

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes
Friday August 12, 2005
Tonopah BLM Field Station

Resource Advisory Council members present and category represented:

Stephen Mellington	Public at Large (Chairman)
Dr. John E. Hiatt	Wildlife (Vice Chairman)
William Mull	Ranching/Grazing
Mark N. Ioli	Mineral Development
Jerry Helton	Transportation/Row
Kenny Anderson	Native American
Marta Agee	Ranching/Grazing
Robert Maichle	Environment
John Weisser	Dispersed Recreation
Billie Young	Wild Horse & Burro
Dr. Colleen Beck	Archeology/Historic
Claire Toomey	Permitted Recreation
Joni Eastley	Elected Official

Resource Advisory Council members absent:

Dr. Steve Parker	Academic/UNLV
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Bureau of Land Management representatives present:

Juan Palma	BLM Las Vegas Field Office Manager
William Fisher	BLM Tonopah Field Station Manager
Jo Simpson	BLM Nevada State Office Chief of Communications
Chris Hanefeld	BLM Ely Field Office PAO
Karen Eller	BLM Tonopah Field Station PAO
Gene Drais	BLM Ely Field Office Field Ely Resource Management Plan Project Manager
Susan Rigby	BLM Tonopah Field Station Archaeologist
Bruce Flinn	Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project - Project Manager

Forest Service representatives present:

Steve Wilson	Austin-Tonopah District Ranger Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
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University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

Bob Wilson

Extension Educator

Public attendees:

Lori Howard

A copy of each attachment is listed in the text of or at the end of these minutes and is also on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Ely Field Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to review said minutes should contact Chris Hanefeld, public affairs specialist, at (775) 289 1842.

Stephen Mellington called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m.

8:10 a.m. – Welcome and introductions

8:12 a.m. – Housekeeping Issues

8:15 a.m. – Review/Approval of the June Meeting Minutes

Maichle motioned to approve the minutes, loli second and all approved.

8:18 a.m. – Bruce Flinn presented the Clark, Lincoln and Whit Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project Environmental Impact Statement (see attachment 1)

- Flinn explained that the scoping process is finished and they received around 8000 comments. Out of these, approximately one half are duplicates. They are in the process of categorizing and entering them. They are entering every one of the comments and have set up an administrative protocol where every document (comment) has a number that is categorized for ease in finding in the future.
- Flinn announced that he will be leaving and handing this project over to a 5 person team that will be handling it from then on.
- Agee asked where in this project someone will analyze if it is less expensive to move the people to the water instead of water being moved to people. Hiatt stated that he doesn't believe that issue has been looked into. Weisser was concerned about how long the pipeline would last. Flinn stated that this line should last at least 300 years. Weisser also added that he would like to see a mitigation period locked into any agreement that is made so that if this affects anyone negatively they will not be locked in court processes for years. Hiatt asked about the corridor. Dreis stated that in the EIS there are utility corridors already present and planned actions that would be inside these corridors. There was an agreement between Lincoln & Clark Counties and if this agreement was at its full potential there are addition water sources available to be tapped into. Palma suggested that for now if the RAC had any thoughts on the procedure it might be a good idea to draft a letter giving their suggestions. Helton added that an EIS had to be done. Hiatt asked if the decision on how to proceed would be done. Flinn stated that should happen within the next 2-3 weeks.
- Hiatt suggested managing this out of the Ely office and looking at the total impacts as a global issue. Overall global EIS with sub EIS's for the pipelines. Included should be a mechanism for the public to asses the project
- Jo Simpson added that BLM would welcome the RACs advice and council. Utah is also involved, two state governments and two BLMs within 2 states. The project manager will report to the State

