

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Travis Farm Land Sale

DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2012-0018-EA

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Carson City District
Stillwater Field Office
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, NV 89701
775-885-6000

March, 2012



It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2012-0018-EA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1.0 INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE & NEED.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION.....	4
1.3 LAND USE CONFORMANCE STATEMENT.....	5
1.4 RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND PLANS	5
1.5 SCOPING ISSUES	6
2.0 PROPOSED ACTION /ALTERNATIVES	6
2.1 PROPOSED ACTION.....	6
2.2 ALTERNATIVES.....	7
2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE.....	7
3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	7
3.1 SCOPING AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION.....	7
3.2 PROPOSED ACTION.....	8
3.3 SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES.....	8
3.4 RESOURCES OR USES OTHER THAN SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES	9
3.5 RESOURCES PRESENT AND BROUGHT FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS.....	10
3.5.1 ROWs/Lands	10
3.5.2 SOILS	11
3.5.3 VEGETATION	11
3.5.4 LIVESTOCK GRAZING	12
3.5.5 INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES	12
3.5.6 VISUAL RESOURCES	13
3.5.7 WILDLIFE.....	13
3.5.8 WATER QUALITY	14
3.6 ALTERNATIVES.....	14
3.7 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE	14
3.8 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS	14
3.9 MONITORING.....	14
4.0 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED.....	15
4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS.....	15
4.2 PERSONS, GROUPS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED	16
5.0 REFERENCES	16
6.0 APPENDICES.....	17

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 3.1	8
Table 3.2	10

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1 Current and proposed land.....	2
Figure 2 Project location.....	3

ACRONYM LIST

AUM	Animal Unit Month
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
Chambers	Chambers Group, Inc.
CRMP	Carson City Consolidated Resource Management Plan
DOI	Department of Interior
\$	dollars (US)
EA	Environmental Assessment
° F	degrees Fahrenheit
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
Hwy. 50	United States Highway 50
Inc.	Incorporated
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MDB&M	Mount Diablo Base and Meridian
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Act
NORA	Notice of Realty Action
NRS	Nevada Revised Statutes
SFO	Stillwater Field Office
U.S.C	United States Code

1.0 INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE & NEED

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Travis Farm's Proposed Action is to purchase 800 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land that is adjacent to its operations within the Edwards Creek Valley, Churchill County, Nevada (Proposed Action). The area is within the Stillwater Field Office (SFO) of the BLM, located at Carson City, Nevada.

Travis Farm began the process to purchase land in Edwards Creek Valley from the BLM in 2004 and has had numerous meetings and correspondence regarding the potential sale during the intervening years. In April of 2009 BLM agreed to proceed with the proposed sale. Travis Farm agreed to hire consultants to prepare the environmental reports and an Environmental Assessment (EA) which are needed for such a federal action.

Travis Farm currently farms hay and various rotational crops on approximately 640 acres adjacent to the land they would like to purchase. They also hold sufficient water rights to farm up to an additional 640 acres. The BLM suggested that Travis Farm purchase an additional 160 acres to consolidate the existing Travis Farm properties in order to prevent fragmented land ownership and land management challenges.

A detail map showing the existing farm in relation to the Proposed Action is shown in Figure 1. An overview map showing the location of the Proposed Action is shown in Figure 2.

The BLM Stillwater Field Office manages public land that has been identified for disposal in the BLM Carson City Consolidated Resource Management Plan (CRMP); page LND-3 C (BLM, 2001). The Subject Parcels are two such public land parcels which total approximately 800 acres and are located in the eastern end of Edwards Creek Valley, Churchill County, Nevada, approximately 30 miles west of the town of Austin, Nevada. The Subject Parcels are within the Mount Diablo Meridian (MDM), T. 21 N., R. 39 E., secs. 2, 3, 10, and 14.

This EA considers the quality of the natural environment based on the physical impacts to public and private lands that may result from implementation of the Proposed Action. Moreover, it analyzes and discloses the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed sale. The sale of public land will be administered by the SFO.

