

### **3.7 RECREATION**

#### **3.7.1 Affected Environment**

A wide variety of outdoor recreation activities occur on BLM-administered lands, including sightseeing, pleasure driving, rock collecting, photography, water sports, winter sports, off-road vehicle use, picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking, bathing in hot springs, and hunting. This wide range of opportunities is possible because virtually all of the public lands are accessible and offer a variety of settings suitable for different recreation activities. Some of these activities may occur on potential geothermal lease areas.

##### **3.7.1.1 Background**

With expanded leisure time and growing affluence among the general population, the WFO attracts thousands of visitors annually. The desert and mountains provide the resources necessary for a variety of recreational experiences. These resources provide natural beauty, solitude, and freedom from the structure and regulations of urban areas. In all recreational opportunities, scenic values are often cited as an important resource to the participants' recreational experience. Virtually all recreation activities depend upon availability of access within the resource area. Most visitors travel on some previously used or marked motorized vehicle route. Recreational opportunities are grouped along a continuum of opportunities ranging from intensive vehicle-oriented activities at one end to resource-oriented activities at the other, although there is often overlap between the two.

The popularity of each of the events varies. A list of the most common recreational areas within the assessment area can be found in Table 3.7-1.

**TABLE 3.7-1  
LOCAL RECREATIONAL VISITATION  
(2001)**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Resource Area</b>	<b>Annual Visitors</b>
1	WFO Area	104,300
2	Dispersed Black Rock Area*	73,000
3	Pine Forest Recreation Area	8,400
4	Water Canyon Recreation Area	4,000
5	Humboldt Range	2,500
6	Trego Hot Springs	2,400
7	California National Historic Trail	1,900
8	Winnemucca Dry Lakebed OHV	800

<b>Number</b>	<b>Resource Area</b>	<b>Annual Visitors</b>
9	Winnemucca Mountain Trail Bike System	760
10	Various Caves	75

\* Most of this area is outside the assessment area

### **3.7.1.2 Highlights**

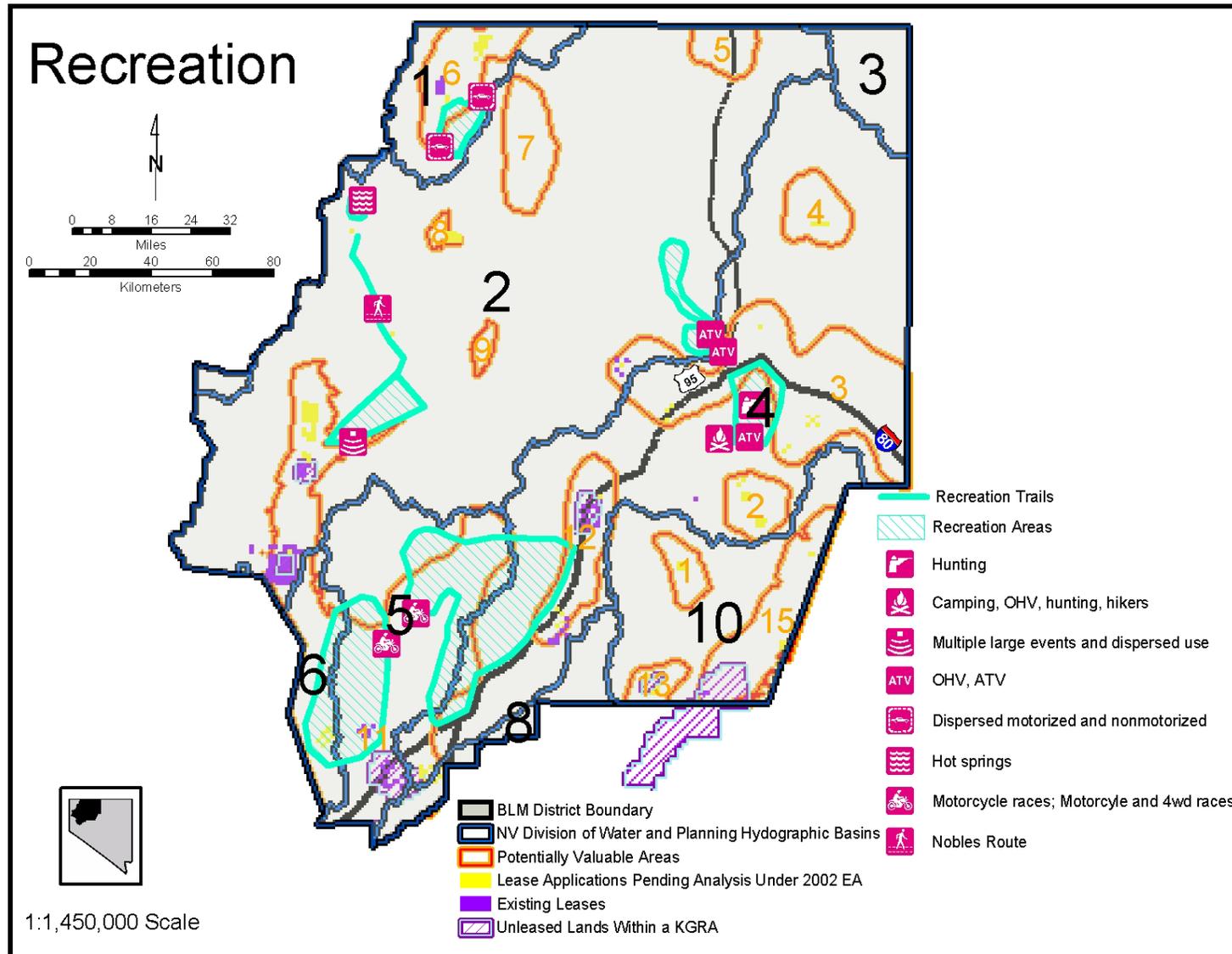
**Pine Forest Recreation Area.** There are three popular recreation sites within the Pine Forest Recreation Area: Blue Lakes, Onion Reservoir, and Knott Creek Reservoir. All three have high quality scenery, excellent fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, primitive camping, and mountain biking opportunities. It is a remote area serviced by unpaved roads. This area is located in the Northwest Region (1) and the Black Rock Region (2) Hydrographic Basins. Pine Forest Recreation Area is located between PVA 1 and 2, of which PVA 1 contains pending lease application sites.

