

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Elko Field Office

**ELKO MOTOCROSS RACETRACK: Extended Site Permit
2004-2009**

Elko County Riders and Racing Club

Environmental Assessment

BLM/EK/PL-2004/13

2930, SRP-NV-014-03-16

1 - INTRODUCTION

Elko County Riders and Racing Club (ECRRC) submitted a 5-year Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Application for exclusive, extended use of a gravel pit for construction and use of a motocross racetrack for local events and practice. The gravel/borrow pit is located adjacent to Bullion Road, approximately 3 miles southwest of Elko, NV in Elko County in T. 34 N., R. 55 E., Sec. 29. See Attachment 3 Maps. The SRP proposal includes long-term maintenance, liability insurance and reclamation bond requirements. There are no permits or other requirements from Elko County.

Applicant – Elko County Racers and Riding Club, PO Box 1043, Elko, NV 89803

This environmental assessment (EA) has been prepared for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) as amended (Pub. L. 91-90, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), to analyze the effects the proposed action would have on the human environment.

1.1 Need for and Purpose of Action

Action is proposed to provide an opportunity for a competitive motocross racetrack near Elko, NV. BLM's purpose in permitting this activity is to allow an outdoor recreational experience in a commercial motocross setting that includes space for spectators and allows maintenance and redesign of the racecourse while providing protection for soil, water, air, vegetation and cultural resources to the maximum extent possible. There is a local demand for such a motocross racecourse area as the existing motocross area at Summit Raceway does not include these design features and does not allow for redesign of the area to include such.

1.2 Land Use Plan Conformance

The Proposed Action as described below is in conformance with the Elko Resource Management Plan, Issue #4 - Recreation, Management Prescription 3, which states the planning area is open to off road vehicles except for Special Recreation Management Areas and preliminary suitable

portions of Wilderness Study Areas, limited to designated roads and trails. The proposed event is not located in a SRMA or WSA. The proposed action is consistent with Federal, State and local laws, regulations and plans to the maximum extent possible.

2 - ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Proposed Action

The BLM proposes to authorize a 5-year Special Recreation Permit to the Elko County Riders and Racing Club (ECCR) to construct a commercial motocross racetrack and parking area. The motocross track area would be constructed in a gravel/borrow pit located adjacent to Bullion Road, approximately 3 miles southwest of Elko in T. 34 N., R. 55 E., Sec. 29. See Attachment 3 Maps. The entire motocross area, including parking for approximately 100 vehicles, would be located within the confines of the already disturbed gravel pit area, which covers approximately 10 acres. The proposed area of disturbance would be less than five acres.

Construction, including fence installation, would take approximately one month and is proposed to begin in May 2004. A D9 bulldozer and other earthmoving equipment would be used to build the course and parking areas. The course would be a sinuous obstacle-type loop, approximately 1700 linear feet long and 30 feet wide, with double and triple jumps, whoops, tabletops (big extended jumps) and a straight speed timing section. Jumps as high as twenty feet would be achieved by digging out trenches and pits as deep as ten feet. Throughout the duration of the 5-year permit, the racetrack would be redesigned and reconstructed periodically to vary the course. No more than five acres of disturbance would occur within the 10 acre area. Volunteers would complete most of the work. See Design Specification in Attachment 3 Maps.

The motocross track would be open year-round with approximately 8-12 races held annually in the summer and fall months. The racetrack also would be open specified times between events and throughout the year for riding and practice. Approximately 40 to 50 participants and more than 100 spectators would be expected for each race event. Races would involve numerous laps on the track. There would be three classes of riders (beginner, junior and intermediate) among the different engine sizes and 3 age classes (mini bike riders, ages 25-30 and over 30 years).

