

**BLM, Bishop Field Office
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100
Bishop, CA 93514**

EA Number: CA-170-06-48

Proposed Action Title/Type:

Conway Summit Hill-Climb Restoration Project

Location of Proposed Action:

Bodie Hills Management Area Mono County, CA T.3N, R. 25E, Sections 13 and 14.
Lundy 7.5" Quadrangle.

Applicant (if any): BLM, Bishop Field Office, Recreation Project

Plan Conformance:

The proposed action is subject to the Bishop Resource Management Plan, approved March 25, 1993. The proposed action was developed to implement RMP guidance and is designed to ensure conformance with General Policies, Area Manager's Guidelines, Valid Existing Management, Standard Operating Procedures, Decisions and Support Needs prescribed in the Bishop RMP. The proposed action has been reviewed and is in conformance with the plan.

Need for Proposed Action:

The proposed action was developed to implement Bishop RMP (BLM, 1993) direction to manage all activities to conform with Visual Resource Management (VRM) standards which for the project area is a VRM Class II. The proposed action would also implement the following RMP Decision specific to the Bodie Hills Management Area.

1. Identify and implement closure or seasonal closure of vehicle routes impacting sensitive plant habitats or areas where mule deer or sage grouse concentrate (BLM, 1993, pages 33 and 34).

Additional RMP Decisions and Standard Operating Procedures that support the proposed action include:

1. Mitigation, where needed, would be applied to eliminate or reduce resource problems caused by OHV use (BLM, 1993, p. 14).

Description of Proposed Action:

The proposed project area is located on public lands north of Lee Vining and Conway Summit east of U.S. Highway 395 (Figure 1). The project area encompasses a transitional mountain big sagebrush/bitterbrush community with low sage inclusions. The purpose of the project is to close restore a one-way hill-climb route that begins in a gravel pit and bisects the identified plant communities for approximately 0.5 miles.



View of hill-climb looking west

Specific actions proposed are described below:

A backhoe would be staged at the gravel pit and would move existing boulders to the base of the route. Road closed signs would be placed at the bottom and top of the hill-climb. No other access routes would be barricaded. Hand work involving the use of Polaskis and Maclouds would be used to bring in adjacent small rocks and dead vegetation to camouflage the middle section of the hill-climb.

