

**Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
August 17 & 18, 2006
El Rancho Hotel
Wells, Nevada**

August 17 - Tour of Spruce Mountain

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

Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Les Hansen	(2) Recreation
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation/ROW
Cyd McMullen	(2) Cultural Resources
Barry Perryman	(3) Academia
Hank Vogler	(1) Federal Grazing Permit

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Mike Brown	Public Affairs Officer, Elko Field Office
Larry Denny	Acting Field Manager, Ely Field Office
Helen Hankins	Field Manager, Elko Field Office
Tamara Hawthorne	Recreation Specialist, Elko Field Office
Dave Pacioretty	Assistant Field Manager, Elko Field Office
Danielle Storey	Archaeologist, Elko Field Office
Stephanie Trujillo	Administrative Assistant, Ely FO

Other Attendees:

Josh Hyde	Public
Gene Kaplan	Public
Peg Kaplan	Public
Tony Wasley	Nevada Department of Wildlife

8:30 a.m. Tour Departed Wells

- Tamara Hawthorne and Danielle served as tour leaders.
- **Stop 1** – Spruce Mountain Trails Kiosk.
- Tamara Hawthorne described the signing program which highlights safety, mine shafts, and cultural features. The Spruce Mountain area is within the Hunting Unit 105 - it is on private and public land. The travel routes are existing routes. Four kiosks will be randomly placed throughout the trail system. Kiosks will contain Tread Lightly material such as, “Play Nice” posters. Reminders will also be posted for visitors information about abandoned mine sites.
- Hank Vogler suggested mentioning livestock on the kiosk signage or on brochures.
- Helen Hankins said that Spruce Mountain is a classic example of a multiple use conflict situation. The Spruce Mountain area has been promoted internationally for recreational opportunities. Elko is one of the top ten places to visit for variety of outdoor recreational

experiences. Elko County Visitor's Authority and Elko County looked at what they could do to diversify the economy and settled on the idea of extreme adventure and outdoor recreation. Familiarization tours have been conducted. Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) is concerned for mule deer winter range and other species.

The dilemma for BLM is how to balance the uses and needs of recreation versus wildlife. The kiosks are the first step in educating and guiding the public. There are no prohibitions on the two-track roads. One of the main reasons the area has peaked more interest is urbanization, neighboring states are becoming more restrictive with recreational use, and there is limited or seasonal use. Elko BLM's practical option is increased management ... we're working on an agreement with Law Enforcement, Elko County, and NDOW.

- Tony Wasley said that NDOW would like to focus use in areas for less impact to resources. Mule deer are funneled to part of the area for wintering. The traditional wintering period is November to December. There are a few antelope and elk are mostly south of the area. The range usage is dependant on the winter (hard or mild). Antler shed hunting has become an issue as people are using motorized vehicles to find and retrieve quicker.

- Tamara Hawthorne discussed ECVA volunteers signing the trails and the extent of existing trails on Spruce Mountain.

- Helen discussed that the Ely Field Office had public input on active/rehabbed roads for the Duck Creek Basin.

- Barry Perryman asked about the count of utilization of the area by the public?

- Danielle Storey responded that they are working on getting traffic counters which will make it simpler. She also said that every time she has been in the area that she has encountered a visitor.

- Helen Hankins noted that Spruce is a heavy mineralized area and there is an increase in exploration due to the increased prices. The area is open to mineral entry; there are more than 150 mining shafts (historic).

- Kevin Lee asked if the majority of mining was for silver.

- Gene Kaplan responded that people initially came looking for silver and gold and found other minerals as well.

- General discussion about the possibility of putting the American Flag on signs that will be posted throughout the trail as means of reducing vandalism.

- Stop 2 - Historic Stamp Mill

- Danielle Storey discussed the remains of the 1872 stamp mill structure (partial rock wall). The site is on public lands and represents one of the best historic interpretation sites on Spruce Mountain.

- Gene Kaplan gave an historical overview of the area in the 19th Century. In 1869 the Wells railhead was completed. The period 1869-1874 saw the start up of mining activity. Ore was hauled in sacks to Wells and later Ely.

- Stop 3 – Black Forest Mine Site

- Danielle Storey discussed the Black Forest Mine site. BLM cannot close or gate shafts if they're on an active mining claim. This area is being used as a camp site; people have used all scrap wood that was lying on the ground and are now stripping wood sections off the historic buildings to use for campfires.

