

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes
Friday January 20, 2006
Las Vegas Field Office

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members present and category represented:

Stephen Mellington	Public at Large (Chairman)
Dr. John E. Hiatt	Wildlife (Vice Chairman)
Kenny Anderson	Native American
Doug "Stretch" Baker	Transportation/Row
Dr. Colleen Beck	Archeology/Historic
Don "Skip" Canfield	State Agency Representative
Robert Maichle	Environment
Dr. Steve Parker	Academic/UNLV
Claire Toomey	Permitted Recreation
Garacian Uhalde	Ranching/Grazing
Billie Young	Wild Horse & Burro

Resource Advisory Council members absent:

Joni Eastley	Elected Official
Mark N. Ioli	Mineral Development
George "John" Weisser	Dispersed Recreation

Bureau of Land Management representatives present:

Stephanie Connoly	BLM Ely Field Office Associate Field Manager
William Fisher	BLM Tonopah Field Station Manager
Juan Palma	BLM Las Vegas Field Office Manager
Hillierie C. Patton	BLM Las Vegas Field Office PAO
Karen Eller	BLM Tonopah Field Station PAO
Gail Marrs-Smith	BLM Las Vegas Field Office Botanist
Penny Woods	BLM Nevada State Office Nevada Ground Water Project Manager

Clark County representatives present

Dave Carlsen	Manager Environmental Division, Clark County
Rob Mrowka	

Outside Las Vegas Foundation

Alan O'Neill
Kim Hutson de Belle

Executive Director
Project Manager

Public Attendees

Elise McAllister
Mike West

Chairman Stephen Mellington called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m.

9:00 a.m. – Welcome and introductions

Mellington added Protocol for the Subcommittees to the agenda, asked for guidance for the protocol.

Mellington expressed concerns about roles and responsibilities of the different people involved and wanted to know if the comments could still be submitted for the Ely RMP. Connolly stated that Ely would still accept them and asked that members get their comments to Ely as soon as possible.

Patton asked if it is her role to draft and send out letters for the RAC. Mellington stated that the RAC just wanted to know if the process was going to change.

Hiatt asked to add the South McCullah's grazing allotment and trespass issue to the agenda

Nothing else was added to the agenda

9:21 a.m. – Housekeeping Issues

- Patton reviewed housekeeping issues. She asked members to bring any important former processes to her attention.
- Palma stated that there were extra binders from the TRI-RAC meeting and passed them out to members not able to attend.

9:15 a.m. – Review/Approval of the RAC Meeting Minutes was postponed to the end of the meeting.

9:30 a.m. – Mellington opened the Public Comment Period

- Mike West presented concerns of constant and increasing closure of BLM areas to OHV use around the LV area. He wanted to make sure that OHV use stays open in the "nice" areas. He felt that all of these areas are now being closed to OHV use. He stated that he wanted to see sharing and balance between the multiple uses of the public land.
- Hiatt asked if he was referring to off-road or roads and trails. West stated that he was referring to existing roads and trails.
- Uhalde asked for suggestions on how West would deal with the irresponsible and disrespectful OHV riders. West suggested using education through OHV dealers.

Canfield asked which areas are closed that West would like to see opened. West stated that the Gene Dry lake area and the North Mesquite/Kingston Area of Nevada/Southern California area.

- Maichle stated that he would give some suggestions to West after the meeting. He also suggested that education was probably the best way to inform the people.

9:45 a.m. - Public comment period closed -

9:45 a.m. – Penny Woods presented the Las Vegas Ground Water EIS

- Woods introduced herself and gave a short overview of the three ground water projects she is working on. She noted the Southern Nevada Water Authority Project (SNWA). She added that the Lincoln County water district applied for the other two projects
- She added that Lincoln County & SNWA reached an agreement to provide transport for Lincoln County water.
- Palma stated that a woman named Diana Weighmann will become the department's "Water Czar" and will be stationed in the Las Vegas Field Office. She will be reporting within 30 days.

10:00 a.m. – Gold Butte Strategy and Direction presented by Juan Palma

- Palma reviewed the issues and suggestions that had been given on the Gold Butte tour and the suggestions that were made in order to refine these ideas.
 - Off-road vehicles are increasing in the area and infringing upon many sensitive areas.
 - Maichle stated that his biggest concern were not the roads, but the "spurs" that go off from the roads. To preserve & protect what hasn't already been disturbed.
 - Non-native invasive species are posing hazard to the ecosystem as well as trespass cattle.
- Palma asked for refinement of comments and additional suggestions
- Young asked if routing roads away from sites and having only walking/hiking trails to these sites would alleviate some of the vandalism. Maichle pointed out that some sites need to be accessible for viewing, but added that barricades should be installed to keep people from touching it directly. Parker expressed concern about the physical safety of the site stewards.
- Beck suggested containing travel to existing roads. Moving some roads will work, but not all roads can be moved. She also suggested that the entire area has not been surveyed and this needs to be done so that BLM knows what is actually out there. Documenting the amount of damage also needs to be done. The Site Stewardship program would help in this documentation of where and when. Limiting access to the sites that are suffering needs to be done as soon as possible. Palma stated that access to SNLPMA monies would be possible in round 7.
- Hiatt asked if a patchwork type program would work, or would a broader program starting from the top work better and does the BLM have the funding to do this? Palma stated that a model had been created at Sloan. A parcel of land was sold and the 62 million dollars has been set aside for preservation efforts. Taking that model and applying it at Gold

Butte should work. Hiatt expressed concern about the available water for any land sold at Gold Butte. Mellington asked about the process for setting up the account. Palma stated that some legislative guidance is needed.