Director. Jo also added that there were 3 EIS's in process right now. Agee added that if the RAC wanted to add comments/suggestions now is the time to do it. Flinn added that BLM would contract with a contract management team. Mellington asked why 3 EISs were done instead of 1. Flinn explained that they are not connected actions and that is why there is more than one. However, after scoping is complete that may change the number based on the fact that they are not connected actions. Mellington stated that it seems there has been a lot of research defending the 3 separate EISs, where if there was only one that would not need to be done. Flinn said that it was all based on timing. Hiatt asked what the new scoping would address. Flinn explained that each EIS will have its own scoping process. Each process would be organized and coordinated in a manner so that each is done the same way. Flinn explained the process of what has to be done to get a cumulative impact statement. A brief discussion ensued regarding EISs and the impact of this project. Helton asked if the boundaries of the EIS were only putting the pipe in the ground or did they also include the effect of removing water. Hiatt said that it would include both. Mellington asked for suggestions concerning this project that could be noted in a letter. He noted that Hiatt had suggested people move to Ely to be closer to the project boundaries, he asked for additional suggestions. Helton discussed the need to have as open of a forum with the public as possible. Hiatt added that putting out relevant information to the public periodically would be a good idea. Mellington reviewed the discussion and added that this RAC will draft a letter with suggestions on guidelines for this project. He asked for a volunteer to draft the letter & send it to Chris who in turn would send it to other RAC members with a due date of comments. Young suggested forming a subcommittee that would draft this letter. Members decided to stay with the bullet approach, and an introductory sentence. Mellington suggested that Helton, Hiatt and Young comprise this committee. Subcommittee members will work on the letter today and will produce a draft before the end of the meeting.

9:00 a.m. – Susan Rigby presented Rhyolite and the potential for recreation development (see attachment 2)

- Maichle asked what the requirements were for filling in the privy shafts. Rigby explained that BLM would have to go to SHIPO and work with them. Maichle asked how much could be done to stabilize the walls. Rigby stated that BLM needed to give SHIPO a separate plan for each of the rehabilitation (stabilization) projects for each of the buildings.
- Fisher stated that the biggest concern is engineering. Rigby also added that liability is a very big concern for the contractors. Beck asked how the bottle house was paid for. Rigby stated that that the funding came from deferred maintenance. Agee asked if the tourists helped pay for the rehab. Rigby stated that Rhyolite is designated as a fee demo site, but that has never been set up. There is a donation box set up so that visitors can give money to a non-profit organization that has been set up which helps pay for small projects. Helton stated that there are two options: fix it or keep people out. He added that an engineer has to be involved and needs to give BLM a recommendation. With that recommendation all liability is taken on by that engineer. Weisser asked about getting it on a national register. Rigby stated that any stabilization for the runes would not be covered by any funding that would be available by doing this.

- Mellington recessed the meeting at 10:30 a.m., reconvening at 10:45 a.m. –

10:45 a.m. – Bob Wilson presented Tri-County Weeds Program and Invasive Species (see attachment 3)

- Beck asked what litter retention means. Wilson explained that “litter” means leaves, etc. If the “litter” stays on the ground there is more water retention.
- Agee asked what individuals can do to stop invasive weeds. Wilson added that as a permittee she probably doesn't have many more options than what she is already doing. He suggested grazing cattle in that area before the perennials come out. Hiatt commented that the reason Cheatgrass is not on the noxious weed list is because no one knows what to do about it. Cheatgrass is better adapted to deal with this climate than the native species. Wilson added that sharing of authority is one thing that has to happen for a group to be effective. For example: the people in a community to commit to deal with the problem as a group. That can happen if resources and manpower are shared. A brief discussion ensued regarding how to help in the control and elimination of invasive plant species. Agee suggested having silk replicas of the invasive weeds. She asked about the cost and suggested that each office have these for reference. Mellington stated that the RAC had a recommendation to write a letter to Don Henderson, Director of Nevada Department of Agriculture.