- General discussion of vandalism and possible interpretive signs in the area to inform visitors of the historic buildings. The group also visited the adjacent site "Hummer Hole" which is temporarily closed off. BLM is working on closing it permanently. Fencing has been used for the public's safety. Area is not secure and is still accessible but hindered.

Lunch Break 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

- Stop 4 – West side of Spruce Mountain

- Tony Wasley explained the mule deer migration corridors and areas. The deer funnel through Basco Springs to Spruce Springs. Migration is affected by weather. There hasn't been a lot of recreation on Spruce Mountain in the past and all of a sudden there is a new use and a new neighbor. There are antelope, deer, and elk on Spruce in addition to 35 species of songbirds, 25 species of raptors, and 4 species of bats. The wildlife interests want a "seat at the table." There is Pygmy rabbit habitat - low brush no under story.

- Hank Vogler commented on the sage grouse populations in the 1920s.

- Gene Kaplan talked about the Northeastern Nevada Stewardship Group's efforts working to restore sagebrush habitat.

- Barry Perryman commented on the University of Nevada Reno's studies that show pygmy rabbits are all over. Perryman asked about usage of the area by snowmobiles.

- Tamara Hawthorne said BLM is discouraging snow machining and talked about the season of use. She also discussed that the Spruce Mountain Travel Management and Planning Working Group suggested that use be limited to existing roads and trails ... and that roads to hazardous areas should be closed. If there are impacts to guzzlers, then the roads should be closed. Right now BLM is assessing the recommendations. BLM will write a draft plan and send to partners and the public requesting comment.

- Helen Hankins added that during the land use plan the public will get to review the alternatives.

Tour ended 4:00 p.m.

August 18, 2006 - Business Meeting at the El Rancho

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

Sheri Eklund-Brown	(3) Elected Official
Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Dave Gaskin	(3) State Employee
Les Hansen	(2) Recreation
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation/ROW
Cyd McMullen	(2) Cultural Resources
Barry Perryman	(3) Academia
Hank Vogler	(1) Federal Grazing Permit

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Mike Brown	Public Affairs Officer, Elko Field Office
Cody Coombs	Forester, Ely Field Office
Larry Denny	Acting Field Manager, Ely Field Office
Helen Hankins	Field Manager, Elko Field Office
Tamara Hawthorne	Recreation Specialist, Elko Field Office
Dave Pacioretty	Assistant Field Manager, Elko Field Office
Jerry Smith	Field Manager, Battle Mountain Field Office
Danielle Storey	Archaeologist, Elko Field Office
Stephanie Trujillo	Administrative Assistant, Ely FO

Other Attendees:

Josh Hyde	Public
Gene Kaplan	Public
Peg Kaplan	Public
Judy Overton	Eureka County Dept of Natural Resources
Frank Overton	Public

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

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- Sheri Eklund-Brown emailed corrections to Mike Brown prior to the meeting and gave manual corrections to him as well.

Sheri Eklund-Brown made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. The motion was seconded by Les Hansen. All in favor.

II. SPRUCE MOUNTAIN TOUR DISCUSSION

- Helen Hankins thanked people for participating in the Spruce Mountain Tour. BLM has accepted thoughts and recommendations for management for multiple use of the area and we're in the process of developing recommendations for travel management that will feed

into the land use plan. Hankins asked the RAC members for any other thoughts for cultural, wildlife ... and opened discussion for those who attended the tour on the 17th.

- Cyd McMullen commented that she was impressed with the Black Forest and Jasper sites and was sad about the vandalism. There is a need to educate people about what they are seeing so that they may be less likely to shoot. She is also in favor of the idea of putting the American flag put on the sign which was discussed yesterday during the tour. There is a tendency to hesitate about destruction with this symbol on the signs.

- Kevin Lee discussed the need to stabilize some of the buildings; one has collapsed within the last two years. Lee asked if there can be an advocate for this action.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown suggested SHPO as an advocate.

- Vince Garcia questioned if the trail is there for recreation or historic purposes?

- Helen Hankins responded that the proposal was for recreation to view the historic, so it would be both.

- Vince Garcia added that in his experience the historical part may be overlooked. If BLM signs are used there may be more activity of target practicing.

- Cyd McMullen added that if the public is informed that these structures date from 1912 they may be more respected.

