



**TRANSPORTATION NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Material Site PE 81-11 Expansion
Lovelock, Pershing County, NV
I-80 Milepost PE 12.1**

PURPOSE OF NOTICE: The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze a proposal to expand an existing material source site (PE 81-11) from 180 to 260 acres on BLM administered lands. This action is a right-of-way (ROW) application from the FHWA to the BLM.

The existing NDOT material site (PE 81-11, CC020789 and NEV063980) is located approximately two miles southwest of Lovelock, in Pershing County, Nevada. The existing material site intersects westbound I-80 at milepost PE 12.1. The proposed 80-acre expansion is adjacent to the west side of the existing 180-acre material site. This material site has been used extensively over the past ten years for highway construction and maintenance projects. The east side of the highway will remain undisturbed.

WHY: This proposed action would expand an existing material source site to provide materials for the construction and maintenance of highways in the area. The additional 80 acres is needed for riprap, base, borrow, and plantmix bituminous surface material.

Material source sites are necessary for the construction and long-term maintenance of highways. These sites are generally located on lands under the jurisdiction of BLM. The BLM is responsible for determining whether this action is a legitimate use of public lands, as authorized under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, or other Public Land Acts, while preventing undue and unnecessary degradation to the land.

WHERE YOU COME IN: You are invited to review and comment on the EA. You may request a copy of the EA from the Environmental Services Division, Nevada Department of Transportation, 1263 South Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89712, 775-888-7013 or you may view an electronic copy of it at:

http://www.nevadadot.com/pub_involvement/meetings/documents/MaterialPit_PE81_11Extension_EA.pdf.

Your comments can be submitted for the public record through 5 p.m. **July 16, 2010**. You may email your comments to info@dot.state.nv.us with a reference to this project in the subject line or fax it to 775-888-7104, or you may mail your comments to Steve M. Cooke, P.E., Chief Environmental Services Division, Nevada Department of Transportation, 1263 South Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89712.

CONTACT: For general project information, Lori Bellis, Environmental Services Division, Nevada Department of Transportation, 1263 S. Stewart Street, Carson City, NV 89712, (775) 888-7035, lbellis@dot.state.nv.us.

NOTE: Reasonable efforts will be made to assist and accommodate individuals with disabilities desiring to review and comment on the EA. Requests for these services should be made to Julie Maxey, Nevada Department of Transportation, Public Hearings Officer at (775) 888-7171.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Material Site PE 81-11 Expansion

Lovelock, Pershing County Nevada
I-80 milepost PE 12.1



Proposed 80-acre Material Site Expansion

Lead Agency:
Federal Highway Administration

Cooperating Agency:
Bureau of Land Management

Preparing Agency:
Nevada Dept. of Transportation

May 2010

Material Site PE 81-11 Expansion
Granite Point area in Lovelock Valley
Pershing County Nevada
I-80 milepost PE 12.1

Proposed 80-acre Material Site Expansion

Proposed 80-acre Expansion:
E $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18
in T.26N., R.31E., M.D.B.&M.

Existing 180-acre Site:
CC020789 is in the
N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18
in T.26N., R.31E., M.D.B.&M.
NEV063980 is in the
NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18
in T.26N., R.31E., M.D.B.&M.

The entire 260-acre site as proposed
E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$
of Section 18,
all in T.26N., R31E M.D.B.&M

Prepared by:
Lori Bellis, Environmental Scientist
Environmental Services Division, NDOT
As a representative for the
Federal Highway Administration
1263 South Stewart Street, Room 104
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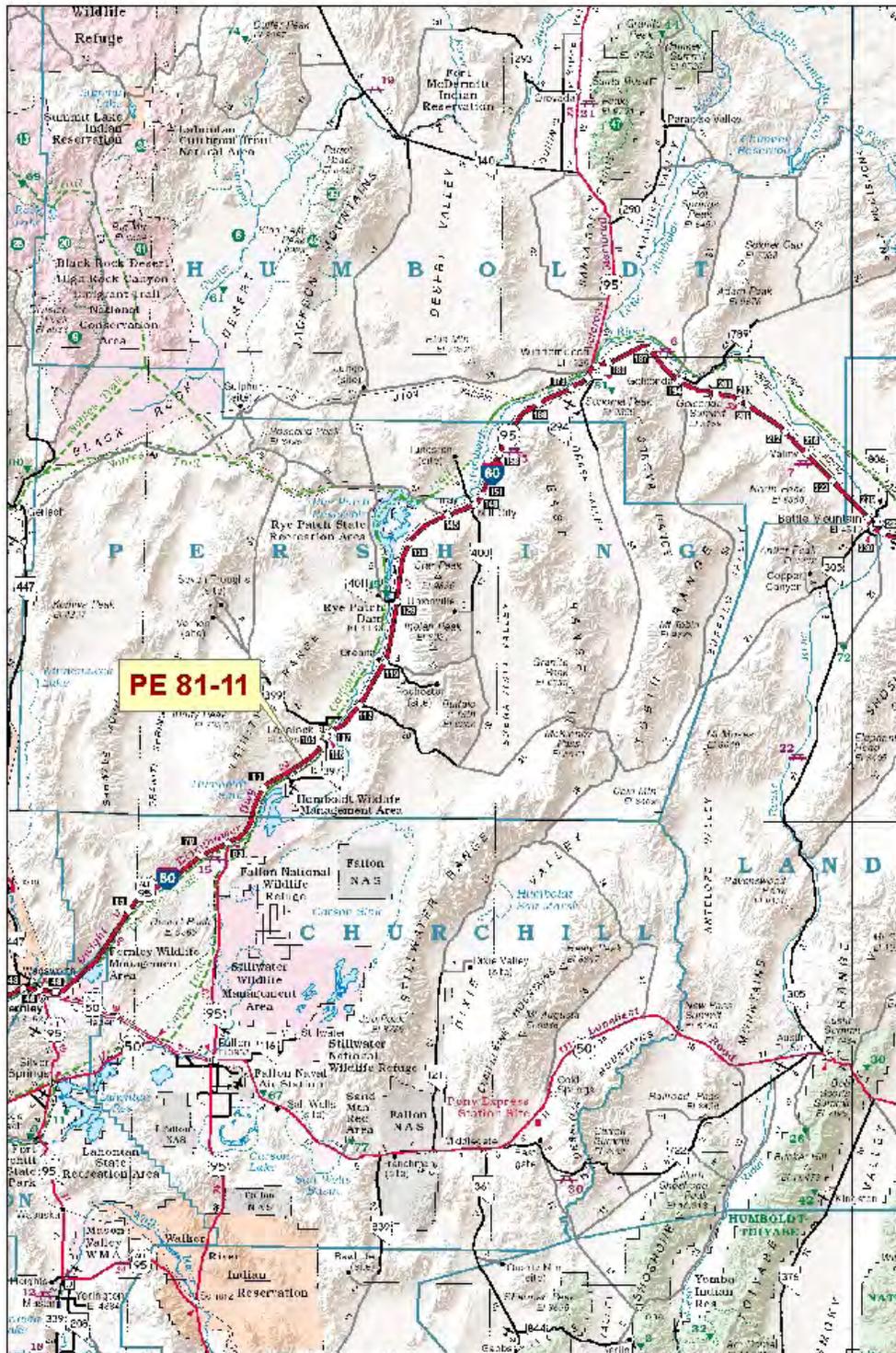
BLM Office Review:
Winnemucca District
Humboldt River Field Office
5100 E. Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, NV 89445
775-623-1500
Field Manager: Bob Edwards

