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# Telephone Canyon Trails Project

## Environmental Assessment

**Spring Mountains National Recreation Area  
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest  
Clark County, Nevada**

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# Introduction

## DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

The staff of the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (SMNRA), on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (NF) has prepared this Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. This EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts that would result from the Proposed Action and alternatives. The document is organized into four parts:

- *Introduction:* The section includes information on the history of the project proposal; the need for and purpose of the project; the agency's Proposed Action to achieve the purpose and need; forest plan direction to meet the goals, objectives, and desired future conditions for the SMNRA; and a description of the decision to be made. This section also details how the staff of the SMNRA informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- *Alternatives:* This section provides a more detailed description of the agency's and a discussion of issues raised by the public and other agencies. This section also addresses resource protection and design criteria, including possible mitigation measures. Finally, this section provides a summary table of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.
- *Environmental Consequences:* This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the Proposed Action. This analysis is organized by resource area. Within each section, the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action Alternative, which provides a baseline for evaluation and comparison with the Proposed Action.
- *Consultation and Coordination:* This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the EA.
- *Appendices:* The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses presented in the EA.

Additional documentation, including more detailed analyses of project-resources, may be found in the project administrative record located in the planning staff offices of the SMNRA in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## Project Location

The Telephone Canyon Trails project area is located on the SMNRA on the Humboldt-Toiyabe NF, approximately 35 miles northwest of Las Vegas in Clark County, Nevada. The project area is approximately 16 miles west of the intersection of State Route (SR) 157 (Kyle Canyon Road) and U.S. Highway 95. It is located directly northeast of the confluence of SR 157 and SR 158 (Deer Creek Highway) and south of Angel Peak Road in an area identified as the Telephone Canyon area.

The project area is located outside of the upper Kyle, Lee and Deer Creek Canyons where most sensitive species and other sensitive ecological resources occur. The project area is

lower in elevation from the upper canyons; however, sensitive species and species of concern do occur in the lower canyons, albeit not as frequently.

## **BACKGROUND**

The staff of the SMNRA prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and signed a Record of Decision (ROD) on December 31, 2009, for the Middle Kyle Complex (MKC) Project on the SMNRA. In the ROD, the Forest Supervisor selected the Market Supported Alternative (Alternative 3) with modifications, which includes construction of a trailhead and multi-use trails in the Telephone Canyon area, as the decision.

The EIS analyzed the effects associated with development of a variety of recreation and administrative facilities designed to respond to current and future recreation demands and direct recreation users to less congested areas of the SMNRA away from the upper canyons where concentrations of at-risk plant and wildlife species are located. During planning and environmental analyses for the MKC project, SMNRA staff relocated several trails because of resource concerns. Several of the trail relocations had not been surveyed for cultural or biological resources. Consequently, SMNRA staff was unable to include some of the trails proposed in the MKC EIS as a system of trails in the Telephone Canyon area because of the limited window of opportunity to conduct plant surveys at that altitude.

The Telephone Canyon Trails Project is proposed to provide a continuous system of trails, constructed to meet Forest Service trails standards, as an extension of the trails system authorized in the MKC ROD and to address the resource impacts caused by the user-created trails in the area (see FSH 2309.18 – Trails Management Handbook, Chapter 20 – Trail Development, 2008). The project is consistent with and tiers to the MKC EIS. Copies of the MKC EIS and ROD are maintained in the project file at the Forest Service offices, 4701 N, Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89130, or can be accessed at the following web address: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/htnf/landmanagement/projects>.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

This section specifies the underlying need for and purpose of the project to which the Forest Service is responding in proposing the Proposed Action and alternatives thereto (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1502.13). The need for action is defined by the gap between the existing and desired conditions. The purpose, or primary objective, of the Proposed Action is to eliminate or reduce that gap. The purpose defines the standards that the Proposed Action and alternatives must satisfy.

The need for action statement is presented first, followed by a discussion of the existing conditions, desired conditions, and, ultimately, the purpose of the action.

### **Assessment of Need for Action**

The Area Manager for the SMNRA has identified a need for a non-motorized, multi-use trail system that offers a variety of experiences for trail users in the Middle Kyle Canyon area

Clark County, Nevada (including the Las Vegas Valley area) has been considered one of the fastest growing urban areas in the United States. Recently, the population of

Las Vegas has seen a slight decline; however, the county's population is expected to increase to 3.6 million by 2035 (Clark County Department of Comprehensive Planning 2008). Much of the recent growth is occurring in the northwest part of Clark County near the SMNRA. The Kyle, Lee, and Deer Creek canyons serve as an urban park for valley residents and regional population growth is likely to increase demand for outdoor recreation and contribute to impacts on the federally managed lands that surround Las Vegas, especially the SMNRA.

### **Existing Conditions in the Project Area**

Most of the recreation opportunities provided by the SMNRA are more of the traditional types of uses on National Forest System (NFS) lands such as hiking, picnicking, camping, and driving for pleasure. Many of the SMNRA users have expressed a need for a greater variety of opportunities and in some cases more "extreme" recreation opportunities such as rock climbing, zip-lining, and mountain biking.

The staff of the SMNRA has observed an increase in the number of mountain bike users over the past ten years. There are several "meet-up groups" with Internet websites, all of which total of more than 1,000 members. These organized groups and other mountain bikers ride every weekend on federal lands in the Las Vegas area. Currently, mountain bikers have limited areas in which to ride and unauthorized bike trails have been created by users east of SR 158 and north of SR 157 in the Telephone Canyon area. The area offers relatively easy highway access for drop-off and pick-up and because of the elevation differences between these points, downhill mountain biking has become a popular activity in the Telephone Canyon area. Mountain bikers typically drop in at the North Loop trailhead on Deer Creek Highway SR 158, ride down abandoned roads on the west side of SR 158, then cross SR 158 and complete their ride on the east side of SR 158, finishing their ride on the north side of SR 157 east of the existing Nevada Department of Transportation maintenance station. The SR 158 highway crossing is at an unmarked location where drivers have poor visibility.

Equestrian trail users have also contributed to the proliferation of unauthorized trails in the Telephone Canyon area. Public comments on the MKC EIS indicated a strong interest from equestrian advocates for expanded equestrian and multi-use trails that provide connectivity to other larger trail networks with a variety of riding experiences and lengths.

### **Desired Future Conditions**

The need to construct new trails and convert user-created trails to National Forest System Trails is identified in the General Management Plan (GMP) for the SMNRA, an amendment to the Toiyabe National Forest Plan (Forest Service 1996). The desired future conditions for the SMNRA are identified in the GMP and many of those same desired conditions are also described in the Conservation Agreement, entered into by and between the U.S. Forest Service, Nevada State Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Many of the goals, objectives, desired future conditions, standards and guidelines outlined in the GMP are identified in this EA in the section entitled Forest Plan Direction.

A diverse range of recreation opportunities that responds to public expectations and

demand is one of the primary desired future conditions spelled out in the GMP. A designated trail system designed for mountain biking and other non-motorized uses would provide opportunities for various skill levels in the Middle Kyle Canyon and Telephone Canyon areas. Mountain bike enthusiasts, equestrians, and other users would be invited to be involved in the development and maintenance of the trail system. The trail system would be designed to minimize resource impacts. An administrative decision to designate use within the trail system would be implemented should conflicts between user groups arise.

### **Purpose for the Project**

The purpose of this action is to provide a diverse range of additional non-motorized trail opportunities and experiences that will respond to public expectations in areas outside of the sensitive Upper Kyle, Lee, and Deer Creek Canyons.

### **PROPOSED ACTION**

The Forest Service proposes to construct a non-motorized, multi-use trail network in the Telephone Canyon area of the Spring Mountains NRA. The project would include construction of non-motorized, multi-use trails for hiking, biking and equestrian use, as appropriate, and a small trailhead parking area adjacent to Angel Peak Road. The project area currently has a makeshift system of unauthorized user-created trails, many of which are located in areas that are creating resource impacts.

#### **The Proposed Action would include the following activities:**

- Construct approximately 10.7 miles of new, non-motorized, multiple use (hiking, biking, equestrian) trails, and designate for specific use as appropriate;
- Construct approximately 0.5 miles of trails dedicated to hiking and biking only;
- Reconstruct and convert approximately 7.3 miles of user-created trails to multiple use, non-motorized system trails;
- Decommission approximately 7.8 miles of user-created trails;
- Construct a small native surface trailhead parking area to accommodate eight to ten passenger vehicles located adjacent to the Angel Peak Road;
- Excavate the cut bank on the north side of the Angel Peak road and slope it back to improve sight distance for vehicles exiting the trailhead or turning around at the trailhead; and
- Relocate and install signs as necessary in and around the trailhead.

### **Trails Construction**

New trails and existing user-created trails converted to National Forest System Trails would be constructed to meet Forest Service trail standards. They would be native surface with trail tread width between 24 and 36 inches. The proposed trail network would connect to the Telephone Canyon multi-use trails and the main Telephone Canyon Trailhead that were authorized for construction in the MKC ROD. On the east edge of the project, a 0.5 mile hiking/biking trail would connect to a hiking/biking trail on the south

side of SR 157, and to the Slot Canyon Trailhead, both of which were also authorized in the MKC ROD. The SR 157 trail crossing would be by way of an existing highway box culvert located at mile marker 7.3.

Existing user-created routes not designated for conversion to system trails would be decommissioned by closing the first 50 feet (plus or minus) of the unauthorized trails where they intersect with the proposed new system trails. Decommissioning may consist of brushing in with construction slash from trail construction or other effective low cost techniques to disguise and discourage use of the unauthorized routes not designated to remain. Trail designation and directional signage on system trails would also be included.

### **Trailhead Construction**

A new, unpaved trailhead parking area would be located on the south side of Angel Peak Road, at approximately 0.56 miles east of the intersection with Deer Creek Highway. The parking area would be designed to accommodate approximately eight to ten passenger vehicles and would include a two-panel information kiosk. A toilet building would not be located at this trailhead. The Clark County signs at the Deer Creek Highway intersection would be moved to the east of the proposed trailhead location. The cut bank on the north side of the Angel Peak road would be sloped back to improve sight distance for vehicles exiting the trailhead or turning around at this location. Just east of the Hilltop Campground entrance, new road sign(s) would be installed to inform travelers of the trailhead/turnaround and that the road beyond that point is closed to through traffic. Parking for vehicles with horse trailers would be provided at the main Telephone Canyon trailhead that was included in the MKC ROD, and not at this proposed parking area. The Proposed Action is displayed in Figure 1.

### **FOREST PLAN DIRECTION**

The Forest Service has identified and delineated in the GMP the goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and desired future conditions relating to recreation management, including trail development, in the SMNRA. Management direction outlined in the GMP relating to recreation management is defined, in part, as follows:

- Limit new development in the upper canyons and distributing use in the lower canyons, while incorporating protection of cultural and natural resources;
- Enhance customer service by considering current and future recreation trends and development of a range of recreation opportunities, including trails;
- Close informal trails causing resource damage and constructing;
- Upgrade trails to an interconnected trail system that is consistent with Forest Service trail system standards, with an emphasis on safety, resource protection and customer satisfaction.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the GMP and is expected to move the project area toward the following desired future conditions described in the plan:

- Increase the quality and quantity of developed and general recreation opportunities through the development of additional multi-use, non-motorized trails outside of the developed canyons.

- Lessen visitor impacts on species of concern and other sensitive ecological resources by focusing recreation development at lower elevations in the least sensitive areas.
- Increase multi-use, non-motorized trail opportunities and improve connections to existing trailheads to create trail networks for hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers, and other non-motorized users.

Additional direction for reaching the desired conditions for recreation management in the SMNRA, as outlined in the GMP and Forest Service policy, are otherwise incorporated by reference.

### **DECISION TO BE MADE**

Based on the analysis documented in this EA, specialists' reports, other information in the project file, and public comment, the Responsible Official—the Area Manager for the SMNRA—will decide which of the alternatives will best meet the Purpose and Need for the project.



## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions in April 2011. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping from July 15, 2011, to August 15, 2011.

The scoping notice for the Telephone Canyon Trails Project was sent to federal, state, and local agencies, businesses in Kyle and Lee Canyons, residents, and equestrian, hiking, and mountain biking organizations. The Public Affairs Specialist presented the project proposal to the Mt. Charleston Town Advisory Board on July 28, 2011. Residents at the Town Advisory Board meeting expressed concerns over potential user conflicts between equestrians and mountain bike riders. The Trails Program Manager met with an individual from the public on August 15, 2011, to discuss volunteer opportunities and to request that the Forest Service provide adequate equestrian parking.

Eleven individuals submitted comments during the scoping period. Comments included topics such as maintaining challenge features for more experienced mountain bikers, ensuring adequate equestrian parking, providing adequate sight distances, user conflicts between mountain bikers and equestrians, and statements of support.

It is anticipated that in August 2012, this EA will be released for a 30-day opportunity to comment on the Proposed Action (pursuant to 36 CFR 215) and a legal notice of availability of the EA will be published in the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the newspaper of record for SMNRA Area Manager decisions. The comments and associated Forest Service responses will be disclosed in the decision document for this project.

## **AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED**

To ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the Forest Service entered into informal consultation with biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southern Nevada Field office. The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office was also consulted during the development of this EA.

## **GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT TRIBAL CONSULTATION**

Seven nations of Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi Indians have strong cultural ties to the Spring Mountains. These nations include the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Kaibab Paiute, Las Vegas Paiute, Moapa Paiute, Pahrump Paiute, and the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah. The Forest Service regularly consults with these nations on projects and programs that affect the SMNRA.

On June 14, 2011, the tribal liaison for the SMNRA forwarded a copy of the Forest's consultation newsletter to each tribal chair and their cultural coordinator. The newsletter included a description of the Telephone Canyon Trails proposal and its anticipated effects on cultural and natural resources. Two weeks following, the tribal liaison made follow-up phone calls to the cultural coordinators, collectively known as the Working Group, to discuss any concerns the nations had regarding the projects included in the letter. None of the Working Group members had any concerns about the Telephone Canyon Trails proposal.

## **KEY ISSUE DEVELOPMENT**

The Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) met to derive issues from comments received during the scoping period. Key issues are defined as “unresolved conflicts about effects of the proposed action on the human environment, which therefore warrant consideration of one or more reasonable alternatives” (FSH 1909.15 § 41.2). The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require this delineation in Sec. 1501.7, “...identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (Sec. 1506.3)...” Members of the IDT did not identify significant issues that would directly or indirectly result from implementing the Proposed Action. A list of non-significant issues and reasons regarding their categorization as non-significant may be found at the SMNRA office in the project record.

The Forest Service identified the issues raised as non-significant because they fell into one of the following categories: 1) outside the scope of the Proposed Action; 2) already decided by law, regulation, Forest Plan, or other higher level decision; 3) irrelevant to the decision to be made; or 4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

The only issue that might have constituted an unresolved conflict was that of user conflicts between mountain bike users and equestrians. If user conflicts are identified following development of the improved trail system, they would be addressed by an administrative decision by the line officer to designate trails to separate uses, where practicable.



# Alternatives

## INTRODUCTION

This section describes and compares the alternatives considered by the Forest Service for the Telephone Canyon Trails Project. The differences between Alternative 1—No Action and Alternative 2—Proposed Action are presented in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between these alternatives and providing a clear basis for choice by the decision maker and the public.

## ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The National Environmental Policy Act directs the Forest Service to use an interdisciplinary approach that will ensure the integrated use of natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts (Sec. 102 [42 USC § 4332]).

The IDT developed the Proposed Action based on the purpose and need of the project and by following management objectives that are based on standards and guidelines outlined in the GMP. As stated earlier in this assessment, the Forest Service did not identify any key issues from comments raised during scoping; therefore, further alternative development was not pursued.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Federal agencies are required by the NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives, and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not considered in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). The Forest Service did not identify any key issues or unresolved conflicts about the effects of the Proposed Action on the human environment and, therefore, did not consider other alternatives.

## ALTERNATIVES STUDIED IN DETAIL

### Alternative 1—No Action

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. No new trails would be built and no trails would be decommissioned to accomplish project goals.

### Alternative 2—Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is described in detail in the Introduction to this EA.

## DESIGN CRITERIA

In response to public comments on the proposal (Appendix A), the staff of the SMNRA developed design criteria (Appendix C) to reduce some of the impacts the Proposed Action may cause.

### Cultural Resources

- Identified cultural sites would be avoided during ground disturbing activities.

- Should any archeological sites be located during ground disturbing activities, work would stop while the District Archeologist assesses the situation.
- Identified culturally sensitive areas would be monitored.

### Wildlife and Plants

- To prevent nest abandonment and loss of young raptors and migratory birds, and potential direct and indirect impacts to a variety of small mammals including, and not limited to, Palmer chipmunks (*Neotamias palmeri*) and bats:
  - Limited Operating Periods (LOPs) for raptors and other migratory birds will be undertaken: Vegetation removal and gate installation will occur between July 21 and May 19 to avoid bird breeding season (May 20 – July 20).
  - If an exception is requested, it may be granted if a nest search is conducted and substrates (i.e., trees or bushes) upon which nests are found are avoided until nestlings fledge. Appropriate buffers will be designated for any nests located, based on the species habitat requirements, by a SMNRA wildlife biologist.
- To minimize potential impacts to foraging bats and nocturnal raptors, no construction or demolition activities would be allowed during natural dark periods of time and no artificial lights would be allowed to be used at any time for project implementation.
- To minimize potential impacts to bats and bird species, no trail construction, reconstruction, or demolition would fall any existing snag or green tree larger than eight inches in diameter at breast height, with the potential exception of the trailhead and parking area construction.
- To reduce loss of individuals of Palmer’s chipmunk and other small mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles, hollow posts of any material or color, used to mark boundaries as part of the trail system, would be capped if open-ended. Exposed holes near the top of posts will be closed to prevent small species from being trapped.
- To reduce the potential risk from introduction and spread of weeds and to reduce the risk of alteration and degradation of native habitats, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Weeds Management Best Management Practices (BMPs) (Humboldt-Toiyabe Supplemental FSM 2080) would be employed during construction and reclamation activities. A full list of prevention measures are listed in the Non-Native/Invasive Species Report for Plants, prepared for the MKC project (ICF Jones & Stokes 2009).
- To minimize degradation of suitable habitat, soils, and water, USFS Soil and Water BMPs (including FSH 2509.22 Region 4 Amendment No. 1) would be employed during construction and reclamation activities.

### COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

Table 1 is focused on a comparison of effects by alternative where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

**Table 1. Comparison of Alternatives and Potential Environmental Consequences**

	<b>Alternative 1—No Action</b>	<b>Alternative 2—Proposed Action</b>
Recreation	No trail upgrades; continued deterioration of trail conditions and continued proliferation of user-created routes.	Overall trail opportunities improved; safer environment; visitor confusion addressed.
Heritage Resources	Continued impacts to recorded sites.	No effect
Wildlife and Plants	No project-specific effects.	Determinations for individual species include no effect or no impact, as well as may impact individuals or habitat and would not contribute to the need for federal listing or loss of viability within the planning area. Determinations also result in no change to the SMNRA or Humboldt-Toiyabe metapopulations or Region 4 population.



## Environmental Consequences

This section provides a summary of the environmental impacts of the alternatives and presents the scientific and analytical basis for comparison of alternatives presented in the chart above.

It provides the information to determine whether it is necessary to prepare an EIS. Conclusions reached by resource specialists indicate the Proposed Action is unlikely to result in significant impacts; therefore, the responsible official has authorized this project be analyzed in an EA. The responsible official will outline the findings as part of the decision in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Further analysis and conclusions about the potential effects are available in reports for each resource and other supporting documentation cited in those reports. These documents are maintained in the administrative file for the project in the offices of the SMNRA.

The effects analysis in this section discloses the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives, as directed by established Forest Service NEPA procedures (36 CFR part 220) that follow guidance provided by the CEQ. The analysis of cumulative effects considers the effects of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions in combination with effects predicted from the No Action and the Proposed Action alternatives.

A summary list of the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions that could contribute to cumulative effects are shown in Appendix B. Past actions and natural processes contribute to present effects or existing environmental conditions. Not all listed actions may be considered in each cumulative effects analysis; each analysis examines only those actions and events that are relevant to the resource in question.

In addition, as noted in the “Purpose and Need,” this EA analyzes the environmental effects of designation, construction and/or reconstruction of identified trails that were not included in the MKC Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and ROD because they were unable to be surveyed for cultural or biological resources, given the limited window of opportunity to conduct surveys. Consequently, this EA focuses on the environmental effects of the Proposed Action on recreation, heritage (cultural) resources and wildlife and plants, and tiers and incorporates by reference the analysis of other resources as described in the MKC FEIS. These resources and a summary of the FEIS’ effects conclusions about the types of activities analyzed in this EA are outlined below:

- Air quality – Closure of user-created motorized routes and conversion to hiking, biking, and equestrian use would reduce dust and air pollutants in these areas (MKC FEIS, pp. 3.1-2, 3.1-3).
- Non-native invasive species of plants – Forest Service policies emphasize the prevention of weed establishment and the Forest Service has developed prevention practices and project design criteria such as construction equipment cleaning provisions, avoidance of travel through known weed-infested areas, minimization of soil disturbance, and utilization of weed-free gravel sources. Implementing these measures reduces the probability of introducing and spreading weed seeds and plant parts. (MKC FEIS, p. 3.1-5)

- With implementation of the design criteria including preventative measures, site rehabilitation, and post-implementation monitoring by SMNRA personnel, the volume of invasive weed introductions and spread is expected to be minor and below (or within) the range of current rates of introductions (MKC FEIS, pp. 3.1-7, 3.1-8).
- Geology and soils – Soils would be more susceptible to erosion by wind and water because of hiking boots, bicycle tires, and hooves breaking through the crust and pulverizing the soil. However, there would be a beneficial effect on soil quality and erosion rates in areas where vegetation and slope restoration would be implemented. (MKC FEIS, p. 3.1-11)
- Hydrology – Impacts from trail construction are short term in nature and minimal compared to the long-term benefits of having designated trails that have been constructed properly in sustainable locations. User-created trails would be closed and restored, reducing soil erosion and compaction in these areas. (MKC FEIS, p. 3.1-15)
- Social and economic resources – The proposal would likely result in improved conditions for the social wellbeing of the study area (MKC FEIS, p. 3.1-20).
- Visual resources – Improvements to the existing trail network would result in a minor beneficial effect on the visual quality objective (VQO) value (MKC FEIS, p. 3.5-10).

## RECREATION

This section summarizes and incorporates by reference the “Telephone Canyon Trails Project Recreation Specialist Report,” included in the planning record.

### Affected Environment

Telephone Canyon provides opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreation including pinyon nut gathering, horseback riding, winter snow play and snowshoeing, trail running and hiking, mountain biking, dispersed camping, 4x4 driving, and shooting and trapping.

The analysis area is defined as the project area shown in Figure 1. The project area was defined as the analysis area for recreation because this area would be the area of impact for the recreation resource. The area is accessed by NFS road 45530 from SR 157, also known as Kyle Canyon Road. This NFS road runs the length of Telephone Canyon, providing vehicular access for dispersed camping, pinyon nut gathering, shooting and trapping. Visitors also access the area along SR 157 at a large graded area below the location of a permitted horse outfitter that serves as a primary staging area for horseback riders. Bike riders park along SR 158 and ride old roadbeds from below the trailhead that accesses the North Loop Trail. Bike riders have approximately five unofficial crossings across SR 158 to the downslope side of the highway, allowing them access to the main grouping of trails. Bike riders generally park shuttle vehicles along the junctions of NFS road 45530A and NFS motorized trail 25782, and in the large parking area below the horse outfitter.