The BLM proposes the sale of the Subject Parcels in response to Travis Farm, the current farmer on the adjacent private property. The Subject Parcels would be sold directly to Travis Farm to provide expansion of the current farm for hay, rotation crop pivot irrigation farming, and to reduce BLM management responsibilities. Regulations contained in 43 CFR 2711.3-3 make allowances for direct sales when a competitive sale is inappropriate and when the public interest would best be served by a direct sale. BLM regulations require the land to be sold at not less than fair market value, which will be determined by a BLM arranged and approved appraisal. The BLM may elect to sell less than the total acreage analyzed in this EA.

Figure 1 Current and proposed land

Figure 2 Project location

If portions of the Subject Parcels do not meet the criteria for sale because they have been identified as having important environmental, biological, or cultural resources, or other public values that could be negatively impacted by the disposal of the public lands, then they would be retained by the BLM.

Other reasons for retaining the parcels in public ownership include:

- Credible objections from the public as well as other public agencies;
- No interested buyers in the parcels;
- Other proposed uses of the resource; and
- Conflicts with county planning.

The proposal is made under the authority of Section 203 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (43 United States Code [USC] 1701, 1713, 1740).

These activities, and their approval by the BLM pursuant to FLPMA, constitute a federal action subject to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This EA is not a decision document, but analyzes the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts from the Proposed Action and alternatives to that action. This EA has been prepared by Chambers Group, Inc., (Chambers), for the BLM SFO to meet the requirements of the NEPA. Preparation has been in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500 et. seq.), BLM guidelines for land use planning in BLM Handbook H-1601-1, BLM guidelines for implementing NEPA in BLM Handbook H-1790-1, and the BLM-Carson City District NEPA Compliance Handbook. The BLM Handbook provides instructions for compliance with the CEQ regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the NEPA and the Department of Interior's (DOI) Department Manual on NEPA (516 DM 1-7).

This EA is a site-specific analysis of potential impacts that could result with the implementation of the proposed action, no action alternative, and other alternatives if needed. The EA assists the BLM SFO during project planning, ensuring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and in making a determination as to whether any "significant" impacts could result from the analyzed actions. "Significance" is defined by NEPA and is found in Chapter 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §§1508.27. An EA provides evidence for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a statement of "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI). Should a determination be made that implementation of the proposed actions would not result in "significant environmental impacts", a FONSI will be prepared to document that determination, and a Decision Record issued providing the rationale for approving the chosen alternative.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to dispose of land that is not cost effective for expansion for agricultural potential in Edwards Creek Valley, in accordance with, Sections 203 and 209 of the FLPMA (90 Stat. 2750, 43 USC 1713 and 1719). The need for the

Proposed Action is to consolidate land that is difficult to manage through transfer from federal ownership. In order to address the purpose and need, the BLM would sell both parcels totaling 800 acres of federal land [43 CFR 2710.0-6].

1.3 LAND USE CONFORMANCE STATEMENT

The Proposed Action and the alternative described in this EA are in conformance with the Carson City CRMP, page LND-3, Management Action/Decision and to the maximum extent possible, are consistent with federal, state and local laws, regulations, and plans. The Subject Parcels were identified for disposal in the CRMP, which is available for review at the Stillwater Field Office located at 5665 Morgan Mill Road, Carson City, Nevada, 89701.

1.4 RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER STATUTES, REGULATIONS, AND PLANS

The Proposed Action would be conducted under the authority of FLPMA. The FLPMA sections authorizing the disposal of public lands through direct sale relative to the Proposed Action are as follows:

- FLPMA Section 203(a) (3) allows disposal through direct sale of public land if it will serve a public benefit. Disposal through direct sale of the Subject Parcels would serve the public benefit by making public lands available for community expansion and private economic development, increasing the potential for economic diversity, and adding to the municipal tax base, thereby adding revenue to the community for services such as schools and roads.
- FLPMA 203(d) requires that public lands be sold at no less than fair market value. The Subject Parcels would be appraised by a BLM approved appraiser to determine their fair market value.
- FLPMA 203(f) describes the allowable methods of sale. The public lands would be sold using the direct sale method as described by federal regulations at 43 CFR 2711.3-3.

