

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Idaho Resource Advisory Council
Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee Meeting
September 22, 2022, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time
Virtual Via Zoom**

Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee Members:

Name	Location	Interest Represented/Affiliation
Present:		
Leon Smith		Federal Grazing
Scott Nichols		Dispersed Recreation
Dan Sakura		Japanese-American Community
Roy Prescott		BLM livestock grazing permittee
Ted MacNeil		Magic Valley ATV Riders
George Lynch		Idaho Governor’s Office of Energy and Mineral Resources
Garret Visser		Idaho Wildlife Federation
Ben Crouch		Jerome County Commissioners
Wayne Schenk		Minidoka County Commissioners
Rebecca Wood		Lincoln County Commissioners
Shauna Robinson		Historic Preservation
Brenda Pace		Archaeological and Historic Interests
Chad Colter		Tribal Interests
Absent:		
Jack Johnson		Twin Falls County Commissioner

BLM staff:

Name	Title	Office
Mike Courtney	District Manager	Twin Falls District Office
Codie Martin	Field Manager	Shoshone Field Office
Kasey Prestwich	Project Manager	Shoshone Field Office
Heather Tiel-Nelson	Public Affairs Specialist	Twin Falls District Office
Jennifer Jones	Deputy State Director, Communications	Idaho State Office
Hannah Cain	Public Affairs Specialist	Idaho State Office
Nancy Haug	Facilitator	Kearns and West

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Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Welcome; Leader's Intent

Presenters: Mike Courtney, District Manager, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Twin Falls District and Designated Federal Official (DFO) for the BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council Proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee (Subcommittee); Leon Smith, Chair, Subcommittee/Member, BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council; Scott Nichols, Chair, BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council/Vice-Chair, Subcommittee.

Mike Courtney and Leon Smith welcomed Subcommittee members and members of the public to the fourth Subcommittee meeting and thanked them for attending. Courtney informed participants that the Lava Ridge Wind Project schedule is being revised and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will likely not be released before the end of 2022. He provided an overview of the Twin Falls District Conflict Map (Conflict Map), which shows the location of designated Wilderness Areas, Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas, designated Sage-grouse habitat and other sites where renewable energy projects cannot be constructed primarily as a result of decisions that have been made in the process of maintaining Resource Management Plans. The Conflict Map includes one site, Cotterel Mountain, where wind energy projects cannot be constructed due to congressional legislation. The Conflict Map also shows the location of areas where renewable energy projects can be constructed, which represents about 30% of the public land within the Twin Falls District.

Courtney explained that the purpose of the Subcommittee meeting is for members to discuss topics and issues that were the focus of presentations during previous meetings. The BLM is in the process of scheduling Subcommittee meetings that will be held after the DEIS is released. During those meetings, the BLM will provide information about the DEIS and will ask Subcommittee members to review the DEIS and range of alternatives to ensure that the BLM has addressed identified issues.

Subcommittee members asked if the Conflict Map would be available to the public. Courtney stated that the map will be posted on the Subcommittee website.

Agenda Item: Agenda Review and Housekeeping; Approve August 25, 2022 Subcommittee Meeting Minutes;

Presenter: Nancy Haug, Facilitator

Haug reviewed the agenda and explained that it is organized around identified topics of concern that have been the focus of presentations during previous Subcommittee meetings. The goal is to capture Subcommittee members' key points, ideas, and concerns.

Smith asked Subcommittee members for a motion to approve the minutes of the Thursday, August 25 Subcommittee meeting. Roy Prescott made a motion that was seconded by

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Shauna Robinson. Subcommittee members unanimously approved the motion.

Agenda Item: Check-in; round robin

Presenters: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Haug invited Subcommittee members to express their thoughts about the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project (Project) and/or the Subcommittee process. Dan Sakura stated that he is very concerned about the proposed project as it is incompatible with efforts to preserve the Minidoka National Historic Site unimpaired for future generations and with environmental and racial justice goals. Garret Visser expressed concerns regarding impacts of the proposed project on wintering wildlife and wildlife habitat as well as the cumulative impacts on these resources of numerous renewable energy projects that are proposed in southern Idaho. Ted MacNeil stated that he is concerned about the potential loss of access for outdoor recreation to the proposed project area. Chad Colter expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed project, as well as other renewable energy projects that are proposed in southern Idaho, on Tribal Treaty Rights for off reservation hunting, fishing, and gathering as well as cultural resources. Wayne Schenk expressed concerns that the proposed project is incompatible with existing uses of the area and that potential impacts cannot be mitigated due to the proposed project size. Roy Prescott encouraged Subcommittee members to reserve opinions on the proposed project until the DEIS is released, which will present the science and analysis necessary to make informed judgments. Rebecca Wood stated that she is looking forward to release of the DEIS and wrapping up the Subcommittee process. Brenda Pace expressed concerns regarding potential impacts of the proposed project on birds, bats, and caves and that she is interested to see how the Section 106 agreements protect these interrelated resources. She stated that she will be looking to see how the DEIS presents inventories and mitigations for bat species that are threatened with extinction largely due to the impacts of wind turbines. Ben Crouch stated that he is interested to see how the DEIS addresses the list of questions that he presented during the Thursday, August 25 Subcommittee meeting. Shauna Robinson expressed concerns regarding the potential of the proposed project on natural and cultural resources, including viewsheds that are important to the historic integrity of the Minidoka National Historic Site, Oregon Trail, and Native American sites as well as the identity of Idaho as a State. George Lynch requested clarification on BLM expectations for input from the Subcommittee and stated he supports a comprehensive process that would identify appropriate locations for renewable energy projects and prioritize proposed projects. Scott Nichols encouraged Subcommittee members to ensure that their judgments on the proposed project are based on science and not only emotion.

