

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
EAGLE LAKE FIELD OFFICE

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DOCUMENTATION**  
**Zanskar Geothermal Exploration Operations**  
**DOI-BLM-CA-N050-2022-0001-CX**

**Project Name:** Zanskar Geothermal Exploration Operations

**Project No.:** DOI-BLM-CA-N050-2022-0001-CX

**Project Location:** The proposed project is located within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eagle Lake Field Office (ELFO), in the Dry Valley Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Area, Wahoe County, Nevada.

**Legal Description:**

Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada  
T. 27 N., R. 19 E.,  
T. 28 N., R. 19 E.,  
T. 29 N., R. 19 E.

**Description of Proposed Action**

Zanskar Geothermal and Minerals, Inc. submitted a Notice of Intent to Conduct Oil and Gas Geophysical Exploration on September 28, 2021. Zanskar is proposing several temperature survey areas in the southwest portion of Dry Valley, in Washoe County, Nevada. Zanskar proposes to conduct a shallow 2-meter temperature survey consisting of 2.2-meter-long, hollow, steel, ½-inch diameter rods being inserted temporarily in the ground to collect temperature status and then removed the same day. There are a total of 83 testing site locations. Each testing site is proposed to be completed within one day. The proposed project would be authorized for a 6-month period. The proposed geophysical project is located within an area already disturbed by OHV use.

Access to each location would be via light duty pickup truck on existing trails and roads, with the exception of site locations detailed below in the Required Design Features. Some of the testing sites are within greater sage-grouse Habitat Management Areas (HMAs). Sites 27-30 are located in General Habitat Management Areas (GHMAs). Sites 21, 40, and 78 through 82 are located within Other Habitat Management Areas (OHMAs). None of the sites are located within Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs). See map in Appendix for site number identifiers.

Authority of this action is Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920 (30 U.S.C. 185), as amended.

**Required Design Features**

- Project locations 3, 4, 16, 24, 25, 26 and 28 will be removed from consideration due to existing resource concerns or their location on privately owned lands.
- Project locations 1 through 16 (Surprise Valley Road), 60-62, and 66-69, (Dry Valley OHV Route 28), shall be placed 15-30 meters to either side of the road, and may not be placed in any visible road or trail. The routes or nearby parallel roads/trails may be unrecorded segments of the Fort

Churchill to Fort Bidwell Military Road, which is protected from mineral explorations per 4.13.4 of the 2008 Eagle Lake Resource Management Plan (RMP).

- All other project locations shall be placed in the existing trail prism to minimize disturbance.
- Work will not occur on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022, or on September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, due to planned events taking place at the Dry Valley OHV Area.
- See map in Appendix detailing testing site restrictions.

### **Land Use Plan Conformance**

The proposed action is in conformance with the Eagle Lake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (2008) (ELFO RMP) and the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA) and Record of Decision (2015).

### **Eagle Lake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision (2008)**

#### **2.3.3.1 Goal: Leasable Minerals**

*Exploration and development of leasable energy and mineral resources would be encouraged to the extent this is compatible with the preservation and management of other resources.*

### **Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA) and Record of Decision (2015).**

#### **2.2.6 Mineral Resources**

*MD MR 6: In PHMAs and GHMAs, allow only geophysical exploration that does not crush sagebrush or create new or additional surface disturbance. Examples of technologies that may meet this requirement are drilling methods using helicopters, articulated rubber-tired vehicles that leave no trace, and vibroseis geophysical operations on roads and bladed shoulders.*

*MD MR 13: In PHMAs and GHMAs, place infrastructure in already disturbed locations to the extent feasible.*

### **National Historic Preservation Act, 1966**

As pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1966, as amended, all necessary steps have been taken by a qualified BLM staff specialist(s) to identify, record, and determine effects on cultural properties. These steps comply with the standards and guidelines of the Protocol Agreement of 2019 between California BLM State Director and the California and Nevada State Historic Preservation Officers, specifically Exemption A - Activity A1, *Ground disturbing activities which involve no more than two (2) square meters of cumulative surface disturbance and no more than one (1) square meter of contiguous disturbance in any given one (1) acre location. This does not apply to ground disturbing activities within the site boundaries of a known unevaluated, eligible, or listed National Register cultural resource.* Based on those efforts, no properties deemed eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or Traditional Cultural Properties are located within the area of potential effect.

