

# Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan



**August 2008**

## **COOPERATING AGENCIES:**

Great Basin National Park  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Nellis Air Force Base  
Nevada Department of Transportation  
Nevada Division of Minerals  
Nevada Department of Wildlife  
Nevada State Historic Preservation Office

Lincoln County  
Nye County  
White Pine County  
Duckwater Shoshone Tribe  
Ely Shoshone Tribe  
Moapa Band of Paiutes  
Yomba Shoshone Tribe



## **Ely District Approved Resource Management Plan**

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- Within desert tortoise ACECs: Tortoises and nests that are found will be handled and relocated by a qualified tortoise biologist in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved protocol. Burrows containing tortoises or nests will be excavated by hand, with hand tools, to allow removal of the tortoise or eggs. Desert tortoises moved during the tortoise inactive season or those in hibernation, regardless of date, will be placed into an adequate burrow; if one is not available, one will be constructed in accordance with Desert Tortoise Council protocol. During mild temperature periods in the spring and early fall, tortoises removed from the site will not necessarily be placed in a burrow. Tortoises and burrows will only be relocated to federally managed lands. If the responsible federal agency is not the BLM, verbal permission, followed by written concurrence, will be obtained before relocating the tortoise or eggs to lands not managed by the BLM.
- Desert tortoises moved in the winter (i.e., November 1 through February 28/29), or those in hibernation regardless of date, will be placed into an adequate burrow; if one is not available, one will be constructed utilizing the protocol for burrows in Section B.5.f. of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-approved guidelines (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1994).
- All projects in desert tortoise habitat will be reviewed by the BLM's wildlife staff to ensure that appropriate measures have been incorporated into the BLM authorization (e.g., material site, land sale, or off-highway vehicle event) to minimize the potential take of desert tortoise and loss of habitat.
- A BLM representative(s) will be designated and will be responsible for overseeing compliance with terms and conditions of all permitted activities and reporting requirements. The designated representative will provide coordination among the permittee, project proponent, the BLM, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **Parameter – Mojave and Great Basin Desert Scrub and Salt Desert Shrub Habitats**

**SS-34:** Identify the spatial and temporal habitat needs for the western burrowing owl to help achieve the desired range of conditions of the various vegetation communities (see the discussion on Vegetation Resources).

**SS-35:** Work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife and other partners (e.g., Great Basin Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight) to conduct breeding bird surveys to document the population status and trends of western burrowing owls.

**SS-36:** Inventory and monitor populations of the Sunnyside green gentian in conjunction with the development of the White River Valley ACEC management plan.

### **Parameter – Great Basin Sagebrush Habitat**

**SS-37:** Manage greater sage-grouse habitat by implementing those actions and strategies identified in the BLM National Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy, Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for

Nevada and Eastern California, and local greater sage-grouse conservation plans that the Ely District Office has the authority to implement (also see Appendix D).

**SS-38:** Maintain intact and quality sagebrush habitat. Prioritize habitat maintenance actions from the BLM National Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy to: 1) maintain large areas of high quality sagebrush currently occupied by greater sage-grouse; 2) maintain habitats which connect seasonal sagebrush habitats in occupied source habitats; and 3) maintain habitats that connect seasonal sagebrush habitats in occupied isolated habitats (also see Appendix D).

**SS-39:** Implement proactive and large scale management actions to restore lost, degraded, or fragmented sagebrush habitats and increase greater sage-grouse populations. Prioritize habitat restoration actions from the BLM National Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy to: 1) reconnect large patches of high quality seasonal habitats, which greater sage-grouse currently occupy; 2) enlarge sagebrush habitat in areas greater sage-grouse currently occupy; 3) reconnect stronghold/source habitats currently occupied by greater sage-grouse with isolated habitats currently occupied by greater sage-grouse; 4) reconnect currently occupied and isolated habitats; 5) restore potential sagebrush habitats that currently are not occupied by greater sage-grouse. Develop allowable use restrictions in greater sage-grouse habitats undergoing restoration, on a case-by-case basis, as dictated by monitoring (also see Appendix D).

**SS-40:** Outside of designated corridors, above-ground facilities will not be constructed within 0.25 mile of greater sage-grouse leks. Underground facilities will not be installed within 0.25 mile of greater sage-grouse leks unless the vegetation can be established to pre-disturbance conditions within a reasonable period of time. No new roads will be constructed within 0.25 mile of greater sage-grouse leks. Exceptions may be granted by the authorized officer, in consultation with Nevada Department of Wildlife, if the project can be designed so that it will not affect breeding activity nor degrade the integrity of the habitat associated with the lek, or if the lek has been inactive for at least 5 consecutive years or the habitat has changed such that there is no likelihood that the lek will become active.

