

Virginia City Grand Prix

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



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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.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Virginia City Motorcycle Club (VCMC) is a domestic non-profit corporation in the State of Nevada, as well as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The VCMC is comprised entirely of volunteer members who serve in various elected offices (as specified in club by-laws) and as workers on club events.

The VCMC was formed in 2001 for the primary purpose of organizing the Virginia City Grand Prix (VCGP) motorcycle race. This event was conducted for 30 years by the founding organization, Western State Racing Association, and now for the past 11 years by the VCMC.

The VCGP is a two-day competitive event that is tightly integrated with the small historic tourist town of Virginia City, Nevada. The event's registered participants, with a combined two-day count ranging from 800 to 1,100 racers, are predominantly from out of state and most stay in Virginia City for multiple days during the event by patronizing the local hotels or by camping through the use of personal recreational vehicles (RV's).

The event's spectators are not regulated or counted, but reasonable estimates are of 6,000 to 8,000 additional town visitors over each race weekend who arrive to view the event or to support the individual race participants. The event is scheduled for the last weekend of April, which provides a significant economic impact at the beginning of the town's annual tourist season. The races importance to the region and the tourist-based economy of Virginia City is underscored by the strong support the local business community and the municipal government have demonstrated each year.

The event utilizes a racecourse that begins/ends in the middle of town and loops through the nearby mountainous areas. A course is normally 20 to 30 miles in length, with the specific route altered each year to provide variety for the racers and to reduce impact to roads and trails by the rotating use.

The racecourse crosses a combination of public and private lands, as well as municipal streets and State highways. The most intensely utilized land during the event, including the start/finish line, pits and designated refueling area, vendor areas, and official spectator locations, are all located on private lands within Virginia City.

The VCMC has worked in close coordination with local municipal agencies, including law enforcement, fire, medical and emergency responders, and the public works department, to ensure the event is effectively integrated with critical local services.

In March 2012 the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sierra Front Field Office determined that the previously written environmental assessment (EA) in 2003 was inadequate for future motorcycle race events in the Virginia City area. The BLM and VCMC executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined their respective responsibilities for

compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The MOU further stipulated the cost recovery required on the part of VCMC to reimburse the BLM for costs associated with administration of this EA process.

This draft EA has been organized and formatted to be consistent with the NEPA and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines, and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1). The goal of this draft EA is to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the Proposed Action, resources that may be affected, potential environmental consequences, and the environmental review and evaluation process.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the BLM is to respond to a Special Recreation Permit (SF-299) application submitted by the VCMC. The Grand Prix events are an important component of diverse recreation opportunities in the Virginia City area, specifically public demand for competitive motorized recreational uses of public and private lands.

1.3 Scoping and Issues Identification

On August 15, 2011 the Proposed Action was evaluated by the BLM's interdisciplinary team. Issues that were raised during the review included:

- Are there BLM sensitive plant species in the Project area? Can potential impacts to them be minimized?
- Are there active, nesting raptors in the Project area? Can potential impacts to them be minimized?
- To what extent do previously authorized routes need re-evaluation under the National Historic Preservation Act?

On June 26, 2012 the BLM initiated a 30-day scoping period. A news release was distributed to the Carson City and Reno media outlets providing the public with notification. The news release was posted in the *Nevada Appeal*, *Virginia City News*, Fox Reno, and KTNV on-line. The BLM received six comment letters from the public all in support of this Project. Comments in support of this Project were received from the Storey County Fire Department and Sheriff's Office, Tourism and Community Services, and from the offices of the Honorable Tom Grady, State of Nevada Assembly and Honorable Dean Heller, U.S. Senator. Comments of support were received from 27 downtown Virginia City businesses. These comments received noted the benefits of the events to the area's tourism-based economy. The BLM also received comments from the Nevada Natural Heritage Program concerning three rare and sensitive plant species. The scoping period closed on July 26, 2012.

1.4 Decision to be Made

The BLM has received a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) application from the VCMC for their 2013 event (and event course to be used at least through 2017). The Authorized Officer would decide whether to issue the permit, and whether to add terms and conditions (stipulations) to the permit.

The SRP authorization would be for the portions of the race matrix involving BLM-managed lands only. Although there is a federal nexus to private lands in the race matrix, the responsibility of obtaining permission for use of privately-owned roads or trails is the sole responsibility of the VCMC.

1.5 Land Use Conformance Statement

The Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) dated May 2001 (BLM 2001). The applicable section is described below:

REC-2, Desired Outcome #1:

- “Provide a wide range of quality recreation opportunities on public lands under management by the Carson City Field Office.”

1.6 Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, and Other Plans

The Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are in compliance with the following:

- Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976;
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969;
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (as amended); and
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended).

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Description of Alternatives

2.1.1 Alternative A: Proposed Action

The VCMC proposes to continue hosting the 41-year old VCGP motorcycle race, to be held each year on the final weekend of April.

The event occurs on a variation of routes within Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Township 16 North, Range 21 East, and Sections 20-29 and 32-36 of Township 17 North, Range 21 East, MDM, which appear on the *Virginia City* and *Flowery Peak* USGS Quadrangle 1:24,000 topographic maps. The public lands affected are within the Virginia City National Historic Landmark (NHL) boundary and are interspersed with local municipal parcels, patented mining claims and other private land holdings (Figure 1).

The VCGP is a multiple-lap motorcycle race using a 20 to 30 mile course designated over a combination of existing roads and trails segments comprised of:

- Paved roads: city streets and state highways (eight percent);
- Dirt roads: improved roads that display some level of grading in their creation, generally eight feet to 20 feet in width (67 percent);
- Two-track trails: well established travel ways that generally did not involve grading but which fully support four-wheeled vehicle travel and range in width from 6.5 feet (two meters) to 10 feet (22 percent); and
- Single-track trails: well established travel ways that range from two feet to six feet in width (three percent).