Equestrian use is generally day use and includes a variety of loop trail rides ranging from three to approximately 10 miles (one to about eight hours). The spring known as Side Hill Spring (also called No Name Spring regionally) is an important destination for equestrians as a water source.

In the 1980s, the area was primarily used by local equestrians, as well as an outfitter that provided guided horseback rides. Some of the trails were created by that operator.

In the mid-1990s, local mountain bike riders began using the trails and they, along with equestrians, expanded the number of trails over time. Many of these user-created trails have been addressed in this proposal. As described in the “Existing Conditions in the Project Area,” in this EA, an increase in the number of mountain bike users has increased over the last decade, and there are several “meet-up groups” with Internet websites, all of which total of more than 1,000 members. These organized groups and other mountain bikers ride every weekend on federal lands around Las Vegas.

In the Telephone Canyon area, mountain bike riders are primarily using the area for downhill runs, using shuttles to reach the top of the run. This allows riders to achieve high rates of speed on the descents and poses a problem for horseback riders whose horses can be spooked, thereby potentially causing an accident. Mountain biker riders can also create a hazardous situation for hikers.

A segment of the mountain biking community has expressed a desire for inclusion of steep, technical trails to be included in the trail system. There are currently fall-line trails in the system that enhance speed and, consequently, users have constructed trail obstacles such as jumps, technical obstacles such as wood barriers across the trails, and drop-offs to make their rides more challenging. While these appeal to a small segment of users in the area, they present hazards for the larger portion of trail users.

Some of these actions also contribute to resource degradation. Fall line trails are particularly susceptible to erosion due to a combination of loss of vegetation, steep slopes, and loose soils. This can cause rapid down-slope soil movement that creates trenches, which expand rapidly from use and weather. This type of trail can become wider over time as users begin utilizing the outside edges of the trail to avoid walking or riding in the trench created through erosion and use patterns.

Other safety concerns exist with the user-created trail crossings on SR 158, in part because they occur near blind turns in the highway and, therefore, do not provide adequate sight distance.

In addition, Forest Service employees have encountered area trail users in the area who have indicated a general sense of confusion as to where trails are located and how they connect. Information regarding these trails is anecdotal in nature and there are no known maps available to the Forest Service.

## **Environmental Consequences**

### **Environmental Consequences of Alternative A—No Action**

Under Alternative A, management concerns in this area would not be addressed. Desired connections to the Middle Kyle Canyon trails would not be built. Upgrading of the trails through realignment and new construction or maintenance to bring existing routes to Forest Service standards would not occur, potentially leading to continued deterioration of trail conditions and continued proliferation of user-created routes. Use conflicts would not be addressed leaving visitors to manage these conflicts in their own way.

## Environmental Consequences of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, a managed system of trails to provide connectivity with, and expansion of, the trail system approved under the MKC project would be designated.

The Proposed Action would address the apparent desire for trails in this area and allow for improvement to the quality and condition of the trails, thereby improving overall trail opportunities and contributing to a safer environment.

Existing user conflicts and visitor confusion would be addressed by bringing these trails under Forest Service Management by way of the following actions:

- Relocating existing routes that cannot be maintained to Forest Service standards;
- Reconstructing existing trails to Forest Service standards to be maintained in the National Forest System trail system;
- Reducing grades throughout the trail system to help control the speed of mountain bike descents;
- Widening trail tread in some areas to allow for passing and improved sight distance;
- Relocating and pruning within the trail prism to allow for improve sight distance; and
- Providing maps and a sign plan for the trail system.

User conflicts not addressed by the Proposed Action may be managed in the future through a decision by the Responsible Official to designate trails as limited access, for example, mountain bike/hiker only or equestrian/hiker only.

Moreover, the safety concerns associated with multiple highway crossings would be addressed with the proposed construction of a new trailhead along the Hilltop Campground road, near the Angel Peak road, and construction of a new trail segment to connect this trailhead with the main trail network. This design would keep all of the designated trail use on one side of the highway, thereby increasing safety.

## Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects to recreation can be evaluated by looking at past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities that could affect recreation cumulatively over time. When considering cumulative effects to recreation based on past, ongoing, and anticipated projects, the primary sources of change would include additional recreation development and use. The cumulative effects boundary would be the SMNRA boundary. The existing recreation conditions take into account all activities that have occurred to the present that have resulted in the current recreation conditions. Trail projects presently under construction on the SMNRA include the Blue Tree trails located in the area of SR 156, the Cathedral Rock trails located in Upper Kyle Canyon, and trails proposed as part of the MKC ROD. No future trail projects are proposed at this time. The Telephone Canyon trails project is expected to enhance the recreation experience by adding to the trail network currently under construction as part of the MKC project and add to the quantity and quality of trails available for recreation in the SMNRA.

## **HERITAGE RESOURCES**

This section summarizes and incorporates by reference the “Telephone Canyon Trails Project: Cultural Resources Report,” included in the planning record.

## **Affected Environment**

### Prehistoric and Historic Context

Most evidence of prehistoric archeological data in southern Nevada, including the project area, comes from the Gypsum and Ceramic Periods, beginning about 4,000 years ago. The Gypsum Period (4000 – 1500 Before Present [BP]) is marked by a great increase in archeological sites as well as a tremendous increase in the diversity of habitats in which the sites are found. The Ceramic Period (1500 BP – AD 1800) marks a time when several material cultures and peoples actually shared the Las Vegas area: the Ancestral Puebloan people (Anasazi), Southern Paiute, and the Patayan (lower Colorado people).

Certain Native American Indian groups have had and continue to have a history in Southern Nevada. These traditional groups are primarily the Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi, but also include the Colorado River Yuman of which the Mojave figure most prominently, as well as the Western Shoshone (most notably the Timbisha or Panamint group of Western Shoshone). Consideration of all these Native American groups is important since traditional ethnic groups in the area were very mobile, occupying large areas in their seasonal subsistence rounds and having large exchange networks.

The Historical Period begins with the arrival of Euro-Americans in Southern Nevada. During the Spanish Exploration Period (AD 1500s – 1700s) and Mexican Period (AD 1822 – 1846) (periods after Swanson 1995), Euro-Americans passed through the region, but did not settle there. Settlement by Euro-Americans began in the Spring Mountains in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historical activities in and around the project area included ranching, sawmill construction and operation, and recreational development, including facilities constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and laborers employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s and early 1940s.

### Survey Methodology

Due to the size of the undertaking, the project was surveyed in several parts on multiple days between December 2010 and June 2011. User created trails and proposed re-routes along these trails were surveyed. Surveys were performed using 15-20 meter spacing between crewmembers and transects were performed on both sides of the trail. It is estimated, based on the size of the crew, that 60 meters on each side of the trail corridor were surveyed. Some block surveying using 15-20 meter spacing between transects was also performed between the trailways in order cover more area more thoroughly. The 316-acre parcel in which previous and newly recorded sites were previously consolidated into one large site was resurveyed using the same block surveying methods as mentioned above. Twelve sites were delineated within the boundaries of the 316-acre parcel and rerecorded. A total of 962 acres were inventoried as required by 36 CFR 800.4; this area constitutes the analysis area for cultural resources.

During the course of the project, a total of 21 new sites, including lithic scatters, reduction sites, hunting camps, gathering sites, rock circles, can dumps, and one cabin, were observed and recorded. Of these 21 new sites, 13 sites are prehistoric, five are historic, and 3 are multi-component. In addition, 14 isolated finds were observed and recorded. One new site was identified after the survey was completed when a previously-identified site was being monitored.

Impacts have been identified in 10 of the 21 newly recorded sites. These impacts have occurred without Forest Service knowledge as they are the result of user-created trail construction.

## **Environmental Consequences**

### Environmental Consequences of Alternative A – No Action

Under Alternative A, trail construction and reconstruction, and decommissioning of identified user-created trails would not occur. Impacts to recorded sites would likely continue as existing user-created trails continue to be used and as additional trails are created by recreationists.

### Environmental Consequences of Alternative B – Proposed Action

Under Alternative B, the design features and monitoring described in “Design Criteria” to reduce potential impacts to cultural resources would be undertaken, including:

- Avoiding identified cultural sites during trail construction, reconstruction and decommissioning activities,
- Stopping work if any archeological sites are located during construction, while the District Archeologist assesses the situation; and
- Monitoring in identified culturally-sensitive areas.

With implementation of the project as designed, the Forest has determined that the proposed trails project on the SMNRA will have No Effect on the integrity of the cultural resource sites located within the project Area of Potential Effect. The Forest’s determination has been submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer for review and concurrence.

### Cumulative Effects

All trails in the Telephone Canyon Trails project were routed away from the known archaeological sites; therefore, there are no sites that would be actively impacted by the project. Consequently, there are no cumulative effects from actions proposed by this project.

## **WILDLIFE AND PLANTS**

This section summarizes and incorporates by reference the “Summary of Biological Analysis for the Telephone Canyon Trails Project,” included in the planning record.

### **Pre-Field and Field Assessment**

As part of the wildlife and plant analysis, information was collected and reviewed to identify species’ present conditions or affected environment. This information included species literature searches; SMNRA project files and Geographic Information System (GIS) data; aerial photos; past activities; relevant survey data (botanical and biological species surveys within and near the project area between 2005 and 2011); and Forest, District, NNHP (2011) and NatureServe (2012) monitoring and observation databases for locations of known wildlife and plant species populations and habitats within the project area.

Survey information considered relevant for this project includes:

- Field surveys for rare plants and butterfly host plants occurrences were conducted in July 2011. The surveys were a systematic transect/grid, with Global Positioning System (GPS)

tracking. Occurrences of target plant species were mapped with GPS equipment. The 2011 field surveys represent the best and most relevant set of knowledge about the presence/absence of target plant species.

- Targeted surveys for owls were performed in the best suitable habitat near the project area in 2005 and other nearby surveys were conducted in 2009. No listed owls were detected utilizing habitat similar to that in which is within the project areas' potential area of impact.
- General bird surveys were also conducted near the project area in 2008. These surveys and general observations have recorded a variety of species presence near the project area.
- No targeted surveys for bats have been performed in the project area. In the Spring Mountains, targeted mist nest and acoustic surveys were performed at select water sources and abandoned mines from 1964-2001 (O'Farrell 2002a and O'Farrell 2002b). Acoustic surveys were performed again in the Spring Mountains at select water sources and three additional acoustic monitoring stations from 2004-2005 (O'Farrell 2006). From 1995-1996, maternity roost surveys were performed at select mine systems, caves, and climbing areas (Ramsey 1997). Results of these surveys were used to assist in determining potential habitat and use of the area by bat species.
- In addition, single birds have been periodically recorded within the SMNRA during Great Basin Bird Observatory (GBBO) bird counts at Cathedral Rock (separate canyon to the south of Lee Canyon). The first known surveys for northern goshawks and suitable habitat occurred in 2005 and targeted select canyons and springs with perceived high-quality habitat (Morrison 2007). A survey of 14 cliff complexes was conducted in 2004 in the Spring Mountains, but no nesting peregrine falcons were documented in the SMNRA (GBI 2005).
- The project and surrounding areas were visited in person by wildlife and plant specialists on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>, and September 1<sup>st</sup>. These visits were to assess habitat suitability and review existing survey information regarding listed wildlife species, sensitive plants, and butterfly host and nectar plants throughout the project area. The authors also reviewed existing facilities to better understand the purpose and need of the proposed activities; observations and incidental sign of wildlife use; and habitat conditions identified in the pre-field assessment were also validated.