- Barry Perryman suggested there needs to be appropriate firewood cutting areas so people don't rip up the buildings. He added there is a certain amount of people that may do it anyways.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown said if there was a plaque (for public view) they would see that the site has significant value. She will visit with ECVA.

- Les Hansen commented that these (plaques) should express what those folks (miners, etc.) went through; education is the key for responsible use.

- Discussion about using kiosks with interpretive signs.

- Helen Hankins said we could look into that idea but we need to have SHPO and NDOW visit. NDOW has concern for mule deer in this area which includes winter range and is used by migratory birds and small species. They (NDOW) are reluctant for signage because they feel that it would draw more people into the area.

- Mike Brown discussed the possibility of putting up a series of small signs with photos attached to a pedestal instead of large interpretive signing. SHPO looks at not taking away from the historical character of an area. Brown added that the use of the American Flag is good idea.

- Helen Hankins added that NDOW is supportive of protecting the historical resources.

- Kevin Lee mentioned that he had seen interpretation where sites were numbered with a referral to a map to show you where you are on the trail.
- Cyd McMullen said they could also be referred to a website.
- Mike Brown added that these are mainly for the recreationist that just stumbled on to it (trail and structures).
- Vince Garcia asked has NDOW considered reducing the number of firearms (hunting) to reduce the amount of vandal shooting.
- Helen Hankins said no, BLM has asked NDOW to limit the number of tags and they didn't want to.
- Vince Garcia added that education is for those to accept rules; there are always those that do not abide. Garcia discussed his allotments and gates being left open.
- Hank Vogler asked how to distinguish between roads we traveled yesterday and faint two-tracks. The roads that we went on have been periodically maintained, is that what is considered an ATV trail?
- Helen Hankins answered that these are designated different uses.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown said they are trying to keep them on the main roads and discourage other ones from being used.
- Les Hansen said the signage that is up there now and the map, it is a good job when these are numbered with a map - and then you will know where you are. Hansen also said that an ATV trail is 52" wide and two-tracks are different.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown remarked that all those two-tracks are open.
- Hank Vogler discussed that in Duck Creek Basin the team identified the loop roads. If there were four roads they closed three of them (if these roads went to the same destination).
- Les Hansen added some of those roads (in Spruce Mountain) may not be necessary. Some (roads) may just go to an overlook.
- Jerry Smith said a lot of people do not use roads that dead-end. If they're signed dead-end they may be discouraged from using it.
- Les Hansen suggested that the length of the road be put on the sign (i.e. Road Ends in 1 Mile).
- Barry Perryman suggested that something be added to the signage. Not everyone belongs to a club - they are responsible. Possibly using a sign that says

“Stop off-road usage” (similar to stop poaching) put the phone number for reporting violations. Make bumper stickers and hand out to the organized groups.

- Les Hansen said vandalism by people not in groups.

- Barry Perryman added that organized groups are the first line of defense.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown said the signs are a great idea. She suggested adding “You Are Entering a Significant Historic Area with Critical Wildlife Habitat. Please Respect These Areas.” to the signs or kiosks. The ECVA is committed to going out every weekend. Less than 5% of users cause the trouble. We are after those that do vandalize.

- Helen Hankins asked if the group should discuss camping at the Black Forest Mine. “No Camping, Please Camp Elsewhere” signs could be posted. Hankins added that BLM Elko Field Office will work with NDOW; however, they are reluctant for staging areas but it will be worth the time to have the conversation to identify areas.

- Barry Perryman stated that if you don’t establish a proper staging area then one will be established for you.

- Les Hansen agreed - there should be multiple areas, have a gravel parking lot, and having the kiosks state that it is a historical area is a good idea as well.

- Helen Hankins added that she will write up the ideas up and have Mike Brown send out with the minutes. She will schedule a meeting with SHPO and NDOW and will report back at the Tri-RAC in November.

- Les Hansen said that he had one negative comment - there is a lot that we did not see on the tour.

- Helen Hankins stated that the initial work identified 850 miles of road and there could be as many as 1,500 miles from looking at the ortho-quad maps. There are over 100 mine shafts; these are a public safety concern. The State of Nevada is working to fill them in.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked Helen to be part of the meeting with NDOW and SHPO.

- Helen Hankins agreed to have Sheri participate in the meeting.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown also added that Barry is correct that if camping areas are not designated that there will be signs of vandalism.