When compatible with local government plans, federal lands should be made available for state, local government, and private uses. The FLPMA is the authority for the sale and Title 43 CFR § 2711.3-3 is the regulatory reference that describes how direct sales are conducted.

Relationships to other statutes, regulations, and plans are:

- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470aa to 470ll
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.
- Clean Air Act of 1970, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7401 et. seq.
- Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 1251 et. seq.
- Council on Environmental Quality, Title 40 CFR, part 1500

Any water used on the described lands should be provided by an established utility or under permit issued by the Division of Water Resources, State Engineer's Office. All waters of the state belong to the public and may be appropriated for beneficial use pursuant to the provisions of Chapters 533 and 534 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS).

1.5 SCOPING ISSUES

A Notice of Realty Action (NORA) announcing the proposed sale was published in the Federal Register on August 23, 2010, followed by publication in local newspapers. This notice also segregated the land for a two year period from appropriation under the public land laws and the mining laws.

Announcement of the proposed sale was presented at the October 7, 2010, Churchill County Board of Commissioners meeting. This provided the Board of Commissioners the opportunity to review the Proposed Action and allowed the board and the public to provide comments regarding the proposed sale (Churchill County Board of Commissioners agenda, 2010).

If a Finding of No Significant Impacts from the Proposed Action is warranted, a second NORA must be published in the Federal Register and local newspapers. The second NORA states the appraised value for the two parcels and the instructions that will be used to conduct the sale.

After completion of an internal administrative review, a 30 day comment period would be provided to gather public comments regarding the Proposed Action. In addition, the EA would be submitted to the Nevada Department of Administration (State Clearing House) for internal review by state agencies. Any relevant comments would be incorporated into the revised EA.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION /ALTERNATIVES

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

This EA analyzes the proposed purchase of approximately 800 acres of land under the jurisdiction of the BLM by Travis Farm in order to increase the production of hay and other rotational crops. Travis Farm currently owns and farms land adjacent to the Subject Parcels. The Subject Parcels consist of a northern and southern parcel. The northern parcel is legally described as the MDM, T. 21 N., R. 39 E., sec. 2, SW $\frac{1}{4}$; sec. 3, SE $\frac{1}{4}$; and sec. 10, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, containing approximately 480 acres. The southern parcel is legally described as the MDM, T. 21 N., R. 39 E., sec. 14, W $\frac{1}{2}$, containing approximately 320 acres (Figure 1). Travis Farm began discussions with the BLM SFO regarding the purchase of approximately 200 acres of land in 2004. In the intervening years Travis Farm requested the total acreage of the sale to increase to approximately 640 acres upon increased availability of irrigation water at the site. The BLM suggested that the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of sec. 14 (approximately 160 acres) be added to the Proposed Action.

Travis Farm uses pivot irrigation farming. The fields are farmed on a 6 year rotational schedule with 5 years of hay development and one year of a rotational crop, such as

triticale or other grain type crop. The Proposed Action would provide enough acreage to add four additional pivots and would potentially double the production of the farm while providing a more efficient use of existing resources (personal communication, Travis Farm, 2010).

The only anticipated structures to be placed in the foreseeable future on the Subject Parcels would be pivot irrigation infrastructure and fencing. Travis Farm would develop pivot irrigation farms on the northern parcel in its entirety. On the southern parcel, sec. 14, NW¼, would also have pivot irrigation, while the SW¼ would remain undeveloped in the foreseeable future (Figure 1). Any wells to supply the new pivots would be drilled on the existing property. The Subject Parcels would be entirely enclosed with fencing similar to the existing farm fencing (4 wires attached to 1 wooden post every 75 feet and 5 steel posts in between the wooden posts) (personal communication, Travis Farm, 2010).

