UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Ely District
702 N. Industrial Way
Ely, Nevada 89301

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for March 2026 Ely District Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale

Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-NV-L060-2025-0016-EA

INTRODUCTION:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ely District Office (District) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), DOI-BLM-NV-L060-2025-0016-EA, to address offering 11 parcels within the Bristlecone Field Office (BFO) at the March 2026 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale. The EA Analyzed the Proposed Action and No Action alternative. Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would make 11 parcels containing 19,957.15 acres available for Lease. The No Action Alternative indicates that the BLM would not offer the 11 parcels, which are located in areas open to oil and gas leasing in the underlying Resource Management Plan (RMP). Consistent with the applicable RMP, standard terms and conditions, as well as parcel specific stipulations, are attached to the parcels as specified in the EA (EA Appendix C).

In accordance with 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 3120.32, BLM has reviewed the parcels in accordance with the Secretary's obligations to manage the public lands for multiple use and sustained yield as required to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of lands and resources. Under the No Action alternative of the EA, no parcels in the EYDO would be offered for lease at the March 2026 Sale. Consistent with the applicable RMPs, standard terms and conditions, as well as parcel specific stipulations and lease notices, are attached to the parcels as specified in the EA and Final Sale Notice.

The purpose of offering parcels for competitive oil and gas leasing within the Ely District's administrative unit is to provide opportunities for private individuals or companies to explore for and develop Federal oil and gas resources after receipt of necessary approvals.

It is the mandate of the BLM, as derived from the Mineral Leasing Act (MLA), the Mining and Minerals Policy Act, as amended, the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act (FOOGLRA), as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), as amended, to support the exploration and development of oil and gas owned by the Federal Government. All of the March 2026 Lease Sale parcels were nominated by the public. The MLA establishes that deposits of oil and gas owned by the United States are subject to disposition in the form and manner provided by the MLA under the rules and regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior, where consistent with FLPMA and other applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

BACKGROUND

The Secretary of the Interior has authority and discretion under the MLA, FOOGLRA, and FLPMA to administer oil and gas leasing and lease operations on public lands. The BLM Nevada State Office conducts regular competitive oil and gas lease sales when eligible lands are available, as described in the EA and on the BLM oil and gas leasing website.

The offering and subsequent issuance of an oil and gas lease does not result in any surface disturbance. A lease grants to the lessee the right to occupy, explore for, and develop oil and gas resources on leased lands consistent with applicable law and the lease terms, upon subsequent approval of a site-specific permit by the BLM authorized officer (43 CFR 3101-2). Such lease operations can result in surface disturbance and other impacts, as described in the EA.

If development operations are proposed for any lease, the BLM will complete additional environmental analysis before deciding whether to approve the operations and may require best management practices and other mitigation measures as conditions of approval, in order to minimize adverse effects on resources. These measures would be identified in any subsequent decision approving a development project.

Oil and gas leases are issued for a 10-year period and continue for as long thereafter as oil or gas is produced in paying quantities. If a lessee fails to produce oil and gas, does not make annual rental payments, does not comply with the terms and conditions of the lease, or relinquishes the lease, ownership of the minerals revert back to the federal government, and the lease can be resold.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT:

Based on my review of the Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-NV-L060-2025-0016) for the March 2026 Ely District Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale and supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Anticipated impacts are within the range of impacts addressed by the approved Ely District RMP and Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision; thus, the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required. This finding is based on the degree of the effects described in the following sections within the identified affected environment.

This analysis adheres to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et. Seq. and the Department of the Interior's NEPA regulations at 43 C.F.R. §§ 46.10-46.450 and Department Manual Part 516[1]. Any future proposed development of these leases,

[1] Executive Order 14154, Unleashing American Energy (Jan. 20, 2025), and a Presidential Memorandum, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity (Jan. 21, 2025), require the Department to strictly adhere to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq. Further, such Order and Memorandum repeal Executive Orders 12898 (Feb. 11, 1994) and 14096 (Apr. 21, 2023). Because Executive Orders 12898 and 14096 have been repealed, complying with such Orders is a legal impossibility. The BLM verifies that it has complied with the requirements of NEPA, including the Department's regulations and procedures implementing NEPA at 43 C.F.R. Part 46 and 516 DM 1, U.S. Department of the Interior Handbook of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures.

should they be sold and issued, would be subject to additional site-specific NEPA analysis and documentation.