- Vince Garcia remarked that BLM is always taking lead role and then when things go wrong it is on them, other agencies need to step forward.

- Helen Hankins said that NDOW is in difficult place as a lot of their revenue is through hunting activities which is a conflict. BLM is sympathetic to their mission, no one has brought up the idea of no firearms before, and this is an interesting idea.

- Jerry Smith commented that BLM can restrict them shooting around these areas as it worked in Nye County around Rhyolite. Smith favors putting on the signs "Help Us Save America's History" with a phone number and flag. The idea of America's history brings meaning to it and allows for the public to relate to it personally.

- Les Hansen stated that he is opposed to firearm restrictions but agrees with the idea of designated no shooting areas.

- Helen Hankins will check into the No Shooting in Historical Districts.

III. ELY BIOMASS PROGRAM

- Cody Coombs gave the Ely Biomass discussion and distributed a handout which follows:

Mechanical Treatment of Pinion-Juniper and Distribution of Resulting Biomass

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely District mechanically treats, or thins, pinion pine and juniper trees (pinion-juniper) to reduce fuel-loading and lessen the risk of a catastrophic wildland fire, as well as to improve habitat diversity. Treatments can result in wood chips, or "biomass," that has fulfilled a variety of needs, e.g., landscaping, fuel, and weed control.

- The BLM Ely District in 2004 completed the Mount Wilson Community Guest Ranch Fire Hazard Reduction Project, about 20 miles north of Pioche, Nev. The project was meant to protect nearby Mt. Wilson Community Guest Ranch residents from the effects of a catastrophic wildland fire. The fire hazard reduction project resulted in about 7,300 tons of biomass. The BLM made the biomass available to the public, free-of-charge, for use in landscaping and/or weed control.
- Approximately 5,500 tons were removed under a stewardship contract for chips at Mount Wilson. The BLM Ely District is in the process of making available the remaining estimated 1,800 tons to the White Pine County School District.
- Biomass from a similar project located on the benches adjacent to Ely, Nev., was also made available to the local public.
- Biomass from a separate, but similar project located west of Ely was made available to the White Pine School District for use in the school district's Fuels for Schools program.

The Fuels for Schools biomass boiler pilot project is part of a \$3.4 million energy retrofit designed to save the White Pine County School District \$196,000 a year (after debt is repaid) and will generate a 15 year positive cash flow of \$842,567.

- A significant, integral part of the retrofit was the installation of a biomass boiler that will reduce fuel and heating costs by \$12,000 per year. Consideration of the

boiler was triggered by a “Fuels for Schools” grant that the Nevada Division of Forestry brought to the attention of the school district.

- The innovative pilot project is the first of its kind in Nevada and will be used to host tours and educate students and visitors about alternative fuels and forest health. The biomass project ties forest health, fuel reduction, energy production and education together to create an economically efficient and ecologically sensible heating system.
- To learn more about the entire energy retrofit, please contact Paul Johnson, at the White Pine School District, at (775) 289-4851.

A national priority of the BLM fuels management program is to issue stewardship contracts. The contractor is required to pay a minimum price for the product they choose to utilize when issued a stewardship contract. Revenue generated from products (e.g., biomass) offset the value of the service work (e.g., thinning). The concept is that by selling the product to the contractor, the entire cost for completing the fuels reduction project is reduced. A secondary benefit is that the product is utilized by the local communities.

The BLM Ely Field Office has awarded three stewardship contracts in the last two years, and three are currently out for solicitation. Cost has been the main problem encountered with stewardship projects due to lack of market for the product. The cost for completing fuels reduction projects as stewardship contracts has caused the price to increase due to long transportation distances to a viable market. If a local market were available, the actual cost could be reduced as transportation distances would be shortened. Otherwise, completing fuels reduction projects without “selling” the product would prove to be cheaper.

- Cody Coombs said that mechanical treatment of pinion-juniper and distribution of the resulting biomass is a national priority. The Ely Field Office is working on three stewardship projects - there is no market for pinion-juniper. The school district has a boiler for fuels to schools and they have 10-15 years of chips. BLM still has 200 tons from Mt. Wilson.

- Hank Vogler asked can the power plant be incorporated.

- Cody Coombs said they have approached Sierra Pacific and they are not interested - the BTUs are higher with coal burning.

- Hank Vogler added but they want our water.

- Cody Coombs stated that he can continue to pursue the option, and that he has not yet approached LS Power Company.

