

Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
May 10 & 11, 2007
BLM Elko Field Office
Elko, Nevada

May 10 - Tour

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:

Larry Barngrover	(2) Wildlife
Sheri Eklund-Brown	(3) Elected Official
Dave Gaskin	(3) State Employee
Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation/ROW
Dave Tattam	(2) Wild Horse and Burro

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Jeff Arnberger	Asst. Fire Management Officer, Elko Field Office
Mike Brown	Public Affairs Officer, Elko Field Office
Shane DeForest	Asst. Field Office Manager Renewable, Elko FO
Helen Hankins	Field Office Manager, Elko Field Office
Kyle Hansen	Ely Field Office
Ray Maestas	Fire Management Officer. Ely Field Office
Tom Reid	Fuels Specialist, Elko Field Office
Doran Sanchez	Chief Communications, Nevada State Office
Gene Seidlitz	Associate Field Office Manager, BM Mountain FO
Stephanie Trujillo	Administrative Assistant, Ely Field Office
Tom Warren	ESR Manager, Elko Field Office

Other Attendees

Mike Gleeson	Public
Gary McCuin	Nevada Department of Agriculture
Rick Orr	Natural Resources Department of Conservation
Maggie Orr	Public
Ron Torell	University of Nevada, Reno, Cooperative Extension

1:00 p.m. Tour left the Elko Field Office. Tour leaders were Tom Warren, Jeff Arnberger, and Shane DeForest

Stop 1 – Approximately 10 miles northeast of Carlin in the Susie Fire (2006) area.

Jeff Arnberger provided handouts and maps. Arnberger discussed the 2006 fire season. The fires started the 3rd week of June – about two months early. First big fires were the Susie and Elburz Fires. For the Susie Fire, there were three fire starts that rapidly grew into a single fire which lasted six days. It burned approximately 80,000 acres and a roughly 50/50 split of public and private. A Type II fire overhead team was ordered the second day when the fire was at 40,000 acres and headed towards Elko. There were impacts to private land, wildlife and habitat, cultural resources, and watersheds.

- Vince Garcia asked BLM would you approach a change in the future.

- Jeff Arnberger responded to have enough resources to do initial attack right away; unfilled orders were a factor last year. However, 93-95% of fires caught at initial attack.

- Vince Garcia asked how fires are approached during the two-year period after the first growing season.

- Jeff Arnberger said they are approached the same depending on the conditions. This area is one of the highest initial attack zones, there were multiple fire areas.

- Helen Hankins noted that since 1999 more dozers are being used, there is a change in vegetation. We are able to use dozers to catch fires. In 2006 we had to choose between areas (lack of resources) and we had to make hard choices. There will be less access this upcoming year.

- Jeff Arnberger commented that we're putting in green strips and fuel breaks. This is new in rehabilitation in the last five years. To stabilize the site, we're using crested wheat. We were competing nationally for resources in 2006.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked is national level prioritized the same, is it politically driven?

- Jeff Arnberger said, yes, the critical resources being threatened are looked at: sage grouse, watersheds, transmission lines, vent drafts, and cultural.

- Helen Hankins added that timbered areas are looked at differently. We would like to see permittees signing up equipment. Fire can be faster than it was (in your father's time), there are vegetation differences as well.

- Jeff Arnberger stated we have worked with permittees as they have an interest in the fire areas. We are concerned about safety; there are requirements that have to be met and refresher courses are required.

- Maggie Orr commented that there is not a huge draw (for fire-fighting jobs), there is competition with the local mines and other high paying jobs.

- General discussion about working relationships among BLM, Elko County, NDF and permittees.

Stop 2

- Tom Warren provided handouts and discussed the stabilization efforts in the Susie Riparian Pasture. Rehabilitation efforts can go on three years after the fire. BLM drill seeded 1,100 acres in the pasture. It was over-seeded with yarrow and sage on 1,200 acres, and 7,700 acres were aerial seeded. The areas are critical wildlife habitat. Thus far the seeding has been successful and we're still monitoring. The private property was also seeded and NDOW contributed to those efforts.

- Helen Hankins asked was there an assessment for recovery?

- Tom Warren responded that, yes, there was potential for cheat-grass and thistle and we were limited on money. There are pre-existing conditions.

- Gene Seidlitz asked when the seeding was done.
- Tom Warren said from October through January.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if monitoring of leks is being done.
- Tom Warren said that there were some flights. NDOW is tracking mule deer, have seen a decrease in the north.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown remarked that this shows the importance of restoring the habitat.
- Helen Hankins asked when the seeding was completed.
- Tom Warren responded the end of March.
- Helen Hankins commented that the cultural inventory had to be completed. BLM had to clear 45 thousand acres.
- Gene Seidlitz added that there have been some rehabilitation issues with concerns over the lack of seed.
- Tom Warren noted that the demand was high which made the cost high.
- Shane DeForest provided handouts and maps. DeForest discussed that BLM held workshops and that permittees were not just interested in the grass recovery. We made adjustments last year. We're looking at the level of recovery before grazing is being introduced (tip height).
- Gary McCuin asked is monitoring of rehabilitation done by permittees.
- Shane DeForest answered that it depends on them, BLM has drafted agreements and they are in stages of completion.
- Gary McCuin noted we will be doing workshops again this summer and that data could be used.
- Tom Warren noted there is funding in ESR for monitoring.
- Vince Garcia asked will the aspen stands be fenced if grazing is recovering?
- Shane DeForest said there are considerations that are incorporated, if not met then they will be looked at to see the reasons.
- Vince Garcia noted that you may take off the cattle but there are big game problems.
- Shane DeForest commented to let your range con know if you are experiencing these problems so that they can be addressed.

Stop 3

Tom Warren led the discussion about noxious weeds at this rehabilitation site (Dry Gulch). Warren noted that there will need to be multiple year contracts. Goat treatment was also discussed.