The leases would include the standard lease terms and conditions for development of the surface of oil and gas leases provided in 43 CFR 3100 (BLM Form 3100-11) along with all stipulations mandated by policy (such as the Competitive Leasing Handbook, H-3120-1) and by the governing Land Use Plan. Legal land descriptions along with corresponding stipulations and lease notices added to address resource issues found through review and analysis that would be attached to each parcel are located within Appendix C of the EA. Areas offered for oil and gas leasing would be subject to measures necessary to mitigate adverse impacts, according to the categories, terms, conditions, and stipulations identified in the land use plans, as amended.

Potentially Affected Environment

The 11 oil and gas lease parcels containing approximately 19,957.15 acres are within Nye County, Nevada, in a rural setting. Activities on public lands include land use authorizations, oil and gas leasing and development, mineral material sales, mineral exploration, livestock grazing, and recreation. Certain aspects of leasing the proposed parcels, such as air resources and water resources, have state-wide and regional importance.

Resource analysis for the lease parcels uses a Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario (RFDS) that estimates surface disturbance for oil and gas projects in the EYDO. These estimates are outlined in the Ely District RMP (section 4.18-3). The RFDS does not change based on the number of parcels being offered, as it is based on historic information and anticipated activity.

The following resources/issues are present in the affected area and may be affected by the proposed action: Air Resources; Greenhouse Gases; Cultural Resources; Water Resources; Socioeconomics; BLM Sensitive Status Species; Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate species; Noxious and Invasive Weeds; and Livestock Grazing.

Degree of Effects

The following have been considered in my evaluation of the selected alternative:

i. Short- and long-term effects

The temporal scale of effects includes the 10-year period of a lease term, unless the lease is held by production, in which case the temporal scale is extended to the life of the producing well(s). If the lease parcels are developed, short-term impacts would be stabilized or mitigated rapidly (within two to five years). Long-term impacts are those that would substantially remain for more than five years.

Below is a summary of the duration of effects and associated significance of the issues:

Issues	Short-term Effects	Long-Term Effects
Air Resources and Greenhouse Gases	During the initial 30 to 60 days of oil production, well construction, and completion, air emissions are expected to temporarily increase and be localized within a short	An oil or gas well facility is projected to operate for approximately 30 years. As the construction phase of the proposed action transitions to long-term operation and maintenance activities of each facility, air emissions would be significantly less over the estimated 30-year operating period

distance from the well completion area. The construction and production phase would consist of 19 wells initially drilled with one oil or gas well put into production. The emissions during the construction phase would consist of criteria pollutants such as particulate matter (PM_{10}), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and hazardous air pollutants (HAPS). However, the owner or operator of the facilities must follow all applicable lease notices and state regulations as well as obtain all applicable state and/or federal air quality permits and install and maintain air pollution controls necessary to ensure that emissions comply with both federal and state ambient air quality standards. Furthermore, additional modeling analysis and/or COAs may be required near residences and Class I areas. For additional specific information on short-term effects on air resources, refer to Section 3.4.1 of the EA.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) quantifies reasonably foreseeable GHG emissions to assess potential effects from the proposed action. The estimated maximum annual GHG emissions over the life of the leases are projected to be approximately 0.27 percent of the onshore federal fossil fuel emissions in the state, and approximately 0.000028 percent of the total U.S. because of reduced heavy equipment use and earth-moving activities. Overall, no exceedance of state or federal air quality standards have been observed while predictive air quality computer modeling also revealed modeled pollutants below the NAAQS. Furthermore, ongoing operations at the oil or gas well sites must adhere to state and/or federal air quality permit limits, conditions, requirements, and regulations which would help ensure compliance with state and federal ambient air quality standards. Refer to Section 3.4.1 of the EA for additional information on long-term effects on air resources.