### **NEPA Compliance**

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with H-1790-1-National Environmental Policy Act Handbook, Appendix 4, B. Oil, Gas and Geothermal Energy (6), “Approval of Notices of Intent to conduct

*geophysical exploration of oil, gas, or geothermal, pursuant to 43 CFR 3150 or 3250, when no temporary or new road construction is proposed.”*

### **Approval**

The Proposed Action has been scoped by a BLM interdisciplinary team of specialists. There are no issues or unresolved conflicts identified with the proposed action. No extraordinary circumstances that may significantly affect the human environment were identified. After review of the proposed action, review of the Departmental Categorical Exclusion authority, and review of the extraordinary circumstances (516 Department Manual, Appendix 2), I have determined the above-described project is appropriate for categorical exclusion and in conformance with the approved Eagle Lake Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision, 2008. No further NEPA analysis is required. It is my decision to implement the proposed action, as described, with the following stipulations/mitigation measures to be applied. Authority of this action is Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920, (30 U.S.C. 185), as amended.

Approved By:

Emily Ryan  
Field Manager

Date

**Contact Person:** For further information regarding this project, please contact Lindsey Moyer at [lmoyer@blm.gov](mailto:lmoyer@blm.gov) or 530-224-2121.

## Review of Extraordinary Circumstances

The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A (3) requires review of the following “extraordinary circumstances” (516 DM 2 Appendix 2) to determine if an otherwise categorically excluded action would require additional environmental analysis/documentation.

THE PROPOSED CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION ACTION WILL:	YES	NO
1) Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> It is anticipated that the temporary short-term use would not have impact to air quality and noise.		
2) Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed action will not have impacts on natural resources or geographic characteristics. The proposed area was surveyed and no significant impacts to natural, historical, or other ecologically significant or critical areas were identified. All proposed testing sites located in cultural sites eligible for the National Register were rejected, no testing is approved within eligible cultural sites.		
3) Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X
<b>Rationale:</b> There are no predicted environmental effects that would result from the proposed action that are considered to be highly controversial nor are there unresolved conflicts.		
4) Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> There are no potential significant environmental effects or risks involved with the temporary lease.		
5) Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> It is not anticipated that the activities would establish a precedent or decision for future actions that would have significant environmental effects.		
6) Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects		X
<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed action would not result in a cumulative significant effect when added to relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions in the area.		
7) Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed action does not have significant impact on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the Eagle Lake Field Office Archeologist.		

8) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Threatened or Endangered Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> There are no anticipated impacts to listed species from this project. The project area itself does not contain suitable habitat for any listed species and does not contain Critical Habitat.		
9) Violate a Federal, State, or Local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
<b>Rationale:</b> It is not anticipated that the proposed action would violate a Federal, State, Local or Tribal law.		
10) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
<b>Rationale:</b> It is not anticipated that the proposed action would result in a disproportionately high and adverse effect on said populations.		
11) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X
<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed action does not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		
12) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X
<b>Rationale:</b> The proposed action would not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, nor would it involve actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		

**Reviewers:**

Specialist	Signature	Date
Botany/Riparian/Weeds	Valda Lockie	5/4/2022
Cultural Resources	Mary Bobbitt_mb	6/3/2022
Wildlife	Melissa Nelson	4/14/2022
Soil/Water/Air	Valda Lockie	5/4/2022
Range	Christian Siemer	6/1/2022
Recreation/Wilderness	Marisa Williams	6/6/2022