Information from the pre-field and field assessment was then used in combination with the most recent scientific literature, Forest, and Region-wide assessments and monitoring, and species conservation assessments to identify species and habitats most likely to be affected by the proposed activities and identify the appropriate level of analysis necessary to determine effects to them. Based on this analysis all wildlife and botanical species listed federally, regionally, or specifically within the SMNRA as threatened, endangered, candidate, Region 4 Sensitive, or any SMNRA Conservation Agreement species of concern that could be impacted in some way were carried forward in detailed analysis.

### **Affected Environment**

The biological resource analysis area boundary includes all areas within 100 meters of trails

(and all interior areas between trails) that are within the Telephone Canyon area (Figure 2), for a total of about 2,045 acres of analysis area. The areas within this boundary include: 1) all trails constructed by the MKC project; 2) all existing user created trails that are being decommissioned; 3) all user-created trails that are proposed for reconstruction; and 4) all new trails proposed for construction. The area of potential impacts for most species of wildlife is being described as all areas within 25 feet either side of the existing or potential to be created trail (this totals a swath 53 feet wide) and, for plants, 20 meters either side of the existing or potential trails, running the full length of all trails mentioned above. The only species that may have a broader ranging area of impact include bighorn sheep and elk. Wildlife use is often influenced by specific conditions that can only be identified at the stand or site scale. However, as this project would have minimum impact on stand structure, specific stand characteristics that influence plant and wildlife use that could change will be discussed at this level of analysis. This assessment is also used to identify habitat features that may need to be protected or enhanced and is used to identify site-specific project design criteria and additionally suggested mitigation measures.

### **Environmental Consequences**

Direct and indirect effects/impacts to plants and wildlife are assessed by evaluating potential effects/impact to individuals and changes in habitat or conditions on NFS lands within the project analysis boundary. The project analysis boundary was selected for analysis of direct and indirect effects/impacts on wildlife and plant species because it includes all areas proposed for activities and contains an adequate diversity of habitat conditions (vegetative and topographic) to assess wildlife distribution and use.

#### **Environmental Consequences of Alternative A—No Action**

Under Alternative A, no project activities would occur, and no project-specific effects on wildlife and plant species would be noted. However, degradation of biological resources necessary to wildlife and plant species habitat would continue with the proliferation of user-created trails.

#### **Environmental Effects of Alternative B—Proposed Action**

Table 2 summarizes the wildlife and plant species with habitat within the Telephone Canyon biological resource project area, and the potential direct and indirect effects of the project on each of these species. The design features included in “Design Criteria” were considered in evaluating the potential effects on the species. An evaluation of other species was made to rule out the possibility of the species having potential habitat in the project area. The potential effects on species are described in the “Summary of Biological Analysis for the Telephone Canyon Trails Project,” included in the planning record.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects on species and their habitats are evaluated by looking at past, present, and foreseeable future activities that could adversely affect them when considered cumulatively over time. When considering cumulative effects to species based on past, ongoing, and anticipated future disturbances, the primary sources of change includes additional recreation development and use, wildfires, road construction and management, and other major changes to existing conditions. The boundary used in this cumulative effects analysis will be the biological resource project analysis boundary as defined above. It will be temporally defined

for all species as the period of implementation (about one to two years). This one- to two-year period would cover the expected implementation from the beginning to completion. Therefore, this one- to two-year period will be used to describe short-term effects/impacts. Long-term effects/impacts would be those expected to last past the time of implementation and for 10 or more years. Rationale for selection of these areas and terms include:

- The existing conditions take into account all activities that have occurred prior to the present that have resulted in the habitat conditions of today. If there are notable circumstances expected as a result of project implementation, such as the introduction of non-native plant species or habitat conversion, they will be brought forward in the effects/impacts discussion on a species-by-species basis.
- The cumulative effects analysis area is large enough to assess the individual home range for species analyzed that could be substantially affected by the project (primarily those species with smaller home ranges). Those species with home ranges of 200 acres or more would not likely be heavily impacted by the scale of this project on an individual basis, let alone on a population or meta-population basis, thereby framing the context and significance of potential impacts to each species.
- Expanding the cumulative effects analysis area further outside of the defined boundary to the north, south, east, or west would include different habitat types, substantially different land structure or vegetation types that have been less intensively managed or are substantially developed, all of which could artificially “dilute” or “increase” potential cumulative effects. There is no expectation that effects/impacts from project implementation could affect individuals that do not exist within the defined area.
- The temporal short- and long-term periods were chosen because many of the potential impacts to species would only exist during project implementation and would cease immediately following it. Other potential impacts from continued trail use will linger beyond project implementation and therefore are considered long-term.

#### Cumulative Effects of Alternative A—No Action

Because no direct or indirect effects to wildlife and plants would occur under Alternative A, no cumulative effects would occur.

### *Cumulative Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action*

Table 2 summarizes the wildlife and plant species with habitat within the Telephone Canyon biological resource project area, and the potential cumulative effects of the project on each of these species. The design features included in “Design Criteria” were considered in evaluating the potential effects on the species. An evaluation of other species was made to rule out the possibility of the species having potential habitat in the project area. The potential effects on these species are described in the “Summary of Biological Analysis for the Telephone Canyon Trails Project,” included in the planning record.

#### Migratory Birds

The project area contains nesting and foraging habitat for a wide variety of migratory birds. The existing condition of the project area indicates that about 143 acres of migratory bird habitat may be currently impacted by trail use in the area. Project design criteria would minimize any potential impacts from construction to these species during nesting season by implementation of LOPs. Project implementation may result in additional short-term impacts to foraging birds from human related noise on about 69 acres while trail construction and decommissioning activities are occurring. Birds may be temporarily displaced to non-disturbed habitats. There is no expectation that this project could result in any change to long-term foraging opportunities or success. Minor long-term disturbance issues to nesting and foraging migratory birds would continue from trail use. Depending upon the type of use (horseback, foot, or bike) and season of use, the disturbance amount (distance) may vary.

The cumulative impact area for migratory birds is being established as all areas within 25 feet (either side) of all trails within the general vicinity. This equates to a short-term cumulative impact of up to 212 acres and a long-term cumulative impact of up to 162 acres due to trail decommissioning actions. These areas were chosen because no direct or indirect impacts to migratory birds or their habitats would be expected to occur from trail construction, reconstruction of existing user created trails, decommissioning, or trail use beyond 25 feet either side of a trail regardless of the season of use. Because there are no known foreseeable future projects within the cumulative impact area at this time, there could not be any additional cumulative impacts associated with this project. As mentioned, long-term impacts associated with the 162-acre area as a result of continued trail use is expected. If future projects were planned within this long-term cumulative impact area, the use of the trails would need to be considered as part of the existing conditions for the future project impact analysis.

The net result of implementing this project would be a short-term increase in potential disturbance to migratory birds of up to 69 acres and long-term increase of less than 20 acres within a 2,045-acre analysis area. This equates to a short-term increase of potential disturbance to migratory birds of up to three tenths of a percent and short-term of less than one tenth of a percent of available habitats. Therefore, the potential impacts to migratory birds are not believed to be substantial.

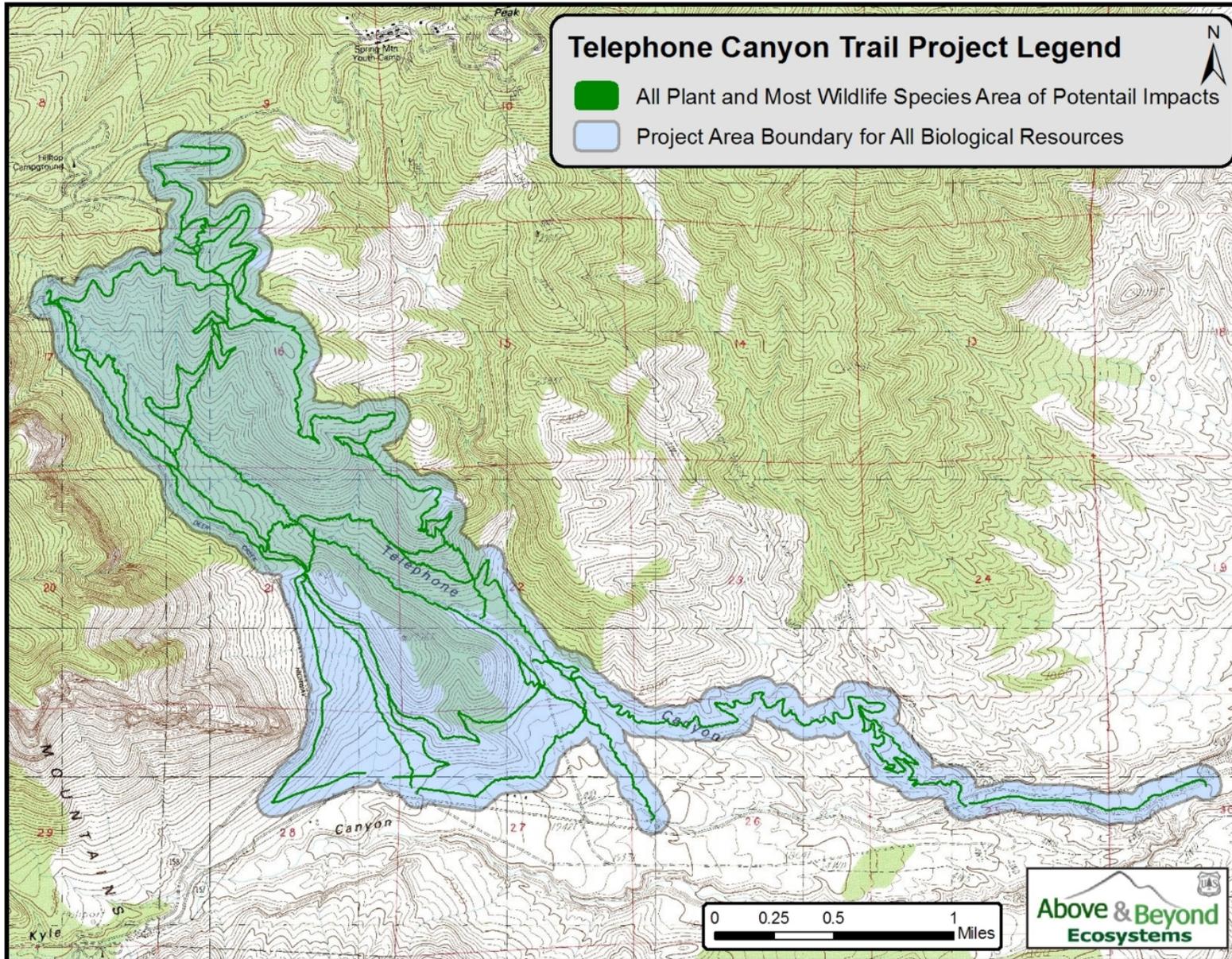


Figure 2. Biological resources analysis area

Table 2. Effects of Alternative B – Proposed Action on Wildlife and Plant Species with Habitat within the Biological Resource Project Area

Species	Scientific name	Status <sup>a</sup>	Habitat Present	Analysis Location <sup>b</sup>	Determination <sup>c</sup>	Rationale
<b>Mammals</b>						
Bighorn sheep	<i>Ovis canadensis</i>	S	Yes	BABE	MIIH	Trail construction and continued use could have short- and long-term impacts to bighorn sheep. The project would completely traverse a migration corridor identified by (unpublished data available in the Project Record). However, considering County Road 157 and existing user created trails already cross this corridor, the project would not result in a net increase of disturbance. It would just adjust trails to more suitable locations. Minor disturbances to sheep that are using or migrating through the area would continue. These potential impacts are not believed to be substantial because the existing condition already has similar use. The addition of officially accepted non-motorized trails and use would not likely result in sufficient impacts to deter bighorn sheep from passing through the area or continuing to use habitat within or near the project area. Incremental adverse cumulative impacts would be expected within the big game cumulative impact area.
Elk	<i>Cervus canadensis</i>	MIS	Yes	SR	NCP	The project would not result in any substantial change to the existing conditions. It would convert existing trails and build new trails throughout critical elk summer range. However, no actual changes to habitat or vulnerability itself would be expected. Trail use would be expected to have long-term adverse impacts on elk use of and movement within the big game cumulative impact area. These impacts from implementing this project would not be expected to result in a substantial change in behavior from the existing condition because County Road 157 and existing user created trails already exist throughout the big game cumulative impact area. There would not likely be a substantial change in abundance of use from the current conditions. Therefore, no change to the SMNRA or H-T NF meta-populations, or Region 4 populations would be expected.
Palmer's Chipmunk	<i>Neotamias palmeri</i> = <i>Tamias palmeri</i>	CA, MIS, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	There are multiple sightings of this species from 1945 and 1987 within about 1 mile of the project area. The project could result in short-term disturbance to individuals from mechanized equipment use near the newly constructed, reconstructed existing user created trails and decommissioned user created trails, up to 166 acres of potential disturbance (if all areas of the decommissioned trails were being affected, which they are not). However, due to the limited operating period, adverse impacts would be minimized to denning individuals. No long-term impacts would be expected with trail use. No cumulative impacts are expected because there are no known foreseeable future projects within the cumulative impact area for this species.
Allen's big-eared bat	<i>Idionycteris phyllotis</i>	CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species has been documented to occur within ¼ mile of the project area. The project could result in short-term disturbance to roosting individuals from mechanized equipment use. No long-term impacts would be expected from trail use because roosting individuals would not be disturbed. No changes to roosting or foraging habitat would be expected. There are no known foreseeable future projects within the portion of the cumulative impact area that contains potential roosting sites, so no cumulative impacts would be expected.