May 2010

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Project Location



1. INTRODUCTION

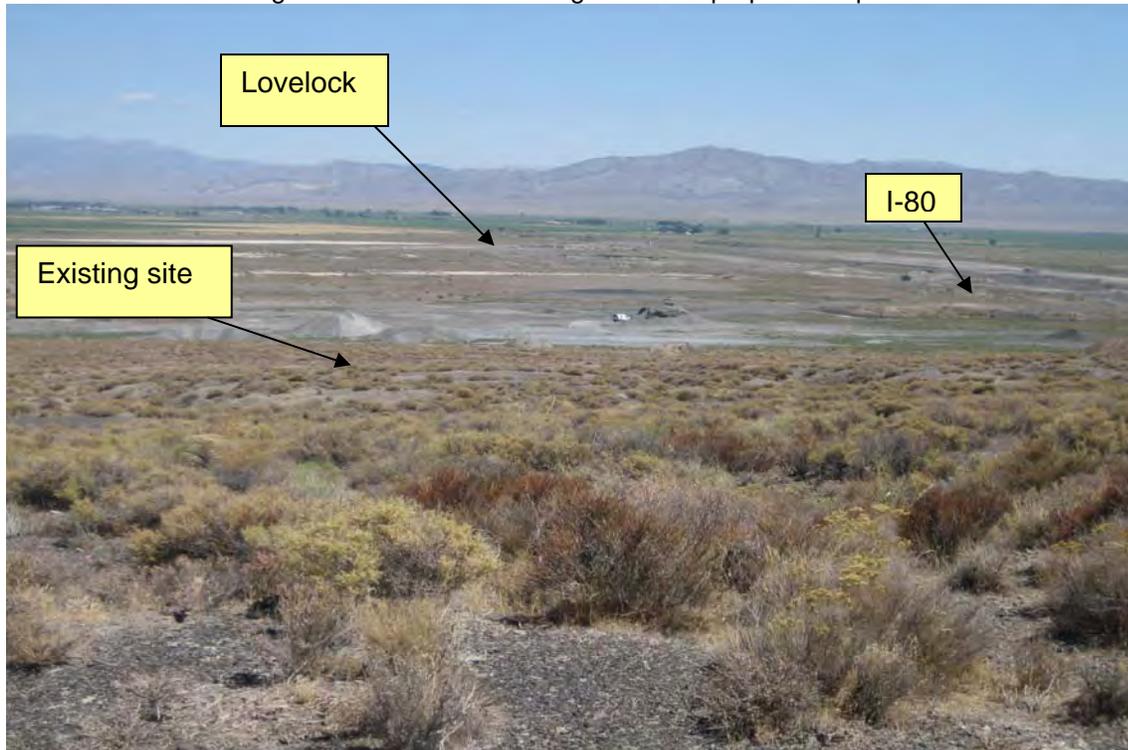
1.1. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this proposed action is to expand a material source site from 180 to 260-acres to provide riprap, borrow, base, and shoulder materials for the construction and maintenance of I-80 and other federal-aid state-maintained highways near Lovelock, Nevada. Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) geologists indicate suitable material is available on this proposed 80-acre site is near I-80 at milepost PE 12.1. This proposed expansion is to the west of an existing 180-acre material site (CC020789 and NEV063980). The expansion is needed to provide material for federal-aid highway construction and maintenance projects.

1.2 CONFORMANCE AND COMPLIANCE

This Environmental Assessment is an evaluation of the potential environmental consequences of the proposed action. It is prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and complies with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), November 2007, between NDOT, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The proposed action is in conformance with the 1982 Sonoma Gerlach Management Framework Plan (MFP). Objective M-3 of the Sonoma-Gerlach MFP states, "Provide sand, gravel and other mineral materials as needed for construction purposes to federal, state, local government, private industries, and individuals."

General view of existing material site in the background and proposed expansion area in the foreground.



2. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to acquire the rights to expand an existing NDOT material site (PE 81-11, CC020789 and NEV063980) located approximately two miles southwest of Lovelock, in Pershing County, Nevada. This site will be used to obtain material for multiple highway construction and maintenance projects funded from State and Federal monies over the next 20 years. The primary site users are NDOT contracted construction companies performing highway construction and maintenance projects in the vicinity. NDOT maintenance crews obtaining material for highway maintenance are secondary site users. Site occupancy is usually from three to twelve months, but can be longer for large projects. Site dormancy can be from one week to three years or longer between projects. An NDOT Resident Engineer oversees the specific highway project the material site is used for and is responsible for making sure the contractor meets all requirements for material site use. NDOT maintenance crews generally utilize stockpiled material every year.

The existing material site intersects westbound I-80 at milepost PE 12.1. This proposed 80-acre expansion is adjacent to the west side of the existing 180-acre material site. The site has been used extensively over the past ten years for highway construction and maintenance projects. The east side of the highway will remain undisturbed.

Development of the site will result in surface and subsurface disturbance, including vegetation clearing, test hole drilling and backfilling, material extraction through excavation and blasting, and a variety of processing activities. Materials suitable for producing plantmix bituminous products, borrow, base aggregates, concrete aggregates, riprap and shouldering material will be excavated, crushed, sorted, stockpiled, processed, and transported from the site to the project area. Highway project material type requirements will determine the specific location within the material site where excavation will occur. As an area is exhausted of usable material, it will be re-contoured and re-vegetated. Over time, the entire site, excluding any avoidance areas, could be subject to disturbance.

The material site corner boundaries will be surveyed and staked with permanent metal boundary markers. The boundary lines between the permanent corner markers will be surveyed and staked with temporary markers (wooden stakes approximately 3 feet high) prior to site use for each specific project. These temporary markers will be clearly visible and within site distance of each other. They will remain in place until the specific project is completed and removed when the contractor vacates the site.

All surface disturbances will be confined to the specific area needed for extraction, processing, and stockpiling of the aggregate materials. Topsoil and overburden will be stockpiled separately and stabilized for use in reclamation of the site. Overburden will be removed to the minimum depth necessary for the production of acceptable aggregate and only in the amount needed for production of the required quantity of aggregate material.

The aggregate material will be crushed to a size and gradation that is acceptable for its intended purpose. If a crusher is used, it will be set within the site boundaries. Material is fed into the crusher by earthmoving equipment. Material screened during the crushing operation will

be stockpiled adjacent to the source area. Rejected material will also be stockpiled, with stockpiles kept relatively close together.

Material stockpiles will be placed a minimum of 100-feet away from concentrated flows of storm water and drainage channels. Non-active material stockpiles (not moved for longer than 21 days) will be covered or protected to stabilize the soil and control sediment using a temporary perimeter sediment control barrier (silt fence, berm, straw wattles, etc.). Active stockpiles will be protected with a temporary sediment control barrier installed prior to the onset of predicted precipitation. Operations will be conducted to avoid the accumulation of standing water within the project area.

If hot mix or concrete plants for mixing asphalt materials or concrete are to be established at the site, they will be set adjacent to the stockpiles. These plants, when used, will be fed by large earthmoving equipment from the stockpiles and the resultant asphalt or concrete mix will be hauled in trucks to the highway construction site for use. All truck transport activity is restricted to existing access roads. Access to this proposed expansion area is through the existing material site.

Based on contractor needs, a water well may be drilled onsite. The contractor is responsible for Nevada Division of Water Resources (NDWR) notification and for retaining a Nevada licensed driller to properly install and abandon the well pursuant to NAC 534. Wells drilled on a material source site are temporary, supplying water for project use for the duration of the project only. Water use is project related and project specific. In general, water is pumped into a lined holding pond or above ground tank. It is used to fill water trucks for dust control; crushing and milling operations; hot plant processing; and other project related activities. The well is capped and abandoned when the project is completed.

The contractor is responsible for furnishing power to the site. Usually on-site generators are used to power the plant rather than electrical power on new power poles. Several mobile trailers may be located on-site to accommodate office and testing facilities for the project. If the contractor chooses to use this location to set up the crusher and hot plant, scales must also be installed. No permanent residences or structures will be set up on the site.

Solid waste (e.g. asphalt and concrete) will be removed and disposed of in accordance with applicable laws or regulations. Reportable quantity releases of all hazardous or regulated materials will be reported to federal and state authorities as required by 40 CFR 302.6 as well as NDOT Environmental Services Division. Resultant impacted material will be remediated and/or disposed of in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements.

Vegetation removal will be conducted to conform with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to avoid impacts to listed migratory birds (50 CFR 10.13) that may be actively utilizing vegetation for nesting. If vegetation removal occurs during avian breeding season (April 15 through July 31), the project areas will be surveyed for the presence of nests. If active nests are located, the area surrounding the nest, including a buffer zone based on the nesting bird species requirements, will be flagged and avoided until the birds fledge.

Measures to minimize site use visibility will be incorporated into the site use stipulations, including using neutral, non-obtrusive colors like tan, brown, white or gray for structures; using water for dust abatement; and not using reflective metals. Between uses and when this site is

no longer needed, the area shall be contoured and seeded with native vegetation to minimize visual impacts, blending the site in with its surroundings.

Any contractor choosing to utilize the site must comply with existing Federal and State air quality regulations. Prior to engaging in surface disturbance at the site, contractors will be required to obtain and pay for required permitting. If the contractor plans to operate material-processing plants at the site, such as those for production of concrete, hot-mix asphalt, or any crushing, screening, or conveyance of raw material, then the contractor will be required to obtain and pay for the appropriate stationary-source air quality permit for these material-processing plants as well. The contractor will be required to implement those Best Management Practices (BMPs) for control of fugitive dust, as specified in the permit. After the contractor completes a project, they will be required to stabilize disturbed areas of the site according to those BMPs specified in the permit.

