



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Forest Service

Intermountain Region

**Humboldt-Toiyabe
National Forest**

Tonopah Ranger District

August 2008



**Scoping Document
And
Notice of Proposed Action**

**SMOKY VALLEY
GEOTHERMAL SEISMIC
EXPLORATION PROJECT**

Nye County, Nevada

Introduction

The Tonopah Ranger District has received an application from Integral Energy Management of Reno, Nevada to conduct geophysical exploration on National Forest System lands in Big Smoky Valley.

We will be conducting an analysis of this project, referred to as the Smoky Valley Geothermal Seismic Project, prior to making a decision on whether or not to approve the proposal.

This document is being provided to:

- 1) Invite scoping comments as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR part 1501.
- 2) Provide an opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action as required by the Appeal Reform Act and Forest Service appeal regulations at 36 CFR part 215.

Because of the limited scope of this proposal, these two comment processes are being combined in an effort to streamline the analysis process.

This document is also available on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/htnf/projects>.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to conduct a seismic survey for mapping of the geologic structures relating to the local geothermal resources. Five seismic survey routes have been proposed for National Forest System (NFS) lands. On NFS lands the routes total approximately 4.3 miles. These five routes are part of a regional survey that includes additional public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

The survey would include 1) placement of geophones and cables along the survey routes, 2) use of a vibroseis truck, traveling mostly cross-country along the five survey routes, to create and record seismic activity, and 3) removal of all equipment and reclamation of all disturbances.

The project is proposed for the fall of 2008.

Location

The project area is located north and west of Carvers, Nevada. See attached map.

The legal location is:

Mount Diablo Baseline and Meridian

T11N,R42E; sections 1, 12, 13, and 24
T11N,R43E, sections 6, 7, 18, 19, and 30

Preliminary Assessment

The preliminary assessment, conducted by Forest Service staff, indicates that this proposal falls within a category of actions listed in the Forest Service NEPA Handbook (FSH) that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. (FSH 1909.15, 31.2 – Category #8 – Short-term mineral, energy, or geophysical investigations and their incidental support activities that may require cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment exploration).

The preliminary assessment also indicates that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would preclude use of the category. The following resource conditions were reviewed when considering the potential for extraordinary circumstances:

- **Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or U.S. Forest Service sensitive species**

There would be no effect to any federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for federal listing or proposed critical habitat.

There may be limited impacts to the pygmy rabbit and sage grouse; both U.S. Forest Service sensitive species.

There may be limited impacts to sensitive plant species that have the potential to occur in the project area.

- **Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds**

Floodplains - The project is not located in or near floodplains.

Wetlands - All of the project activities will take place in upland sites. No effects to wetlands are expected, either directly or indirectly.

Municipal Watersheds - No municipal watersheds are located within or adjacent to the project area.

- **Congressionally designated areas, such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas**

The project does not lie within any congressionally designated areas. The project is immediately East of the Arc Dome Wilderness, but all activities will be outside of the wilderness boundary.

- **Inventoried Roadless Areas**

The project is within the Arc Dome-Carvers Inventoried Roadless Area. The project will not involve road building. Impacts to the IRA are expected to be short-term and minimal.

- **Research Natural Areas**

The project does not lie within any Research Natural Areas

- **American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites**

There are no known American Indian religious or cultural sites within the project area.

- **Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas**

The project disturbances will be surveyed for archeological sites and historic properties. Impacts will be avoided or mitigated in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

Public comments and additional agency review/analysis will be used in making a final decision by the responsible official on whether or not the use of a categorical exclusion is appropriate for this project.

Notice and Comment Period

Since the Forest Service is combining the “Scoping period” with the “Notice of Proposed Action comment period” all comments received will be considered as comments submitted in response to the “Notice of Proposed Action comment period.”

The “Notice of Proposed Action comment period” is being provided in accordance with a July 2, 2005, court order issued by the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS. This 30-day comment period provides those interested in or affected by this proposal an opportunity to make their concerns known prior to a decision being made.

How to Comment and Timeframe

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted for 30 days following publication of the Legal Notice for this project in the Tonopah Times - Bonanza.

Written comments, concerns, questions and suggestions should be mailed to Steve Williams, District Ranger, Austin/Tonopah Ranger Districts, P.O. Box 130, Austin, NV 89310.

Written comments can be hand delivered to Steve Williams at the Austin Ranger District Office, 100 Midas Road, Austin Nevada 89310.

Oral comments can be submitted by calling the Tonopah District office at 775-482-6286.

Comments may also be sent via facsimile to the following number: 775-482-3053.

