



United States Department of Agriculture

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

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News Release

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Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Issues Draft Decision on Oil and Gas Leasing in the Ruby Mountains

Sparks, NV., March 14, 2019 – The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest released the Ruby Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing Availability Analysis draft Decision Notice/Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and final Environmental Assessment (EA) for a 45-day formal objection period. The Forest Supervisor selected the No Leasing Alternative where none of the National Forest System (NFS) lands within the analysis area would be available for oil and gas leasing.

Forest Supervisor Bill Dunkelberger said his decision is the result of detailed analysis and extensive involvement of citizens and communities. The analysis revealed unfavorable geologic conditions in the area, meaning that there is little to no potential of oil and gas resources in the area. This, coupled with concerns over potential impacts to wildlife and to the recreational and scenic values of the iconic Nevada landscape, led to the No Leasing Alternative.

Dunkelberger added that camping, hunting, fishing and motorized recreation are popular activities in the proposed lease area and represent part of a \$12.5 billion recreation industry in Nevada—an industry that supports 87,000 jobs statewide.

The NFS lands analyzed are located between Lamoille Creek and Sherman Creek in the Ruby Mountains in Elko County, Nevada. These lands total approximately 52,533 acres. Mapping found that nearly all of the analysis area has very low to no oil and gas potential because of unfavorable geologic conditions.

The Ruby Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing Analysis began in 2017, when the USDA Forest Service was informed by the Bureau of Land Management that interest had been received regarding oil and gas leasing in the Ruby Mountains area. Before leasing can be approved, the Forest Service was required to analyze any impact lease activities would have. This helps inform the decision on whether a proposed project can proceed, and if so, what stipulations, if any, are applied to that work.



The Forest Service received more than 14,000 comments on the project documents during two previous comment periods. These comments played a critical role in the Forest decision. “Receiving so many comments shows how engaged the public is with this project,” said Dunkelberger, “their involvement is critical in getting a firm understanding of what concerns our communities have, what they value, and how our work and decisions can best serve their needs.”

Objections will be accepted for 45 days following publication of the legal notice in the Elko Daily Free Press. The publication date is the only means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objections will be accepted from anyone who previously submitted specific written comments during designated comment periods. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted comments, unless based on new information arising after designated opportunities to comment. Project documents can be found at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52443>.

Objections must be submitted to Reviewing Officer, Intermountain Region U.S. Forest Service, 324 25th Street, Ogden UT, 84401, or hand-delivered during normal business hours from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays. Facsimiles can be sent to 801-625-5277.

Electronic objections must be submitted in a format such as an email message, pdf, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to: objections-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Please put “Ruby Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing” into the subject line.

For more information on this project please contact Josh Nicholes, District Ranger, at 775-778-6109 or jnicholes@fs.fed.us.

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The Humboldt-Toiyabe's spectacular 6.3 million acres make it the largest national forest in the lower 48 states. Located in Nevada and a small portion of eastern California, the Forest offers year-round recreation of all types.

