

Meeting Minutes

Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council June 28 & 29, 2006

BLM Winnemucca Field Office Winnemucca, Nevada

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I. RAC Attendance and Welcome

9:07 a.m., Wednesday, June 28, 2006 – Meeting Called to Order by Vice Chairman Trippet with the following members of the RAC present.

SIERRA FRONT – NORTHWESTERN GREAT BASIN RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Council Member	Resource/Expertise	Wednesday June 28	Thursday June 29
John Gebhardt – Chair	State Agency		
Larie Trippet – Vice Chair	Public-At-Large	X	
Laura S. Crane	Environmental	X	X
John E. Dicks	Recreation	X	
Rochanne Downs	Native Americans	X	
James Eidel	Wildlife	X	X
John Falen	Nevada Cattlemen	X	X
Jerry Hepworth	Energy/Minerals		
Patricia Herzog	Elected Official	X	X
John Mudge	Mining		
Ernest Paine	Livestock	X	
William Roullier	Transportation/ROW	X	
Vernon Schulze	Wild Horses	X	X
Sherm Swanson	Academic	X	X
D. Craig Young	Archeology		

BLM staff present: Don Hicks, Field Manager Carson City Field Office (CCFO); Gail Givens, Field Manager, Winnemucca Field Office (WFO); Mark Struble, Public Affairs Officer, CCFO; Jamie Thompson, Public Affairs Officer, WFO; Bob Edwards, Supervisory Cultural, Lands, Realty, WFO; Craig Drake, Acting Assistant Field Manager, Non Renewable Resources, WFO; Mark Ennes, Archaeologist, WFO; Gerald Gulley, Outdoor Recreation Planner, WFO; Joey Carmosino, Outdoor Recreation Planner, WFO; Scott Clarke, Rangeland Management Specialist, WFO; Mike Whalen, Fire Management Specialist, WFO; Nancy Thompson, Secretary, WFO.

Public present: Jose Noriega, Ranger, Santa Rosa Ranger District, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest; Bill Bennett, Sierra Pacific Power; Dr. Lee Manske, North Dakota State University; Jim Christison, WFO range permittee; Joel Diamond, Utah State doctoral student; UNR students; Representatives of Resource Concepts; Jan Shade, Wildfire Support Group; Gary McCuin, Nevada Department of Agriculture; Brad Schultz, Humboldt County Extension Service; Will Fry, WFO range permittee; Susan Hess.

II. Summary of Motions

MOVED – by John Dicks that the RAC accept the State Director’s recommendation to create a recreational subcommittee with the special purpose of advising the RAC concerning establishing or changing

recreation fees, the subcommittee to consist of one to three members from each Nevada RAC under the auspices of the Interagency Enhancement Act and the agreement between the BLM and the US Forest Service.

SECOND – Sherm Swanson

DISCUSSION – Gail Givens commented that the Forest Service does not have RACs so they will be ex-officio members of the Recreation RACs and will present issues they would like discussed.

APPROVED – by acclamation.

MOVED – by Sherm Swanson that the RAC subgroup be further recommended to discuss other recreation issues related to their principle topic such as carrying capacity and other issues related to the management of recreation areas should other issues that they address result in recommendations to the agencies, so that any of those additional issues could be brought back to the BLM and the Forest Service.

SECOND – Laura Crane

DISCUSSION – (See topic VIII, Establishment of Recreation RAC in Nevada.)

APPROVED – by acclamation.

III. Summary of Action Assignments

1. BLM Carson City Field Office was asked by Vern Schulze to provide him with the cost per day to keep a horse at the Snow's holding facility.
2. BLM Winnemucca Field Office was asked by Patti Herzog to supply the group with a list of who is represented on the RAC NCA Implementation Subgroup.

IV. Minutes from the Meeting in Carson City, Nevada, March 2, 2006

MOVED – by John Dicks to approve the minutes as written.

SECOND – by John Falen.

DISCUSSION – Bill Roullier asked for a clarification of the chart of members present on page 2 to reflect that he was not present at the meeting.

APPROVED – by acclamation with the above mentioned clarification.