- Barry Perryman remarked that it would be good for someone pursue this; they are just blowing you off. Coal is expensive to ship; they need to look at this option more closely,

- Cody Coombs said there is a power plant in Susanville who will take it but cost of transportation of the material would kill us. This stewardship has been set up for three contracts (out for solicitation), goal is to reduce the costs. Coombs added that leaving it on the ground would partly meet his objectives but it does not reduce the fire hazard.
- Barry Perryman asked could they (Sierra Pacific, LS Power) get their BTUs and shipping for what the coal purchase would be?
- Kevin Lee asked about the EIS status for the power plant.
- Les Hansen asked what the BTU on biomass is.
- Barry Perryman said he thinks that coal is 85.
- Hank Vogler also added that we are not asking them to burn total biomass - just a portion. They are impacting our schools, they want our water for cooling, and there are a lot of impacts to us.
- Les Hansen agreed that we should demand a percentage of biomass usage by the power plants; some plants have higher BTUs than others.
- Vince Garcia added that when these meetings or public comments come out we need to submit our concerns as a RAC.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown discussed that the chips are a clean product coming from the west (versus the product coming from the east with infestations), why is this not feasible?
- Cody Coombs answered that the transportation is not feasible.
- Hank Vogler also added that the sheer volume is not feasible.
- Discussion of where the plant is located, discussed possibility of plant located closer to the coal resource, etc.
- Hank Vogler remarked that he is doing a private land project and that all burns areas are not equal - there are a lot of factors that contribute to the differences. He is doing selective cutting on his private land (fence post, Christmas trees, etc) is looking at 800 acres and Cody is talking 4 million acres, it is inconceivable.
- Barry Perryman asked if the commissioners are getting involved.
- Cody Coombs replied that they did approve a guy to come in with pellet log company.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown suggested involving SNWA as they have money.
- Barry Perryman said that this is BLM's best chance (with the power plants) to deal with pinion juniper and to not lose the opportunity.

- Jerry Smith added that it has to be the permitting agency – FERC and the State Regulatory Agency. The power plant is on public land.
- Hank Vogler said that the alternative is a catastrophic fire then we all look like idiots. Cannot micro-manage – instead, macro-management is needed.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown commented that you would think a wood mill would be natural here.
- Barry Perryman referred to a study done in the late 1970s as an experiment concerning a wood product company. It works, but the problem is it is cheaper to get trees somewhere else. There has to be an economic incentive. Perryman stated again that BLM should not allow this opportunity to pass, and encouraged BLM to look into further.
- Helen Hankins asked Cody Coombs and Larry Denny if the RAC could recommend this to the State Director.
- Vince Garcia stated that the selling point is the water issue; everyone wants to benefit from the results.
- Barry Perryman emphasized don't let the opportunity slide by, referred to Yucca Mountain and the amount of funding that we could be receiving.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the amount of electricity created by school.
- Cody Coombs replied that the school's generator is not electric; it is a huge pellet stove that is used for heat. They were using oil and converted to the woodchip generator. Coombs thanked the RAC for their suggestions.

9:45 a.m. Chairman Garcia called for a break.

10:00 a.m. Chairman Garcia called the meeting back to order and announced the Public Comment period is open.

- Les Hansen commented he had attended the ATV Rodeo in Winnemucca.

IV. FIRE UPDATE

Elko Field Office Fire Update:

- Helen Hankins said that since end of April approximately 415,000 acres have burned. Half of the total is the Winters Fire in the northwest part of district north of Battle Mountain. There are two major fires currently - the Charleston Fire in the Mary's River is the largest and an overhead team is assigned. The TP Fire is 6000 acres and is in the northeast corner of the County near the Idaho line. BLM has completed ESR for all but one or two of the fires. We will submit to Washington - we have 21 days to submit the plan. The preliminary figure is \$4 million in rehabilitation costs for those plans submitted. Rehabilitation money is competitive this year because of the early and long fire season. Hankins stated the need to compete effectively.

- Mike Brown gave a size update of 105,000 -107,000 acres. The fire line along Mary's River Road held. There have been no structure losses; the fire was hooked to the south. Crews put in dozer and hand line. Hand crews working all night for structure protection.

- Helen Hankins added that the Charleston Fire has not jumped Mary's River. There was a cow camp that burned; but no residences lost and only one livestock loss known. Livestock are still being threatened.