Stop 4

California Trail Center. Dave Jamiel led the discussion. This is a \$9.4 million construction contract. Cooperators have assisted with part of the cost. The amphitheater is the second phase of the project. Guide books have been written already, and we're working on ads. We expect an estimated 66,000 visitors each year. We're also working on signage (billboards) - on either side of the freeway. The Center is scheduled to open February 2008.

May 11 – Business Meeting

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:

Larry Barngrover	(2) Wildlife
Sheri Eklund-Brown	(3) Elected Official
Dave Gaskin	(3) State Employee
Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Les Hansen	(2) Dispersed Recreation
Jon Hutchings	(3) Public-At-Large
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation/ROW
Cyd McMullen	(2) Cultural Resources
Dave Tattam	(2) Wild Horse and Burro

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Jeff Arnberger	Asst. Fire Management Officer, Elko Field Office
Mike Brown	Public Affairs Officer, Elko Field Office
Shane DeForest	Asst. Field Office Manager Renewable, Elko FO
Chris Hanefeld	Public Affairs Officer, Ely Field Office
Helen Hankins	Field Office Manager, Elko Field Office
Kyle Hansen	Ely Field Office
Ray Maestas	Fire Management Officer, Ely Field Office
Doran Sanchez	Chief Communications, Nevada State Office
Gene Seidlitz	Associate Field Office Manager, BM Mountain FO
Gerald Smith	Field Manager, Battle Mountain Field Office
Steve Smith	Wilderness Coordinator, Nevada State Office
Joe Tague	Resources, Nevada State Office
Stephanie Trujillo	Administrative Assistant, Ely Field Office

Other Attendees

Harvey Barnes	Nevada Department of Agriculture
Mike Gleeson	Public
Gary McCuin	Nevada Department of Agriculture
Megan Werley	Nevada Cattlemen's Association

8:15 a.m. RAC Chairman Vince Garcia welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Everyone introduced themselves.

I. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- Sheri Eklund-Brown sent corrections to Mike Brown of the meeting in Ely, Nev.

Jon Hutchings made a motion to approve the minutes with those corrections. Les Hansen seconded the motion. All in favor.

II. NEVADA WILDERNESS UPDATE

The Nevada Wilderness Area Update was presented by Steve Smith. Smith discussed the following handout:

PREPARATION FOR WILDERNESS LEGISLATION AND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

- **Become intimately familiar with your WSAs and begin preparation for wilderness legislation well in advance of bill introduction.**
- **Review “intensive” inventories and other material in permanent WSA files.**
- **Complete a Developments and Disturbances Inventory for each WSA and contiguous areas that may exhibit wilderness character (e.g., GPS existing boundary roads, ways, wildlife and livestock developments, campsites, wells, weather stations, treated, seeded and chained areas, areas disturbed by mining, old dump or landfill sites, structures, etc.)**
- **Know where your T&E, archaeologic, historic, paleontologic, special feature, and supplemental value sites are.**
- **Know where in holdings and edge holdings are located.**
- **Research and digitize or GPS all existing rights-of-way, mining claims, and mineral leases inside and adjacent to WSA boundaries.**
- **Become familiar with citizen proposed Wilderness Areas and prioritize them for GPS – related projects.**
- **Use the same data dictionary for all GPS work.**
- **During the legislative process, BLM’s role is to provide information and mapping services to the Congressional delegation. (What the Congressional staff wants, the Congressional staff gets!!!)**
- **Know the areas you are requested to digitize for the Congressional staff.**
- **Set up your file system ahead of time. Keep each mapping request as a separate file by date and each shape file separate by date and subject. Keep an accurate log of requests, reasons for the requests, and Congressional intent.**
- **Use at least 1:24,000 base maps as work maps which can easily be converted into legislative maps at an appropriate scale.**
- **Unless otherwise directed by the Congressional staff, place boundary lines on your base map that are manageable, recognizable by the public, defensible, and enforceable.**

DURING AND AFTER WILDERNESS LEGISLATION

- Assemble a work group composed of GIS and wilderness staff and perhaps others to provide comprehensive regional information, GIS mapping, and other services to the Nevada Congressional delegation *in a timely manner*.
- All assistance to the Congressional delegation is *confidential*. Nothing can be released to the public or outside the working group without the permission of the Washington Office Legislative Affairs Group.
- Information supplied to the Congressional delegation must be accurate and up-to-date. No personal opinions, speculative, or tentative data is provided.
- The work group begins preparation of an Implementation Management Strategy prior to passage of the wilderness legislation. The Implementation Management Strategy identifies actions and tasks which must be completed in order to implement the various requirements in the wilderness legislation. The Strategy identifies who will complete the action or task, when the action or task will be completed, and whether there are any budget implications.
- Examples of typical components considered in the Implementation Management Strategy include:
 - Preparing a communications plan
 - Informing stakeholders of the effects of the legislation
 - Planning public maps and fact sheets for each wilderness area
 - Preparation of wilderness management plans
 - Reviewing and revising authorizations (e.g., permits, leases, etc.)
 - Preparation of legal boundary descriptions and official maps
 - Reviewing aerial imagery, acquiring updated coverage
 - Removing old WSA boundary markers and placing new ones
 - Arranging for reclamation of disturbed areas
 - Evaluating the need for additional staff and training volunteers
 - Create serialized case files
 - Organizing a dedication ceremony
 - Developing interim wild land fire guidelines
 - Developing a law enforcement plan
 - Identifying, prioritizing, and implementing cadastral survey needs
 - Updating Master Title Plats
 - Preparation of a wilderness monitoring plan
 - Determining status of realty actions within wilderness areas

NEVADA WILDERNESS STATISTICS (as of 4/19/07)

For budgeting purposes only, the Nevada BLM manages a total of 100 Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and Wilderness Areas (i.e., 57 WSAs and 42 Wilderness Areas). The 57 WSAs include two in Alpine County, California managed by the Carson City Field Office, and exclude eight WSAs managed by the Eagle Lake and Surprise Field Offices (California BLM jurisdiction). The 42 Wilderness Areas exclude three Wilderness Areas managed by the Surprise Field Office (California BLM jurisdiction).