V. Field Manager Reports

The field managers' reports were distributed to the RAC members for their review before the meeting. Don Hicks and Gail Givens briefly reviewed the reports and entertained questions.

A. Carson City Field Manager Don Hicks' Report

Don told the RAC members that there is a lot of fire in Carson City and adjacent areas. A complex has formed with one Type 1 team called in. Elayn Briggs is acting agency administrator for Don while he is at the RAC meeting. The next few days will continue to be critical. Fire season will not even begin until Wednesday of this week. The Mound House fire is 1,480 acres. BLM expects a busy fire season.

Fuels treatment projects are all completed. CCFO staff is planning next year's projects.

The Pilot-Table Mtn gather will be completed in the next few weeks. It will take CCFO to Appropriate Management Level (AML).

Vern Schulze commented to Don that it is great that the Carson City Field Office has gathered in a herd area and gotten to AML. What is the cost per day to keep horses at the Snow's holding facility? Don answered that he wasn't sure but he would get the information for him.

Staff continues to work on range permit renewals, 13-15 this year. As of Monday, June 26 Don had signed 7 or 8 decisions. CCFO is looking at Standards & Guidelines on the renewals. Staff is trying to get at least a year ahead in monitoring for the renewals for next year. The ones being issued now are the result of last year's monitoring.

Vern Schulze asked if the CCFO has a priority for monitoring for permit renewals. Don answered yes, monitoring for permit renewals is a priority. Vern commented that some areas are already subject to poor monitoring. He said he would like to see those areas made a priority. John Falen commented that BLM can renew the permits without doing any of the above resulting in a fully processed permit. If there is a major action or change on the permit you have to look at it. Even then you can't hold up the rancher's permit. He continued that it bothers him to see permit renewal monitoring put as a priority at the expense of other range projects. He said that he met with the State Director about this issue. He also commented that all the field offices are not doing things in the same way. Gail Givens commented BLM can renew a permit without doing any of the above if there is basically no change to the permittee's operation. In Winnemucca a goodly part of the permits are going to require changes. Jim Eidel commented that if you need to know there's no change to renew the permit, then you have to do the field work to know that. Gail commented to John that the WFO is following the current guidance from our State Office. We haven't seen any guidance come out as a result of your meeting with the State Director. John said he would follow-up. Sherm Swanson asked if there is a requirement for all grazing allotment paper work to be NEPA sufficient by a certain time. John commented by 2008. Gail commented that all permits that need to be renewed must be renewed within that time frame.

CCFO Energy Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) administrative draft was prepared in March. Staff ran into a few snags with their assessment. Seventy-five geothermal leases have been sitting on the shelf for five years

waiting to be processed. With the energy law passed in 2005 CCFO had to set this EIS aside to complete the leases by October 1, 2006. Consultation was necessary with all the Tribes in the field office on all the leases. Leases are good for 10 years. This is the first step in a three or four step process. John Dicks asked if proponents get the lease and then sit on it. Gail answered that happens a lot.

Some management changes have been made on the Pine Nut Plan. BLM held meetings last week with the OHV community. The draft should be published by September 30.

No problems came forward with the Alpine County Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment.

The Denton Rawhide sale will probably be ready this fall.

From what Don can tell things are moving along pretty well on the Yerington Mine. The CCFO is coordinating site security only. Other coordination responsibilities are being handled by the BLM Nevada State Office.

BLM is working with Douglas County which is continuing to pursue State Question 1 funding in cooperation with other partners to assist with future management of the Ruhenstroth Vehicle Restrictions area and the Pine Nut Trails Association on language for signs as well as placement and monitoring of route signs. Don showed a map of travel routes to the group.

BLM has collected approximately \$322,000 in user fees at Sand Mountain this year already. The draft Conservation Strategy Plan has moved forward with the help of Rochanne Downs and many others. The Churchill County Commission approved it last week. The City of Fallon still has to look at it, probably next week. Then BLM will have a public signing of the document.

John Dicks asked if the big gate at Hangman's Pass is locked and if it is, why? He said he knows there is BLM land beyond the gate. Don said he doesn't know but he could find out before the meeting ended.