Courtney stated that the BLM's expectation is that the Subcommittee gather information and research and presents that to the BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council so that they can advise the BLM on whether the DEIS alternatives for the proposed project address all of the issues. In addition, as he discussed during the Thursday, August 25 Subcommittee meeting, there are themes that are common to all proposed renewable energy projects that

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would be helpful for the BLM for the Subcommittee to discuss.

Agenda Item: Review and discuss information obtained during field tour and previous meetings. Tribal perspective/cultural resources and Minidoka National Historic Site/Japanese-American community. Outcome: key points/ideas/concerns

Presenters: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Dan Sakura stated that the 2006 National Park Service General Management Plan identifies scenic vistas and the sense of isolation as fundamental resources and values of the Minidoka National Historic Site. He urged the BLM to ensure this is considered in the analysis of the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project (project) and to support the National Park Service in preserving this site by developing administrative protections on nearby public lands. Sakura expressed concerns that visual resource classes for nearby public lands that could impact construction of the proposed project have not been determined through the land use planning process. He recommended that the BLM pause consideration of the proposed project and adopt a comprehensive approach to renewable energy development based on four elements: 1) community support; 2) alignment with environmental and racial justice and Tribal sovereignty; 3) sound land use planning; and 4) Smart From The Start siting principles.

Chad Colter expressed concerns about the large amount of public lands in Idaho that are currently being proposed for renewable energy projects to generate electricity for private monetary gain. He stated that the Tribes support decentralized renewable energy projects where power is generated and used locally. Colter urged the BLM to follow laws that protect nonrenewable cultural resources for Tribes and to ensure that the DEIS considers impacts of the proposed project on Tribal Treaty Rights for off reservation hunting, fishing, and gathering. He stated that the Tribes support a comprehensive approach to renewable energy development in southern Idaho.

Wayne Schenk expressed concerns that proposed mitigation strategies will not be effective in reducing impacts to the Minidoka National Historic Site or on Tribal Treaty Rights and cultural resources. Subcommittee members suggested adding areas with Tribal Treaty Rights and Japanese American incarceration sites to the Twin Falls District Conflict Map as well as any other Conflict Maps the BLM produces for Idaho.

Brenda Pace and Shauna Robinson emphasized the importance of obtaining local input and site specific information so that concerns can be effectively addressed as well as a comprehensive approach that considers the cumulative impacts of all proposed renewable energy development projects. Shauna suggested that public surveys be the first step in the project application process.

Dan Sakura expressed concerns that the Conflict Map is not accurate and shows land as being open for renewable energy development when it isn't because the Monument Resource Management Plan does not include visual resource classes based on current visual

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resource inventories.

Ted MacNeil expressed concerns that the electricity that would be generated by the proposed project would be too little to justify the amount of public land it would require and the impacts on outdoor recreation and wildlife.

Mike Courtney stated that the new visual resource inventory will be included in the DEIS and that the BLM would like Subcommittee input on it.

Agenda Item: Wildlife/avian/outdoor recreation issues.

Outcome: key points/ideas/concerns

Presenters: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Garret Visser expressed concerns regarding the lack of scientific studies and information about the impacts of wind energy projects on wildlife habitat. He stated that he is particularly concerned about potential impacts of the proposed project, and the cumulative impacts of all proposed renewable energy development projects, on winter range in southern Idaho as it is geographically restricted. He suggested that BLM take a proactive, big picture, long term approach to renewable energy development by initiating an Idaho specific programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for wind, solar, and battery projects.

Brenda Pace expressed concerns regarding potential impacts of the proposed project on bats and birds and the lack of information about local populations and sites. She suggested conducting acoustic monitoring at known bat hibernaculum and lava tube caves and other sites within and around the proposed project area to collect local baseline data regarding present and migrating bat populations to support assessment studies. Brenda also suggested conducting surveys to gather site specific information regarding migratory bird habitat within the proposed project area.

