

# Reno Air Races Temporary Land Closure

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2016-0012-EA

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It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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**[Note: maps are not embedded in this document in order to maintain a small file size, maps are available on the Project website. Look under the Navigation Pane for “Maps.”]**

- A Project Area
- B Temporary Land Closure for 2016

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

The Reno Air Racing Association Committee has requested a temporary closure of public lands during scheduled Reno Air Racing Association Pylon Racing Seminar and Reno National Championship Air Races both held annually on private land north of the Reno-Stead Airport. Annual closures of the public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) during the scheduled racing events have taken place at the request of the Reno Air Racing Association Committee since 1990.

### **1.2 Purpose and Need**

The air race course is laid out on private land north of the Reno-Stead Airport; however, some flyovers by racing aircraft may occur over or adjacent to public land during the events. Accordingly, the purpose of the Proposed Action is to minimize potential harm to the public and race participants if aircraft fly over the public lands during the scheduled events. The need of the Proposed Action is for the BLM to respond to the Reno Air Racing Association Committee's request for a temporary closure of public land and for the BLM to ensure public safety during the events.

### **1.3 Scoping and Issues Identification**

This project has a long history of public support as it is a major economic gain to Reno and Sparks community. The BLM has been enacting this temporary closure for public safety since 1990; therefore, the project is not considered controversial.

### **1.4 Decision to be Made**

The Authorized Officer would decide whether to issue a temporary closure of public land during the scheduled events that would occur over the next 10-years. The temporary closure order would be published in the *Federal Register* with the specific event dates and legal description for the public lands to be temporarily closed.

### **1.5 Land Use Plan Conformance Statement**

The Proposed Action is in compliance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (2001). The applicable sections includes:

SOP-1: "An environmental review (i.e. environmental assessment) will be prepared before projects are developed except when they are covered by categorical exclusion or previous analysis deemed adequately through a determination of NEPA adequacy (DNA) so that implementation, modification, or abandonment of the project may be considered depending on identified impacts."

SOP-3: "Authorized public land users will prevent or control damage to scenic, aesthetic, cultural, and environmental values (including damage to fish and wildlife habitat), damage to federal property and hazards to public health and safety."

The Proposed Action is also in conformance with the *Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA)* (BLM 2015). The Project Area includes designated as Other Habitat Management Area (OHMA) and General Habitat Management Area (GHMA) for the greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*).

Projects in OHMA require the implementation of required design features (RDF's), if applicable to the Project. The Proposed Action is administrative in nature, no RDF's apply to the issuance of a temporary closure of public lands. Projects in GHMA require that the Project not have a direct or indirect effect to greater sage-grouse. The Proposed Action is administrative in nature and would not cause surface or noise disturbances to greater sage-grouse. The nearest U.S. Geological Survey telemetry for the greater sage-grouse is approximately 15 miles east of the Project Area. The habitat in the Project Area is unoccupied, is surrounded by urban development, and as is not located in a migration corridor for the greater sage-grouse.

The use of the air space above the public lands in the Project Area is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration; the ARMPA does not apply to the air space above public lands.

The Proposed Action would be in compliance with the *Carson City District Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* (BLM 2014) in accordance with Public Health and Safety (Table 2-2):

- #660 “Provide for public health and safety, especially in areas of concern, in development sites, and areas of concentrated use.”
- #661 “Implement a total public closure during the Reno Air Races (generally 4 days in mid-June and 7 days in mid-September, exact dates depend on event schedule).”

## **1.6 Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Plans**

The Proposed Action is in compliance with the following federal, State, and local plans to the maximum extent possible:

- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (as amended);
- Public Range Improvement Act of 1978;
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1969 (as amended);
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976; and
- Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment, 2015.

Authority for a temporary land closure is found at 43 CFR 8364.1

## 2.0 ALTERNATIVES

### 2.1 Description of Alternatives

#### 2.1.1 *Alternative A: Proposed Action*

The Proposed Action is a temporary closure of certain public land located adjacent to the seminar and race site on private land north of the Reno-Stead Airport, Washoe County, Nevada. The public lands described below would be closed annually to all public entry for the duration of the seminar and racing events. Public land users wishing to use the lands for various purposes would be affected by the temporary closure. The Project Area for this environmental assessment is an area of approximately 1,694 acres of public land managed by the BLM (Figure A).

#### 2016 Events

October 27, 2015, the Reno Air Racing Association Committee applied to the BLM for the temporary closure of public land for the Pylon Racing Seminar to occur on June 15 to June 18, 2016 and the National Championship Air Races to be held on September 10 to September 18, 2016 (Figure B). A total of approximately 445 acres of public land would be affected by the closure and are located as follows:

Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada

T. 21 N., R. 19 E.,

sec. 8, N1/2NE1/4, SE1/4NE1/4, and E1/2SE1/4;

sec. 16, SW1/4SW1/4NE1/4, NW1/4, and W1/2SE1/4.