# Zanskar Geothermal Sites

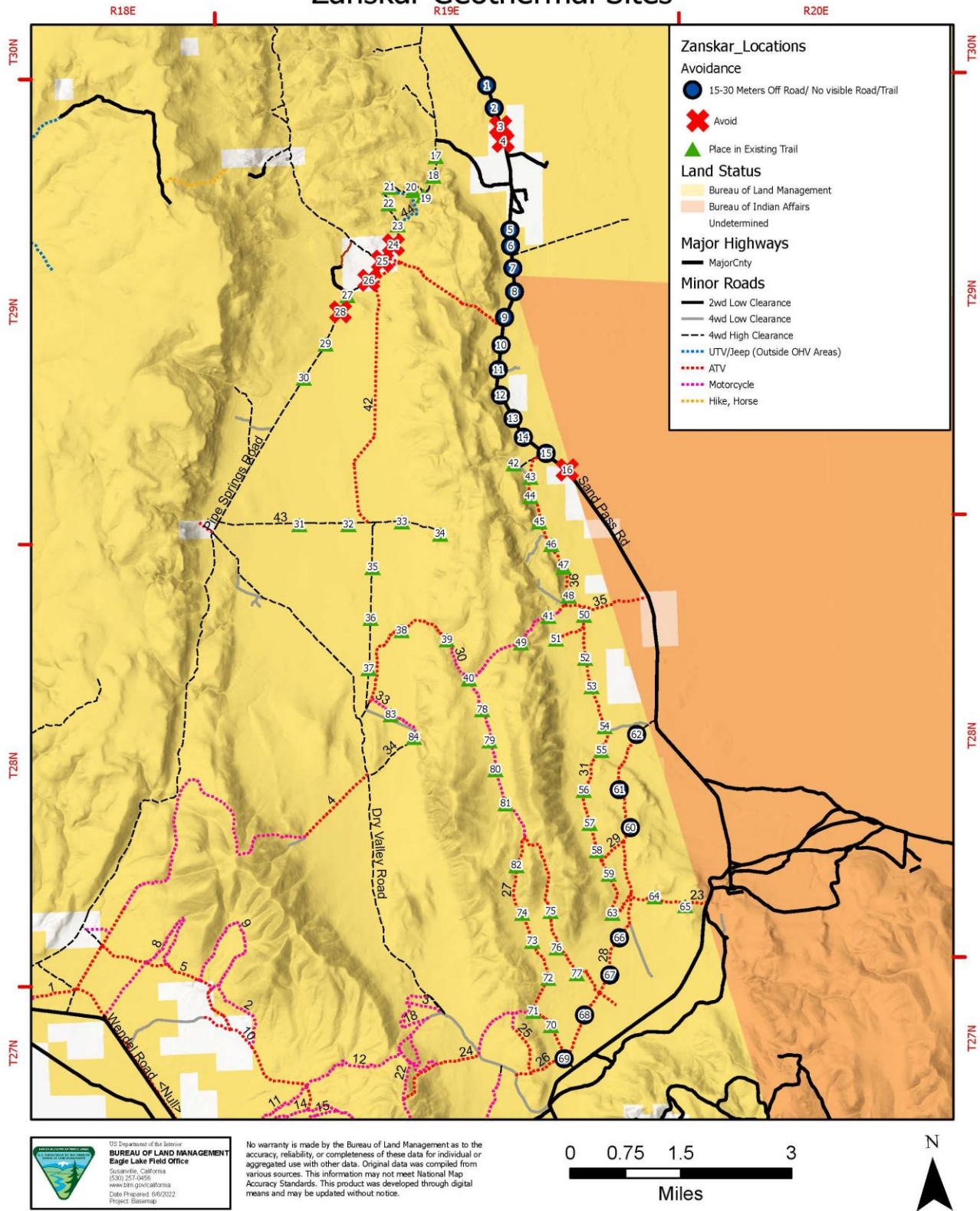


Figure 1: Map of testing site restrictions