Wayne Schenk expressed concerns regarding the potential impacts of constructing new roads and fences, as well as modifying existing roads, within the proposed project area on wintering and migrating wildlife.

Chad Colter expressed concerns regarding potential impacts of the proposed project on Tribal Treaty Rights for off reservation hunting due to reductions in wildlife populations that could occur as well as restrictions on access to the proposed project area that could be imposed for administrative purposes.

Shauna Robinson suggested that potential impacts of the proposed project on rabbits, insects, butterflies, reptiles, and lizards, and snakes should also be monitored and Ted MacNeil suggested that potential impacts of the proposed project on duck and geese migration should be identified.

Kasey Prestwich, Project Manager for the BLM, clarified that no general restrictions on

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access to public lands within the proposed project area have been proposed or are being considered at this time. However, some small areas could be closed temporarily during construction to ensure public safety.

Dan Sakura and Shauna Robinson suggested that the BLM incorporate human perspectives on natural and cultural resources, for example the spiritual significance of eagles that inhabit public lands to Native Americans, to the Conflict Map.

Agenda Item: Water rights/roads/fire

Outcome: key points/ideas/concerns

Presenters: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Wayne Schenk expressed concerns that newly constructed roads and modified existing roads within the proposed project area would not be effective firebreaks during a wind driven fire given current high fuel loads. He also stated that in terms of benefits of the proposed project, Minidoka County would receive revenue from property taxes.

Garret Visser expressed concerns about the potential impacts of newly constructed and modified roads and fences within the proposed project area on wildlife and requested additional information about road decommissioning and reclamation at the end of the proposed project lifespan.

Scott Nichols requested information about the actual lifespan of the proposed project, if/when it will be reclaimed or removed, and if there is a possibility that it could become a permanent fixture on the landscape.

Chad Colter expressed concerns about wildlife habitat fragmentation due to constructing new roads and fences, and modifying existing roads, within the proposed project area and emphasized the need for avoidance measures to reduce impacts of roads on wildlife.

In response to a Subcommittee member question regarding potential impacts on aerial firefighting within the proposed project area, Mike Courtney clarified that the Federal Aviation Administration does not prohibit aerial firefighting within wind energy project sites, it is up to individual pilots to determine whether to fly in those areas.

Brenda Pace and Shauna Robinson requested the BLM to determine whether any historic travel routes, such as the Oregon Trail, are located within or near the proposed project area. If there are, potential impacts to them should be addressed in Class 2 Cultural Resource Surveys and the DEIS. Potential impacts should include viewsheds as these are important to preserve the historic integrity of historic travel routes and key components of National Register of Historic Places designations.

Shauna Robinson expressed concerns that constructing new roads, and modifying existing roads, within the proposed project area could facilitate the spread of invasive grass species

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that could lead to large, severe wildfires.

Agenda Item: Smart from the Start siting principles/decommissioning/rehabilitation.

Outcome: key points/ideas/concerns

Presenters: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Dan Sakura expressed support for following Smart From The Start siting principles as a means for the BLM to avoid controversy, delay, uncertainty, litigation, and political risk when considering proposed renewable energy development projects. He provided information about successful use of these principles in siting renewable energy projects in other states including North Carolina, Colorado, Nevada, and California.

Chad Colter stated that the Tribes support using Start From the Start siting principles and reiterated that Tribes believe that power produced by renewable energy projects should be distributed to local communities.

Wayne Schenk expressed concerns regarding the economic feasibility of decommissioning the proposed project at the end of its lifespan three feet below ground. Luke Papez confirmed Magic Valley Energy's commitment to that. Mike Courtney stated that there will be a decommissioning plan and that Magic Valley Energy will be required to post a bond to ensure it will be completed as planned. Papez explained Magic Valley's financial incentives through bonding to complete decommissioning as planned, including meeting success standards for rehabilitation and reclamation.

Agenda Item: Land Use Planning

Outcome: key points/ideas/concerns

Presenter: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Dan Sakura reiterated concerns that the Monument Resource Management Plan does not have visual resource management classes and requested information about the BLM's plans to complete Visual Resource Inventories/visual resource management classes. Dave Freiberg, Outdoor Recreation Planner, BLM clarified that BLM has completed a draft project level Visual Resource Inventory for the proposed project area that will be summarized in the DEIS. This could also be used as a basis to designate visual management classes through amending the existing Monument Resource Management Plan or developing a new Resource Management Plan for the area.

Brenda Pace suggested that once visual resource management classes are developed through the land use planning process, they be included in Conflict Maps.

Dan Sakura expressed concerns that BLM is not meeting requirements to coordinate land use planning with the National Park Service as the Monument Resource Management Plan does not appear to be aligned with the General Management Plans for the Minidoka

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National Historic Site.