B. Winnemucca Field Manager Gail Given's Report

Gail Givens told the RAC that the cheat grass project information they had requested is still in raw form. It will be discussed tomorrow at the field trip if all the players are available. Some are at fires.

There is not much update on cooperative monitoring. The Battle Mountain District was going to have a pilot project. It was moving quite slowly and has now stopped because there is a molybdenum mine within the allotment. The mine project is in negotiations to buy out the permittee.

The WFO is very close to district-wide AML on wild horses and burros.

Land sales should all happen before the end of the calendar year. Surveyors have been pulled off the survey for land near Winnemucca to work on a major crime scene in another district.

WFO has authorized test wells for the Aqua Trac proposal. Several wells have been blown up by vandals. The NEPA document will be an EIS at the very least because of being such a sensitive issue with the public. John Dicks commented that Gail used the word “vandal.” He asked if the blowing up of the wells seemed to be motivated by people who didn’t want the proposal to happen. Gail answered that is what it appears to be. “Saboteur” would be a better term.

The fire situation as of the report Gail received 45 minutes before the meeting was fourteen fires since last Friday burning 34,000 acres. More lightning was predicted for June 28 and 29. Quite a few resources have been brought in including three Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) and three Type 3 teams. Several of the fires are contained or controlled. The 3,600-acre Sage Fire out in the flats toward Porter Springs is contained. There is currently activity near Moonlight Mine and Horse Creek Ranch. There has been a lot of support from the volunteer fire department. The three fires in the McDermitt area are being handled by the Vale, Oregon district. Elko is in pretty bad shape right now. We could be in a situation this summer where our regular work could suffer. If people are in danger, that comes first.

The Fire Prevention Team is working around the state. They spend time in a concerted effort at prevention by disseminating information in specific communities.

Geothermal lease applications that have been around for a while are being completed.

A lot of minerals activities are going on, but Gail commented that with the increases in gold prices you would think we would have been inundated with work and haven’t been.

Gail told the group that he attended the Annual Kids’ Fishing Day. It was quite an experience.

Jim Eidel asked Gail if he could explain the lack of funds for the sage-grouse satellite telemetry project. Gail told him he would find out before the end of the meeting. Jamie Thompson commented that it was a matter of prioritizing limited funds in the WFO wildlife program.

About 18 rangeland permits are being completed this fiscal year.

The Hot Springs Peak Allotment Hearing is in its third week in Winnemucca. A tremendous amount of funding is spent on these hearings.

The Winnemucca RMP is continuing to move along on schedule. A lot of meetings have been held with BLM agency cooperators and the RAC subcommittee. A lot of people have put in a lot of time.

Nevada Passage taped several segments in Winnemucca in May. They will be on TV later in the year.

The Lovelock Cave celebration went well. It was a challenge with the main road to the cave washed out, but BLM was able to find an alternate route.

The Burning Man permit process is in the appeal period. The only group we think would appeal is the proponent because of some stipulations they're not too pleased with.

WFO is trying to get the dispatch staff positions filled.

Ernie Paine asked how BLM prioritizes the gather of horses outside of the Herd Management Areas (HMAs). He asked if BLM is getting any cooperation from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Gail told him we just gathered and zeroed out burros in the north Fernley area this year. He said he didn't have the answer. The priorities are divided up according to how much the districts can do. Don Hicks commented that he can't answer that question either. He told the group the BLM state wild horse and burro coordinator talks with the wild horse folks in the districts to find out where BLM is having problems. Jose Noriega told the group he doesn't deal with horses in his ranger district, but in the Ely district if horses cross the boundaries the BLM gathers them and the Forest Service goes along with it.

Jim Eidel asked what the question is with the Hot Springs Peak Hearing. Gail told him that the Final Multiple Use Decision (FMUD) increased the numbers by 35 percent. The range consultant for the permittee said it should be more like 400-500 percent. Our thought is that there is not a lot of basis to their argument.