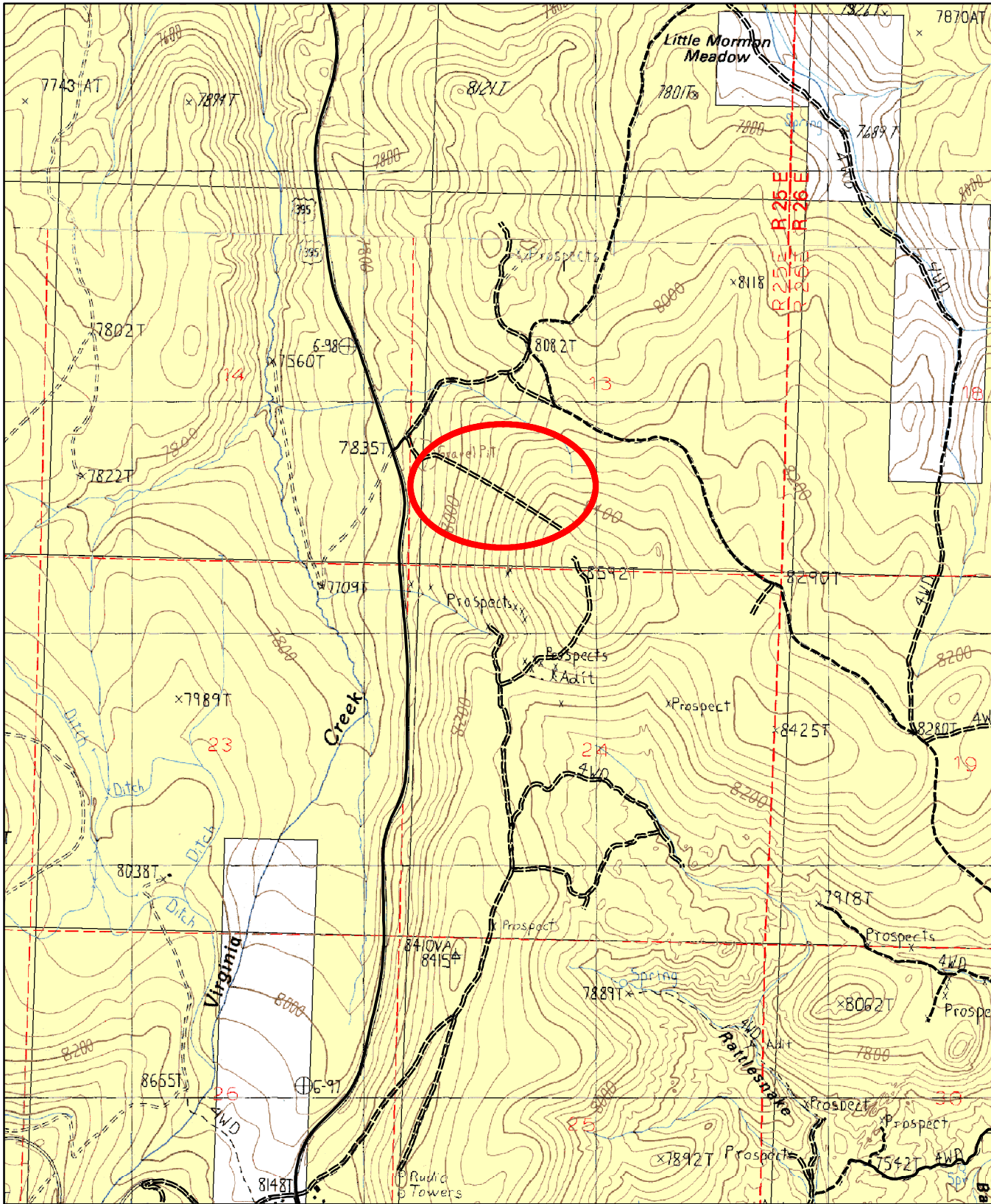
Project Implementation Requirements

The following protective measures would be applied during restoration project implementation to reduce the probability of residual impacts and the need for subsequent mitigation:

1. Prior to any ground disturbing activity for route improvement, route re-route or route closure, the route would be surveyed for archaeological resources. Project design would be adjusted to avoid identified cultural properties and ensure their protection. If previously undiscovered surface or subsurface cultural resources are found during project implementation project activities in the area would be stopped and evaluated by the Bishop Field Office Archaeologist.

Conway Summit Hill Climb Restoration Site

Figure 1.



T3N

Legend

- Bureau of Land Management
- Private
- Project Area Boundary



0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

1:24,000

Note: This Map is Not a Legal Lands Status Record

Bureau of Land Management
Bishop Field Office

Lundy and Big Alkali
7.5 Quadrangles
Nad 83 UTM Zone 11

2. Vehiclular access to the proposed project area would occur on an existing road/vehicle track.
3. Improvements to designated routes and adjacent parking areas and undeveloped campsites would be completed before redundant access routes to sites are closed to ensure recreational access.
4. The source of any road base or fill required for project implementation would be approved by the Bishop Field Office Botanist prior to use to avoid the spread of noxious weeds.
5. All vehicles, tools and material used pre and post project implementation would be pressure-washed prior to transport to the project site to avoid the spread of noxious weeds.
6. Surveys for invasive weed infestations would be completed prior to and the completion of the project. If any invasive weeds are identified within or adjacent to the project areas, the weeds would be removed to reduce the risk of an invasive soil seed bank developing.
7. All improvements required for project implementation would be limited to the least intensive method required to meet project objectives.
8. A training session would be provided to all construction personnel to educate them on the avoidance and minimization measures and of the potential impacts of construction activities.
9. Biological monitors would be present at the project site during construction-related activities.
10. Staging areas would be clearly flagged to prevent heavy equipment from damaging sensitive habitats and plant species.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Table 1. Critical Element Table. Table applies to resources or elements affected by any of the alternatives described in this Environmental Assessment.

