

period. Of the submissions, 420 were identical copy letters, 89 were form letters with additional text, 73 were unique letters, and one was a duplicate submission. Principle comment issues included:

- Wildlife impact concerns, including birds, bats, big game, amphibians, pollinators and insects, general wildlife, special-status species, and GRSG;

- Lands with Wilderness

Characteristics impact concerns;

- Visual resource impact concerns;

and

- Cultural resource impact concerns.

Public and stakeholder comments also provided specific edits and corrections to EIS sections and general support or opposition to the proposed Project.

Final EIS Revisions

Comments on the Draft EIS received from the public and internal BLM review were considered and incorporated as appropriate into the Final EIS. Public comments resulted in the addition of clarifications and analysis, but comments did not identify significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns that have bearing upon the proposed action.

In response to public comments on the Draft EIS, revisions were made to the Final EIS. The agency made micrositing changes within the 0.5-mile wide siting corridor at Marjum Pass in Millard County, Utah, which is analyzed as part of the Agency Preferred Alternative within the Final EIS. The LWC, Transportation, Visual Resources, and Wilderness Study Areas sections of the Final EIS include updated analysis for the Agency Preferred Alternative micrositing at Marjum Pass. Impacts from the Agency Preferred Alternative would be the same as described under the Proposed Action for the following: air quality; climate change/greenhouse gases; cultural and heritage resources; fire and fuels management; geology, minerals, and renewable energy production; inventoried roadless areas; land use; livestock grazing; noxious and invasive weeds; paleontology; recreation; socioeconomic and environmental justice; soils; vegetation; water resources; wildlife; and woodlands.

In addition to micrositing in Marjum Pass, the agency widened the 0.5-mile-wide siting corridor in two specific areas (Utah-Nevada border west of Garrison, Utah; and Steptoe Valley, Nevada) where public comments noted administrative constraints that would preclude or interfere with existing infrastructure, private lands, and specially managed areas. Widening the

siting corridor in these locations allows for the flexibility of the centerline to shift. The 0.5-mile-wide siting corridor was also reduced after publication of the Draft EIS in multiple locations across Nevada to remove locations outside designated utility corridors. These are locations where siting of the transmission line would not be in conformance with the *Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment* (Nevada-California ARMPA) (BLM 2015b), as described below. The 0.5-mile-wide siting corridor and centerline were also shifted in the southwest corner of Millard County, Utah, to avoid the LWC Inventory Unit Jackson Wash (UT-C010-121).

In early 2024, the United States Geological Survey issued a draft annual update report related to GRSG that disclosed an adaptive management trigger identified in the Nevada-California ARMPA that was tripped for the third year in a row for a lek cluster within the area near the western terminus of the Project at Robinson Summit Substation (Prochazka et al. 2024). The individual annual triggers are defined as *soft* triggers in the Nevada-California ARMPA, and the plan provided that tripping three soft triggers in consecutive years (2021, 2022, and 2023) equates to a *hard* trigger. In response to tripping a hard trigger, the ARMPA identifies any land outside designated utility corridors and within GRSG habitat management areas as exclusion areas for new high-voltage transmission. There is an approximately 1-mile-long segment of the proposed Project and action alternatives that would be located outside the designated utility corridor across GRSG habitat management areas and whose authorization would not conform to the approved Nevada-California ARMPA based on this new information. Through a separate process, the BLM is currently reconsidering its 2015 GRSG planning decisions, including its management of the lands being considered for this proposed Project segment. The BLM published a NOA for the draft GRSG RMP amendments on March 15, 2024. The BLM will ensure that its decision responding to the application for the Project will conform to the land use plans approved at the time of the record of decision, consistent with 43 CFR 1610.5-3.

Additional updates were made to address public concerns within the following resource sections: renewable energy resources, visual resources, Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

and cumulative impacts, GRSG, and LWC.

Agency Decisions

Based on the environmental analysis in this Final EIS, the BLM Utah State Director will decide whether to authorize the ROW grant, authorize with modifications, or deny the application based on the proposed Project, alternatives, or any combination thereof on Public Lands. The Forest Service will issue a separate ROD specific to its decision whether to authorize a SUP on National Forest System land.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10)

Christina Judd,

Acting State Director, Utah.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[BLM_NV_FRN_4500181325]

Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Ioneer Rhyolite Ridge LLC's Rhyolite Ridge Lithium-Boron Mine Project, Esmeralda County, Nevada

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Rhyolite Ridge Lithium-Boron Mine Project (Project) proposed by Ioneer Rhyolite Ridge LLC (Ioneer) in Esmeralda County, Nevada.

DATES: The BLM will not issue a decision on the proposal for a minimum of 30 days after the date that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its Notice of Availability (NOA) in the **Federal Register**. The EPA usually publishes its NOAs on Fridays.