**SS-41:** Where appropriate, restrict permitted activities from March 1 through May 15 within 2 miles of an active greater sage-grouse lek (see **Map 8**).

**SS-42:** Where appropriate, restrict permitted activities from November 1 through March 31 within greater sage-grouse winter range (see **Map 8**).

**SS-43:** Survey all proposed ground disturbing activities in suitable pygmy rabbit habitat utilizing the appropriate protocol. Surveys will be completed by a qualified biologist approved by the Ely District Office (also see Appendix D).

### ***Monitoring – Special Status Species***

In conjunction with other private, state, or federal agencies, monitoring of known populations of special status species that are considered to be important indicators or obligates to a particular habitat community type (such as greater sage-grouse for sagebrush communities) will continue. Monitoring could consist of

## **Watershed**

The planning area has been divided into 61 watershed units (entire watersheds or manageable portions thereof). Watershed conditions are controlled by climate, geology, topography, vegetation, and soil characteristics. Vegetation and soil conditions change naturally over time in response to climate, fire, and other natural processes and management. The rate water is captured by the watershed, the amount of storage available, and the rate and location of water release depends on the amount and type of vegetation and type and condition of soil. Thus, healthy watersheds are dependent on achieving or maintaining land health standards.

### ***Goals – Watershed***

Manage watersheds to achieve and maintain resource functions and conditions required for healthy lands and sustainable uses.

### **Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Standards**

- Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, and land form.
- Riparian and wetland areas exhibit a properly functioning condition and achieve state water quality criteria.
- Habitats exhibit a healthy, productive, and diverse population of native and/or desirable plant species, appropriate to the site characteristics; to provide suitable feed, water, cover, and living space for animal species; and maintain ecological processes. Habitat conditions meet the life cycle requirements of threatened and endangered species.
- Land use plans will recognize cultural resources within the context of multiple use.

### **Mojave/Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Standards**

- Watershed soils and stream banks should have adequate stability to resist accelerated erosion, maintain soil productivity, and sustain the hydrologic cycle.
- Watersheds should possess the necessary ecological components to achieve state water quality criteria, maintain ecological processes, and sustain appropriate uses.
- Riparian and wetlands vegetation should have structural and species diversity characteristic of the stage of stream channel succession in order to provide forage and cover; capture sediment; and capture, retain, and safely release water (watershed function).

- Habitats and watersheds should sustain a level of biodiversity appropriate for the area and conducive to appropriate uses. Habitats of special status species should be able to sustain viable populations of those species.

***Objectives – Watershed***

To manage watersheds that display physical and biological conditions or functions required for necessary ecological components to achieve state water quality criteria, maintain ecological processes, and sustain appropriate uses.

***Management Actions – Watershed***

**WS-1:** Perform watershed analysis initially on the following watersheds: North Spring Valley, Antelope Valley, Gleason Creek, Smith Valley, South Steptoe Valley, Clover Creek South, North Antelope Valley, Steptoe A, and Spring Valley. When these analyses are complete, analyze the high priority watersheds listed in **Table 24** followed by the low priority watersheds.

**Table 24  
Watershed Priority for Analysis and Treatment**

| <b>Watershed Name</b> | <b>Priority</b> | <b>Watershed Name</b>    | <b>Priority</b> | <b>Watershed Name</b>       | <b>Priority</b> |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Antelope Valley       | High            | North Spring Valley      | High            | Big Sand Springs Valley     | Low             |
| Beaver Dam Wash       | High            | Panaca Valley            | High            | Butte                       | Low             |
| Cave Valley           | High            | Patterson Wash           | High            | Central Little Smoky Valley | Low             |
| Clover Creek North    | High            | Rose Valley              | High            | Coal Valley                 | Low             |
| Clover Creek South    | High            | Smith Valley             | High            | Deep Creek                  | Low             |
| Coyote Springs        | High            | Snake Valley South       | High            | Delamar Valley              | Low             |
| Dry Lake Valley       | High            | South Spring Valley      | High            | Duck Creek Basin            | Low             |
| Dry Valley            | High            | South Steptoe Valley     | High            | Egan Basin                  | Low             |
| Duck Water            | High            | Spring Valley            | High            | Emmigrant                   | Low             |
| Eagle Valley          | High            | Spring Valley South East | High            | Fox-gap Mountain            | Low             |
| Escalante Desert      | High            | Spring Valley South West | High            | Garden Valley               | Low             |
| Gleason Creek         | High            | Steptoe A                | High            | Jakes Valley                | Low             |
| Hamblin Valley        | High            | Steptoe B                | High            | North Little Smoky Valley   | Low             |
| Huntington            | High            | Steptoe C                | High            | Park Range                  | Low             |
| Kane Spring Wash      | High            | Tikaboo Valley           | High            | Railroad Valley             | Low             |
| Lake Valley           | High            | Toquop Wash              | High            | Ruby Valley                 | Low             |
| Long Valley           | High            | Tule Desert              | High            | Sand Hollow Wash            | Low             |
| Meadow Valley Wash N  | High            | White River Central      | High            | Sand Spring Valley          | Low             |
| Meadow Valley Wash S  | High            | White River North        | High            | Snake Valley North          | Low             |
| Newark                | High            | White River South        | High            | South Little Smoky Valley   | Low             |
| North Antelope Valley | High            |                          |                 |                             |                 |