Electronic comments can be e-mailed to:

comments-intermtn-humboldt-toiyabe-austin-tonopah@fs.fed.us

Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc). Please place "Big Smoky Valley" in the subject line of your email.

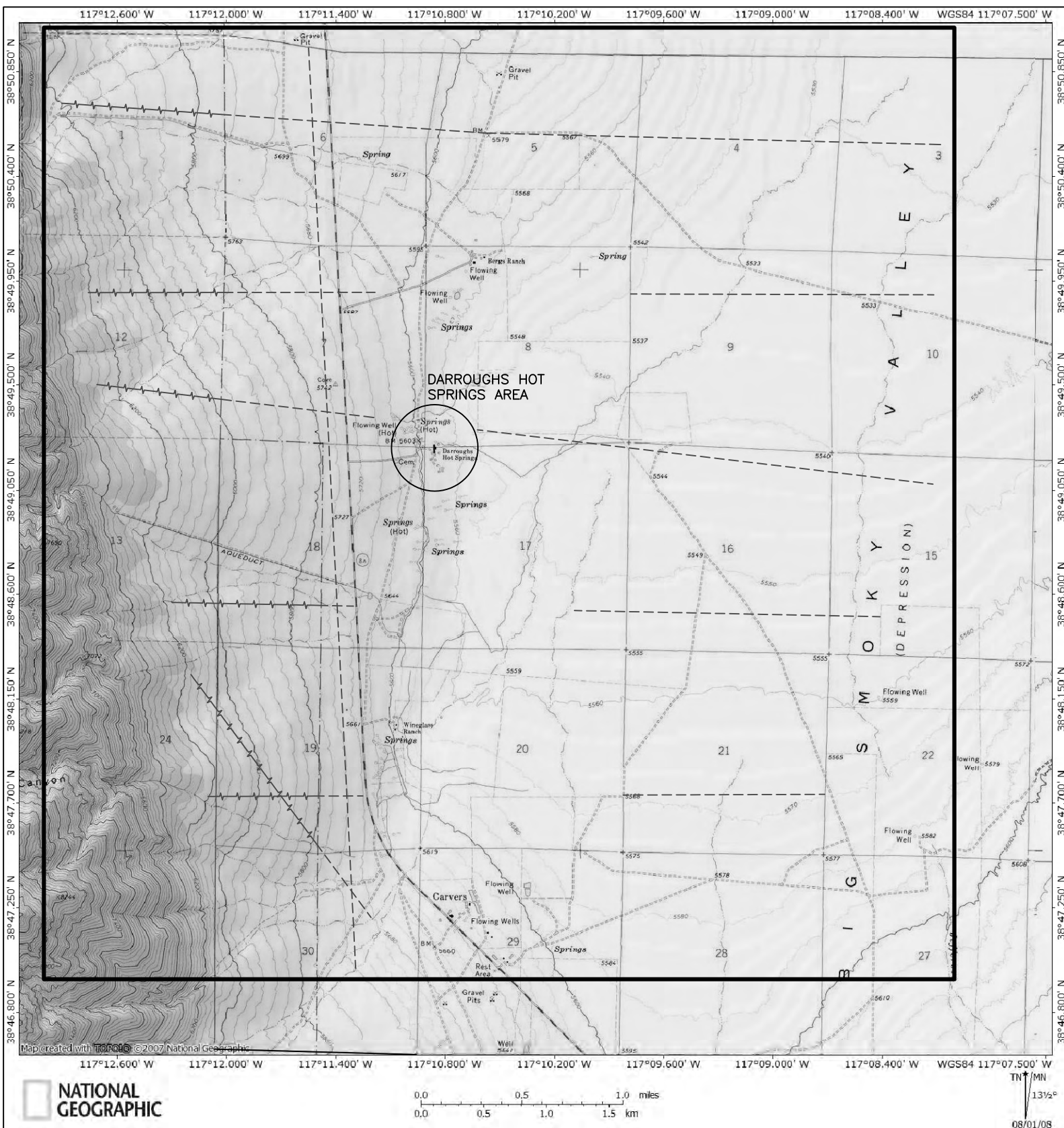
Comments must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 215.6. Only those who submit timely comments will be eligible to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection.

Contacts

For information or if there are any questions, please contact project coordinator Jim Rigby, Tonopah Ranger District, P.O. Box 3940 Tonopah, NV 89049, or by telephone at 775-482-7887.

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BIG SMOKY VALLEY GEOTHERMAL SEISMIC EXPLORATION PROJECT



LEGEND

- SEISMIC LINE ON USFS LANDS
- - - - SEISMIC LINE ON BLM LANDS
- · - · USFS LAND BOUNDARY