#### Future Events

Over the next 10-years, the BLM could potentially close, in whole or in part, certain public land depicted in Figure A, during the scheduled events. Approximately 1,694 acres of public land could be temporarily closed and are located as follows:

Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada

T. 21 N., R. 19 E.,

sec. 8, N1/2NE1/4, SE1/4NE1/4, and E1/2SE1/4;

sec. 16, N1/2 and SE1/4;

sec. 22, SW1/4;

sec. 27, SW1/4NE1/4, W1/2, and NW1/4SE1/4;

sec. 28, NE1/4, the portion of the NW1/4 southeast of Bravo Avenue, N1/2SW1/4, N1/2SE1/4, and SE1/4SE1/4.

#### Publication and Notification

Temporary closure of the public lands would be initiated by the publication of a Temporary Closure Notice in the *Federal Register*. This notice would also be published in a local newspaper prior to the scheduled event. The *Federal Register* notice would be posted on the BLM website and public room at the Nevada State Office in Reno. BLM law enforcement in coordination with the Washoe County Sheriff's Office, would provide notification to the public that all public use, whether motorized, on foot, or otherwise, is prohibited on public lands. Notification includes the following: posting of signs, flagging, barricades, and/or through public

contacts made by BLM law enforcement, Washoe County Sheriff's deputies, and search and rescue members.

**2.1.2 *Alternative B: No Action Alternative***

Under the No Action Alternative, the public lands would remain open to public entry during the scheduled events. Members of the public could be in danger from incidents involving participating aircraft. The BLM would be unable to implement the temporary land closure under the existing 2009 "Temporary Land Use Closure, Reno Air Races, Washoe County, Nevada" Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2009-0016-EA) because the EA does not conform to the existing land use plan, which was amended by the ARMPA on September 21, 2015 (see Section 1.5).

### **3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

This chapter identifies and describes the current condition and trend of elements or resources in the human environment, which may be affected by the No Action Alternative and Proposed Action. The Affected Environment is the same for all alternatives.

#### **3.1 Setting**

The Project Area is approximately 1,694 acres of public lands of varying topography ranging from 5,400 feet above sea level to 4,920 feet above sea level. The Project Area is located east of the Reno-Stead Airport and within Lemmon Valley (Figure A). The southern portion of the Project Area includes Swan Lake and the northern portion of the Project Area is comprised of mountainous terrain, and the Reno-Stead MotoCross Track. A widely used road (Lemmon Valley Drive and Lemmon Drive) is located near the Project Area. Residential communities border portions of the Project Area. The public land in the Project Area is commonly used for dispersed recreational activities.

##### ***3.1.1 Resources Considered for Analysis***

The BLM is required to address specific elements of the environment that are subject to requirements in statute or regulation or by executive order (BLM 2008). Table 1 lists the elements that must be addressed in all environmental analysis and indicates whether the Proposed Action and Alternatives affect those elements. Other resources of the human environment that have been considered for analysis are listed in Table 2.

**Table 1. Supplemental Authorities\*.**

Resource	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
Air Quality	Y	N	Although this resource is present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	N		Resource not present.
Cultural Resources	Y	N	Although this resource may be present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Environmental Justice	N		Resource not present.
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	N		Resource not present.
Floodplains	N		Resource not present.
Noxious and Invasive Plants	Y	N	Although this resource may be present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Migratory Birds	Y	N	Although this resource may be present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Native American Religious Concerns	N		Resource not present.
Threatened or Endangered Species	N		Resource not present.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	N		Resource not present.
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	N		Resource not present.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	N		Resource not present.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	N		Resource not present.
Wilderness/WSA	N		Resource not present.

\*See H-1790-1 (January 2008) Appendix 1 Supplemental Authorities to be Considered.

*Supplemental Authorities determined to be Not Present or Present/Not Affected need not be carried forward or discussed further in the document.*

*Supplemental Authorities determined to be Present/May Be Affected may be carried forward in the document.*

**Table 2. Resources or Uses Other Than Supplemental Authorities.**

Resource or Issue**	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
BLM Sensitive Species (Animals)	Y	N	Although this resource may be present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource. See Section 1.5 for a discussion on the greater sage-grouse.
BLM Sensitive Species (Plants)	N		Resource not present.
General Wildlife	Y	N	Although this resource may be present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Land and Realty	Y	N	Although this resource is present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource. The BLM would continue to coordinate with right-of-way holders in the Project Area prior to the temporary closure of public lands.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	N		Resource not present.
Livestock Grazing	Y	N	The northern portion of the Project Area is within the Antelope Mountain Grazing Allotment. This administrative action would have no effect on grazing operations; there are no range improvements (i.e. boundary fence) present.
Minerals	N		Resource not present.
Paleontological	N		Resource not present.
Public Health and Safety	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Recreation	Y	N	During the temporary land closure, the recreating public would have to find alternative public lands to use. See Travel Management.
Socioeconomics	N		Resource not present.
Soils	Y	N	Although this resource is present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Travel Management	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Vegetation	Y	N	Although this resource is present in the Project Area, the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Visual Resources	Y	N	Although this resource is present in the Project Area (VRM Class IV), the Proposed Action is administrative only and would not result in direct or indirect effects to this resource.
Wild Horses and Burros	N		Resource not present.