Each year a course is “designed” by assembling various segments from an approved route matrix. The intent is to provide variety for the participants from year to year and to reduce any potential impact to course segments from continual use. Each year the VCMC informs the BLM of the selected race route, coordinates with officials from multiple Storey County departments, and contacts the private parcel owners or mining claimants whose parcels will be crossed by the course with a request of use letter.

As a regular part of the event’s organization, public and private parcel owners receive an indemnification by all race participants and are listed as additionally insured under the spectator liability insurance policy.

In the days leading up to the race, the course is identified on the ground by club members who are familiar with the approved route segments. The workers use customary off-road racecourse markings that include pink ribbon, yellow caution tape, orange “snow fence” barriers, straw bales, and various paper signs that display direction arrows, wrong-way indications and alerts for “high skill” areas.

The race format includes a Saturday event where the higher-skilled racers compete in classes based on ability (Pro, Expert and Amateur) and age or motorcycle designations. This race runs

for a minimum 4-hour window, plus the time required for riders remaining on the course to return to the finish line location after the checkered flag has been issued.

The Sunday event includes riders in the Novice classes, a Women's class and classes for two designations of older "vintage" motorcycles. This races runs for a minimum three hour window, plus the time required for riders remaining on the course to return to the finish line location.

Race participants pay an entry fee of \$150 to \$160 for the Pro Class and \$60 to \$70 for all other classes. Top finishers in all classes receive trophies and/or sponsor prizes, and the Pro Class top finishers additionally receive cash prizes.

For both days the race begins at 10 a.m. with participants staged in rows of 10 along the Virginia City's main street ("C Street"). This roadway is also State Highway 341 and through coordination with the Nevada Department of Transportation and Storey County, the VCMC is allowed to close the road for a two hour window each day to conduct the race start. Depending on participation levels, the rider count can typically be between 400 and 550 racers per day.

The race start involves releasing a row of 10 riders every fifteen seconds until the entire start field is on the course. Based on each year's racecourse configuration, the racers make their way out of town on some paved city streets and proceed along the course's route, consisting primarily of dirt segments but also using the occasional paved section of county or state roads. At the conclusion each lap, racers have returned to town and are at the main timing check point and the race pit area. Depending on the length and difficulty level of the course, racer may complete one to six laps during their timed race window.

The race's pit area is located on private property along E Street between Union and Sutton Streets. This area is designated by chain link fence, with access strictly control during the race. Each racer is limited to two support crew members and no children under age 12 or pets of any kind are allowed entrance. A smoking ban is strictly enforced as a fire safety precaution.

Event staff members, designated by club vests or staff shirts, are used to coordinate activities around the pit and vendor areas. Event staff and other volunteer organizations (e.g. Storey County Jeep Posse) also support racecourse activities by occupying remote checkpoints, communication stations, observations points and road crossings. The intent of this racecourse presence is to keep the race flowing well, to ensure racers are strictly abiding by the course route, and most of all, to support safety for the participants and spectators.

In addition to the stationary workers positioned at strategic locations around the course, additional staff serves as Sweepers (normally 15 to 25 per day) and Medics / EMTs (normally 12 to 20 per day) who circulate the course on motorcycles during the race. They too have a primary mission of ensure safety, yet also play a key role in keeping the event running well and racers in compliance with course routes and restrictions.

In the two to four weeks following each year's event, club members cleanup the course by removing all ribbon, flagging, signs, fencing, and straw bales, plus any debris left by the participants and/or spectators. While the terrain used for the race is primarily hard-packed and

very rocky, some areas of looser soil are sometimes encountered, which may experience some rutting or berm formation from the traffic. In these cases, the cleanup effort also involves re-grading the affected areas to fill ruts and remove berms using hand tools.

Environmental commitments.

Migratory birds. As described in Section 3.2, migratory birds may be present during the annual race event, as the proposed race would occur during the migratory bird nesting season (considered to be from March 1 to July 15). Existing raptor nest data would be reviewed annually and field surveys would be conducted by BLM within 10 days of the event where there is nesting data within 350 feet of the race route. If an active raptor nest is found, the race route may be modified to avoid disturbance.

Rare and sensitive plants. The Virginia City area has unique soil conditions that provide habitat for rare and unique plant species. Several short portions of the race matrix have been identified with those soil conditions suitable for one BLM sensitive plant species. The BLM has removed one segment of the race matrix due to resource conflicts including the rare and unique plants that are adjacent to the segment. To prevent inadvertent impacts to these soils and plants, the BLM has included as a new stipulation (see Section 6.0). The VCGP would be required to install additional flagging and marking short sections identified by the BLM to ensure that event participants do not go off the authorized routes.

2.1.2 Alternative B: No Action

The No Action Alternative would deny the issuance of the SRP as requested by the VCMC. Since viable options do not exist to conduct the event without use of public land, the VCGP would no longer be held. This would result in the loss of this competitive recreational opportunities in the Virginia City area and its associated economic benefits to the community.

2.1.3 Alternative Considered but Dismissed From Detailed Analysis

When considering the minimum area required for a VCGP format race course and the configuration of interspersed public and private land around Virginia City, it is not feasible to conduct the VCGP race on private-only land to avoid use of public land and eliminate the requirement of obtaining a SRP. The alternative of using only private or local municipal land was eliminated from further analysis.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Setting

Virginia City is located in Storey County, Nevada, about 12 miles north of Carson City. Virginia City lies between two mountain ranges, the Virginia Range to the west and the Flowery Range to the east. The elevation of Virginia City is approximately 6,300 feet above sea level (asl). Mt. Davidson, to the west of town is approximately 7,864 feet asl. Flowery Peak to the east is approximately 6,581 feet asl. Public lands in the Virginia City are utilized for mining exploration, tourism, casual and organized recreation, livestock grazing, and wildlife habitat. Common plant communities in the area include single-leaf pinyon (*Pinus monophylla*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), and Wyoming sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentate*).