2.2 ALTERNATIVES

The proposed sale of public land to Travis Farm has been in discussion since 2004. During this time the amount of land to be transferred from the BLM to Travis Farm has ranged from 200 to 800 acres. Variance in the amount of the acreage to be transferred could have provided one or more alternatives; however, the affected environment and potential impacts would be essentially the same. This analysis will only address the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

2.3 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No Action Alternative would be the retention of the proposed sale acres in public ownership. There would be no development of the land by Travis Farm, thus, no agricultural or economic expansion. The currently farmed parcels would continue to be in a fractured ownership pattern and the BLM would continue to manage the Subject Parcels.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This chapter identifies and describes the current condition and trend of elements or resources in the human environment which may be affected by the Proposed Action or Alternatives.

3.1 SCOPING AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

A NORA announcing the proposed sale was published in the Federal Register on August 23, 2010, followed by publication in local newspapers. This notice also segregated the land for a two year period from appropriation under the public land laws and the mining laws.

Announcement of the proposed sale was presented at the October 7, 2010, Churchill County Board of Commissioners meeting. This provided the Board of Commissioners the opportunity to review the Proposed Action and allowed the board and the public to provide comments regarding the proposed sale (Churchill County Board of Commissioners agenda, 2010)

If a Finding of No Significant Impacts from the Proposed Action is warranted, a second NORA must be published in the Federal Register and local newspapers. The second NORA will state the appraised value for the two parcels and the instructions that will be used to conduct the sale.

After completion of an internal administrative review, a 30 day comment period will be provided to gather public comments regarding the Proposed Action. In addition, the EA would be submitted to the Nevada Department of Administration (State Clearing House) for internal review by state agencies. Any relevant comments would be incorporated into the revised EA.

3.2 PROPOSED ACTION

General Setting

The Subject Parcels are located in the Edwards Creek Valley, southeast of the Shoshone Pass, Churchill County, Nevada. They are at the head of the valley that is defined on the west and north by the Clan Alpine Mountains and on the east by the New Pass Range. Elevation for the site ranges from 5,180 feet to 5,240 feet. The Subject Parcels are sparsely vegetated with high desert scrub brush. Annual precipitation is 8 to 9 inches annually, mainly from snowfall, although seasonal thunderstorms are not uncommon. Temperatures in the area can range from an average low of 10° F (degrees Fahrenheit) in winter to a range of 90 to 100° F in summer (Chambers Group, Inc., 2010a).

3.3 SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES

Appendix 1 of BLM's NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1) identifies Supplemental Authorities that are subject to requirements specified by statute or executive order and must be considered in all BLM environmental documents. The table below lists the Supplemental Authorities and their status in the project area. Supplemental Authorities that may be affected by the Proposed Action are further described in this EA.

Table 3.1

Supplemental Authority	Not Present *	Present/ Not Affected *	Present/ May Be Affected**	Rational and/or Section Found
Air Quality		X		Any additional impacts to the air quality will be insignificant to the existing air quality.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	X			None.
BLM Sensitive Species		X		Because of historic fire and drought that has led to large areas of cheatgrass, halogeton, and Russian thistle invasion, the plant communities associated with the Proposed Action contain very little vegetation to support viable BLM sensitive species populations.
Cultural Resources		X		A Class III cultural resource inventory was conducted (CRR3-2507P); results were two isolated artifacts. Per the <i>State Protocol Agreement between the Bureau of Land Management, Nevada and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office for Implementing the National Historic Preservation Act</i> ,