***For purposes other than budget*, there are a total of 109 WSAs and designated Wilderness Areas within the geographic boundary of the State of Nevada (i.e., 45 Wilderness Areas and 63 WSAs). These WSAs and Wilderness Areas are listed in this document under the Field Office with primary administrative jurisdiction.**

Number of Wilderness Areas within the State of Nevada - 45

Number of acres in Wilderness Areas within the State of Nevada - 2,056,545

Number of WSAs within the State of Nevada - 63

Number of acres in WSAs within the State of Nevada - 2,552,457

Number of WSAs within the State of Nevada recommended for wilderness (i.e., all or portions of WSAs recommended “suitable”) - 28

Number of WSAs within the State of Nevada recommended for nonwilderness (i.e., all or portions of WSAs recommended “unsuitable”) - 58

Number of acres in WSAs within the State of Nevada recommended for wilderness (i.e., recommended “suitable”) - 720,478

Number of acres in WSAs within the State of Nevada recommended for nonwilderness (i.e., recommended “unsuitable”) - 1,831,979

- Steve Smith noted that BLM was excluded from the Wilderness Act. The perception was that BLM was a land disposal agency until 1976 when it received authority to manage lands. To review: 3 phases - inventory, study phase and report- looked at two characteristics size and roadlessness (no constructed roads).

- Dave Tattam asked have any of these areas been released.

- Steve Smith answered that every county has language in their bill (to release).

- Jon Hutchings asked, not administratively (release)?

- Steve Smith said that is correct.

- Dave Tattam asked what is your recommendation 16 years later, for potential with the changes.

- Steve Smith answered that is true there have been changes. The concern in Las Vegas is with off highway vehicles.

- Helen Hankins asked if there is a time limit in three years.

- Steve Smith answered that there is no time limit for Congress to act on recommendations.

- Vince Garcia asked is there a process that individuals can recommend.

- Steve Smith said yes, absolutely, they are always open to comments. The average of receiving a bill has been every 2-3 years. Smith added to get in touch with your congressman and congressional delegation the legislative process is political.

- Vince Garcia asked who monitors WSAs.

- Steve Smith answered that BLM does. They are in the field offices.

-Gene Seidlitz added that monitoring is on the ground plus aerial flights.

- Steve added that the best is by ground control.

- Kyle Hansen added that BLM provides recommendations to senators and provide a mapping service.

- Helen Hankins said that there is monitoring of a quality or area, if found to be impaired a public notification has to be done (for wilderness).

- Dave Tattam asked if Harry Reid will be looking at Wilderness, is the file up to date?

-Steve Smith explained that it is a political process and we (BLM) monitor Wilderness Study Areas to assure that the characteristics are intact.

- Helen Hankins added that since 1991 there may be more information of an area, such as mineral deposits which can change a recommendation.

- Steve Smith noted that they do not always listen to our recommendations. The public can go to congressional delegation and give comments.

- Larry Barngrover asked Smith for figures for Fish & Wildlife Service and Forest Service.

- Steve Smith answered that he did not have figures with him. The Forest Service bill was in 1988-89. Smith discussed areas in Lincoln and White Pine that were not WSAs and added that these are citizen nominated areas.

- Jon Hutchings commented that if Congress wants to act they do not have to establish that it is needed like we do.

- Steve agreed that this is interesting; they need to do a better job of adhering to their own act. Smith reminded the RAC that we (BLM) are not allowed to delegate we provide a mapping service.

- Gary McCuin asked when doing mapping does BLM look at the ecological condition of the ground.

- Kyle added that there is a misperception of the use of a minimum tool; the minimum tool can be a dozer.

- Gary McCuin commented that you have the ability to do it but it is not usually done.

- Steve Smith added that he is not sure that we have ever said or been asked that before.
- Jon Hutchings remarked that it is important that the congressional delegation does not ask those questions; it should be up to the private citizen.
- Dave Tattam asked if there are hearings at the local level.
- Steve Smith responded that it depends on the delegation. There were public meetings for Lincoln County. They have designated some of these areas; but have not released others.
- Jon Hutchings commented that doing this county by county they're adding some new ones in White Pine. There are no more outstanding WSAs.
- Kyle Hansen said there are two WSAs in White Pine County. Clark County is the same, there are two that border.
- Jon Hutchings added that there are bigger drivers to these bills.
- Dave Tattam asked how many WSAs have not been recommended and have been released.
- Steve Smith said that after the bill is signed we put together a wilderness implementation strategy to meet requirements of the legislation.
- Larry asked how much latitude is there for economic issues.
- Steve stated that it is not in this document but we do address it in the wilderness management plan – one is prepared for every area with identified issues.
- Gene Seidlitz asked what the time frame is to develop the wilderness plan.
- Steve Smith responded that the policy is two years, but we're not able to do it with limited resources and money.
- Larry Barngrover asked about the plans for open public process?
- Steve Smith stated that draft plans are sent to public and comments are accepted for 30 days.
- Jon referred to the handout (2nd bullet) and asked how BLM manages confidentiality; as an agency there is responsibility for confidentiality.
- Steve Smith responded that the Congressional staff gets to decide how open the process is going to be, how dealt with. Steve said we work for the delegation providing a mapping service. There are public meetings and hearings. Smith added that he would like to see a more open process.
- Megan Werley asked if there is a separate contract for mapping.
- Steve Smith responded that there is no contract.