3.1.1 Resources Considered for Analysis

The BLM is required to address specific elements of the environment that are subject to requirements in statute or regulation or by executive order (BLM 2008). Table 3-1 lists the elements that must be addressed in all environmental analysis and indicates whether the alternatives affect those elements. Other resources of the human environment that have been considered for analysis are listed in Table 3-2.

Table 3-1. Supplemental Authorities*.

Resource	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
Air Quality	N		The Project area is not within a non-attainment area. During the event, there would be a minor increase in vehicle emissions and particulates, however overall air quality would not be affected.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	N		Resource not present.
Cultural Resources	Y	N	BLM has determined that this Project is exempt from Class III cultural resources inventory in accordance with Appendix C of the <i>State Protocol Agreement between BLM and SHPO for Implementing the National Historic Preservation Act</i> (2009, revised January 2012). The event would take place on established roads and trails at least two meters (six feet) wide, where use is similar to previous permits, and which would not affect historic properties.
Environmental Justice	N		Resource not present.
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	N		Resource not present.
Floodplains	N		Resource not present.
Invasive, Nonnative Species	Y	N	Although invasive, non-native species may occur within the Project area, the proposed event would be limited to existing roads and trails and would not change the overall occurrence or distribution of invasive, non-native species. Stipulations in the Special Recreation Permit would further reduce the likelihood of inadvertent spread of invasive, non-native plant species.
Migratory Birds	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Native American Religious Concerns	Y	N	The proposed event would not affect access to traditional, animal and plant resources.
Threatened or Endangered Species	N		Resource not present.

(Wildlife)			
Threatened or Endangered Species (plants)	N		Resource not present.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	Y	N	Measures to minimize any exposure to mine tailings would be stipulated in the Special Recreation Permit.
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	Y	N	Seasonal streams in the Project area would not be affected by the proposed event which would not include any construction activities across any surface streams.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	Y	N	Although limited riparian areas associated with seasonal streams exist in the Project area, the proposed event would not include any construction activity adjacent to such areas; as a result they would not be affected.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	N		Resource not present.
Wilderness/WSA	N		Resource not present.

**See H-1790-1 (January 2008) Appendix 1 Supplemental Authorities to be Considered.*

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 may be carried forward in the document.

Table 3-2. Resources or Uses Other Than Supplemental Authorities.

Resource or Issue**	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
BLM Sensitive Species (animals)	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
BLM Sensitive Species (plants)	Y	N	Areas with known occurrences of sensitive plants would be avoided; therefore this resource would not be affected.
Fire Management/Vegetation	N		Resource not present.
Forest Resources	N		Resource not present.
General Wildlife	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Global Climate Change	Y	N	Although there is a public and scientific debate about human-caused contributions to global climate change, no methodology currently exists to correlate greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from the Proposed Action, and to what extent these contributions would contribute to global climate change.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Y	N	Under the Proposed Action there would be negligible contribution of a vehicle emissions, a GHG. No methodology currently exists to correlate GHG emissions from motorcycle races to any specific resource impact within the project area.
Land Use Authorization	N		Resource not present.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	N		Resource not present.
Livestock Grazing	N		Resource not present.
Minerals	Y	N	The proposed event would occur on existing roads and trails and would not affect any mineral activity on public lands.
Paleontological	N		Resource not present.
Recreation	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Socioeconomics	Y	Y	Carried forward for analysis.
Soils	Y	N	The proposed event activities would remain on existing roads and trails, and would not affect overall soil conditions or cause conditions that could lead to soil erosion.
Travel Management	Y	Y	See the Recreation Section.

Vegetation	Y	N	The proposed event would remain on existing paved and dirt roads and trails. No new construction would occur. Vegetation would not be affected.
Visual Resources	Y	N	The proposed event would not change the overall visual character of the Project area and would be consistent with VRM Class III.
Wild Horses and Burros	N		Resource not present.

***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 may be carried forward in the document.

3.2 Recreation & Travel Management

Virginia City is the largest federally designated NHL in the U.S., and attracts an estimated 600,000 tourist visitors each year (Storey County Community Services, 2012). In-town attractions include saloons, bed and breakfasts, mine tours, museums, the Virginia & Truckee Railroad, Piper’s Opera House, Fourth Ward School, and St. Mary’s Church. Miner’s Park is located in Virginia City at the corner of Carson and F Streets. This park includes a pool, baseball field, gazebo, BBQ area, skate park, and playground equipment. The Virginia City High School campus, located on R Street, includes an artificial turf athletic field that provides regulation football and softball facilities that are utilized by the high school athletic teams, as well as the town’s residents.

The rural nature of the Virginia City and Gold Hill area provides year-round opportunities for outdoor recreation. The many roads and trails in the surrounding mountainous areas are used by residents and visitors for personal recreation such as off-highway vehicle operation, hiking, biking, trail running, horseback riding, big game and bird hunting, and pine nut collecting. The local culture is very linked to these outdoor activities, which a large percentage of the residents enjoy. In addition to these personal uses, organized and permitted events take place in the area, such as motorcycle and off-road vehicle racing, guided OHV tours, guided hunting tours, and endurance horse races.