Temporary erosion control measures will be implemented on the site and for the haul road, addressing both fugitive dust abatement and water pollution controls. These measures may include using chemical palliatives and water. Water will be used in accordance with all applicable State of Nevada and Federal regulations and, if necessary, approval from the appropriate water rights owner must be obtained by the contractor.

Storm water discharges from this site are permitted by NDEP under the General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activity (Permit No. NVR050000) defined at 40 CFR § 122.26(b)(14). This permit covers borrow activities. Contractors utilizing this site will obtain coverage under NDEP's General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity (Permit No. NVR100000) for the project the material will be used for. The permit will cover any temporary concrete, asphalt, and material plants or operations associated with this material site. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan is required to address specific storm water controls for the project, including material site use.

Plant surveys will be conducted prior to site use to determine if sensitive plant species have colonized the site. If populations of sensitive plant species are found, the BLM botanist will be consulted, avoidance areas will be established, and a monitoring plan implemented.

Noxious weed surveys will be conducted prior to site use. If noxious weeds or other invasive species deemed detrimental by BLM are found, a BLM Weed Specialist will be consulted and an appropriate treatment plan developed and implemented. Control standards and measures will comply with applicable State and federal regulations. Weed treatments may include the use of herbicides, and only those herbicides approved for use on public lands by the BLM will be evaluated for use.

If noxious weeds are present on the site, an NDOT biologist will notify the contractor of weed type, location, and treatment options. Contractors using the site will be required to submit a Noxious Weed Management Plan to NDOT Environmental Services via the Resident Engineer prior to occupying the site. The plan will include weeds to be controlled along with appropriate eradication/control methods based on weed type, location, and applicator certification. Monitoring will be conducted throughout the life of the project and retreatment completed as necessary. The plan will also include methods for keeping equipment, personnel, staging areas, construction and excavation sites, and roadways clear of noxious weed plants and seeds. Equipment leaving noxious weed infested areas shall be cleaned prior to moving to another location. Equipment coming into or leaving the project area shall be cleaned and the cleaning

area kept clear of plant material and contaminated dirt to prevent weed spread. The plan shall also address the treatment of weeds in topsoil salvage material. Materials used for erosion control and re-vegetation must be certified weed-free.

NDOT staff will inspect the site while in use to assure best management practices are being followed to prevent weed infestations on to the site and that the Noxious Weed Management Plan is being followed.

During excavation, if any historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources are discovered, operations with the potential to affect the resources will cease immediately and the discovered materials and surrounding area will be protected. NDOT archaeologists will investigate the site, assess the significance of those resources, contact BLM, and determine the best course of action.

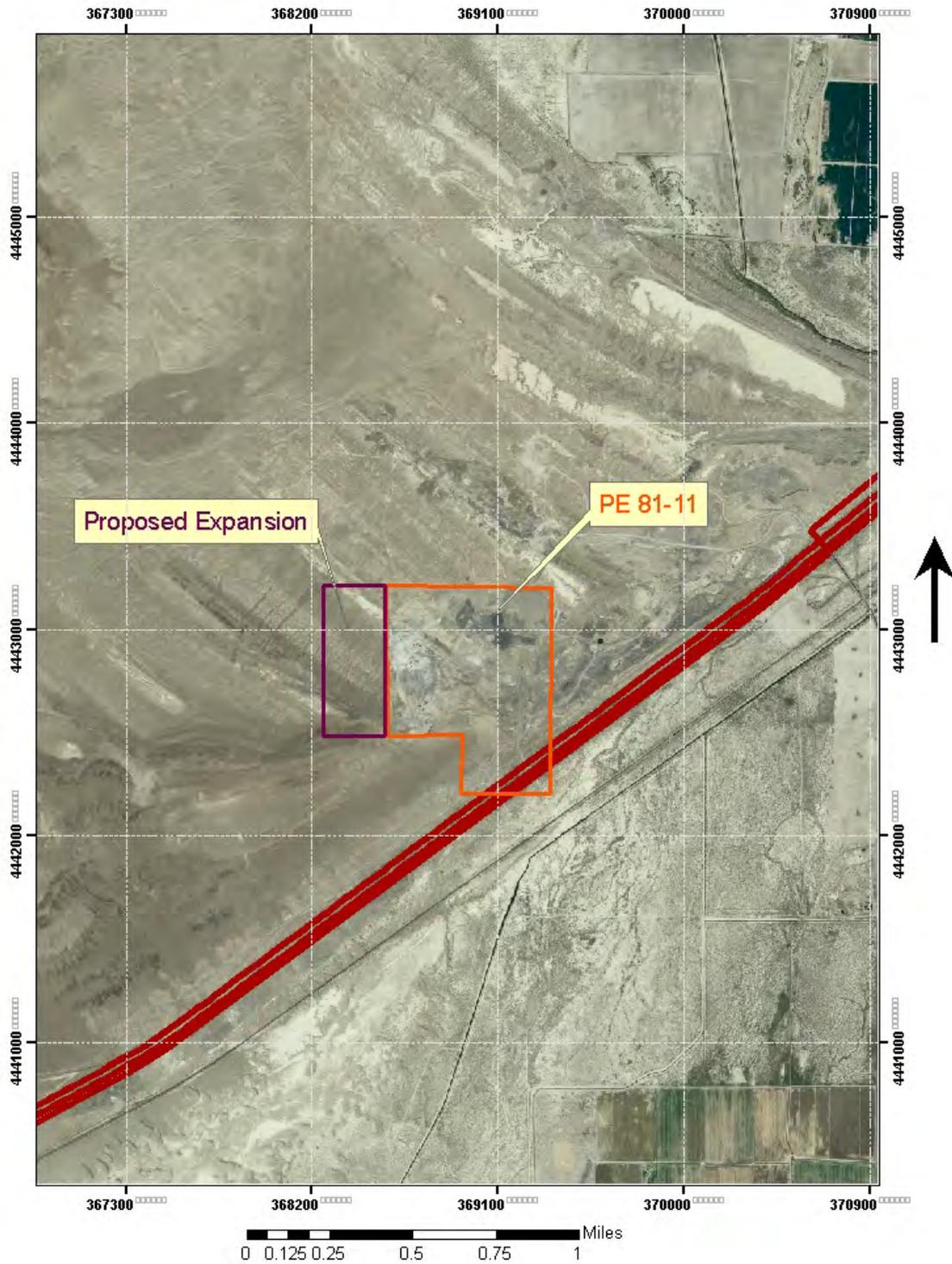
All state and federal safety standards will be followed. In keeping with NDOT policy, all environmental requirements resulting from this assessment will be stipulated in the contract documents. The site will not be accessible to the general public during active use. The site will be inspected annually during non-active use to assure it is not being used for illegal dumping. If public access creates a safety or environmental hazard, NDOT will consult will BLM to determine the best course of action to remedy the situation.