The BLM utilized the Annual 2024 GHG Specialist Report and other data to contextualize potential emissions from the lease sale against national and global emission levels, comparing them to common activities. The BLM has displayed the greenhouse gas emissions in the EA in comparison to a variety of emissions sources and metrics. There is also no scientific data in the record, including scientific data submitted during the comment period for this lease sale, nor are there are any established thresholds, tools or methods that would allow the BLM to conclude that the GHG emissions associated with this proposed action or any reasonable alternatives may result in significant environmental effects. Short and long-term effects of the Proposed Action are within the impacts analyzed in the RMP.

	emissions from oil, gas, and coal. In total, these emissions could amount to approximately 272,047 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) over the lease lifespan. For additional information on GHGs, please refer to Section 3.4.1 of the EA.	
Cultural Resources	While most of the disturbance associated with oil and gas development is expected to occur within a 30- to 60-day well construction and completion period, the BLM emphasizes the importance of ongoing consultation to protect TCPs and requires lessees to obtain an approved APD, potentially including a plan that addresses Native American religious concerns, before commencing any ground-disturbing activities. Additionally, off-lease development is anticipated to negate any potentially negative effects (EA Section 3.4.8).	As operations shift to maintenance, it is expected that concerns related to cultural and Native American resources will diminish due to the reduced use of earth-moving activities and heavy equipment. Additionally, ongoing operations at well sites will comply with tribal, state, and federal permitting requirements and regulations, ensuring adherence to legal standards. Continuous consultation and coordination will be maintained to ensure that actions do not impede or disrupt practices or locations recognized as TCPs or otherwise significant (EA Section 3.4.8).
Water Resources	While most of the water use associated with oil and gas development is expected to occur within a 30- to 60-day well construction and completion period, the effect of this use on groundwater aquifers is expected to last until recharge occurs. Due to the uncertainty about water sources and recharge rates, it is assumed that all water associated with oil and gas development is likely to be a long-term effect. Additionally, the ability for aquifer recharge may be affected by drought conditions.	Water uses associated with development of the nominated lease parcels would occur during the 30- to 60-day well construction and completion period (e.g., hydraulic fracturing), during the 20-year operation period (e.g., water use associated with dust control), and during the interim and final reclamation. Most water use occurs during the well construction and completion period, and water uses during operation and reclamation phases are negligible in comparison. Due to the uncertainty regarding water sources and recharge rates, it is assumed that all water use associated with oil and gas development may be a long-term effect but with limited extent beyond the location of withdrawal. Drilling and completion of 19 wells in the nominated lease is estimated to use approximately 168 Acre-Feet (AF) of groundwater which would be frontloaded in the first 5 years of the 20-year development scenario (consistent with the RFD time frame). The water use associated with development of the lease parcels would be

		approximately 84 AF for the first 5 years as the wells are drilled. Alternately, water use estimates could be lower if produced water is reused or recycled for use in hydraulic fracturing.
Socioeconomics	The short-term effects to socioeconomics through increased activity in oil and gas development and operations could have an impact on the demand for community services, as well as some effect on available housing and demand for goods and services within the affected county. Oil production from federal lands is subject to a 12.5% royalty payment to the federal government. Fiscal impacts could result from bonus bids, annual rent fees (for 10 years regardless of activity on a leased parcel), and royalties (if and when production occurs) (Section 3.4.2). Some of this royalty income would be allocated to the Nye County government. Temporary increases in economic activity may be beneficial with additional short-term jobs, during construction, and increased income and tax revenues.	Long-term effects to socioeconomics would be the same as short-term effects in addition to affecting the local economy with additional long-term jobs and increases in income and tax revenues.
BLM Sensitive Status Species	Short-term effects to GRSG and its habitat associated with potential development of the lease parcel includes the potential for direct mortality from infrastructure or vehicle use associated with initial development of the leases. (EA Section 3.6.3). Oil and gas development can contribute to declines in lek persistence and male attendance, yearling and adult hen survival, and nest initiation rates miles from the source of disturbance. The effects of leasing would not	All 11 parcels are in GRSG GHMA or OHMA There are no known leks within 4 miles of any parcel. The ROD prepared for the 2015 ARMPA* implemented GRSG management goals and objectives, including amending leasing categories for managing the mineral estate. Offering the parcels for competitive leasing is in conformance with the mineral decisions of the Nevada and Northeastern California and Nevada Greater Sage Grouse ROD/ARMPA (BLM, 2015). Leasing actions are specifically provided for in the planning decisions (Management Actions for Minerals Resources). Because all or a portion of these lease parcels are within GHMA, the parcels would be offered with lease notices.