The main access into Virginia City is provided by Highways 341 (Geiger Grade, Occidental Grade) and 342 that connect Virginia City with both Reno and Carson City. Six Mile Canyon Road connects Virginia City with the rural community of Dayton. The Virginia & Truckee Railroad provides tourism based transit between Virginia City and Carson City. Paved streets in and around downtown Virginia City provide ancillary access to the residential community. Beyond paved access there are numerous dirt roads, two-track and single track trails in the Virginia City area that provide access into the surrounding hills constituting the Virginia and Flowery Ranges. Notable main dirt roads in the area include Seven Mile Canyon located east of Virginia City, and both Jumbo Grade and Ophir Grade that provide access to American Flat and Eastlake Boulevard at Washoe Lake.

Roads and trails in the project are generally characterized as hard-packed, rocky and fairly stable during periods of moderate soil moisture. Roads and trails are prone to soil displacement during periods of dry (dust) or high moisture events (rutting). At an elevation of 6,200 feet asl, Virginia City receives more snow in the winter months than the lower elevations in Dayton, Reno and Carson City. Subsequently, the area does not draw a significant amount of motorized use in the winter months compared to Hungry Valley (north Reno) or the lower Pine Nuts (Carson City) since road and trail access is limited due to snow levels.

3.3 Socioeconomics

The adjacent communities of Virginia City and Gold Hill are within Storey County, located in northwestern Nevada. The combined population of Virginia City and Gold Hill is most recently estimated to be 1,220 within an area of approximately 18.5 square miles, creating a population density of 66 people per square mile (City-Data, 2010).

The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau data indicates the ethnic makeup of the area to be 94.7 percent white, 3.4 percent Latino of any race, 2.2 percent Native American, 0.5 percent Asian, 0.1 percent African American, and 2.4 percent from other races. In 2000, 13.5 percent of families and individuals in Virginia City and Gold Hill were living below the poverty level. In 2008, the estimated median household income in Virginia City was \$47,170 per year, and the unemployment rate was 6.8 percent (City-Data, 2010).

Virginia City is designated as a NHL in 1961 and has for decades been a popular tourist attraction. The area attracts an estimated 600,000 tourist visitors each year (Storey County Community Services, 2012), both national and international in origin, by promotion as an authentic “old west” town from the gold and silver mining era of the late 1800’s. The local economy is primarily based on tourism and related services, with the related workforce predominantly found in retail, food and beverage services, gaming, entertainment, accommodations and the arts.

Located at an elevation of about 6,300 feet asl, normal weather conditions significantly reduce the tourist visits during the winter season. This situation creates a pronounced annual cycle, with economic activity picking up in the spring, peaking in summer, and trailing off by mid-to-late autumn. During the active portions of the cycle, local merchants traditionally benefit from reasonably steady tourist visits during weekdays and weekends, but special events are relied upon to deliver the town’s most significant economic performance.

With its late April schedule, the VCGP is the kickoff of the town’s major special events and is among the top performers for the town’s merchants. Recent VCGP events have had participant registration levels of 900 to 1,000, with the majority of participants coming from out of state. The racers generally bring friends and family members as their support crews, and the event is also attended by spectators from the local area, as well as from out of state. The total count of visitors related to the event, including participants, support crews and spectators, is estimated to be in the range of 7,000 to 9,000 over the weekend.

In addition to the economic activity created during the day time by the visitors, the VCGP differs from all other special events in Virginia City in that a large number of these visitors remain in town overnight one or more of Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. In addition to all available hotel rooms in Virginia City and Gold Hill experiencing 100 percent occupancy during the event, many more visitors rely on their RVs and camp trailers for their sleeping accommodations, thus pushing the town far beyond its normal capacity for overnight visits. The result of this situation is the local merchants, particularly the restaurants and saloons, remaining far busier into the evening and night time than with any other special event.

3.4 Migratory Birds

Regulatory Setting. In 2001, President Clinton signed Executive Order (EO) 13186 placing emphasis on the conservation and management of migratory birds. Migratory birds are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 and EO 13186 addresses the responsibilities of federal agencies to protect migratory birds by taking actions to implement the MBTA. The BLM management for migratory bird species is based on Information Bulletin (IB) No. 2010-110 (BLM 2010). See Appendix A for migratory birds that may be present in the Project area. A complete list of migratory birds can be found at: 50 CFR Part 10.

3.5 BLM Sensitive Species (Animals)

Regulatory Setting. BLM Manual 6840 (Special Status Species Management) provides policy and guidance for the conservation of BLM special status species and the ecosystems upon which they depend on BLM-administered lands. BLM special status species are: (1) species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and (2) species requiring special management considerations to promote their conservation and reduce the likelihood and need for future listing under the ESA, which are designated as BLM sensitive by the State Director(s). For a complete list of BLM Sensitive Species see Instruction Memorandum NV 2011-059 and the final list published October 2011. For more information on the BLM Sensitive Species Manual go to:

http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/regulations/Instruction_Memos_and_Bulletins/national_instruction/2009/IM_2009-039.html.

Species Information. The Project area is not within greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) preliminary general or priority habitat and this species is not discussed further. See Appendix A for BLM Sensitive Species that may be present in the Project area.

3.6 General Wildlife

Based on the Southwest Regional GAP Analysis Project, the Nevada Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP 2006) describes Nevada's 27 key habitat types and identifies wildlife species assemblages for each. The key habitats in the Project area are described below.

Intermountain Cold Desert Scrub – Some of the general wildlife species associated with this habitat type include kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*), Great Basin collared lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), desert horned lizard (*Phrynosoma platyrhinos*), long-nosed leopard lizard (*Gambelia wislizenii*), and black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*).