- Mellington opened the Public Comment Period. –

11:28 a.m. - Public Meeting: Tonopah BLM Field Station Conference Room

- There being no public comment, Mellington closed the public comment period at 11:29 a.m. –
- Mellington recessed the meeting at 11:30 a.m., reconvening at 12:05 p.m. –

12:05 p.m. Gene Drais presented the Ely Resource Management Plan (see attachment 4)

- Drais explained that all comments are due by November 28, 2005. Public Comment Scoping Meetings will be held in October in Ely, Caliente Mesquite, Las Vegas Reno and Tonopah.
- Drais stated that they were anticipating minor changes to this document after all of the comments have been received. Sometime next summer the proposed plan and EIS will come out.
- Maichle asked how specific Drais would like the comments to be. Drais stated that he would like to have specific information with their comments. He also asked to let the public know that specific comments are more helpful. Maichle asked the group if the RAC could have another meeting before the November 28 deadline. Mellington stated it was up to the members. Hiatt stated that RAC could decide to meet before the Tri-RAC meeting. Mellington said that members should decide on a date in early November and have Chris Hanefeld get the notice to the Federal Register. Mellington stated that the RAC should have a formal response to this issue. Young suggested extending the Tri-RAC meeting by half a day to discuss this topic. Mellington asked if anyone had any arguments against extending the Tri-RAC meeting. Mellington reiterated that the options are extending the Tri-RAC or having a totally separate day. Hiatt suggested having a separate day in November for the new members to have time to familiarize themselves with this topic. Beck showed concern regarding being able to come to a consensus. Hiatt stated that the RAC needs to comment on specific issues rather than being general. Young stated that based on it's diverse points of view this RAC has come to be recognized as being supportive in those different points of view. Eastley stated that the RAC should dedicate a meeting solely to this topic instead of adding it to another meeting. Beck agreed. Toomey suggested adding a meeting to the

field trip to Mesquite that is already scheduled. Palma suggested planning a meeting, but as a workshop setting with proper facilitators. He said he could recommend facilitators. Palma stated that he didn't think that consensus could be reached in one day, but a list of concerns would be attainable. Helton stated that having a couple levels of goals and list concerns that everyone agrees on. Hiatt stated that he's reviewed some of the drafts and has provided comments. The only way that a meeting would be productive would be for people to do their homework and come prepared with their comments. The ground rules need to be specified ahead of time. Members decided on a separate date after the Tri-RAC so the new members can familiarize themselves with the document. A date of November 4, 2005 in Las Vegas at 8:00 a.m. was decided upon.

1:00 p.m. – Karen Prentice presented the Post Wildland Fire Update and Implication to Watershed Health (see attachment 5)

- 160,000 acres of fire occurred in flooding area. The fires brought about concerns regarding reseeded based on the competition for seeds.
- Emergency stabilization funding allows only for keeping the area stable so that it won't deteriorate. It does not allow for reestablishing the area to its previous condition.
- Hiatt asked about the process that follows emergency stabilization. Prentice stated that they can pursue other avenues after the initial stabilization. Other sources of funding have to be used to do this. Prentice stated that if the RAC sent out letters of support for the different proposals that could help tremendously at this point.
- Hiatt stated that 6 weeks is a short amount of time to put together a meaningful plan. Prentice stated that if a plan is not put together at that time BLM could lose the funding and no, it is not a realistic time frame, but it is something to start with. Hiatt recommended putting an emphasis on monitoring scientific studies. This is just one of the first of big fires in the Mohave and more will come based on the plants present today. Prentice added that she feels that USGS is interested in helping them create their monitoring plan. Hiatt asked about the cost of this plan. Prentice stated that it's around 13 million, down from 17 million.

2:10 p.m. – William Fisher presented the Forest Service Update because Steve Williams was unable to stay to present it himself. (see attachment 6).