Species	Scientific name	Status <sup>a</sup>	Habitat Present	Analysis Location <sup>b</sup>	Determination <sup>c</sup>	Rationale
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species was documented multiple times within a mile of the project area. The project could result in short-term disturbance to roosting individuals from mechanized equipment use. No long-term impacts would be expected from trail use because roosting individuals would not be disturbed. No changes to roosting or foraging habitat would be expected. There are no known foreseeable future projects within the portion of the cumulative impact area that contains potential roosting sites, so no cumulative impacts would be expected.
Long-eared myotis	<i>Myotis evotis</i>	CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species was documented multiple times within a mile of the project area during throughout the summer months of 1994. The project could result in short-term disturbance to roosting individuals from mechanized equipment use. No long-term impacts would be expected from trail use because roosting individuals would not be disturbed. No changes to roosting or foraging habitat would be expected. There are no known foreseeable future projects within the portion of the cumulative impact area that contains potential roosting sites, so no cumulative impacts would be expected.
Long-legged myotis	<i>Myotis volans</i>	CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species was documented multiple times within a mile of the project area during throughout the summer months of 1994. The project could result in short-term disturbance to roosting individuals from mechanized equipment use. No long-term impacts would be expected from trail use because roosting individuals would not be disturbed. No changes to roosting or foraging habitat would be expected. There are no known foreseeable future projects within the portion of the cumulative impact area that contains potential roosting sites, so no cumulative impacts would be expected.
Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>	MSHCP	Yes	SR	MIIH	There is multiple sighting w/in 2 miles. The project could result in short-term disturbance to roosting individuals from mechanized equipment use. No long-term impacts would be expected from trail use because roosting individuals would not be disturbed. No changes to roosting or foraging habitat would be expected. There are no known foreseeable future projects within the portion of the cumulative impact area that contains potential roosting sites, so no cumulative impacts would be expected.
Spotted bat	<i>Euderma maculatum</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	NI	Project activities would not be expected to have any impact on individuals or habitat because primary roosting habitat would not be disturbed by activities associated with trial construction or long-term use of trails and no foraging habitat or characteristics would be modified by this project or continued use of the trails.
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	NI	Five individuals were captured within 1 mile of the project area in 1992. Project activities would not be expected to have any impact on individuals or habitat because primary roosting habitat would not be disturbed by activities associated with trial construction or long-term use of trails and no foraging habitat or characteristics would be modified by this project or continued use of the trails.

Species	Scientific name	Status <sup>a</sup>	Habitat Present	Analysis Location <sup>b</sup>	Determination <sup>c</sup>	Rationale
Western small-footed myotis	<i>Myotis ciliolabrum</i>	CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species was documented multiple times within a mile of the project area during throughout the summer months of 1994. Primary roost habitat would not be disturbed by project related activities. However, the project could result in short-term disturbance to roosting individuals from mechanized equipment use within occasionally used roosting habitat (trees). No long-term impacts would be expected from trail use because roosting individuals would not be disturbed. No changes to roosting or foraging habitat would be expected. There are no known foreseeable future projects within the portion of the cumulative impact area that contains potential roosting sites, so no cumulative impacts would be expected.
<b>Birds</b>						
Flammulated owl	<i>Otus flammeolus</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	Minor changes and disturbances to low quality roosting and foraging habitats may occur as a result of project implementation. Long-term impacts would be similar to existing condition within the project area.
Black-throated gray warbler	<i>Dendroica nigrescens</i>	PIF	Yes	SR	MIIH	Project design criteria would minimize any potential impact to this species as a result of implementing this project. See impact summary for migratory birds above.
Cooper's hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	PIF	Yes	SR	MIIH	The project area contains potential nesting and foraging habitat. There are no known occupied nesting territories within or near the project area. If nesting individuals do exist within the project area, they may move nesting locations as a long-term change to trail locations. No expected change to abundance of habitat or individuals would be expected to occur as a result of project implementation.
Gray flycatcher	<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>	PIF	Yes	SR	MIIH	Project design criteria would minimize any potential impact to this species as a result of implementing this project. See impact summary for migratory birds above.
Gray vireo	<i>Vireo vicinior</i>	PIF	Yes	SR	MIIH	Project design criteria would minimize any potential impact to this species as a result of implementing this project. See impact summary for migratory birds above.
Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	NI	Northern goshawk foraging habitat exists throughout the majority of the project area and there is no suitable nesting habitat. The proposed activities and long-term use of the trail systems would have no direct or measureable indirect impact on northern goshawk or their habitat because prey availability and abundance would not be expected to change with project implementation. Therefore, no cumulative impacts would be expected for this species.
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus var. anatum</i>	S, CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	NI	There is no nesting habitat for this species within the project area or within the area of potential impact. Foraging opportunities would not be expected to change as a result of project implementation or long-term use of the trails.
Pinyon jay	<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>	PIF	Yes	SR	MIIH	Project design criteria would minimize any potential impact to this species as a result of implementing this project. See impact summary for migratory birds above.
Western bluebird	<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	PIF	Yes	SR	MIIH	Project design criteria would minimize any potential impact to this species as a result of implementing this project. See impact summary for migratory birds above.

Species	Scientific name	Status <sup>a</sup>	Habitat Present	Analysis Location <sup>b</sup>	Determination <sup>c</sup>	Rationale
<b>Invertebrates</b>						
Carole's silverspot butterfly	<i>Speyeria carolae</i> = <i>S. zerene carolae</i>	CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species has been documented within 100 meters and repeatedly within 3 miles of the project area from sometime before 1996 through 2007. The project could result in short-term changes to larval host and nectar plant numbers and locations from the existing condition as a result of trail construction and decommissioning. There would be an expected net loss of about one and one tenth (1.1) acres of plant production from areas lost to new trail construction minus those gained through trail decommissioning. Project Design Criteria would minimize impacts to existing larval host and important nectar plants.
Charleston ant	<i>Lasius nevadensis</i>	CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	There is potential that if this species occurs within the project area that individuals or habitat could be impacted. Surveys for this species have not been conducted recently, so current distribution is unknown.
Morand's checkerspot	<i>Euphydryas chalcedona morandi</i> = <i>E. anicia morandi</i>	S, CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	A breeding colony was observed south of Harris Mountain in 2001. The closest observations of this species were about 0.6 miles west and south of the project area from 1987 and sometime prior to 1996 (unpublished data available in the Project Record). There are larval and nectar host species associated with this butterfly within the potential area of impact from this project. However, the project area was classified as outside the range of this butterfly. Therefore, there is some potential for impacts to habitat as a result of project implementation and not likely any to individuals.
Nevada admiral	<i>Limenitis weidemeyerii nevadae</i>	CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	The project could result in short-term changes to larval host and nectar plant numbers and locations from the existing condition as a result of trail construction and decommissioning. There would be an expected net loss of about one and one tenth (1.1) acres of plant production from areas lost to new trail construction minus those gained through trail decommissioning. Project Design Criteria would minimize impacts to existing larval host and important nectar plants
Spring Mountains acastus checkerspot	<i>Chlosyne acastus robusta</i>	S, CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species has been documented using habitat within 100 meters of the project area and farther away multiple times from 1936 – 2006. The project could result in short-term changes to larval host and nectar plant numbers and locations from the existing condition as a result of trail construction and decommissioning. There would be an expected net loss of about one and one tenth (1.1) acres of plant production from areas lost to new trail construction minus those gained through trail decommissioning. Project Design Criteria would minimize impacts to existing larval host and important nectar plants
Spring Mountains comma skipper	<i>Hesperia Colorado mojavensis</i> = <i>H. comma mojavensis</i>	CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species has been documented using habitat within 100 meters of the project area and farther away repeatedly from 1950 - 2007. The project could result in short-term changes to larval host and nectar plant numbers and locations from the existing condition as a result of trail construction and decommissioning. There would be an expected net loss of about one and one tenth (1.1) acres of plant production from areas lost to new trail construction minus those gained through trail decommissioning. Project Design Criteria would minimize impacts to existing larval host and important nectar plants

Species	Scientific name	Status <sup>a</sup>	Habitat Present	Analysis Location <sup>b</sup>	Determination <sup>c</sup>	Rationale
Spring Mountains dark blue butterfly	<i>Euphilotes ancilla purpura</i> and <i>E. ancilla cryptica</i> = <i>E. enoptes purpurea</i>	S, CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	This species has been documented utilizing habitat within about 250 meters of the project area and multiple times further away from the project area. The project could result in short-term changes to larval host and nectar plant numbers and locations from the existing condition as a result of trail construction and decommissioning. There would be an expected net loss of about one and one tenth (1.1) acres of plant production from areas lost to new trail construction minus those gained through trail decommissioning. Project Design Criteria would minimize impacts to existing larval host and important nectar plants
Spring Mountains icarioides blue butterfly	<i>Plebejus (Icaricia) icarioides austinorum</i>	CA, MSHCP	Yes	BABE	MIIH	The closest observations of this species were about 0.6 miles southwest of the project area in Middle Kyle Canyon (unpublished data available in the Project Record). The project could result in short-term changes to larval host and nectar plant numbers and locations from the existing condition as a result of trail construction and decommissioning. There would be an expected net loss of about 1.1 acres of plant production from areas lost to new trail construction minus those gained through trail decommissioning. Project Design Criteria would minimize impacts to existing larval host and important nectar plants
Spring mountainsnail	<i>Oreohelix handi</i>	Future CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	In 2000 several shells and two living individuals were found under boulders about 1 mile N of the project area. No specific surveys for these types of species have occurred within the project area so additional springs or areas surrounding them may be occupied. Project Design Criteria would minimize potential adverse impacts to the species through spring protection. Mechanized equipment use for trail construction and continued trail use could directly impact individuals. So, short- and long-term impacts to individuals could continue indefinitely. However, these potential impacts are not believed to be substantial because this species' movement would not be blocked or restricted; the most likely occupied areas near springs would be protected.
Clokey's milkvetch	<i>Astragalus aequalis</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	Very limited habitat present.
Nevada willowherb	<i>Epilobium nevadense</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.
Charleston Mountain goldenbush	<i>Ericameria compacta</i>	S	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.
Clokey's buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum heermannii</i> var. <i>clokeyi</i>	S	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.
Clokey's greasebush	<i>Glossopetalon clokeyi</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.
Dwarf greasebush	<i>Glossopetalon pungens</i> – Analysis includes <i>G.p.</i> var. <i>glabrum</i> and <i>G.p.</i> var. <i>pungens</i> that have recently been combined taxonomically.	S, CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.