**Water Canyon.** Water Canyon provides Winnemucca residents and visitors cool shade of aspen and cottonwood groves, perennial streams, and a secluded canyon. The primary activities include hiking, jogging, bicycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, picnicking, camping, wildlife viewing, fishing, and hunting. Roads to the ridge tops provide impressive views of adjacent mountain ranges, the Humboldt River, and other valleys. Recent BLM activities included purchasing private inholdings, building a cattle enclosure fence, and protecting the watershed. The primary problems are off-road vehicle use within the watershed, vandalism, woodcutting, littering, health and safety issues, livestock use, shooting, and fire fighting scars. Water Canyon is located within the Humboldt River Basin Hydrographic Region (4). A portion of Water Canyon is located within PVA 7.

**Trego Hot Springs Area.** Trego Hot Springs, which is located on the southern boundary of the Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails NCA, has been a popular recreation area for many years. The area mainly attracts visitors from Nevada, California, and Oregon. The majority of users participate in the following leisure activities: bathing, camping, picnicking, and studying nature. Most visitors seem to enjoy the quiet, isolated, primitive setting, which is offered at this rural location. While Trego Hot Springs is located outside of the assessment area near PVA 8, many of the recreational activities associated with visits at the hot springs occur within PVA 8.

There are two large disperse motorcycle use areas located in the southwestern portion of the assessment area, west of Lovelock. These OHV-use areas are located within the Humboldt River Basin (4), the West Central Region (5), and the Truckee River Basin (6). The majority of these two areas are located within PVA 8, with a small portion in PVA 9.

FIGURE 3.7-1  
ASSESSMENT AREA RECREATION MAP



### **3.7.2 Environmental Impacts**

#### **3.7.2.1 Proposed Action**

Direct Impacts – There are no direct impacts to issuing leases for future geothermal exploration, development, and production activities.

Indirect Impacts – When considering the “reasonably foreseeable development scenario,” impacts to recreation activities in the assessment area are likely to be minimal. Loss of surface water quantity and quality could keep the public from bathing in the hot springs. In addition, production facilities, support facilities, and/or security fencing could also limit public access to hot spring bathing areas. Any development near Trego Hot Springs could adversely affect recreation experiences for thousands of visitors each year.

The following are the potential environmental impacts on recreation when analyzing the “reasonably foreseeable development scenario.”

**Exploration.** During the exploration phase, survey and drilling crews are likely to use the available access roads and trails in the area that are also used for recreation access. Due to increased use, temporary delays could result. The survey activities conducted during the exploration phase are likely to only minimally impact recreation, if at all, due to the short duration, small crew size, and temporal nature of the surveys and drilling wells.

**Development.** The development stage includes intense construction activities. At this time access roads, well pads, pipelines, transmission lines and power plants are constructed. Increased truck traffic during the construction phase could affect recreation due to increased noise and dust levels and could cause temporary delays or closures on access roads. Construction sites are likely to have limited access to the public, slightly decreasing access to the area for recreation.

**Production.** The production stage includes operation and maintenance of the constructed facilities. These activities require a small number of employees who would require use of access roads in the area but are not likely to limit the recreational use of these roads. The geothermal power plant and facilities are likely to have limited access to the public, therefore slightly decreasing access to the area for recreation. Development could preclude access for recreational use of hot springs.

**Close-Out.** The close-out stage involves abandonment of the site after production has ceased. Close-out activities would require a small crew to remove equipment, cap wells and rehabilitate the disturbed area. This crew would require use of access roads in the area but are not likely to limit the recreational use of these roads. Due to the short duration of activities and small crew size close-out activities are not likely to affect recreation.

### **3.7.2.2 No Action Alternative**

Direct Impacts – There are no direct impacts to issuing leases for future geothermal exploration, development, and production activities.

Indirect Impacts – Indirect impacts from the No Action Alternative would be similar to those described in the Proposed Action; however, updated mitigation measures and stipulations would not apply using the 1982 Geothermal EA.