

# Canoe Hill Trail System Project

PUBLIC SCOPING



DOI-BLM-NV-C020-2015-0017-EA

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February 2015



## **BLM Seeks Input on the Canoe Hill Trail System Project**

**Introduction.** The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sierra Front Field Office in Carson City, Nevada has been coordinating the development of the *Canoe Hill Trail System* (Project) since 2009. In February of 2014 the BLM received a complete proposal from the Canoe Hill Trail Working Group (CHTWG) and the Great Basin Institute (GBI). The Project area is located on public lands southwest of the Golden Eagle Regional Park in Washoe County, Nevada.

In order to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act, an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential effects of trail construction and maintenance will be prepared by the BLM.

An environmental assessment is intended to be an overview of environmental concerns, not an exhaustive study of all environmental issues.

In preparing their proposal, the CHTWG and GBI have provided the BLM with the following information and needs:

- Authorization of 9.4 miles of user-created non-motorized trails (hiking and mountain biking), which may require improvements, modifications, and/or realignments to meet current trail standards and to minimize effects to sensitive resources;
- Authorize the construction and maintenance of 13.6 miles of new non-motorized trails (hiking and mountain biking);
- Utilize as the primary access point, the existing parking lot at the Golden Eagle Regional Park;
- GBI would be responsible for the construction and long-term maintenance of the trails;
- Installation of directional and educational signage;
- Evaluate closing an existing user-created, unmaintained dirt road; and
- Consider future trail expansion opportunities on other public lands in the area.

**Purpose and Need.** The purpose of the Project is for the BLM to authorize a total of 23 miles of non-motorized trails (hiking and mountain biking), to be known as the *Canoe Hill Trail System* (Project). The need for the Project is to respond to a request by the CHTWG and GBI to provide for non-motorized recreation opportunities on public lands. Consistent with the multiple-use mandate under the Federal Land Management Policy Act, the need for the Project is for the BLM to provide for a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

**Land Use Conformance.** The Project is in conformance with the Carson City Field Office Consolidated Resource Management Plan (CRMP), May 2001, page REC-2, RMP Level Decisions, Desired Outcomes #1:

- “Provide a wide range of quality recreation opportunities on public lands under management by the Carson City Field Office [now known as the Carson City District Office].”

Under the *Proposed Resource Management Plan* published in November 2014, the Project area would be included within a proposed 20,000-acre Pah Rah Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). Although a final decision would not be made until 2016, the designation of this ERMA would be “for mountain biking, hiking and environmental education opportunities while providing for protection of natural resources.” This Project is consistent with the current and proposed land use planning objectives for this area.

**Alternatives.** The BLM would evaluate, at a minimum, a No Action Alternative, which would not authorize the *Canoe Hill Trail System*, and a Proposed Action, which would authorize the *Canoe Hill Trail System*. Additional alternatives may be analyzed based on public input from scoping.

**Issues Identification.** On February 24, 2014, a BLM interdisciplinary team reviewed this Project. Issues that were raised during this review included:

- Do you know of resource conflicts or public safety issues in the Project area? How should target shooting be addressed?
- Are their historic properties or other sensitive cultural resources in the Project area that may be affected?
- Should special recreation events be authorized, such as competition mountain bike races?
- Do you have any other substantive input into this Project at this early stage?

**How to Comment.** The BLM is seeking input at this early stage. In order to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and National Historic Preservation Act, an environmental assessment to evaluate the potential effects of trail construction and maintenance will be prepared by the BLM. The environmental assessment (EA) would likely be available for public review in the summer 2015.

#### **\*\* Public Workshop \*\***

A public workshop will be held on Tuesday February 17, 2015 at the Spanish Springs Elementary School, multi-purpose room. The school is located at 100 Marilyn Mae Drive in Sparks. The workshop will be held from 6:30 pm until 8 pm. At 6:45 pm a presentation on the project will be conducted. The meeting will not be a hearing, staff will be available for provide Project information and maps will be available for review.

#### **\*\* Project Website \*\***

Maps, additional information, and how to comment are provided on the Project website located at: [http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/carson\\_city\\_field/blm\\_information/nepa.html](http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/carson_city_field/blm_information/nepa.html)

**This 30-day scoping period is from February 11 until March 12, 2015.**

For more information contact Brian L. Buttazoni, Planning and Environmental Coordinator at: 775-885-6004 or by email at: SFFO\_EA@blm.gov

## Resources Considered for Analysis

The following resources were considered during an internal interdisciplinary team meeting on this proposal held on February 24, 2014. Based on that review, resources *present* and *may be affected* by this proposal would be analyzed in the draft EA.

### Category I, Supplemental Authorities.

Resource	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
Air Quality	Y	N	Although the Project area is within the Washoe County non-attainment air basin, construction of the trail system and long-term use would not prevent the air basin from achieving attainment status.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	N		Resource not present.
Cultural Resources	Y	??	To be determined. The Project area has been inventoried under a Section 110 survey. The BLM would evaluate whether the Project has the potential to adversely affect historic properties or cultural resources.
Environmental Justice	N		Resource not present.
Farm Lands (prime or unique)	N		Resource not present.
Floodplains	N		Resource not present.
Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plant Species	Y	N	Best management practices would be incorporated into the Project design to minimize potential spread of noxious weeds and invasive plant species. Monitoring and any application of herbicides to control noxious weeds and invasive plant species would be implemented under an integrated weed management plan.
Migratory Birds	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
Native American Religious Concerns	Y	??	Discussion with the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe are on-going.
Threatened or Endangered Species	N		Resource not present.
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	N		Resource not present.
Water Quality (Surface/Ground)	N		Resource not present.
Wetlands/Riparian Zones	N		Resource not present.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	N		Resource not present.
Wilderness/WSA	N		Resource not present.

Category II, Other Resources.

Resource or Issue**	Present Yes/No	Affected Yes/No	Rationale
BLM Sensitive Species (animals)	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
BLM Sensitive Species (plants)	N		Resource not present.
Fire Management/Vegetation	N		Resource not present.
Forest Resources	N		Resource not present.
General Wildlife	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
Land Use Authorization	Y	N	Although rights-of-way may exist in the Project area, they would not be affected by this Project.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	N		Resource not present.
Livestock Grazing	Y	N	Although the Spanish Springs/Mustang Grazing Allotment overlaps the Project area, there would be no effect to grazing operations by the construction of the trail system.
Minerals	N		Resource not present.
Paleontological	N		Resource not present.
Public Safety	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
Recreation	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
Socioeconomics	N		Resource not present.
Soils	Y	N	Best management practices would be incorporated into the Project to ensure that soils are not affected and potential soil erosion is minimal.
Travel Management	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
Vegetation	Y	Y	Would be analyzed in the environmental assessment.
Visual Resources	Y	N	Portions of the project area are in VRM Class III and IV. The trail features would be designed to minimize the visual contrast and would not be inconsistent with the VRM Classes.
Wild Horses and Burros	N		Resource not present.

The draft EA for this Project would be made available for a 30-day public review and comment period in the summer 2015.

## Preliminary Identification of Resource Issues

### *Biological Resources*

- The Project area *is not* within greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) general or priority habitat, a BLM Sensitive Species and candidate species for listing on the Endangered Species Act.

### *Cultural Resources*

- A Section 110 inventory under the National Historic Preservation Act has been completed for the Project area. The BLM would determine whether the Project would adversely affect historic properties or sensitive cultural resources.