Species	Scientific name	Status <sup>a</sup>	Habitat Present	Analysis Location <sup>b</sup>	Determination <sup>c</sup>	Rationale
Jaeger ivesia	<i>Ivesia jaegeri</i>	S, CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.
Death Valley beardtongue	<i>Penstemon fruticiformis</i> ssp. <i>armagosae</i>	CA	Yes	BABE	MIIH	May impact habitat.
Jaeger's beardtongue	<i>Penstemon thompsoniae</i> spp. <i>Jaegeri</i>	S	Yes/Present	BABE	MIIH	Known plants within the project area. Most of the occurrences would not be impacted. A few of them are in areas adjacent to the existing user created or planned new trail segments and impacts from rehabilitation/construction and recreation use may occur.
Charleston grounddaisy	<i>Townsendia jonesii</i> var. <i>tumulosa</i>	S, CA	Yes/Present	BABE	MIIH	Known plants within the project area. Most of the occurrences would not be impacted. A few of them are in areas adjacent to the existing user created or planned new trail segments and impacts from rehabilitation/construction and recreation use may occur.
Charleston violet	<i>Viola charlestonensis</i>	S	Yes/Present	BABE	MIIH	There are known plants within the project area. Occurrences would be impacted. A few of them are in areas adjacent to the existing user created or planned new trail segments and impacts from rehabilitation/construction and recreation use may occur.
Blue grama grass	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	MIS	Yes	SR	NCP	Individual plants could be affected by this project; however, potential habitat is currently being impacted from the rec use of existing trails. The demolition and reconstruction would be expected to have additional short-term impacts to habitat. Long-term impacts from implementation of this project may improve habitat characteristics in some areas by closing excess trails. However, the area of impact from recreation is not expected to decrease or increase as a result of the project, so the long-term habitat conditions for this plant are not expected to measurably change. There is an abundance of habitat for this species in the SMNRA and the project is not expected to have any implications at the SMNRA or H-TNF, or Region 4 level.
Clokey paintbrush	<i>Castilleja martinii</i> var. <i>clock eyi</i>	MIS, MSHCP	Yes	SR	NCP	May impact habitat.
Dicranoweisia moss	<i>Dicranoweisia crispula</i>	MSHCP	Yes	SR	NCP	Potential habitat exists within the project area (upper elevations). No surveys for this species have been completed. There would not be any removal of trees with implementation of this project, so there would be no net-change to potential habitat. The area will continue to be used for recreation purposes.
Inch high fleabane	<i>Erigeron uncialis</i> ssp. <i>conjugans</i>	MSHCP	Yes	SR	NCP	May impact habitat.
Silk tassel	<i>Garrya flavescens</i>	MIS	Yes/Present	SR	NCP	May impact habitat and individuals.
Charleston pinewood lousewort	<i>Pedicularis semibarbata</i> var. <i>charlesonensis</i>	MSHCP	Yes (just outside 25m buffer)	SR	MIIH	Habitat and individual plants found throughout the project area. Decommission, reconstruction, & continued recreation uses will impact individuals & habitat, but not expected to increase to a point that would have larger long-term impacts to species.

<sup>a</sup>**Status**—Listed in progression from the highest level to the lowest level: E = federal Endangered species; T = federal Threatened species; C = federal Candidate species; S = Region 4 Sensitive Species; CA = Spring Mountain Conservation Agreement species; MIS = Humboldt-Toiyabe NF Management Indicator Species; and MSHCP = Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

<sup>b</sup>**Analysis Location**—BABE = Analysis for this species will be located within this projects' combined biological assessment/biological evaluation; SR – Analysis for this species will be located within this project's combined specialist report.

<sup>c</sup>**Determination**—Determinations listed are specific language for the highest level of status for the species. NA = No Affect to this species (federal listed species' determination); NI = No Impact (R4 Sensitive, CA, MIS, and MSHCP language); MIIH = May Impact Individuals or Habitat, and would not contribute to the need for federal listing or loss of viability within the planning area (R4 Sensitive, CA, and MSHCP language); and NCP = No Change to the Spring Mountain Natural Resource Area or Humboldt-Toiyabe NF meta-populations, or the Region 4 population as a result of project implementation, although individuals or habitat may be directly, indirectly, and cumulatively impacted at the project level (MIS language).

## **OTHER IMPACTS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Environmental Justice**

All projects involving federal actions must comply with Executive Order 12868, issued February 11, 1994, which directs federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects of federal projects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law.

There would be no disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects that would fall on low-income, minority populations, American Indian tribes, women, or affect the civil rights of any United States citizen. All trails would allow free access and continue to be open to the public year round. The physical effects to surface resources from ground disturbance would be localized to the disturbance footprint.

### **Climate Change Considerations**

The Forest Service has identified climate change as one of its top priorities and has issued guidance to include climate change considerations in project planning and NEPA documents. Project construction would increase project area Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions over the existing condition only for the short-term and would not be a continuous new source of GHGs. The project would not impede the state of Nevada's ability to meet its 2020 GHG emission reduction goal. The equipment used for trails construction proposed for this project will be licensed to comply with state air quality standards. The small scope of this project does not make it possible to quantify or qualify the direct or indirect effects from heavy equipment emissions, nor establish a cause-effect relationship between this single project and global climate change.

### **Public Health and Safety**

Current user-created trails and user-created trail features, such as mountain bike challenge features, increase the risk of injury to trail users. The risks would continue with the No Action Alternative. By identifying and delineating trails, reclaiming user-created trails, and bringing trails up to Forest Service standards, the SMNRA would be able to provide a safe recreation experience for users of non-motorized trails in the area. The proposed parking area, a component of the Proposed Action, would delineate parking spaces, control shoulder parking, control trails access off the main highways, and provide safe trailhead access to the Telephone Canyon Trail system.

### **Unique Characteristics**

There are no unique landforms within the project area. The project area is not located in or near parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or wild and scenic river corridors. The visual quality of the Wilderness area on the SMNRA would not be impacted. The use is compatible with federal law that designated the National Recreation Area.

The project is located in a Biodiversity Hotspot; however, the Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service have come to recognize the entirety of the SMNRA is "an island of endemism" and a single large biodiversity hotspot and have elected to analyze for species viability rather than land base acres in the hotspot. The project area is not located in an ecologically critical area, although in the project area there are sensitive species, species of

concern as listed in the Conservation Agreement and covered species as listed in the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

### **Other Federal, State, or Local Laws or Requirements for Protection of the Environment**

The project would be in compliance with the Clean Water Act by following the BMPs designed to reduce impacts to water quality. The project is consistent with Forest Plan standards for soil loss by following the BMPs designed to reduce soil loss. The project is consistent with direction set out to reduce impacts to wildlife and plant species as outlined in the Toiyabe National Forest Plan and the GMP for the Spring Mountains. Proposed management activities align with the goals and objectives of the Conservation Agreement for the Spring Mountains SMNRA and Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

### **National Forest Management Act Compliance**

The Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the GMP were developed under authority of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA), as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and its implementing regulations. The Toiyabe Forest Plan was amended in 1996 to include the SMNRA General Management Plan, which supplements the Toiyabe Forest Plan standards and guidelines, by replacing direction for Management Areas 11 and 12 (Forest Service 1996). This project is proposed to make progress toward goals and objectives embodied by the direction set out in the GMP for the SMNRA.

Resource protection measures have been included in the project design criteria and disclosed in the effects analysis. The project occurs on land suitable for recreational activities. The Proposed Action accomplishes multiple-use resource goals by providing access to trails for day use.



## Consultation and Coordination

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes and non-Forest Service persons during the development of this EA:

The following people contributed to the development of this EA:

### INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM MEMBERS

Spring Mountains Natural Resource Area, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest,

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Genny Wilson

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Line Officer, Acting Area Manager

Interdisciplinary Team Leader

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### FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES

Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Nevada Department of Transportation