- Kyle Hansen added all the information is available to the public. The fact that the delegation is interested in a certain area is not released until the delegation releases it.
- Steve Smith remarked that the working group is composed of a GIS specialist and wilderness staff; other specialists' opinions are asked for.
- Dave Tattam asked is there a budgeting resolution of study for the areas and budgeting to implement these changes?
- Steve Smith said that some funding that we get is coming from other states. The budget at the federal level has been cut each year.
- Jon Hutchings asked if in the Clark County Land Act is the administrative cost of land sales covered or can it also be these costs.
- Doran Sanchez stated that it is only to cover administrative costs.
- Helen Hankins added that this is carefully defined in the conservation initiative.
- Steve Smith said that we do have some money from SNPLMA. The Lincoln County money for signing extends to White Pine County also.
- Jon Hutchings asked if the management is an active effort.
- Steve Smith responded that it is active; we get proposed actions all the time. These actions go through the process.
- Gary McCuin asked is this active on weeds management?
- Steve Smith said, yes, we can allow treatments (chemical), but want to preserve the natural ecosystem.
- Gary McCuin asked the edge of the threshold and doing prescribed burns in WSAs.
- Steve Smith said BLM can do analysis with public input.
- Gene Seidlitz discussed wildland fire use. There are discussions of letting some areas burn. It is in the fire management plan approved by the state director (monitored fire use). The Incident Commander has a full range of tools, but must be sensitive that it is a wilderness area. Heavy equipment can be used but we try not to.
- Vince Garcia asked is this decision made locally.
- Steve Smith said these are national policies.

III. WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM UPDATE

- Joe Tague gave the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program update. As of February 2007, Nevada has achieved appropriate management levels (AML) of horses and burros on the range (statewide). The current estimated population of horses and burros is about 12,995 animals. This compares with AML which is estimated at 13,485 animals (at the upper end of the population range).

About 1,247 excess animals will be removed from the range during summer 2007 (the Bald Mountain/South Shoshone and Roberts/Whistler Mountain herd complexes, and the Jackson Mountains, Jake's Wash and Mariah HMAs are planned for removals of excess horses and burros).

At the end of September 2007, an estimated 89 Nevada herd management areas (HMAs) are expected to be at or below AML. At that time, the estimated population of horses and burros on the range is expected to reach 14,347 animals (following the 2007 foaling season).

To maintain the February 2007 population level, another 1,300-1,400 animals would need to be removed from the range during the winter 2007/2008 gather season.

Adoption Initiatives:

To date in FY2007, 2,388 animals have been adopted bureau-wide and 346 animals have been sold. This compares to BLM's goal for this fiscal year of about 5,400 animals. This number is down from historic levels. Also of concern is declining interest in adopting animals over age 3 or increasing interest in adopting only pre-gentled or trained mustangs.

Reduced adoption numbers parallel a nation-wide trend in the horse industry. As 85 million baby boomers reach middle age, they are less willing to risk injury riding untrained horses or are more interested in pursuing other activities. The younger generation or Generation X comprises only about half the number of baby boomers, and tends to be motivated more by "what's in it for me" than the baby boom generation.

As a result, BLM is increasingly challenged to hang on to our current market share to expand into previously untapped markets. To meet this challenge, BLM is implementing a number of initiatives with the goal of increasing adoption numbers. Included are:

- Implementing a volunteer program at the Palomino Adoption Center. Volunteers meet with potential adopters and gentle younger animals for adoption. They also help to keep the facilities open on Saturday. As a result, adoption numbers have increased by 50%.

- Nevada BLM is also working with the Mustang Heritage Foundation to elevate the Perceived value of "mustangs"-through the Extreme Mustang Makeover event, 100 Trainers will train a 3 or 4 year old Nevada Mustang, then bring their trained mustangs to Fort Worth, TX in September, to compete for \$25,000 in added prize money. Following The show event, the trained mustangs will be offered for adoption. Sponsors include Fort Dodge, Western Horseman and RFD TV who will feature 6 primetime episodes about the trainers and their Nevada mustangs.

- Nevada is also working to make more trained mustangs available for adoption by working with the Foundation to implement an incentive-based training and adoption program. Under this program, approved trainers may train and adopt up to 4 Nevada mustangs at one time.

- Other projects include implementing a virtual adoption program, which includes a "Take a Nevada Mustang to School" classroom component, and an adoption incentives program, or High Stakes Futurity in which eligible mustangs and their adopters can compete for added prize money at designated Futurity Shows.

The FY2008 budget proposes a reduction of \$4.7 million for the wild horse and burro program bureau-wide. Within those budget parameters, the Bureau will focus primarily on caring for animals in holding facilities and promoting adoptions. FY2008 gathers are expected to continue in Wyoming because the BLM is under court order to maintain AML in the state.

The Department is currently working to address the funding shortfall.

To maintain the current population of horses and burros on the range in Nevada, a total of 2,599 animals would need to be removed during FY2008 (which begins October 1, 2007 and ends on September 30, 2008).

If Nevada is unable to gather 2,599 animals in FY2008, the population of horses and burros on the range would be expected to grow from 12,995 currently to about 17,200 animals by September 2008.

Gathers tentatively proposed for FY2008 include:

- Nevada Wild Horse Range (Las Vegas FO)
- North Stillwater (Winnemucca FO)
- Callaghan (Battle Mountain FO)
- Owyhee (Elko FO)

- Helen Hankins said BLM is paying more for long term holding or about one third of the budget - it is the highest cost.

- Dave Tattam added that this is projected same as Nevada initiative eight years ago.

- Joe Tague commented the added mortality rate is less than 10 percent. The cost is less in long term than short term. The summer gather numbers (1,247) are limited by short term holding space. 2,500 animals need to be gathered a year in Nevada.

- Dave Tattam asked how many are adopted each year.

- Joe Tague answered 5,000 annually nationwide, but the market is declining for adoptions. Demographics are changing. The 2008 budget is looking at not gathering but doing adoptions. We're working with the Mustang Foundation to have a contest in Texas. There will be national sponsors. 250 trainers responded. This effort is to market mustangs. There will be six reality show episodes. We're also working on a virtual adoption to fund long term holding.

- Vince Garcia remarked that horses are coming from the west but they are going to the east.

- Megan Werley asked about the amount of interest from the public.