Agenda Item: Check-out; round robin

Presenter: Nancy Haug, Facilitator; Subcommittee Members

Nancy Haug asked Subcommittee members to respond to three questions: 1) What have you learned today or what has surprised you?; 2) Setting aside your concerns, what benefit(s) might you see in this project; and 3) What is missing at this point in the process?

Shauna Robinson requested additional information regarding Conflict Map criteria. She stated that one of the benefits of the proposed project is that it has unified many people in the local area around protecting the land. Shauna requested information about the monitoring process for bird/bat kills and urged the BLM to develop strategies for monitoring impacts of the proposed projects on people as well.

Dan Sakura stated that he was surprised to learn about the legislation that prohibited wind energy development on Cotterel Mountain. He stated that he sees benefits of the proposed project to California residents who will be receiving the power that is generated by it. Dan agreed with Shauna Robinson that unity in the community to protect public land is one of the benefits of the proposed project. He stated that he has learned a lot about the operation of energy markets through participating in the Subcommittee.

Brenda Pace stated that she was surprised that aerial firefighting might still be possible within the proposed project area and that could be a benefit of the proposed project. She also identified the ability of offset power generation that may be lost if the Snake River dams are removed as a potential benefit of the proposed project. Brenda stated that what is missing at this point in the process is detailed information about strategies to mitigate and minimize adverse effects from the outset through operational considerations.

Ted MacNeil stated that benefits of the proposed project would be for California and Nevada residents who would receive power generated by it. He expressed gratitude for the artwork/images that Dan Sakura shared earlier in the meeting.

Chad Colter mentioned the Conflict Map and emphasized the importance of keeping locally generated power for local communities.

Garret Visser urged the BLM to include additional information in the Conflict Map, including the human element. He agreed with Shauna Robinson and Dan Sakura that a benefit of the proposed project was unifying diverse groups of people. Garret Visser identified that what is missing is public support for the proposed project.

Leon Smith stated that benefits of the proposed project are primarily to residents of other States who will receive the power that will be generated by it. He identified what's missing at this point is prioritization of what is most important, i.e. the land, the community, the

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history, or renewable energy. Leon also expressed concern about the future of wind energy and that once a project is constructed if it is determined to be inefficient in the future it will not be easy to rectify.

Roy Prescott stated that one of the benefits of the proposed project is the revenue that the Counties and taxing districts will receive. He emphasized the importance of obtaining all the facts and information prior to making a decision on the proposal.

Rebecca Wood expressed concern about the available data related to the efficiency of wind turbines and asked for suggestions on how to reach more people about proposed projects.

Wayne Schenk expressed appreciation for comments related to the Cotterel legislation.

Agenda Item: Public comment period

Ten members of the public provided comments to the Subcommittee: Patricia Weber, Conservation Chair, Prairie Falcon Audubon Society; Dr. Dave Makings; Diana Nielson; Jerry Holton; John Robison, Public Lands Director, Idaho Conservation League; Mary Abo; Diane Honda; JoEtta Abo; Steve Miller; and John Arkoosh.

One individual urged the BLM to approve the proposed project, and all other proposed renewable energy projects, as quickly as possible to reduce use of fossil fuels, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and provide a stable, reliable source of energy. One individual expressed support for the enhanced road access that the proposed project would provide and the potential financial benefits for local communities. Some individuals expressed support for renewable energy, wind projects that are sited appropriately, and for a comprehensive approach to renewable energy development on public lands in Idaho. Several individuals expressed concerns about the proposed project. These include: potential risks to birds and wildlife; proposed project footprint and location; transmission of energy that would be produced to other States; lack of lithium battery recycling facilities in Idaho; potential impacts on the Snake River aquifer and wells; potential impacts on viewsheds; potential impacts on hunting opportunities; age of Monument Resource Management Plan; potential of the proposed project to become a permanent fixture on the landscape; adequacy of bonds to cover reclamation and rehabilitation costs; potential impacts on outdoor recreation; potential impacts on livestock grazing; potential impacts of construction of new roads and modification of existing roads.

Agenda Item: Closing Remarks

Presenter: Mike Courtney

Mike Courtney thanked Subcommittee members and members of the public for participating in the Subcommittee meeting. He emphasized that the DEIS will address virtually all the issues that the Subcommittee has been exploring, including detailed analysis of alternatives and mitigation. Future Subcommittee meetings will be scheduled once the

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DEIS release date has been determined. The BLM will ask the Subcommittee to review the DEIS to determine if all issues have been addressed and if anything has been missed. The full Idaho Resource Advisory Council will meet on Wednesday, October 19. The meeting will include an update on the Subcommittee's work. All Subcommittee members are welcome to observe that meeting, which is currently planned to be held at the BLM Twin Falls District Office with a virtual participation option. Information will be available soon on the BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council website.

Agenda Item: Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time.