

Other potential effects include mortalities or injury due to collisions with vehicles or mining and construction equipment. Mitigation measures SSS-6 outlined in Section 4.5.4 would minimize direct mortality to Burrowing Owls and includes limiting disturbance during the breeding season, performing breeding bird surveys prior to ground disturbance, and implementing appropriate nest buffers to avoid breeding and nesting disruption.

Indirect effects include decreased quality of foraging habitat, increased habitat fragmentation, and avoidance and displacement associated with increased mine-related noise and human presence.

SSS – GRSG

There is one active lek (Montana-10) within 0.96 miles of the Project area, and three active lek sites within 3.1 miles of the Project area (Figure 4.5-10, Appendix A). NDOW lek observations have documented birds displaying at this lek within 0.75 miles of the proposed Project area (NDOW 2020). GRSG have been documented within the Project area during field surveys and by NDOW, who reported 63 tracking locations generated by at least 30 radio-marked birds (NDOW 2018). Noise levels would increase under the Proposed Action due to construction and operation activities such as blasting, drilling, and use of large construction equipment and vehicles. The closest lek to the Project area, the Montana 10 lek, was assessed for visual baseline. The visual assessment at KOP-4 showed there would be no direct line-of-sight between the Montana 10 lek and Project facilities (LNC 2019g). Noise levels at GRSG leks are analyzed in detail under Section 4.5.2.

Portions of the Project area are identified by the BLM as Priority Habitat Management Area (PHMA), General Habitat Management Area (GHMA), and non-habitat for GRSG (Figure 4.5-11, Appendix A). NDOW has also identified seasonal habitat in portions of the Project area that include GRSG winter habitat, GRSG nesting habitat, and GRSG breeding habitat (SWCA 2019b). GRSG would be directly affected as a result of construction and operation disturbance within the Project area. The 2015 GRSG Nevada and Northeastern California Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (2015 ARMPA) includes habitat management categories as delineated by the August 2014 version of the Coates et al. GRSG habitat model for Nevada (Coates et al. 2014). The BLM has been using this August 2014 habitat map to conduct conservation efforts and NEPA analysis under the direction of the 2015 ARMPA. However, the BLM may adopt the 2019 ARMPA habitat model (Coates et al. 2016) with minor revisions to delineations for GRSG habitat management areas including PHMA, GHMA and Other Habitat Management Areas (OHMA) (Figure 4.5-12, Appendix A).

Using the 2015 ARMPA habitat mapping, the Proposed Action would remove approximately 5,011 acres of PHMA and 545 acres of GHMA (Table 4.5). Using the 2019 ARMPA habitat mapping, approximately 5,695 acres of PHMA would be removed. (Table 4.5).

Disturbance of PHMA represents less than two percent of PHMA in the Population Management Unit (PMU). LNC would conduct reclamation activities concurrently with mining activities to reduce impacts to GRSG habitat; however, decreased quality of habitat and increased habitat fragmentation following concurrent reclamation are likely due to the prolonged time required to