**WS-2:** Additional forage resulting from implementation of vegetation restoration projects identified through the watershed analysis process will be allocated to livestock and wild horses and/or reserved for watershed maintenance and wildlife, depending on the degree of watershed function required to maintain rangeland health standards.

## **Special Designations Management**

This section deals with a variety of special designations mandated by a number of laws, regulations, and policies. Included are ACECs, the BLM's Back Country Byway program, wilderness designated by Congress, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, and other special designations such as National Historic Trails.

Section 202(c)(3) of Federal Land Policy and Management Act mandates that priority be given to the designation and protection of ACECs. These areas are defined in section 103(a) as areas where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important values, resources, systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.

### ***Goals – Special Designations Management***

Evaluate areas of interest for special designation and appropriately manage those areas that meet necessary requirements.

### ***Objectives – Special Designations Management***

To ensure that multiple use activities within the planning area are consistent with the management plans developed for special designation areas such as ACECs.

### ***Management Actions – Special Designations Management***

#### **Parameter – Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

**SD-1:** Manage the Kane Springs, Mormon Mesa, and Beaver Dam Slope ACECs primarily for the recovery of the desert tortoise (203,670 acres) (see **Map 23** and **Table 26**; also see Appendices C and D).

**SD-2:** Develop management plans for the Kane Springs, Beaver Dam Slope, Mormon Mesa, and Lower Meadow Valley Wash ACECs within 3 years to address and implement multiple-use management actions and conservation measures for desert tortoise and Southwestern willow flycatcher. When completing the management plan for Lower Meadow Valley Wash ACEC, all Union Pacific rights-of-way (approximately 2,675 acres) located within the ACEC will receive special consideration noting the legal limitations contained in the right-of-way grants (also see Appendix D).

**SD-3:** Designate 16 ACECs totaling an additional 106,980 acres. See **Map 23** and **Table 26** for additional information including management prescriptions for each of the ACECs.

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**Table 26 (Continued)**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Shoshone Ponds (1,240 acres)</b>              |   |
| <b>Management Activities</b>                     | <b>Management Prescriptions</b>                                   |
| Land Use Authorization                           | Exclusion area; rights-of-way will not be granted within the area |
| Off-highway vehicle use                          | Limited <sup>3</sup>  |
| Visual resource management class                 | III   |
| Plant collecting                                 | Closed  |
| Road maintenance                                 | Limited <sup>5</sup>  |
| Leasable minerals                                | No surface occupancy  |
| Locatable minerals                               | Closed  |
| Mineral materials                                | Closed  |
| Lands disposal                                   | No disposals  |
| Fire management                                  | Limited <sup>12</sup>   |
| Transportation                                   | Limited   |
| Livestock management                             | Available <sup>6</sup>  |
| Fuelwood cutting                                 | Closed  |
| Renewable energy                                 | Closed <sup>7</sup>   |
| <b>Snake Creek Indian Burial Cave (40 acres)</b> |   |
| <b>Management Activities</b>                     | <b>Management Prescriptions</b>                                   |
| Land Use Authorization                           | Avoidance area <sup>2</sup>                                       |
| Off-highway vehicle use                          | Limited <sup>3</sup>  |
| Visual resource management class                 | III   |
| Plant collecting                                 | Limited <sup>4</sup>  |
| Road maintenance                                 | Limited <sup>5</sup>  |
| Leasable minerals                                | No surface occupancy  |
| Locatable minerals                               | Closed  |
| Mineral materials                                | Closed  |
| Lands disposal                                   | No disposals  |
| Fire management                                  | Open <sup>6</sup>   |
| Transportation                                   | No new roads  |
| Livestock management                             | Unavailable   |
| Fuelwood cutting                                 | Not applicable  |
| Renewable energy                                 | Closed <sup>7</sup>   |
| <b>Swamp Cedar (3,200 acres)</b>                 |   |
| <b>Management Activities</b>                     | <b>Management Prescriptions</b>                                   |
| Land Use Authorization                           | Avoidance area <sup>2</sup>                                       |
| Off-highway vehicle use                          | Limited <sup>3</sup>  |
| Visual resource management class                 | III   |
| Plant collecting                                 | Closed  |
| Road maintenance                                 | Limited <sup>5</sup>  |
| Leasable minerals                                | No surface occupancy  |
| Locatable minerals                               | Closed  |
| Mineral materials                                | Closed  |
| Lands disposal                                   | No disposals  |
| Fire management                                  | Limited <sup>12</sup>   |
| Transportation                                   | Limited   |
| Livestock management                             | Available <sup>8</sup>  |
| Fuelwood cutting                                 | Closed  |
| Renewable energy                                 | Closed <sup>7</sup>   |