- Palma stated two projects one type for Sloan Canyon and the other type at Gold Butte that funding is in place now. Hiatt asked what a level three was. Beck stated that a level three survey is a survey that covers an entire area that is agreed upon between the BLM and the State of Nevada. Palma stated that there is funding available for some of these projects.
- Law Enforcement Ranger Don Miller reported on his patrol efforts in the Gold Butte area. He explained the routes he takes on patrol (vehicle and foot patrol).
- Elise McAllister complimented BLM for hiring Don Miller to patrol the area and praised the partnership between BLM Law Enforcement and the Site Stewardship Program.
- Toomey asked about the number of sites in the site stewardship program. Miller stated he believed it was 30 or more. Site stewards are asked to contact Law Enforcement if they find any vandalism or suspicious individuals.
- Maichle suggested creating a parking area with a blockade at the end that would prevent a vehicle from getting through, but let people, wheelchairs, etc through to the site.
- Palma stated that there are two debates, short term and long term. This list of concerns is short term only. He asked members to decide on the three biggest concerns that need to be addressed this year.
- Hiatt commented on non-native species. He stated that the biggest concern should be keeping non-natives that have not already established themselves. Maichle agreed with non-natives and added controlling motor vehicle access. Steve Parker concurred with controlling motor vehicle access.
- Young added site survey and a vehicle management plan would provide significant information; these would be both long and short term. Signage and limiting access to sensitive sites by providing proper access to these sites would be her two short term issues.
- Baker asked if there is any signage on how to report incidents. Don Miller stated that BLM is in the process of putting up signs and Gail Marrs-Smith commented that the plan is to have signs at each entrance.
- Maichle stated that the single high priority should be getting rid of the invasive species that have not been able to get established before they get out of control
- Beck stated that signage was one the most important things to be done.
- Mellington recommended everyone gets three votes on the issues to decide on what the short term priorities might be.
- Palma stated that, to him, short term is up to 12 months, mid term is 1-2 years, long term is three plus years.

11:05 a.m. - Mellington recessed the meeting for a five minute break.

11:10 a.m. – Mellington reconvened meeting

11:00 a.m. – Conservation Transfer Area (CTA) Status and Update given by Gail Marrs-Smith
Marrs-Smith gave a short history of the CTA and reviewed the work that has been done so far for new members

- She noted that this parcel is *available* for disposal, however, it does not have to be sold.

- Marris-Smith stated that future impacts were more difficult to determine than current impacts.
- Parker asked when the public scoping would start. Marris-Smith stated that it should start within the next month. A finish date cannot be determined at this time. It depends on several factors. Mellington asked what the link is between Utah State and the EIS. Marris-Smith said that these two have to move somewhat simultaneously in the first phase, which will then help the second phase move more quickly. Mellington asked if the outcome of the first phase could be pre-decisional to the EIS. Marris-Smith stated that all input will be of equal value and the decision will be based on all of the information available.
- Hiatt noted the basic issues that have to be included in this process. He pointed out that the smaller the area within the larger urban area the harder it will be to keep this area in its natural state.
- Mellington asked about the “buffer” strip that the Piutes wanted. Marris-Smith stated the area to the North of the wash was all reservation. That area is historically used by the Piutes and they are concerned about the type of encroachment. Mellington stated that dealing with that issue is a whole separate realty action. Taking this on would be taking on more responsibility than is necessary.
- Hiatt noted that it is necessary that this proposal be out in the open so people know everything before they make a decision. Mellington agreed, but added they also need to be aware that they are two totally different issues and the decision needs to be based on the CTA, not this other issue.
- Palma communicated the necessity of having valid reasons for the choosing of each parcel of land for sale. In case of future inquiries there needs to be proper documentation to back up the decision for sale.
- Hiatt commented that the dynamics of washes are very sensitive and how to preserve those dynamics. How the wash will be affected by the changes of the surrounding areas.

