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First name: Larry

Last name: Hyslop

Organization: Friends of the Ruby Mountains

Title:

Comments: Ruby Oil and Gas

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Larry Hyslop

grayjaypress.com <<http://grayjaypress.com>>

raven-blackware.com <<http://raven-blackware.com>>

exro-nature.com <<http://exro-nature.com>>

The Friends of the Ruby Mountains have reviewed the documents concerning the Ruby Mountains Oil and Gas Leasing Availability on lands administered by the U. S. Forest Service in the Ruby Mountains. This constitutes the group's comments concerning the possible leases. We recommend no oil and gas leases be allowed on U.S Forest Service lands in the Ruby Mountains.

Our objections center on the U. S. Forest Service's stipulations already in place that would be applied to any prospective lease. The Ruby Mountains contain too many sites meeting these stipulations to make them available for oil and gas leases. The lower slopes of the Rubies contain both greater sage-grouse PHMA and GHMA, so the No Surface Occupancy restriction would be in place in much of these sections of land. The Rubies also have several occupied Lahontan Cutthroat Trout streams and those drainages would be restricted to no surface occupancy. Much of the lands that might be offered for leases have lands with slopes greater than 40%, so again there would be no surface occupancy. Much of the areas proposed for leases meet the Timing Limitation stipulations for crucial mule deer winter range, raptor nests and migratory bird nesting areas. When the areas covered by the existing stipulations are plotted on a map, very little land remains available for surface occupancy needed for oil and gas exploration.

All lands have intrinsic value for different purposes. The Ruby Mountains have a much greater recreational value for all Elko County residents than the value they would provide to a small number of oil and gas companies. The Rubies are also a national treasure. The mountains, the wildlife, and the Ruby Crest Trail are widely known outside of Nevada.

The Friends of the Ruby Mountains thanks you for the opportunity to provide comments and express our concerns. We are reliant upon the U.S. Forest Service to make well informed decisions regarding multiple uses of the Ruby Mountains.