John Dicks commented that he had not made up his mind about global warming or water in Nevada, but he suggested to Gail to have something about water in the Winnemucca RMP like there is about air quality. He continued that the price of gold went up, but maybe the differential in fuel and such went up also. Maybe that is the answer.

Patti Herzog extended kudos to Bob Edwards, WFO supervisory cultural, lands and realty, for his work on the input for the affordable housing tour. She commented that BLM also had involvement in the sustainable development workshop.

John Falen extended kudos to Jeff Johnson, WFO RMP lead, for a really good job of chairing [leading] the Winnemucca RMP subgroup and getting everyone's thoughts down. He commented that there are a lot of [agency] cooperators. What we have is a cat and mouse game going on. A lot of them [the cooperators] are meeting separately with the BLM. At some point in time we're going to have to meet together and get some of these differences worked out. Gail answered that some of this has happened because

some of the agencies came on late. Sherm Swanson commented that the division that John is talking about is not a matter of intent but a matter of ability simply to get it done at this time. Gail told the group he has really been pushing to keep going with the RMP. That is how this got started. At the point some cooperators came in we didn't have a choice. John commented that the point he wanted to make is that the process is really working.

Jim Eidel commented that Jeff Johnson has been very good about sending out the input to the RMP. He suggested that John can ask for the input from other groups if he wants to.

John Dicks commented that in terms of the cat and mouse that John was referring to, a federal official told him that in reference to the Pine Nuts Plan, meeting with some of the entities separately was a requirement of federal law. Gail commented that the only thing he could think of that is a requirement of federal law is consultation with the Native American Tribes. John continued that he thinks particularly Douglas County has a different idea about development than the BLM does. Don Hicks commented that the particular issue with Douglas County is consistency with its master plan. When the BLM does planning efforts we try to be consistent with the county master plans. John continued that he sees a real collision with what was explained to him two years ago and what was explained to him just now.

VI. Black Rock NCA Implementation Subgroup

Gail Givens told the RAC that he believes that even though they had created a subgroup for the NCA and its plan, then subsequently an implementation subgroup, the implementation subgroup may only have a few RAC members on it. Jim Eidel and Craig Young are members of the group. The issue then becomes does the RAC still want to have an NCA implementation subgroup and how will that group move forward. If not, that group will continue to work with BLM staff but not as a RAC subgroup.

Patti Herzog asked who is represented on the group. Jamie Thompson replied that he can find that information and mail it to the RAC members. Gail continued that the subgroup has not been reporting to the RAC. Jim Eidel commented that he wants to continue the group. He and Craig can stay with them.

Larie Trippet commented that the group exists. The RAC either changes it or makes a motion to disband it.

Jim Eidel commented that the subgroup has taken two field trips, looking at the problems on the playa and at Soldier Meadows. They have looked at signage. Craig is very involved.

Jamie Thompson commented that the subgroups don't necessarily have to make a report at the first RAC meeting following a subgroup meeting or field trip, but should definitely do so the very next time a representative of the chair of the subgroup is available at a regular RAC meeting.

Mark Struble commented that the RAC needs to discuss the report and act on its recommendations.

Jamie Thompson added that the RAC's oversight of its subgroups needs to be a much more formal reporting and approving process than it has been.

Jim Eidel told the group that there would not be a report from that subgroup at this meeting because he was not at the last subgroup meeting and Craig Young is not present.

Gail Givens commented that he would prefer that the group continue as a subgroup of the RAC. If not, BLM could be vulnerable under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

Bill Roullier suggested that as the next agendas are crafted, a "subgroup report" item needs to be put on it with an asterisk indicating that some RAC action needs to be taken on the report, and the reporting person(s) should be notified that they have to give a report.

Larie Trippet commented that his understanding is that the subgroup advises the RAC and the RAC advises BLM. The subgroup cannot directly advise BLM.

Sherm Swanson commented that the vast majority of the time the process of the discussion provides the action. If it is important enough to get recorded in the RAC minutes, it is important enough to be acted on by the RAC.

Jim Eidel said he would discuss this information with Craig Young and make sure someone comes to the RAC.