				2009, Appendix E. A., No Properties.
Environmental Justice	X			The only residence located within the affected area is the farm owner. No other residence will be affected.
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	X			The Subject Parcels are currently undeveloped. There is no record of prior use as farm land.
Floodplains	X			The Subject Parcels are above the 100 year floodplain.
General Wildlife		X		Carried forward for analysis.
Invasive, Nonnative Species			X	Carried forward for analysis.
Migratory Birds		X		Because of historic fire and drought that has led to large areas of cheatgrass, halogeton, and Russian thistle invasion, the plant communities associated with the Proposed Action contain very little vegetation to support viable migratory bird populations.
Native American Religious Concerns	X			Tribal consultation was conducted with the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe (correspondence 11/10/09, 5/28/10 and 9/7/10; face to face 2/24/10). No concerns were brought forward, however, in the event that human remains are discovered the Tribe will be contacted per NRS 383.170 (see appendix D).
Threatened or Endangered Species	X			After consulting with the BLM wildlife biologist and the USFWS website for Nevada, there are no federally listed threatened or endangered species within the project area (http://www.fws.gov/nevada/protected_species/species_by_county.html)
Visual Resources		X		Carried forward for analysis.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid		X		Phase I report identified a nonhazardous material dump site within the northern tract.
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)		X		Carried forward for analysis.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	X			None present on or near parcels.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X			None.
Wilderness	X			None.

**Supplemental Authorities determined to be Not Present or Present/Not Affected need not be carried forward or discussed further in the document.*

***Supplemental Authorities determined to be Present/May Be Affected must be carried forward in the document.*

3.4 RESOURCES OR USES OTHER THAN SUPPLEMENTAL AUTHORITIES

The following resources or uses, which are not Supplemental Authorities as defined by BLM's Handbook H-1790-1, are present in the area. BLM specialists have evaluated the potential impact of the Proposed Action on these resources and documented their findings in the table below. Resources or uses that may be affected by the Proposed Action are further described in this EA. Some resources that are present and not affected are discussed further in the EA for clarification purposes.

Table 3.2

Resource or Uses	Not Present*	Present/ Not Affected*	Present/ May Be Affected**	Rational and/or Section Found
Visual Resources		X		Carried forward in EA.
BLM Sensitive Species		X		Because of historic fire and drought that has led to large areas of cheatgrass, halogeton, and Russian thistle invasion, the plant communities associated with the Proposed Action contain very little vegetation to support viable BLM sensitive species populations.
General Wildlife		X		Carried forward in EA.
ROWS/Lands			X	Carried forward in EA.
Air and Noise		X		Very limited impact to project area due to rural area.
Recreation		X		Impact would be insignificant due to the low use of the area.
Soils			X	Carried forward in EA.
Vegetation			X	Carried forward in EA.
Wildlife		X		Because of historic fire and drought that has led to large areas of cheatgrass, halogeton, and Russian thistle invasions, the plant communities associated with the Proposed Action contain very little vegetation to support viable wildlife populations.
Socioeconomics	X			None.
Livestock Grazing			X	Carried forward in EA.
Wild horses and Burros	X			None present.
Minerals and geology		X		A Mineral Report (Appendix E) was conducted and found low potential for any valuable oil, gas, or mineral material.
Water Rights		X		Not affected because Travis Farm owns significant water rights to farm the additional acreage of the Subject Parcels.

*Resources or uses determined to be Not Present or Present/Not Affected need not be carried forward or discussed further in the document.

**Resources or uses determined to be Present/May Be Affected must be carried forward in the document.

3.5 RESOURCES PRESENT AND BROUGHT FORWARD FOR ANALYSIS

The following resources are present in the area and may be affected by the Proposed Action: ROWs/Lands, Soils, Vegetation, Livestock Grazing, and Invasive, Non-native Species. The following resources that are present and not affected are also discussed below: Visual Resources, Wildlife, and Water Quality.

3.5.1 ROWS/Lands

Affected Environment

The Subject Parcels are on undeveloped land that surrounds the existing farm land. The existing farm has been in production since the early 1970's (Terracon, 2010).

A 12.5 kV power distribution line, right-of-way NVN 011441 held by Sierra Pacific Power Company doing business as NV Energy, runs through section 14 and terminates next to

section 2. There are no other utility services (natural gas, public water, sewer, or phone services) to the Subject Parcels. The northern section of the Subject Parcels (see Figure 1) is bordered to the south and east by irrigated farm land; as is the northern and southern border of the southern section of the Subject Parcels. A dirt access road runs somewhat parallel to the eastern edge of the existing farm land. There are no known off road vehicle routes that access the Subject Parcels and very little recreation within the area.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would convert the majority of the Subject Parcels to crop use identical to the existing adjacent uses. Travis Farm would fence the entire border of the Subject Parcels. No new access roads would be developed and any new electrical utility lines would be placed on Travis Farm property. The Subject Parcels would no longer be available for land use authorizations.