Sagebrush – General wildlife species such as Great Basin pocket mouse (*Perognathus parvus*), sagebrush lizard (*Sceloporus graciosus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), Merriam's shrew (*Sorex merriami*), panamint kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys panamintinus*), and sagebrush vole (*Lemmiscus curtatus*) are associated with this habitat type.

Lower Montane Woodlands - Pinyon-juniper woodlands provide habitat for general wildlife species such as gray flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*), western scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and black bear (*Ursus americanus*).

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and compares the environmental consequences predicted to result from implementing the Proposed Action or Alternatives described in Chapter 2.0. The purpose of this chapter is to present the impact analysis of the alternatives and to disclose the impacts of the actions on affected resources by the Proposed Action or alternatives.

The potential consequences or impacts of each alternative are addressed in the same order of resource topics in Chapter 3.0. This parallel organization allows readers to compare existing resource conditions (Chapter 3.0) with potential impacts (Chapter 4.0).

4.1.1 Types of Effects

This chapter describes the potential direct, indirect, and residual effects to resources that may result from the Proposed Action or Alternatives, as well as identifies the potential monitoring needs associated with the specific resources. In this document, the word “adverse” is used in characterizing minor (non-significant) detrimental effects to a resource, and “negligible” is used in characterizing minor (non-significant) detrimental effects to a resource that are generally undetectable. “Beneficial” effects would have a positive effect on the resource. In this document, the terms “effect” and “impact” are used synonymously.

4.2 Recreation & Travel Management

Alternative A: No Action

The No Action Alternative would end the largest organized OHV event in the area and would not meet public demand for competitive motorized recreational uses for resident of Virginia City and Gold Hill, the surrounding northern Nevada communities, and the out-of-state visitors who regularly participate in or attend the VCGP. Other special events in the Virginia City area, whether under federal permitting or not, would continue.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action there would be no change in any of the current recreation opportunities and would allow continued access to competitive motorized recreational uses for resident and visitors. During these two-day events, there would be an increase in traffic congestion, noise (especially in downtown Virginia City), and some increased contribution of dust and vehicle emissions. These adverse effects are short-term.

Potential impacts associated with race vehicles on authorized roads and trails would remain the same. The general public would be denied access on roads and trails 2 to 3 days during the event. Road and trail conditions may decline over time due to potential accelerated soil erosion or displacement associated with soil migration (i.e. dust, rutting) during the event. Overall, effects to Travel Management are negligible.

4.3 Socioeconomics

Alternative A: No Action

The No Action Alternative would end the 41-year old event and deprive Virginia City and Gold Hill of the economic benefit experienced from one of the top special events held in the town and the estimated 7,000 to 9,000 related visitors.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action there would be the continuation of the VCGP and which would be beneficial to the socioeconomic conditions found in the Virginia City and Gold Hill area. Continuation of the VCGP would be expected to continue delivering significant benefits to the local economy during one of the town's top special event weekends of the year.

4.4 Migratory Birds

Alternative A: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not issue a SRP for the VCGP. There would be no effect to migratory birds because the event would not occur. Effects to migratory birds caused by on-going activities present in the Project area, such as use of the roads and trails by motorized vehicles, would be expected to continue.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

The VCGP would occur over a two-day period; all effects from the VCGP would be short-term. The VCGP would occur during the migratory bird nesting season (generally considered to be from March 1 to July 15). As described in Section 2.1.1, the BLM would commit to a review of existing information and a field inspection of the event race matrix would occur within 10 days prior to each year's event to determine the location and status of any nesting migratory bird. The actual location and timing of the nesting cycle may vary from year to year and by species, if nesting occurs at all in a given year. If an active migratory bird nest is located within 350 feet of the race course, avoidance measures to minimize disturbance may be implemented, including but not limited to, the removal of that segment of the race course for that year.

There would be no effect to migratory bird habitat because the Project does not involve surface disturbance. Any wildlife conflicts or mortalities would be reported to BLM monitors immediately and if warranted, the race route would be modified to minimize reported conflicts. Migratory birds in the Project area are already accustomed, to some extent, with disturbances caused by motorized vehicles and urbanization. Individuals may be temporarily displaced during the VCGP, however there would be no effect on regional populations. Overall effects to migratory birds are expected to be negligible.

4.5 BLM Sensitive Species (Animals)

Alternative A: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not issue a SRP for the VCGP. There would be no effect to BLM Sensitive Species because the event would not occur. Effects to BLM Sensitive Species caused by on-going activities present in the Project area, such as the use of roads and trails by motorized vehicles, would be expected to continue.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

The VCGP would occur over a two-day period; all effects from the VCGP would be short-term. There would be no effect to BLM Sensitive Species habitat because the Project does not involve

surface disturbance. This Project would have no effect on cave resources. Any wildlife conflicts or mortalities would be reported to BML monitors immediately and if warranted, the race route would be modified to minimize reported conflicts.

BLM Sensitive Species in the Project area are already accustomed, to some extent, with disturbances cause by motorized vehicles and urbanization. Individuals may be temporarily displaced during the VCGP, however there would be no effect on regional populations. Some BLM Sensitive Species may be bearing or rearing young during the time of year the event takes place. However, if those animals are adjacent to the race course, they are already accustomed, to some extent, with disturbances caused by motorized vehicles or urbanization. Overall effects to BLM Sensitive Species are expected to be negligible.