- Sheri discussed issues for the cooperative agencies regarding EIS documents - they do not reflect that there is benefit to area when it's grazed. She would like to see the benefits included in environmental documents. Fuel reduction should be included in documents. Without livestock grazing fuel loads would become overwhelming. What is BLM doing with allotments that are being shut down? High density allotments should be shared. Is rehabilitation money applied exclusive to riparian areas and then the rest goes to cheat grass?

- Helen Hankins replied no, some permittees lost the majority of their allotments with recent fires. BLM is evaluating options; within Elko District there are allotments that are not permitted which may be able to be used. There are allotments where permittees are not using full preference. Sharing allotments with Battle Mountain these may be an option. Hankins will contact the Forest Service for vacant allotments. Issues include transportation and mixing one permittee's cows with other cows. For the long term BLM recognizes ecosystems evolved with grazing since the 1850s. It is part of what needs to happen and can be explained in documents better. There is a relationship between good livestock management and rate of recovery after a fire. It is a myth if grazed to the ground that it will not burn. BLM needs to look at fuel treatments in Nevada; for example between Winnemucca and Battle Mountain. Cheat grass and fine fuels are allowing for repeat fires. This is even more complicated in Ely with 4 million acres of pinion-juniper.

- Hankins added that if there is one big fire there would be recovery of vegetation; but if two or three fires in a short timeframe, then outcomes are different. The large fire cycle used to be 30 to 50 years, and now it is more often.

- Hankins discussed about the question of how BLM determines what is rehabbed. BLM determines if an area will recover on its own (heat of fire is a factor) or needs help. Look at fire intensity – low, medium, or high. Areas that won't recover without help are treated. All areas are evaluated or treated – not just riparian areas – but uplands as well. The goal is to stabilize the rangeland, why we use a lot of grasses, it works (crested wheat grass) and not just treat special areas.

- Gene Kaplan complimented BLM and said there only so much BLM can do. More sheep grazing is needed because sheep eat vegetation and help manage it. Public support is needed.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown added there are benefits from all types of grazing.

- Vince Garcia asked if there is an incentive for permittees who do not use all their AUMs.

- Helen Hankins answered there is no federal incentive.

- Jerry Smith said there are vacant allotments in Battle Mountain associated with trespass actions. Battle Mountain is setting up a forage reserve. The Ely and Elko offices are looking at the same option (forage reserves). The Nevada Cattleman's Association has suggested a permit/lease to a lessee with a custodial caretaker for 1 million acres and two thirds of the allotment would be part of the lease the other one third would be a forage reserve.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown said there are 20 allotments vacant in Jarbidge. Elko County contracted a socio-economic study with UNR. 40% of all Nevada cattle are in Elko County. Elko County would like this study included in all EIS's as an appendix ... and it will help counter Western Watershed arguments. The study will be completed and given to BLM by the end of October.

Battle Mountain Fire Update:

- Jerry Smith reported that in Battle Mountain there have been 43 fires to date for 35,000 acres. There have been seven ESR plans completed – five for the Northeastern RAC area and two for the Mojave Southern RAC areas. Reoccurrence of cheat grass is a problem. BLM is looking at using Plateau chemical to spray for cheat grass and then reseed.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown commented that the White Pine County lands bill has an addendum for Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition funding from SNPLMA for restoration.

- Jerry Smith said there are several amendments in the bill for other purposes.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown said BLM needs more funding

Ely Field Office Fire Update

- Larry Denny distributed the following handout:

FIRE AND FUELS UPDATE
BLM ELY FIELD OFFICE
August 18, 2006

- Wildfire activity was constant during the latter part of June and through July. Normally, fire activity occurs in surges; a large group of fires are ignited followed by a break in activity, which is then followed by another large group of fires. This year, wildfire activity was constant for nearly six weeks.
- Wildfires have burned approximately 125,000 acres in the Ely District this year.
 - Most of the fire activity has occurred in Lincoln County within low desert (black sagebrush, salt desert) and Mojave vegetation types.
- Six wildfires, totaling approximately 3,289 acres have been managed as wildland fire use for resource benefit.