Facilities and equipment to be installed as part of the motocross course include: a trailer for registration, public announcement system, spectator viewing stands, portable toilets, lighting, garbage cans, concession stand and locked gate. These would all be located within the defined limits of the gravel pit area and would be portable, temporary or otherwise capable of being removed with reclamation of the area after expiration of the permit. Overnight camping would not be permitted within the parking areas. A refueling site would be set up in accordance with the requirements for protection against hydrocarbon spills (See Stipulation 36.f.). Monitors would be provided for spectator control and safety during all racing events. Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) would be stationed on-site during racing events. The area would be clearly delineated by fencing and flagging to discourage riders from leaving the gravel pit and parking areas.

With the expiration of the permit (unless it is renewed), the area would be completely reclaimed. (Leaving the racetrack up would entail liability issues for the federal government with the probability of continued casual use.) Reclamation would involve those actions required to return the area to conditions similar to those prior to the construction of the motocross racetrack area. This would involve removing all facilities and dismantling, leveling and recontouring the entire motocross track. Reseeding of the area also would be required. All reclamation would be completed within 30 days after the expiration of the Special Recreation Permit, as specified in Stipulations #43-45.

The Proposed Action would include the Terms and Conditions listed on the reverse side of the SRP application and the SRP Stipulations in Attachment 2, which will be included with the Special Recreation Permit.

2.2 No Action

The Special Recreation Permit (SRP) Application would be denied and the Elko Motocross Racetrack would not be constructed in the specified location on public lands administered by the BLM Elko Field Office for the extended five-year period.

2.3 Special Resource Protection Measures and Monitoring Common to All Alternatives

Stipulations are included as part of the Special Recreation Permit in order to mitigate expected environmental effects. These are listed on the reverse side of the SRP Application and the SRP Stipulations in Attachment 2. This includes mitigations and stipulations developed as part of the environmental review.

Monitoring

BLM personnel will inspect the location of the fencing, survey the construction of the motocross course and parking areas, and monitor the motocross racetrack periodically throughout the duration of the permit to ensure compliance with permit stipulations. Thirty days after the permit expires or is cancelled or terminated, BLM personnel will conduct a post-use inspection to verify that all reclamation work has been completed, as specified in SRP Stipulations 43-45.

2.4 Alternative Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Analysis (No Action)

Under the No Action Alternative, none of the environmental consequences described in the next section for the proposed action would occur. The Special Recreation Permit would not be issued and the motocross racetrack would not be constructed in the proposed location on public lands administered by the BLM Elko District. With this denial, the opportunity to recreate on public lands in a developed commercial motocross racetrack would not be available.

3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

General Setting – The project area is located within a reclaimed gravel pit situated between a graded maintained county road (Bullion Road) and a hilly area on the southwest edge of Elko, NV. (See Attachment 3 Maps.) Elevation is approximately 5,000 to 5,100 feet.

3.1 Critical Elements Not Present or Affected

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or would not be affected by the proposed action:

- ? Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- ? Farmlands (prime or unique)
- ? Environmental Justice
- ? Hazardous or Solid Wastes
- ? Special Status Species
- ? Wetlands/Riparian Zones
- ? Wild and Scenic Rivers
- ? Wilderness

BLM specialists have further determined that the following critical elements or resources are not present in the project area or would not be affected by the proposed action for the following reasons:

- ? Native American Religious Concerns: Memo from Gerald Dixon, Native American Coordinator, BLM Elko Field Office (dated April 9, 2003 for the ECRRC Fund Motocross Race EA) -- Considering the activity's exact location, and the implementation of the stipulations regarding cultural resources, this activity currently has a limited potential to adversely affect any Native American religious site, religious practice/ceremony, or area of traditional use. Native American consultation has been deemed unnecessary at this time due to the lack of concerns as the proposed motocross racetrack is located on lands that have been previously disturbed and the motocross race events would be held within the confines of an existing gravel/borrow pit area that covers approximately 10 acres.
- ? Hazardous or Solid Wastes: Proper disposal of gas, oil or diesel during the event is addressed in Stipulation #36.
- ? Lands/Access: The proposed project site is located entirely on public lands.

