

# RECREATIONAL TRAIL PROPOSAL

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TO: BLM- Tonopah Field Office

FROM: Trails-OV (Subsidiary of STORM-OV)

PROJECT NAME: Historic Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad Grade Recreation Trail – Section Rhyolite to Tonopah

## PROJECT GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

**Action:** Place recreational trail signs on existing routes currently used for mountain biking for safety.

**Location:** Beatty NV, Nye County T 12 S, R 46 E Sec 10, 11,12,14, & 15

**Physical Description:** The route is dirt natural surface and is 3.8 miles long. The section lies between the intersection of N E Ave and W Center St of the Beatty Township and the Rhyolite Depot. The width of the rails were 4' 8.5" (standard gauge), the remaining bed is approximately 8 feet.

### Ownership:

The route passes through BLM- Tonopah Field Office lands and patented mining claims held by Barrick Gold LTD (ME Pats)

## PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad (T&T) operated between 1905 and 1938 servicing mines and communities along a route which extended north from Ludlow, California into western Nevada. The Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Pacific Coast Borax Company, which from 1905 to 1907 built a standard gauge railroad between Ludlow on the Santa Fe main line to Death Valley Junction and Beatty, where it connected with the Bullfrog-Goldfield Railroad which in turn connected with the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad and provided a through railroad link which via the Southern Pacific ran all the way up into western Nevada east of Reno. The railway was removed in 1917.

The town of Rhyolite flourished for just a few years, until the gold ores in the surrounding hills were exhausted, but at its peak in 1908 the place was a substantial settlement, home to over 5,000 residents and boasting such advanced facilities as a school, opera house, bank, railway station, swimming pool and stock exchange. The town declined rapidly after the brief boom and was largely abandoned by the early 1920s.

Most recently the town of Beatty has experienced significant economic hardship, once again, due to reduction in mining. In an effort to diversify the town's economic base a local group, Trail-OV, in partnership with the Beatty Township is looking toward Recreation based tourism to help boost the economy of the region.

According to BLM visitation statistics the town of Rhyolite draws 150,000 tourists yearly to the non-commercialized ghost town. Many groups would like to see these ruins restored and interpreted for the benefit of the traveling public.

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL:**

### ***Purpose and Need:***

The proposed action has four purposes:

- 1) To provide a safe connection between Rhyolite and Beatty for non-motorized recreation traffic.
- 2) To provide an alternative form of travel between Beatty and Rhyolite
- 3) To restore and maintain the historic rail grade for future generations
- 4) To educate the public on the history and significance of the area.

There are four reasons that the proposed action is needed:

- 1) To create an opportunity to diversify the Beatty economic base.
- 2) To create a non-motorized trail opportunity that can be used by all levels of users.
- 3) To create a venue to share the history of the region with the public.
- 4) To create an alternative for cyclists to access Rhyolite from Beatty without riding on the highway.

### ***Proposed action:***

The proposed action consists of adopting 3.8 miles of existing rail bed as a recreational trail (See Map). In addition, sections of the route that have fallen in disrepair due to flooding and erosion would be repaired to their original grade. This would include the addition of culverts to divert water and repairing the eroded areas to their original grade.

The trail width would be maintained at the original rail bed width and the route would remain as a natural surface route. There would be no new soil disturbance for this project. However, the addition of crushed rock or other aggregate may be used to maintain or increase the trail bed stability.

The section would no longer be open to full size vehicle traffic.

Recreational signage would be placed along the corridor to direct users and inform the public of allowed uses, trail difficulty, and distance. Several interpretive signs may also be placed along the route (See Interpretation Summary below).

### ***Interpretation Summary:***

What began as one man's challenge to a transportation problem at a borate mine east of Death Valley resulted in a rail system that greatly benefitted all those who lived in the surrounding area. The history of the T&T is a story of success in overcoming great obstacles in the desert regions of California and Nevada. These obstacles included long expanses of uninhabited land devoid of trees and surface water, steep mountains, dry lakes and rivers which were subject to flooding, etc. The great geologic forces which formed high grade mineral deposits also created conditions that were formidable barriers to their economic development.

### ***Potential Interpretive Topics:***

- History of the railroad
- Settlement
- Rhyolite
- Geology
- Mining