*\*\*Resources or uses determined to be Not Present or Present/Not Affected need not be carried forward or discussed further in the document.*

*Resources or uses determined to be Present/May Be Affected may be carried forward in the document.*

### **3.2 Public Health and Safety**

The Project Area contains trails that are used by public for dispersed recreation, including hiking, camping, and off-highway motor vehicle use. There is a potential of aircraft flying over or landing within the Project Area during the seminar and racing events. Beginning in 1990, the BLM has annually closed a portion of the Project Area to public entry during the seminar and racing events to prevent exposing the public to potential hazardous conditions from potential flyovers.

### **3.3 Travel Management**

Motorized vehicle use on BLM public lands are limited to existing routes except in designated open areas. The portion of the Project Area located in section 8 contains the Lemmon-Stead Motocross Track and is designated as open to all motor vehicles. The remaining Project Area is designated as open to motorized use limited to existing roads and trails. There are a number of travel routes throughout the Project Area including user-created trails and roads in various state of repair. There are no BLM-designated routes or Washoe County-designated roads in the Project Area.

## **4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the potential direct, indirect, and residual effects to resources that may result from the Proposed Action or Alternatives.

### **4.2 Public Health and Safety**

#### ***Alternative A: Proposed Action***

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would temporarily close certain public land adjacent to the seminar and racing site to public entry for the duration of scheduled events. After the scheduled events, all public land closures would be lifted and no longer in place. Expanding the closure area to encompass more public land adjacent to the seminar and racing site may occur over the 10-year period to allow BLM to more effectively manage the affected lands during the annual scheduled events. The Proposed Action would have beneficial impacts on public health and safety because it would help prevent potential harm to the public from aircraft flyovers during the events.

#### ***Alternative B: No Action Alternative***

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not implement a temporary land closure and the public could continue to enter the Project Area during scheduled events. Implementation of the No Action Alternative would pose an increased safety risk to the general public during the race events, a negligible effect. The No Action Alternative would not meet the project's purpose and need (see Section 1.2).

### **4.3 Travel Management**

#### ***Alternative A: Proposed Action***

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would temporarily close certain public land to public entry for the duration of the scheduled events. The recreating public would have to use alternative public land for recreational activities during the scheduled events, a negligible effect.

#### ***Alternative B: No Action Alternative***

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not implement a temporary land closure during the air races. Although the public would continue to access the Project Area during the events, the BLM would also not address the public safety risk during scheduled events. The No Action Alternative would not meet the project's purpose and need (see Section 1.2)

## 5.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

A cumulative effect is defined under NEPA as “the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action, decision, or project when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other action”. “Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR Part 1508.7). Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are analyzed to the extent that they are relevant and useful in analyzing whether the reasonably foreseeable effects of the Proposed Action and/or Alternatives may have an additive and significant relationship to those effects.

### Cumulative Effects Geographic Area.

The Cumulative Effects Study Area (CESA) is approximately 1,694 acres of public lands. The CESA is located east of the Reno-Stead Airport and within Lemmon Valley (Figure A).

### Timeframe for Effects Analysis.

Although the closure would be issued for a time period covering the scheduled events, the BLM has considered the timeframe for effects as 10-years.

### Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions.

#### Past and Present Actions.

The CESA includes numerous user-created trails and roads used by the public primarily for recreation travel. The northern portion of the CESA is located within the Antelope Mountain Grazing Allotment, however due to the isolation of the parcels, the public lands are not used for livestock grazing. Within the northern unit there is a water tank under BLM permitting that Washoe County operates and maintains for municipal drinking water purposes supply. Within the southern unit is the Swan Lake Nature Study Area, managed by Washoe County. The site is popular for bird watching and includes a boardwalk trail and viewing platform with educational information.

#### Reasonably Foreseeable Actions.

### Effects Analysis.

#### Public Health and Safety

##### Alternative A: Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would apply to public land adjacent to the seminar and racing site for a temporary period during scheduled events. The closure would be lifted immediately after the events had occurred. Cumulative effects when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, would be beneficial for public health and safety, as the closure would help minimize potential exposure to aircraft landings and flyovers during the scheduled events.

##### Alternative B: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, existing land uses within the Project Area would remain unchanged. The BLM would not implement the temporary land use closure and would not address potential safety risks to the public. Cumulative effects from this alternative, when

combined to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions on public health and safety within the CESA would be negligible.

### *Travel Management*

#### Alternative A: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would implement the temporary land use closure during scheduled events over a 10-year period. The recreating public would have to find alternative public land areas to recreate during the scheduled events. Cumulative effects from this alternative, when combined to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions on travel management within the CESA would be negligible there are sufficient alternative areas for the public to use during the scheduled events.

#### Alternative B: No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, travel management in the CESA would remain unchanged. Cumulative effects from this alternative, when combined to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions on travel management within the CESA would be negligible as the recreating public would be exposed to safety risks from flying aircraft during the scheduled events.

## 6.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

### 6.1 List of Preparers

BLM staff that contributed to this document.

Name	Resource
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## **7.0 REFERENCES**

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 2001. *Consolidated Resource Management Plan*. Carson City District Office. May.

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