- Joe Tague responded that it is just being developed.
- Kyle Hansen added that there is considerable interest in Utah.
- Dave Tattam asked if the money goes directly to the horse fund.
- Joe Tague responded that revenues are projected three to five years down the road.
- Dave Tattam asked if BLM is looking at different way to get funding?
- Helen Hankins responded that at this point that we need to try other things.
- Jon Hutchings commented that he appreciates the innovative approach but we need to turn to Congress and say we need to have this funding.
- Dave Tattam added that that is what is going on now. Two years ago while trying to streamline the change of ownership; the biggest horse group took a beating over their position on keeping slaughter as an option.
- Joe Tague added that if we do not keep funded we lose ground fast.
- Vince Garcia commented that user groups on public land turn around and blame ranchers. When we get to where user groups will start blaming each other, they will split.
- Jerry Smith asked if all of Nevada is at AML.
- Joe Tague responded yes, the gathers this summer should get us to be there.
- Larry Barngrover asked if there is a fluctuation included so that there is a lower limit and higher limit.
- Kyle Hansen responded set at reproductive rate for a four year gather cycle, and we're monitoring to see any differences.
- Jon Hutchings asked how much uncertainty there is for the 2,500 gather.
- Joe Tague responded that 1,247 animals will be gathered this fiscal year.

10:30 Break

10:45 Resume

Gary McCuin, Nevada Department of Agriculture, gave a Wild Horse and Burro Proposal/Presentation.

The Wild horse & Burro Program presents challenges to the BLM:

- BLM manages the animals and habitat.
- Emotion is high.
- BLM must find balance among multiple users and limited resources.

A History of Wild Horses:

- Horses originated in North America 55 million years ago.
- They became extinct about 75,000 years ago.
- The Spanish returned them to the continent in the late 1400s.
- Indian Tribes moved horses, establishing herds through the plains and on both sides of the Rockies.

History of Local Herds:

- Horses came to this region following the Gold Rush era.
- The region became a major horse producing area.

Current Herd Management Areas:

- Nevada has 102 HMAs.

Hard on the Range:

- Prior to 1934 unregulated cattle, sheep and horses used the range, causing resource deterioration.
- The Taylor Grazing Act was passed in 1934 (a key date in BLM history, along with FLPMA in 1976).

Finally...Regulations:

- The Taylor Grazing Act required permits for cattle, sheep and domestic horses.
- The act did not address wild horses.
- In the ensuing years, the Grazing Service (a predecessor to the BLM) worked to remove all un-permitted livestock from the public lands.
- This included wild horses.

The Nonconformists:

- Some horse operations had no permits. They also harvested from the wild populations.
- The "Taylor Boys" had only partial success at controlling the problem.

The Mustangers:

- Some ran horses for fun and to earn some extra money. Few were successful in gathering large numbers.
- The best became efficient at gathering large numbers. They were called Mustangers.

The Abuses:

- In 1930 the Mustangers started using airplanes and other means.
- After WWII horses were used for overseas human consumption, pet food and chicken feed.
- Mustangers gained a reputation for being abusive in gathering, loading and hauling horses to slaughter plants.

Enter Wild Horse Annie:

- Velma Johnson of Nevada was concerned about how the animals were being handled.
- She is credited for protective measures passed in 1959 and 1971.

The Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act:

- To require the protection, management and control of wild, free roaming horses and burros on public land.

The 1971 Sale Provisions:

(e) Sale of excess animals

(1) In general, any excess animal or the remains of an excess animal all be sold if-

(A) The excess animal is more than 10 years old; or

(B) The excess animal has been offered unsuccessfully for adoption at least 3 times.

(2) Method of sale

An excess animal that meets either of the criteria in paragraph (1) shall be made available for sale without limitation, including through auction to the highest bidder, at local sale yards or other convenient livestock selling facilities, until such time as-

(A) all excess animals offered for sale are sold; or

(B) the appropriate management level, as determined by the Secretary is attained in all areas occupied by wild free-roaming horses and burros.

Wild Horses:

-They are symbols of the American West.

-Americans have a very emotional connection with horses, especially wild horses.

Science and Emotion Conflict:

-Manage populations in a manner that is designated to achieve and maintain a natural, thriving ecological balance on the public land.

-CFR 4700- "self sustaining populations of healthy animals in balance with other users and the productive capacity of their habitat..."

vs

-Living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the west.

-Protect at any cost-to the government (society), regardless of the consequences to the horses or the rangelands.

Wild Horse and Burro Program Cost to Society

-1992-1996 average expenses \$15.6 million per year.

-\$6.5 million on Program management.

-\$2.6 million on removal of WHB from public lands.

-\$6.5 million on adoption activities.

Adoption fees brought in +/- \$780,000 per year.

Total Cost 1992-1996:

-\$124.80 Million Spent.

-\$ 3.12 Million recovered.

\$121.68 Million dollars net loss in a four year period.

Current Status

-West-wide H&B population +/- 31,000.

-Nationwide Appropriate Management Level (AML) is +/- 27,000.

- +/- 26,000 H&B in BLM short and long-term holding.

-2006 WHB Program Budget was +/- \$37 Million.

-Holding costs were approx. \$20 million.

-54%.

The Adoption Program:

-WHB Act provides that excess animals could be adopted by the public.

-Limited the number of animals that could be adopted in a one-year period to four.

- Set forth procedures under which adopters could receive title, resulting in removal of federal protection for the animal.
- More than 213,000 animals have been adopted nationwide.

Which Horses are Adopted:

- Foals and yearlings are most desired by adopters.
- There is less demand for 3 and 4 year-olds.
- Few adopters prefer horses 5 and over. Some exceptional older horses find homes.
- BLM must take horse age into consideration when factoring in the adoption program into overall herd management.
- In at least one management strategy (1992) the BLM stressed adoptability as a deciding factor in removals.

Ongoing Needs:

- Even at AML: The need to remove excess horses will continue in order to maintain ecological condition.
- Wild herds reproduce at 17 to 20 percent annually, depending on conditions.

Management of Alternatives:

- A discussion of these on-the-range scenarios developed by Bill Phillips (BLM, retired).

Horses are not Born, nor do They Die, on Cue:

- They are born and they die in a somewhat predictable pattern in a given setting.
- The following discussions are based on a fictional base herd of 100-horses.
- This herd is in an undisturbed condition that has an annual increase of 17% with an annual death loss of 5%.