4.6 General Wildlife

Alternative A: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not issue a SRP for the VCGP. There would be no effect to general wildlife because the event would not occur. Effects to general wildlife caused by on-going activities present in the Project area, such as the use of roads and trails by motorized vehicles, would be expected to continue.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

The VCGP would occur over a two-day period; all effects from the VCGP would be short-term. There would be no effect to wildlife habitat. Wildlife in the Project area are already accustomed, to some extent, with disturbances cause by motorized vehicles and urbanization. Individuals may be temporarily displaced during the VCGP, however there would be no effect on regional populations. Large animals may temporarily move out from areas adjacent to the race course. Some wildlife may be bearing or rearing young during the time of year the event takes place. However, if those animals are adjacent to the race course, they are already accustomed, to some extent, with disturbances caused by motorized vehicles or urbanization. Overall effects to general wildlife are expected to be negligible.

5.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

A cumulative effect is defined under NEPA as “the change in the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action, decision, or project when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other action”. “Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR Part 1508.7). Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are analyzed to the extent that they are relevant and useful in analyzing whether the reasonably foreseeable effects of the Proposed Action or alternatives may have an additive and significant relationship to those effects.

Cumulative Effects Geographic Area.

The Cumulative Effects Study Area (CESA) is based on the direct and indirect effects for migratory birds, BLM Sensitive Species (animals) and general wildlife (a one-mile buffer, 27,787 acres of public and private lands). The CESA for recreation is limited to the race matrix only (approximately 87 acres). For socioeconomics, the CESA in Storey County includes the communities of Virginia City, Gold Hill and Silver City (Figure 2).

Timeframe for Effects Analysis.

Direct effects to the human environment that contribute to cumulative effects would occur over the two-day race event. Indirect effects to the human environment that contribute to cumulative effects would occur over the several days after each race event. All effects to resources are short-term although the race itself would occur over a five-year period.

Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions.

The Comstock Mining Project (CMP) is located in Storey and Lyon Counties. The CMP is owned by Comstock Mining, and is a combination of new and existing mining projects. Phase I of the CMP consists of hard rock mining on private property. Extraction of ore and waste materials from the proposed open pit mine would be by conventional drill and blast mining techniques using front shovel/truck operations. Exploration on private and public lands is also occurring.

The Virginia & Truckee (V&T) Railway Tunnel is located in the heart of Virginia City. Storey County plans to reconstruct this historic tunnel and purchase the accompanying train depot to extend service of the V&T Railroad. The tunnel would be constructed within the East Street ROW, a few hundred feet from South Washington Street, and extend north of Union Street. The tunnel would be approximately 440 feet long. Project initiation depends availability of funding.

The Virginia City area sponsors a wide-range of tourism-based events throughout the year from classic car shows, tours of gold mines, to ghost walks in the downtown. In addition to VCGP, the BLM permits annual horse endurance rides.

Effects Analysis.

Recreation.

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would renew the SRP for the VCGP for five-years, a cumulatively beneficial effect for recreation in the Virginia City area. Under the No Action Alternative, the SRP would not be re-issued, a cumulatively adverse effect.

Socioeconomics.

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would renew the SRP for the VCGP for five-years, a cumulatively beneficial effect for socioeconomics in the Virginia City area. Under the No Action Alternative, the SRP would not be re-issued, a cumulatively adverse effect.

Migratory Birds.

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would renew the SRP for the VCGP for five-years, a cumulatively negligible effect to migratory birds. Under the No Action Alternative, the SRP would not be re-issued; there would be no cumulative effects from the VCGP.

BLM Sensitive Species (Animals).

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would renew the SRP for the VCGP for five-years, a cumulatively negligible effect to BLM Sensitive Species. Under the No Action Alternative, the SRP would not be re-issued; there would be no cumulative effects from the VCGP.

General Wildlife.

Under the Proposed Action, the BLM would renew the SRP for the VCGP for five-years, a cumulatively negligible effect to general wildlife. Under the No Action Alternative, the SRP would not be re-issued; there would be no cumulative effects from the VCGP.

6.0 PERMIT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In addition to the Standard Stipulations on the back of Permit NVC02-13502, the following terms and conditions apply:

TERMS / CONDITIONS:

- Permit is based upon acceptable performance associated with the conduct event and compliance with management stipulations.
- This permit authorizes VCMC to conduct one two-day OHV race on approved routes on BLM managed lands as delineated in the permit (NVC02-13502) race route map. The type of use authorized is competitive / commercial OHV racing.
- Pre-racing is not authorized by this permit. Racers may conduct route orientation at reduced speeds and according to guidance provided in 43CFR 8341.1 - Regulations governing use and 43 CFR 8343.1 - vehicle operations, of off-road vehicles on public land.
- A copy of the permit and/or Letter of Authorization must be displayed where participants and spectators may see it during the conduct of an event.
- This permit does not authorize the use of private lands.
- This permit does not guarantee or assign exclusive use of the authorized routes to the permittee.
- The Use Fee will be \$5.00 / participant / day or 3% of total gross receipts, or cost recovery, whichever is greater. Use fees are subject to change according to National Fee Scheduling.
- The permittee, Virginia City Motorcycle Club, must show a copy of the permit to any BLM other authorized official if requested. Failure to comply with any of these conditions may result in the revocation of the permit, citation, or denial of future permits.
- Prompt completion of post use report and fee payment. The permittee must submit a **Post-Use Report** within 30 days following the event. Number of entrants, any injuries or property damage must be reported in addition to fee computations.
- Acceptable performance rating from agency personnel.
- Maintain current proof-of-liability insurance naming the U.S Department of the Interior – Bureau of Land Management as additional insured for \$500,000 bodily injury for any one person; \$1,000,000 for any one occurrence; and \$50,000 property damage for any one occurrence.

Failure to comply with or meet any of the above may result in the revocation or suspension of the permit, citation, or denial of future permits.