Upon project completion, any disturbance created will be restored to NDOT/BLM standards. All ancillary equipment will be removed from the site. With the exception of topsoil stockpiles and solid waste, all stockpiles remaining after operations cease will be used to backfill the site unless arrangements are made to retain these materials on the site or move them to another site for use on another public project. All slopes will be contoured to a 3:1 (H:V) ratio or to pre-construction conditions and stabilized unless the slopes are subject to special stipulations. Site reclamation will conform to the topography of the natural land formations of the area. After re-contouring and stabilization have been completed, stockpiled topsoil will be spread uniformly over the area of disturbance and reseeded with a BLM approved seed mix. Reclamation is considered complete when re-vegetation is successful.

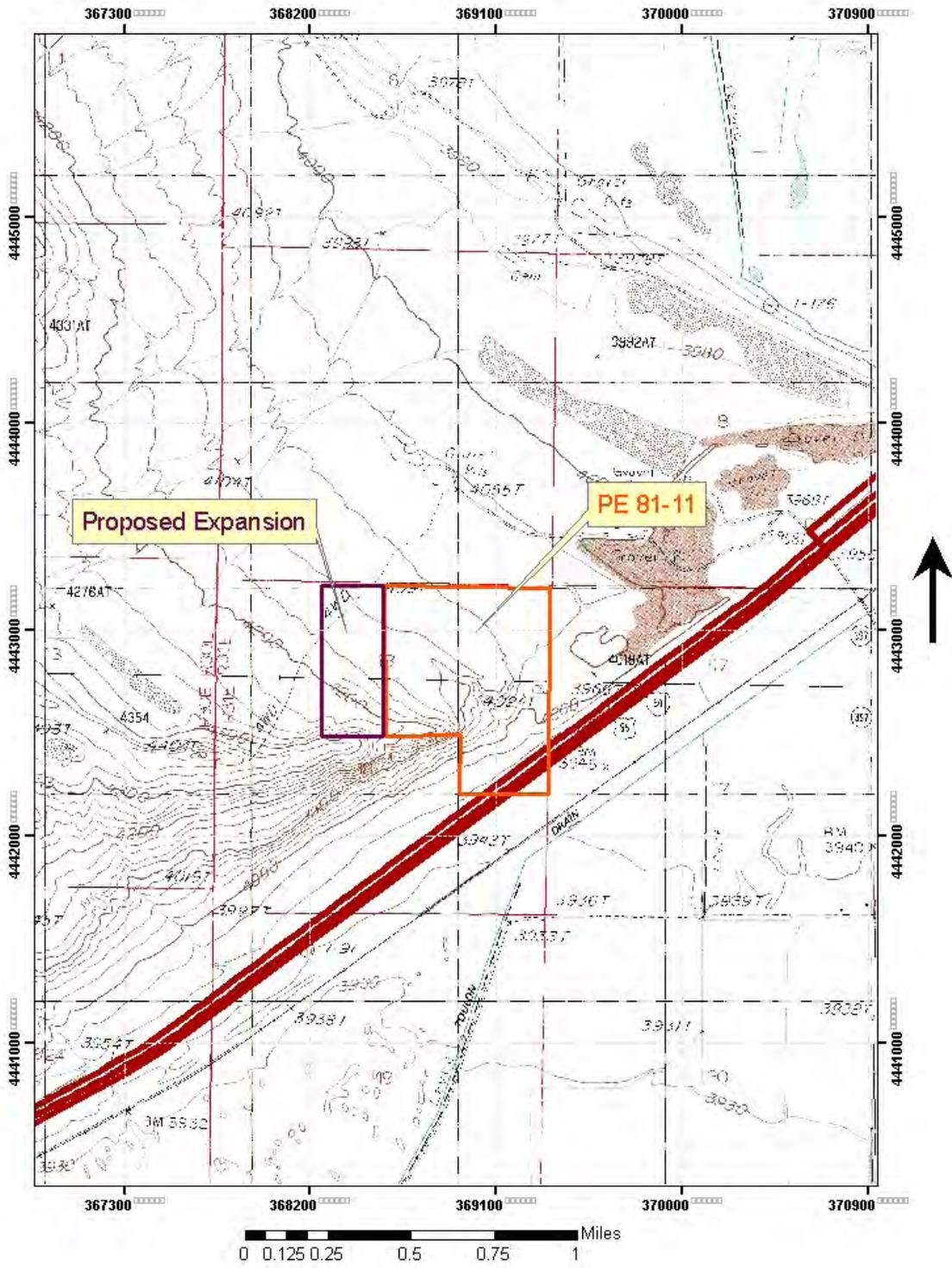
View from existing site looking southwest toward the proposed expansion.