Table 26 (Continued)

| White River Valley (13,100 acres) |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Management Activities             | Management Prescriptions    |
| Land Use Authorization            | Avoidance area <sup>2</sup> |
| Off-highway vehicle use           | Limited <sup>3</sup>        |
| Visual resource management class  | III, IV                     |
| Plant collecting                  | Limited <sup>4</sup>        |
| Road maintenance                  | Limited <sup>5</sup>        |
| Leasable minerals                 | No surface occupancy        |
| Locatable minerals                | Closed                      |
| Mineral materials                 | Closed                      |
| Lands disposal                    | No disposals                |
| Fire management                   | Limited <sup>12</sup>       |
| Transportation                    | No new roads                |
| Livestock management              | Available <sup>8</sup>      |
| Fuelwood cutting                  | Not applicable              |
| Renewable energy                  | Closed <sup>7</sup>         |

- <sup>1</sup> Acres within the existing Beaver Dam Slope, Kane Springs, and Mormon Mesa ACECs are those within the planning area (see **Map 23**).
- <sup>2</sup> Avoidance area; granting rights-of-way (surface, subsurface, aerial) within the area will be avoided, but rights-of-way may be granted if there is minimal conflict with identified resource values and impacts can be mitigated.
- <sup>3</sup> Off-highway vehicle use is limited to designated roads and trails. Areas within ACECs designated as wilderness are closed to off-highway vehicle use.
- <sup>4</sup> Plant materials, including common species, may be collected by permit only.
- <sup>5</sup> Road maintenance is limited to the designated roadway; shoulder barrow/ditch construction is limited to only that necessary to ensure public safety and serviceability of the road.
- <sup>6</sup> The activity is allowed in the area. NEPA compliance and clearances for cultural resources and threatened and endangered species required for some activities.
- <sup>7</sup> Closed to renewable energy facilities; avoidance area for ancillary rights-of-way for access roads, transmission lines, and pipelines.
- <sup>8</sup> Livestock grazing is controlled through terms and conditions on the grazing permit.
- <sup>9</sup> Rights-of-way; limit authorization of future communication sites to existing established rights-of-way unless technically unfeasible and encourage use of existing corridors for all future rights-of-way when possible.
- <sup>10</sup> Exception requires Section 7 consultation with a no adverse impact conclusion.
- <sup>11</sup> Subject to exception for valid claims existing prior to designation as an ACEC.
- <sup>12</sup> Limits could be placed on fire management activities.
- <sup>13</sup> Closed except for free use permits and federal highway material site rights-of-way on a 1-mile corridor, 0.5 mile each side of road on three designated roads.
- <sup>14</sup> Open with special stipulations. Open to mineral material activities subject to controlled surface use, seasonal timing restrictions, restricted or no uses in avoidance areas (e.g., riparian areas, live water, areas with special wildlife or plant features, and sensitive viewsheds), additional NEPA analysis, and Section 7 consultation.