3.5.2 SOILS

Affected Environment

The Subject Parcels soils are derived from flat lake bed (playa) sediments composed of geologically recent valley fill gravels and lake bed deposits typical of northern Nevada closed basin playas (Chambers Group, Inc., 2010b). There are two different soil associations located within the Subject Parcels that have been mapped in the Soil Survey of Churchill and Lyon Counties. The northern section is exclusively the Hessing-Wholan-Dun Glen Association and the majority of the southern section is Hessing-Wholan-Dun Glen Association with a small amount of the southwest corner consisting of the Chuckles-Playas complex (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2010).

The Hessing-Wholan-Dun Glen Association consists of a combination of silt loam, very fine sandy loam, gravelly loam, and stratified gravelly sand to gravelly loamy coarse sand. This soil association is found on slopes with 0 to 4 percent grade. This soil is very well drained. Less than one acre of the southern Subject Parcel consists of the Chuckles-Playas complex. This complex is found on slopes of up to 2 percent grade and consists of loam, silt loam, stratified very fine sandy loam, silty clay, and silty clay loam. The Chuckles-Playa complex varies between moderately well drained and poorly drained due to variations in percentages of Playa soil to Chuckles soil (Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2010).

Environmental Consequences

There would be no significant change in the existing soil structure or composition. The Proposed Action would only remove existing vegetative cover and replace it with pivot irrigated crops. Irrigation of the Subject Parcels would identify the land as prime farmland and protect the land from other, non-farming uses.

3.5.3 VEGETATION

Affected Environment

The native vegetation within the northern section of the Subject Parcels is dominated by the Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland and the southern section of the Subject Parcels consists of various plant communities including the Inter-Mountain Mixed Salt Desert Scrub and Invasive Annual and Biennial Forbland (BLM, 2010). The subject area has been affected by recent fires within the last 10 to 20 years which have reduced the

number of living sage brush species. This has allowed invasive grasses to become dominant. Plant species that are found on the Subject Parcels include: big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), budsage (*Picrothamnus desertorum*), and Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*). Non-native and invasive species found within the Subject Parcels include cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), foxtail (*Hordeum jubatum*), tansy mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola iberica*) (Chambers Group, Inc., 2010a). Hoary cress (*Cardaria draba*) is listed by the state of Nevada as a noxious weed. There are no known threatened or endangered plant species in the Subject Parcels (personal communication from Nevada Natural Heritage Program, 2010).

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would remove approximately 800 acres of native vegetation and replace it with a 6 year rotation of alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) or other hay crops with a rotation of a grain crop, currently triticale (*x Triticosecale*), irrigated by a pivot system to increase water efficiency. Travis Farm would use existing practices, such as weed control, to ensure minimal crop seed loss to areas that are not being actively farmed on adjacent land.

3.5.4 LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Affected Environment

Both cattle and sheep grazing take place in this pasture. Cattle use occurs between September 1 and October 31. Sheep graze within the eastern portion of the pasture from December 1 thru March 31.

Grazing allotments are permitted by Animal Unit Month's (AUMs). An AUM is the amount of forage needed to feed a cow, one horse or five sheep for one month. The Edwards Pasture allocation is 927 cattle for 1859 AUMs and 1737 sheep for 1200 AUMs (personal communication, Linda Appel, Rangeland Management Specialist, March 31, 2010).

The BLM has two wells used for supplying water for livestock which are located approximately 1 mile away and are only used for periodic grazing activities during the year.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would deduct the Subject Parcel acreage from the Edwards pasture, but would not impact the allotted AUMs because the sale area contains very little forage of any value to livestock.