Patterns:

- Note: Where a herd is half females (the normal situation) this translates to the females that are over 2 years of age producing a 57.7% foal crop.
- Foal Crop as used in the following discussions refers to those foals that survive until December 31 of the year in which they were born.

Management Options:

- Three management options for herds on the range:
 - gate cut.
 - structured herd (four year cycle).
 - structured herd (two year cycle).

Gate Cut:

- Random gather.
- Removes all ages from the herd until the population reaches the desired target.
- Advantages: cheapest.
- Disadvantages: More unadoptable horses are removed (primarily because of age). More horses go into long-term holding.

4-Year Structured Herd:

- Gather herds every four years, capturing all or nearly all animals.
- Sort animals by age. Older animals are returned to the range; younger animals are sent into the adoption program.
- Some younger animals are returned to the range to offset herd death loss and

maintenance of the herd.

-Advantages: Fewer horses in long-term holding.

-Disadvantages: More expensive gathers than gate cut.

2-Year Structured Herd:

-Gather stud bands (reproductive units) from the herd every two years.

-Bachelor bands are left on the range.

-Requires precise counts of the bachelor bands.

-Advantage: Only foals and yearlings removed-most adoptable animals.

-Disadvantage: High gather costs (every two years).

In Summary:

-The program presents management challenges.

-There is no National strategy once AML is achieved.

-Long-term holding is expensive but can be managed. Eventually, the total cost of the program could be reduced.

-The Northern CA RAC and the Nevada Board of Agriculture urges you to consider supporting a national strategy eliminating horses being put into long-term holding.

- Jon Hutchings asked what the range budget is.

- Kyle Hansen responded these are separate budgets appropriated by delegation.

- Helen Hankins asked are most herds 50% female.

- Gary McCuin responded, yes. Gate cut is the cheapest for gather costs.

- Dave Tattam asked are you asking us to choose one of these options.

- Gary McCuin replied that he is asking you to consider supporting a national strategy eliminating horses being put into long term holding.

- Kyle Hansen stated that there is national policy selective removal criteria - adoptability first then age, and then put back out on the range - unless there is an exceptional animal adjust age or sex structure of the herd.

- Dave Tattam said that a cost study from 1992-1995 in overpopulated herd pulling old off creates higher cost. When looking at two horses if one improves adoptability that horse is put back out to improve herd adoptability criteria.

- Gary McCuin the strategy has to be at AML for it to work (younger horses-adoptable). Gate cut strategy is used to get to AML not looking at minimizing the AML.

- Gary McCuin then discussed the California program. The California program was successful until monitoring was looked at and not where it needed to be so they stopped.

- Kyle Hansen said there is a national strategy bill.

- Gary McCuin will get Phillips and Fontana contact information and it will be given to Kyle Hansen.

- Helen Hankins said look at the economics of 102 HMAs in Nevada, the cost to do a large gather as compared to California over a five year period and look at same cost for long term over the same five year period.
- Gary McCuin recommended that Bill Phillips be contacted. Invite Bill Phillips and Jeff Fontana to discuss.
- Jon Hutchings said he is in favor of doing this - keep issue front and center. What is the overall age distribution of gathered horses in last three years for Nevada, are we changing from gate cut to age approach.
- Jerry Smith said that may not be representative.
- Dave Tattam suggested looking at the final disposition of the horses in the last five years.
- Kyle Hansen said the National Humane Society of Americas has a protocol to use vaccination; but it is only used for research study right now. It is 90% effective for the first year, and then drops to 84% for the second year.
- Helen Hankins said that would be more marketable to the public.
- Gary McCuin commented that horses will not get to slaughter.
- Helen Hankins said we have statistics for Nevada and the nation and will provide the requested information at the July 26-27th meeting – the aging of horses in long term care and 5-10 year status.
- Kyle Hansen said the birth control vaccination has been going on since 1991 and the drug is a five to seven year development process. Nevada has four projects going on now. It is time consuming meeting legal challenges and concerns.
- Helen Hankins commented there are two issues – the legal challenge, look at what do we need to do to get this to be a tool that can be used, not a research tool. Find out about the FDA process for the July meeting.
- Jerry Smith said he is concerned that we do not want to narrow our tool to one; we need to keep all tools available.
- Cyd McMullen asked for information about selective removal as well.
- Doran Sanchez said he will invite the national program office lead.

IV. PREVIOUS DAY'S TOUR

- Vince Garcia said that the tour looked at fire rehabilitation areas and noted that the established growth is promising without any moisture. Will it be beneficial this year? Garcia questioned if these areas will be available for grazing.
- Dave Tattam said he was impressed with the reseeding efforts.

- Helen Hankins said there was a lot of help with cooperators. The agencies took fire program individuals and shifted them to the rehab effort.
- Dave Tattam asked if the crested wheat needs to be re-seeded.
- Larry Barngrover remarked there is reason for optimism. Indications from yesterday show that rehab is coming along. Getting into rehab effort on a large amount with these fires has provided an opportunity to revitalize the area. Get seed mixtures established and get rejuvenated areas.
- Vince Garcia noted that finding opportunities for ranchers' grazing uses besides the rehab was done also. Everyone needs to be complimented. Noxious weeds are more identifiable.
- Helen Hankins said that the California Trail Center construction should be finished late fall. Saturday is Trails Day from 10-4 in the City Park.
- Kevin Lee noted that he misspoke yesterday, for the Trail Center grant application, the intent is due in August and the application is due in December.