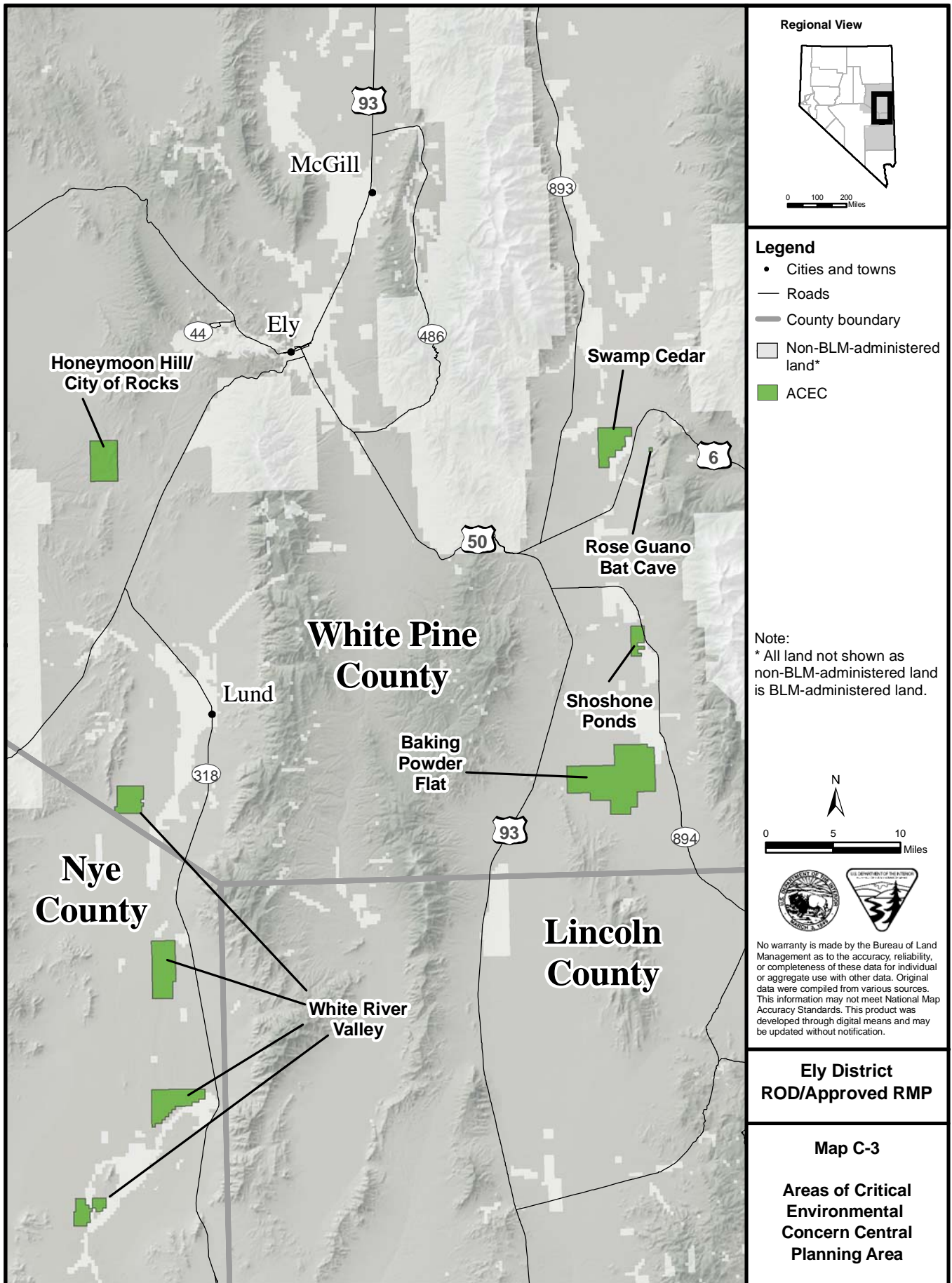
**Parameter – Back Country Byways**

**SD-4:** Retain the Mount Wilson Back Country Byway. In addition, designate the Rainbow Canyon and the Silver State Trail as back country byways (see **Map 24**).

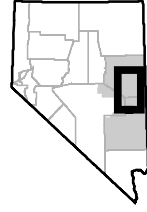
**Parameter – Designated Wilderness**

**SD-5:** Manage 22 designated wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964; the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act of 1989; the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2004; the White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2006.





**Regional View**

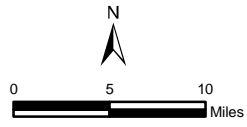


0 100 200 Miles

**Legend**

- Cities and towns
- Roads
- County boundary
- Non-BLM-administered land\*
- ACEC

Note:  
\* All land not shown as non-BLM-administered land is BLM-administered land.



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**Ely District  
ROD/Approved RMP**

**Map C-3  
Areas of Critical  
Environmental  
Concern Central  
Planning Area**