

# Groups Take a Stand Against Habitat Destruction in Nevada

*Massive habitat destruction plan challenged in Ely*

ELY, NEVADA, UNITED STATES, March 9, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [WildLands Defense](#) (WLD) and [Wild Horse Education](#) (WHE) [have filed an appeal](#) of the Ely District BLM Bristlecone Field Office's "Long and Ruby Valley Watershed Restoration Plan" Environmental Assessment (EA) and Final Range Decision. The project entails extensive livestock grazing facility construction and purposeful sagebrush habitat destruction



Livestock, project area (photo: Katie Fite)

BLM split the mis-named "restoration" project action into two parts. BLM had previously issued a separate decision for numerous projects to denude Pinyon-Juniper forests across half a million acres of public land in the core of the Great Basin. Such vegetation "treatment" is helping push Pinyon Jay, a species petitioned for ESA listing due to plummeting populations, closer to extinction.

“

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*Katie Fite, WildLands Defense*

Now, in this same area Ely BLM has released a second separate decision. This landscape contains a wealth of natural values threatened by development of the mammoth Bald Mountain gold mine's road network and

aquifer depletion footprint, climate change stress, and existing high levels of domestic livestock grazing. The combined project entails large-scale use of federal funds (likely more than \$27,000,000) to wantonly destroy and fragment native old growth and mature pinyon-juniper and sagebrush habitats.

The newly Appealed BLM project assault on this landscape includes numerous livestock water pipelines, spring developments and a proliferation of new fences – including an 11.5 mile long

fence and a separate 5 mile fence project slicing through Sage-grouse and Pygmy Rabbit habitats. The fences also will impede free roaming wild horse use of the designated Herd Management Area (HMA) lands. BLM also plans to punch in a new well and linked livestock water pipelines that will further increase livestock exploitation of public lands.

The latest decision also authorizes destruction of a mature sagebrush community community home to Sage-grouse, Pygmy Rabbits (a species that was just petitioned for ESA listing due to habitat loss and declining populations) and sagebrush migratory songbirds. BLM intends to mow, crush or brushbeat the sagebrush and use heavy equipment to “reseed.”

The organizations charge that BLM did not perform essential baseline biological surveys and conducted a tainted livestock industry biased watershed “health” evaluation that blindly overlooked ongoing livestock grazing degradation impacts across 10 grazing allotments.

“Existing livestock facilities in Long and Ruby Valleys are a shambles. Now BLM wants to ‘reconstruct’ some of these disasters, dig into the heart of what is left of springs, and pipe water away to cattle troughs,” said Katie Fite of WildLands Defense, “Yet the springs and well sources are already suffering flow reductions, and existing enclosure fences are ground into dirt and unmaintained. It appears industrial grade generators are needed here just to pump water from existing cow wells. Some wells appear to have dried up altogether. Instead of addressing the damage already done by high levels of livestock use and facilities, and the impacts of mine-caused aquifer depletion, BLM is figuring out how to recklessly expand livestock use. This is an abomination.”

“BLM absurdly claims these water developments that result in flow reductions, or complete flow loss at springs, would cause any harm to the wild horses of the Triple B complex,” stated Laura



Dead Golden Eagle near road (probably hit by truck traffic)



Wild horses, project area

Leigh, President of Wild Horse Education. "The wild horses in this area are already struggling to deal with expanding roads for mining, existing fences for cows and decreased resources available to them. BLM Ely is notorious for claiming 'no harm' will come to wild horses as profit driven uses repeatedly destroy the fragile rangeland. Then BLM proceeds to scapegoat horses for land damage to justify its repetitive and massive removals of wild horses."

The organizations remain committed to pursuing action against the incessant destruction of our public lands approved by the BLM and the species that continue to be threatened with removal and extinction.

END

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