3.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Resources present and brought forward for analysis are discussed by the following subsections:

- ? Air Quality
- ? Soils
- ? Water Quality
- ? Floodplains
- ? Cultural Resources
- ? Invasive, Nonnative Species

- ? Migratory Birds
- ? Vegetation
- ? Livestock Grazing/Range
- ? Visual Resources
- ? Recreation

3.2.1 Air Quality

The proposed motocross course is located more than 100 miles away from the Jarbidge Class I Airshed, which is a Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) Area. Air quality near the proposed racecourse generally is considered to be good. Blowing dust during the dry months of May through November and occasional trash burning are the major impairments to air quality in this area.

During construction of the motocross racetrack and parking areas, air quality would be degraded temporarily by vehicle traffic and equipment removing vegetation and moving soils. However, the Class I Airshed would not be impacted. With the five acre limitation on ground disturbance, a fugitive dust permit would not be required (see Attachment 4 Waiver of Surface Air Disturbance Permit).

On race days, air quality would be degraded in the race area from blowing dust that is churned up by vehicle traffic. The amount of fugitive dust emissions would be greatest where the soils have the highest percentage of silt size particles on the surface and where the soil moisture is low. The quantity of fugitive dust emission increases linearly with the number of vehicles racing. The air quality impacts would be greatest along the newly constructed track because of the loose particles on the surface from construction.

Impacts to air quality from fugitive dust would be concentrated in the area of the racetrack. Fugitive dust may impair vision of the racers and affect nearby homes and drivers on Bullion Road. Dust suppression (e.g. watering the motocross track) during the construction of the course and on race days, as specified in Stipulations 21 and 25, is expected to decrease fugitive dust emissions to an acceptable level. Wind-break or wind-limiting fences also would be helpful. Other appropriate methods for dust control include the application of soil binding agents or chemical surfactant to road surfaces and areas of disturbed soil.

3.2.2 Soils

The proposed motocross area would be confined within an old gravel pit where soils have been previously disturbed but is now partially covered in sagebrush. The soils are classified as Oravada loam on a 2-4 % slope and are positioned on upper fan skirts or the toe slopes of fan piedmont remnants. The hazard of wind and water erosion when soils are disturbed is low and runoff is slow.

Less than 5 acres of the total acres would be disturbed for construction of the motocross racetrack and parking area. Blading vegetation and moving soil to create jumps and obstacles would create concentrated areas of disturbed soils with susceptibility for movement off-site by wind and water erosion. Wind erosion may affect nearby homes and vehicles driving on Bullion

road. Water erosion may deliver sediment to the Humboldt River floodplains; but this is highly unlikely as there is no direct hydrologic connection between the motocross racetrack area and the floodplain. Potential impacts from the disturbed soils may be long-term due to the close proximity of Elko and the large number of off-road enthusiasts that would continue to use this race area over the five year duration of the permit.

The use of existing roads and disturbed areas in the design of the motocross track (as specified in Stipulation 22) would reduce removal of existing vegetation, thus reducing the potential for soil erosion. Leaving islands and strips of vegetation on the course would help stabilize the area and assist in slowing water runoff and wind erosion. Armoring drainages within the course area with gravel and/or water bars would help to slow erosion from the motocross racetrack and allow for crossings. The drainages should not be run as part of the motocross racetrack. Avoiding disturbance to drainages would allow vegetation to stabilize soils and prevent erosion.

3.2.3 Water Quality

The proposed motocross area is located adjacent to the Humboldt River floodplains but not within. The Humboldt River is listed by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) as an impaired water on Nevada's 2002 303(d) list.

Ground disturbance associated with motocross course construction and vehicle use during racing activities would create the potential for sediment to be carried off-site in runoff. As stated in the soils section, it is highly unlikely sediment would reach the Humboldt River except possibly during extreme storm events. There is no direct hydrologic connection between the river and motocross area. The intervening road, railroad, grade levee and vegetation would trap sediment. The motocross racetrack area would be covered under a Storm Water Discharge Permit Exemption as long as the amount of disturbance does not exceed five acres. Using existing roads and disturbed areas in the design of the motocross track, leaving islands and strips of vegetation on the course, armoring drainages within the course area with gravel and/or water bars, and not running drainages as part of the motocross racetrack would reduce off-site erosion.