Vice Chair Trippet told the group that it seemed to have reached consensus that the subgroup would be left as is, but that the discussion had been valuable in having put some emphasis on reporting.

VII. RAC Subcommittee Reports

A. *Winnemucca RMP*

Sherm Swanson reported to the RAC that the Winnemucca RMP is ongoing. Mostly the cooperating agencies and the RAC subgroup are working their way through the matrix. Agreement comes through consensus. The consensus is captured in the alternatives.

B. *Black Rock NCA Implementation Report*

There was no one present who had attended the last NCA Implementation subgroup meeting. (NOTE: See discussion above, topic VI, Black Rock NCA Implementation Subgroup.)

John Dicks commented, in reference to an article in the *New York Times* that he circulated to the RAC and Gail Givens and Don Hicks, that the mining industry is removing subterranean waters and putting them in ponds. Then the water is evaporating.

John Falen commented that he thinks the transfers of water that are going to places like Las Vegas are morally wrong. "I don't think we have the moral right to drill that deep and transfer water to other places," he said. He told the group that somehow people have to take actions against that, that we can't continue to deplete these underground aquifers.

Sherm Swanson commented that he thinks a lot of that is implemented by state water law, not by BLM. He told the RAC he didn't think either of these issues is something that should be addressed in the Winnemucca RMP. Maybe it's a subject to take up at a subgroup meeting.

Jim Eidel commented that the inter-basin transfers are irreversible transfers. He told the group that he hasn't seen the states address this type of issue. The states say they will turn off the wells, but they don't have the environmental expertise to know when to turn them off. He said he would endorse the RAC really looking at the mercury issue and the Elko issue of that part of the water that would transfer to another area.

Patti Herzog asked if they say that in the RMP water should be its own alternative. She continued that water had been brought up at the subgroup meetings, but not inter-basin transfers. Gail Givens answered that he didn't think the inter-basin transfer issue was an RMP issue. Don Hicks commented that he had just signed two decisions for inter-basin transfer rights-of-way (ROWs). The position of the agency has been if the proponent has an adjudicated water right and permission from the state BLM has the obligation to approve a ROW and the trench. That is the only obligation we have. The water rights rest with the State.

John Dicks commented if we can deal with air we can deal with water. Larie Trippet commented that the issue is that there is a certain body of law surrounding water that does not exist with air or other things being dealt with in the RMP. He said he thinks the RAC has the heterogeneous group to discuss this issue and they have a person who manages a big piece of land. Gail Givens commented that he thinks water is discussed *ad nauseam* in the RMP within other issues, but inter-basin transfer of water is something that BLM cannot deal with except as it relates to ROWs.

Laura Crane asked whether, when applications are made for ground water for an inter-basin transfer, BLM looks at how that could impact the springs BLM manages. Don Hicks answered that recently BLM has protested a lot a water transfers. We file the appropriate paperwork with the state. Gail Givens added, or we protest when we're unsure whether there will be an impact.

Jim Eidel commented that there are two places that the RAC can comment – when there is a required EIS for an inter-basin transfer we can look at the impacts, and when it affects a BLM spring.

VIII. Establishment of Recreation RAC in Nevada

Don Hicks told the RAC that establishing a Recreation RAC in Nevada will enhance the ability of BLM as an agency to look at a place where we want to change fees or look at establishing fees. The Recreation RAC would look at and approve fees. BLM can establish a statewide Recreation RAC, or as our state director and the US Forest Service (USFS) regional forester are recommending we can establish a group from our regional RACs. The question before the group is: would it be a good idea to have a group established from this RAC and the other [Nevada] RACs, two or three members from each RAC. Don continued that he would like to see a workload prior to the beginning of the recreation season. A lot of the work of the Recreation RAC members could be done through emails.

Rochanne Downs commented that it is a good idea to make up the group from the RACs. We also need to look at holding capacities for some of these recreation areas.

Larie Trippet commented that the only role this group would have is to set fees and to say how much the fees should be.

Don commented that when the proposal comes up the subjects Rochanne is talking about would be part of the BLM information presented as part of the discussion.