Nevada Division of Forestry

Nevada Highway Patrol

Clark County Volunteer Fire Department

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

**TRIBES**

Chemehuevi Indian Tribe

Colorado River Indian Tribes

Kaibab Paiute

Las Vegas Paiute

Moapa Paiute

Pahrump Paiute

Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

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## Appendix A

### Response to Comments

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Sharon	equestrian	For those handicapped persons that should have the opportunity to be a part of the quiet and safety of the mountain, I welcome those in electric vehicles. Possibly you can create a path for horse drawn carts for the handicapped.	accessibility	The Forest Service strives to make recreation opportunities accessible to people with disabilities; however, not all trails can be made accessible. The steep topography of the Telephone Canyon area limits our ability to design the trail for horse drawn carts.
Sharon	equestrian	I would never think about going to an area that is frequented by ORV to hike or ride my horse, so why bring an ORV to an area that is for passive recreation?	user conflicts	The Telephone Canyon Trail System is proposed as a multiple-use, non-motorized trail system.
Sharon	equestrian	I am very saddened by the fact that every time I try to find a way to utilize my wagons or horse drawn carriages within parks, or other outlying areas, I am constantly fenced out, cut off by barricades and many other means only because of the past illegal passage and destruction that has occurred by the ORV group.	accessibility	The Telephone Canyon Trail System is currently being proposed as a multiple-use, non-motorized trail system. We try to encourage motorized vehicles to ride on designated motorized roads and trails with the use of signage, motor vehicle use maps, public contacts, and other means. This helps to limit the number of barricades needed to prevent motorized vehicle use in inappropriate areas.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Rob	mountain biker	My greatest concern is that this area will reach a similar fate as the Bristlecone Pine trail. It once had a number of technically challenging sections that I believe were neutralized in the name of safety. It is now a much less enjoyable experience due to lack of challenge. I implore you to consider all skill levels in the development of this area and provide "well built" challenge variations to engage experienced riders.	challenge features	Safety will remain our primary concern in the design and construction of the trail system. We will make efforts to keep existing natural terrain features that engage experienced riders.
Jim & George	equestrian	I also have concern as to how the Forest Service is going to keep bike users on the trail and not keep expanding the existing system and putting in jumps and trail braiding.	challenge features	By keeping existing natural terrain features that engage experienced riders and by providing a well signed and mapped trail system, we hope to limit bike users from expanding the existing trail system and installing unsafe challenge features.
Jim & George	equestrian	We need to find a way to get to the extreme user community and teach them what happens when we build something or change something along the trails. Maybe more trail head signage and definitely more Rangers hiking, biking, riding.	challenge features	We intend to install signage at the trailhead to provide information about the damaging impacts of user-created trails and the dangers of unauthorized challenge features. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate staffing to regularly patrol the trails.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Jeremy	mountain biker	A critical component to realizing the Forest Service's goal of reducing or eliminating unauthorized trail building will be to ensure that the trails meet the experiential expectations of mountain bikers. Incorporation of particular trail design features can serve multiple purposes; reducing environmental impacts, adding to the user experience and reducing potential conflict points. Some examples include trail sightlines, trail flow and the use of alternate lines.	challenge features	We agree that by providing a trail that can engage experienced riders, we can reduce the number of unauthorized trail building. We will incorporate your suggestions on sightlines, trail flow, and alternate lines during the design of the trail system.
Jeremy	mountain biker	Carefully planned sightlines are important on all trails...the goal is to ensure that users can see the trail, obstacles, or other users ahead, and adjust their riding accordingly.	design components	Thank you for your suggestion on sightlines. We will incorporate this idea during the design of the trail system.
Jeremy	mountain biker	A critical component of good flow is to avoid abruptly changing the trail from open and flowing to tight and technical. Smooth the transitions and slow riders gradually by progressively increasing the tread texture, gradually narrowing the trail corridor, installing a series of decreasing radius turns, or designing a slight uphill rise into the trail.	design components	Thank you for your suggestion on proper flow. We will incorporate this idea during the design of the trail system.
Jeremy	mountain biker	On multi use trails, optional lines can provide a detour for riders looking for a more advanced experience.	design components	Thank you for your suggestion on optional lines. We will incorporate this idea during the design of the trail system.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Jim & George	equestrian	I'm always for more parking for horse trailers and a way to access the trails.	equestrian parking	We are limited in the size of our proposed parking area off of Angel Peak Road. Currently, the proposed parking area is only large enough to accommodate 8-10 passenger cars. Equestrian parking for Telephone Canyon Trails is provided off of Kyle Canyon Road as a part of the Middle Kyle Complex Project, where we can better accommodate the large turning radius of horse trailers.
Keith	equestrian	I am extremely concerned about parking for horse trailers, when your only proposed parking for this trail system is: Construct a small, unpaved trailhead parking area to accommodate 8-10 passenger vehicles, located adjacent to the Angel Peak Road.	equestrian parking	We are limited in the size of our proposed parking area off of Angel Peak Road. Currently, the proposed parking area is only large enough to accommodate 8-10 passenger cars. Equestrian parking for Telephone Canyon Trails is provided off of Kyle Canyon Road as a part of the Middle Kyle Canyon Project, where we can better accommodate the large turning radius of horse trailers.
Mary Sue	equestrian	The first question I have involves horse trailer parking on Kyle Canyon Road. I don't see any plans for this on the map. If I've missed one, where would it be? It would need to be in the vicinity of the current horse rental operation since that's where our trails begin and end.	equestrian parking	We are limited in the size of our proposed parking area off of Angel Peak Road. Currently, the proposed parking area is only large enough to accommodate 8-10 passenger cars. Equestrian parking for Telephone Canyon Trails is provided off of Kyle Canyon Road, near the horse rental operation, as a part of the Middle Kyle Complex Project, where we can better accommodate the large turning radius of horse trailers.
Ed	equestrian	As long as the parking facility is not replaced by a smaller lot, I have no objection. As long as there are no reductions of facilities for horse riders I am not against the plan.	equestrian parking	We are limited in the size of our proposed parking area off of Angel Peak Road. Currently, the proposed parking area is only large enough to accommodate 8-10 passenger cars. Equestrian parking for Telephone Canyon Trails is provided off of Kyle Canyon Road as a part of the Middle Kyle Complex Project, where we can better accommodate the large turning radius of horse trailers. This will provide additional facilities for horse riders.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Laurie	equestrian	I am requesting that you take into consideration the need for adequate parking, unloading and trail head usage for recreational horseback riders while addressing Telephone Canyon Parking facility.	equestrian parking	We are limited in the size of our proposed parking area off of Angel Peak Road. Currently, the proposed parking area is only large enough to accommodate 8-10 passenger cars. Equestrian parking for Telephone Canyon Trails is provided off of Kyle Canyon Road as a part of the Middle Kyle Canyon Project, where we can better accommodate the large turning radius of horse trailers.
Keith	equestrian	I would seek any opportunity, to meet with your staff and look at ways we can work together to achieve: The goal of this project is to provide multiple use trails for hikers, bikers, and equestrians.	meeting	You met with our Trails Coordinator on August 15, 2011, to discuss opportunities for participating in this project. Thank you for offering to volunteer your time to help make this project a success.
Mary Sue	equestrian	It is a bit tricky to figure out from the map exactly what your plans are, and I am left with many questions here, so perhaps a visit to your office would be better.	meeting	The scoping notice contains a contact number if you wish to further discuss the project.
Sharon	equestrian	Originally all the maps had the language “no motorized use” prominently placed on every map regarding mixed use. I strongly suggest that language be put back into and onto all maps in the mixed use mapping process. The two uses – passive non-motorized, as opposed to motorized, are not and never will be compatible to the different user groups.	user conflicts	As described in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area Visitor Guide, our designated trail system is not open to motorized use. Motorized trails are designated and mapped in our Motorized Vehicle Use Map. Telephone Canyon Trails will be listed as a non-motorized trail system and will be signed as such.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Sharon	equestrian	I do believe the motorized group should have a place to recreate. They should have an area away from the mountain, where...they are neither an intrusion to our peace and quiet nor a safety threat to bicyclists, walkers, hikers, or horsemen. Let us not forget about the environment, the animals and the flora of our Mountain that the ORV's have run over, torn up and disregarded for years.	user conflicts	Motorized trails within the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area are designated and mapped in our Motorized Vehicle Use Map.
Rob	mountain biker	I am encouraged by the progress being made in this area and look forward to seeing it move forward.	support	Thank you for your support of this project.
Jim & George	equestrian	From my perspective most of it looks like it will work and serve the community well.	support	Thank you for your support of this project.
Pat	resident	Generally, I approve of these plans, if they are done properly.	support	Thank you for your support of this project.
Jeremy	mountain biker	The International Mountain Bicycling Association and local chapter Southern Nevada Mountain Bike Association fully support development of the Telephone Canyon Trails project in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area.	support	Thank you for your support of this project.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Kenny	mountain biker	As a member of SNMBA/IMBA I would just like to voice my support for this project.	support	Thank you for your support of this project.
Jeremy	mountain biker	IMBA supports the design and management of trail systems using stacked loop systems that are frequently connected by longer routes across less frequently accessed terrain...The system could also be connected to the Twilight Trail Network on BLM property, the Bristlecone Trails and potential trails located on the Las Vegas Ski Resort as well as potential future trails on the south side of Kyle Canyon.	trail connection	This proposal will be a staked loop trail system with four official points of access: Hilltop/Angel Peak staging area, Robber's Roost Trailhead, Lower Harris Springs staging area and the new trailhead along SR 157. If future funding allows, the connection to the Twilight Zone Trails in Red Rock Canyon is recognized as a desirable connection by both the BLM and the Forest Service. This comment has come up at public planning meetings with both agencies. There are currently no plans to connect to the Bristlecone Trail, or potential trails at LVSSR. This proposal does provide for limited connectivity South of SR 157.
Mary Sue	equestrian	Why would so many current miles of trail be decommissioned? Explanations for this would be helpful.	trail decommissioning	The portions of the trail system that are proposed for decommissioning were done to protect public safety and/or environmental and cultural concerns. These decommissioned sections are being replaced by improved trail segments. In total, there is a net gain of designated trails relative to decommissioned, user-created trails.
Ed	equestrian	While the description of the plan is not clearly mapped out, it seems this is a relocation of the parking lot and the removal of a section of trail that will be replaced by another section.	trail decommissioning	A new parking lot will be constructed on Angel Peak Road to provide parking for mountain bikers to access the trail network from the higher elevations on the trails. Currently, mountain bikers are dropping people off on the side of the road to start their ride. A new equestrian/RV/bus parking lot will be constructed, north of HWY 157, as part of the Middle Kyle Complex project. User-created trail segments that are causing damage to resources will be improved to meet Forest Service trail standards, while other user-created trails will be decommissioned.
Pat	resident	Please assure us that no mature, adult, healthy trees will be cut down, Western Yellow Pine, White Fir, or others. Nothing is worth sacrificing these 1 and 3 hundred year old trees.	tree cutting	We intend to keep as many trees as possible during the implementation of this project. Some trees may have to be cut for safety reasons, but we would avoid cutting large trees.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Sharon	equestrian	I am tired of breathing dust and calling an overburdened police department about trespass and intrusions in my neighborhood and my life. It has cost me tens of thousands because of trespassers. Police do not confiscate vehicles and I am forced to fence my vacant land to keep them off. Keep them off of our mountain!!!	trespass	The Telephone Canyon trail system is proposed as a multiple-use, non-motorized trail system. Motorized trails are designated and mapped in our Motorized Vehicle Use Map. The Telephone Canyon trail system is not located near any residential communities.
Mary Sue	equestrian	Regarding the proposed new parking lot on Angel Peak Road, keep in mind that horse trailers need a lot of room to turn around and get back out onto the paved road. Another parking area is very welcome, so we appreciate this proposal.	turning radius	We are limited in the size of our proposed parking area off of Angel Peak Road. Currently, the proposed parking area is only large enough to accommodate 8-10 passenger cars. Equestrian parking for Telephone Canyon Trails is provided off of Kyle Canyon Road as a part of the Middle Kyle Canyon Project, where we can better accommodate the large turning radius of horse trailers.
Ed	equestrian	In the past, most of the U.S. Forest Service projects at Mount Charleston concerning horse use have not gone forward, making us cautious of stating approval of any project. It would help if periodic progress reports on all the projects were e-mailed to those who took the time to provide comments.	updates	Those who provide comments during the public scoping period receive copies of the Environmental Assessment and the final decision to update them on the progress of the project. You will receive these updates.
Mary Sue	equestrian	Regarding the proposed changes at Telephone Canyon, equestrians would enjoy a bicycle-free trail if possible. Most of the time we all get along great, but the bikes come downhill so fast, we have nearly been run over many times.	user conflicts	We are currently looking at opportunities to provide portions of the trail system that separate bikers and horse riders.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Pat	resident	Have Forest Service presence at the trailheads and otherwise as necessary. Conflicts occur between mountain bikers and hikers, et al.	user conflicts	We are currently looking at opportunities to provide portions of the trail system that separate bikers and horse riders; however, by asking trail users to yield to other users, we can provide more recreation opportunities for all groups on the mountain. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate staffing to regularly patrol the trails.
Sharon	equestrian	I welcome someone to find out if the tagging and vandalism of our outlying areas are done by folks that are hiking or on horseback or if a motor was involved. Let's find out from public records how the people that tear up our public protected areas reach those areas.	vandalism	Our law enforcement officers investigate vandalism and destruction of public land to the extent practicable. Any information provided by the public can further help law enforcement succeed in finding these vandals.
Chris	mountain biker	Mountain bikers need the challenges that rocks, boulders, trees provide in the form of obstacles to go around, over, and even under, and embankments for high speed turns that put us nearly in a horizontal riding position called "wall rides", a feat impossible for horses or hikers.	user conflicts	Safety, terrain, and plant and animal concerns do not always make it feasible to provide trails for advanced mountain bike users; however, we are looking at opportunities to provide sections of trail to separate mountain bikers and horse riders.
Chris	mountain biker	Many of these trails that we ride were created specifically in order for us to get off of the trails used by equestrians and away from the many issues they cause for us.	user conflicts	We are currently looking at opportunities to provide portions of the trail system that separate bikers and horse riders. We hope that these will be sufficient to prevent future user created routes, which damage the vegetation.

First Name	Affiliation	Comment	Category	Response
Chris	mountain biker	Horses with riders and baggage tear rocks loose from the cliff side and churn the earth into powder, making the path loose and more dangerous to mountain bikers due to the lack of control. This also makes it hard to breathe and see because of the resulting dust that is easily washed into ruts by the rain.	user conflicts	The trails will be constructed to Forest Service standards, which will hopefully minimize the hazards you describe from equestrians and mountain bikers sharing a trail.
Chris	mountain biker	The map being used is not accurate.	data	We would welcome any information you have to correct errors in our map.
Chris	mountain biker	If it is decided that some of these trails are to be segregated, you can be assured of our full support and assistance.	user conflicts	We are currently looking at opportunities to provide portions of the trail system that separate bikers and horse riders. Thank you for your support.

