

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 11/2/2017 7:00:00 AM  
First name: Larson  
Last name: Bill  
Organization: Western Shoshone Defense Council  
Title:  
Comments: WESTERN SHOSHONE DEFENSE PROJECT

c/o 401 Railroad Street, 3rd Floor, Elko, NV 89801

Ph: (775) 753-4357 Fax: (775) 753-4360

November 1, 2017

USDA Forest Service

Attn: Susan Elliot, Project Lead

660 South 12th Street

Suite 108

Elko, NV 89801

Re: Ruby Valley Comments Oil and Gas

Dear Ms. Elliot,

On behalf of the Western Shoshone Defense Project, a 501(c)(3) affiliate of the Seventh General Fund for Indigenous Peoples and the below signed individuals with respect to the Environmental Assessment being prepared for the Ruby Mountains Oil & Gas Leasing Availability Analysis we, submit the following comment in opposition to any and all leasing exploration, mining, drilling and any manmade destruction caused to our homeland.

The Western Shoshone people have inhabited the greater area of Nevada, the Ruby Mountain Range and Ruby Valley since time immemorial; our creation story says the Creator placed us here, this is the home of our ancestors and the home of our unborn grandchildren. Through prayer and ceremony we are able to connect to the Creator where He teaches us the importance of all things living together. One of our most spiritual ceremonies, the Sundance, is still performed today in Ruby Valley. Sundancers and spectators from many Indigenous communities attend this ceremony. Through ceremony such as this, Creator taught us which plants to

use for medicines, how to understand the movements of animals, when to hunt and how to read the seasons for gathering and harvesting. He taught us that humans are only one element in the equation and He continues to teach us lessons of understanding and how we are to live today. The poisoning and destruction of our water, plants and animals is equivalent to spiritual genocide as all living things in this "church" are connected and serve a purpose in this life as Creator has a plan for us all.

We have received support from two separate international human rights bodies upholding our rights to these lands and reprimanding the United States for their actions. In March 2006 the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued its first decision 1(68) of many in response to a request for urgent action on behalf of Shoshone communities. This committee upheld the concerns of the Shoshone petitioners and instructed the United States to cease and desist from further destructive activities on Shoshone homelands. In addition, with respect to the 2002 recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the Western Shoshone and the United States, the United States has continued to take no action of the recommendations and has continued to allow destructive resource extraction activities.

In Ruby Valley in 1863 the Shoshone people signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the United States and since then we have lived in peace and friendship with all who have come to our territory. We have seen many people come and go, some with good intentions, others with ill intentions. No matter the outcome of our trial and tribulation the Shoshone people are still here, we still occupy our homelands, we still gather our medicines, hunt, fish and conduct ceremony for our people and the future of our water and planet. However; this is not just about the Shoshone People this is also the home of the many generations of ranching families and others who have lived in peace and will continue to live here for generations to come; we acknowledge you family and friends. In addition, many residents and visitors alike hike the trails, watch the unique species of birds, hunt healthy animals that thrive in this pristine environment and enjoy the landscape we are so privileged to experience. We understand the importance of protecting the water and environment so that future generations can live on a healthy planet and enjoy clean water, air, and resources.

Northeastern Nevada is an arid climate which makes water a precious resource that must be protected, this is also an area where mineral extraction is prevalent which has placed a burden on our underground water supply, not to mention the additional burden of the Southern Nevada Water Plan which would further deplete underground water resources of the region. These combined efforts jeopardize the wellbeing of our grandchildren and the wellbeing of all living things in this area. Indigenous peoples including the Shoshone people understand the magnificence of water and how it can be compared to the blood in our veins. It is time to view and treat the planet as our mother- giver of life - a gift from the Creator. Would we inject our daughters or sisters with heroin, then why would we inject our mother with fracking chemicals? Why would we intentionally harm and make our mothers, sisters, or daughters ill? It is time to realize there will be repercussions for the continued poisoning and destruction of our planet and resources and that it will be our grandchildren and great grandchildren who suffer those repercussions.

For the past 400 years Native American people have been forced to live in a "civilized society". We have watched heartbroken as this civilized society ravages our homelands and poisons the water in the name of "progress" and we still watch as the destruction continues in the name of energy dominance. We have been living in the comfort of this civilized society to the point of greed, gluttony and the destruction of water, land and other precious resources. It is time to rethink our existence as a human race, consider the choices we make and realize how those choices can have a detrimental effect on future generations and the potentially damaged planet we leave

to them. The depletion and poisoning of water and resources in any and all forms negatively impacts all living things in the region today and well into the future including people, plants and animals. As the saying goes, "we did not inherit the planet from our ancestors, it is on loan from our grandchildren". As human beings we must humble ourselves and understand that we are only one element of the environment, we are equals with the bears, birds, badgers and snakes, we all have a place and purpose in the web of life, when we compromise one element we compromise ourselves. One thing that separates humans from animals is free will, we have the free will to choose; we can choose to protect mother earth or we can choose to aide in her destruction. We can choose to be the ancestors that protected the future generations or we can be the ancestors who chose destruction.

We would strongly encourage the USFS and/or the proper governmental entity to have meaningful consultations with the Tribes and traditional peoples of the area, who know firsthand the Tribal Cultural Properties (TCP's) of the area(s). More than one study has been conducted for the Ruby Valley area and one study in particular (SWCA and Julian Steward) identified some TCP locations and other areas of concern however; in the eyes of some Shoshone people the study is incomplete therefore should not be taken into consideration without first consulting with the affected Shoshone people as the Forest Service has stated in correspondence to the Elko Band Chairman dated September 27, 2017.

In reference to the comments submitted by the Nevada Department of Wildlife dated October 19, 2017 they too have great concern about these parcels with respect to fish and wildlife resources. In particular NDOW raises concerns about the habitat of (Greater-Sage-Grouse) and the federally listed threatened species the Lahonton Cutthroat Trout with regard to water drainage and the degradation of streams. The NDOW also relays concerns regarding Mule Deer and recognizing this area as a crucial winter range for mule deer.

In accordance with 36CFR, Ch. 11 (7-1-13 Edition), Subpart A. Section 218.2 Definitions: Environmental Assessment (EA) is responsible in turn the federal government is responsible to provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS). In this region it is vital to err on the side of caution when determining the suspected risks associated with harm to the public and to the environment. We take a stand that any arm of the United States government as decision makers needs to protect the public from exposure to harm when there is sufficient scientific evidence that says there is possible harm to people or the environment.

Respectfully submitted,

Larson Bill, Community Planner

Western Shoshone Defense Project