- Largest wildland fire use has been the Lusetti Fire, located approximately 8 miles north of Ely in the Egan Mountain Range just west of Basset Lake. The Lusetti Fire burned approximately 2,785 acres of Wyoming sagebrush, pinion, juniper, mahogany, and white fir. The majority of vegetation burned was pinion, juniper and sagebrush.
- Initial attack has been slow for the past two weeks as a high pressure system has been in place preventing dry lightning storms.
- Monsoonal flow is expected to begin by the end of August, which should decrease initial attack activity.
- We are currently supporting other Field Offices' fire suppression efforts.
- Three prescribed burns planned for this year:
 - Marking Corral (Joint Fire Science; 1,500 acres)
 - North Spring Valley (4,500 acres)
 - Christmas Tree Wash (90 acres)
- Currently in National Preparedness Level 5, so all prescribed burning must be approved by the National Multi Agency Coordination Group.
- Marking Corral is beginning August 18, 2006 and is scheduled to last through the next three weeks.
- North Spring Valley is scheduled to begin as soon as possible, if approved.
- Christmas Tree Wash will also begin within the next two weeks.
- Other Fuels Projects Include (within RAC boundary):
 - Williams Creek and White River Sagebrush (Dixie harrow, mowing, and drill seeding)
 - Ward Mountain Stewardship (thinning)
 - Cherry Creek Herbicide Treatment
 - Thirty Mile, Cold Springs and 2006 Ward Mountain Stewardship

- Larry Denny said there are field trips that are set up for some of the burned areas through the ESR program.

- Helen Hankins added that BLM Elko Office held a meeting last Friday with permittees and identified areas for field trips in the Elko District to discuss rehabilitation.

- Barry Perryman stated that there are others besides the Western Watershed Coalition who objected to the new grazing regulations.

- Discussion about the new grazing regulations and provisions.

- Barry Perryman said it is getting to the point where resource specialists make a decision and the judge decides if they can do it. Perryman added that in planning documents including statements in alternatives about the use of livestock for fuels reduction – is a

very complex issue. UNR wants to do a fuels reduction experiment at the Gunn Ranch where eat cheat grass in the fall. Using livestock for fuels reduction is not a panacea. There are not enough animals in the United States to take off the fuels in Nevada. He also said that he would like to see a PBS documentary on how complex this issue is.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown noted that when firefighters got to an area where there was controlled grazing, it was easier to get control of the fire.

- Helen Hankins commented that the situation we face with fuels and fire suppression is different than in the 1960s - cheat grass was less then than it is now.

- Jerry commented on the comment that "if you get ahead of the fire then you can put it out." Smith added that he has seen fires blow up - fire goes where it wants. He offered to have a fire behavior specialist come and talk to the RAC.

- Helen Hankins stated that we are in transition - the ecology and burning effects are different. There have been vegetation changes.

- Hank Vogler added you can put animals out there but this does not guarantee under the right conditions that it will not burn. There needs to be a designated area for sheep to go through to prevent structures being threatened.

V. GRAZING PERMIT RENEWAL UPDATES

- Jerry Smith said they have issued decisions. Battle Mountain will comply by Fiscal Year 2009. A strategy is in place; they will meet with permittees, renew agreements, and collecting monitoring data.

- Larry Denny provided the following information:

- The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Ely Field Office is preparing Environmental Assessments (EA) on fifteen (15) term-permit renewals.
- The BLM Ely Field Office is scheduled in fiscal year 2007 to sign the Decision of Record/Finding of No Significant Impact (DR/FONSI) for the fifteen term-permit renewals, including six (6) that were scheduled for completion in FY 2006.
- The fifteen term-permit renewals scheduled for completion in FY 2007 are:
 1. Bastian Creek, Negro Creek and Cleveland Ranch allotments
 2. Becky Springs Allotment
 3. Bennett Creek Allotment
 4. Duckwater Allotment (Currant Ranch)
 5. Forest Moon Allotment
 6. Georgetown Ranch Allotment
 7. Heusser Mountain Allotment
 8. Mallory Springs Allotment
 9. North Chokecherry Allotment
 10. North Steptoe Allotment

11. Sand Springs Allotment
12. School House Spring Allotment
13. Second Creek Allotment
14. Tom Plain/McQueen Flat allotments
15. Willard Creek Allotment

- The BLM has been directed by fiscal year 2009 to have fully processed all term-permit renewals.
- The BLM Ely Field Office is pursuing completion of the Ely Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (Ely RMP/EIS).
- The BLM Ely Field Office staff is organizing comments received from the public and preparing responses and/or changes to the Ely RMP/EIS.
- A Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement is planned for release in fiscal year 2007.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked what the criteria for completion in 2009 are. How can some be excluded from NEPA?