3.2.4 Floodplains

The proposed motocross area is located very close to the Humboldt River floodplain, but it does not extend into it. Flood Insurance Rate Maps indicate that no 100-year floodplains would be affected by the proposed motocross location. The section of floodplain close to the course is currently used for hay meadows and for grazing.

Runoff and erosion from the motocross course could cause sedimentation to the Humboldt River floodplain during an extreme storm event only as there is no direct hydrologic connection between the motocross course area and the floodplain.

3.2.5 Cultural Resources

Humans have inhabited the Humboldt River Valley for at least 10,000 years. Prior cultural resource inventories have documented 13 archaeological and historical sites in or within a mile of the proposed project area. Five of the sites were evaluated as eligible for the National

Register of Historic Places (NRHP). All but one of the eligible sites have been destroyed by road construction and maintenance, off-road vehicle activity, gravel removal and rehabilitation, and other human activities during the past 30 years.

The proposed motorcycle motocross course construction and use would not have any direct impact on the known cultural resources, as long as all activities are kept within the existing gravel pit. The clear delineation of the gravel pit boundaries with fencing would ensure compliance.

3.2.6 Invasive, Nonnative Species

No known noxious weed infestations occur within the proposed project area. Isolated spots of cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*), an invasive plant species, are present.

Surface disturbing activities associated with the construction of the motocross and parking areas potentially provide an avenue for the entry of noxious weed species. Noxious weed seeds or plant parts may be lodged on the ground-moving equipment and become displaced to the newly disturbed areas. This would be reduced by washing down the bulldozer and any other construction equipment prior to transport and/or use at the site.

3.2.7 Migratory Birds

As per the BLM Elko Field Office “Bird List”, there are approximately 246 species that could inhabit the Field Office area on a seasonal or yearlong basis. Due to the habitat provided in upland areas and riparian areas associated with flowing and standing water settings, the proposed action area potentially provides habitat for many migratory bird species.

On January 11, 2001 President Clinton signed the Migratory Bird Executive Order directing departments and agencies to take certain actions to further implement the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. A list of the migratory birds affected by the President’s executive order is contained in 43 CFR 10.13. References to “species of concern” pertain to those species listed in the periodic report “Migratory Non-Game Birds of Management Concern in the United States”, priority migratory bird species as documented by established plans (such as Bird Conservation Regions in the North American Bird Conservation Initiative or Partners in Flight physiographic areas), and those species listed in 50 CFR 17.11.

The proposed action is located within or adjacent to sagebrush habitat type and has the potential to support all or some of the bird species associated with them. The Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan identifies the following bird species associated with this ecotype:

Obligates: Sage Grouse

Other: Black Rosy Finch, Ferruginous Hawk, Gray Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Vesper Sparrow, Prairie Falcon, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Swainson’s Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Calliope Hummingbird

Other associated species: Brewer’s Sparrow, Western Meadowlark, Black-throated Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Green-tailed Towhee, Brewer’s Blackbird, Horned Lark

The construction and racing activities associated with the proposed action could result in temporary displacement of migratory bird species and/or nest sites that might occur in the area. However, these adverse impacts are expected to be minimal and to have no measurable effect on migratory bird populations.

3.2.8 Vegetation

The site is vegetated by big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp.), rabbit brush, various native bunchgrasses and a heavy component of cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*).

Approval of the proposed action would eliminate a large part of the native vegetation that has reestablished itself on the site of the old gravel pit. Within the general vicinity of the borrow pit, a large cheat grass component already is present in the under story. Removal of the existing vegetation, coupled with ground disturbance from construction and racing activities, would result in a much greater cheat grass presence on the site, as well as providing an opening for noxious weed invasions.

