



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

News Release

Twin Falls District

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Bureau of Land Management releases proposed plan to protect cultural resources in and around the American Falls Archaeological District in Idaho

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — To protect nationally-significant Tribal and cultural resources dating back thousands of years, the Bureau of Land Management Burley Field Office is proposing to close the American Falls Archaeological District (Archaeological District) and a portion of the Lake Channel area to rock climbing and off-highway vehicle use in southern Idaho.

Under the proposal, the area would remain open for compatible recreation uses, including big game and waterfowl hunting, fishing, horseback riding, camping and hiking. More than 300 routes are available to rock climbers on adjacent state lands and public lands in the Lake Channel area. Off-road enthusiasts will also retain motorized opportunities on public lands immediately north of the Archaeological District.

Increased use of the Archaeological District and Lake Channel area for bolted rock climbing and off-highway vehicle use during the last few decades has caused significant damage to cultural resource sites. In the early 2000s, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes asserted and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer agreed that this violated the Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

Working with partners and cooperating agencies that include the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes, the Bureau of Reclamation, Power County, the former Twin Falls District Resource Advisory Council, local and national climbing organizations and others, the BLM considered five alternatives to balance recreational use with resource protection. The BLM's Cedar Fields Proposed Plan Amendment and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Monument Resource Management Plan aligns with the Department of the Interior priority of strengthening government-to-government relationships with sovereign Tribal nations. This analysis honors the federal trust responsibility to the Shoshone-Bannock and Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to protect cultural and sacred values on public lands.

“For more than 12,000 years, the Shoshone, Bannock and Paiute peoples occupied these lands, and the significance of the Archaeological District to these Tribes cannot be overstated,” said **BLM Twin Falls District Manager Mike Courtney**. “We appreciate the public comments we received on the draft proposal that refined our approach to balance protection of cultural and sacred values with compatible recreation uses.”

The Shoshone, Bannock and Paiute peoples used this area as a winter campsite for thousands of years, leaving a long archaeological record that became the basis for the area's listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999. The BLM initiated the environmental analysis in 2011 to update the Monument Resource Management Plan to reduce impacts of increasing recreation use on the area's significant cultural resources.

Protests may be filed by any person who previously participated in the planning process and who has an interest that will or might be adversely affected by approval of the planning decisions. Protests must be postmarked or

electronically submitted on the BLM's ePlanning site by Nov. 25. For further information on filing a protest, please visit: <https://on.doi.gov/3z0Cnig>.

Copies of the proposed plan and environmental analysis are available at the BLM Burley Field Office and the ePlanning project website: <https://bit.ly/3CLwuXe>.

Before including your address, phone number, email address or other personal identifying information in your protest, you should be aware that your entire protest— including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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