

Request for Comments Scoping

NRCS Schell Creek Range SNOTEL Sites USDA Forest Service – Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Ely Ranger District July 15, 2010

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DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BUDGET AND PLANNING DIVISION

Project description

Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) proposes to install three SNOTEL (SNOW TELEmetry) sites in the Schell Creek Range. Two of the SNOTEL sites would be on existing NRCS snow courses in the Kalamazoo and Bird Creek areas. The third would be on Cave Mountain. The installation of the SNOTEL sites would allow NRCS to collect data on snow water equivalent, snow depth, precipitation, air temperature, soil moisture and soil temperature. This data would be used to help forecast water supplies.

SNOTEL sites include instrument shelters measuring 4'x4'x8'x 8' at Kalamazoo and Bird Creeks and 4'x4'x8'x12' at Cave Mountain. Each site will also include a snow pillow, pillow pad and fence measuring 30 ft. in diameter, a precipitation gage measuring 2'x2'x12', and a meteorological instrument tower measuring 1'x1'x20'. All measurements are approximates.

NRCS currently has two SNOTEL sites in the Ely, NV area. One is in the Berry Creek area of the Schell Creek Ranger and one in the Ward Mountain area of the Egan Range.

Project location

The Project is in the Schell Creek Mountain Range East of Ely, Nevada. One site is in the Kalamazoo area in Section 35, T. 20 N., R. 65 E. Mt. Diablo Meridian, one site in the Bird Creek area in Section 3 T. 18 N., R. 64 E. Mt. Diablo Meridian, and one site on Cave Mountain in Section 18 T. 15 N., R. 65 E. Mt. Diablo Meridian.

Why this location?

The site locations were chosen based on elevation and additional hydroclimatic variables.

The decision to be made

The decision to be made is whether or not to issue a Special Use Permit to NRCS for the installation and maintenance of three SNOTEL sites in the Schell Creek Range.

What we have learned so far

- The sites will be near the High Schells Wilderness area.
- One site is near the Bird Creek Campground.
- A 25 ft. diameter area would have to be level and clear of vegetation to install the SNOTEL site.

How we will figure out what to do

We will use these issues, the comments we receive from you and the results of archeological, vegetation and wildlife on-site surveys to determine the possible effects (positive and negative) of allowing construction of these SNOTEL sites.

How you can help us decide what to do

We ask that you think about this proposal and let us know what you think. This comment/scoping period provides those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to any decision being made. Comments for this scoping period will be accepted through July 30, 2010.

We want to hear from you ...

If you would like more information on this proposal or would like to submit a comment write or call:

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Public involvement in the NEPA process is essential. Scoping is performed as one of the first steps to receive input from interested individuals, organizations and government agencies including federal, state, and local agencies. We invite you to submit written comments stating your concerns and issues that are relevant to the proposed project. Comments received in response to this scoping document and from personal contacts will be considered during the analysis of this project.