Vern Schulze asked if the RAC was to include this responsibility within the existing RAC would the members have more control over the discussion of carrying capacities. Larie Trippet told him no.

Sherm Swanson commented that when you have a multi-interest group forming about recreation they will have a voice about more than just fees. The agencies should listen to that voice. The power of the idea of bringing people together for a discussion with the agencies will cause discussion about these other things.

Vern Schulze commented you have the Department of Agriculture involved [through the USFS participation]. We still need some agriculture input.

MOVED – by John Dicks that the RAC accept the State Director’s recommendation that this RAC create a recreational subcommittee with the special purpose of advising the RAC concerning establishing or changing recreation fees, the subcommittee to consist of one to three members from each Nevada RAC under the auspices of the Interagency Enhancement Act and the agreement between the BLM and the USFS.

SECOND – Sherm Swanson

DISCUSSION – Gail Givens commented that the Forest Service does not have RACs so they will be ex-officio members of the Recreation RACs and will present issues they would like discussed.

APPROVED – by acclamation.

MOVED – by Sherm Swanson that the RAC subgroup be further recommended to discuss other recreation issues related to their principle topic such as carrying capacity and other issues related to the management of recreation areas should other issues that they address result in recommendations to the agencies, so that any of those additional issues could be brought back to the BLM and the Forest Service.

SECOND – Laura Crane

DISCUSSION –

APPROVED – by acclamation.

IX. Tour of Water Canyon Recreation Area

RAC members were taken on a tour of Water Canyon Recreation Area south of Winnemucca at the base of the Sonoma Mountain Range.

The first stop was a pull-off next to the creek to view one of the improved sites.

The second stop was a pull-off and camping area. Joey Carmosino told the RAC that Water Canyon will be part of a special recreation management area called a zone under the Winnemucca RMP. The concept of zones was discussed at the last meeting of the RAC RMP subgroup and people began to understand the concept. The proposal is in two of three proposed RMP alternatives. The BLM has the support of most of the RAC subgroup members and most of the public BLM has met with.

Water Canyon has been a gathering spot for Winnemucca residents since the 19th century. It is the coolest spot in the area during summer. In the past, the creek was the primary source of water for the town. The canyon is still popular today because of its proximity to town. It is also a major access area to the Sonoma Range for hunters. Livestock have been kept out of the recreation area for about five years.

Gerald Gulley told the group that one of the major issues is getting people coming to recreate in the area not to put graffiti on the rocks or leave trash. Trash alerts BLM to “party patch” areas.

BLM plans to have a campground host at Water Canyon during the season. The host site will have an electric hook-up.

The Humboldt County Sheriff will increase patrols in the recreation area next fiscal year (BLM fiscal year 2007 begins October 1, 2006) when BLM will be able to supply some funding.

About 15,000 vehicles travel into Water Canyon each year.

Mark Ennes, Water Canyon Project Lead, told the group that the Water Canyon Plan has gone through the entire NEPA process. The Plan calls for:

- Withdrawing minerals. The process is in the segregation phase now.
- Improving the road by creating 20-foot site distances, straightening blind curves and leveling knolls.
- Developing 10 camp sites from sites that are already there. Fill will be used to bring half of the sites to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Four inches of aggregate will be put on the parking spots. There is no rule limiting visitation to day use only. Most sites will have mixed use. Overnight camping is restricted to three consecutive nights.
- Vault toilets will be installed at some of the sites, 100 feet or more from the water. BLM will monitor the effects of the vaults on water quality.
- There will be large kiosks near the cattle guard at the entrance to the area with maps and Leave No Trace information. Mark showed the group a copy of the Water Canyon brochure that was developed by BLM and partially funded through a grant by BLM to the Nevada Outdoor School.
- BLM will set up more cooperative agreements for Water Canyon. There is one now that covers law enforcement.

Emphasis in Water Canyon will be on natural and cultural resources.