	have significant short-term effects on GRSG and GHMA (General Habitat Management Area) because of the timing and spatial limitations established in the EYDO RMP stipulations (EA, Appendix C).	Oil and gas wells elicit strong avoidance response in yearling age classes, nesting/brooding hens, and wintering birds (GRSG FEIS, 2015). GRSG have continued to maintain population numbers within the lease area albeit with low lek counts and connectivity with other areas may lead to continued persistence. Lease Notices, Required Design Features, and Stipulations would be evaluated at the APD stage, which would further reduce the long-term effects associated with well development. Due to lease notices and stipulations attached to these leases, and expected disturbance relative to the lease parcels' size, significant effects to greater sage-grouse would not occur as a result of offering the parcels for competitive leasing.
Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species	Short-term effects to potential and occupied habitat for Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species from potential development of the lease parcels include potential loss of occupied or suitable habitat for the species. Based on the disturbance assumptions (EA Sections 3.4.4 and 3.4.5). Additional correlated impacts include increased fugitive dust deposition, increased competition with nonnative species, and increased fragmentation of habitat. Implementation of Lease Notices in conjunction with the Standard Lease Terms and Conditions, completion of subsequent site-specific review, and completion of site-specific Section 7 consultation (as appropriate) reduces impacts to the species and its habitat and therefore would not result in significant short-term effects on Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate species.	Long-term effects to potential and occupied habitat are similar to the short-term effects. Impacts to habitat and individuals would continue through at least at least final reclamation of lease facilities. Implementation of Lease Notices, in conjunction with the Standard Lease Terms and Conditions, completion of subsequent site-specific review, and completion of site-specific Section 7 consultation (as appropriate) reduces impacts to the species and its habitat and therefore would not result in significant long-term effects to Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate species.
Noxious and Invasive Weeds	Short-term impacts associated with noxious and invasive weeds include the potential	Long-term impacts associated with noxious and invasive weeds would be similar to the short-term impacts.

	spread of various species through increased disturbance. The 11 lease parcels (approximately 19.957.45 acres) that would be offered for competitive sale have an estimated 117.5 acres (2.1% of the total parcel acreage and 0.4% of the weed analysis area) have mapped invasive upland vegetation landcover. Following the lease sale, parcels would still be under BLM jurisdiction, and the noxious and invasive weed best management practices detailed in Appendix A of the 2008 Ely District RMP for livestock movement and the maintenance of unpaved roads would still apply.	
Livestock Grazing	Short-term impacts to livestock grazing include the removal or limiting the use of available forage in those grazing allotments. Table 3-11 in the EA shows that this could represent between 0.5 and 12 percent of the total area of each of the affected grazing allotments. It is important to note that the entirety of the lease parcel area is not likely to be developed under the reasonably foreseeable future development scenarios for oil and gas but the extent of potential development is currently unknown.	The long-term impacts to livestock grazing are similar to the short term. However, they differ as the combination of RFFAs (Section 3.3) in combination with any past and present actions would further alter the amount of land and forage available for grazing, alter vegetation composition, and adjust the overall grazing management within these allotments.

* Citation for the 2015 GRSG ARMPA:
https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/lup/103343/143706/176907/2015_Great_Basin_GRSG_ROD_ARMPA.pdf.

ii. Beneficial and adverse effects

Effects of oil and gas leasing and future exploration and development may be beneficial when considering the revenues for the State of Nevada (49% is retained to the state), opportunity for improved or added infrastructure (powerlines, pipelines, roads), and jobs to the local communities where the parcels are located. Oil and gas leasing and subsequent development could result in adverse effects when considering the associated surface disturbance and resource use, including sand and gravel use (road building), water use (drilling), air quality degradation and emissions (travel on roads, equipment operation, and drilling), and burden on local community resources (housing, power, restaurants, fuel, and food).