In addition to the Standard Stipulations on the back of SRP NVC02-13502, the following stipulations apply:

1. This permit authorizes VCMC to conduct a motorcycle race on approved routes through BLM managed lands as delineated in the permit map. The type of use authorized is competitive / commercial motorcycle racing.
2. This permit covers the time period of authorization signature date, April 2013 through May 30, 2017. Should circumstances warrant, this permit may be modified, suspended or revoked by the Authorized Officer at any time to protect public resources, health and safety, the natural

environment, where non-compliance with permit stipulations has occurred, or when rules or standards are revised or updated.

3. Establishment of permanent markers and improvements is prohibited. Use of “Enviro” paint, paint balls, or colorful chalk sprayed, splattered or poured onto rocks, brush or the ground is prohibited. (Though these products advertise bio-degradable, dry climates prolong the products outdoor life.) Use of white gypsum or flour is ok. It should be washed, brushed off, or mixed into the soil.

Approved route marking consists of occasional flagging attached to clothes pins, wooden stakes or flour “dust” ground marking arrows on the dirt road surfaces. If using flagging, the issuing agency must be advised of the color of the flagging two weeks prior to the event and advised by phone when markings have been removed (775) 885-6000.

Prior to final flagging, it is the permittee's responsibility to inspect the area within 100 feet of the route for hazards that may affect rider or public safety. **Discovery of un-marked abandoned mine features must be reported immediately to BLM or Nevada Department of Mine Safety at 1-800-541-MINE.** The permittee must remove all route markers and other debris immediately following the event.

During flagging operations and rehabilitation work, club members shall be aware of wildlife, livestock and wild horses. Every effort shall be made to ensure that birthing, nesting, foaling, calving and fawning animals happened upon shall not be harassed. Sightings, conflicts and mortalities shall be reported to BLM monitors immediately. Additional flagging and/or course marking will be required for short sections of the race course that are adjacent to habitat, or are occupied by rare and unique plants.

4. The event course would follow predetermined/authorized routes as shown on the attached permit map. Traffic control methods and Check Points are to be located with the intent of keeping riders on the course and avoiding short cuts. Participants must use existing routes as marked on the ground as the travel route or as described on the ride scroll or global positioning navigation system. The route may not be improved without consultation with the BLM. This includes trimming tree branches, cutting brush or loosening fence lines along the route.

5. Participants shall observe all applicable federal, State and local laws, regulations and ordinances associated with the premises of the event. Vehicles used in the event shall be motorcycles. Helmets are required attire. All vehicles shall have legal and properly functioning mufflers and spark arresters.

The permittee may be held accountable for the costs of fire suppression if it is evident that a fire was caused by participants.

6. Motorcycle, OHV free-play (motocross, hill climbs, cross-country riding, etc.) is prohibited in conjunction with the event. Entrants, spectators, children and pit personnel shall be advised that initiation of new trails or cross-country vehicle travel is prohibited. Riders must be cautioned that

passing must take place completely within the approved route path. Avoid wet areas, limit passage through these areas to one established route.

7. The permittee assumes responsibility for public safety and sanitation during all phases of the event. The permittee shall designate a qualified first aid coordinator to organize and provide the necessary personnel with appropriate communications and transportation equipment to insure the rapid assistance to injured participants.

An adequate supply of portable toilets and trash barrels would be available at any field location accommodating spectators, participants or support personnel. All refuse must be removed from these areas immediately after occupation.

Dumping of sewage or petroleum products onto the ground is prohibited. Refueling and other major servicing of vehicles would be restricted to designated pit areas. Spontaneous pit activities at Check Points and road crossings must remain clean of all residues. Accidental spills of petroleum products must be contained to the smallest extent possible. **Any spill of one (1) quart or more must be reported to BLM immediately.** The permittee shall be responsible for the clean-up and proper disposal of any soils contaminated by such spills.

8. Cultural resources (historical or prehistoric site or object, including, but not limited to, ruins, historic buildings, artifacts, rock art, and hearths) are protected and shall not be damaged or removed. All personnel associated with the permitted activity would be informed by the permittee that they are subject to prosecution for vandalizing and/or collecting any historic or prehistoric artifacts or remains. Inadvertent surface or subsurface discoveries of cultural resources or fossil materials shall be left undisturbed.

The permittee would be responsible to ensure that historical, archaeological, cultural, or paleontological values are not damaged, destroyed, or removed by any participants on authorized trips. Unless specifically authorized, collection of plants, rocks, fossils, artifacts, shed antlers, animals or parts of animals is prohibited. Permits for such collecting are issued separately outside of a Special Recreation Permit.

9. Serious accidents or deaths must be reported to BLM within 24 hours of occurrence.

10. The permittee must provide a communications system from the event course to the pit area, sweep motorcyclists, four-wheel drive rescue units, air rescue units, and law enforcement personnel. Establishment of an Emergency Priority frequency that would not interfere with event operations is recommended. Cell phone is adequate.

The permittee shall provide for first aid, emergency response coordination and law enforcement should a participant, spectator or other public become sick, injured, disruptive or belligerent at the event. Fire extinguishers must be located at fueling area and at each Check Point.

The permittee shall notify local emergency response personnel 30 days prior to the event and a reminder call the day before the event.

11. The permittee shall contact the BLM Field Office prior to the event to determine “camp”-fire restrictions. If campfire restrictions are in place, cooking may be done on gas or propane stoves only.

Note the following:

- a) Campfires may not be ignited if weather conditions are hot and dry or when fire restrictions are otherwise in place.
- b). No cans, bottles, aluminum, plastic, or wood pallets with nails and staples should be burned in a campfire. Campers shall provide own fuel wood.
- c). A burning campfire shall not be left unattended at any time. A bucket of water and a shovel must be close at hand when a campfire is burning. The fire must be put dead-out and cleaned of un-burnt rubbish prior to abandonment.
- d) The campfire must be cleaned of all firewood, garbage and litter prior to abandonment of the site. Scatter rock rings; naturalize the used area.
- e) Draining of sewage is strictly prohibited on public and private lands. The permittee would be responsible for cleaning up and disposing of sewage in a timely and appropriate manner (event and spectator related).