Critical Element	No Impact	May Impact	Not Present	Rational
Air Quality	X			The proposed action is not within a federal air quality non-attainment area. The actions would not result in the emission of PM ₁₀ .
Cultural	X			The site is highly disturbed and no archaeological resources have been identified.
Environmental Justice	X			No minority or low income groups would be affected by disproportionately high & adverse human health or environmental effects because these proposed actions would not cause adverse health or environmental impacts nor would these actions take place in the vicinity of any such groups.
Farmlands, Prime or Unique			X	Resource is not present as per Bishop RMP (BLM, 1993).
Invasive, Non-native Weed Species		X		Addressed in Environmental Assessment
Native American	X			Native American consultation would occur prior to project implementation.
T&E Fauna/Flora	X			Any identified T&E plant or animal species would be surveyed and avoided prior to project implementation. Projects would be designed to reduce impacts to such identified resources.
Waste – Hazardous/Solid	X			Resource is not present nor will be created by the proposed action or alternative.
Water Quality/surface/ground water	X			Projects would be designed to ensure no additional opportunity for sediment (the major water quality pollutant) transport in to streams, springs and shallow pond locations.
Wetlands/Riparian			X	Resource is not present as per Bishop RMP (BLM, 1993).
Wild and Scenic Rivers			X	Resource is not present as per Bishop RMP (BLM, 1993).
Wilderness/Wilderness Study Areas			X	IMP direction in the case of WSAs.
ACEC's			X	Resource is not present as per Bishop RMP (BLM, 1993).

Recreation Opportunities

Proposed Action

A wide variety of dispersed recreation activities occur within the proposed project area including OHV touring, mountain biking, bird watching, rock climbing and enjoyment of the natural setting. Access to recreational opportunities is mainly via county maintained roads and/or the unimproved dirt routes. These routes were designated in the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP, BLM 1993). The designation for all routes on BLM managed public lands outside of the Poleta Canyon Open Areas is "limited". In completing the RMP, the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum planning system was used. Lands within the proposed project area are managed for Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation.

On November 21, 1996 the Bishop field Office adopted the Interagency Vehicle Access Strategy. This strategy was developed to assist in the implementation of the Field Office's vehicle access program and to meet the goals of the Bishop RMP. Implementation of the proposed action would enhance semi-primitive motorized recreational opportunities and better protect resource values within the proposed project area.

The direct effects of the proposed action on existing recreational access would be confined to closing the hill-climb. Access to other routes would be maintained outside the project area.

No Action

By not implementing the proposed action access to routes would not be improved and impacts to visual resources would continue.

Visual resources

Proposed Action

The proposed project area is located within a Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II Objective area. The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be low. Management activities may be seen from key observation points, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Currently the hill-climb does not meet the VRM standards. Specifically, the hill-climb can be seen from key observation points. The proposed action would be implemented using predominately natural materials and/or materials characteristic of the existing landscape. VRM standards would be enhanced.

No Action

By not implementing the proposed action the VRM standard would continue to be compromised and resource impacts would continue.



Views of hill-climb from U.S. Hwy 395, looking east

Soils and Vegetation

Proposed Action

Implementation of the proposed action would ameliorate current vehicular induced impacts such as soil compaction, erosion, and associated loss of soil stability and vegetation cover. The proposed action would over the long-term improve soil surface conditions and facilitate re-vegetation of native species.

No Action

By not implementing the proposed action continued impacts to soils and vegetation would occur. Increased losses of vegetation cover and increases in soil erosion and compaction would reduce overall site productivity and capacity for regeneration.