The stipulations and lease notices (EA, Appendix C) provide adequate protection for all site-specific resources of concern that were identified including scoping comments, public comments, and input from various agencies and organizations. None of the environmental effects, including reasonably foreseeable, associated with offering the proposed lease parcels for sale, approach significance when considering the effects to the potentially affected environment. Nor do the effects, both beneficial and/or adverse, exceed those described in the applicable approved RMP and/or the Final Environmental Impact Statement or Records of Decision.

iii. Effects on public health and safety

None of the action alternatives authorize lease occupancy or surface use. The proposed action alternative, through the imposition of lease stipulations and standard lease terms, will minimize impacts including public health and safety. Upon receipt of an APD, the BLM will review the proposed location and could, within the extent consistent with lease rights granted, modify the siting of the location by 800 meters consistent with 43 C.F.R. § 3101.12. The BLM would then initiate a site-specific NEPA analysis that considers reasonably foreseeable effects of a specific action including consideration of necessary state or local government issued permits.

In all potential exploration and development scenarios, the BLM will require the use of best management practices (BMPs) documented in "Surface Operating Standards and Guidelines for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development" (USDI and USDA 2007), also known as the "Gold Book,", which encourages safe and efficient operations while minimizing impacts to the environment. The Gold Book provides operators with a combination of guidance and standard procedures for ensuring compliance with agency policies and operating requirements, such as those found in 43 C.F.R. § 3160, 43 C.F.R. § 3170, and notices to lessees.

The BLM may also require or recommend site specific Conditions of Approval (COAs) at the APD stage, based on site-specific environmental review. Reasonable measures that may be considered include restricting the rate or intensity of development to minimize impacts to other resource values, land uses, or users not addressed in the lease stipulations at the time operations are proposed (43 C.F.R. § 3101.12). In addition to BLM, local, State, and other Federal agencies regulate oil and gas exploration and drilling operations to protect health and safety.

iv. Economic effects

The BLM anticipates that future development resulting from this lease sale will yield economic benefits, primarily through job creation, state revenue generation (49% is retained to the state), opportunity for improved or added infrastructure (powerlines, pipelines, roads), and increased local spending. The EA focuses on economic metrics, including output, employment, and revenue. Leasing these parcels may facilitate exploration and subsequent development, fostering employment opportunities in sectors such as drilling, construction, and associated support services. Even small-scale lease sales are expected to stimulate local economies through direct and indirect economic activity.

Revenues generated from lease sales, including bonus bids, rental payments, and royalties on production, will contribute to federal and state coffers. These funds support public services and infrastructure, bolstering federal, state, and local budgets. However, the EA notes that not all leased parcels will proceed to development, thereby limiting potential impacts on economic vitality and public services. To address potential environmental impacts, such as localized land disturbance from drilling, the BLM has incorporated protective stipulations to safeguard natural resources. These measures ensure minimal disruption to other economic sectors, including agriculture and recreation.

In comparison to the comprehensive economic analyses presented in the Ely District Approved RMP and FEIS (BLM, 2008), the incremental economic contributions from this lease sale are minor and remain within the scope of previously analyzed impacts. The temporary nature of exploration activities and the limited geographic scope further mitigate the significance of economic effects, ensuring they are unlikely to substantially alter long-term economic trends or place undue strain on public services in Nevada.

v. Effects on the quality of life of the American people.

The BLM has been permitting and managing oil and gas development in the BFO planning area since its inception and, accordingly, has extensive experience implementing oil and gas development and assessing and disclosing correlated environmental effects on the human environment. Moreover, oil and gas exploration and development have been, and continue to be, studied and regulated for health and safety through multiple agencies, including federal, state, and local governments. In addition, the projected potential effects on the quality of the human environment owing to oil and gas leasing and development have been analyzed and disclosed in the 2008 Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan, as amended (BLM, 2008), as well as this Lease Sale EA (DOI-BLM-NV-L060-2025-0016-EA).

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Authorized Officer Robbie Purdie-Williams District Manager, Ely	Date

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