PE 81-11 along I-80 at PE 12.1



PE 81-11 along I-80 at PE 12.1



2.2 No Action Alternative

The existing material site will be exhausted of material and will not be expanded. Since this is the most productive NDOT material site in the area, this action may impact the Department's ability to meet road construction and maintenance project objectives in the area. Highway construction and maintenance requires a material source, which means obtaining material at an existing site, creating a new site, or not performing highway construction and maintenance activities.

2.3 Other Alternatives

Material site PE 81-01 (CC022486) is adjacent to this site to the east (see map of project area on page 12), and does not contain material suitable for highway construction. The material in this site is primarily sand, which is adequate for shoulder material only.

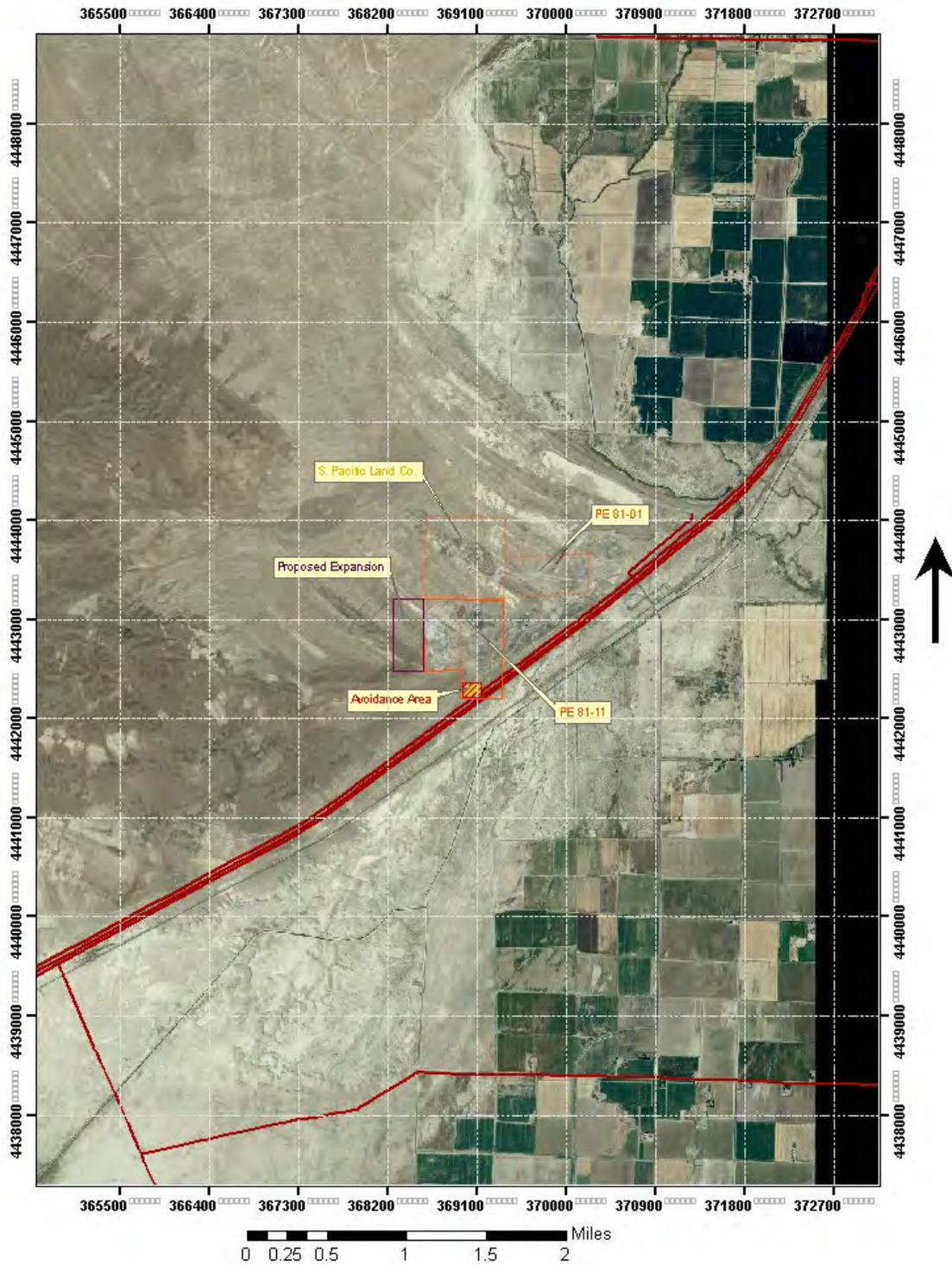
Creating a new material source site in an undeveloped area was not considered since this alternative increases rather than reduces environmental impacts through additional non-contiguous land disturbance and habitat fragmentation.

Table 1 lists the areas of potential impact identified during field reviews and scoping conducted by NDOT and BLM in 2008 and 2009.