- Helen Hankins answered the regulations have three choices in Interior – small and insignificant with Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), Environmental Assessments, and Environmental Impact Statements. For permit renewals in the Department of Interior – we will use Categorical Exclusion (CX) if meeting rangeland health standards set by the RACs and don't have to do NEPA. The general threshold of EIS versus EA depends on level of public controversy and significant impacts on the environment. Individual permit renewals usually are not controversial or significant. Elko BLM is combining EAs where possible.

- Hankins added for the Elko grazing renewal report - the same as last year with 20-25 complete in October 2006 and a few more next year. We will be looking at rehabilitation on the recently burned areas.

- Sheri asked about the affected allotments for renewal where Western Watersheds had won a decision.

- Helen Hankins stated that it was challenging multi-use.

- Jerry Smith added that cooperative monitoring is also used in evaluations.

- Hank Vogler commented that he uses 26 Ely allotments, if used properly it works.

- Helen Hankins said that Winnemucca is looking at an EIS for permit renewals through the RMP EIS.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the minimum amount of time to close allotments after a fire.

- Helen Hankins responded that in Elko is based on vegetation condition. For an estimated time the rule of thumb is two grazing seasons or meet objectives.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked what if permittee helped (watering, etc.) for quicker timeframe of recovery.
- Helen Hankins said that there is not a lot that can be done other than watering.
- Jerry Smith added we have ranchers that go into burned areas and pre-seed the areas for a better sustainability. Smith also discussed the use of chemical Plateau. They are experimenting with Plateau, but it can only be used on 5 acres a year; we are hoping for the Record of Decision (for using the chemical) to be completed.
- Discussion about weeds, treatment, and fire rehabilitation.

VI. MINING UPDATE

- The Mining Update was given by Dave Gaskin.
- Dave Gaskin said mining in the state is in a period of transition – Newmont has reorganized, the Barrick take over of Placer Dome, and the Nevada State Office is replacing Del Fortner. Things are working well with BLM Field Offices. The reclamation cost standard model will be completed the end of September and it also is being transferred for use in other countries. In the legal decision arena – there is a change which limits parties who have standing in appeals – Great Basin Mine Watch does not have standing. Helen Hankins got a good decision for water and reclamation.
- Helen Hankins added that cumulative impacts are be reconsidered by 9th Circuit Court. The BLM Washington Office agreed to ask for the reconsideration. Issue- if you did not raise an issue you could still take someone else's issue and raise it, it is inconsistent with NEPA. The risk (if pursued) is that we may lose and fees may be higher.
- Dave Gaskin added that several decisions on the Clean Water Act incorporated by the state could affect mining permits.
- Helen Hankins said with prices of metals up we are seeing more exploration but also proportionately more problems (non-compliance) - all related to the increased exploration. Companies are working with BLM.
- Discussion about tax revenues from minerals.
- Judy Overton said in Eureka County they're dealing with this issue now.

VII. FIELD MANAGERS' AND DISTRICT RANGERS' REPORTS

- Larry Denny went over changes from the report that was mailed out ahead of time.

- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) - if comments were supposed to be made. This was handed out to the RAC members at the last meeting.
- Hank Vogler discussed the Lost Ox Trail (Ely Field Office) there is land owner concern. NDOW is concerned for habitat and the public are not receiving public notices. They are put in the paper but there is only one printing a week (Friday).
- Sheri Eklund-Brown asked why meetings can't be posted.
- Mike Brown discussed the process of having them published in the Federal Register.
- Discussion about parts of the White Pine bill that were rescinded; Sheri Eklund-Brown will provide comments to Mike Brown.
- Kevin Lee discussed the hikers that were trapped in Lamoille Canyon. He was not notified. Lee discussed the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Carson City.
- Sheri asked do we (Elko County) have to have an emergency declared to use NDOT equipment (fires, etc).
- Kevin Lee said that requests have to be made thru EOC (Carson Office).
- Helen Hankins discussed training for fires for ranchers and possibly others.
- Sheri Eklund-Brown added that Elko County is looking at training their staff, would like them to be knowledgeable and safe.

Sheri Eklund-Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting. Hank Vogler seconded the motion. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Date Approved:

Approved by:

Minutes by Stephanie Trujillo and Mike Brown