



File Code: 1950
Date: September 29, 2017

Dear Interested Reader:

The Forest Service, Mountain City, Ruby Mountains, Jarbidge Ranger District, is analyzing the impacts of making available for lease approximately 54,000 acres of National Forest System (NFS) land in the Ruby Mountains portion of the District. If made available, these lands may be proposed for oil and gas leasing by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in a future BLM lease sale. The Forest is initiating this analysis because we received a request from the BLM asking that we provide leasing concurrence on these specific lands. Enclosed is a map illustrating the location of the proposed lands. More detailed map(s) and a legal description of the lands are available upon request to the District office. This leasing analysis is an administrative decision and does not authorize any ground disturbance. If lands are made available for leasing by the Forest Service and leased through a future BLM lease sale, detailed environmental analysis would be conducted for any ground-disturbing proposal submitted by a future lessee.

This letter serves as the invitation to provide scoping comments as provided for under the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1500, and notification of opportunity to comment as provided for under the Forest Service's administrative review regulations at 36 CFR 218.24. This project is not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA); however it is subject to the Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process under 36 CFR §218 Subparts (A) and (B).

The lands are located south of Lamoille Creek and North of Sherman Creek, on the west side of the Ruby Mountains. These lands are within areas covered by the 1986 Humboldt Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), and all are designated as open to leasing.

This Project proposal will be analyzed in an environmental assessment (EA) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Forest Service policy. To aid the Forest Service with the environmental analysis, we are accepting any input, recommendations and concerns you may have with this proposal. The BLM is a cooperating agency on this project.

As part of the analysis, the Forest Service will decide if all or a portion of these NFS lands are available or are not available for leasing. For any lands made available, the Forest Service would need to identify reasonable and necessary stipulations that would be attached to the lease for a given legal description to avoid or minimize impacts to resources such as wildlife, soils, watersheds, roadless area characteristics and cultural resources. Stipulations are written to conform to the approved land use plans governing Forest Service management of resources in the area to be leased, and consistent with laws, regulations, policies, rules, and orders.



Based upon an initial review of the lands, the following stipulations are being considered:

No surface Occupancy Stipulation for:

- Greater sage-Grouse Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA).
- Occupied Lahontan Cutthroat Trout stream corridors
- Lands with slopes greater than 40%
- Occupied Rare Plant Habitat
- Riparian habitats and wetlands

Controlled Surface Use Stipulation for:

- Greater sage-Grouse general habitat management areas (GHMA)
- Inventoried Roadless Areas

Timing Limitation Stipulation for:

- Crucial mule deer winter range
- Active raptor nests
- Migratory bird nesting areas

Written comments must be submitted to Susan Elliott, Project Lead, at 660 South 12th Street, Suite 108, Elko, Nevada 89801; or you may hand-deliver your comments during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, to the above address.

E-mail comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to sgelliott@fs.fed.us. Please put "Ruby Oil and Gas" into the subject line.

Electronic comments can also be submitted using the project webpage at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52443>. To submit comments using the web form, select "Comment/Object on Project" under "Get Connected" on the right panel of the project's webpage.

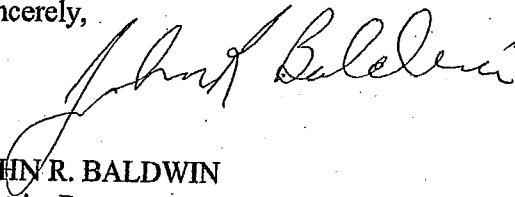
In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for objection eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

The opportunity to comment ends 30 days following the date of publication for the legal notice for this project in the *Elko Daily Free Press* (Newspaper of Record). The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or time frame information provided by any other source. Only those who submit timely and specific written comments regarding the proposed project during a public comment period established by the responsible official are eligible to file an objection under 36 CFR §218.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this Project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For more information on this project please contact Susan Elliott, Forest Service Minerals Program Manager, at (775) 778-6123. Project information can also be found on the project webpage at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52443>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John R. Baldwin".

JOHN R. BALDWIN
District Ranger