BLM is constructing a hiking trail in the canyon. The first part will be moderately accessible by ADA standards with a 7% grade. Eight interpretive stops will provide visitors with a self-guided tour on the middle part of the trail. This part of the trail will not be wheelchair accessible. The Bluff Trail has also been constructed, is 1,000 feet in length and provides overlooks of Winnemucca. Mark took the RAC members for a walk the Bluff Trail.

All of the trails are being built with volunteers and support from Nevada Division of Forestry prison crews. There is no money available from BLM.

Fuels are dense in the canyon. BLM will remove up to 40% of the dead and down fuels. Jim Eidel commented that this type of management will change the habitat of the area. Imagine if BLM managed all areas this way. Gail responded that the decision has been made to manage the Water Canyon area for recreation. Larie Trippet said that the point is that this is a recreation area. This little piece is managed for recreation. Large pieces are managed for conservation. Patti Herzog commented that this is just a start for recreation management and that this BLM office has done a good job with conservation areas.

Sherm Swanson commented that BLM might consider putting some of the removed wood in the stream. The public will then remove it for fires. Bob Edwards reminded the RAC members that wood cutting is not allowed in the area.

There was a prior agreement with the city and the county for maintenance of Water Canyon. The agreement has expired. BLM will have an opportunity to renegotiate with the city and the county in September.

Vern Schulze asked how much of the stream is outside the development area. Craig Drake told him that about 65% of it is in Zone 2, above the gate, and offers natural recreation opportunities.

The third stop for the RAC was the ATV hill on the west side of the road. The other side of the road is a partially developed site. Mining companies in the region brought large rocks in and helped put them in place to keep vehicles away from the stream. Volunteers contoured, restored and fenced-off the hill as part of a National Public Lands Day project in 2003. The road ends a short distance above this point.

Gerald Gulley told the RAC that BLM Recreation manages three or four dispersed recreation sites in the field office including Lovelock Back Country Byway and the Pine Forest. The WFO also issues several special recreation permits throughout the year – six or seven motorcycle races, one off-road vehicle race with Hummers, and two bicycle races on the Bloody Shins Trail south of Winnemucca. There are also three or four non-permitted activities including reenactments, horse and buggy rides, etc. Outfitter Guide Permit preparation for multi-field office permits is being centralized in the Elko field office.

Law enforcement is the biggest recreation issue. Very loosely organized spill-over from Burning Man type groups is also an issue. On other parts of the field office liquid fuel rocket tests and vehicle speed testing have become safety issues.

X. Public Comment Period

No public comments were made.

MOVED – by Vern Schulze to recess for the day.

SECOND – by Patti Herzog.

DISCUSSION –

APPROVED – by acclamation.

XI. Grazing to Control Cheatgrass Tour

The RAC left the WFO at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday to take a field trip to a grazing to control cheatgrass area north of Winnemucca along US 95.

The first stop was at the UC allotment near McDermitt. Mike Whalen told the RAC that this area was a cooperative experiment with Utah State University and John Falen through a Joint Fire Science project using livestock grazing to control cheatgrass. Fourteen 60 x 60-meter plots are involved.

The plots were grazed at different intensities throughout last season. Last fall, burns were run to study the differences in the intensity of cheatgrass on the different plots. Joel Diamond, a graduate student at Utah State, explained the experiment to the RAC, several ranchers, guests from the University of Nevada Reno, and employees of Resource Concepts.

Four experiments were run.

- Grazed 80 to 90% of biomass.
- Grazed and burned.
- Not grazed, burned.
- Not grazed for three years, not burned – control site.

All three grazed plots were grazed the last week of April through the first week of May.

Joel studied the change in fire behavior, how the different treatments affected seed base and how it affected the above-ground complex.

There was a second graze during the boot stage. The cheatgrass intensity in this plot was greatly reduced. There was a much lower seed density per meter than in the control area. There was an increase in Sandberg blue grass and pepper grass which burns less easily. Flame height during the burn was ½ meter.

The control site has not been grazed for three years. A lot of the cheatgrass is lying down. There is a 70 to 80 percent cover of cheatgrass, enough buildup for a catastrophic burn.

Fuel mass won't be calculated at the burn site until right before the burn. Flame height is expected to be 2 ½ meters.