3.5.5 INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment

Noxious weeds (designated so by Nevada Revised Statute NAC 555.010) and invasive species are typically non-native plants that quickly infest an area, if left unchecked. The BLM defines noxious weed as "a plant that interferes with management objectives for a given area of land at a given point in time." The strategy for noxious weed management is to "prevent and control the spread of noxious weeds through local and regional cooperative efforts... to ensure maintenance and restoration of healthy ecosystems on BLM managed lands." When introduced to an area, noxious weeds can quickly dominate native species, particularly in areas with ground disturbance, making them more difficult to control.

The Subject Parcels contain invasive species including Russian thistle (*Salsola iberica*), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), foxtail (*Hordeum jubatum*), tansy mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*) and hoary cress (*Cardaria draba*) (Chambers Group Inc., 2010a). Hoary cress is listed by the state of Nevada as a noxious weed.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would remove invasive grasses and forbs species by implementing the vegetation removal operations to create the pivot irrigated crop land. The removal of the existing individual plants will greatly reduce the spread of invasive plants within the Edwards Valley. Hoary cress can spread by rhizomes, by leaving pieces of the root on the ground or by seed. This weed may need to be treated by an herbicide, if not eradicated through developing the crop area. The SW¼ of sec. 14, to be undeveloped as crop land, could continue to contribute to the invasive spread of these species if not properly treated.

3.5.6 VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment

Travis Farm is located approximately 8 miles north of United States Highway 50 (Hwy. 50). Hwy. 50 is considered a scenic drive throughout the majority of its route, but is only considered an official Scenic Byway from the California/Nevada border to Milepost 6 in Carson City (<http://www.nevadadot.com>, 2011). Currently the Travis Farm is visible in the far distance from the roadway as it passes between Fallon and Austin Nevada.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would potentially double the size of the irrigated land. Impacts to the view from Hwy. 50 would be minor because the majority of the expansion is on the northern side of Travis Farm, which is the farthest point from Hwy.50 and furthest from view.

3.5.7 WILDLIFE

Affected Environment

There are no known threatened or endangered species located within the project area. The Subject Parcels contain habitat that may support the pygmy rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis*) and the Lahontan beardtongue (*Penstemon Palmeri* var. *macranthus*), both are Nevada BLM Sensitive Species (personal communication from Nevada Natural Heritage Program, 2010). Neither species has been observed in the Subject Parcels in or adjacent to the Subject Parcels. Animal species commonly found in the area include mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), mountain cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*), blacktailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audobonii*), ground squirrels (*Spermophilus* spp.), kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys* spp.), woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), kit fox (*Vulpes velox*), badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black – billed magpie (*Pica pica*), greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), raven (*Corvus corax*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), in addition to several other reptile and bird species. Mule deer habitat is present within the Subject Parcels and has been identified as a potential seasonal migration route or foraging/bedding grounds (Chambers Group, Inc., 2010a). Pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra Americana*) were observed within the project area and the irrigated farm land.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would reduce native habitat of the local animal species. The Proposed Action could be beneficial for species such as the greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), mountain cottontail (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*), blacktailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audobonii*), ground squirrels (*Spermophilus* spp.), kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys* spp.), the Pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra Americana*), and other small grazing species or birds because the land will be irrigated crop land. Private parcel fences will meet BLM standards for antelope.

3.5.8 WATER QUALITY

Affected Environment

Travis Farm currently uses wells located on site to irrigate the existing fields. Travis Farm is intending to use these existing wells and to drill two more to irrigate the fields developed upon completion of the Proposed Action. The two new wells would be placed within the currently existing farm land due to existing electrical infrastructure (personal communication, Travis Farm, 2010). There is no surface water resources located within the farm or within the adjacent parcels. Currently, the only groundwater uses are Travis Farm and BLM. No record exists regarding the quality of the underground water source.

Environmental Consequences

The Proposed Action would increase the use of existing groundwater resources. Travis Farm would continue to ensure minimal use of any fertilizer, pesticides, or herbicides during farming activities to reduce any impact to the quality of the groundwater resource.

3.6 ALTERNATIVES

No alternatives to the Proposed Action other than the No Action Alternative are considered in this document.

