UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
MOUNT LEWIS FIELD OFFICE

Serial Number: N-94284
EA# DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2015-0074-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

I have reviewed Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B010-2015-0074-EA, dated May of 2016. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the proposed action with the project design specifications, including specific design features, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required to be prepared.

I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the approved Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan, and is consistent with the plans and policies of neighboring local, county, state, tribal and federal agencies and governments.

This finding and conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context

A Plan of Development (POD) was submitted to the BLM in July 2015 along with BLM Form SF-299 (1/2006) Application for the Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands. A revised SF-299 Form and POD were submitted in February 2016. Commnet is requesting a 30-year right-of-way (ROW) grant for an upgrade to approximately 748 linear feet of a 20-foot wide existing partially reclaimed access road, and a 100-foot by 100-foot wireless communication tower site on public land, for a total of approximately 0.5 acre. The ROW would also grant use of an existing road for access, approximately 6.8 miles long and 12 feet wide. Five specific areas along the access road would need to be improved for safe construction vehicle passage (Road Improvement Zones) and total approximately 1.4 acres. The total surface disturbance associated with this ROW is approximately 1.9 acres. Disturbance outside the ROW is not anticipated; however, any incidental disturbance that may occur would be reclaimed immediately.

The Project is being proposed as part of Commnet's efforts to meet the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Mobility Fund obligations. The Mobility Fund Phase I Auction offered support to wireless communication carriers that committed to providing advanced mobile voice and broadband services in areas where services were unavailable. The FCC defined qualifying road miles (currently uncovered roads) within each census tract in qualifying counties and allowed carriers to place a bid to cover those roads with third generation (often called "advanced" or "3G") service within two years. Winning bidders were required to provide coverage to a minimum of 75 percent of the eligible road miles within each census tract

identified. Eligible road miles in Eureka County totaled approximately 729 miles, and eligible road miles in Lander County totaled approximately 994 miles. Commnet submitted an extension with the FCC, which was granted for only one year through an upgrade from "3G" service to fourth generation ("4G") service.

Commnet of Nevada, LLC (Commnet) proposes a wireless communication tower and associated access road at the Tonkin Summit Wireless Communication Tower Project (Project) located in north-central Nevada approximately 60 miles northwest of Eureka, in Eureka County, Nevada. The Project is located on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO). The Project is located in part of Section 20, Township 24 North, Range 49 East (T24N, R49E), Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (Project Area). The Project is accessed from Eureka by traveling 3.3 miles northwest on United States (US) Highway 50, turning north-northwest onto Nevada State Route 278, then after approximately 40 miles, turning northwest onto J D Ranch Road, traveling northwest and southwest for approximately 20 miles, then turning west onto the access road by the Tonkin Mine and traveling approximately seven miles to the Project Area. Figure 1.1.1 shows the Project location, access, and land status.

Construction timing would occur, to the extent feasible, outside of bird nesting seasons (March 1 through July 31 for raptors, and April 1 through July 31 for other migratory birds).

All construction-related vehicles would be pressure washed to remove extraneous plant matter (e.g., noxious and invasive weeds) prior to entering a project site. A water truck would be on-site to ensure dust abatement during site preparation.

Intensity

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The EA considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the ROW. The proposal would result in new, reliable, cellular service to an under-served rural community. The proponent's objective is to expand existing microwave and radio network systems to support current and future operational needs across Northern Nevada. Improved services would benefit both local residents and travelers by increasing range and ease of access to these modern communications channels. It will not significantly complicate or otherwise affect the management of other nearby existing ROWs and there are no other currently proposed developments at these locations.

Adverse impacts of the proposed ROW are minimal, as described in the EA.

None of the environmental consequences discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA are considered significant.

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

The effects of the proposed action on public health and safety are considered to be positive. Locally expanded communication capabilities fostered by the proposed facilities would contribute positively to human well-being. New, project-associated communication capabilities

would initiate a variety of business, education and social opportunities presently unavailable in the project areas.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The location of the Proposed Action area was surveyed for cultural resources. Reports describing the cultural and historical resources located at the sites have been submitted to and accepted by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office. The resources have been determined ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; no further mitigation of the sites is anticipated.

The proposed action is not located near any park lands, prime or unique farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The proposed action is not expected to be controversial because it is needed to provide enhanced and upgraded, reliable communications services to a currently underserved rural community. Much of the construction would occur alongside existing ROWs, adjacent to existing disturbance and cause minimal or temporary effects.

A scoping letter providing opportunity for comments on the proposed project was mailed to those individuals and holders of adjacent rights-of-way or permits. The following comments were received during scoping:

- One comment was received from the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe with no opposition to the proposed project.

- One comment was received from Nevada Department of Wildlife in support of the proposed project with a perch mitigation suggestion.

None of these comments identified any significant new issues. The full text of the comments and the BLM's responses have been provided in an appendix in the EA.

A notice of availability of the EA was also placed on the Battle Mountain District website. The comment period ran for 15 days until May 26, 2016. No comments were received on the EA.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no known effects of the proposed action identified in the EA which are considered to be uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. Similar telecommunications facilities have been constructed previously in the Battle Mountain District and other districts throughout the BLM and the anticipated effects are well understood.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The proposed action is necessary to upgrade and support enhanced telecommunications in the surrounding rural communities. Rights-of-way for communication sites and associated equipment, such as generators and propane tanks and facilities, are common authorizations under the FLPMA.

The proposed action has been found to cause no significant effects to the environment when appropriate design features are applied and does not represent a decision in principle about future considerations. Any future actions on public lands would be analyzed on their own merits and carried out, or not, independently of the action currently proposed.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions have been considered in the Cumulative Impacts analysis in the EA (Section 4.3). The Cumulative Impacts analysis examined all of the other appropriate actions and determined that the proposed action would not have significant cumulative impacts or incrementally contribute to significant cumulative impacts.

While the proposed action is a "stand alone" action it is related to certain other current and past actions.

There are no known future actions in the area; however, for any actions that might be proposed in the future, further environmental analysis, including assessment of cumulative impacts, would be required prior to authorizing surface disturbing activities.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

There are no adverse effects on the districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there would be no indirect effects to previously-recorded sites within a one-mile buffer of the Project Area and Road Improvement Zones.

The proposed action would require appropriate mitigation of cultural resources, but no cumulative impacts to the cultural resources are expected as a result of this action. No sites or items were discovered that are NRHP-eligible within the project area. If culturally significant items are discovered, all operations within the Project Area would be suspended until the authorized officer issues a notice to proceed.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

No threatened or endangered species were surveyed at or near the Project Area.

The NDOW reported that Greater sage-grouse habitat in the Project Area consists of General habitat and that there are no at-risk species documented within the general vicinity of the Project Area (i.e., a 3.1-mile area). The NNHP reported that potential habitat may be available within the Project Area and vicinity for the following species: golden eagle, a Nevada BLM sensitive species; western jumping mouse (*Zapus princeps*), a NNHP Imperiled species; and American water shrew (*Sorex palustris*), a NNHP Imperiled species. Surface water and riparian vegetation are critical habitat components for both the western jumping mouse and the American water shrew; therefore, there is no habitat present for either species in the Project Area or vicinity.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Jon D. Sherve

Jon D. Sherve
Field Manager
Mount Lewis Field Office

6/1/2016
Date