12:00 p.m. – RAC Members recessed for lunch

1:19 p.m. – Mellington reconvened the meeting

1:19 p.m. – Open Space Trail Connectivity presented by Dave Carlsen, Rob Mrowka and Alan O’Neil

- Dave Carlsen gave an overview of the Open Space Trail Connectivity program
- Alan O’Neil presented proposed trail open space system areas.
 - Hiatt stated that not everyone is on the same page with this issue. He suggested coming up with a realistic plan and get cooperation from everyone involved. McAllister suggested that the county acquire the land. Mrowka pointed out that initial trail planning went on without involving pertinent individuals. In October they were successful in establishing a pathway on how trails were created and getting the cooperation of all individuals involved.
 - Maichle suggested that planning needs to be going on now not only for what this program has, but other areas that need trails as well.
- Toomey asked about rural preservation zoning. Mrowska stated that zoning does change with the status of the area of that zone. Hiatt noted that these plans were put together in 1990 with disposing of all BLM land in mind. He added that the need for water needs to be

considered in all of these plans. It will become an expectation that the county will provide the water needed for these areas.

- Carlsen asked the RAC to support the BLM's participation in the Clark County planning process. Mellington agreed that this is an important project in the planning process. He asked Palma if he felt the RAC needed to be involved. Palma stated that the RAC could possibly be of assistance through their individual knowledge and from their contact's knowledge as this project moves forward. Mellington stated that the RAC would depend on Palma to let them know when their assistance is needed. Canfield added that it will take strong political will and power to uphold this open space.

2:14 p.m. – Hillerie Patton presented the letter with the comments for the Ely RMP. Members reviewed the letter and voted to accept the letter with minor changes.

2:36 p.m. – Field Manager Reports

- Bill Fisher reviewed the Battle Mt. Field Office Manager's report (see attachment 5)
 - Fisher commented to the RAC that Nye County official's have already started planning for open spaces.
 - Explained that Tonopah Field Station issued a Multiple Use Decision (MUD). The MUD was appealed by NDOW. This MUD zeroed out horses on that management area, but wanted to leave burros. NDOW appealed the decision based on the fact that burros would present a threat to the Bighorn Sheep population.
 - Working on Montezuma decision now. Decision should be out in Fall.
 - Proposed land sales for Beatty & Fish Lake Valley. If the counties support the land sales Tonopah Field Station will go ahead, if counties do not support Tonopah Field Station will not go ahead with sales.
 - Mellington asked if the engineer from Denver had come out to look at Rhyolite. Fisher stated that the engineer has not been out yet.
 - Beck asked what a desert land entry was. If land is agriculturally usable then you can apply for the Desert Land Entry process. This process consists of several steps and several criteria that must be met before someone can apply for this. After 5 years, if they meet the criteria and have completed all of the steps, the land becomes theirs.
- Stephanie Connolly reviewed the Ely Field Office Manager's report (see attachment 6)
 - She passed out "samples" of some of the invasive/noxious weeds with information.
 - Connolly updated the members on some personnel changes within the Ely district. She noted that the Eastern Valley Coalition is a key part, but there is a group of ranchers that are also a key part, Gracian Uhalde being one of them.
 - Fisher asked how Sierra Pacific was going to power their plant. Connolly stated that they are waiting for the process of coal gasification. Hiatt asked if the two power plants are completely separate or if they are related in any way. Connolly stated that they are separate.
 - Fisher brought up the Yucca Mt railroad. Ch 1 & 2 are complete 3 & 4 should be started soon. Connolly mentioned that this is an internal process before it is presented for public review.
- Juan Palma presented the Las Vegas Field Office Manager's report (see attachment 4)

- Palma reviewed some of the 2005 achievements. He predicted another heavy fire season for 2006.
- Palma stated that the LVFO leadership team created a binder that holds all of 2006 projects. The office has R.O.W., EA's legislation, among other things. He mentioned a new V.A. hospital, and a new campus for UNLV.

3:10 p.m. Access into the South McCullah Grazing Allotment Wilderness Area

Hiatt brought up the issue of Cal Baird. Palma stated that he has been assured by the county that they will take over responsibility of this issue.

Palma stated that if the county has not taken any action by this spring, then he would proceed with action against Cal Baird.

3:20 p.m. Guidance on how to run the sub-committee's

Young stated that she would like to know if there is any BLM presence at the sub-committee. How would BLM like to be presented with updates on topics the sub-committee worked on. Palma stated that he would do research and bring it to the next meeting on how other RAC's operate their sub-committees. Young showed concern regarding if meetings should be coordinated with a BLM official for minutes, etc. Palma stated that he would put all of that information together for the next meeting. This topic was tabled until next meeting.

3:25 p.m. –

Review/Approval of the October 21, 2005 Meeting Minutes

Members reviewed and approved with minor changes.

Review/Approval of the November 4, 2005 Meeting Minutes

3:36 p.m. – Adjourn

-Young motioned to adjourn and Hiatt second the motion

- There being no further business, Stephen Mellington recessed the meeting at 3:37 p.m. -

APPROVED BY:

John Hiatt, Vice-Chair

March 23, 2006

Minutes provided by Karen Eller, BLM Tonopah Field Station -