Table 1 - Affected Environment

	<u>Present</u>		<u>Affected</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Air Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biological Resources				
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Threatened or Endangered Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife, including Migratory Birds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wild Horse & Burro	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Grazing/Range	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Forestry & Vegetation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive Species, inc Noxious Weeds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetlands & Riparian Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wild & Scenic Rivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wilderness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Native American Concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Land Use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Noise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Social & Economic including Environmental Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visual Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Project Area



3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The site is located along the western edge of the lower Lovelock Valley on Quaternary alluvium in the Trinity Range foothills approximately two miles south of Lovelock, Nevada. The proposed 80-acre expansion is located in the E $\frac{1}{2}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18 in T.26N., R.31E., M.D.B.&M., in Pershing County. The existing 180-acre site is comprised of two grants: CC020789 in the N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18 in T.26N., R.31E., and NEV063980 in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18 in T.26N., R.31E., M.D.B.&M. The entire 260-acre site as proposed would be the E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18, all in T.26N., R31E M.D.B.&M. Site elevation ranges from 4,000 to 4,200 feet.

View from mid-point within the proposed expansion area looking northwest.



3.1 AIR QUALITY

The site is in the Lovelock Valley Hydrographic Basin (HA) 73, within the Humboldt River Basin. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) categorizes HA73 as *unclassifiable/attainment* for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) criteria pollutants (i.e., CO, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, and O₃; and also NO₂, and SO₂). Therefore, transportation conformity requirements do not apply. The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) has authority to enforce air quality regulations and permit air contaminant emission sources at the site.

3.2 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The site does not contain threatened or endangered species, a wild and scenic river, wetlands, streams, creeks, ponds, or riparian areas.

3.2.1 Wildlife including Migratory Birds. Evidence of the following species was encountered during field surveys: pronghorn, black-tailed jackrabbits, coyote, raven, lizards, and small rodent and reptile burrows.

Migratory bird protection responsibilities are defined in the Executive Order issued January 11, 2001 under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and subsequent amendments (16 U.S.C. 703-711). Breeding season is generally April 15th - July 31th for most species in this BLM management area. BLM designated Sensitive Species that may be in the project area are loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). The Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan identifies the following migratory bird species associated with Salt Desert Scrub: loggerhead shrike and burrowing owl.

No burrowing owls or potential burrowing owl burrows were found on site. The site does not have potential sage grouse or pygmy rabbit habitat. Granite Point, two miles to the south, has cliff areas associated with raptor nesting sites. Consequently, raptors, including golden eagles and prairie falcons, may use this area for foraging. Shrub and ground nesting birds may use the site for forage, cover, and nesting.

3.2.2 Forestry & Vegetation. The site lies within the Lahontan Salt Shrub Basin of the Central Basin and Range ecoregion. The existing site was surveyed in August 2008 and February 2009. The vegetation is sparse, primarily low-growing salt desert shrubs indicative of very low annual precipitation and high summer temperatures. Shadscale (*Atriplex confertifolia*) and low greasewood (*Scarcobatus baileyi*) are the dominant shrub species. Associate vegetation includes budsage (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), *Ephedra nevadensis*, spotted dalea (*Psorothamnus polydenius*), broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), princesplume (*Stanleya pinnata*), turtleback (*Psathyrotes ramosissima*), globemallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), *Eriogonum brachypodum*, wire lettuce (*Stephanomeria exigua*), *Halogeton glomeratus*, and cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*).

3.2.3 Noxious Weeds. The proposed expansion area, existing site, and roadside do not contain noxious weeds.

3.2.4 Grazing/Range. Two permittees graze sheep seasonally in the Ragged Top allotment in the higher elevation rangelands northwest of the proposed site. This action does not affect grazing operations.

3.3 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The existing material site has a cultural resource an avoidance area in the S ½ of the NW ¼ of the NE ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 18, T.26N, R.31E, M.D.M. within application CC020789. This avoidance area would not be affected by the proposed expansion. No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated.

A BLM Class III cultural resource survey of this proposed material site extension was conducted in June 2008. An isolated artifact and a rock ring absent of artifacts were found during this survey. Neither meet National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility; therefore, no historic properties are affected (36CFR800.44 (d) (1)). Survey results are documented in NDOT report PE08-002P (BLM report No. CRR 2-3007) which was submitted to the Winnemucca District BLM Office for review.

3.4 NATIVE AMERICAN CONCERNS

The Lovelock Paiute Tribe was consulted by NDOT Native American Consultation Coordinator, Sabra Gilbert-Young. A tribal consultation letter was sent to the Lovelock Tribe on October 13, 2009. Numerous follow-up phone calls were made and e-mails sent to Victor Mann, Tribal Chairman for the Lovelock Tribe. Chairman Mann expressed a concern about the land ownership status of the project area. He believed the project was located on Tribal allotment lands. A map confirming the public ownership of the land was sent to Chairman Mann. No other concerns were identified by Chairman Mann.

No known traditional cultural properties, sacred sites or other areas of concern would be impacted by this proposed action.

3.5 RECREATION

The proposed expansion will not affect existing travel routes.

3.6 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

The site is in an area used extensively for material source operations. Lovelock is approximately two miles to the northeast. The adjacent land is checkerboard public and private land ownership. Highway maintenance and construction projects can bring construction employment opportunities to the area. These projects also generate revenue for local businesses.

During construction, truck traffic increases between the material site and the project site.

3.7 SOILS

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey classifies the site within the Mazuma-Swinger-Toulon association (702). The landform is a lake terrace east sloping alluvial fan, well-drained, with a typical profile of very gravelly loam. The area includes welded and non-welded silicic ash flow tuffs of possible Tertiary date; ash flow tuffs and tuffaceous

sedimentaries; Jurassic/Triassic shales, mudstones, siltstones and carbonates with sparse volcanics and various granitics.

3.8 VISUAL RESOURCES

The site is within a BLM Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class III area and is not visible to motorists traveling on I-80. The BLM VRM Class III guidelines are to “partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract the attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer.” This proposed action is acceptable under the area’s Class III category. Disturbance will not occur on the ridgetop or on steep slope visible from I-80.