- Members reviewed documents presented with no questions

2:15 p.m. – Field Manager's Reports (see attachments 7, 8 & 9)

- William Fisher presented the Battle Mountain District's Field Manager's Report (see attachment 6)
 - Fisher added that the Fish Lake Valley Health Assessment has been out for approximately 1 month. Tonopah has received only one comment so far and it was supportive.
 - No comments have been received for the Springdale #2 Allotment setting of Appropriate Management Level (AML). AML has been set at 2 burros and no horses.
 - Hiatt asked about the article about Ben Colvin declares victory. Fisher explained that this article was written in response to an article that had come out in previous months regarding this issue. The previous article had stated that The Court had found no wrongdoing on BLM's part. Hiatt asked Fisher if he could get a copy of the rangeland health assessment. Fisher reminded him that this document's comment period is due to close next week.
 - Mellington thanked Fisher and the Tonopah staff for the wonderful tour.

- Gene presented the Ely District's Field Manager's Report (see attachment 7)
 - Drais stated that the Ely office will continue to work with union pacific railroad on trespasses.
 - A pre gather census was completed and they found approximately 1000 more horses than anticipated. The gather continued on schedule and they are going back out in late fall/early winter.
- Juan Palma presented the Las Vegas District's Field Manager's Report (see attachment 8)
 - Hiatt asked about conservation initiative. Palma stated that the meeting is coming up and BLM has very good information from cooperating agencies. BLM will take that information and formulate proposals into a draft EIS which will be out sometime in January 2006. Helton noted that today was the deadline to turn in maps on the preferred boundaries. Hiatt asked if the upcoming sale will proceed as planned. Palma stated that yes, it would proceed as planned.
 - Palma stated that the Table Mt wind energy project is still on hold.
 - Toomey asked about 160 acres in Pahrump. Palma stated that BLM has looked into transferring the land to the previous occupant's descendents. The only available process is a congressional delegation.
 - Palma stated that the Ivanpah Airport will definitely affect the recreation in that area, however to what degree is unknown at this time. An agency will do the research to find the answer to this.
- Jo Simpson announced that Ron Wenker is the new State Director. He is currently the State Director from Colorado and was the Field Manager of Winnemucca for quite some time. He will be reporting on October 3, 2005.
- Agee asked if Smith would bring the RAC up to date on the Western Watershed Vs. Bennett issue. Smith stated that the Court stated that BLM had not responded properly and ordered all grazing off of the allotments. Smith explained that 4 NEPA documents were completed in order to graze those allotments. The judge stated that it was an actual increase of 83% in grazing because permittees had been granted non-renewable grazing permits and those numbers were added to the grazing authorization. The court Stayed the Decision and ordered the BLM to complete an EIS. The court also ordered that all livestock be removed from the allotments until the EIS is complete and grazing numbers are reassessed.

3:12 p.m. Mellington handed out the letter drafted by the subcommittee. Members reviewed the letter and made a few corrections and Maichle moved to distribute the letter. Helton second and all approved.

Mellington asked if members wanted to write a letter to Don Henderson. Eastley asked if members wanted to put the topic on the agenda for next meeting. Hiatt made some suggestions on what to say in the letter. Agee explained how difficult it is to raise weed free hay. Members agreed to put the topic on the next meeting's agenda. Agee suggested writing a simple letter saying that this RAC supports weed free hay. Young pointed out that there are more concerns that need to be discussed before a letter is drafted. Mellington suggested that this topic be tabled and discuss it at another meeting.

3:26 p.m. – Adjourn

- There being no further business, Maichle motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:26 p.m. Helton second and all approved. -
- Mellington adjourned the meeting -

APPROVED BY:

Date

Stephen Mellington, Chair
Mojave-Southern Great Basin
Resource Advisory Council

- Minutes provided by Karen Eller, BLM Tonopah Field Station -

Attachments:

1. Clark, Lincoln and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project EIS
2. Rhyolite and the Potential for Recreation Development
3. Tri-County Weeds Program and Invasive Species
4. Ely Resource Management Plan and Environment Impact Statement
5. Post Wildland Fire Update and Implication to Watershed Health
6. Austin/Tonopah District Ranger's Report
7. Battle Mountain District Field Manager's Report
8. Ely District Field Manager's Report
9. Las Vegas District Field Manager's Report