3.7 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the Subject Parcels would remain public land. BLM would continue to manage the northern and southern parcels. No impacts identified in this document as a result of the Proposed Action would occur.

3.8 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

All resource values have been evaluated for cumulative impacts. It has been determined that cumulative impacts would be negligible as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action because of the localized nature of the impacts. Current uses of the land surrounding the Travis Farm are expected to remain for the foreseeable future and it is unlikely that increases in these or other land uses will occur.

3.9 MONITORING

The management practices described in the Proposed Action are sufficient for this Action.

4.0 PERSONS, GROUPS, AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

4.1 LIST OF PREPARERS

Terry Reid
Program Manager
Chambers Group, Inc.

James Smithwick
Principle Environmental Planner
Chambers Group, Inc.

Joseph Loveland
Staff Environmental Planner
Chambers Group, Inc.

Leslie Hall
Project Assistant
Chambers Group, Inc.

Erik Strods
Biologist
Chambers Group, Inc.

Paul Strobel
Geologist

Bureau of Land Management

NAME	TITLE	PROJECT EXPERTISE
Erik Pignata	Reality Specialist	Lands, land use
Linda Appel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Grazing, range management
John Wilson	Biologist	Vegetation and Wildlife
Steve Kramer	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	NEPA
Jill Devaurs	Weed Coordinator	Invasive, Non-native Species
Susan McCabe	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources, Native American Religious Concerns

4.2 PERSONS, GROUPS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED

NAME	AGENCY	PROJECT EXPERTISE
Erik S. Miskow	Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources	Biologist
Craig Travis	Travis Farm	Proponent
	NRSC	
	Nevada State Clearing House	
	Churchill County	

5.0 REFERENCES

Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2011. *Labor Force By County, Not Seasonally Adjusted, April 2010 To May 2011*, <http://www.bls.gov/lau/laucntycur14.txt>., Accessed 7/28/2011.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2009. *Carson City District NEPA Compliance Guidebook (Draft)*. Carson City District Office, Carson City, Nevada.

_____. 2001. *Consolidated Resource Management Plan*. Carson City District Office, Carson City, Nevada.

_____. 2010. *Plant Communities in the Project Area*. Figure developed by John Wilson, Carson City District Office, Carson City, Nevada.

Chambers Group, Inc. 2010a. *A Class III Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed Travis Farm Land Sale, Churchill County, Nevada*. Reno, Nevada.

_____. 2010b. *Mineral Report Travis Farm BLM Land Sale Application No. NVN-087749*., Reno, Nevada.

Churchill County, 2010. *Agenda for Board of County Commissioners Meeting, October 7, 2010*. Fallon, Nevada.

_____. 2005. *Churchill County Master Plan (2005 Update)*. Fallon, Nevada.

Nevada Department of Agriculture, Plant Industry Division, 2011. *Noxious Weed List*. http://agir.nv.gov/nwac/PLANT_NoXWeedList.htm. Accessed 7/26/2011

Nevada State Department of Transportation, 2011. *Nevada Scenic Byways*. http://www.nevadadot.com/Traveler_Info/Scenic_Byways/Nevada_s_Scenic_Byways.aspx. Accessed 7/29/2011.

Terracon Consultants, Inc. 2010. *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment US BLM/ Travis Farm Land Sale Edwards Creek Valley Churchill County, Nevada*. Sparks, Nevada.

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Services, 2010.
*Soil Map – Churchill County Area, Nevada, Parts of Churchill and Lyon Counties
(Travis Land Sale). Nevada*

6.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A – Migratory birds with potential to overfly the Subject Parcels

Appendix B – Letter from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program regarding at risk animal and plant species located on the Subject Parcels

Appendix C – Photos

Appendix D – NRS Statute regarding the discovery of remains

Appendix E – Mineral Report

APPENDIX A
Migratory birds with potential to overfly the Subject Parcels

APPENDIX B

Letter from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program regarding at risk animal and plant species located on the Subject Parcels

APPENDIX C

Photos

Appendix D

NRS Statute

Appendix E
Mineral Report