
Marc Sanchez	Recreation Specialist, Pahrump Field Office	Document Preparation, Evaluation
Stanley Plum	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns, Paleontology
Lisa Christianson	Environmental Protection Specialist & Hazmat	Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazardous Waste
Fred Edwards	Botanist	Botanist, Forest Initiative, Healthy (Cactus/Yucca), Threatened, Endangered or Candidate (Plant Species), Vegetation Excluding Listed Species
Erica Pionke	Realty Specialist	Visual
Susan Farkas	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA review
Krystal Johnson	Wild Horse and Burro Specialist	Farmlands (Prime or Unique), Wild Horse and Burro
Ashley Holcomb	Natural Resource Specialist	Fish & Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate (Animal Species)
Chris Linehan	Recreation Specialist	Wild and Scenic Rivers
Sean McElderly	Fire Management Specialist	Fire Management Specialist Species
Boris Poff	Hydrologist	Floodplains, Hydrologic Conditions, Soils, Water Resources/Quality (Drinking/Surface/Ground), Wetlands/Riparian Zones,
Benjamin Klink	Weed Specialist	Weed Management
Melanie Cota	Wildlife Biologist	Fish & Wildlife, Migratory Birds, Threatened, Endangered or Candidate (Animal Species)
Lori Dee Dukes	Geologist	Geology/Mineral Resources/Energy Production

EXHIBIT A— Copy of the Biological Opinion for the Great Basin College Parcel of Land

Biological Opinion

EXHIBIT B— Maps

Maps