

EXHIBIT 15

Letter to Tribes Soliciting Comments
on the Thacker Pass Lithium Project
Memorandum of Agreement and HPTP



United States Department of the Interior



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In Reply Refer To:
3809/1780 (NV0W030.02)

CERTIFIED MAIL NO. 9171 9690 0935 0230 4932 66
RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Chairman Tildon Smart
Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe
PO Box 457
McDermitt, NV 89421

Dear Chairman Smart,

The purpose of this letter is to request your assistance in identifying the cultural values, religious beliefs, sacred places, and traditional practices of Native American people which could be affected by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) actions on public lands, and where feasible to seek opinions and agreement on measures to protect those tribal interests.

Recently Lithium Nevada applied to the BLM for a Plan of Operations for a lithium mining operation at Thacker Pass, located approximately 62 miles northwest of Winnemucca and 24 miles southwest of McDermitt, Nevada. The Thacker Pass Project would construct a variety of mining facilities including a mining pit, tailings stack, waste rock storage, stockpiles, processing plants, and construction of ancillary facilities including roads, stormwater diversions, a pipeline, and a transmission line. Various communications between the BLM and your tribe have occurred, including letters sent in December 2019 and August 2020 informing you about the project, requesting any information you may have about the area, and inviting you to formally consult on the project in a government-to-government setting.

As part of the BLM's review under the National Historic Preservation Act, the BLM determined areas of potential effect where cultural resources could be directly (e.g. physically) or indirectly (e.g. visually) affected. Within those areas, 1,018 cultural resources could be directly and indirectly affected. Of those 1,018 cultural resources—most of which are related to prehistoric obsidian toolmaking—there are 57 historic properties (i.e. cultural resources eligible to the National Register of Historic Places) that would be either physically or visually affected by the

Thacker Pass Project. Out of the 57 historic properties, 55 are associated with prehistoric Native Americans and consist of obsidian toolmaking sites and habitation sites.

Physical effects that would be caused by the Thacker Pass Project could result in the partial or complete destruction of 56 of the 57 historic properties, including all 55 resources with a prehistoric Native American component. The other one (1) historic property would be affected by the visual changes to their setting. Consequently, in consultation with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, the BLM determined that the Thacker Pass Project would have an adverse effect to historic properties, and that it would be necessary to take action to resolve those adverse effects. In order to specify how those effects would be resolved, the BLM has created a draft Historic Properties Treatment Plan, which contains descriptions of the historic properties involved, the mitigation research design, mitigation methods, and the specific actions to be taken at each historic property. In general, mitigation for physical effects to historic properties—including both prehistoric and historic resources—would involve data recovery (e.g. excavation) in order to learn as much as possible about the property prior to its destruction; and mitigation for visual effects to historic properties would involve interpretation for the public (e.g. research, publications, interpretive signage).

The draft Memorandum of Agreement and Historic Properties Treatment Plan for the Thacker Pass Project are enclosed for your review and comment.

The BLM is committed to coordinating and consulting with any affected tribes on all proposed projects on BLM-managed federal lands. In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Executive Orders 13007 and 13175, and Secretarial Order 3317, our communication and consultation is essential. Any information brought forth during the consultation process will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

You are invited to submit comments on the proposed project for the next 35 days from the date of this letter. My staff and I would also be glad to meet with you and your Council to consult on any issues surrounding this project. To arrange a consultation meeting or find out more about this project please contact Tanner Whetstone by email at twhetstone@blm.gov or by phone at 775-623-1791.

Sincerely,

Ester M. McCullough
District Manager

Enclosure