The area 80 to 90% grazed had a higher seed survival of native grasses. Annuals gained a competitive edge. Soil was compacted less than in the ungrazed area.

In 2005 the entire area received 127% of annual precipitation. In 2006 precipitation came early and was spotty.

A conclusion drawn from the experiment is that treatment of cheatgrass must be continuous and requires constant management.

The second stop was an area of crested wheatgrass. Dr. Lee Manske, Ph.D., North Dakota State, discussed how vegetative reproduction of crested wheatgrass works. Vegetative reproduction is the preferred growth mechanism of all native grasses including crested wheatgrass. Natives must be grazed to be revegetative.

Years ago pastures were managed with multiple rotations of grazing and crops. The native grasses eventually became less productive. Most reinvestment of natives comes from tillers. Tillers are out-shoots of the main plant. For each leaf that grows on a lead

tiller there is an auxiliary bud. Carryover comes only from secondary tillers which become next year's lead tillers. Secondary tillers will fill food requirements of cattle for a longer time.

Cattle can be used to remove a portion of an inhibiting hormone in the plant to release the growth hormone that activates the residual buds. The more buds growing the more grass density. Seedlings rarely survive. Tillers have the help of their plant family to survive. Tillers must be stimulated to grow. Five to 10% of the land area in northern Nevada can be stimulated to produce crested wheatgrass.

A tall grass area recovers from fire in one year. A mixed grass area takes at least five years to recover.

Dr. Manske's information is available on his website www.grazinghandbook.com.

The next stop on the tour was the Rock Creek Fire Site north of Orovada. In July 1939 five men died fighting the Rock Creek Fire.

Mike Whalen told the RAC that not many years ago he met an older man who said his name was Vitale. The man told Mike that he wanted to see where his older brother had died. Mike took him to the site of the Rock Creek Fire.

In 1939 Vitale's older brother was part of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crew that responded to a fire a few miles north of Orovada. A more experienced fire crew walked on a lower route up to the McConnell Creek Trail while the CCC men took a higher route into the mountains. A sudden downdraft made the fire run and grow three times larger in a very short time. The experienced crew crossed the flat ground and began to run ahead of the fire. The less experienced CCC men took any route they could to get away from the flames. Mr. Vitale turned north and climbed into a crevice in the rock face. The fire overcame him there. Eventually the fire burned all the way to the road which is now located at the edge of the meadow. This was the largest loss of life in a Great Basin fire until the 1980's. Through a cooperative effort, which included the BLM and the USFS, a monument and plaque were put at the edge of the burn area which is now a turnout and rest area along U.S. 95. In a ceremony sponsored by the City of Orovada the plaque was dedicated to the five men who lost their lives.

The Rock Creek Fire area has become the site of a staff ride which BLM initiated to teach fire fighters and others lessons learned. Several other staff rides have been initiated across the country for the same reason. BLM recently hosted 37 fire people from Washington and Oregon who said they were quite impressed with the ride. BLM also uses the area to teach fire fighters. They are run through five stands during their training. They are taken up the mountain to walk the original trail and recreate the evacuation route until the point where the firefighters began to run. The staff ride and training teach fire behavior and fire leadership.

The final stop on the RAC tour was the Long Canyon Allotment. Will Fry, son of the permittee and Susan Hess who is constructing a database with monitoring information from the allotment, discussed their experience at the site and what ranchers are doing to complement the UC project.

The Long Canyon Allotment was burned during the Moore Canyon fire in 1994. Ranchers are grazing cattle there in the early spring to feed off the cheatgrass before it has a chance to produce seed heads. Will told the RAC that so far the strategy seems to be working. The cows are moved back and forth throughout the season. He feels that if this can be done for three to five years, they may be able to beat back root growth.

Three one-meter cages have been set up on the allotment to gather information. There are 80 head of cattle on the smaller pasture and 150 on the larger. There is also a water development.

Susan is putting the information in a custom data entry program that was developed by Natural Resources Conservation Service. She can input the information right at the ranch and can also input pictures.

XI. Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm at the tour site.