## Appendix B

### List of Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Projects Spring Mountains National Recreation Area Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest 2012

Past Projects	Location	Project Description	Decision Date	Implementation Date
Bristlecone Habitat Protection Project (CE)	Adjacent to Highway 156 in Lee, Deer and Mack's Canyons, SMNRA	Fence up to 1000 meters of the Bristlecone Trail (from the Highway 156 trailhead south) to protect sensitive plant species and their habitat. Install signing to educate public about the resource and the reason for the fence.	11/20/2006	5/24/2007
Lovell Canyon Trails and Trailhead (CE)	Lovell Canyon	Construct approximately 12 miles of new trail and one low development trailhead for hikers and equestrians.	02/26/07	09/2007
Fuel Reduction to Reduce Wildland Fire Danger adjacent to developed communities (EA)	Kyle, Lee, Lovell and Trout Canyons, Mountain Springs, Cold Creek	USFS proposal to mechanically reduce fuels (vegetation) on 2,900 acres of NFS lands adjacent to communities rated by the Nevada Fire Safe Council as "high and extreme" risk of wildfire.	12/20/2007	03/2008; completed fall 2010
Sign and Low Frequency Radio	Throughout SMNRA	Implement signage program/information radio station.	No date	02/28/08
Echo View Reservoir	Approx. 1,000 feet north of Tr. Canyon Trailhead	300,000 gallon water storage reservoir with 1,900 foot pipeline running along Echo Road to Clark County Echo Well 3.	2005	2005
Motorized Trails Designation Project	Throughout NRA	Restricts motorized travel to designated FS system roads.	6/2/2004	2004
Fletcher View/Kyle RV Improvements	On SR 157, approx. one mile west of intersection with 158 in Kyle Canyon	Replace vault toilet at Fletcher View with 2 flush with showers, update plumbing system; construct new trail between campground and visitor center; restore user defined trails; install interpretive signs.	12/12/03	2004
Sawmill Trailhead Project	State Route 156	Construct trailhead parking area for equestrian use.	2004	2005-2006
Sawmill Loop Trail Project	State Route 156	Construct 1.5 miles of new trail named the Sawmill Loop Trail.	03/27/2007	2007
Mitigation of safety hazards at abandoned mines sites (CE)	Throughout NRA	Develop and implement safety requirements for visitors.	10/26/09	2009
Interp. Signs and Displays (CE)	Throughout NRA	Install informational/interpretive signage.	07/30/08	11/30/09
Resource Protection Devices (CE)	Throughout NRA	Design devices to guide people in developed areas.	05/01/09	10/01/09
Fencing and Interpretive Signage (Law Enforcement) (CE)	Kyle Canyon	Install winter fencing to prevent winter play at Cathedral Rock.	09/30/08	11/30/08

Past Projects	Location	Project Description	Decision Date	Implementation Date
Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort Snowmaking System & Parking Improvements (EA)	Lee Canyon	Resort proposal to expand snow-making pond to 1.5 million gallons; expand and pave lower parking lot; and control parking lot water discharge.	7/24/2009	2009
Nellis AFB Fiber Optic Line SUP Project (CE)	Hwy 158, Angel Peak Communications Site	Grant a linear ROW SUP for a fiber optic line to increase bandwidth for FAA and Nellis communications.	11/04/2009	12/2009
Mt. Potosi Guzzlers SUP Project (CE)	West side of Mt. Potosi	Develop gallinaceous guzzler water sources for small game.	01/31/2011	2011
Mt. Springs Radio Tower Site SUP Project (CE)	SW of summit at Mt. Springs pass	Replace an existing radio/microwave tower with a 70-foot tower and equipment shelter.	12/03/2010	2011
Lee Canyon Meadow Restoration (CE)	Lee Canyon	USFS proposal to improve blue butterfly habitat by addressing meadow and water quality degradation: repair gullies; dissipate water energy at culverts; install footbridges & interpretive signing; control access by wild horses; improve parking.	8/25/2009	2009-2011
Archery Range (CE)	Deer Creek	Rehabilitate and close dispersed camping areas.	09/16/11	2011-2012
Upper Kyle Trailhead Improvement Project (EA)	Kyle Canyon	USFS proposal to development trailhead access in the vicinity of Mary Jane Falls, Old Ski Tow, and Trail Canyon Trailheads.	08/22/2011	2011-2012
Desert View Rehabilitation Project (EA)	State Rd. 158	USFS proposal to improve the Desert View Overlook (State Road 158) to provide for traffic safety at the turnout and improved interpretive abilities and viewscapes. Includes construction of off-highway parking lot and ADA accessible trail.	05/09/2008	2011-2012
Cathedral Rock Picnic Area Rehabilitation Project (EA)	Section 36, T19S, R56E, MDB&M. At the upper terminus of State Route 157 in the community of Mount Charleston.	USFS proposal to remove the existing Cathedral Rock infrastructure and replace it with new facilities and infrastructure, and convert a portion of the existing picnic area into trailhead parking for adjacent trails.	3/7/2011	2011-2012
Cathedral Rock Trails Project (CE)	Section 36, T19S, R56E, MDB&M. At the upper terminus of State Route 157 in the community of Mount Charleston.	USFS proposal to construct two connector trails from the new trailhead in Cathedral Rock Picnic Area to access the Cathedral Rock and the South Loop Trails, and make trail improvements.	09/15/2011	2011-2012

Past Projects	Location	Project Description	Decision Date	Implementation Date
Middle Kyle Complex (EIS)	Sections 14-17, 21-29, 32, 34-36, T19S, R56E & Sections 18, 19, 30, 31, T19S, R57E MDB&M. Middle Kyle Complex	USFS proposal to construct a recreation complex to provide a variety of recreation and education opportunities in an environmentally sensitive manner. Opportunities could include a visitor center, campgrounds, picnic area, and multiple trail systems; includes reconstruction of Kyle Canyon Campground in lower Kyle Canyon.	12/31/2009	2010-2013
Blue Tree Trails (CE)	Lee Canyon	USFS proposal to designate 44 miles of trail for hiking, equestrian & mountain bike use from the recently constructed Sawmill Trailhead; close & rehabilitate 9 miles of existing user trails/roads & 7 campsites; and convert 1 mile of road to trail.	5/17/2010	2010-2012
Lovell Road - Round 7 (CE)	Lovell Canyon	Reconstruction of paved section of road for safety.	12/6/2011	2011-2012
Dolomite/McWilliams/Old Mill Campgrounds (EA)	Lee Canyon	Total renovation of the campgrounds.	06/2012	09/01/12
Mahogany Grove (EA)	Deer Creek	Reconstruct group picnic area.	06/2012	09/01/12
Foxtail Group Picnic Area (EA)	Lee Canyon	Develop winter play/renovate picnic area.	06/2012	09/01/12
Rd 6- Fuel Reduction In The SMNRA (EA)	Throughout NRA	Implement the removal of trees and brush for fire protection.	2012	2013
Rainbow Mountain and LaMadre Mountain Wilderness Plan (EA)	Rainbow Mountain and LaMadre Mountain Wilderness Areas, Spring Mountains NRA and Red Rock National Conservation Area	USFS proposal to complete Wilderness Planning for Rainbow Mountain and LaMadre Mountain Wildernesses, which are partially located on the Spring Mountains NRA.	2012	2012
Mt. Charleston Wilderness Plan (EA)	Mt. Charleston Wilderness Area	USFS proposal to complete wilderness planning for Mt. Charleston,	2012	2012
Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort Avalanche Hazard Reduction (EA)	Lee Canyon	Authorize LVSSR to upgrade existing avalanche hazard reduction equipment with a 105 mm howitzer; construct facilities to house the weapon and munitions.	05/01/2008	On Hold
Telephone Canyon Trails Project (EA)	Deer Creek Highway	Construct, realign, close, and rehabilitate non-motorized, non-wilderness multiple use trails and provide trailhead parking.	04/2012	07/20/2012
LVSSR Ski Lift Replacement (CE)	Lee Canyon	Authorize LVSSR to replace existing ski lift.	1/2013	7/2013

<b>Past Projects</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Implementation Date</b>
Mud Springs Fencing Project (CE)	Lee Canyon	Construct fence to exclude ungulates around springs and provide alternative water source.	7/2013	7/2013
Clark Canyon Rehabilitation Project (CE)	Lovell Canyon	Project to improve timber and wildlife habitat.	9/2013	7/2013

## Appendix C

### Design Criteria, Mitigation and Conservation Measures Telephone Canyon Trails Project

#### Botanical and Biological

These design criteria would be included as part of the Proposed Action specific to the project area and are designed to minimize potential impacts to flora and fauna species with implementation of this project.

PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES	POTENTIAL IMPACTS ADDRESSED
<p><b>Limited Operating Periods (LOP) for raptors, and other migratory birds:</b> Vegetation removal and gate installation will occur between July 21 and May 19 to avoid bird breeding season (May 20 – July 20).</p> <p>If an exception is requested, it may be granted if a nest search is conducted and substrates (i.e., trees or bushes) upon which nests are found are avoided until nestlings fledge. Appropriate buffers will be designated for any nests located based on the species habitat requirements by an SMNRA wildlife biologist.</p>	<p>Reduce nest abandonment and loss of young raptors and migratory birds, and potential direct and indirect impacts to a variety of small mammals including, and not limited to, Palmer chipmunks and bats.</p>
<p><b>LOP for nocturnal species:</b> No construction or demolition activities will be allowed between the official sunset and sunrise times for the Spring Mountains and no artificial lights will be allowed to be used at any time for project implementation.</p>	<p>Minimize potential impacts to foraging bats and nocturnal raptors</p>
<p><b>Trees &amp; Snag Loss Preservation:</b> No trail construction, reconstruction, or demolition will fall any existing snag or green tree larger than 8 inches in diameter at breast height, with the potential exception of the trailhead and parking area construction.</p>	<p>Minimize potential impacts to roosting bats and nesting bird species</p>
<p><b>Entrapment Prevention:</b> Hollow posts of any material or color, used to mark boundaries as part of the trail system, will be capped if open-ended. Exposed holes near the top of posts will be closed to prevent many species from being trapped.</p>	<p>Reduce loss of individuals of Palmer’s chipmunk and other small mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles.</p>
<p><b>Weed Prevention:</b> USFS and Humboldt-Toiyabe NF Weeds Management Best Management Practices (Humboldt-Toiyabe Supplemental FSM 2080) will be employed during construction and reclamation activities. A full list of prevention measures are listed in the Non-Native / Invasive species Report for Plants (MKC FEIS, p. 3.1-5).</p> <p><b>Weed Prevention Monitoring:</b> Post-implementation, the project area will be monitored for 3 years for introduced weeds. Any introduced weeds observed will be treated.</p>	<p>Reduce the potential risk from introduction and spread of weeds.</p> <p>Reduce the risk of alteration and degradation of native habitats.</p>

<b>Erosion Control:</b> USFS Soil and Water Best Management Practices (including FSH 2509.22 Region 4 Amendment No. 1) will be employed during construction and reclamation activities.	Minimize degradation of suitable habitat, soils, and water.
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### Botanical and Biological Suggested Mitigation Measure

The following suggested mitigation measure would result in reducing expected or potential impacts to identified biological resources. This measure is a recommendation to help reduce expected and potential short- and long-term impacts and improve user experiences.

SUGGESTED MITIGATION MEASURES	POTENTIAL IMPACTS ADDRESSED
<b>Protection of butterfly larva and larval host plants:</b> Install restroom facilities and garbage receptacles at Angel Peak Trailhead. There are larval host plants for three species of butterflies immediately adjacent to the proposed Angel Peak parking area that currently are and would continue to be impacted if restroom facilities are not provided. If funding is available, installation of these facilities at the proposed Angel Peak parking areas would address the immediate biological resource concern.	Reduce expected impacts to multiple species of butterfly larval host plants and potential impacts to individual butterfly larva

### Cultural, Archaeological and Historic Resources

With implementation of the project as designed, the Forest has determined that the proposed trails project on the SMNRA will have No Effect on the integrity of the cultural resource sites located within the project Area of Potential Effect.

PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES	POTENTIAL IMPACTS ADDRESSED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid identified cultural sites during trail construction, reconstruction and decommissioning activities,</li> <li>• Stop work if any archeological sites are located during construction, while the District Archeologist assesses the situation; and</li> <li>• Monitor in identified culturally-sensitive areas.</li> </ul>	Reduce potential impacts to cultural resources