ADDRESSES: The Final EIS and documents pertinent to this proposal are available for review on the BLM's National NEPA Register (ePlanning) at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2012309/510>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Scott Distel, Project Manager, telephone: (775) 635-4093; email: sdistel@blm.gov; address: 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV 89820. Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind,

hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunication relay services for contacting Mr. Distel. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Purpose and Need

The BLM's purpose for the action is to respond to Ioneer's proposal as described in its proposed Plan of Operations, and to analyze the potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action and alternatives to the Proposed Action. NEPA mandates that the BLM evaluate the potential effects of the Proposed Action and develop alternatives. The BLM's need for the action is established by the BLM's responsibilities under section 302 of FLPMA and the BLM Surface Management Regulations at 43 CFR part 3800 subpart 3809 to respond to a proposed Plan of Operations.

Alternatives A, B, and C

Under *Alternative A*, the Proposed Action, Ioneer is proposing to construct, operate, close, and reclaim a new lithium-boron mine project in Esmeralda County, Nevada. The proposed Rhyolite Ridge Lithium-Boron Mine Project Plan of Operations boundary would encompass 7,166 acres, which consists of a 6,369-acre Operational Project Area and a 797-acre Access Road and Infrastructure Corridor. The total surface disturbance associated with *Alternative A*, including existing and reclassified disturbance and exploration, would be 2,306 acres of BLM-administered public lands and private land.

The Project would employ a workforce of approximately 400 to 500 employees during initial construction and approximately 350 employees during operations. The Project would operate 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The total life of the Project would be 23 years, including four years of construction (years 1 through 4), 17 years of quarrying (years 1 through 17), 13 years of ore processing (years 4 through 17), and 6 additional years of reclamation (Years 18 through 23). Reclamation of disturbed areas would be completed in accordance with BLM and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection regulations. Concurrent reclamation would take place where practicable and safe.

The proposed activities for the Project would include:

- A mine, including an open pit berm and water storage tanks;
- A processing facility, including a contact water pond and diversion channels;
- Three overburden storage facilities (North, West, and Quarry Infill), including contact water ponds and diversion channels;
- One spent ore storage facility, including an underdrain pond and diversion channels;
- Project Area exploration, including access routes and drill sites with sumps;
- Haul roads, service roads, and public road realignment;
- Buckwheat exclusion area and critical habitat fencing; and
- Ancillary facilities including an explosives storage area, communication towers, All-Terrain Vehicle trails, a batch plant, a proposed water supply testing facilities including pipelines, a sewage system including septic leach fields, a dewatering pipeline, growth media stockpiles, stormwater controls and diversions, monitoring wells, laydown yards, and fencing.

Under *Alternative B*, the North and South OSF Alternative, which is the BLM's preferred alternative, all mine components and operations would be the same as *Alternative A*, but the facility layout would be modified to reduce surface disturbance within the Tiehm's buckwheat (*Eriogonum tiemii*) designated critical habitat. Surface disturbance under *Alternative B* would be less than *Alternative A* and total approximately 2,271 acres.

Under *Alternative C*, the No Action Alternative, the development of the Project would not be authorized and Ioneer would not construct, operate, and close a new lithium-boron mine project.

Lead and Cooperating Agencies

The BLM Battle Mountain District Office is the lead agency for the EIS. The Nevada Department of Wildlife, the Nevada Division of Forestry, the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Ecological Services, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Migratory Birds Program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Esmeralda County Board of County Commissioners have participated in this environmental analysis as cooperating agencies. Several Native American Tribes have also participated in the environmental analysis.

Schedule for the Decision-Making Process

Consistent with the NEPA and the BLM's land use planning regulations, the BLM is providing a 30-day public review period for the Final EIS and will

not issue a decision on the proposal for a minimum of 30 days after the date that EPA publishes its NOA in the **Federal Register**.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10)

Jon D. Sherve,

District Manager, Battle Mountain District.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

[BLM_NV_FRN_MO4500180510]

Notice of Availability of the Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement for the Copper Rays Solar Project in Nye County, Nevada

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Copper Rays Solar Project and by this notice is providing information announcing the opening of the comment period on the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS.

DATES: This notice announces the opening of a 90-day comment period for the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS beginning with the date following the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) publication of its Notice of Availability (NOA) in the **Federal Register**. The EPA usually publishes its NOAs on Fridays.

To afford the BLM the opportunity to consider comments on the Draft RMP Amendment/EIS, please ensure your comments are received prior to the close of the 90-day comment period or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later.

The BLM will be holding one in-person public meeting and one virtual public meeting during the public comment period.

- In-Person Meeting
 - Date and Time:* October 22, 2024, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
 - Location:* Pahrump Nugget Hotel and Casino, 681 NV Highway 160, Pahrump, Nevada 89048
- Virtual Meeting