V. OHV TRAILS UPDATE

- Helen Hankins gave the OHV Trails update for the Elko Field Office. The situation is the same as at the last meeting. Commitments to develop recommendations on Spruce Mountain are continuing. The effort started last December was delayed by fire rehab. We need a land use plan decision looking at travel management for the district, will get public input. Public scoping is out one to two years.
- Kyle Hansen gave the OHV Trails update for the Ely Field Office. The Lost Ox Trail decision was rescinded - not sufficient policy. There will be more public involvement. The Silver State Trail is still being looked at. The Silver State Trail is a scenic byway that could eventually, through federal legislation, extend statewide. The Silver State Trail is designated in Lincoln County by an approximately 260-mile loop extending from Caliente north to the White Pine County line. A study is underway to designate a section of trail in White Pine County. The study is expected to be completed by December 2009. Chief Mountain is marked and signed. The Hell's Half Acre off-road group would like BLM to allow use by rock crawlers.
- Jerry Smith gave OHV Trails update for the Battle Mountain Field Office. The situation is the same as at the last meeting. They're working on an EA for Shoshone Trail. A key staffer is leaving for Burns, Oregon. Ely will assist with the EA. For Travel Management, they're working on gathering information. Would like to have information for the 2009 RMP revision.
- Les Hansen remarked that Jerry Smith was working with the permittee, Ellison Ranching, to address issues. There will be built-in monitoring for the trail and it will be a phased approach – based on looking at the monitoring data. It should be out to the public in late spring.

Lunch 12:00

Resume 1:15

- Doran Sanchez suggested that the public comment periods are tentative times and the public should be suggested to arrive early. Put after introductions at the next meeting.

VI. RANGE UPDATE

- Jerry Smith gave the range update for the Battle Mountain Field Office. There are six permittee renewals to do and all are on track. They're doing them through agreements. Dry Creek is close to completion working with RCI. Buffalo Valley is close to agreement. They have some big allotments where no evaluation was done before. They're developing management plans to meeting the standards.

- Larry Barngrover asked about modifications.

- Gerry Smith said each is handled differently. They're looking at hot season grazing elimination, changing season of use, developing management systems, and/or reducing AUMs.

- Larry Barngrover asked if they address making range functional again.

- Jerry Smith said yes, it will be phased in over time.

- Larry Barngrover asked if owners are still sub-leasing.

- Jerry Smith said yes, and waiting to see what turns out before releasing. All parties are involved in the renewal process.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the ruling regarding public water reserve; the State Engineer ruled to the ranchers, has that impacted your applications.

- Jerry Smith said the public water reserve has to have a specified amount. If there is additional water, someone can appropriate. Smith does not see it as an issue and is not familiar with the case.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown said that the opinion in the ruling is that water could not be reserved exclusively for wildlife.

- Jerry Smith said but could be reserved for humans and recreation. Our filings for wildlife are a drop in the bucket. Public water reserves are non-protestable.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked why you aren't filing for reserves.

- Jerry Smith said most are for instream flow and a very small portion of water .3 cfs. One was granted that was under protest. We did site visit with the county and permittee worked it out and the State Water Engineer granted it.

- Helen Hankins said we have been working on a long-time water issue and the permittee is working with us. The proposal has changed over time and the most recent may be workable .We have to have part of the water right and she is not agreeable. This needs to be resolved before moving forward.

- Jerry Smith said that for rehab everything has been drilled seeded. They issued closures for fire caused. No entire allotments closed and five 5 allotments were affected for 42,000 acres.

- Kyle Hansen said that Ely is on track - 32 renewals will be done by September 6th or 7th. The EA is going out for public comment next week. The EAs are being reviewed for meeting standards and guidelines. For the Laccawanna fence, all partners are on board with four agreements.
- Larry Barngrover asked if that is for livestock control.
- Kyle Hansen responded yes, cattle going into private property is a safety issue. NDOT, private landowners, the county, city, and NDOW are involved.
- Vince Garcia asked for how many miles.
- Kyle Hansen responded 12 miles total. BLM range conservationists are out interfacing with the permittees.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked who the person is doing the Cold Springs Stewardship Project?
- Chris Hanefeld said he will find out and will get that info to Sheri.
- Ray Maestas said there is prescribed burn monitoring on the Egan Range and UNR is involved.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked who the contact is for UNR.
- Ray said he will find out and get that info to Sheri. There is wildland fire use available on 3 million acres. The EA is approved and once the RMP is done it will be bumped up.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown noted we have met a lot of opposition where you have not.
- Ray Maestas commented that public outreach and partnerships help. We're trying to get ranchers and OHVers to come together under the RMP.
- Chris Hanefeld said he will get BARCAAS information to Sheri.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown said she would like a copy of the light-hand-on-the land and minimum impact suppression tactics (MIST). She asked what the budget for weeds is.
- Kyle Hansen said that Bonnie Waggoner is the Ely Field Office weeds specialist. The tri-county group is doing a grant application - applying for \$200,000. Monitoring is done by specialists and permittees. SNPLMA funds can be used.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the amount of roads maintained in the Ely Field Office.
- Ray Maestas said they work with partnerships.
- Helen Hankins commented that Elko spent four month of the fiscal year working on fire rehab and grazing management. The fire rehab window is narrow and we had the support of the state director. We're hoping for 50 grazing permit renewal completions next year and the year after. We have 150 left to do. Fire rehab was a community effort.
- Larry Barngrover asked what the significance of not getting those renewals done is.

- Helen Hankins said we do not know. BLM committed that we would get a renewals done by 2009. We're finding that Idaho, Wyoming, and some parts of Nevada will not meet this deadline. External groups are our biggest concern - seeing that we have not met this date. The intent was that we would look at standards and take action for progress for the rangelands. We need to come as close to that as we can.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if that is their entire objective - to slow you down.

- Helen Hankins commented we have prevailed in our last three cases. In all cases judges said allegations were without foundation. We're taking an offensive approach to slow them down and they will be required to pay for each page of copying. We're obligated to provide for the public but not to victimize ourselves.

- Larry Barngrover asked is Western Watersheds the only one you receive these requests from.

- Helen Hankins said yes, besides Great Basin Mine Watch.

- Jon Hutchings said Western Watersheds notwithstanding, have these discussions taken place with the state director that BLM will not make deadline. Should we have an open brainstorming session to sort out impacts and how to handle the situation?