3.2.9 Livestock Grazing/Range

The proposed project area is located within the Buzzetti Seeding Pasture of the Bullion Road Allotment; however, livestock rarely are in the proposed location area. Season of use on this allotment is 05/01 to 09/03 annually. Livestock use is rotated between this pasture and one other pasture within this allotment. Eugene E. & Armanda M. Buzzetti Trust is the sole livestock permittee within this allotment.

Effects on livestock operations in the allotment would be negligible as livestock rarely are in the proposed location area. The confined and fenced location of the motocross area would keep out livestock—thus eliminating the possibility of motorcycle and livestock collisions. Livestock use in this portion of the allotment already is infrequent as this area is cut off from the rest of the allotment by housing developments and the City of Elko waste treatment facilities.

3.2.10 Visual Resources

The proposed motocross area falls within a VRM Class IV area. The Class IV VRM objective is to allow for management activities that involve major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of contrast can be high—dominating the landscape and the focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements of the characteristic landscape.

The landscape consists of a reclaimed gravel pit situated at the base of gentle foothills. Landscape colors include seasonal vegetation color variations of green and gray-green to light yellowish tan and brown. Soil colors are primarily light tans and browns. Texture is a sagebrush community with areas of bare ground from previous disturbances. Although the gravel pit has rehabilitated, vegetation is noticeably less dense than the surrounding vegetation. Man-made features in the area consist of the linear intrusion of dirt roads and fences, an assortment of dumped items and trash, and private residences.

The construction of the motocross course and parking areas would result in new areas of bare ground. This ground disturbance and vegetation removal would result in strong color and texture contrasts with the surrounding landscape. Because of the relatively small area and topographic screening of the foothills, the majority of this disturbance would only be visible within the local area. It would not dominate the landscape or the view of the casual observer except within the immediate area. With reclamation, the original line of the landscape would be restored. VRM Class IV objectives would be met.

3.2.11 Recreation

The majority of recreation opportunities within the area consist of dispersed use. Activities include: off-highway vehicles, four-wheel driving, mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking. Most of this use occurs by the residents of Elko and the adjacent landowners. The area generally is designated “open” to off-road vehicle use, under the Elko Resource Management Plan (1987). There are no developed recreation facilities or sites in the area.

The proposed action would provide a developed commercial recreation area for motocross racers. Restricted use of the area to paying participants would interfere with the recreational pursuits of other casual users in the area; however the motocross racetrack is situated in a relatively small area.

3.3 Cumulative Effects

After the permit expires and reclamation is completed, cumulative effects from the proposed action on affected resources are anticipated to be minimal. The motocross racetrack would represent a short-term use of a relatively small area that would not appreciably affect the long-term productivity of the area. Although impacts would occur during construction of the motocross course, most of these would be reclaimed. Reseeding would help with reestablishing vegetation on the site. The area already has been impacted by its previous use as a gravel borrow pit. It currently receives casual motorcycle, ATV and 4WD use, which would continue after the area has been reclaimed. These past and continuing land uses and disturbances in the immediate area have resulted in long-term impacts to the immediate location that are not likely to be compounded by the proposed action.

Prior to reclamation, the motocross area and race activities would increase motorized use and human activity in the area for the duration of the permit. Motorized vehicle travel and associated impacts of dust and noise would increase along Bullion Road, especially on race days.

The proposed motocross racetrack is included as part of a new Race Park proposal to be constructed over a 100-200 acre area that was recently submitted by Elko County under a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) lease application. A separate environmental assessment will evaluate construction of this permanent race park proposal. In the event that the R&PP lease for the permanent race park is approved, the Special Recreation Permit for the motocross track would be transferred and the motocross course would become a permanent site under the R&PP lease.

Cultural: Road maintenance already has destroyed most of the cultural resources that once existed near Bullion Road. However, off-road vehicle traffic and associated erosion threaten numerous cultural resources, most located further south of Bullion Road in the surrounding hills. Indirect and cumulative effects can be expected to continue from off-road activities unless additional stipulations are met to protect the few remaining, but important cultural resources. Reclamation of the motocross course, construction of the stipulated fence and barriers and active enforcement of off-road vehicle restrictions on public lands would help deter further impacts to cultural resources.