3.9 LAND USE

The area is managed by BLM as multi-use. No mining claims occur in the proposed project area. The site is not within or adjacent to an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a wild horse management area, wilderness or wilderness study area. This proposed action is within the scope of acceptable land use activities.

3.10 WATER QUALITY

The site is located in the Lovelock Valley hydrographic basin (HA 73) within the Central Region River Basin Region in Pershing County, Nevada. No lakes, streams, springs or other surface waters occur within the material site boundary or in the vicinity.

The Nevada Division of Water Resources well log database was searched to obtain static water levels to determine the average site depth to ground water. A well log record for a well drilled in 1990 in Basin 73 within T26N R31E Section 17 indicated a static water level of 51 ft. with a total depth of 88 ft. Material site operations do not adversely impact surface or groundwater. Ground water has not been intercepted from past excavations, consequently; the existing pits do not act as conduits for potential ground water contamination.

Storm water discharges from this site are permitted by NDEP under the General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Industrial Activity (Permit No. NVR050000) defined at 40 CFR § 122.26(b)(14). This permit covers borrow activities. Contractors utilizing this site will obtain coverage under NDEP’s General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity (Permit No. NVR100000) for the project the material will be used for. The permit will cover any temporary concrete, asphalt, and material plants or operations associated with this material site. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be required to address specific storm water controls for the project, including material site use.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section evaluates the areas of potential impact indicated on Table 1 – Affected Environment (page 11).

4.1 AIR QUALITY

Excavation and processing of raw material and its transport off-site can impact the local air quality since those activities have the potential to generate air contaminants. Localized and short-term increases in emissions of fugitive dust and carbon monoxide are anticipated from activities at the site. However, these would be temporary and would not cause long-term adverse effects.

4.2 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

4.2.1 Wildlife, including Migratory Birds. The greatest direct effect from this proposal is to mammalian and reptilian species with low mobility. Soil disturbance and excavation destroys animal burrows, injuring or killing trapped animals. Mobile animals would be displaced by the excavation activities, resulting in loss of cover, forage, and travel routes.

Loss of potential nesting, roosting, and foraging areas may impact resident and migratory birds. Ground clearing activities during avian breeding season (April 15 to July 31) would have the highest potential impact to nesting birds. Direct impacts to migratory birds are expected to be minimal since the nearest riparian area is several miles away along the Humboldt River drainage in the valley bottom. Direct effects to wildlife from habitat removal and disturbance include population reduction from loss of individuals through direct death and harassment which can reduce reproduction potential.

Indirect effects of the dust, noise and vibration caused by construction activities may cause terrestrial and avian species to abandon adjacent habitat they currently use for forage, cover, and nesting. During material site use, operations could cause resident and migratory animals to avoid the area, altering their movement patterns into unfamiliar territory, which could increase their risk of exposure to injury or predators.

Cumulative effects of habitat fragmentation from all types of ground disturbing activities reduces the area available to wildlife, restricts or alters their movement, and can expose animals to higher risks of death, injury, and illness.

4.2.2 Forestry and Vegetation. The site contains native salt desert scrub vegetation, which will be removed as site excavation occurs. Vegetation removal contributes to soil erosion, particularly when combined with excavation activities which change the landform topography. An excavated area can affect adjacent land by altering the flow of storm water, removing vegetation, creating gullies and rills down slopes. As discussed above, another indirect effect of vegetation removal is reduction and fragmentation of habitat for wildlife use.

The cumulative effect of vegetation removal from excavation activities is the permanent alteration of landform and the potential to permanently alter vegetation type. Reclamation activities will be conducted to create landforms as consistent with the surrounding environment

as possible and to re-establish native vegetation, however, the site will not return to its original condition. Native vegetation from adjacent land will eventually re-colonize the site.

4.2.3 Invasive Species, including Noxious Weeds. Disturbance of native soils and vegetation allows opportunistic noxious weed species to invade. If these species are not controlled, they may prevent reestablishment of native species in the disturbed areas in addition to moving into undisturbed areas and out-competing the native vegetation. The likelihood of a noxious weed invasion increases if noxious weeds are present on adjacent sites or if seeds are transported from an invaded area to a disturbed area by equipment or soil movement.

The cumulative effects of land disturbance are loss of native vegetation to bare ground, which creates a niche for invasive species establishment. In Nevada, cheat grass and Russian thistle, both annual invasive species, readily colonize disturbed sites. These species are more fire-prone than native perennial grasses and shrubs, increasing fire frequency and intensity. Generally, invasive species do not provide adequate forage or cover for wildlife, rendering the area unusable wildlife habitat. Since invasive species spread easily, their establishment along disturbed areas like roadways and cleared areas can also increase the likelihood of weed infestations spreading along into undisturbed lands.

4.3 SOILS

Eighty acres of land may be disturbed by this proposed action. The removal and stockpiling of topsoil exposes the underlying parent material and increases the likelihood of erosion from storm water runoff. Excavation and extraction activities permanently alter the soil structure and landform.

The cumulative effects of material removal are alterations in soil composition. The removal of vegetation reduces decomposition and nutrient cycling in the soil. Once the underlying gravel is exposed and excavated, reclamation is more difficult because plant establishment is more difficult and the opportunity for erosion is greater.

4.4 OVERALL IMPACTS

Statewide, as with most mining activities, the development of material sites contributes to the cumulative degradation of Nevada ecosystems. The cumulative long-term negative impact resulting from this project is a larger surface area of disturbance in an arid environment where restoration efforts have met with limited success due to low precipitation, poor soil growing conditions, and the spread of invasive species (cheat grass and Russian thistle) which promote more frequent fire cycles.

An indirect cumulative effect of material sites is accessibility which can lead to illegal dumping. Illegal dumping has a detrimental visual and physical effect on the environment, can become a safety hazard, and is costly to clean up.

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