Invasive, non-native species

Proposed Action

Low densities of cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) occur within the project area, but not adjacent to or within any of the target routes associated with the proposed action. Implementation of the proposed action would help reduce the proliferation of these species by reducing off-road seed transport and route proliferation which creates suitable microsites for weed species.

No Action

By not implementing the proposed action increases in weed proliferation would likely occur because of ancillary effects of route proliferation.

Cumulative effects

The limited scale and magnitude of the proposed action and associated environmental impacts significantly reduces the probability of negative cumulative effects associated with project implementation. Positive effects would include an increase in view-shed benefits, a reduction in habitat fragmentation, soil erosion and invasive weeds. The proposed action would not contribute to negative cumulative effects to the human environment or resource values in, or adjacent to the proposed project vicinity.

Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts:

Protective measures were incorporated into the proposed project design and implementation requirements (Pages 2 and 3) to reduce the probability of residual impacts and the need for subsequent mitigation. No residual impacts are anticipated and no additional mitigation measures are needed or proposed.

Implementation Monitoring:

Bishop Field Office Botanist and Recreation Staff would direct and monitor project implementation to ensure conformance with project design and implementation requirements identified in the proposed action.

Effectiveness Monitoring:

Post project monitoring would be conducted annually to assess the effectiveness of the proposed project at meeting project objectives. Visitor use and compliance monitoring would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed project at meeting stated objectives to reduce OHV impacts to vegetation and soils.

Monitoring of the project would entail documenting visitor compliance on the closure and recovery of plant cover.

Monitoring report(s) would be attached to the original copy of this document.

Public Input:

To date several methods have been employed to receive public input to the proposed project; posting of the project on the California BLM website and personal communication with the members of the Bridgeport community.

Persons/Agencies Consulted:

Members of the Bridgeport Community
Paul McFarland, Friends of the Inyo (Wilderness Society)

References:

Bureau of Land Management. 1993. Bishop Resource Management Plan Record of Decision. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, California State Office, Sacramento, CA

Preparer(s):

Anne Halford, Botanist
Diana Pietrasanta, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Rich Williams, Outdoor Recreation Planner (OHV)
Terry Russi, Supervisory Wildlife Biologist

Date:

Reviewed By: _____ **Date:** _____
Joseph Pollini, Environmental Coordinator

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. The proposed project to close and restore a hill-climb in the Conway Summit Area has been designed to incorporate protective measures and implementation requirements that substantially reduce the potential for significant environmental impacts and no additional mitigation measures are required. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below would not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required.

There would be no negative effect on threatened or endangered species as a result of the action.

I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan, which was approved March 25, 1993. This plan has been reviewed, and the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

It is my decision to implement the project with the mitigation measures identified below.

Mitigation Measures/Remarks:

The following protective measures would be applied during restoration project implementation to reduce the probability of residual impacts and the need for subsequent mitigation:

1. Prior to any ground disturbing activity for route improvement, route re-route or route closure, the route would be surveyed for archaeological resources. Project design would be adjusted to avoid any such identified resources and ensure their protection. If previously undiscovered surface or subsurface cultural resources are found during project implementation, implementation would be stopped and the Bishop Field Office Archaeologist notified.
2. Vehicular access to the proposed project area would occur on an existing road/vehicle track.
3. Improvements to designated routes and adjacent parking areas and undeveloped campsites would be completed before redundant access routes to sites are closed to ensure recreational access.

4. The source of any road base or fill required for project implementation would be approved by the Bishop Field Office Botanist prior to use to avoid the spread of noxious weeds.
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9. Biological monitors would be present at the project site during construction-related activities.
10. Staging areas would be clearly flagged to prevent heavy equipment from damaging sensitive habitats and plant species.

Authorized Official: _____
Bill Dunkelberger, Field Office Manager

Date: _____