Range: The Bullion Road Allotment already is impacted heavily by off-road recreational vehicle use. Extended use of this site for a motocross racetrack would result in loss of some grazing land in the Elko area, although not of prime quality.

Vegetation: The removal of vegetation and ground-disturbing activities associated with construction and extended use of the motocross racecourse, even with reclamation, would result in immediate loss of the native vegetation endemic to the area. Invasion of cheat grass and noxious weeds into the disturbed area may result in long-term loss of the native vegetation from the site, resulting in further native plant community and wildlife habitat fragmentation.

3.4 Monitoring

The monitoring described for the proposed action would be sufficient for this proposed activity.

4 – CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

4.1 Public Scoping

Summary of Public Comments for Elko County R&PP Lease, which includes the motocross racetrack but is considerably larger. Public hearings and letters were mailed out by the County.

ACTION	ENTITY	DATE	COMMENTS
Board meeting	Public Land Use Advisory Commission	Feb. 24, 2003	Discussed support for R&PP Lease on Bullion Road; no specific comments provided.
Regular board meeting – seeking County Commission approval to go forward with R&PP Lease	Elko County Commission	March 19, 2003	Comment regarding needing public hearing. Response included County conducting public hearing and BLM giving public notice. Motion to pursue R&PP Lease through BLM passed unanimously.
Mailing to 59 local landowners re public hearing on race park	Elko County Planning Commission	Prior to April 17, 2003 public hearing	Public notification of county proposed action. List of names in case file.
Public hearing on Elko County R&PP lease	Elko County Planning Commission	April 17, 2003	To discuss and finalize plans for R&PP Lease for race park.

Continuation of Elko County R&PP Lease and Proposed Uses Public Hearing	Elko County Planning Commission	May 15, 2003	Ridges act as noise barriers. 6 races/year; 60-120 riders; 240-360 people. 2 days every other month. No RVs to be allowed on site. Person on-site to monitor when open. 4 members public: 3 opposed, 1 in favor County Commissioners approved. County Planning Commission approved with: - on and off-site dust mitigation - vegetation plans to mitigate noise and dust - Bullion Road improvement plan - set time limit on hours of operation
Resolution authorizing the filing of R&PP Act Application on public lands for Bullion Road race park	Board of County Commissioners	Feb. 4, 2004	County passed resolution for the current R&PP Lease that has since been received in this office.

Marvin Urban, BLM Realty Specialist, also went around to some of the closest residents and spoke with them about the race park proposal. He did not meet anyone who was opposed to it.

4.2 *Persons, Groups or Agencies Consulted*

Brenda Mayo, Elko County Riders and Racing Club - race promoter
Randy Phillips, Bureau of Air Pollution Control, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP)
Cliff Lawson, Bureau of Water Pollution Control, NDEP
Randy Brown, Elko County Planning Commission
Elko County Commissioners
Public Land Use Advisory Commission
Eugene Buzzetti, Jr. for Eugene A. & Armanda M. Buzzetti Family Trust - grazing permittee

4.3 *List of Preparers*

Elko BLM Field Office:

JuLee Pallette - Recreation, Visual Resources, Lead preparer
Bill Fawcett - Cultural Resources
Jeff Moore - Livestock Grazing/Range, Vegetation
Nycole Burton - Wildlife, T&E Plants & Animals, Migratory Birds
Deb McFarlane - Geology/Mineral Resources, Hazardous/Solid Wastes
Chuck Keeperts - Soil, Water, Air Resources
Mark Coca - Invasive, Nonnative Species (Noxious Weeds)
Gerald Dixon - Native American Religious Concerns

Attachments

- Attachment 1: Special Recreation Permit and Terms and Conditions
- Attachment 2: Special Recreation Permit Stipulations
- Attachment 3: Proposed Motocross Location and Design Specifications
- Attachment 4: Waiver of Surface Air Disturbance Permit
- Attachment 5: Photos of Proposed Motocross Racetrack Location