EVENT COURSE OR AREA REHABILITATION GUIDELINES

It is the permittee’s responsibility to initiate care of public lands and resources. The issuing agency may inspect the course, pit and event areas immediately after and within two to four weeks following the event to evaluate event effects on resources and permittee’s compliance with resource protection and rehabilitation measures. The permittee shall be notified of additional rehabilitation needs, as necessary.

The permittee may be required to grade, recontour, drag, disc or seed soil and vegetation areas within the course and pit areas that were significantly changed or impacted as a result of the event. Main access roads used by support or rescue vehicles during muddy conditions where significant road damage occurs must be graded to pre-event status.

***Post Event rehabilitation guidelines *prior* to BLM inspection:**

- a.) Where berms, ruts and/or depressions due to soil loss have occurred, smooth the race/event trail to pre-event soil levels. Use a drag harrow to loosen and spread soils to create a more natural appearance and to maintain trail condition for future use.
- b). Neutralize single-track ruts where soil erosion or channelized water run-off is likely, or where safety to other vehicle traffic could be affected.

c). Reduce berms created by hard turns on commonly used roads and trails. Expose vegetation that has been covered by berms.

d) Repair any damages to fences, posts, gates or range improvements that occurred as a result of the race/event. Soil ruts that develop at gate locations must be reduced to prevent livestock from getting under the gate/fence. Loose wire must be tightened to prevent livestock entanglement. Leave gates open or closed according to condition found at race time.

e). If mechanized equipment is required to make trail repairs, use **must** be coordinated with BLM. Extra caution must be taken when making repairs near historic ruins, rock walls, tailings piles, and historic debris.

Failure to complete clean-up and course restoration within 30 days following an event, unless an extension is granted by BLM, may affect future permit opportunities and may cost the permittee additional fees. If BLM employees have to do course clean-up and restoration, the permittee may be billed up to \$60 per employee per hour plus equipment costs.

7.0 CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

7.1 Public Review and Comment

This draft EA has been made available to the public for review and comment for 30-days. Comments must be received by the close of business on December 5, 2012. This draft EA and supporting documents are available on the Carson City District website at: http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/carson_city_field/blm_information/nepa.html.

All comments received will be reviewed and categorized. Although not required for an EA by regulation, an agency may respond to *substantive* and *timely* comments received.

Privacy notice: before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment(s), you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment(s) to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Substantive comments:

1. question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of information in the EA;
2. question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis;
3. present new information relevant to the analysis;
4. present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the EA; and/or
5. cause changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives.

No response is necessary for non-substantive comments (BLM 2008).

Upon the conclusion of this public review process, the BLM would issue a Final EA, and sign the FONSI and a Decision Record for the Proposed Action. The Decision Record would provide the rationale for selection of the Proposed Action that the BLM would implement.

7.2 Individuals, Tribes, Organizations and Agencies Consulted

7.2.1 Individuals

Clark, Catherine

7.2.2 Organizations

7.2.3 Relevant State Agencies

Fire Marshal

Department of Agriculture

NAS Fallon

Division of Emergency Management

Natural Heritage Program

Division of State Parks
 Commission on Minerals
 Department of Wildlife
 Public Utilities Commission
 Division of Minerals
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Division of Forestry
 Division of Water Resources
 Nevada Division of Environmental Protection
 Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
 Indian Commission
 Division of State Lands
 Department of Transportation
 Conservation Districts
 Office of Traffic Safety

7.3 List of Preparers

BLM staff that contributed to this document.

Name	Resource
Brian Buttazoni	NEPA Compliance
Arthur Callan	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Rachel Crews	Archeologist
Pilar Ziegler	Wildlife Biologist

VCGP staff that contributed to this document.

Name	Responsibility
Curt Chapman	VC Event Coordinator

8.0 REFERENCES

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City-Data.com. 2010. Virginia City, Nevada City Profile. <http://www.city-data.com/zip/89440.html>. Accessed on October 1, 2012.

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Appendix A.

BLM Sensitive Animals and Migratory Birds That May be Present or Their Habitat May be Present in the Project Area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	BLM Sensitive Species	BLM Migratory Bird
Big brown bat	<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>	Y	-
Brazilian free-tailed bat	<i>Tadarida brasiliensis</i>	Y	-
Brewer's sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	N	Y
Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	N	Y
California myotis	<i>Myotis californicus</i>	Y	-
Dark kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops megacephalus</i>	Y	-
Ferruginous hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Y	Y
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	Y	-
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Y	Y
Green-tailed towhee	<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>	Y	N
Little brown myotis	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	Y	-
Loggerhead shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Y	Y
Long-eared myotis	<i>Myotis evotis</i>	Y	-
Long-legged myotis	<i>Myotis volans</i>	Y	-
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Y	Y
Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Y	N
Pale kangaroo mouse	<i>Microdipodops pallidus</i>	Y	-
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	Y	-
Pinyon jay	<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	Y	Y
Sage sparrow	<i>Amphispiza belli</i>	N	Y
Sage thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>	N	Y
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	Y	-
Swainson's hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Y	N
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	Y	-
Virginia's warbler	<i>Vermivora virginiae</i>	N	Y
Western pipistrelle bat	<i>Pipistrellus hesperus</i>	Y	-
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	Y	-
Yuma myotis	<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>	Y	-