- Helen Hankins replied that we did have discussions and asked each field office to define where they're at, and ideas of how to approach. Our intention is to meet the deadline.

- Jon Hutchings remarked that some other high priority will be done and he would like to see that discussion happen now with all appropriate parties. If for nothing else to allow for more time.

There needs to be a Plan B and at the 11th hour.

- Kyle Hansen said there will not be a Plan B; there are not any other options - it will be achieved.

- Kevin Lee asked what the consequences would be.

- Helen Hankins said she is unsure.

- Jon Hutchings said he is unsure also. The concern is that BLM will be sued and this will come against the ranchers so they are not able to turn out those AUMs. Hutchings would like message to go back to Ron and further.

- Vince Garcia said BLM is doing it, but not at the level they should be.

- Kyle Hansen said it done in Salt Lake City with six range cons.

- Jerry Smith said that Congress could extend the rider.

- Larry Barngrover agreed with Jon Hutchins that the state director needs to know that this is an issue that needs to be considered. Create a central team or group that could be available on special assignments to complete these.

- Kyle Hansen said that the Nevada State Office is saying these are your priorities.

- Jon Hutchings suggested the need to appoint some commission to put input into the process and determine the likelihood of making deadline, yes or no.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown said Elko County would help fund this.
- Helen Hankins said she met with the state director on Monday and briefed him on Elko's situation. We have to lay it out but need a solution of how to get there, idea of centralized advisory group would be great. Group will contemplate and support the actions.
- Larry Barngrover agreed with Vince Garcia's point that we cannot reduce the quality.
- Jerry Smith said the emphasis is renewal of permit not all the necessary changes for land health standards. Do not have to be meeting the standards, just renewing permits. There could be a lesser/streamlined version looking at renewing the permit.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if it is a given that the permit will be renewed.
- Jerry Smith said that is our proposed action.
- Larry Barngrover said the expectation is that the standards will be met. At the Ely Field Office that is how it was stated.
- Kyle Hansen said each EA will have those standards attached.
- Gene Seidlitz commented that each office is inconsistent; some are doing EA permit determination renewal.
- Vince Garcia remarked that we should get with the other RACs to determine if they have the same concerns.
- Jerry Smith said that each office was given their own options to get these completed.
- Helen Hankins said we're looking at what the condition is on the range.
- Jerry Smith said we are making a determination of significant progress to reach the standards - after looking at the assessment then developing a proposed action to renew the permit. The primary NEPA action is to renew the permit, not full blown for all renewals.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if the permittee is negligent will the permit be renewed.
- Jerry Smith said if we offer the permit (full blown) there will be changes to the terms and conditions which will have to be signed off on by the permittee. Where there are not as many conflicts the permit is streamlined not full blown. Primary action is streamlined to get permit renewed.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if they do not accept it, is the status of allotment affected. How would it be offered?
- Helen Hankins said it could be acquired (opened up) under the same conditions as the permittee who did not want it.

- Jon Hutchings said he would like to assess the implications if not met.
- Jerry Smith said we're working on getting them done before June before fire season. The Washington Office is saying they could cut budgets next year if widgets are not completed. They will put money where they are getting the work done.
- Helen Hankins commented that we have an internal system (electronically) that is looked at by the Washington Office.
- Jon Hutchings asked for an update at the next meeting, in October at the Tri-RAC, and then after the first of the year. If slipping then we should take appropriate action.
- Jerry Smith said it would be a great topic for the Tri-RAC meeting for all the RACs to have the updates for their areas.
- Vince Garcia said that the general public may have concerns if they are not met and what will the ramifications be. BLM will still be operating but the rancher is the one that may feel the effect.
- Helen Hankins added that they are looking at the direct impact for livestock if done or not, the renewed permit may have reduced AUMs. If not addressed then other things are being impacted (environmental factors).

Sheri Eklund-Brown said there should be documentation stating this and why it works for you and not against you; and works for your accountability.

Agreement that there will be an update at the July meeting and discuss what can be provided at the Tri-RAC. Contact other RACs after the July meeting.

Fire management

- Sheri Eklund-Brown said with private versus public, some have state NDF. How are we going to deal with this? These Counties without NDF or Fire Protection Districts may have to start paying. BLM cannot keep assuming the costs.
- Jerry Smith said he had discussions with the Lander County Commission and addressed developing an agreement between Lander County, Elko County, and Battle Mountain to discuss the risk of cost.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown said we need to have the dialogues starting with the counties especially those at risk.

Jerry Smith said it is not that big of an issue where there is no checkerboard. It's up to them to become a protection area. A memorandum of agreement needs to be developed and define what portion they will pay for suppression costs. We have reciprocal agreements with Nye and Esmeralda counties. Lander County definitely needs to be. Fire budgets are being cut and said that counties need to step up. NDF and BLM are changing their state-wide agreements.

1:35 p.m. Public Comment Period

VII. MINING UPDATE

- Dave Gaskin gave the mining update. Several mine expansions are ongoing.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the mercury discovery; any comment?
- Dave Gaskins responded that this was pressured by groups to monitoring. They put in the best controllable technology and solutions. Implementations with the environmental commission will focus on when it is determined what kind of mercury. Will not put blanket limits on everything.
- Larry Barngrover asked is mining reform ongoing all the time.
- Dave Gaskin said yes, it comes up every year.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if the Newmont waste dump is resolved.
- Dave Gaskins said a study is being done on re-sloping. They're looking at other facilities that are similar.
- Jerry Smith asked why it happened.
- Dave Gaskin said it was the way the material is stacked. Quadra is reclaiming and is looking at these in Ely area.
- Kevin Lee said Newmont is rebuilding the road where the slide went.

VIII. FIELD MANAGERS' REPORTS

- Vince Garcia announced that this is Helen Hankins' last day and voiced appreciation for her relationship, leadership capabilities, and effort (and resulting impact) that she put forth for the community.

Vince Garcia moved the meeting adjourned and the motion was seconded by Cyd McMullen. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Date Approved:

Approved by:
