

Argenta Cooperative Monitoring Group Meeting Minutes

Lander County Courthouse

50 State Highway 305
Battle Mountain, NV 89820

November 16 - 17, 2016

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DAY 1 – NOVEMBER 16, 2016

CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW

The meeting was called to order by Mike Lunn, a Conflict Resolution Specialist with the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) at 8:07 AM by welcoming everyone to the meeting and reviewing the agenda for Day 1. In response to a request from Mr. Steve Leonard, it was agreed to discuss the 2016 monitoring data prior to addressing the 2016 grazing management and 2017 Stockmanship Plan, which will be addressed together.

Persons attending the meeting are depicted in Attachment 1.

Mike Holbert, owner of Silver State Meeting Minutes, introduced himself and described the process for recording the meeting's discussion and preparing minutes for the meeting. In summary, two recording systems are used to ensure the minutes accurately reflect the discussion. The minutes will not be a transcript of discussions but will provide a summary of presentations, pertinent discussions, positions taken, decisions made, action assignments, etc. Once the minutes have been finalized, the digital recordings of the meeting will be deleted.

INTRODUCTIONS & MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Mike Lunn asked each person to introduce themselves, address their thoughts on the 2016 grazing season, and describe their expectations for this meeting.

The following is a summary of the expectations raised by the participants.

- 2016 was a very busy year particularly in the spring during which several disputes were addressed; controversial monitoring sites were reevaluated; and long-term monitoring, which will be important in establishing long-term resource baseline conditions was completed.
- Permittees were recognized for their hard work over the year that resulted in a strong positive trend on many sites.
- Looking forward to reviewing the 2016 monitoring information and identifying a strategy for moving forward.
- The “growing pains” experienced in 2016 have placed the Cooperative Monitoring Group (CMG) in a stronger position to cohesively move forward into 2017. Management and work of many individuals has resulted in positive on-the-ground impacts in 2016.
- Encouraged with the progress that has been made but frustrated with some of the impediments that remain to be overcome.
- People have been working together better in the field as well as in identifying changes in the 2017 Stockmanship Plan to address issues experienced during the 2016 grazing season.
- The hard work of the NRST and the livestock permittees was recognized.
- In-season monitoring data has shown a much brighter picture as compared to previous years and there are high expectations for 2017.
- Many difficulties have been overcome and good monitoring strategies have been developed using science rather than opinion.
- Development of height/weight curves for several species has improved vegetative measurements.
- Encouraged that there has been progress made in 2016 as compared to 2015.
- It may not be necessary to monitor upland areas once per month in 2017 as was done in 2016. It was recommended that monitoring at seed ripe or when potential issues are observed would be appropriate. Knowing utilization at seed ripe is important for the health of the plant.
- Attending a CMG meeting for the first time, it was good to put faces to individuals.
- The 2016 grazing season was very successful and everything is moving in the right direction.

- Communication between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the livestock permittees improved in 2016.
- Appreciated that discussions moved away from addressing the Settlement Agreement (Agreement) and toward management after the Agreement expires.
- Improvements have been made over the past year. Using the dispute resolution process, sideboards have been established on a number of issues resulting in the process being on a better track as compared to 2015.
- Concerned with how the Agreement has been implemented and is hoping some changes will be made. Based on a recent field visit, the individual wasn't very impressed but recognized there has been some improvement but there needs to be a lot more.
- The 2015-2016 winter and 2016 spring was great in terms of grass growth and water being in areas that were dry in previous years. The permittees were able to implement the 2016 Stockmanship Plan but not without some issues such as having adequate water infrastructure to hold cattle in areas or lack of drift fences to keep livestock out of certain areas.
- Upland utilization was very good. There isn't a cattle or overgrazing issue but a riparian issue, which can be addressed through Stockmanship and range improvement development. The allotment has historically been neglected in terms of range improvement developments and has a need for developing appropriate projects.
- Overall, the management objectives in most areas were met and the effort is moving in a positive direction.
- Hopeful that the positive management direction and communication will be maintained as the process moves forward.
- Everyone has worked hard in 2016 which resulted in good progress being made. Hopeful that progress will continue to be made in 2017.
- There are issues remaining to be addressed, which can be done with the improved cooperation demonstrated by the BLM Battle Mountain District office staff, which has been appreciated.
- Everyone wants the same thing – to make the resources as good as they can possibly be for the best advantage of the land.
- 2016 was a long year but not as long as 2015. There has been a tremendous amount of hard work and money expended in 2016 resulting in a positive direction for the allotment.
- The start of 2016 was difficult with many issues needing to be addressed. The efforts made in 2016 will make the path into 2017 easier. Things are not perfect but there is no doubt that they are better. The goal of achieving “demonstrable improvement” was met in 2016. The CMG is more strategic in placing its time, energy, resources, and efforts, which will be important as we move into 2017.
- The end-of-year meetings are important for everyone to be on the same page in terms of understanding what happened and how we're going to be moving forward.
- The work of the CMG and the permittees has made the Grazing Permit Renewal Team's (GPRT) effort easier in terms of identifying alternatives for the permit renewal process.
- Appreciated the time livestock grazing permittees spent time in the field with members of the GPRT to ensure they(GPRT) have a good understanding of the grazing permittees' operations. It will be important that the outcome of the grazing permit renewal process is a plan that meets the agency's ecological responsibilities as well as the permittees' grazing operations.
- Encouraged after meetings in the field with the grazing permittees' and their consultants.
- Working on consolidating the project record, assisting in development of the health assessment, and making sure the process will be compliant with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- Pleased with the progress and the communication that occurred in 2016.
- Happy with the work the GPRT accomplished especially in terms of communication with the grazing permittees' and the field office staff in sharing information and ideas.
- The GPRT experienced challenges in 2016 including implementation of sage-grouse direction and consolidating existing information.
- Pleased with the progress that has been made but there is still a long way to go. Believes we're in the right position and hopes for additional progress in 2017.

- The Argenta CMG process has been a major effort and the speaker has been humbled for having the opportunity to work with the permittees as well as the Battle Mountain office. He has been impressed with the willingness of all involved to engage in and resolve difficult issues.
- It was noted that 2016 is the 20th anniversary of the NRST, which has been involved in various efforts throughout the West as well as several countries.
- The majority of the photographs on the wall of the conference room were taken by Shawn Mariluch's grandfather, who was a pioneer of Battle Mountain starting the first mercantile/hardware/grocery store.

DOUG FURTADO COMMENTS

In closing the discussion, Doug Furtado, BLM's Battle Mountain District Manager, indicated that one year ago, BLM was faced with unprecedented circumstances that led to difficult decisions and an environment that was unproductive and unhealthy for all involved. As the Agreement was being drafted, he committed one hundred percent support to replace grazing closures with management, which, he believed, was going to be very challenging given the controversial and political environment in place at that time.

Direction to his staff and the agency's priority for the Argenta allotment has always been to (1) support the Agreement and (2) change the agency's relationship with the grazing permittees to rebuild trust.

Mr. Furtado recognized Shawn Mariluch, who experienced and overcame health problems in 2016 while working to meet his commitments and responsibilities to implement the Agreement. Mrs. Angie Mariluch also recognized Lynn Tomera and EddyAnn Filippini who also experienced health issues in 2016.

Mr. Furtado recognized the Battle Mountain staff and livestock permittees for the significant progress made in 2016 and for their work to identify solutions to problems, permittee investments in water hauling and additional fencing, preparing appropriate NEPA documents while supporting the massive workload associated with the Argenta process, and issuing critical decisions associated with exclusions.

From a management perspective, progress was made in implementing effective Stockmanship plans that were supported by monitoring. The Stockmanship plans will serve as the foundation for the permit renewal process and long-term management.

In terms of the trust factor, Mr. Furtado believes there is still progress to be made. Conversations are occurring between BLM managers and staff at different levels as well as with individual permittees, which will be critical to continue in the future. As issues arise, Mr. Furtado encouraged permittees as well as other members of the CMG to call either himself or Jon Sherve (BLM's Mount Lewis Field Manager) who will work cooperatively to resolve the issues. Such efforts and communication over time will lead to rebuilding the trust relationship.

Mr. Furtado highlighted efforts of the Tomera family with respect to collection and summarizing monitoring information as well as the well written reports that provided specific and detailed information concerning livestock movement.

Many hurdles experienced in 2015 such as discussions addressing confidence intervals (CI), averaging utilization, Stockmanship plan development, and approving applications before Stockmanship plans were approved are all things of the past. The CMG is now positioned to be well organized and structured as 2017 approaches.

The NRST had a very important role in the beginning of the CMG process, which involved bringing everyone to the table to begin developing functional relationships and effective management of the public lands in the Argenta allotment. To date, the NRST has done a tremendous job! With the numerous issues facing BLM nationally such as wild horses, sage grouse, transfer of public land, a new Administration; the NRST is being asked nationally to address many other issues and situations.

There have been discussions internally within BLM between Mr. Furtado, BLM's Nevada State Director, and others as to an exit strategy for the NRST, which will result in a meaningful and structured reduction of the NRST's role in moving forward within the Argenta allotment. Once the permit renewal process completed and decisions from that effort are

being implemented, it will be critical that the Battle Mountain District Office staff and the grazing permittees be able to work cooperatively together. Mr. Furtado indicated that it is his goal to continue to (1) slowly reduce the NRST's role and increase the District/Field Office role when addressing complex issues collaboratively and (2) support the NRST's desire to have a continued role throughout the Agreement process but to a lesser degree in the long-term future, which will require the permittees to rely more on the District/Field Office staff for day-to-day communication and problem solving.

Later in the discussion, Laura Van Riper indicated that what Mr. Furtado explained in terms of reducing the NRST's role in the Argenta process was correct and should not be new to anyone. When written, the Agreement placed an emphasis for NRST involvement early in the process dealing with disputes, facilitating CMG meetings, working to establish monitoring sites, etc. Once those areas are addressed, which has for the most part been completed, the level of NRST involvement is expected to decrease. The NRST anticipates continuing its involvement albeit to a lesser degree through the Agreement and the permit renewal processes.

After discussions with the GPRT and the Battle Mountain staff, Mark Gonzalez views his role at this time as "coaching and oversight" to ensure the GPRT is comfortable with and is able to implement the protocols properly.

Mr. Furtado recognized that a tremendous amount of time has been appropriately devoted to monitoring, which may be decreased in the future while ensuring the GPRT has the appropriate information for completing the permit renewal process. Mr. Furtado expressed his support for a permittee cooperative monitoring component that will address collection of within-season monitoring data used to determine when livestock should be moved within and between use areas. It will be important to have effective communication between the BLM field staff and the permittees. If an agreement is reached and implemented properly, BLM will not later debate how it was implemented.

Mr. Furtado indicated that he will be meeting with Barrick Gold later in the day at which time he will strongly suggest that Barrick Gold make planning, the NEPA analysis, and construction of the south boundary fence between the Argenta and Carrico Lake allotments a priority.

The appeal period for the last Round 2 (R2) decision will end on December 2, 2016. The Battle Mountain District has engaged in discussions with BLM's Nevada State Director and the Director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to give the District latitude for construction of the fence in the Fall 2016. The District expects to receive a letter of support from NDOW in the near future. Should a stay petition be filed, it will require additional time to address the legal process through the Office of Hearings and Appeals.

Mr. Furtado believes the Argenta CMG process has resulted in a cultural change where parties are working together and have come to an understanding on several important things such as effective herding of livestock through a stockmanship plan, water haul sites that have been used to promote livestock movement and distribution, and identifying trigger levels requiring livestock movement.

Mr. Furtado closed by indicating that he looked forward to the adjustments the CMG will recommend in the 2017 Stockmanship plan, which, hopefully, will address areas identified by monitoring data as needing management change. Mr. Furtado explained that feedback received from users of the public land (such as hunters) serve an indicator of how BLM is managing the Nation's public lands. Positive feedback from users received this year addressed the public lands in northern Lander and Eureka counties. Feedback has included the number of sage-grouse observed in the Bates Mountain area; the Simpson Park range west of Roberts Mountain where deer with three fawns had been observed; the increased number of chukar observed in the Argenta area, which directly relates to the cover provided during the nesting season.

When NDOW accompanied BLM staff on the ground in July to assess meadows for seasonal restrictions, sage-grouse were observed in many meadows in the Argenta allotment. This observation also serves as a strong indicator of how the public lands have been managed this year.

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PERMIT RENEWAL UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Jake Vialpando, Supervisory Grazing Permit Renewal Specialist from BLM's Nevada State Office, provided an overview of key items associated with the Argenta grazing permit renewal process. Following his presentation, individual members of the GPRT addressed their areas of expertise in more detail.

2016 represented the first year for the GPRT as well as its first year of involvement with the Argenta allotment, which has been very successful. The GPRT has been working in several different areas of the permit renewal process, many of which will be shared with the CMG today.

Many new requirements such as actions and decisions stemming from the Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment (ARMPA) are being incorporated into the grazing renewal permit process. Great progress was made in 2016 regarding collection of sage-grouse habitat monitoring information through the Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring (AIM) protocol for the Argenta/Battle Mountain Complex allotments. This data will be used to complete the Habitat Assessment Framework (HAF) for sage-grouse.

GPRT 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The GPRT continues its efforts to compile existing and new data and information, which should be completed in the near future. Efforts have been initiated to review the data to (1) determine what is available and (2) identify key information that is missing.

The team has begun writing the first draft of the rangeland health assessment by addressing the general background information such as the general setting and describing the current situation, current livestock grazing management practices, ecological site descriptions, etc.

Jim Schroeder, a Hydrologist on the GPRT, worked closely with the NRST regarding Proper Functioning Condition assessments in riparian areas.

Currently, the AIM information is being sorted and compiled, which will be used to complete the time-consuming HAF protocol, which will evaluate and identify suitable, unsuitable, and marginal sage-grouse habitat.

Ken Vicencio, a Rangeland Management Specialist on the GPRT, spent a tremendous amount of time in the field with the Mount Lewis Field Office staff stratifying monitoring sites for collection of AIM information. Equally important was the time Ken spent engaged with the grazing permittees on the ground learning the allotment and the grazing management operations, which are a critical and essential part of the grazing permit renewal process. In addition, Ken is compiling and analyzing actual use information as well as information associated with exchange-of-use, which will need to be incorporated into the rangeland health assessment.

Amanda DeForest and Margo Anderson continue to compile and manage existing information as addressed earlier.

GPRT VACANCIES

Efforts to replace the vice-Joseph May position continue to move forward. Mr. Vialpando will be meeting with BLM Nevada's senior leadership on November 22nd to discuss a strategy for completing the hiring process. Ms. Jamie DaFoe asked if the vice-Joseph May position would continue to be part of the GPRT. Mr. Vialpando indicated that he is proposing the position would report directly to him so that he (Mr. Vialpando) would have direct supervision and mentoring over the individual occupying the position.

The position is proposed to be a GS-5/7 position, which affords more opportunity for attracting individuals interested in getting into the field. The position's primary responsibility will continue to be monitoring of the Argenta/Battle Mountain Complex allotments, which was its primary focus in 2016. As time allows, the position will be available to the GPRT for other workloads such as data management.

In addition, Mr. Vialpando has requested permission to hire a Great Basin Institute Biological Technician position whose primary responsibility would be to provide support to the vice-Joseph May position with monitoring efforts in the Argenta/Battle Mountain Complex allotments.

Mr. Shawn Mariluch asked if the two positions would be based in the Battle Mountain District Office to which Mr. Vialpando indicated that the positions would be based out of the BLM Nevada State Office. The primary reason for having the positions based out the State Office is to facilitate supervision, which has been an issue in the past when positions are based at a remote office.

Mr. Mariluch asked if the positions could be used to supplement permittee monitoring efforts that continue over the course of the summer. Mr. Vialpando indicated that assisting with the permittee monitoring was a primary intent of both positions.

In a separate question, Mr. Schweigert indicated that a commitment was made at the March 2016 CMG meeting to share field data collected over the course of the summer by the GPRT with the permittees and their consultants. To date, sharing of that information has not occurred. Mr. Vialpando indicated that one installment of the field data has been shared and a second installment is close to being ready for sharing. Mike Rahe will address sharing of field data in more detail during his presentation.

Mr. Steve Cote inquired as to the type of monitoring that will be completed by the two positions. Mr. Vialpando indicated that the two positions will be monitoring for the Mount Lewis Field Office and the livestock grazing permittees; not the GPRT. They will be collecting monitoring information as identified by the field office and/or grazing permittees.

Ms. Jamie DaFoe clarified that the two positions would be travelling out of the Nevada State Office and asked if the position would be a Rangeland Management Specialist. Mr. Vialpando indicated that the vice-Joseph May position will be a Rangeland Management Specialist. Mr. Vialpando's expectation is that the individual occupying the position should hit-the-ground running and understand the different monitoring methodologies. The person may not fully understand BLM's requirements but will have a general understanding of range management principles.

Mr. Gant Massey indicated that he has worked closely with Mr. Vialpando over the past year regarding the complexities such as providing the appropriate level of leadership and oversight to the vice-May position, and believes Mr. Vialpando is moving in the right direction.

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GPRT SCHEDULE

Mr. Vialpando provided an overview of the schedule for completing the Argenta grazing permit renewal effort. The Agreement identifies February 28, 2018, as the target date for completion of the permit renewal process. After reviewing the existing information, it was determined that additional data such as riparian Proper Functioning Condition will need to be collected in the Spring 2017, which will delay the remaining steps in the renewal process. BLM's intent is to issue the final decision no later than July 30, 2018 (see table below).

Table 1 identifies the key milestones in the current schedule.

Table 1 Key Schedule Milestones	
<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Milestone</u>
March 1 – May 31, 2017	Completion of PFC Assessments
August 1, 2017	Publish Draft Rangeland Health Assessments (RHA) and Evaluation Reports (ER) for 30-day public comment
October 15, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue/Publish Final RHAs and ERs and unsigned Determination documents. • Concurrently, issue grazing permit renewal application to all affected grazing permittees.
February 20 – March 25, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue/Publish Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA), unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and signed Determination documents. Preliminary EA will be available for a 30-day public comment (March 25, 2018). • GPRT will meet with Mount Lewis Field Manager to discuss/select alternative for implementation. • GPRT will begin to draft Proposed Decisions.
June 11, 2018	Issue/Publish NEPA, FONSI, and Proposed Decisions.
July 30, 2018	Issue Final Decisions

Mr. Vialpando emphasized that he and his team are willing to meet with anyone at any time to discuss concerns, issues, progress, etc., concerning the permit renewal process.

Ms. Kathryn Dyer asked if there was a deadline or end date by which data must be submitted for consideration in the permit renewal process. Mr. Vialpando indicated that the deadline for data submission for the RHA will be May 31, 2017. Data collected between the time the RHA is finalized and preparation of the EA begins will be considered and used in preparation of the EA. Ms. Dyer emphasized that it is important the grazing permittees understand that data collected after the RHA is finalized will be accounted for in the permit renewal process but not reflected in the RHAs.

Mr. Schweigert asked at what point in the process will a request be made for the grazing permittee's alternative. Mr. Vialpando indicated that the logical time for submitting the grazing permittee's alternative will be when the final RHAs, ERs, and the unsigned Determination are released (October 15, 2017 milestone). Mr. Vialpando emphasized that BLM should be communicating with the permittees much earlier than the October 15th deadline to understand what the permittees anticipate proposing as an alternative. The earlier this communication occurs, the better.

Mr. Mike Lunn asked if (1) the permit renewal EA will adequately analyze identified range improvement projects so they may be constructed or (2) will the projects require additional site specific environmental analysis at a later date. Mr. Vialpando indicated that the intent is to provide a thorough analysis in order to incorporate project implementation in the final decision. Mr. Lunn emphasized that the information provided in the permittee alternative should be as specific as possible to allow for an appropriate analysis. Mr. Vialpando indicated that if the submitted information is not specific enough, the projects would require additional NEPA analysis and a separate decision.

Mike Rahe, an Ecologist on the GPRT, provided an overview of efforts made to identify existing data as well as data gaps required for the sage-grouse HAF using stratified criteria. To address data gaps, AIM data was collected in 2016 at several new sites (locations). Where necessary to supplement existing data, some existing sites were revisited to collect additional AIM data at which time HAF data sheets were used. For each site visited, there are ten HAF data forms that must be completed, which is a time-consuming process.

Mr. Rahe indicated that he has also been reviewing reports previously submitted by RCI in the 1990s. Mr. Rahe will be contacting Mr. Jack Alexander to discuss and understand the content of those reports.

In response to a previous question asked by Mr. Schweigert concerning the March 2017 commitment to provide copies of the 2016 monitoring data to the permittees, Mr. Rahe indicated that the intent was to have a second installment of data submitted this week; however, a review of the data discovered an extremely large number of duplicates, which is taking longer than originally expected to resolve. The intent is to have the second data installment, which will include the 2016 AIM and HAF data as well as the supplemental data on historic sites, ready for the permittees by December 19th.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Vialpando committed to sending all data that the GPRT has (whether complete or not) to the permittees on December 19th. (NOTE: completed)

Another member of the GPRT (Margie) has been reviewing 2013 to 2016 HAF worksheets, which address nesting - early brood rearing, upland late brood rearing, riparian late brood rearing, and winter habitats.

Interdisciplinary team (IDT) discussions concerning the collected data will begin in December 2016.

Ken Vicencio indicated that following the 2016 kickoff meeting held at the Battle Mountain District Office, he contacted all of the grazing permittees in the Argenta allotment as well as the other allotments in the Complex. After those contacts were made, Mr. Vicencio orchestrated three field tours with the Tomera family, Shawn and Angie Mariluch, and Josh Smith. Mr. Vicencio hopes to be able to get into the field with Dan and EddyAnn Filippini to better understand their livestock operation. Some of the smaller cattle and sheep operators declined the opportunity to go to the field with Mr. Vicencio but asked to be kept abreast of the effort.

In addition to the field visits, Mr. Vicencio is reviewing grazing casefiles to identify decisions that changed management within the Argenta allotment. To date, he has completed a review of all the closed grazing casefiles.

In moving the grazing permit renewal process forward, the GPRT will use the RHAs to develop alternatives for livestock management on the Argenta allotment. The GPRT has a good understanding of the major issues such as grazing on riparian areas, which are expected to be affirmed by the RHA. It is expected that riparian management will be a significant part of the grazing plan as it is developed.

Information from permittees that would be helpful in developing basic alternatives include (1) identification of use areas that are easiest to control livestock if herding is a major component of management, (2) calving areas, (3) areas where calf make the most weight gain, etc. Mr. Vicencio believes the best way to develop a realistic alternative is to work closely with the grazing permittees to address issues, concerns, etc., during development of the alternative; rather than waiting until the public comment period on the Preliminary EA or issuing a proposed decision. Mr. Vicencio recognizes that there may be areas of disagreement but it is important to understand where each person is coming from.

When considering range improvements, it is important that the improvements (1) support the grazing system and (2) address the allotment's objectives. Objectives may be the permittee's operational objectives (i.e., improving distribution to relieve grazing pressure on riparian areas) or resource management objectives. Proposals for range improvement projects should be included in the permittee's grazing alternative, which is due no later than October 15, 2017. While it is not required to have site-specific information prior to October 15, 2017, the earlier site-specific information can be identified the better in terms of developing a defensible NEPA analysis.

It is important for the permittees to clearly describe (1) what the proposed range improvement projects will achieve, (2) how the projects will help management of the livestock and/or improve resource conditions, and (3) how they will ultimately support the grazing management plan. Identifying a permittee priority list for proposed range improvements

will be important. At some point in the process, BLM and the permittees will need to discuss and, hopefully, agree on a priority for range improvement development that is tied to meeting identified objectives, rangeland health standards, and improving management on-the-ground.

Ms. Dyer suggested that while livestock management is a priority when identifying range improvement development priorities, the highest priority will be addressing identified rangeland health standards and objectives. As raised earlier by Mr. Vialpando, the goal is to have sufficient specificity concerning range improvements in the NEPA analysis for the permit renewal, which will avoid the need for additional or supplemental analysis at a later point in time. Realistically, there will be a finite number of range improvement projects that can be addressed in the NEPA document. Mr. Vicencio indicated that the GPRT will not identify an upper limit as to the number of range improvements projects that may be proposed but reiterated the need for range improvements to implement and/or improve management of the resources.

Mr. Shawn Mariluch asked if it is possible to identify long-term future projects in the grazing management plan. Mr. Vicencio indicated that long-term project proposals could be included in the management plan, which would facilitate development of the foreseeable cumulative effects section in the NEPA document. The future projects would be referenced in the permit renewal NEPA document but would require a separate site-specific NEPA document at some point in the future.

Mr. Mariluch asked a follow-up question if the permittees would be restricted from submitting other range improvement proposals after the permit renewal process was concluded. Ms. Dyer indicated that the permittees would be able to submit other project applications but they would be considered with all other range improvement project applications submitted to the District.

Mr. Vicencio suggested that project proposals should also include an interim management strategy which addresses how the area will be managed before the proposed improvement is constructed. Ms. Dyer indicated that was another reason why the integral proposed projects are sufficiently addressed in the permit renewal NEPA analysis, which, if approved, would allow construction immediately following issuance of the Decision Record (or Record of Decision).

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Lunn suggested Mr. Vicencio develop and e-mail¹ a list of items (i.e., understanding what the project will achieve, how the project will help livestock grazing management, project specifics (miles, location, acres of proposed disturbance, etc.) the permittees should address to ensure the range improvement project applications contain the appropriate information to assist preparing a defensible NEPA analysis.

Mr. Paul Tomera asked if a general statement describing the proposed project is sufficient at this time or if a more specific, detailed description of the project was required. Mr. Vicencio indicated that at this time the request can be more general. At some point, the GPRT will be working with the Mount Lewis Field Office staff and the grazing permittee(s) to discuss the site-specific on-the-ground details of the project.

Another area that should be addressed is range improvement projects that are currently on the ground but no longer functioning. It will be necessary to determine if (1) the project is beneficial to livestock management and reconstructed or (2) it should be removed.

Mr. Vialpando indicated that his primary objective concerning the permit renewal NEPA analysis is to ensure the agency has completed a thorough job of analyzing the grazing alternatives, range improvements, etc., in case there is a legal challenge. To this end, Mr. Vialpando will be asking the GPRT many challenging questions to ensure the NEPA document meets his standards and is defensible.

¹ To the livestock grazing permittees, consultants, and the Mount Lewis Field Office.

In terms of range improvements, it is important to recognize that the Mount Lewis Field Office and, more specifically, the Field Office Manager, has the final decision authority. The GPRT will work with the grazing permittees and the field office staff to ensure everything is incorporated to develop a feasible and implementable alternative.

Mr. Jim Schroeder, a Hydrologist on the GPRT, provided an overview of changes being made to the approach for assessing riparian areas within the Argenta allotment. Mr. Schroeder's presentation addressed riparian assessment from the basic premise of rangeland health and the assessment and evaluation of riparian functionality, which is Mr. Schroeder's primary responsibility.

To date, Mr. Schroeder has reviewed much of the existing riparian data, which includes data and summary reports from 2005 and 2006. Ideally, it would be best to complete comprehensive assessments of all riparian systems; however, there is not sufficient time nor resources available. It will be necessary to find efficiencies to determine how best to describe the riparian systems and draw conclusions concerning achievement of rangeland health standards.

Mr. Schroeder recognized the assistance provided by the NRST and, in particular, Mark Gonzalez in developing the approach being taken to assess the riparian areas of the Argenta allotment. In simplistic terms, the approach will follow BLM's guidance (Technical Reference 1737-15, *Proper Functioning Condition Assessment for Lotic Areas*) as it was intended.

Two areas where BLM has historically struggled in implementing its guidance is (1) delineating and stratifying stream reaches and (2) describing the potential for those systems. Properly describing and understanding the potential of a system is a key component in reaching a conclusion if the system is properly functioning (or not). There have been instances where a riparian system (or reach) has been classified as non-functioning or functioning-at-risk when the potential for that reach to be better than its current condition doesn't exist.

Based on his 20-year experience conducting riparian assessments on the ground, Mr. Schroeder believes that while assessing riparian systems in the field, the IDT discusses the system's potential but that discussion is never documented. Conducting a proper assessment is a matter of following the agency's protocol and properly documenting it.

Phase 1 of the assessment process begins with conducting a desktop analysis, which has been Mr. Schroeder's primary focus to date for the Argenta allotment. Using existing information, such as information/data and aerial imagery, Mr. Schroeder identifies stream reaches that have potential to demonstrate appropriate riparian values on the ground. An ephemeral stream reach, which may flow during and shortly after a storm, has a rapid response and the water is quickly gone. In these areas, there is no chance to develop hydric soils or riparian vegetation. In these cases, there is not much potential for developing a riparian community; therefore, such sites would not be delineated for further assessment.

Another parameter considered in the desktop analysis is the length of the stream segment. Stream segments that are too short don't have the ability to develop a system associated with flowing water and channel development. While such segments have been assessed in the past, Mr. Schroeder is not proposing to assess such segments in the future. As a general rule, the technical reference for conducting PFC on lotic systems recommends assessing reaches only if they are a quarter mile or more in length. Some segments as short as 500 feet in length (or shorter) have been assessed in the past, but are not worth the time and effort unless they have some special resource value.

Mr. Schroeder provided the CMG with a sample data sheet that identifies the physical environment, the biology of a site, etc., which are products of the desktop analysis. Most of the information is obtained from existing data/information, aerial imagery, etc. If there is a need to obtain more site-specific information for the various stream reaches, Mr. Schroeder will meet with field office staff, grazing permittees, and others, which is Phase 2 of the assessment process.

Mr. Schroeder explained that stratifying stream reaches (as addressed in the technical reference) is appropriate and very important. Sampling a subset of similar stream reaches with similar characteristics is appropriate for drawing conclusions regarding the functioning condition of those reaches. Mr. Schroeder stressed that decisions as to which stream reaches to assess have not been made at this time.

Mr. Schroeder noted that it is possible to create bias with the sampling methodology. Focusing sample efforts on problem areas may give the impression that there are problem areas throughout the allotment when, in fact, there are areas functioning properly. Mr. Schroeder admitted that the approach to conduct the most detailed assessments on the most sensitive sites may appear to be biased toward problem areas. In the PFC technical references, the process calls for less sensitive areas to be assessed too, but with less detailed analysis that is faster and easier to complete.

To emphasize his point, Mr. Schroeder drew an example (Trout Creek) on a flip chart (Figure 1).

The only access into the Trout Creek drainage is from the top; there is not access from the bottom of the drainage. The rectangular areas represent the drainage areas that feed each specific segment. There is some mineral exploration/disturbance in the upper part of the watershed.

Based on previous riparian assessments, the lower two segments (left side of diagram) were in good condition with a trout population, riparian vegetation, good channel characteristics, etc. More issues (channel entrenchment, past disturbance) were identified in the upper two segments (right side of diagram) but the potential of these segments was believed to be less as compared to the lower segments. While no decisions have been made, Mr. Schroeder's impression is that the bottom two segments look pretty good and may not be worth the time and effort to assess these segments again in detail. Although the stream types are similar, the lower segments have different conditions (as compared to the upper segments); therefore, a better use of the team's limited time and resources may be completing more detailed assessments of the more sensitive, upper two segments. Without providing the proper context, we could show a biased approach by evaluating the upper segments as functional-at-risk while the two lower reaches are properly functioning. The assessment report would need to document the condition of all stream segments, including less sensitive segments that received a cursory review and more sensitive segments that required more detailed analysis.

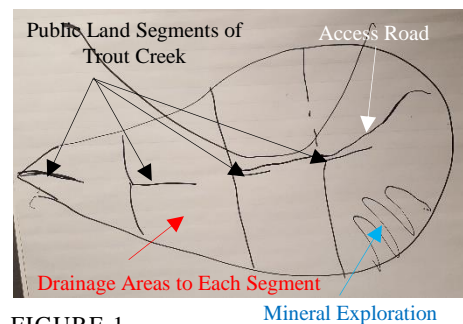


FIGURE 1

Ms. Dyer asked if the intent would be to collect (1) short-term monitoring data on the upper segments and long-term monitoring on the multiple reaches or (2) short- and long-term monitoring on just the upper reaches. Mr. Schroeder indicated that he will require information (PFC data) on riparian condition to complete the assessment and evaluation processes in order to draw conclusions as to the riparian areas meeting rangeland health standards. The stratification approach outlined in the Trout Creek example would be sufficient to reach the appropriate PFC conclusion and would be defensible. From a long-term perspective, Mr. Schroeder would eventually want/like to complete an assessment on all four segments described in the Trout Creek example.

In response to a follow-up question, Mr. Schroeder indicated that he has used the Trout Creek watershed as an example to demonstrate how his approach would be implemented. In reality, there are other adjacent stream networks and delineated segments that are also proposed for assessment. Decisions as to what assessments to complete and what information is sufficient to determine if the standard is being met will have to be made in the context of all stream networks and segments.

Ms. Dyer asked if it would be necessary to define the condition of other areas (such as the PFC segments in the Trout Creek example) in the assessment's final report in order to put the proper context on why the assessment focused on more problematic areas (such as the upper two reaches in the Trout Creek example). Mr. Schroeder indicated that he is still forming his thinking on this approach but believes it will be important to address the condition of the PFC segments in this specific example. The technical reference process is to account for the condition of all riparian segments, though the time spent on each segment may vary depending on resource issues, environmental sensitivity, and management objectives.

Ms. Jamie DaFoe suggested that the stratification process to determine where monitoring should be conducted on the reach is not totally random. Mr. Schroeder indicated that the sample size in this particular example is not large enough. He noted that he has delineated approximately 36 sample sites in the Argenta allotment.² Many of the sites are similar in nature (moderately steep gradient, confined drainages), which would require monitoring all sites if a randomized approach

² Crippen Creek has yet to be reviewed.

were used. Mr. Schroeder believes it important to focus on the areas impacted by the major drivers such as livestock management, access, etc. Ms. DaFoe indicated that it may be possible to stratify the reaches using a GIS product, which could minimize the number of reaches to be sampled.

Mr. Mark Gonzalez suggested that what is being proposed is more of a targeted assessment approach, which is based on an area's sensitivity to management. To emphasize his point, Mr. Gonzalez described the Rock Creek situation where below the drift fence there is a very large, nearly continuous community of mature clump willows, which provide a bank stabilizing benefit. In 2016, there was a significant storm event which did not result in any significant change in channel dimensions or function. Those reaches are properly functioning, which could be observed using Google Earth. Those reaches could then be placed in the properly functioning condition category using a remote sensing assessment. Technical Reference 1737-15 allows for such assessments. The new form allows for the identification of the type of assessment being completed. Some areas will be assessed and placed into a PFC category based on an office/remote sensing inspection or assessment. Other areas may require field visits involving intense transects or inspections of different segments of a stream reach. The level of inspection will change as the sensitivity of the stream changes.

In addition to remote sensing information, the 2005 and 2006 data is available on the Argenta allotment.

Ms. Dyer indicated that she would like to ensure that the process accurately represents the miles of PFC as well as miles of non-functioning or functioning-at-risk segments, where it will be important to track the changes over time. There was additional discussion addressing the ability of the Mr. Schroeder's PFC assessment approach to provide appropriate information to track changes in properly functioning condition over time. Mr. Lunn suggested this particular discussion went beyond the grazing permit renewal process and may be more appropriately discussed in a different venue. Mr. Vialpando emphasized that Mr. Schroeder is using the agency's protocol to address data gaps that need to be addressed during the allotment's grazing permit renewal process.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that the CMG was formed to address riparian issues. The permittees have concerns of why and how everything will be done and need to be involved in the process. There are a lot of riparian areas but, in general, they are small in size. Although small in size, they affect grazing management as they are often the only water source and have established management triggers in place. Mr. Lunn asked what Mr. Mariluch would need to feel more comfortable with what is being discussed. Mr. Mariluch indicated that there needs to be thought put into how riparian areas will be protected (is it feasible to use management alone or management with other items (i.e., off-site water)).

Mr. Schroeder emphasized that the approach is being used (1) to gain an understanding of what is on the ground right now and (2) in making a determination if rangeland health standards are being met with current management practices. Once that is known, it will be possible to identify the causal factors if an area is not meeting rangeland health standards. If livestock are determined to be a causal factor, grazing management changes can be identified, which is what Mr. Mariluch addressed in his statement.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Vialpando recommended that once a draft plan or strategy has been developed for conducting PFC assessments in the Spring 2017, the GPRT will meet with the Mount Lewis Field Office staff and the grazing permittees to review and discuss the draft plan/strategy (areas to be sampled, etc.) to ensure everyone is in agreement and onboard.

Ms. Lynn Tomera indicated that there are many streams on the Argenta allotment containing segments that are properly functioning and other segments that could use additional help. Livestock management can only do so much. Ms. Tomera would like the opportunity to use other avenues (such as temporary and/or permanent fencing, off-site water, etc.) to give the riparian vegetation the chance to recover. Mr. Tomera asked for BLM's assistance in incorporating such avenues into the plan. Mr. Vialpando recognized that the permittees probably already know areas that need assistance and what other avenues might be feasible to address those issues.

Mr. Gonzalez indicated that this discussion is "music to his ears" as it represents language on page 7 of Technical Reference 1737-15. It will be important to complete the stratification process to determine where PFC data will be collected, identify potential of those sites to ensure a proper assessment, and then the work begins when the IDT begin to identify the values of each reach (good forage potential, high recreational value, etc.) and develop management objectives

for the areas experiencing issues. Everything raised by the CMG discussion is part of the integrated riparian management process outlined in the Technical Reference.

Mr. Dan Tomera asked if the process is far enough down the road to make recommendations for livestock grazing management changes. Mr. Schroeder indicated that now is not time for such recommendations but wanted to ensure that a step-by-step approach (as outlined in BLM's guidance) is taken to ensure everyone understands the approach and why assessment judgements were made and that the entire process is properly documented. Mr. Tomera indicated that from a permittee perspective, they are all asking "ok – what is going to happen". The PFC assessments will be completed in the Spring 2017 after which there will be a better sense of the on-the-ground conditions and where possible changes may be made. Right now, we're not at that point.

2016 MONITORING REVIEW

2016 RIPARIAN OVERVIEW

Mr. Mark Gonzalez began the 2016 monitoring review by explaining that long-term data was collected in 2016 to put annual use indicators into context. If annual use guidance is met from year to year, there is a presumption that long-term conditions should be stable or show improvement over time. However, realistically, there may be good years and bad years, where, in the bad years, annual use exceeds allowable levels. Long-term indicators will smooth out the fluctuations expressed by using annual use data. Management objectives should be established based on long-term or baseline conditions; not annual use indicators.

Mr. Gonzalez reviewed the 2016 monitoring data for several but not all of the riparian areas. For each riparian system, the greenline³ species have been categorized into two categories - "stabilizers" and "early-seral". Stabilizer species are deep rooted species that provide excellent bank stability while early-seral species are considered disturbance species that come in after a disturbance. Early-seral species are typically weakly rooted plants, which do not provide a great deal of soil stabilization properties.

Long-Term Vegetation Rating Parameters

Greenline Ecological Status

Site Wetland Rating

Winward Greenline Stability Rating

Mr. Gonzalez provided an overview of three long-term vegetation parameters (inset) used to evaluate the current condition of each riparian area. As outlined in the Multiple Indicator Monitoring (MIM) protocol, a numerical value is assigned to each plant measured in the greenline and when collectively added together produce a disturbance index known as the **ecological status**. An "early" ecological status indicates a site that is constantly and consistently disturbed. Another useful rating is the site's **Wetland Rating**, which indicates how wet the plants are. A "high" wetland rating indicates the right plants are growing in the right place. A "fair"

wetland rating means that the greenline is moving up due to disturbance, bank shearing, etc. The **Winward Greenline Stability Rating** is a rating of the overall stability of the greenline, which is based on the percentage of stabilizer and early-seral plants in the greenline. On sites that are vegetation dependent for bank stability, a stability rating of 80 or higher is desirable. Using these protocol values, long-term management objectives can be developed based on long-term indicators; rather than using annual use indicators.

Beginning with Fire Creek, which has the highest riparian potential and value because it has the largest volume of spring discharge in the allotment, approximately half (49%) of the greenline community are classified as stabilizers (bull rush,

³ The perennial vegetation occurring on the water's edge.

Baltic/Arctic rush, Nebraska sedge, Woods' rose). Other species such as curly dock, ragwort, etc., fall in the early-seral category and provide very little bank protection.

Mr. Gonzalez briefly addressed a proposal to construct a fence with either water gaps or off-site water, which Mr. Gonzalez believes would achieve attainment of the area's management objectives. With their rhizome root system, stabilizer species have a tremendous capacity to dominate a site, if provided sufficient rest. The proposed fence would provide for the rest necessary to see improvement in the stabilizer species on the Fire Creek site.

Table 2 provides a summary of the streambank and vegetation ratings for nine riparian systems in the Argenta allotment.

Table 2 Summary Streambank and Vegetation Ratings by Riparian Area						
Riparian Area Stream	Streambank Summary			Vegetation Rating		
	Alteration (%)	Stability (%)	Cover (%)	Greenline Ecological Status	Site Wetland Rating	Winward Greenline Stability Rating
Fire Creek	26	73	94	Early	Fair	Mid
Ferris Creek	5	72	80	Early	Fair	Low
Indian Creek	11	73	94	Mid	Fair	Mid
Corral Canyon	0	87	99	Early	Fair	Low
Slaven	1	79	96	Early	Fair	Low
The Park	15	91	99	Early	Fair	Mid
Crippen Creek	6	60	69	Early	Fair	Mid
Trout Creek	1	100	100	Early	Good	Low
North Fork of Mill Creek	40	84	93	Very Early	Good	Low

Key points for each riparian area/stream made in the presentation are summarized below.

Ferris Creek

The height of the willow plants has been historically suppressed by grazing. The 2015 browse level on the riparian vegetation was 60 to 70 percent where, in 2016, that level was under 30 percent. The leaders of the browse vegetation are beginning to reach a 5-foot height, which is the level where they cannot be reached by livestock.

A Round 2 enclosure was proposed but not constructed at this site in 2016. Stockmanship practices in this area clearly made a difference by allowing regrowth of the herbaceous species to occur.

Indian Creek

The monitoring site was moved in 2016 due to the previous site being totally dry. The new site is a ground water discharge reach with a high-water table and a good herbaceous community with Nebraska sedge. There are fish in deep pools.

There is a high percentage of early-seral vegetation species along the greenline. Important stabilizer species (Nebraska sedge, Woods' rose, Drummond's willow, Arctic rush) are present on the site but in very low numbers.

Mr. Gonzalez recommended some growing-season deferment in 2017 to improve plant composition, increased composition of bank stabilizers, and good forage plants.

Corral Canyon

It will be important to control grazing during the hot season as well as fall grazing when woody plants are most susceptible to browsing.

Ratfink

This stream received a runoff event in 2015 that significantly damaged the stream channel. In 2016, a riparian enclosure was constructed. Many of the stabilizer species and, in particular, Woods' Rose, had significant new growth coming from their rhizomes. Other herbaceous species (Annual rabbitsfoot grass and Arctic rush) were also sprouting profusely.

It was recommended that long-term baseline data be collected at this site in May to early-June 2017.

Slaven

Composition of the site, which contains a large percentage of early-seral plants and a limited number of stabilizer species, is a concern. Upstream from the monitoring site is a large percentage of stabilizer species (bulrush; cattails, sedges, etc.), which is indicative of the appropriate building blocks being in the drainage.

Construction of the riparian enclosure in 2016 (R1 project) should help establishment of additional stabilizer species along the channel.

Rock Creek

Rock Creek is a complicated site considering its steep gradient. Below the drift fence, the drainage has very steep sides which end immediately at the water's edge where there is a mature stand of clump willows. Upstream of the drift fence is a broader valley, which serves as a concentration point for livestock. It will be important to discuss the future of the drift fence, which should be a management tool that helps resource conditions on both sides of the fence. In this instance, the drift fence is working as a tool downstream but creating management/resource issues upstream.

The browse species, particularly willow, are consistently grazed late in the season as upland vegetation cures out and loses palatability. This is a seasonal grazing issue that needs to be addressed.

Paul Tomera indicated that while in the field recently, a proposal was raised to construct temporary electric fencing in this area to address the issues raised by Mr. Gonzalez. Mr. Gonzalez indicated that the site and terrain are conducive to using a temporary electric fence with good access, being relatively flat, etc.

Mr. Gonzalez indicated that long-term monitoring data was not collected at this site, which was established late in the summer of 2016 after an extensive stratification effort in 2015 and early 2016. The new site was selected after completing field inspections of several reaches of the stream to ensure the reach was the most sensitive riparian complex. He recommended collection of long-term (baseline) data be collected in May to early June 2017.

Ms. Lynn Tomera asked if the intermittent stream would have an effect on willow growth. Mr. Gonzalez indicated that while water is not observed on the surface, the presence of riparian woody species (such as willow) indicates they are drawing water during the growing season from a subsurface source, which is why he is recommending monitoring focus on woody species rather than herbaceous species.

Mr. Steve Leonard indicated there is good data on potential concerning perennial sites; however, it is more difficult to determine potential on intermittent sites. With riparian woody species present on the site in substantial numbers, it is recognized that they are reaching the water table and have a chance to reproduce.

The Park

While The Park contains a good remnant population of stabilizers such as Arctic rush and Nebraska sedge, it will be necessary to shift the relative balance from early-seral and weakly-rooted plants to a larger percentage of stabilizer species. To accomplish this goal, periodic deferment from grazing during the growing season (particularly during hot season grazing) will be necessary so that the plants are able to rebuild their root systems and recharge their vigor.

The Park is an area well suited for temporary electric fencing as a management tool. Other options (off-site water) could be explored to draw and keep livestock off riparian areas.

Crippen Creek

Most of the physical stability of this site is provided by rock; rather than vegetation. Due to the rocky substrate and steep gradient, the potential of this site is a shrub dominated community. Approximately one-third of the greenline is vegetated with woody stabilizer species. The herbaceous community should decline in importance if the woody species continue to establish and grow. If the herbaceous component decreases, it was suggested that, at some point in time, it might be possible to drop the stubble height requirement on herbaceous species and monitor exclusively on woody browse species.

Trout Creek

While there is good diversity and remnants of desirable plant species, overall the preponderance of species are early-seral, weakly rooted plants. Of note was the lack of Nebraska sedge and Arctic rush plants, which could retard the rate of recovery. Deferring hot-season grazing when upland plants lose their palatability would be a recommended management strategy for this site.

North Fork of Mill Creek

This stream has the highest imbalance of plants on the allotment with 84% being early-seral, weakly rooted plants and 5% being stabilizing species, which is indicative of an area that has been disturbed for a very long period of time. Construction of the Round 2 exclosure, which was approved in mid-October 2016, should easily achieve the management objectives.

Mill Creek

This site was fenced by a Round 1 exclosure constructed in 2016. The fence appears to have reduced but not entirely eliminated the practice of grading road material into the channel. There is evidence the exclosure is not entirely effective in keeping livestock out and livestock are able to gain access to the exclosure at the lower stream crossing where there is a significant gap below the lower rail. **ACTION ITEM:** The Mount Lewis Field Office staff and/or permittees should inspect the Mill Creek exclosure fence to determine where livestock are gaining access and repair the problem area.

Long-term (baseline) data should be collected in May to early June 2017.

Harry Canyon

This stream was stratified in 2016 and appears to violate a few site selection criteria. There is a road that parallels the monitoring site, which affects animal movement. The site is a lentic⁴ site; rather than a lotic⁵ site. MIM protocol is for lotic monitoring; therefore, this site is not a perfect fit.

The site contains a substantial amount of spikerush, which is not the most palatable plant nor an ideal species to monitor. Mr. Gonzalez's recommendation is to monitor browsing on willows; rather than annual use on herbaceous plants. Mr. Sam Ault noted that the amount of water production from the source spring will affect how far the riparian area reaches downstream. Mr. Gonzalez noted that the spring serves as a point of diversion for water tanks in the Carrico Lake allotment.

At best, the current site may function as a critical Designated Monitoring Area (DMA); not a representative DMA.

⁴ (of organisms or habitats) inhabiting or situated in still, fresh water.

⁵ (of organisms or habitats) inhabiting or situated in rapidly moving fresh water.

Perennial reaches of the stream in Harry Canyon are very limited (approximately 600 meters in length of which 350 meter in the Carrico Lake allotment and 250 meters in the Argenta allotment). While the perennial reach is a valuable resource, it is manipulated for livestock watering purposes and its water availability is irregular.

It is recommended that livestock access to the perennial reaches be controlled and provide off-stream water sources. Mr. Schweigert suggested this recommendation would also apply to the short perennial reaches in The Park use area. Mr. Gonzalez suggested that the GPRT and the Mount Lewis Field Office staff may want to discuss the possibility of using “shrub” corrals to control livestock access to the perennial reaches of stream. “Shrub” corrals could be constructed from juniper trees that are cut and stacked. It is possible that juniper encroachment has adversely affected the spring’s volume.

In closing, Mr. Gonzalez used a cartoon diagram (Figure 2) to display what is happening on many sites in the Argenta allotment. The upper left diagram depicts a site dominated by stabilizer riparian plants which have a strong, highly developed root mass, which provides the physical stability of the streambank.

In highly disturbed systems, there is a “post holing” phenomenon (lower right diagram), which create voids and severs the root system. Severing the root system compromises the plant’s health and vigor in subsequent years, which eventually leads to a change in the site’s composition. The plant’s first priority is to repair the root system before producing above ground biomass. The voids can (and do) fill up as sediment as the stream periodically floods the greenline; however, the voids typically are inhabited with early-seral plants, which have a lower forage value and weaker root systems.

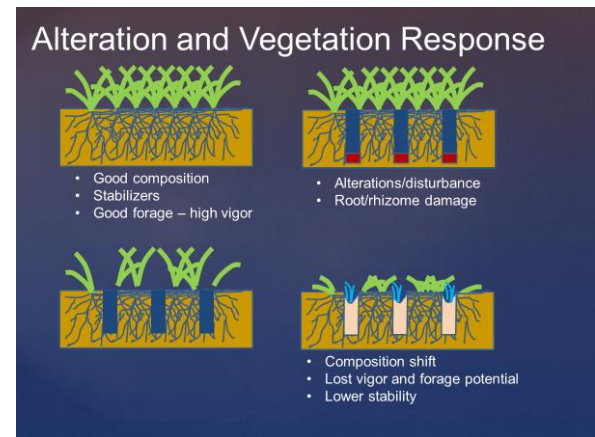


FIGURE 2

2016 IN-SEASON MONITORING OVERVIEW

Ms. Jamie DaFoe provided an overview of the 2016 utilization monitoring process and data, which is summarized below.

In March 2016, the CMG agreed to complete in-season monitoring every 30 days in those use areas where 2015 use exceeded or may have exceeded annual-use levels set in the Settlement Agreement. Within-season monitoring maintains an awareness of forage utilization, which is important for allowing the permittees sufficient time to move livestock as trigger points are being approached. Triggers were a percentage of use that would prompt livestock movement. During the 30-day rotation schedule, once a certain utilization percentage (above the trigger level) was achieved, subsequent monitoring time periods were reduced to every seven days.

During the grazing season, staff from Intermountain Range Consultants (IRC) collected utilization data approximately every 30 days. Members of the CMG and individuals on the CMG mailing list were extended an open invitation to participate in collecting utilization data; however, the majority of the time it was only the IRC staff in the field.

Although the 2016 Stockmanship Plan designated livestock rotation patterns, monitoring activities were prompted when livestock were observed in a use area regardless of the designated rotation pattern. If livestock were not observed in a use area, monitoring was not conducted. Once cattle were removed from an area, utilization monitoring occurred as part of the 30-day rotation schedule; not necessarily immediately after livestock removal. If cattle did not return to a use area, the area was not monitored again during the year.

There were areas which experienced livestock drift and depending on the amount of drift and other workloads, a decision was made on a case-by-case basis to (or not to) collect additional monitoring data.

IN-SEASON UPLAND MONITORING

On upland monitoring sites, water hauling and placement of mineral supplements were effective methods for controlling livestock distribution away from riparian areas. In 2016, there was not one occasion on upland sites where utilization monitoring identified a trigger being reached thus prompting livestock movement. In general, most utilization levels are very low.

In 2016, height/weight curves were developed for two upland species. When the end-of-season monitoring was conducted at the Trout Creek site, based on the ecological site description for that site, Slender Wheatgrass was added.

ACTION ITEM: Considering the lack of issues identified and the cost of monitoring upland sites, the frequency of upland monitoring will be reduced in 2017.

IN-SEASON RIPARIAN MONITORING

Early in 2016, efforts were made to determine how and how much short-term utilization monitoring should be completed as the Agreement addressed stubble height and woody browse utilization. Bank alteration and other MIM indicators were not considered.

As utilization triggers were approached, permittees were kept abreast of the situation. Except for one site,⁶ riparian monitoring sites did not begin to reach threshold levels until August.

There were some drift issues encountered; however, no additional details were provided. (See monthly CMG reports from Tomeras)

The North Fork of Mill Creek site is not reported on the in-season riparian stubble height report (Table 3) as it reached the 4-inch stubble height threshold by the time the team completed the baseline monitoring in June 2016. Additional monitoring of that site was not conducted after that time frame as the threshold had already been met. Mr. Schweigert added that Tomera Ranches did not place livestock in the North Fork of Mill Creek area because there was a significant livestock drift problem, which will need to be addressed as part of the 2017 Stockmanship Plan. (The construction of a fence on private land, plus the completed R2 fence, should assist with drift issues,)

Table 3 2016 In-Season Riparian Stubble Heights			
Key Area	Date	Stubble Height (Inches)	Woody Use (%)
Lewis			
Crippen Creek	August 18	6	11.0
Crippen Creek	September 15	4.2	10.0
Ferris			
Ferris	August 16	7	12.0
Ferris	September 16	4	11.5
Trout Creek			
Trout Creek	July 17	7	n/a
Trout Creek	August 16	6	n/a
Maysville North			
The Park	July 17	14	n/a
The Park	August 15	5	n/a
The Park	September 16	3.69	n/a
Fire Creek			

⁶The North Fork of Mill Creek site reached the 4-inch trigger level in June. .

Fire Creek	May 16	14	
Fire Creek	June 16	10	
Fire Creek	July 17	15	
Fire Creek	August 18	7	15
Fire Creek	August 30	7	17

In concluding her presentation, Ms. DaFoe indicated that the riparian stubble height monitoring results support the need for additional infrastructure such as permanent water sites. Hauling water was successful but is very expensive and not a good long-term solution.

2016 END-OF-SEASON RIPARIAN MONITORING

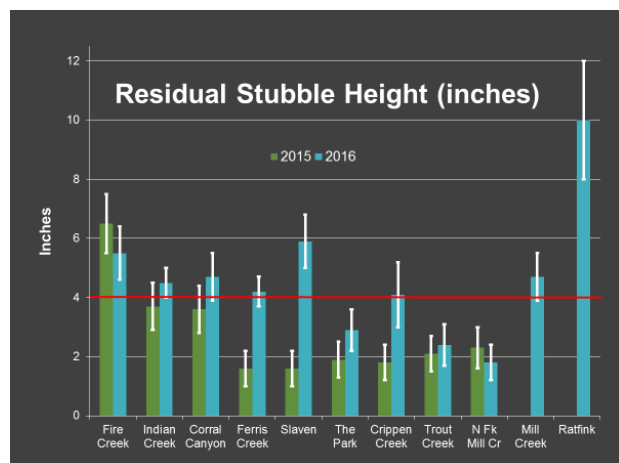


FIGURE 3

Mr. Sam Ault provided an overview of the 2016 end-of-season riparian monitoring including both herbaceous and woody species on eleven DMAs.

In terms of residual stubble height on herbaceous vegetation (Figure 3), 4 of the 11 DMAs were successful in not meeting met thresholds. Four of the 11 DMAs were more likely than not to not have met thresholds and may have been successful. Three of the DMAs were clearly not successful and met thresholds. . On the “more likely than not to not have met” DMAs, the average residual stubble height readings were above the 4-inch stubble height threshold; however, the lower end of the 95 percent confidence interval was either at or below the threshold level. Mr. Lunn suggested the term “did not meet” in describing attainment of the threshold is confusing and may need to be explored. Not attaining the 4-inch threshold is a good thing.

From a woody browse standpoint, the threshold utilization level was 30 percent. One DMA (Rock Creek) met the 30% threshold level. One of the DMAs were more likely than not to have met thresholds and may have not been successful. Two of the DMAs were more likely than not to not have met thresholds and may have been successful. 4 DMAs⁷ did not meet the 30% threshold level (Figure 4).

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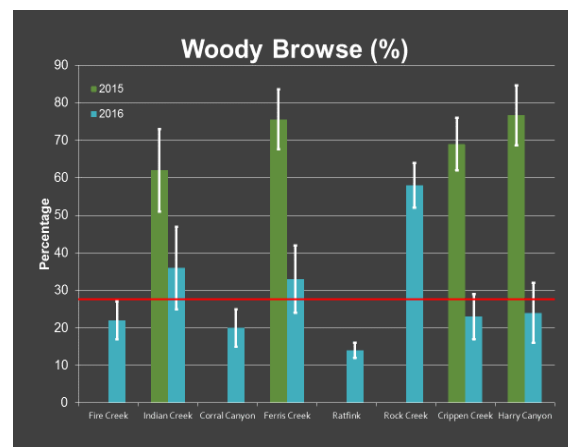


FIGURE 4

⁷ Fire Creek, Corral Canyon, Ratfink, Crippen Creek.

Mr. Ault reviewed the herbaceous stubble height and woody utilization levels for each DMA (Table 4). Key points and questions raised during the discussion are addressed below. Some discussions were duplicative of areas discussed by Mr. Gonzalez in his *2016 Riparian Overview* presentation. Where possible, the duplication was not repeated below.

Table 4 2016 Herbaceous Stubble Height and Woody Utilization by DMA				
DMA	Herbaceous Stubble Height		Woody Utilization	
	Average (Inches)	Confidence Interval (Inches)	Average Utilization (%)	Confidence Interval (%)
Corral Canyon	4.7	1.1	20	5
Crippen Creek	4.1	1.1	23	6
Ferris Creek	4.2	0.5	33	9
Fire Creek	5.5	0.9	22	5
Harry Canyon	n/a	n/a	24	8
Indian Creek	4.5	0.5	36	11
Mill Creek	4.7	0.8		
North Fork of Mill Creek	1.8	0.6		
Ratfink	10.0	2.0	14	2
Rock Creek			58	6
Slaven	5.9	0.9		
The Park	2.9	0.5		
Trout Creek	2.4	0.7		

Corral Canyon

This site was grazed by C Ranches who has a lease for the area. A boundary fence is proposed for construction, after which Corral Canyon will be part of the Tomera Ranches area of use.

The monitoring area is moderately sloped with a high-water table that favors a diverse mix of herbaceous and woody riparian species. The steep gradient favors recruitment and establishment of woody riparian plants, which may need to be a long-term management objective.

Crippen Creek

The potential of this site is a shrub-dominated riparian community and currently approximately one-third of the greenline is vegetated with woody stabilizer species. The herbaceous community should decline in density and importance if the woody species continue to establish and grow at this site. If that occurs, at some point in the future, the CMG should consider not monitoring the herbaceous residual stubble height and focus exclusively on woody browse utilization.

Ferris Creek

There was a dramatic improvement in herbaceous use levels in 2016 as compared to 2015, primarily due to Stockmanship efforts made by the permittees. Riding efforts also resulted in regrowth occurring on herbaceous species. Utilization of woody browse species was also lower in 2016 as compared to 2015. The permittees did not place livestock in this area but spent time riding to remove drift livestock.

Mr. Dan Tomera asked why the size of the CI was 0.5 inches in Ferris Creek when the CI for Corral Canyon and Crippen Creek were 1.1 inches. Mr. Ault explained that the CI varies based on site variability and sample size. The CI will be smaller when the site variability (or heterogeneity) is smaller and when the sample size is larger. In some circumstances, where the sample size appears to be low, sampling was intensified to reduce the CI and increase the certainty of the data.

Mr. Mark Gonzalez added that long-term data was collected in June (2016), which should provided an indication of the abundance of certain key species.

Fire Creek

Use in 2016 was higher as compared to 2015. It will be important in the future to manage for stabilizing riparian vegetation to address several knick points in the streambed. Bank alteration remains high and is adversely affecting the establishment and growth of desirable stabilizing plants. The proposed riparian fencing and hardened water gaps should assist in riparian management and resource conditions on Fire Creek.

Mr. Steve Cote asked if the Klondex mine was going to address the erosion and head cutting issues on Fire Creek. Mr. Ault indicated that the company intends to address the erosion issues but BLM has not received a proposal from the company at this time. Mr. Shawn Mariluch indicated that a phased approach to addressing the erosion will be necessary. The initial phase will be fencing and off-site water, which will be followed by spreaders and working on the head cut. The company is consulting with a third-party hydrologist to develop the details of a proposal.

Harry Canyon

No 2016 herbaceous stubble height information was collected at this site.

Mr. Dan Tomera asked if there was a proposal to develop off-site water in Harry Canyon. Mr. Ault indicated that there is a water pipeline upstream from the DMA from which water is drawn for the Carrico Lake allotment. There is concern that drawing water from the spring/pipeline for the Carrico Lake allotment could adversely affect the water flowing through the DMA. There is not a proposal for off-site water in Harry Canyon but the water pipeline upstream was identified as a potential compounding factor.

Mr. Paul Tomera asked if it might be possible to tap into the pipeline for a potential off-site water source in Harry Canyon. Mr. Ault indicated that there is potential for tapping into the pipeline; however, contact would have to be made with Ellison Ranching Company who owns the water right.

Indian Creek

Relocation of the DMA (as discussed previously by Mr. Gonzalez) complicates a direct comparison between 2016 and earlier data.

Tomera Ranches did not place livestock in this area; however, C Ranches did.

Mill Creek

Mr. Gonzalez indicated that the species composition at this site contains the appropriate stabilizing species but in relative low density, which is why so many samples were collected. Having never collected monitoring data at this site, one purpose was to develop an inventory of the species located on the site.

North Fork of Mill Creek

This area received use from drift livestock and the 2016 Stockmanship Plan was not followed. Livestock entered the use area early and riparian triggers were exceeded by early June. An exclosure is planned to be constructed in 2017.

Ratfink

Mr. Dan Tomera noted that severe erosion observed in 2015 was caused by several events; not just one.

Rock Creek

Ms. DaFoe indicated that the 2016 Stockmanship Plan may have hindered riparian improvement at this site.

The Park

Mr. Ault suggested more riding, use of supplements, and seasonal use limits should be continued or expanded in 2017.

Following the presentation, Mr. Steve Cote asked if use by wildlife is taken into account during monitoring efforts. Mr. Ault indicated that use by wildlife is noted in the field notes. If there are areas with continued issues associated with wildlife use, NDOW typically will consider increasing the number of hunting licenses issued for that area. Ms. Dyer noted that the overall utilization percentage documents the use by all herbivores and is not identified by type of animal (livestock, wildlife, etc.) Mr. Schweigert noted that in the Carrico Lake allotment (just south of the Argenta allotment) there are several “cattle only” enclosure where aspen new growth was being severely impacted by deer. In response to that use, the enclosure was redesigned to exclude deer, which successfully addressed the aspen regeneration issue. Mr. Gonzalez described a situation in the Malheur National Forest where browse measurements are taken prior to livestock entering an area and then again after livestock have been removed. It was suggested that a picture and some notes addressing use of woody species would be helpful when the livestock are removed. Mr. Leonard indicated that if there is a concern with wildlife use on browse specie, he likes to collect browse utilization data prior to livestock entering an area, similar to what is done in the Malheur National Forest. If browse utilization levels has been met, it doesn't mean livestock shouldn't be allowed to use the site but livestock grazing should not further increase the level of utilization. Not all members of the CMG agreed with Mr. Leonard's statement.

2016 END-OF-YEAR UPLAND MONITORING

Mr. Ken Vicencio provided an overview of the 2016 end-of-year upland monitoring information, which included herbaceous and woody species. A list of scientific and common species names was provided (Attachment 2) to the CMG.

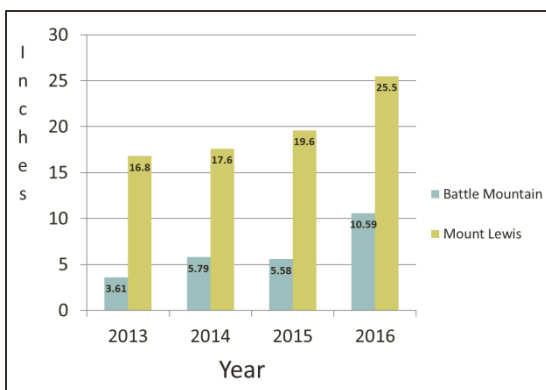


FIGURE 5

There have been several comments relating to the amount of spring forage available in 2016 on the uplands.

Figure 5 provides a summary of the precipitation received from October to May between 2013 and 2016 for two recording stations.

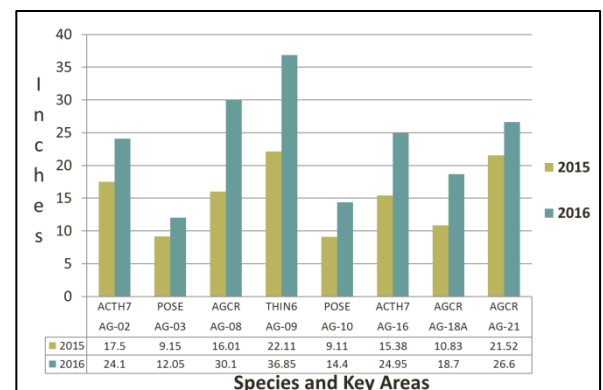


FIGURE 6

The significantly higher precipitation received in 2016 is reflected as one of the factors that contributed to the higher average key species height between 2015 and 2016 (Figure 6).

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HERBACEOUS UTILIZATION OVERVIEW

A summary of the average herbaceous utilization by key management area is provided in Figure 7. In summary, no site showed an average herbaceous utilization level above 45 percent (when considering the CI). The utilization threshold for all use areas (except Mule Canyon) was set at 40 percent and Mule Canyon was set at 50 percent.

Data from each monitoring site was reviewed but not summarized in these minutes.

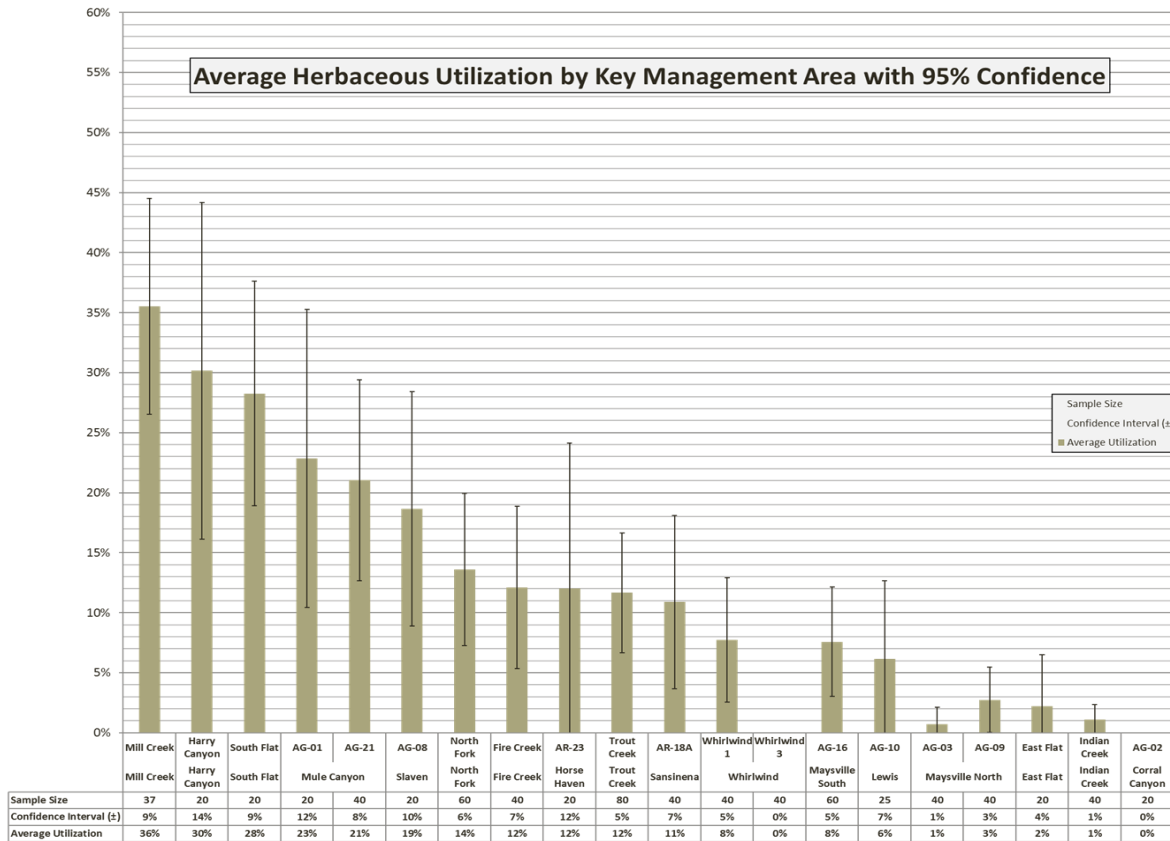


FIGURE 7

It was noted that a review of the key species might be in order for the North Fork site. Ms. DaFoe indicated that after reviewing the ecological site description for this site, she believes the key species should be Slender Wheatgrass. This site is difficult to monitor as the species composition will vary depending on the location of the transect, which is indicative of a microsite. To address this problem, it will be important the same bearing is taken each time the transect is read.

Mr. Paul Tomera noted that livestock were introduced into the Slaven use area in May, which was earlier than outlined in the 2016 Stockmanship Plan due to the concentration of cheatgrass. Cattle remained in the area throughout the summer. Solar powered troughs were placed in the area to improve livestock distribution across the use area.

WOODY UTILIZATION OVERVIEW

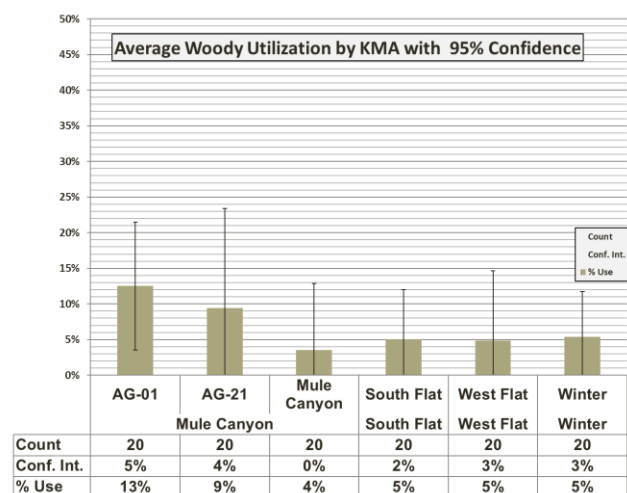


FIGURE 8

Figure 8 depicts the average woody utilization results on six key monitoring areas in four use areas.

There was discussion concerning the Mule Canyon key management area in relation to possible past vegetation manipulation practices that may have occurred, which created an unusual mosaic of brown strips. It was suggested that the mosaic of brown strips could have been the result of a Wildland Urban Interface project. Representatives of Tomera Ranches indicated that the project was done within the past year but no one apparently knows who was responsible for it.

2016 GRAZING MANAGEMENT REVIEW & 2017 STOCKMANSHIP PLAN

Mr. Steve Leonard combined an overview of the 2016 grazing management with the 2017 Stockmanship Plan during his presentation.

Mr. Leonard summarized several areas addressed during the 2016 monitoring overview presentations including upland use thresholds being met on most, if not all, use areas. The average utilization in Harry Canyon was 30% +/- 14%. It is likely the prescribed utilization levels in the settlement agreement (40%) were not met or crossed. The average utilization in Mill Creek was 35% +/- 9%. It is likely the prescribed utilization levels in the settlement agreement (40%) were not met or crossed.

Progress was made in 2016 on meeting both residual herbaceous and woody browse thresholds on riparian DMAs. As agreed in 2015, the CMG will continue to use the decision tree outlined in Appendix 1 of the Agreement to address 2016 areas of concern.

In 2016, significant progress was made in establishing long-term monitoring sites on the Argenta allotment. The few remaining areas of use will have long-term monitoring sites established in 2017. With the long-term monitoring sites in place, it will be possible to relate annual use indicators to long-term objectives, which also are scheduled to be developed in 2017 through the grazing permit renewal process.

A 2016 goal was to implement protection of the most sensitive riparian areas through construction of Round 1 and 2 projects; however, completion of Round 2 projects was not completed in 2016.

Another 2016 goal was to begin development of a longer-term grazing plan and infrastructure; however, this effort has been delayed until the long-term objectives are developed. Mr. Leonard indicated that monitoring locations have been established for short-term use indicators and that it will be interesting to see how those sites will relate to the rangeland health indicators and if the monitoring locations will still be appropriate.

As expected, it was necessary to adjust the 2016 Stockmanship Plan as the summer unfolded. Key adjustments are summarized below.

- There were some issues with removal of livestock from Mule, Crippen, Trout, and North Fork of Mill in July. Cattle were removed but they drifted back into those areas.
- Livestock were moved into Slaven in May, which was earlier than planned (July) to take advantage of the cheatgrass growth.
- The North Fork of Mill Creek and the Ferris use areas were not used as planned as they had received use by drift livestock. A significant amount of time was spent repeatedly riding areas where livestock had been removed to

ensure livestock did not return or drift livestock did not enter the area. A possible solution to address this concern may be temporary electric fencing and/or completion of Round 2 projects.

Table 5 provides an overview of the presentation and discussion associated with the 2016 grazing accomplishments to demonstrate progress required by the Agreement and suggested proposed 2017 actions.

Table 5 2016 Grazing Accomplishments and Proposed 2017 Actions by Objective			
Objective	2016		2017
	Planned Actions	Accomplishments	Proposed Actions
Light use on key upland species	Disperse early season use to minimize active growth utilization (except Fire Creek and Sansinena for rotation).		Continue 2016 actions.
	Defer late season use in Mule, Crippen, Trout, North Fork of Mill Creek, and Fire Creek.		
	Defer use in Sansinena until after seed ripe.		
	Use Stockmanship and multiple supplement stations where possible with smaller groups to avoid habituation to local areas and concentrated trailing.	Overall, Stockmanship worked relatively well but there were issues with riders over the course of the summer.	
Meet riparian stubble height and woody browse use limits.	Disperse early season use when riparian use is minimal.	Overall, the grazing system and efforts worked well in dispersing livestock.	Continue 2016 actions.
	Defer late season use in Mule, Crippen, Trout, North Fork of Mill Creek, and Fire Creek to facilitate regrowth.		Consider using Slaven later in the grazing season (late summer/fall) as it does not have riparian issues.
	Use strategically placed water developments/haul to attract livestock from riparian areas.	Water was developed in the Slaven use area.	Submit an application for a water haul site in the Slaven use area (south of Miller Pit) to take advantage of annual grass growth late in the grazing season.
		At least one site on private land was explored for hauling water on Rock Creek.	
		A spring development was completed in the Mule Canyon use area. ⁸	Additional water will be developed on non-federal land in Fire Creek.
	Focus on Stockmanship efforts and multiple supplement stations where possible to place dispersed groups in suitable upland areas.		
	Improvements and allotment boundary adjustments – Round 2 and additional electric fence/private fence.	The boundary fence was not completed but is being discussed with Barrick Gold today (11/26/2016).	Complete Round 2 projects. If Round 2 projects cannot be accomplished, explore use of temporary electric fencing to address residual riparian vegetation and livestock drift issues. ⁹
			Construct a private fence on the North Fork of Mill Creek to minimize or prevent drifting livestock.
			Open gates in the Rock Creek drift fence in August to prevent livestock from congregating above the fence.

2017 GRAZING GOALS

The 2017 grazing goals are to continue (1) demonstrating progress required by the Agreement and (2) addressing emerging sage-grouse issues.

⁸ There is concern with the amount of flow being received from this spring source. The original application was for two springs and two troughs; however, only one spring and one trough was approved.

⁹ Areas identified for temporary electric fencing include Rock Creek, , and The Park. Trout Creek was mentioned as a possible future consideration for fencing, but a fence was not formally recommended by NRST at this time. NRST agreed to re-review this fencing request in the future, if needed/appropriate. Laura noted that, if understanding correctly, she doesn't think additional fencing request (beyond temporary electric) are going to be considered at his time – given permit renewal.

DEMONSTRATING PROGRESS REQUIRED BY THE AGREEMENT

Objectives for demonstrating progress required by the Agreement will be the same and/or similar as those outlined for 2016.

ADDRESSING EMERGING SAGE-GROUSE ISSUES

There are no objectives at this time associated with addressing emerging sage-grouse issues. Establishing objectives requires having representative ecological sites evaluated relative to the habitat objectives outlined in the ARMPA.

In the interim, surrogate actions (below) as proposed in 2016 are recommended for 2017.

Surrogate Action 1: *Disperse use at light use level from April 1 to June 30 (RMPA nesting period) to maintain residual and livestock perennial grass cover where shrub cover is less than 25 percent and minimize concentrated disturbance.*

Mr. Leonard suggested that actions taken in 2016 were effective. It is proposed to continue similar actions in 2017.

Surrogate Action 2: *Deferment of select use areas to maintain upland and near riparian cover and height during late brood rearing as well as progress toward PFC.*

Despite the issues experienced in 2016 associated with return drift and livestock congregating in Rock Creek, progress was made in riparian areas. Completion of Round 2 projects and use of temporary electric fencing will result in additional progress being made in 2017. With the exception of Rock Creek, Mr. Leonard believes that within a 200-meter zone immediately adjacent to the riparian area, livestock use levels were very low.

Surrogate Action 3: *Use developed/hailed water to attract use away from riparian areas during brood rearing.*

Hauling water was effective in 2016 in dispersing livestock use into upland areas. Additional water development/hauling on private land is being considered for 2017. The permittees are hopeful the GPRT will identify additional proposals to make developed/hailed water a more permanent solution.

Surrogate Action 4: *Use Stockmanship and temporary electric fences to minimize riparian and near riparian use during brood rearing as well as maintaining upland perennial grass and forb cover.*

Temporary electric fencing would be an excellent temporary, low impact, low cost, and safe tool for jumping starting some riparian areas, including those that serve as brood rearing habitat.

2017 STOCKMANSHIP PLANS

The 2017 Stockmanship Plan for each of the three distinct grazing operations (inset) within the Argenta allotment were summarized by displaying a general use map. The generalized actions addressed in Table 5 were specifically tailored to each individual livestock operation.

Mr. Leonard summarized that progress was made in 2016 on the riparian areas and feels additional progress will be made in 2017 if Round 2 projects are completed and temporary electric fencing can be used. Stockmanship efforts will be continued into 2017, noting that it usually takes approximately three years after major livestock management changes are made for those changes to be most effective. The 2017 Stockmanship Plan proposes to continue dispersement of early season use and deferment of late season use in specific areas as was the approach taken in 2016.

Distinct Livestock Operations in the Argenta Allotment

Dan and EddyAnn Filippini

Shawn and Angie Mariluch

Tomera Ranches

General discussions relating to each general use area are summarized below. The 2017 general use maps for the Filippini, Mariluch, and Tomera Ranches operations are depicted in Attachments 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

Dan and EddyAnn Filippini

This operation utilizes the Mill Creek and Harry Canyon Use Areas. The primary approach will be dispersed use keeping the livestock spread out. There have been recent discussions addressing an issue of Filippini cattle mixing with Tomera livestock. There may be additional discussions associated with identifying separate use areas or allotments or other avenues to prevent the mixing of livestock.

Shawn and Angie Mariluch

Grazing would begin in the Fire Creek Use Area to utilize the upland areas early, which will minimize use of the riparian areas. Approximately June 1 the livestock will be moved into the Horse Haven and Whirlwind Valley Use Areas. Later in the season, after seed ripe, the livestock will be moved into the Sansinena Use Area where they will remain until either the use levels or the end of the season is reached.

Tomera Ranches

As on-the-ground conditions permit, livestock will be dispersed across the East Flat and West Flat Use Areas (blue arrows on map). As early as conditions will allow, some livestock will be placed in the Mule Canyon Use Area. Using Stockmanship efforts, the livestock will be dispersed throughout these use areas. As conditions allow, livestock will be allowed to move up the mountain as early as possible, again, maintaining dispersal through Stockmanship efforts (white arrows on map).

In early to mid-July, livestock will be removed from the Mule Canyon, Crippen, Trout, North Fork, and Mule Canyon use areas and placed with the rest of the livestock in Maysville North and South (yellow arrows on map). Stockmanship efforts will focus on riparian areas. As use levels are reached or in early September (whichever comes first), livestock will be moved into Slaven (depending on the cheatgrass growth) or the East and West Flat Use Areas.

Ms. Dyer stated that the monthly reports have been informative and helpful.

Mr. Steve Cote asked Mr. John Sherve for his perspective on use of temporary electric fencing to address some of the issues discussed earlier in the day. Mr. Sherve indicated that factors such as the length of fencing, area where it is being proposed, acres affected or enclosed, etc., will need to be considered. Mr. Adam Cochran explained that a distinction between permanent and temporary fencing is not made when approving and permitting range improvements. Small enclosures may be authorized under the Categorical Exclusion (CX) authority. Other types of fencing such as gap fencing are not permitted under the CX authority and will require completion of an EA, unless there is another document to tier to such as the drought EA but we'd need to be in a drought situation.

Mr. Shawn Mariluch suggested the Agreement might be the appropriate document that gives authority to make necessary management improvements (i.e., lower utilization levels, riparian improvement, etc.) (Note: the settlement agreement does not replace the need to conduct NEPA). Mr. Schweigert noted that the Agreement provided for up to three larger enclosures, of which the Fire Creek enclosure was one (NF Mill and Ferris were the other two).

Mr. Sherve indicated that there are options available such as reviewing the drought EA to determine if it contains the appropriate analysis or expanding other documents being currently being prepared (i.e., the South Boundary fence) to address temporary electric fencing proposals.

Ms. Lynn Tomera asked how a "small enclosure" is defined. Ms. Dyer indicated that a definition is not provided in the CX handbook.

Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that the Slaven enclosure was small enough (approximately a quarter mile in length) to be permitted through the CX process; however, the North Fork enclosure is a larger project that was addressed through the Round 2 project EA. Mr. Tomera did not believe the other projects (i.e., Hilltop Canyon, Ferris Creek, Trout Creek, Rock

Creek) were going to be any larger than the Slaven enclosure; therefore, could be authorized through the CX process. The Park project may be larger and will need to include water gaps.

A question was asked if The Park project could be separated into two smaller projects, which would fit under the CX authority. Mr. Ault explained that even though small enclosures are separate projects, the cumulative impact of several projects begins to become an issue, which is why Mr. Ault recommended the option of incorporating the temporary electric fencing proposals within an EA currently being prepared.

A question was asked if the Sage-Grouse RMP amendment might be appropriate for authorizing the smaller projects. Ms. Dyer indicated that the level of analysis in the Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment EIS was at a level which did not address site-specific proposals.

A follow up question was asked if it would be prudent to identify the type of electric fence that would be desirable, the size of the area in question, the purpose of the fence, etc. Mr. Leonard indicated that it would be hard to identify a specific timeframe for which the temporary fence would be needed to establish sufficient residual vegetation.

Mr. Ken Cole asked if not using the affected use areas for two or three years might be a better option to achieve the same result. More and more “band-aid” fencing is being proposed. The Agreement specifically states if the end-of-season monitoring shows that the standards haven’t been met for two consecutive years, NRST and BLM will consider closing the use areas the following grazing season. Mr. Cole hasn’t heard that option mentioned once in the course of the discussion. It’s all about building a new fence or spring without ever having discussed reducing or eliminating grazing in these areas, which doesn’t seem to Mr. Cole to be good grazing management. These lands are public lands; not the permittee’s lands. The CMG needs to discuss solutions other than dumping a large sum of money in fencing and developments. These things traditionally are considered after the rangeland health assessment has been completed as part of the permit renewal process; not outside the permit renewal process as is being done here. Now we’re making an exception for the Argenta permittees and wanting to propose these projects outside of the permit renewal process.

Ms. Dyer indicated that she believes Mr. Cole’s statement is a broad overstatement and does not believe everyone else does it in the fashion described by Mr. Cole or that is the only way that it can be done legally or correctly. While the permit renewal process is a good way to do it, it is not the only or predominantly used way. Mr. Cole indicated that based on his experience, it is the predominantly avenue used. There are problems with cattle straying into areas where they are not supposed to be or straying back into areas that they’ve been removed from. For the past two years, we’ve been dancing around the idea that maybe there should be a reduction in grazing to respond to some of these problems. Mr. Schweigert asked if Mr. Cole had looked at the utilization levels, to which Mr. Cole indicated that he has. There are some places where the utilization standards have been exceeded two years in a row and it indicates in the Agreement that the NRTS and BLM will consider eliminating grazing from those use areas if that happens. Ms. Van Riper indicated that the Agreement states “If end of season use levels are exceeded two years in a row, the NRST and BLM will consider whether the Use Area needs to be rested in the following grazing year”.¹⁰ Mr. Cole indicated that he is not aware of the variety of ways that rest can be achieved.

Ms. Dyer indicated that the grazing response index outlined in the *Nevada Rancher’s Monitoring Guide*, and BLM TR 1737-20, refers to the plants ability to grow or regrow, which is accomplished by providing rest during the growing season. Grazing could occur outside of the growing season while still providing the rest required for the plant to have the opportunity to complete its annual growth/reproduction needs.

Mr. Dan Tomera indicated that he disagrees with the majority of Mr. Cole’s statement. Mr. Tomera disagreed that Stockmanship, fencing, moving livestock, etc., are not good management and that, in Mr. Cole’s opinion, good

¹⁰ Settlement Agreement at 6.10.

management is exclusion of livestock. Quite to the contrary, Mr. Tomera believes good management in multiple use situations is Stockmanship, moving of livestock, installing infrastructure beneficial to the resources, etc. Mr. Tomera believes Mr. Cole's logic is contrary to beneficial multiple use management.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that providing rest (drawing on concepts associated with the Grazing Response Index) was one of the topics discussed at length during Settlement Agreement negotiations. Data indicates that there are riparian issues, not use area issues, which is why discussions have focused more on infrastructure improvements such as temporary electric fencing. One potential solution is closure of the entire use area, which affects a very large area to address a very small issue. Mr. Cole indicated that he disagreed with Ms. Van Riper's assessment.

Ms. Jamie DaFoe indicated that there are areas where current fuel loads are 120 percent of normal. To close an entire use area, which would potentially inflate the fuel loading to address an issue in a small area doesn't make sense. The Rock Creek area was used as an example where the DMA was established in 2016. The existing fence has one gate that cattle have been using for over 20 years to go home. It doesn't seem appropriate to make a blatant statement that fences are being proposed everywhere to apply a "band-aid" approach. The CMG is addressing an issue that was identified by data obtained at a new DMA that did not exist prior to 2016.

Mr. Cole indicated that he takes issue with the "graze it/don't blaze it" approach. When the analysis of the Murphy fire was completed, the conclusion was reached that an area would have to be severely overgrazed to affect fire behavior. You could do that but there wouldn't be any remaining habitat for sage-grouse. Fires will burn and cheatgrass is a major driver of fires. Grazing creates additional opportunities for cheatgrass. It is a vicious circle where the only solution is to continue grazing or building fences. These landscapes didn't evolve with cattle or buffalo but with big horn sheep, pronghorn, and rabbits. Not large herbivores that are destroying the soil crust. Mr. Cole fundamentally disagrees that grazing is always the solution to the problem.

Mr. Lunn indicated that when different issues are examined, options including rest are identified to achieve the purpose of the Agreement, which states "set out the parameters for re-opening the temporarily closed Use Areas to grazing and for interim grazing management on the currently open Use Areas in the Argenta Allotment, using management techniques that are effective, feasible, and designed to achieve resource objectives."¹¹ Closing an area is one alternative but there are other alternatives. The purpose of the CMG is to maintain the livestock operations on the allotment. By law, you have to explore the "no grazing" alternative but the purpose of this group is somewhat different.

Mr. Cole indicated that there has been discussion of three exclosures involving temporary electric fencing, multiple exclosures built under Round 1, two in Round 2, and one more on Fire Creek that will be paid for by the Klondex mine. Mr. Cole believes that it is absurd when considered from a NEPA perspective and the cumulative impacts. Consideration of alternatives needs to be completed as part of the grazing permit renewal process after the rangeland health assessment has been completed.

Mr. Steve Leonard indicated that temporary electric fencing provides temporary rest where it is needed. Mr. Cole interrupted by stating that the rest could be achieved using other approaches. Mr. Leonard indicated that they have a difference of opinion as temporary electric fencing, which is just that – temporarily giving rest where it is needed and not giving rest to areas that don't require rest such as the upland areas.

Ms. Dyer reemphasized the point made by Ms. Van Riper where the Agreement states that rest should be examined when appropriate. Had the upland sites, which is the majority of the land mass, shown heavy use and/or large impacts, the CMG's discussion would have been much different. The CMG would have been looking at a larger need for change whereas we are currently experiencing concentrated problems. Ms. Dyer used an analogy of not replacing an entire roof

¹¹ Section 1 – Purpose of the Agreement.

to address an issue with a one-square foot section of that roof. When considering the larger context such as the entire allotment, appropriate use levels on key monitoring species indicate, to most people on the CMG, that the majority of use across the allotment is not detrimental. The CMG collectively has agreed there are some focused locations which could benefit from management changes, which could include infrastructure. As a multiple use agency, BLM would be remiss in its duties not to consider those opportunities.

Mr. Pete Tomera indicated that one stipulation in the Agreement was that whatever we do, the operation has to be feasible.¹² Closing off areas or the allotment would not result in a feasible livestock operation.

Mr. Cole indicated that he has seen electric fences on public land where so often those fences are not maintained and don't appear to be working half the time. The electric fences that he has seen working are those with big, new wire fences with insulators on the poles, which are also less than ideal. Mr. Cole is very skeptical that the electric fences will be maintained and operational. Mr. Cole indicated that it "sucks" when someone using public lands for recreational purposes comes to an electric fence and gets shocked by the fence. Multiple use doesn't mean all uses have to be implemented all the time everywhere. We're forgetting about other uses such as recreation, wildlife, etc. There are options other than grazing everywhere all the time and that needs to be considered.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that the grazing regulations do not require the permit renewal process be completed in order to construct infrastructure on an allotment. Mr. Schweigert believes the Agreement indicates that BLM will consider other enclosures or riparian enclosures recommended by NRST.¹³

Mr. Shawn Mariluch indicated that he was dumbfounded about the other uses. He is a sportsman, hunter, and have many friends who are hunters, use ATVs, hike, etc. He doesn't see where any of those uses have been slowed down by livestock grazing-related management and, if anything, many of the improvements have and will continue to help hunting.

Ms. Dyer reminded the CMG of Mr. Furtado's comments this morning about public feedback he received from recreationists and sportsmen that had positive things to say about the impacts from management.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that there were approximately ten lotic fencing proposals that were brought forward for review by the CMG and recommended to the NRST. Out of the 10 recommendations, 3 were recommended for construction. The assumption that everything proposed to the NRST is automatically approved and that everything is being proposed to be fenced is not true. Ms. Van Riper noted that the five lentic enclosures were specifically identified in the Agreement.

Mr. Steve Leonard indicated that Mr. Cole may have seen electric fences that have not been maintained or were not working but he (Mr. Leonard) uses electric fencing every year. If you maintain an electric fence, and train cows to use it, it will work.

Mr. Jon Sherve indicated that there are a couple of options available to the CMG – (1) work through the Agreement with NRST or (2) individual permittees may propose projects. BLM will discuss all proposals as there are other factors that need to be considered (i.e., risk of challenge to the NEPA analysis, etc.)

Mr. Lunn indicated that it is important the CMG recognize that Mr. Cole represents a large number of people who use the public lands and that he (Mr. Lunn) appreciated Mr. Cole's willingness to raise those points of view. Mr. Lunn also appreciated the willingness of the remaining members of the CMG to express their thoughts and opinions.

¹² Goal "f" under **Section 2 – Goals** of the agreement which states "Maintain Permittee operations, consistent with Rangeland Health Standards and applicable federal laws and regulations."

¹³ Section 8.2 of the Agreement which states "Following the 2015 grazing season, the CMG may identify additional proposed fencing needs for review by the NRST, which will recommend to the BLM whether additional fencing proposals should be prioritized for consideration during the Interim Management Period."

In response to Mr. Sherve's options, Mr. Steve Cote asked if someone should develop reasonable fencing alternatives to be presented to the BLM for consideration. Mr. Sherve indicated that suggestion would be very helpful. Mr. Ault added that it would be beneficial to have additional internal BLM discussion concerning NEPA vulnerability and risks.

ACTION ITEM: Representatives from the Mount Lewis Field Office, Battle Mountain District Office, and the Nevada State Office will discuss the NEPA vulnerability and risks associated with different levels of NEPA analysis in determining the appropriate level of analysis for addressing infrastructure proposals. (NOTE: in progress)

ACTION ITEM: The livestock permittees, NRST, and the Mount Lewis Field Office staff will work collaboratively to identify range improvement project proposals as part of developing the 2017 Stockmanship Plan. The livestock grazing permittees were given the responsibility for initiating discussions with the Mount Lewis Field Office and the NRST. (NOTE: Steve Leonard sent proposals to MLFO).

Ms. Van Riper asked what would be "Plan B" if the electric fence proposals are not acceptable or approved. Mr. Dan Tomera indicated that there is an off-site water location on private land in the Rock Creek – Hilltop Canyon area that could be moved to a higher bench location, which will draw livestock from the riparian areas. Changing the time when the Rock Creek drift fence gate is open/not open could also be considered. Mr. Leonard indicated that a fence on private land in the North Fork of Mill Creek would eliminate an estimated 80 percent of the livestock drift from the south. Mr. Schweigert suggested a drift fence across the upper reaches of the North Fork of Mill Creek should also be considered, which would defer grazing in some areas or allow movement of livestock if utilization thresholds are being reached. Mr. Schweigert suggested a similar fence in Trout Creek use area should also be considered.

Directly after break, Ms. Dyer addressed the CMG concerning its discussion with Mr. Cole, which is summarized below. Unfortunately, Mr. Cole was not in the room at the time Ms. Dyer addressed the CMG.

Ms. Dyer indicated that there is a large "grey" area of potential opportunity between (1) Mr. Cole's perspective of livestock removal and (2) fencing discussed by the remainder of the CMG. Part of the previous discussion addressed (and future conversations will need to address) compliance with NEPA. Part of the previous discussion was driven by the connection to the permit renewal process, which will analyze a variety of alternatives (reduction, livestock removal, infrastructure, etc.) BLM is legally obligated under NEPA to analyze a variety of alternatives under the permit renewal process identifying the pros and cons of each alternative for the variety of resources BLM is responsible for managing. In addition, financial impacts of each alternative will also be addressed.

In site-specific NEPA documents, typically, there may only be two alternatives (construct or not construct); however, there is nothing prohibiting consideration of additional alternatives. With the CMG being so familiar with the Argenta allotment and involved in previous discussions, we may have already weighed and dismissed in our mind alternatives suggested by Mr. Cole and not raised them during the earlier discussion. It will be important that the CMG consider Ms. Van Riper's question relating to "Plan B" if temporary fencing is not possible. While temporary fencing may be a viable management option and appropriate site-specific temporary solution; never in earlier conversations (earlier today or when discussing the Stockmanship plan) has the CMG stated these fences are the only solution and nothing else is going to be considered.

Mr. Leonard added that temporary electric fences are (1) less costly in terms of materials and installation and (2) if it doesn't work, the temporary fence can be easily removed with very little (or no) residual impact.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that she was somewhat confused by Ms. Dyer's statement as she (Ms. Van Riper) feels several options including reduced grazing, etc., have been discussed over the course of the past two years. The reason we now are discussing the addition of temporary electric fencing as a tool in the toolbox, which has not been discussed earlier, is because other avenues have been taken and demonstrated progress but areas of concern still exist. Temporary electric fencing could be added to the tool box as an appropriate tool to address those areas of concern. Ms. Van Riper believes the CMG needs to continue to explore different avenues for demonstrating improvement and progress towards meeting the requirements of the Agreement.

Ms. Dyer agreed that there has been a suite of tools discussed and used over the past two years but emphasized her point was that the some CMG members have, through discussions over the past two years, mentally “put the dots together”. Since these explicit conversations have not occurred, it may seem that the NRST and/or CMG have dismissed several of the alternatives suggested by Mr. Cole. In the discussion with Mr. Cole, the CMG could have raised the other alternatives but didn’t as we were discussing one component/tool within the tool box. Ms. Dyer’s statement was speaking to the way the CMG addressed Mr. Cole’s concerns, which could have addressed his concerns in the context that fencing is not the only solution and that we’re employing several other tools as well.

Ms. Kim Dow indicated that she appreciated this most recent discussion as she is new to the CMG and doesn’t have the historical context of the past two years. This discussion was helpful in helping her understanding that the discussion with Mr. Cole was more than fencing versus livestock removal and that there have been many other tools implemented over the past two years.

Ms. DaFoe asked if people new to the CMG are provided past meeting minutes and other documents to assist in bringing them up-to-speed in a timely manner. Mr. Ault indicated that there is a Argenta allotment link available on the Battle Mountain District Office’s website, which contains much of the information associated with the allotment and CMG process. **ACTION ITEM:** Sam Ault will provide the CMG (via e-mail) with a link to the Argenta allotment website.

ROUND 2 RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Mr. Adam Cochran indicated that he had received a message on November 15th from Mr. Furtado indicating that he (Mr. Furtado) had received new direction from the Nevada State Director, who was working with Mr. Tony Wasley, Director of NDOW concerning the R2 fences. At this time, the District has not received any additional information as to what the new direction will be.

With the six-week construction window (September 15 to October 31) having past, Mr. Ault is assuming that there may be an extension granted for construction of the R2 fences. Mr. Ault indicated that a field meeting is scheduled for this coming Friday (November 18) with NDOW to discuss sage-grouse seasonal variables and determine if sage-grouse are using their winter habitat.

Ms. Van Riper asked if the fence could not be constructed during the winter, if another field visit would be required in the spring. Ms. Dyer indicated that NDOW has confirmed that the nesting/brood rearing period is important and that construction during that time period would adversely affect the bird; however, NDOW is supportive of construction prior to the nesting/brood rearing time period.

Access to the fencing sites (North Fork of Mill Creek and Ferris) may be an issue in the winter depending on the snow conditions. The Ferris site is more accessible as compared to the North Fork site.

GROUND DISTURBING QUESTION

Questions have been raised as to fence development and maintenance not being ground disturbing activities.

Ms. Dyer indicated that BLM’s current guidance outlines that **no** livestock infrastructure (i.e., fencing, water development, etc.) will be counted against the three percent disturbance cap as outlined in the Greater Sage-Grouse RMP Amendment. Such livestock infrastructure is not considered “ground disturbing” actions in the 3% disturbance cap context. However the seasonal restrictions do not only apply to the 3% ground disturbing activities, and although Ms. Dyer could not recall the exact language, she paraphrased the guidance as “ground disturbing activities and other uses (emphasis added) that decrease the ability of the bird to use its seasonal habitat would be required to meet a number of restrictions depending on the specific season.” The term “and other uses” is the phrase creating confusion.

In riparian areas that contain important nesting and brood rearing habitat, construction of infrastructure could decrease the bird's ability to use that area when construction activities are underway. In larger seasonal areas - such as winter habitat which is essentially all areas where the sagebrush is nine inches above the snow depth - it is difficult to have a concentrated impact that would inhibit the bird from meeting its seasonal needs.

BLM is working to clarify the intent of the RMP amendment language, which is to limit activities only when the bird's ability to use a critical habitat to meet a component of its life cycle may be adversely impacted. The language will be clarified by a plan maintenance action.

Mr. Schweigert stated that IRC commented on the nebulous nature of that phrase ("and other public uses"), which wasn't clearly identified and vetted in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). That error was not corrected in the Final EIS, which was protested by IRC. IRC has now filed an appeal of that time limitation.

DAY 2 – NOVEMBER 17, 2016

MONITORING DISCUSSION

Mr. Sam Ault summarized that the 2016 end-of-season monitoring found that upland utilization was relatively light and that it may not be necessary to complete monthly monitoring of uplands in 2017. [NOTE: The March 2016 CMG meeting notes state that areas subject to within-season monitoring include those that exceed annual-use limits or that have statistically uncertain level of use. For uplands the statistically uncertain level of use applies to two use areas: Mill Creek and Harry Canyon.]

The Mount Lewis Field Office would like to develop cooperative monitoring agreements with the permittees, which would address collection of photo-point monitoring of KMAs or going into the field together to discuss things to observe as utilization triggers are being approached.

From a riparian standpoint, after discussions with NRST, not fully implementing the MIM protocol is acceptable; rather the focus will be on using a permittee collected stubble height transect. In cases like Rock Creek and to a lesser extent Crippen Creek and Harry Canyon, woody browse are important within-season measurements too.

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Dyer will send the CMG an electronic copy of the *Nevada Ranchers Monitoring Guide* and the *Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook*, which is currently being revised to include new sage-grouse monitoring protocols.

The *Nevada Ranchers Monitoring Guide* is a multi-agency¹⁴ guide designed to be a plain English guide for monitoring Nevada's rangelands. The document contains a summary of different agency-approved monitoring techniques and is a pared-down version of the monitoring handbook.

Through the intensive monitoring efforts in 2016, the Argenta permittees have gained a good sense of when monitoring needs to occur and, as mentioned by Mr. Ault, timeframes in 2017 may need to be adjusted. Techniques outlined in the *Nevada Ranchers Monitoring Guide* require a minimal amount of equipment (i.e., camera, ruler, etc.) and may not need to be fully implemented at some points in the grazing season. The example used was being in the field in May using a wallet to provide a size perspective to illustrate the height of herbaceous vegetation in a riparian area to determine if the 4-inch

¹⁴ BLM, United States Forest Service, Nevada Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Nevada Department of Agriculture.

stubble height is being exceeded (or not). Ms. DaFoe added that it is possible to measure your hand to know the length of each finger, which can be used as a “substitute” ruler.

In addition to the agency-approved techniques outlined in the *Nevada Ranchers Monitoring Guide*, it is possible to use more general methods to document observations made in the field as to the progress of meeting established thresholds without having to use transects to collect quantitative data. Photographs are an important component of any monitoring technique as long as there is a size reference (ruler, wallet, etc.) in the photograph.

Riparian areas will be first to show impacts from livestock grazing; therefore, it would be prudent to spend more time observing and monitoring those areas as compared to upland areas. While it is easy to observe and document herbaceous stubble height, it is more difficult to observe and document browse utilization. Mr. Gonzalez indicated that generally browsing of woody species is a seasonal concern in the fall when animals have a change in forage preference. The only time one might observe woody browsing earlier in the season is when the herbaceous forage becomes limited in the riparian area, which is an indication that the 4-inch stubble height threshold has been exceeded. Mr. Leonard suggested that livestock forage selection is a learned behavior and once in a while there are individual animals that prefer woody species over herbaceous species. Mr. Leonard also suggested that when woody species browsing is observed, it might be time to begin moving livestock without measuring and collecting data. One difficulty is differentiating between wildlife and livestock use of woody species as well as differentiating between last year’s use and current use.

2017 Pre-Season Field Inspections

The 2016 preseason field inspection was conducted by Mr. Leonard and Mr. Cote using the standard range readiness assessment. In 2017, a cursory field inspection of use areas will be conducted by the permittees, Mr. Ault, and the new GPRT range monitoring position (when that person comes onboard).

2017 In-Season Monitoring

Within-season monitoring will be the primary responsibility of the grazing permittees but, as mentioned previously, not using the same time frame as conducted in 2016 (particularly with regard to uplands). When possible, the GPRT monitoring positions will accompany the permittees as monitoring is conducted. If possible, it would be preferable to give those individuals advance notice of monitoring dates.

The Mount Lewis Field Office is developing a “cooperative monitoring agreement”. In addition, the Nevada State Office is developing the template for a statewide uniform “cooperative monitoring agreement”, which will be an agreement between the permittee and the BLM Field Office, that defines objectives, what is to be monitored, where monitoring will occur, and the types of monitoring to be completed. The monitoring agreement will also commit the permittees and BLM to sharing and annually reviewing the data to determine changes in management are needed prior to the following grazing season. Training will be offered as part of the cooperative monitoring agreement process.

2017 End-of-Season Monitoring

End-of-season monitoring for the Argenta allotment will be coordinated and lead by the Mount Lewis Field Office with participation from the CMG, permittees, consultants, NRST, and the BLM Nevada State Office staff.

Nevada Department of Agriculture Monitoring App

Ms. DaFoe indicated that the Nevada Department of Agriculture is developing a basic, easily used monitoring app that can be put on a smart phone, which will serve as another tool for completing monitoring using techniques outlined in the *Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook*. Ms. Dyer and Ms. DaFoe will be beta testing the app in the field. Ms. DaFoe has been requested by the creator of the app to test the app in the field with a client to determine if the app is useable by someone who does not have a range management background.

The app is scheduled to be released to the public at approximately the same time as the *Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook* revision is completed. Similar to an existing noxious weed app, the monitoring app will send collected monitoring data to a data base, which is accessible by the Nevada Department of Agriculture. Unfortunately, BLM will

not have access to the monitoring data collected through the phone app; therefore, the person collecting the data must provide the data to the local BLM office. Use of the phone app is optional. **ACTION ITEM:** When the monitoring phone app becomes available to the public, Ms. Dyer will ensure that it is made available to the CMG.

Ms. Van Riper asked if timelines for collecting monitoring data, notification requirements, submission of collected data, etc., will be identified in the cooperative monitoring agreement. Ms. Dyer indicated that those requirements would be outlined in the cooperative monitoring agreement and, more specifically to the Argenta allotment, the cooperative monitoring agreement may contain less requirements as compared to the requirements of the Agreement. Ms. Dyer indicated that the cooperative monitoring agreements developed at this time will remain in effect until the permit renewal process is completed at which time new agreements will need to be developed.

Mr. Mariluch asked if the notification timeframes should be lifted as the permittees will be monitoring while riding the areas. Ms. Dyer indicated that cursory observations and non-technical vegetation measurements (as discussed earlier) to determine if vegetative thresholds are being approached will help the permittees determine when the formal monitoring data should be collected. Notification of other individuals (BLM, IRC, CMG, etc.) is necessary for the collection of formal monitoring data but not when cursory, non-technical information is collected.

Mr. Mariluch asked if it was necessary to notify everyone if he makes a decision to remove livestock from an area. Mr. Ault indicated that it is not necessary to monitor an area prior to livestock being removed earlier than scheduled but he (Mr. Ault) would appreciate a courtesy call when livestock are moved. Mr. Leonard indicated that livestock can be moved whenever the permittee determines it appropriate and doesn't have to wait until a trigger is reached.

Ms. DaFoe indicated that the 2016 monitoring season parameters established last winter were not set in stone. Ms. Van Riper agreed that the parameters are not set in stone but would like to ensure that everyone understands if we are (1) eliminating or changing them at this time or (2) making a plan to address them at some point in the future. Ms. DaFoe indicated that a decision needs to be made concerning (1) if the CMG was going to make a definitive outline for the 2017 monitoring season (as was done for the 2016 monitoring season) or (2) if the CMG is comfortable waiting until the permittees observe an issue before initiating monitoring. Mr. Ault indicated the monitoring approach (set schedule with triggers, etc.) would be outlined in the cooperative monitoring agreement. Mr. Lunn indicated that it is important to realize that this is part of the continuing transition to a more normal way of management. Riding the range and making non-technical observations and/or vegetative measures is not formal monitoring but determining when formal monitoring should be completed and/or livestock moved. This will be codified within cooperative monitoring agreements.

Mr. Mariluch asked if it was necessary to conduct formal monitoring if livestock are not in an area. Mr. Ault indicated that if livestock have not used an area, there is no reason to complete livestock monitoring. Ms. Dyer indicated that it may be possible to wait until the end-of-season monitoring is collected. However, where livestock drift may be an issue, as livestock are removed, the permittee may want to collect formal data immediately after livestock removal in addition to collecting end-of-season data.

Mr. Leonard indicated that the 2016 monitoring approach would be replaced by the cooperative monitoring agreements, which would serve as the 2017 monitoring protocol. Ms. Dyer indicated that the monitoring protocol can vary from area to area depending on discussions between the permittee(s) and the Mount Lewis Field Office staff. Mr. Gonzalez indicated that when the monthly 2016 monitoring protocol was established, it was targeted toward those sites that had reached or were within the statistical uncertainty of exceeding the established thresholds in 2015. The number of sites of concern at this time in 2016 is much less as compared to 2015. The CMG should review the 2017 monitoring plan and associated cooperative monitoring agreements to make sure it will likely work and contribute to continued success.

Mr. Dan Tomera asked if there is a handout or brochure identifying grass species, particular those within the Argenta area. Ms. Dyer indicated that most handouts or books address vegetative species over a much larger area and are not as area-specific as suggested by Mr. Tomera. Mr. Ault indicated that a member of the Mount Lewis Field Office has been interested in developing such a handout or brochure. Mr. Tomera indicated that such a brochure would be helpful for individuals who do not conduct monitoring on a regular basis. Ms. DaFoe suggested that Barry Perryman's *Field Guide to Nevada Grasses* is a very good source, which provides pictures of species in various stages of growth. Using your

phone to take a picture of the various stages of plant growth might be a good tool for trying to identify individual species while in the field. Dan asked Mark to provide him with some additional coaching on plant identification; Mark agreed.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Lunn summarized that the Mount Lewis Field Office will be working with the permittees to develop the cooperative monitoring agreements. The intent is to develop a more effective, efficient, less expensive avenue for obtaining good quality information to meet the needs of the Agreement. Ms. Van Riper indicated that the end-of-season monitoring will occur with CMG in October 2017.

Mr. Schweigert offered a comment on Ms. Dyer's statement concerning pre-season range readiness being an avenue to determine if there is sufficient vegetative matter for livestock turnout. Mr. Schweigert agreed with Ms. Dyer's statement but added that in some cases there may be residual forage remaining from the previous year; not necessarily green spring vegetative growth. Ms. Dyer agreed that residual forage may be a contributing component but range readiness doesn't only address the vegetative component but includes soils. Mr. Mariluch indicated that they have turned out livestock on cheatgrass when there may not be green growth on other species. It was agreed to postpone further discussion concerning range readiness until a later date.

Ms. Angie Mariluch asked if there had been a training recently in Winnemucca. Ms. Dyer indicated that a two-day ecological site description training was completed in Winnemucca as well as one in June 2016 in Elko, Nevada. Ms. Dyer attended approximately four hours of the two-day training in Winnemucca; however, based on her knowledge of the Elko training and the agenda for the Winnemucca training, Ms. Dyer indicated that the training was geared toward making the ecological site concept understandable by someone who doesn't have a professional rangeland management degree.

Ms. Dyer briefly discussed a presentation she made at the Elko training addressing targeted grazing plots in the Elko District along the I-80 corridor in the Carlin area, which were specific to livestock created fuel breaks in annual invasive dominated areas. Ms. Dyer also made reference to a statewide programmatic NEPA document addressing targeted grazing.

Ms. DaFoe asked if there would be additional targeted grazing workshops. Ms. Dyer wasn't sure if there are additional workshops planned but she will be participating in a conference call in the near future with a national group associated with implementation of Secretarial Order 3336. The October 2016 workshop was conducted by a national "targeted grazing" work group, which is a subgroup of the group working on implementation of Secretarial Order 3336. Ms. Dyer is not aware of that group's future training plans but that would not prohibit Nevada from having additional workshops or informational sessions.

2017 Sage-Grouse/Range Workshops

January 17..... Winnemucca
January 18..... Elko
January 19..... Ely
January 20..... Austin
January 21..... Fallon

Ms. Van Riper indicated that a second round of sage-grouse/range statewide workshops sponsored by the Nevada Cattlemen's Association will be conducted from January 17 – 21, 2017 (inset to left). The BLM Nevada State Office will be mailing a notification letter of the workshops, dates, locations, etc., in the near future.

END-OF-SEASON SCHEDULE & ACTION PLAN

Key 2017 dates for the Argenta CMG effort are highlighted in Table 6.

Table 6
Key 2017 CMG Dates

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
January 13, 2017	Draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 End-of-Season (EOS) report (with proposed 2017 Stockmanship Plan) will be completed, distributed to interested parties and posted on the web.
February 8 – 9, 2017	Tentative CMG meeting to discuss and resolve public feedback on the Draft FY16 EOS report and finalize its content.

After discussion with representatives from the Mount Lewis Field Office, Battle Mountain District Office, and the Nevada State Office; the decision was made to release the FY16 EOS report and not to have a public meeting, which is consistent with the 2016 approach. There will be a 14-day public comment period on the FY 2016 EOS. The Mount Lewis Field Office will be responsible for compiling the public comments.¹⁵ The public comments will be posted to the web at some point in the future.

It was agreed to tentatively schedule a CMG meeting for February 8 and 9, 2017, to address the public comments on the draft FY16 EOS report. If, based on the number and/or substantive nature of the public comments, do not require a face-to-face meeting, a conference call may be scheduled and/or additional coordination can occur via e-mail.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that 2016 demonstrated a large amount of success and he personally can't see a need for a face-to-face meeting in February 2017. Mr. Schweigert clarified that the proposal is to set the week of February 6th aside in case there is need to address the comments. Otherwise, a conference call and/or e-mail may suffice. Ms. Van Riper indicated that, in 2015, there was concern that everything was pre-decisional and decisions were being made before the public had opportunity to comment. Ms. Van Riper would like to ensure that there is not the same perception with the 2016 EOY report. Ms. Dyer indicated that while no one can predict the future, it appears most major issues were addressed in 2016 and that development of the 2017 Stockmanship Plan should be relatively straight forward. **DECISION:** The decision was made to tentatively set February 8 - 9 aside for a face-to-face CMG meeting; however, it may be cancelled depending on the number and substance of the public comments received.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that two additional key actions will need to be scheduled in 2017: (1) end-of-season monitoring and (2) CMG's November EOS meeting. Other actions such as collection of additional baseline MIM data and reassessing key species on some KMAs can be scheduled between individuals involved in those actions. **ACTION ITEM:** Dates for the end-of season monitoring, CMG's November 2017 EOS meeting, collection of additional baseline MIM data, PFC assessments and other GPRT meetings, and assessing key species on some KMAs will be formally scheduled in February 2017.

SOUTH BOUNDARY FENCE

Mr. Sam Ault indicated that representatives from Tomera Ranches, members of the GPRT, and Mr. Ault went into the field on Tuesday, November 15, 2016, to discuss several issues of which one was the South Boundary Fence.

Mr. Ault provided an overview of the proposed location of the South Boundary Fence as discussed with Mr. Sam Castor (Barrick Gold). Once the fence is constructed, a determination of the forage preference in each use area would need to be made. Currently, Tomera Ranches is leasing Animal Unit Months (AUMs) to C Ranch in Corral Canyon. With the boundary fence in place, leasing of AUMs will not be necessary. The Corral Canyon area would remain in the Argenta allotment. Mr. Ault indicated that Indian Creek would not become part of the Carrico Lake allotment but would be a separate use area for C Ranches in the Argenta allotment.

Mr. Pete Tomera indicated that cattle have a tendency to go around the top of a fence coming up from the Town of Crescent Valley between Corral Canyon and Fire Creek. The fence ties into a rock bluff but cattle use a saddle just above the rock bluff to get around the fence. Mr. Ault indicated that he wasn't sure how rectifying this issue will (or not) be addressed in the South Boundary fence NEPA document. Mr. Dan Tomera indicated that regardless if the area is leased

¹⁵ Three comments were received on the 2015 EOS, which were placed in a tabular format documenting the comment, who it was from, etc.

from Tomera Ranches or Tomera Ranches run their own livestock in the area, it would be a good management tool to keep the Fire Creek and Corral Canyon use areas separate. Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that this issue had been discussed with Mr. Castor and if there was a way to include rectifying this issue as part of the South Boundary Fence NEPA analysis it would be beneficial.

Mr. Ault indicated that BLM needs to receive an application addressing what the permittees are proposing to address the issue. He was not sure if it will be able to fit within the preview of the South Boundary Fence EA. If not, the proposal would be addressed in line with the field office's other workloads and priorities.

Mr. Mariluch asked why it was necessary to do anything at all. As an alternative, Mr. Dan Tomera suggested building the fence on private land. Mr. Ault indicated that fences built on private land without any federal funding would not require a BLM analysis. Mr. Adam Cochran indicated that if the fence were constructed on private land that it would be good to notify BLM of its location.

Ms. Lynn Tomera asked if Mr. Furtado had opportunity to discuss the South Boundary fence with Barrick Gold during his meeting with them yesterday. Mr. Ault indicated that he would be contacting Mr. Castor this afternoon to set up a meeting to continue discussions on the fence. Mr. Ault indicated that he would contact Tomera Ranches to determine a suitable date for that meeting. Mr. Dan Tomera indicated that it might be beneficial to have a meeting in the morning and then visit the site in the afternoon. It was suggested that Mr. Mariluch also be involved in the meeting with Barrick in case he leases Corral Canyon in the future.

When asked as to Barrick's reaction to the proposal, Mr. Ault indicated that he has not had opportunity to talk with Mr. Castor but, based on his (Mr. Ault) experience, Mr. Castor is generally willing to do whatever BLM recommends. Mr. Gant Massey indicated that he was in a meeting with Mr. Castor a couple of days previously during which Mr. Castor expressed direct interest in the fence and asked when it was going to happen. Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that after the meeting with Barrick Gold, Tomera Ranches will know how (or if) an application will need to be submitted.

ADDITIONAL FENCING REQUESTS

Ms. Van Riper indicated that Section 8.2 of the Agreement states "Following the 2015 grazing season, the CMG may identify additional proposed fencing needs for review by the NRST, which will recommend to the BLM whether additional fencing proposals should be prioritized for consideration during the Interim Management Period."

It is her understanding that there have not been any additional fencing applications submitted to the NRST for review. Mr. Schweigert indicated that the Trout Creek application has yet to be acted on by the BLM. There is also a drift fence application in The Park; however, Mr. Schweigert thought the application may need to be changed to a large enclosure proposal, which would need to be resubmitted to the BLM. An application for an electric fence on Rock Creek will have to be filed with BLM.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that she is keeping electric fence proposals separate from jackrail fencing proposals. Ms. Van Riper suggested the 2017 Stockmanship Plan would be the appropriate mechanism for addressing temporary electric fence proposals. Mr. Schweigert indicated that an application for a temporary electric fence was submitted¹⁶ in middle of the summer in 2014 and then, in August, an application was submitted for a jackrail fence. Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that issues in Rock Creek and The Park could be addressed with temporary electric fencing for the short-term; however, a better long-term solution would be a permanent riparian enclosure.

¹⁶ The location of the requested project was not referenced.

Mr. Tomera believes the issues in Rock Creek could be addressed with either a short-term temporary electric fence or a temporary jack rail fence that could be removed once willows are established. As an alternative to a temporary electric fence in Rock Creek, Mr. Schweigert suggested moving the drift fence location so that water would be available below the fence. Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that the fire drift fence has served its purpose from a management standpoint. It is nice in the spring/summer of the year when livestock are placed above the fence and the permittees haul water to keep the livestock dispersed. Opening the gates to allow the livestock to travel home would be great but the best reason for keeping the fence is in the fall of the year when livestock are gathered from Indian Creek, brought over the "tubing" hill, and placed below the drift fence, which prevents livestock from returning to Indian Creek.

Mr. Mariluch suggested that moving the fence would not hurt anything as it would still be there. Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that the only issue would be having to move the fence. Mr. Schweigert indicated that livestock could still be placed below the fence and the gate closed behind them. Moving the fence would put the sensitive area into the spring use area. Mr. Paul Tomera asked if it would be simpler to put the temporary electric fence around the sensitive area; rather than moving the drift fence. Mr. Dan Tomera asked what hurdles would have to be overcome to move the permanent drift fence. Mr. Adam Cochran indicated that if the drift fence could be placed on private land in the canyon, the permittees could do that tomorrow. Mr. Cochran would have to review the fire plan (under which the drift fence was constructed) but suspects the fire plan may have required the fence to be removed already. If that is the case, there would not be any additional work or decision on BLM's part to remove the existing drift fence.

As far as other fencing proposals including temporary electric fencing are concerned, Mr. Cochran indicated that there are other factors that need to be considered. While not wanting to be "Debbie Downer", there are a couple of reasons why contingency plans should be developed in case the additional fencing proposals are not approved. First, with every round of range improvements, the susceptibility for additional litigation and the chance a Judge may grant a stay under appeal increases. We need to be prepared for that reality. If that happens, we must have other grazing strategies in place if electric fencing cannot be used. Ms. Dyer asked if Mr. Cochran's concern was because of segmentation of NEPA. Mr. Cochran indicated that, based on discussions with BLM's Solicitor, segmentation of NEPA is a risk. Basically, there is concern that the more we do, the more risk we assume.

The second reason is the level of NEPA analysis. Small exclosures and things like that can be addressed using the CX authority; however, BLM's NEPA staff does not believe many more range improvement projects should be approved in this allotment under the CX authority because of (1) segmenting NEPA and (2) cumulative effects of the number of exclosures and other actions that have already completed over the past couple of years. Additional proposals may need to be addressed under an EA.

Workload capacity is also a concern. Mr. Cochran indicated that the State Director has required each district office to develop a five-year grazing permit renewal schedule that they (the district) will be held accountable for completing. If Mr. Ault is committed to preparing more EAs and developing decisions, inevitably there will be litigation involved with those actions, which will consume a majority of Mr. Ault's time as well as time of other District employees. Those workloads will directly compete with workloads associated with meeting other commitments such as completing grazing permit renewals.

Right now, Mr. Ault's top priority is getting some of Barrick's permit renewals completed. It is important to keep in mind that Barrick has gone a long way to help us out on some things but, at the same time, if we have some small temporary exclosures and things like that require Mr. Ault's time, it may lead to Barrick not getting what they want. While Barrick may not be invested in the livestock industry like the Argenta permittees, one thing critical to Barrick is that their livestock program leads to obtaining credits for sage-grouse, which, in turn, leads to billions of dollars in gold. It is important to Barrick that Mr. Ault stays on schedule in completing the grazing permit renewals for their allotments.

Mr. Cochran indicated that he wants the CMG to realize that (1) the Battle Mountain District Office has some very heavy workloads, (2) that there is legal risk, and (3) the BLM will do what it can to process and approve the projects. If, for one reason or another, they don't happen or we can't do them, we've got to have contingency plans in place. If we can focus on solutions that don't require Mr. Ault's and BLM's internal staff time (such as removing the fire fence where there may

already be a decision or moving the gap fence to private land), we're going to be in a better situation to make things happen.

Instead of just opening the gate in the Rock Creek drift fence to allow livestock movement, Mr. Leonard asked, as an Alternative "B" to opening the gate, if it would be possible to convert sections of the drift fence from the gate to the valley toe slopes to a "let down" fence. The fence could be let down in the fall when movement of cattle to the flats is necessary or put up to prevent livestock drift. Mr. Cochran indicated that it would depend on the specificity in the original decision that authorized the fire drift fence. If the decision outlined the exact fence design (i.e., 4-wire barbed fence with a smooth bottom wire), converting sections to a "let down" fence would require additional NEPA analysis. If the fence design was not specifically outlined, it may be possible to convert the fence to a "let down" fence under the existing NEPA document. There are different approved fence designs that can be used of which some can be let down. Mr. Cochran indicated that fire fences are typically four barbed wires with a smooth bottom wire but a review of the EA and decision document could be completed to determine the level of specificity outlined. Mr. Leonard indicated that a let-down fence would facilitate better livestock passage.

Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that there was a gate with a cattleguard in Long Canyon and where the livestock go along the creek and up over the foothill to Long Canyon, a gate could be put at that location to facilitate livestock continuing down the canyon, instead of going up over the foothill. A gate in that location would make the three lines of travel accessible to livestock.

Ms. Dyer indicated that ordinarily fire-related NEPA documents are as cut-and-dried as possible and fire fences are typically meant to be temporary in nature. Ms. Dyer indicated that it is possible to make temporary fences into permanent fences, and that using a wildlife CX authority to modify existing fences to wildlife friendly specifications may allow for some sections to be modified to 'let down' fences. This authority has been used to change a barbed bottom wire to a smooth wire. This might be another option if there is a wildlife benefit from a let-down fence as opposed to a barbed bottom wire.

Mr. Mariluch appreciated Ms. Dyer's comments as she is looking for options. The permittees have spent a lot of money on this allotment with the NRST, the State Office, etc., and we've come a long way. It's not like we're just throwing ideas out there now. We've been doing this for going on three years. We know what we need and what will work to benefit the resources. Mr. Mariluch expressed his frustration of just getting shut down and offered excuses instead of figuring out how best to get things done or identifying what can be done.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that she heard yesterday that BLM would like the permittees to submit their range improvement proposals as part of the 2017 Stockmanship Plan. The proposals should address what each proposal will entail, how many, what size, why, etc. (NOTE: completed) In the meantime, there will be additional conversations internally within BLM about NEPA (i.e., no CX authority for electric fences, level of analysis, etc.) Ms. Van Riper indicated that it is her sense that although Section 8.2 of the Agreement provides additional opportunity to consider jackrail fencing, we might be too far along in the permit renewal process for such proposals at this time. She suggested the range improvement project list developed by the permittees should focus on projects the GPRT should address as part of the grazing permit renewal process. Ms. Dyer added that the chance for any additional infrastructure proposals being constructed before completion of the grazing permit renewal process is minimal; therefore, she believes it more logical to address more permanent infrastructure proposals as part of the permit renewal process.

Ms. DaFoe indicated that she was out on the allotment every 30 days over the course of the grazing season and no one accompanied her to the field. While she doesn't want to point fingers, and understands that BLM staff have a large workload, she feels the permittees are trying to find solutions to address stubble height issues in riparian areas. We have one more year to meet a litigated settlement. We're once again being told that we can't have these tools. What happens if we don't hit that stubble height next year? Where is all of this going to go? That is what Ms. DaFoe is looking at right now. The permit renewal is going to, hopefully, give us these tools but we have a year to not have a 2-inch stubble height in The Park. That's what these permittees are looking at.

Mr. Schweigert added that we've been talking for a day and a half about how we are transitioning into the permit renewal with our objectives and monitoring techniques. He doesn't see any difference in beginning to construct or beginning the

EA and paperwork for projects that can be done next year (2017), which would be one less project that has to be put in the permit renewal process. He doesn't see any difference in constructing a jack-rail fence in 2015, 2016, or 2017.

Ms. DaFoe indicated that permit renewal improvements can take years to construct so once again we'll just be back here with a litigated settlement agreement because we're in the same place that we've been in. So, if we can't do these things, what tools are we allowed to use? What is in our toolbox if CXs aren't available?

Ms. Dyer doesn't think that CXs are not available at this point. Ms. Dyer doesn't believe NEPA segmentation is a problem; however, there needs to be further conversation regarding cumulative impacts. Ms. Dyer is not sure we're at a point where use of the CX authority is totally off the table for all projects.

Ms. Angie Mariluch indicated that we're into this big time. Mr. Mariluch indicated that the permittees are not throwing out proposals "willy-nilly" but are proposing well thought out projects. Throwing out a concern that projects may be litigated is crazy. BLM must plan on getting litigated on anything that is done. If you know you're doing the right thing and it's defensible, who cares? It's going to get litigated.

Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that he had the impression from yesterday's discussion that Mr. Ault thought an EA might be required to get the electric fence projects done because the permittees were requesting at least three and possibly up to five proposals, if the North Fork of Mill Creek and Ferris Creek projects were included. Mr. Tomera indicated that an application for the Trout Creek proposal has already been submitted and a proposal for a jack-rail fence enclosure in The Park could be submitted. Mr. Tomera asked if an EA is used for the electric fences, how much more complicated does it get if the permittees request jack-rail fences and, until funding and materials are received, use electric fence in the interim?

Ms. Dyer indicated that what Mr. Tomera was asking reminded her of a discussion relating to Round 2 and if there should be an alternative addressing temporary projects, which would be further discussed/considered during the permit renewal process. Ms. Dyer suggested incorporating Mr. Tomera's proposal into the electric fence EA as an alternative (constructing a permanent jack-rail fence with the option of it being removed if not approved through the permit renewal process) would be possible. Mr. Tomera asked if Ms. Dyer was proposing an electric fence in 2017 and have the GPRT consider it as a permanent fence during the grazing permit renewal process. Ms. Dyer indicated that approach was definitely an option as a permanent project may not be necessary after one or two years of protection to allow the vegetation to get a "jump start".

Ms. Van Riper asked if the impacts would be less overall when considering a temporary electric fence as compared to a permanent jack-rail fence. Secondly, Ms. Van Riper asked if the level of NEPA analysis would be lower if considering a temporary fence. Ms. Dyer indicated that electric fencing does not provide an opportunity for raptors to perch as compared to a jack-rail fence. Temporary electric fencing can be constructed with concrete blocks holding the fiberglass rods.

Ms. Dyer indicated that she does not see the CMG as being out of options at this point.

Ms. Lynn Tomera pointed out that until 2014, the Argenta allotment was ignored. Requests the permittees received from BLM office usually were difficult to manage due to the land pattern. The permittees have built a lot of fence on private land at their own expense. Due to circumstances beyond their control, tensions have been forced on the permittees who were, in turn, forced to respond. So Mr. Cochran can say a lot of money has been spent on the allotment; however, if money spent over the past 30 years had been spent on infrastructure and helping to develop tools to manage the allotment better, we probably wouldn't be in this situation. As mentioned by Mr. Mariluch, we have three years to reinvent the wheel and Ms. Tomera would appreciate all the help the permittees can get because they are going to need all of the help they receive to be successful.

Mr. Mike Lunn reminded the CMG that (1) the schedule outlined by Ms. Van Riper and (2) the efforts of Mr. Leonard and Mr. Cote working with the permittees to develop the 2017 Stockmanship Plan, which will include all of the items discussed, should move us forward. Mr. Lunn recognized that not all proposals may be approved but the more thoroughly the Stockmanship plan addresses the importance of the requested improvements, the more likely they will be completed.

Mr. Lunn does not believe anyone is talking about backing away from anything. The reality is that there may be litigation and we're going to do our best to work through it.

Ms. Dyer recognized the aggressive schedule required to post the end-of-season report on the web by the end of February but asked if Mr. Lunn meant the range improvement applications had to be finalized between now and completion of the 2017 Stockmanship Plan. Mr. Leonard indicated that the permittees have identified proposed management actions, infrastructure, etc., that they believe will help to meet the objectives for their ranches and the resources. The permittees will propose using electric fencing in The Park, Rock Creek, and others areas if jack-rail fencing (R2) can't be constructed in a timely manner. The application will be part of the proposed 2017 Stockmanship Plan package. The application, which will be developed by the permittees working with Mr. Leonard and Mr. Cote, will include the details (length, type of electric fence, etc.) and will serve as supporting documentation of need for each proposal.

Ms. Dyer indicated that she was not concerned with segmentation of NEPA as raised by Mr. Cochran. Fire Creek was probably the closest the CMG came to segmenting NEPA with two projects approved under two separate NEPA documents that addressed the same riparian area. Even then, working with the Solicitor's Office, that situation wasn't found to be a segmentation of NEPA. Segmentation of NEPA addresses projects that are dependent on each other in order to make an entire project. The example used to demonstrate segmentation is a mine application that requires a road to reach the mine location where each proposal (mine and road) are analyzed in separate NEPA documents. Neither project could exist without the other; therefore, analyzing them separately is segmentation of NEPA. The Fire Creek situation was determined not to be NEPA segmentation as each enclosure demonstrated a tangible riparian benefit as a stand-alone project. With that understanding of NEPA segmentation, Ms. Dyer is not personally or legally concerned about NEPA segmentation with the project proposals discussed as each project would be beneficial of and by themselves. The projects do not require each other in order for any one project to provide the intended benefit.

While Ms. Dyer is not concerned with NEPA segmentation, cumulative impacts come more into play when preparing several CXs to avoid having to prepare an EA. Ms. Dyer suggested that additional discussion with the SO/DO NEPA specialists and Solicitor's office is needed on this issue. The Argenta allotment is a large allotment and has a relatively limited amount of infrastructure in place. The cumulative impacts of the existing projects are dispersed and may not yet rise to a level of concern. Use of the CX authority as additional projects are proposed needs to be thoughtfully and carefully considered but she doesn't personally believe the allotment has reached the level of development where a cumulative impact threshold has been reached or exceeded.

Mr. Leonard indicated that there are only two new temporary electric project proposals – one in The Park and the second in Rock Creek. Mr. Leonard asked that if temporary electric fencing could be constructed in the same location of approved jack-rail fences (Round 2), which have not been constructed due to various issues (lack of materials, seasonal restrictions, etc.) Construction of the temporary electric fencing would address the immediate riparian issues until the jack-rail fence is constructed. Waiting until October 2017 to construct the Round 2 jack-rail fences will defeat the purpose of the 2017 grazing system. Construction of an electric fence in exactly the same location to address the same purposes of the approved permanent projects would serve as a stop gap measure for something that has already been approved.

Similarly, Mr. Mariluch asked if the EA for an enclosure in Fire Creek is approved but construction is delayed due to a lack of materials, could a temporary electric fence be constructed as a stop gap measure under the existing EA. Mr. Lunn suggested that Ms. Dyer may have to consult with other individuals such as NEPA Specialists, the Solicitor's office, etc., before being able to answer Mr. Leonard's and Mr. Mariluch's questions.

Mr. Cochran indicated that construction of the temporary electric fence was not address in the approved EA for the Fire Creek enclosure. It might be possible to prepare a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) and argue the temporary electric fence is inherently the same but that would be a high-risk approach. Ms. Dyer indicated that her personal approach is to recognize that BLM's actions are likely to be litigated so we should be logical and fulfill our environmental obligations. Mr. Cochran indicated that he is fine with that approach but his point in bringing up litigation was the impact it has on staff time and capacity to meet other workload commitments; not that we should avoid it. It is important to

realistically think about workload capacity and meeting other goals and objectives for other areas and responsibilities of the Battle Mountain District office.

Ms. Dyer indicated that NDOW has also been involved in Round 2 and other projects in general so it will be important to involve them in this discussion, which may result in lowering the litigation risk and increasing the chances of prevailing.

Ms. Mariluch indicated that the Argenta allotment is on a different level not as a result of the permittees doing but we must think of it in that manner.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that Western Watersheds is not the only one who knows the way to the courthouse.

Ms. DaFoe indicated that Tomera Ranches has had to budget for a massive amount of monitoring. Each of us has our own thing and while we respect the agency's workload, everyone's workload is very high.

Ms. Mariluch indicated that we're on this level now so we must step up to that level.

In previous CMG meetings, Ms. Dyer had discussed several draft Washington Office prioritization Instruction Memorandums (IM) with the CMG. Those IMs have now been released and the permittees will be hearing more about them in January 2017. Since release of those IMs, the Nevada State Director has asked each district office to be more accountable in implementing its responsibilities in all resource programs including the range program. Being more accountable in the range program translates into developing a state-wide five-year plan for completing grazing permit renewals. Each District/Field office has delineated how it will address its grazing permit renewal workload under the statewide five-year plan. Ms. Dyer indicated the State Director is well aware of the importance of and the workload associated with the Argenta allotment. She suggested that workload may need to be factored into the State's five-year plan in a different manner. Ms. Dyer indicated that what we don't want to happen, which has historically happened associated with completion of grazing permit renewals, is the Washington Office telling the State it has 700 permits and 70 permit renewals must be done annually to stay on a ten-year schedule. In response to that direction, each District office then identifies that it will be able to complete a certain number of permit renewals, which cannot realistically be achieved.

It is important that we address workloads realistically in the five-year strategy for moving forward. Ms. Dyer indicated that having a five-year plan will be monumentally helpful for Nevada with its turnover. It doesn't matter who comes in management or staff wise, what their priorities are, what changes occur, etc., the sequence of workload events are set. If necessary, the State will have opportunity to modify the plan with appropriate rationale.

Ms. DaFoe asked where the Argenta allotment lies on the priority list. Mr. Ault indicated that the Argenta allotment is the top priority for grazing permit renewals as well as the top priority for range improvements. The Argenta allotment as received more range improvements in the last two years as compared to all other grazing permittees in the Battle Mountain District.

Ms. DaFoe indicated that the permittees are hearing Barrick Gold needs to have something done so the implication she took from that statement was that BLM staff doesn't have enough time to complete EAs or CXs. Ms. DaFoe indicated that the allotment hasn't received any range improvements in the past 30 years so throwing out that the allotment has more done in the last two years is like comparing apples and oranges. If the Argenta allotment is top priority, again, not to point fingers, she hasn't seen that this summer in terms of monitoring or other actions. While recognizing Ms. Dyer's comment that a CX could be considered, Ms. DaFoe felt that by even raising the CX availability conversation, Mr. Cochran made the implication that the Argenta allotment was not the top priority and that there wasn't enough time to do a CX or EA for an electric fence, which is why Ms. DaFoe asked the question.

Mr. Cochran indicated that he meant the District has priorities other than the Argenta allotment. Right now, the District has been told that getting the grazing permit renewals completed is its first priority and the Argenta allotment is the highest priority. In addition, there are other internal priorities within the office that must be addressed. When it comes to range improvements, Mr. Cochran has range improvements in the Tonopah Field Office that have had approved decisions for years but there hasn't been money available in the District's budget to buy materials because the funds have been

allocated to the Argenta allotment. There are other projects that could be constructed tomorrow if the materials were available but he hasn't been able to afford the materials. It is the same materials sitting in the ware yard waiting to go up on the Argenta allotment. Mr. Cochran wanted the Argenta permittees to be aware of that. There are other people who are not getting things because of the Argenta allotment being a priority.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that the same is true in reverse for the last 30 years in the Argenta allotment. The 1984 or 1986 Resource Management Plan/Rangeland Program Summary called for 90 miles of fence in the Argenta allotment. Not one mile was built until 2015. What goes around comes around. Mr. Schweigert also reminded the CMG that the livestock permittees offered to build the enclosures around the sensitive areas in 2014 at their own expense, which was denied. So, that's the world we live in today. Mr. Furtado committed to providing the materials for these at the settlement meeting so that's the commitment we're going to hold BLM to.

Mr. Jon Sherve indicated that this is the first he's heard of the new electric fences, which came up this week. As far as that goes, we've got the Settlement Agreement that tells us how to process them, which is through CMG to the NRST for a recommendation, if we're going to move forward on them. How we do that, I'm not sure yet. Mr. Sherve is worried about NEPA segmentation. Ms. Dyer explained why she is not worried but Mr. Sherve is. Usually that has to do with avoiding segmenting NEPA where an approach is taken to avoid a higher level of NEPA analysis. We're still in the same allotment and it can be looked at in different ways but certainly we're getting to a risk where continuing to do a CX here or an EA for the new projects. An argument could be made for an EIS level analysis as well. There is a need for additional discussion internally with the NEPA experts.

Mr. Sherve addressed the other project mentioned by Mr. Schweigert on Trout Creek, which was included in the application and went through the CMG and NRST but wasn't recommended at that time. That project application would have to be reviewed again by the NRST. Mr. Schweigert responded to Mr. Sherve by indicating the NRST recommended Round 1 and Round 2 having seen the allotment and sensitive areas only once or twice. The NRST has now had two years of experience with the allotment and its sensitive areas and it appears to Mr. Schweigert that NRST is recommending use of temporary electric fence around some of the sensitive areas. [NOTE: NRST is not recommending fencing on Trout Creek at this time.]

Mr. Sherve indicated that when taking that into account, looking at additional fencing projects through the NRST, which doesn't make sense to him right now when the renewal process is pending, could push the grazing permit renewal evaluation further down the road for another year or two. Ms. DaFoe questioned why it would delay the process. Mr. Sherve explained that if an EA is the preferred NEPA document, a person should plan a one-year process. Some can be completed quicker, some longer but on average one year.

Mr. Schweigert asked if there was an idea of the level of analysis that will be required for the permit renewal process. Mr. Cochran indicated that at this time the typical approach will be taken where an EA will be developed to determine if an EIS is needed. If an EIS is not needed, a Finding of No Significant Impact will be issued along with the Decision Record. There is nothing, at this time, which suggests the need for an EIS.

Mr. Schweigert asked a follow up question: if the first level of analysis for the permit renewal that includes all of the projects and grazing systems was an EA level analysis, why would we suspect that one, two, or three projects of the list of projects is going to rise to a level above an EA level analysis? Mr. Cochran indicated that the original EA must be completed to address the compounding (cumulative) effect of several projects. Mr. Cochran used an example of mine expansion to illustrate his point. When a mine expands its project boundary, it may be necessary to complete a livestock grazing preference reduction. If the mine expansion includes 10 acres in an allotment where the average carrying capacity is 20 acres per AUM, the grazing reduction is insignificant and would not be pursued. If the mine has had 300 expansions involving 10 acres per expansion over a 30-year period, there becomes a point at which there is a cumulative impact over time. In the Argenta allotment where there have been several NEPA actions over a short period of time, there becomes a point when everything has to be looked at to determine what the cumulative impact has been. Mr. Cochran is not saying an EIS is (or is not) necessary for the grazing permit renewal. The GPRT will have to examine and analyze the cumulative impacts of all previous actions to determine if there has been a significant impact. At this point, BLM is not

expecting a significant impact from previous actions but more rounds and projects that occur within the allotment raises the risk and argument for a EIS-level analysis.

Ms. Dyer summarized that there are (1) some potential new electric fence proposals, (2) proposals to use electric fences in the interim before construction of permanent Round 2 fences, and (3) possible future additional proposals for jackrail fences outside of the temporary electric fencing. Ms. Van Riper indicated that she wasn't sure she had heard additional permanent fencing outside of the temporary electric fencing. Ms. Dyer suggested that each proposal has a different potential and that there is need for further internal discussion within BLM after which feedback should be provided to the CMG as to what future options may (or may not) be available. This feedback should be provided sooner rather than later. Some of the questions involve the level of NEPA analysis required and the risk of each level of analysis associated with the temporary electric fence. Although BLM uses the same regulatory authority to permit temporary and permanent infrastructure, each type of project has a different level of impact on the ground. Different impacts would be identified in the NEPA analysis and may lead to a different level of NEPA being appropriate (potentially a lower level of analysis).

Ms. Dyer indicated that the grazing permit renewal process is a multi-year, multi-step process. Even though the Argenta allotment is the highest priority for permit renewals, for other allotments to be ready for their permit renewal in subsequent years, the Mount Lewis Field Office staff is having to dedicate time to monitoring other allotments. Even though there is not another permit renewal occurring concurrent with the Argenta allotment's process, there are other steps that require staff time in other areas in order for other permit renewals to occur at a later point in time.

Ms. Mariluch reiterated that she has never felt the Argenta permittees were better than anyone else when it comes to getting something before other people such as the people in Tonopah. We need to realize that the Argenta allotment is on a different level.

Mr. Leonard indicated that we are not going to solve these issues in this meeting. He reiterated that he is asking BLM to explore avenues to simplify the process for authorizing use of temporary electric fencing on the Round 2 projects that have already been analyzed and approved but are awaiting construction. Mr. Leonard also reiterated that two additional projects will be proposed (as outlined in his presentation early), which should go through the CMG/NRST process for Mr. Sherve's decision. Mr. Cochran indicated that BLM can always look at the proposals.

Mr. Paul Tomera indicated that Ms. Dyer and Mr. Sherve raised the need for obtaining legal advice, which he (Mr. Tomera) assumes will occur right away. The permittees will submit the draft 2017 Stockmanship Plan in January 2017, which will include construction of temporary electric fencing. Mr. Tomera asked if a directive could be issued to have Mr. Ault start developing the NEPA analysis as soon as the legal issues have been addressed and a decision made as to the appropriate level of NEPA analysis; rather than waiting for approval of the final 2017 Stockmanship Plan in February. Mr. Tomera would like have the NEPA process initiated as quickly as possible so that the required public comment period, protest period, etc., have been addressed. Mr. Sherve indicated that one option is to incorporate the temporary electric fence proposals into the South Boundary Fence EA. He wasn't sure if that could be done but was willing to explore it. Mr. Cochran indicated that it comes down to workload planning with the limited staff and capability. If the State Director were to give the Battle Mountain District guidance allowing the District to make the five-year plan a three-year plan that can be started two years from now and not prioritizing other workloads. Mr. Cochran indicated that Mr. Ault is assigned a lot of EISs for mining and other things that are ongoing. Ultimately, we have a certain level of capacity of what we can produce and that one person can do. Mr. Ault indicated that he is not the only person working on the EA. It involves an IDT with individuals from all of the District's departments. It's not just Sam's workload that makes these things move forward. It's also involves individuals within lands/realty and mineral programs, the wildlife biologist who has his hands full with mining EISs, and others. That's an important consideration to move forward. If it were just Mr. Ault's workload Mr. Furtado would make Mr. Ault the Range Management Specialist of the Argenta allotment and he'd be able to focus solely on the Argenta allotment; however, that is not exactly how the NEPA process works.

Mr. Mariluch indicated that the workload issue just floors him when there is something that needs to be done. If a person wants to lighten their workload, they get it done and move on to the next workload. We've been working on the Argenta allotment for the past three years so it is not new. When you prioritize something and want to get it done, you want to say "this works and we're done with it" and move on. To him, that's what makes sense.

Ms. DaFoe indicated that she was a NEPA Specialist and a permitter for Newmont, which is where some of her hardship with this discussion comes from. She has seen how quickly an EA can get done with overworked BLM offices. When, in certain situations, she permitted a leach pad expansion in three months - had a federal decision in three months with Newmont. It can happen. She's seen it happen and has been involved with it happening. Newmont paid for the EA, maybe that is an option. Maybe the permittees can help assist in writing the EA. She is not hearing a lot of solutions coming forward. It is a very different atmosphere than having sat involved in these things in the mining world and she doesn't think it has to be that way.

Ms. DaFoe suggested that it doesn't sound like they're getting Step 1, which she thinks was Mr. Paul Tomera's point. Is Step 1 that we need to have the NRST suggest these electric fences? Ms. Dyer indicated that the electric fences are as part of the 2017 Stockmanship Plan. Ms. DaFoe indicated that January doesn't appear to give them enough time. Ms. Van Riper indicated that technically the electric fences have just been recommended. Ms. DaFoe asked if, in theory, is that sufficient. Ms. Van Riper indicated that there are more questions that need to be answered about if whether the District is going to move forward with them on any level, which Ms. Van Riper believes needs to be answered as quickly as possible. Mr. DaFoe indicated that in past CMG meetings, a deadline was established for getting an answer to a question to keep things moving forward timely. She asked if that is something the CMG should consider in this situation so that we are not waiting for three or four months. Ms. Van Riper indicated that she believes the question should be answered within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Leonard indicated that hopefully the question can be answered within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Leonard believes the best option is for the Round 2 projects to be constructed so that those three projects are not an issue.

Ms. Dyer indicated that this situation is different from a mining situation where the range program is one of the only programs in BLM that does not have a cost recovery avenue for projects. Essentially, NEPA in the range program is done for free. BLM charges mining companies for mineral-related NEPA analysis. Other programs charge for the work they provide.

Ms. Dyer believes she understands what everyone is saying. It seems to her (Ms. Dyer) that one of the livestock grazing permittees biggest frustrations is that they are not always a priority for NEPA or implementation but have become a permanent priority for the impact/repercussion of not having those actions. Ms. Mariluch indicated that Ms. Dyer's statement was very well said.

Ms. Dyer indicated that Mr. Sherve is the decision-maker in these instances. He must understand and weigh the risk(s) as well as the benefits associated with each project. It is important that the CMG understands that he will be the person in court defending that decision. If he sees something different than Ms. Dyer or other people, it is important to recognize that ultimately his decision prevails as he is the one making the decision.

Mr. Sherve indicated that he understood Ms. Dyer's statement regarding the permittee's biggest frustration. He would have to review the course of events associated with Round 2 but, in his opinion, Round 2 could have been constructed by this time. Regardless, this is where we're at. If we can find ways to shorten time frames and get things done, that's what we're here for.

Mr. Mariluch asked how we could have had the Round 2 projects constructed by this time. Mr. Ault indicated that there has been much discussion concerning implementation of sage-grouse RMPA in response to the permittee's protest. Had we not received the protests, we would have been able to construct them within the window. Mr. Mariluch asked how they could have been constructed "within the window" if BLM did not have the material. Mr. Ault indicated that BLM had the material in part for North Fork.

Ms. Van Riper indicated that Mr. Ault's statement was not entirely correct. The fact is the Round 2 decision was scheduled to come out in April 5th and because it had not been properly vetted through the Nevada State Office or the Solicitor's office and BLM had been pulled into federal litigation on Round 1, the State Director and the District made the decision to go to the permittees and request their blessing to allow the Round 2 project to be delayed by a few weeks so that the State Office and Solicitor could look at them to make sure it was bullet-proof because the intention was to win the litigation; not to get litigated and lose.

The initial draft at the time was delayed and went from an extension of two weeks to two months to start with. Then the within-season restrictions entered into the Round 2 draft decision that was issued, again, without having been properly reviewed in the State Office. The decision was protested by the grazing permittees. The plan at the time was to have the site verification done by BLM and NDOW and Ms. Van Riper had hoped with the permittees but that didn't happen during the appeal period. Things spiraled from there. Site verifications were conducted but looked at only one habitat type instead of all habitat types. There was information that existed but not shared at the time. There were a lot of questions and concerns. The State Office had the plan for a while which was forgotten for at least three weeks to Ms. Van Riper's knowledge.

Mr. Ault agreed with Ms. Van Riper and indicated that he didn't want to underplay that. Mr. Mariluch indicated that Mr. Ault did underplay it by stating that it was the permittee's protest that delayed construction of the Round 2 project.

Ms. Dyer indicated that the decision wasn't just needing to be vetted through the State Office so that they could ensure the litigation would be won but because the State has a very high desire to ensure that the State's sage-grouse plan was being consistently implemented. It was not just the litigation but the consistency of approach. Ms. Van Riper added the sage-grouse coming on top of it was a big thing and BLM knew the decision would get litigated.

Ms. Van Riper apologized to the CMG as it was her intent in October (2016) was for the questions about Round 2, Round 3, Round 4 fencing and the ongoing criticisms and concerns about NEPA segmentation to be addressed so that information would have been available at this meeting as she knew this conversation was going to happen. Ms. Van Riper is not sure why the questions were not timely addressed. She also had asked for people to discuss the options for electric fencing as she knew those projects were being discussed for potential inclusion in the Stockmanship plan. Knowing that the electric fences were going to come up in this meeting, she wanted to have those questions answered as well. Unfortunately, those conversations did not occur and we don't have the answers.

Mr. Schweigert indicated that in terms of workload and the commitment of resources for the consideration of temporary electric fences, there is a lot of hand wringing being done that is a little over rout. He understands that there are meetings and coordination but we already have the Round 2 EA, which could serve as a template. Eighty percent of that document could be cut and pasted into any EA for these other projects. The impacts, caveats, and time restrictions are going to be the same. Eighty to 90 percent of the EA on these other projects is already written. Ms. Van Riper added that is true if the projects are permanent fences but the impacts would be less if they are temporary electric fencing. Ms. Dyer indicated that other sections such as the current condition, etc., would also be the same.

Mr. Lunn indicated that this has been a good and very necessary discussion. We have a course for moving forward. We keep circling back to "what if it doesn't work". Mr. Leonard has laid out a very good strategy for moving forward. As soon as we know what the fencing proposals are, they will be incorporated into the 2017 draft Stockmanship plan. Let's let the process work. Maybe we just need to vent and that's ok but it is not being productive and moving us forward. The CMG has worked on a good plan for moving forward in an orderly fashion. Ms. Dyer has indicated that she is going to take this back to her team to discuss the NEPA questions to develop a common approach to how this be done to best meet the needs of the resources, the permittees, and the Agreement. Let's move on and allow the process that we've laid out work.

Ms. Dyer responded to Ms. Van Riper's statement concerning not having some conversation completed. Ms. Dyer indicated that there were conversations previous to this meeting which addressed Round 3 and Round 4 potential projects. Ms. Dyer indicated that CMG's discussions are very informative as some conversations are usually cut and dried but, at the CMG meetings, other complexities and other thoughts are interjected, which allows everyone to understand the full extent of potential. It is important that the CMG conversations not necessarily outline what we're going to do but identify the full suite of options and what each could (or couldn't) provide.

In closing this discussion, Mr. Lunn provided a summary of the assigned action items (below).

- Mr. Leonard and Mr. Cote will continue to work with the livestock permittees in developing the 2017 draft Stockmanship Plan, which will include project proposals. The plan will continue to evolve until it is due to be submitted in mid-January.

- Ms. Dyer will work internally within BLM will discuss and address several NEPA-related questions over the course of the next two weeks, which will be helpful to the livestock permittees in defining project proposals.

CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS

In closing the meeting, each participant was asked to address how they felt about the meeting, the conversations, where we ended up, and the most important things they believe are critical for moving forward. Note: Due to the nature of some of the comments, a request was made to incorporate each person's closing remarks in the minutes as close to verbatim as possible.

Pete Tomera

Round 2 has been agreed upon and a lot of work has been done it. Let's get Round 2 done. Let's get something done. Sitting here talking doesn't get anything done. Let's get her done on the ground. Our life is on the line and we're compelled to make these stipulations and we need help to do it. You can't do something without something to do it with. And, as far as being overworked and overstaffed and required, we're required to do a lot of things that normally we wouldn't do. And, as far as finding people to do it, that's a big task in itself. This morning I had to babysit before I came in here and that's one of our best men, so you know what we're talking about. Let's get it done. You get a fence up and you don't have to worry if it is going to report to work tomorrow morning or not.

Dan Tomera

I don't have a whole lot to add to it, I guess. When Steve first brought up the Rock Creek thing, it kind of opened my eyes to his explanation of how the cattle come to an area that has been grazed off pretty good and it made so much sense when he said that they come back to that area cause the grass is so fresh. It just kind of opened my eyes and "Wow, we could make a huge improvement so easy!" and then it was disheartening to come a realize that it is not that easy. His plan to correct that resource on Rock Creek section in particular just made total sense to me. I've noticed that area, even before the fire fence, was a loafing area and it just kind of hit me just like that. I think that would be an incredible improvement with very little money and very little effort and it would be such a good thing. I really hope that that can be done. And, going through all this stuff, we're obviously going to have to get a list and I think we already have a pretty good list of things to put on the ten-year permit renewal for different projects. Some of them are quite small and some are a little larger. I think some of these things that we've been hashing back and forth may have to be a year or two down the road. Maybe we'll have to prioritize them and get them done when we can get them done. I look forward from that fashion and hopefully we get to being better at monitoring, which is a whole new thing to us. It's old hat to most of you people but it's a whole new challenge to us and adds a tremendous amount of work to our already limited staff and resources that we have already.

Lynn Tomera

It is going to be a whole new ball game but again I will say this should be a cooperative effort and I understand that these guys are very busy and have a lot on their plates. So, do we. So, do does everybody. But the more cooperation, the more help, we can get, the more chance we have of succeeding and, if we succeed, the Battle Mountain BLM office looks good because they had a part in it. And, we took something that needed to be improved and, by working together, we did improve it. Again, any help that we can get will go a long way toward making the whole thing a success.

Dan Tomera

Mr. Tomera offered his congratulations to Sam Ault and his wife as they are expecting a baby.

Paul Tomera

The very first thing that we did in our meeting yesterday was we went around and did our introductions. Everybody felt real positive about the direction we were going and everything and we concluded that with Doug talking to us about how

he was committed to making this whole process work. I hope going forward that is something that we can hold him to. I hope that it wasn't lip service and I hope as we go forward that we can call upon Doug or any members of his staff to work with us. And, I felt really good yesterday the meeting went really well and we didn't have any hiccups or anything and it wasn't until this last conversation that we started to have an issue. In looking at it, to us, it's really important to get these projects done. It's like Kathryn said, we're being held accountable for the results out there in 2017 and in the last two years we've run into a lot of obstacles that I think with the infrastructure and the improvements that can be made are going to help make this job easier for us in 2017 and the next 30 years.

Looking at the responses we got from Sam and John and Adam, what I hope I'm hearing that is that they're not telling us "We're working against you. We're not trying to stall this process." I hope what I'm hearing is they're saying there is a process that we have to go through and we're going to address it as best we can and going forward we're going to try and make this process work. I hope that's what I hearing from these guys is that we have steps we have to do to take care of this legally and we want to work with you and we're going to do everything in our power to make this process happen. That's what I hope I'm hearing.

Kim Dow

I would like to continue with that. I think that is what you are hearing. I takeaway that is what you are hearing. In my job, I supervise a staff of eleven people with a lot of different resources that they manage and they work with all the different districts. The workload issue is not unique to Battle Mountain and is not unique to Argenta or the range. It is a real issue, especially with the sage-grouse plan amendments. We're coming up on the first year of implementation. The fact that we have to account for our implementation in four years is incredibly scary to a lot of BLMers. We have to, in four years, justify that we've implemented the Plan well enough to keep sage-grouse from being listed. That is a big workload and a workload that everyone is willing to take on. I think what you are hearing, it may come across as an excuse and it may come across as a lack of commitment but I think it is not. I think it is just stress. I think that is what you are hearing is the stress. I just got an e-mail this morning from my supervisor with a list of things to do and the very first thing, my head just went swimming. I can't answer him right now about what I can do or what timeframe I can get it done in because my head is swimming with all the other things. But, I will answer him in a few hours after I've had a chance to think about it and I think that is kind of what we are hearing here too. I don't want to put words in your mouth but there is a lot of things that have to get done and I don't think it is a lack of commitment. I think it is a give me a chance to digest what you've told me you need and what your priorities are so I can figure out what that workload is. I think the commitment of I will get it done is still there but it is a matter of how. I don't think there is always a fast answer. Sometimes it takes a couple of hours to try and figure it out. I hope that is coming across right. Maybe it is not. The commitment for Argenta is there and it's not going away and is there at all the different levels. Argenta being a priority is not going to change for implementation for getting all of this work done. I think it is just a very stressful time as it is for everyone. I hope it is not coming across as an excuse and I hope that you can feel that it is a stressful time right now.

Aside from that, being this is my first CMG meeting, I was really impressed to see all of the improvements and all of the grass. I was telling Laura that I needed about more five minutes per slide yesterday just to stare at the slides as I'm not used to seeing them all the time like you guys are. But you guys would have been very bored with watching me stare at them. Seeing the improvements from 2015 to 2016 was very impressive to me. I have been on the CMG mailing list between 8 months and a year. It is different to read and hear from the staff about what's going on than to actually sit in a meeting to meet the people including the permittees, which is a different way to get information. I'm very appreciative that I've had this opportunity to meet the Tomeras. I didn't have much of a chance to meet EddyAnn except for a quick handshake. I met the Mariluch as well. I appreciate the opportunity to see what you guys have done. She recognized that their commitment is huge to this effort, which I appreciate.

Genevieve Skora

My comments echo the comments of Lynn and Kim. Everyone has been short-staffed this year. We know from the permittees reports that they hired on cowboys that quit or got hurt. They've dealt with health problems. It just seemed like 2016 wasn't great for anyone. Like Kim said everybody is stressed and over worked. I think there has been a lot of

cooperation that has happened in the last couple of years between all the parties. Everybody has given a little to work with each other and that's amazing. You guys did show improvements in the year so you're making progress, you've got some range improvements in, and I think we need to keep plugging along try not to let the little things get to everybody.

Sam Ault

I appreciate what Dan was saying about Rock Creek and it is what I want to touch on. For us, we recognize that it's something that can improve conditions on the ground in the BLM. But the first thing that jumps into our mind, how are we going to permit it because that is the world we live in. We live in a regulatory world. You guys live in a on-the-ground implementation operation world. I think there is a disconnect between the way we view approaches to problems. I don't want you guys to take that as "we don't want this project to get implemented". It's more of a question of how are we going to do it without losing in court and having to remove it or not being able to keep it. Please don't take our hesitance on saying "Yes, we'll do an EA for it, we'll start next week" as "we don't want this to be implemented."

John Sherve

I'd say that Argenta continues to be the priority for the State of Nevada for the grazing permit renewal. Argenta continues to be the priority in our Renewable Division for our office and, for that matter, for our District. I feel that we've done a lot in meeting our commitments. I know the Round 2 decision came a lot later but there was a lot beyond anybody's control on that. Prior to that, we did a lot of work getting our EA done, the decisions done, dealing with whatever end-of-year reporting. We did a lot. We will continue to keep meeting our goals and deadlines on that.

The NRST is still our boss on this. We will continue to work through the NRST with whatever recommendations come down whatever direction. We will have input on to that when it comes to discussing future projects. It will be a really collaborative effort to see what we can move forward with balancing the known projects we've got. I think that's where we're at and I think we all want to make the Argenta great again.

Adam Cochran

I would like to reiterate what John and Sam said there. Don't take this as a lack in desire. We have a responsibility to everybody with the time and funds we have in the federal government. We live in a regulatory world. We need to be successful in how we implement and follow those regulations. If we go through a long, drawn out process they're expensive and at the end of the day fail, not only do you guys not get what you want on the ground, not only does our staff get disheartened because they work hard and it came to naught, so we waste a lot of money that belongs to the American people. It's important that we make sure that we operate within those parameters of what is feasible to do within those regulations. They're not fun but that's why the government pay Sam and me to live our lower middle class life style that we have is because it's not fun. But, it is required and it is necessary. For us here, failure on that front is not an option. We come across as the "Debbie Downer" sometimes but because we want to be successful on that front.

Angie Mariluch

I'm not going to lie. When I heard that the National Riparian Team was going to have a reduced role in this, my heart was just pounding. We have grown trust in all you guys and thank you. I thank everyone for all the work that they've done. And, I want to say, Kathryn, what you said really, really was what I was thinking and it couldn't have been said better. Thank you.

Shawn Mariluch

Most everything has been said. Just to go back to what Adam said "I'm being "Debbie Downer"", that's what I think started this thing - this last conversation. Instead of saying "there's ways to look at this, they might not be possible but we're going to look at them", there was five reasons not do even approach them.

Angie and I have talked about this yesterday when we heard about the reduced role of NRST, and that's what we're scared of. I don't feel the commitment from Adam that Doug said here and maybe Doug has it and maybe just Adam

doesn't, I just don't know. But, we're worried about what's going to happen when the CMG/NRST is not involved in this.

Bob Schweigert

I believe everything has been said that can be said about "Debbie Downer" so I'm say that we're going to proceed with assuming that we're going to get stuff done. And, approach it with a positive, optimistic outlook and we're going to get it done whatever route it takes.

Jamie Dafoe

I think that this group in this situation for this state if we maintain a "yes, we can try" – I make my kids try, if my 5-year old comes at me with a shoe, and says "I can't", I won't talk to you. You have to keep trying and maybe you won't succeed and that's life and that's what happens. So, for the atmosphere that has existed in this state between the regulatory agency and the ranching community. To maintain a productive outcome with this group in this situation is so much further reaching than the people in this room that I think we all have to keep trying because it is not just about this situation. I grew up in this state, a lot of people in this room grew up in this state, watching a lot of really hard things happen to really good people. So, imagine the hope that can come out the productiveness of this situation getting us somewhere.

Steve Cote

I don't have a whole lot to add. I did appreciate the Permit Renewal team, the tour with Sam and the other guys. I thought it was a really productive tour – some great ideas came out of it and I'm really encouraged by some of the things I think can be done and hopefully they can be done. It's hard to think that "Wow" - I kind of feel like Dan a little bit – "Yea, we can really make a difference in some of these spots." I worked for the government too and have done EAs and stuff like that. I did learn to cut and paste. I'm really good at that. I understand the agency's position. Sometimes it's difficult, I worked first for the BLM, Forest Service, and the ranchers and it's difficult sometimes for people in the ranching community, the farming community to understand the difficulties sometimes an agency faces, it's almost hard to believe but it really is there. And, it's discouraging. It's discouraging and stressful for everybody. I know as I was in it. I do understand that too. I do feel like everyone working together has been better. I appreciate the BLM a lot and the ranchers, of course, a lot too. I was a little encouraged by the tour, I felt good about that. Ken was great, Mike and Sam. One of the things that I think will be really important to and, I hope, I know Doug said it but that we do get more BLM people out on the ground. I hope that the new monitoring crew will be out there to help too. I hope that Sam will be able to get out there a lot more too.

Steve Leonard

I am really happy that we've made progress this year. The amount of progress we've made, I think we're going to make more this year. A big part of the progress that was made was made last year was not only the hard work but the ability to do some adaptive management on the fly. So, no matter what happens this year, we can't predict what the growing conditions are going to be, we can't predict a lot of things. We have a plan and I expect that there will be times when we, I know there will be times, we were going to make some adaptive management decisions to make sure that we continue to make progress. We will coordinate that with Sam and whoever else is involved with it to make sure that there are no surprises. And, regardless of what happens, I think we'll continue to make more progress. We can do that. It would nice to make that progress as easy as possible but we're still going to do it.

Kathryn Dyer

Definitely, the stress is real and we're all feel it. We all feel it sometimes from multiple sides. I think that the stress is so much bigger than even this room. I think that we all recognize that there is a lot riding for us personally on the things that occur in the Argenta but there are changes happening in the State and nationally that we're also influencing. And, that's like an enormous weight, right? But, with that, we also all have the potential to have an enormous success.

Kim's my boss and she gets to hear me complain about my workload but sometimes I described the job like a little manic depressive because there are times when people say "Man, you just accomplished something!" and "Maybe you're making a positive impact!" and there are other times when you're thinking "We just went backwards and god knows how far". The only reason though that there is that potential for those highs and lows is because of the importance of what we all are involved in.

Gant Massey

I've been sitting and listening, I don't have to say a lot because I have an advantage that actually everybody else shares. I've got Sam Ault on my staff. When I came into this, months ago, we were down two full time people in the renewable group. With John's leadership and Adam's support, we've rebuilt our group and we're planning and moving forward into next year. As a Plant Ecologist, I can look at the results. We're heading in the right direction, got the right people. It's not always going to be easy. I am hopeful and appreciate the opportunity for being here. This is why I'm on the job. Someone, I forgot among the folks, asked or made the comment whether or not Doug's words were just words or a commitment. I know that they are a commitment, a commitment from him, John, and myself.

Mark Gonzalez

I have some good news and some bad news. I'll start with the bad news so I can finish on a higher note. And, this might upset a couple people but I don't know if I can go through another meeting here without saying this. There is a cultural issue for one. NRST gets a unique view of the agency because we get to work in a lot of different offices. And, so we get to see how people interact and every office develops its own little culture. This office here has a different culture. And, it is not one that I think is very healthy. And, I hear things like "we're a regulatory agency". The BLM is not a regulatory agency. BLM is a land management agency. And, if you chose to manage by regulation, you're missing the point. You manage by cooperation, you manage by willingness, you manage by encouragement, you manage by education, you manage by pulling together; but you don't manage by regulation. That's what's gotten us into the problems that we're in. That's part of the culture this office has that I don't see replicated – I just don't know if I've seen that replicated elsewhere in the BLM. Now, I've pissed people off but I had to get that off my mind.

Part of this is changing the way we approach the problem. So, you probably wouldn't recognize this as being I'm so far detached from my childhood but my Dad was a surgeon. We tried to eat supper as a family every night because he thought that was the most important thing we could do. But, he'd call up at 6 PM or 6:30 PM and tell my mother "go ahead and feed the kids" because I've got to go take care of this now. And it was hauling someone else to get fixed up. Get called up in the middle of the night and he'd go. He didn't say "I'm too tired or understaffed or overworked". He went because it was his job and somebody needed him. He took care of the people who needed him and they needed him now. And, that's what we got here. These people need us. The resources need us. The condition on the land needs us. We're either going to step up and we're going to do the job without excuse or we probably shouldn't be doing the job. So, remember that. We're here because we chose to be here but the resources need us, the people need us, and we're just going to get the job done. So, we got to change this mindset. We're a "get 'er done, not a "Debbie Downer" group. That's how we're going to get this done.

And, I agree with you, Shawn, you put out a proposal and maybe you can do it, maybe you can't but you don't start off with a list of five reasons why I don't want to do this. Five reasons why I don't think we're going to get this done. Five reasons why I'd rather not. It's not the approach to take. Maybe we can't but we're not going to start off with that approach. We're going to be the guy who wakes up in the middle of the night when somebody calls him up and says "we need you now" and you go into the operating room and fix them. That's what he was – he was a "fixer". So, I'd like to think that in my background I came from a "get 'er done" unit. We're fighting over one allotment permit renewal. In six years, I've got 210 – 225 allotments renewed. That's because I've come from a whole unit of "get 'er done's" that were land managers; not land regulators. So, attitude has a lot to do with the success that you either enjoy or you'll struggle with. We've got to really look at our attitude here. We've just got to start talking to each other as we're going to be "get 'er done" and we are a "can do" unit and that's how we're going to move forward.

Now, all that bad stuff being said, I'm going to end on this. By golly, permittees, you had a phenomenal year because I think about the numbers we recorded last year at this very same meeting, there was not a whole lot to smile about. But,

when I look at the bar graphs from 2015, the bar graphs with the numbers from 2016 that was a darn good year. You've turned the corner. I think we also learned that some strategies are working really well, some strategies – it's still going back to the blackboard and saying "we still got to tweak, we got to change, we got to do whatever it takes" because we know there is still some sore spots that need more attention. But, by gosh, I think we should all pat ourselves on the back. Everybody contributed in some fashion or form and we shouldn't leave here with the mistaken notion that we haven't come a long way. I just think there is demonstrable change from one year to the next and we ought to congratulate ourselves for that. It took a lot of effort from a lot of people; some more than others. I just want to really tip my hat off to the people who were the principals in making that happen. You did a great job! I'm an optimist. I see next year being better than this year.

Mike Holbert

Well, I don't know how you follow that. I agree a lot with the comments made. I guess first of all I appreciate having the opportunity to be a part of the process of the group. Like Mark, I was very pleasantly surprised with the results of the monitoring efforts and what happened on the ground. I think the majority of the allotment had good use. As was mentioned, there are a few areas that need to be addressed and you're working on trying to address those. There is a lot of work that, at least I see, by everyone in this room that needs to be done but I think you've got a good strategy ahead of you. I think you probably won't accomplish everything but I think progress will be made. I agree with Mark that attitude and to go forward staying positive is probably the most important part of the communication between everybody in this room. You've got to maintain that in order to make that progress. Again, thank you for letting me to be a part of it.

Laura Van Riper

Overall, I'm pleased with the meeting. I can completely relate to the stressed out over work situation and, like it has been said, I think that everybody here can. When I find myself getting frustrated, which happens a bit, I have to go back and remember to put this into perspective. The first time we met you guys was January 2015, it hasn't even been two years. The first time you went out with Steve and Wayne and those guys was March 2015, like a year and nine months ago. When I think about that and I think about when we met you guys in the Civic Center in January 2015 and the situation then, the situation in March, the situation when we convened that first meeting in April, and what really was going on and how bad things really were; I'm frankly really amazed of where we are. I think all those little things in between get frustrating and it's taken a lot of work to get here and I get all of that but I think it is frankly amazing and I'm not sure I really thought it was even possible so I'm twice as amazed.

Mike Lunn

I will say the same thing that I said yesterday. Laura laid out how short the time has been that we've been involved in this and the major changes that people have made and the progress. There is always a lot of opportunity to fail in anything that you do. One of my friends used to say "If you think you can or you think you can't, either way you're right." I've seen so much work and dedication by the permittees and some of the folks in BLM to make this thing work at all levels. I think it is going to work. I think we can. It is always a privilege for me to be able to work with all of you. Thank you.

Ken Cole

Mr. Cole was not able to join day 2 of the CMG meeting due to a prior commitment. Upon reading the draft CMG meeting notes, Mr. Cole responded to Mr. Gonzalez's comments via email. Rather than engaging in a virtual discussion about what Mark said/meant, Ms. Van Riper suggested that Mr. Cole's comments simply be added to the meeting notes – since they reflect what he likely would have said as part of the closing. Those comments are below. Mr. Cole also shared an electronic copy of the BLM grazing regulations, which Ms. Van Riper agreed to share with the CMG along with the final version of the meeting notes.

I take issue with Mark's assessment that the BLM should not be managing based on regulation. The grazing regulations are intended to ensure that the agency doesn't act in an arbitrary and capricious way and ensures that the interests of the public are protected. The BLM is required to manage grazing in accordance with the grazing regulations. I've attached them for your review.

The Battle Mountain District are thoroughly educated about the rules and regulations they are required to follow and don't shoot from the hip like many other offices do. Despite our concerns with the BLM's grazing management in general, their decisions, until the NRST was brought in at the behest of the Nevada State Office, have been well reasoned and comply with regulations. That should be a minimum requirement for any BLM employee. Unfortunately, many BLM employees seem to regard the regulations as a secondary concern and we see this reflected in the degraded condition of our public lands.

I submit to you that a long history of ignoring the grazing regulations and giving ranchers whatever they demand is the reason we got to this point on the Argenta allotment. The Battle Mountain District did an honorable job of trying to work with the permittees during the drought, but the permittees refused to work with them and did not even comply with the agreements that they made with the BLM. The bar has been set so low, for so long, that whenever the livestock industry doesn't get what they demand – despite the cost to the public and our resources – the ranchers react loudly and, as we have seen in Gold Butte and Malheur, sometimes violently. When the BLM caters to this kind of pressure, it encourages more actions like those.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

In closing the meeting, Ms. Van Riper indicated that the draft meeting notes will be ready for review by December 7th or 9th. As soon as the minutes are received, Ms. Van Riper will distribute them to the CMG for review. In the interim, Kathryn, Sam, and others will get the NEPA questions answer and report back to the CMG. The permittees working with Mr. Leonard, Mr. Cote, and BLM on developing the draft 2017 Stockmanship Plan and NRST will be drafting various sections of the end-of-season report.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

DECISION AND ACTION SUMMARY

Attachment 6 provides a summary of decisions made. Attachment 7 provides an overview of the action assignments made.

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ACRONYMS

The following acronyms were used during the meeting and listed in alphabetical order.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
AIM.....	Assessment, Inventory, and Monitoring
ARMPA	Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment
AUM	Animal Unit Month
BLM.....	Bureau of Land Management
CI	Confidence Interval
CMG	Cooperative Monitoring Group
CX.....	Categorical Exclusion
DMA	Designated Monitoring Area
DNA.....	Determination of NEPA Adequacy
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EOS.....	End-of-Season
ER	Evaluation Report
FY	Fiscal Year
GPRT	Grazing Permit Renewal Team
GS	General Schedule
HAF.....	Habitat Assessment Framework
IDT.....	Interdisciplinary Team
IM.....	Instruction Memorandum
IRC.....	Intermountain Range Consultants
MIM.....	Multiple Indicator Monitoring
NDOW	Nevada Department of Wildlife
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NRST	National Riparian Service Team
RHA	Rangeland Health Assessment

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ATTACHMENTS

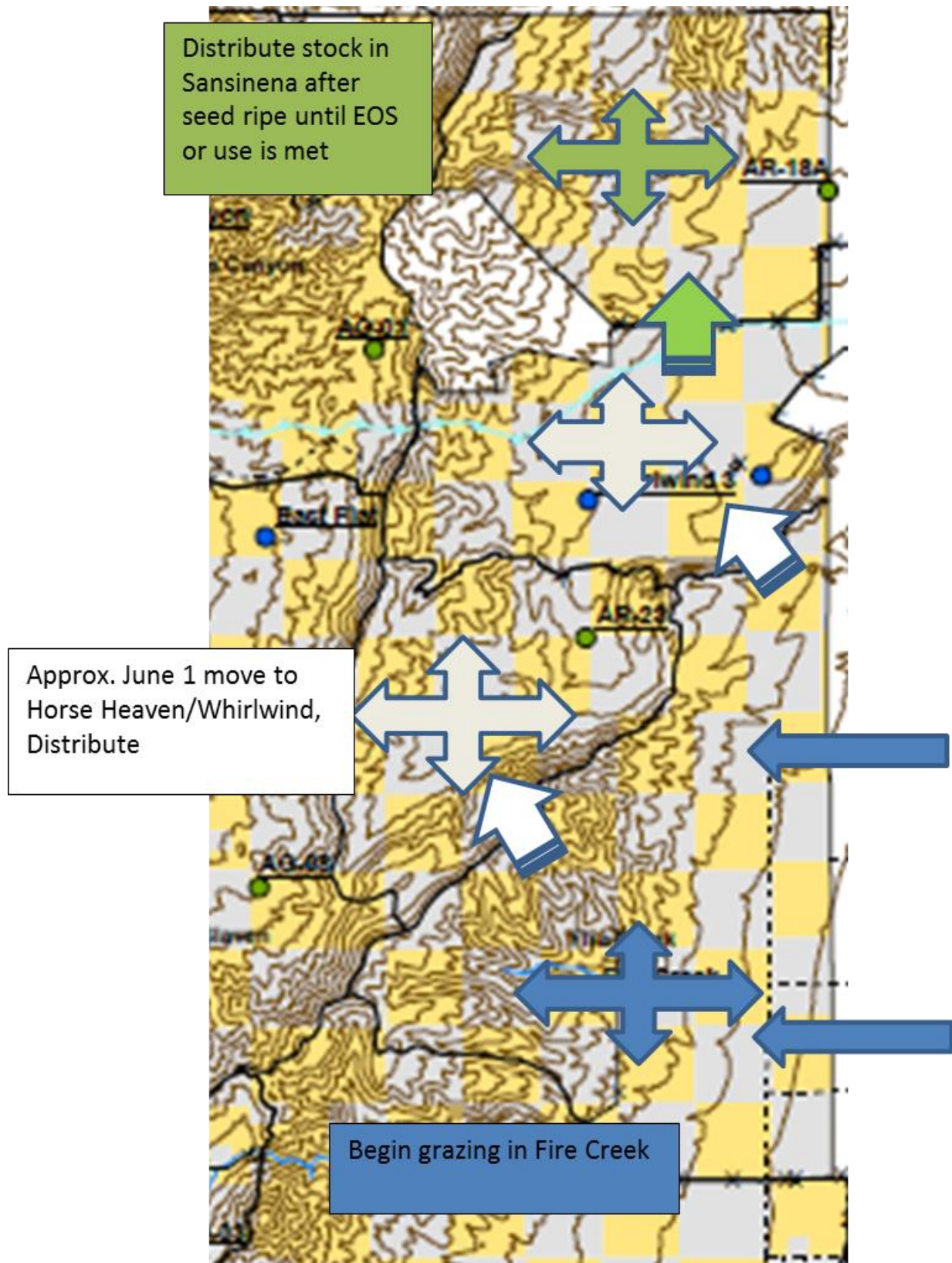
ATTACHMENT 1 – ATTENDANCE

RAC Members in Attendance				
Member	Representing	Day 1	Day 2	
Margo Anderson	BLM – Nevada State Office	X		
Sam Ault	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office	X	X	
Steve Cote	Cattle Sense	X	X	
Adam Cochran	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office	X	X	
Kent Cole	Western Watersheds Project	X		
Jamie Dafoe	Intermountain Range Consultants	X	X	
Amanda DeForest	BLM – Nevada State Office	X		
Kim Dow	BLM – Nevada State Office	X	X	
Kathryn Dyer	BLM – Nevada State Office	X	X	
EddyAnn Filippini	Badger/Chiara Ranches		X	
Mark Gonzalez	National Riparian Service Team	X	X	
Steve Leonard	Cowdance Range & Riparian Consulting	X	X	
Mike Lunn	National Riparian Service Team	X	X	
Angie Mariluch	Filippini Ranching Company	X	X	
Shawn Mariluch	Filippini Ranching Company	X		
Gant Massey	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office	X	X	
Mike Rahe	BLM – Nevada State Office	X		
Jim Schroeder	BLM – Nevada State Office	X		
Bob Schweigert	Intermountain Range Consultants	X	X	
John Sherve	BLM – Battle Mountain District Office	X	X	
Genevieve Skora	U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service – Reno	X	X	
Dan Tomera	Tomera Ranches	X	X	
Lynn Tomera	Tomera Ranches	X	X	
Paul Tomera	Tomera Ranches	X	X	
Pete Tomera	Tomera Ranches	X	X	
Laura Van Riper	National Riparian Service Team	X	X	
Ken Vicencio	BLM – Nevada State Office	X		
Jake Vialpando	BLM – Nevada State Office	X		

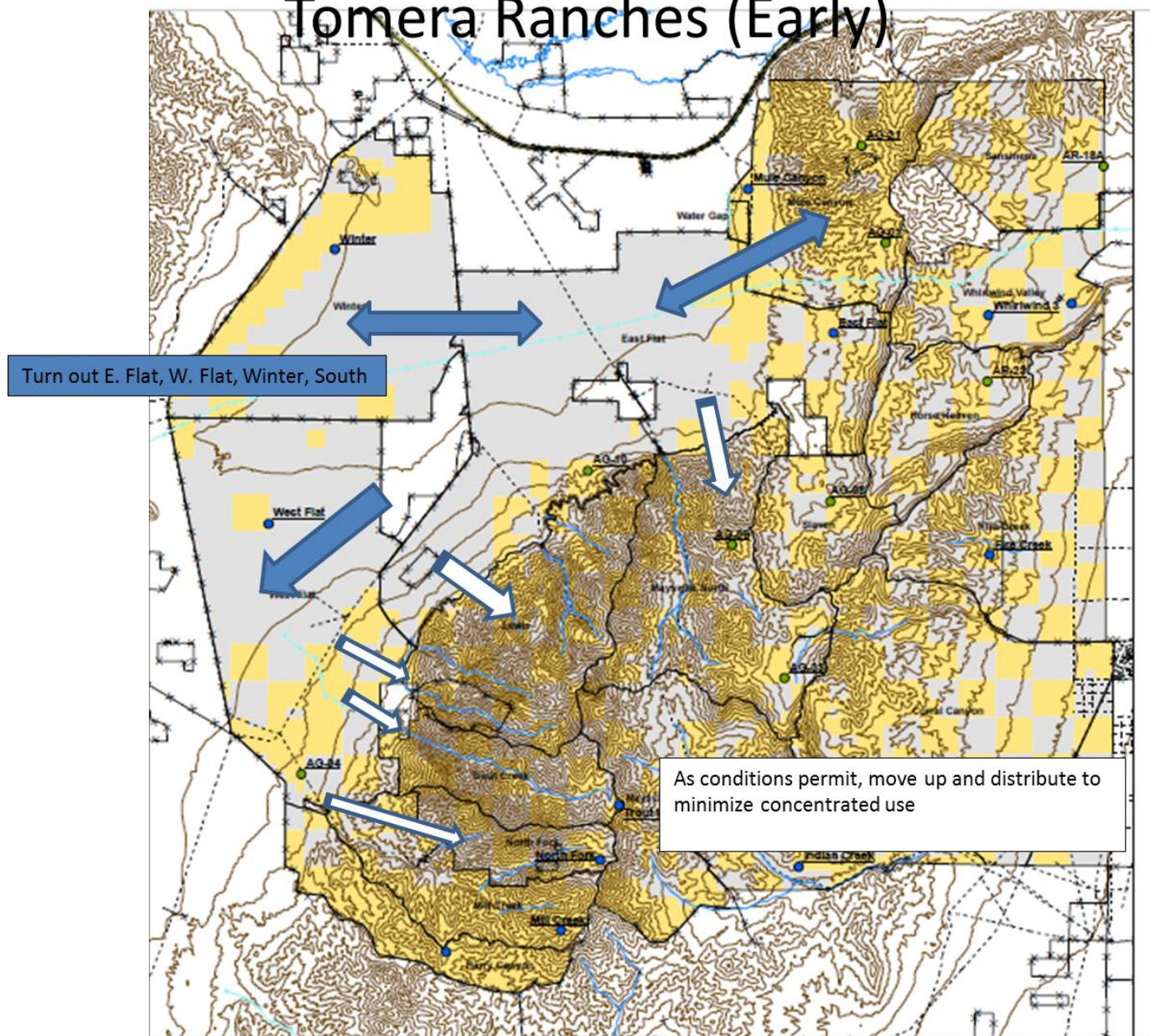
SPECIES LIST

NRCS Plant Symbol	Scientific Name	Common Name	Type
ACLE9	<i>Achnatherum lettermanii</i>	Letterman's needlegrass	Herbaceous
ACTH7	<i>Achnatherum thurberianum</i>	Thurber's needlegrass	Herbaceous
AGCR	<i>Agropyron cristatum</i>	crested wheatgrass	Herbaceous
ATCO	<i>Atriplex confertifolia</i>	shadscale saltbush	Woody
BAPR5	<i>Bassia prostrata</i>	forage kochia	Woody
BRMA4	<i>Bromus marginatus</i>	mountain brome	Herbaceous
ELEL5	<i>Elymus elymoides</i>	squirreltail	Herbaceous
ELTR7	<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i>	slender wheatgrass	Herbaceous
FEID	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	Idaho fescue	Herbaceous
POSE	<i>Poa secunda</i>	Sandberg bluegrass	Herbaceous
PSSPS	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>	bluebunch wheatgrass	Herbaceous
THIN6	<i>Thinopyrum intermedium</i>	intermediate wheatgrass	Herbaceous

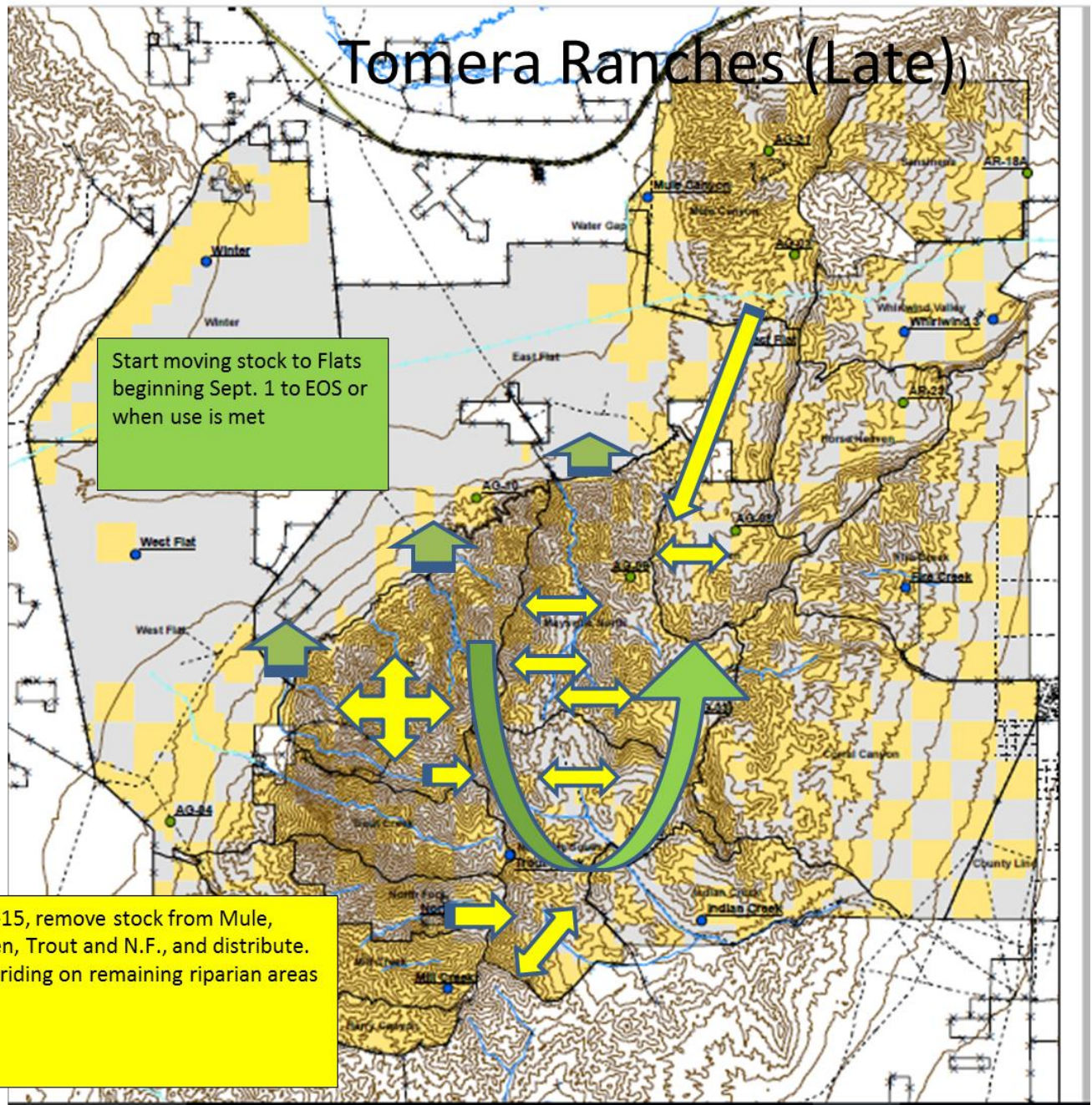




Tomera Ranches (Early)



Tomera Ranches (Late)



ATTACHMENT 6 – SUMMARY OF MOTIONS AND DECISIONS MADE

The following is a summary of the motions and decisions made by the CMG.

Decisions Made	Page of Meeting Minutes
Tentatively set February 8 – 9, 2017, aside for a face-to-face CMG meeting; however, it may be cancelled depending on the number and substance of the public comments received.	38

ATTACHMENT 7 – SUMMARY OF ACTION ASSIGNMENTS

The following is a summary of the action items made during the meeting.

Action Number	Action	Party Assigned Action	Page of Meeting Minutes
1	Send all data that the GPRT has (whether complete or not) to the permittees on December 19, 2016.	Jake Vialpando	9
2	Develop and e-mail ¹⁷ a list of items (i.e., understanding what the project will achieve, how the project will help livestock grazing management, project specifics (miles, location, acres of proposed disturbance, etc.)) that the permittees should address to ensure the range improvement project applications contain the appropriate information to assist preparing a defensible NEPA analysis for the grazing permit renewal process.	Ken Vicencio	10
3	Once a draft plan or strategy has been developed for conducting PFC assessments in the Spring 2017, the GPRT will meet with the Mount Lewis Field Office staff and the grazing permittees to review and discuss the draft plan/strategy (areas to be sampled, etc.) to ensure everyone is in agreement and onboard.	Jake Vialpando	13
4	The Mount Lewis Field Office staff should inspect the Mill Creek enclosure fence to determine where livestock are gaining access and repair the problem area.	MLFO	17
5	Representatives from the Mount Lewis Field Office, Battle Mountain District Office, and the Nevada State Office will discuss the NEPA vulnerability and risks associated with different levels of NEPA analysis in determining the appropriate level of analysis for addressing infrastructure proposals. Results of these discussions should be shared with the CMG no later than December 2, 2016.	Kathryn Dyer	31
6	The livestock permittees, NRST, and the Mount Lewis Field Office staff will work collaboratively to identify range improvement project proposals as part of developing the 2017 Stockmanship Plan. The livestock grazing permittees were given the responsibility for initiating discussions with the Mount Lewis Field Office and the NRST.	Livestock Permittees	31/32
7	Provide the CMG (via e-mail) with a link to the Argenta allotment website.	Sam Ault	33
8	Send the CMG an electronic copy of the <i>Nevada Ranchers Monitoring Guide</i> and the <i>Nevada Rangeland Monitoring Handbook</i> , which is currently being revised to include new sage-grouse monitoring protocols.	Kathryn Dyer	34
9	Make the Nevada Department of Agriculture's monitoring phone app available to the CMG once it becomes available to the public.	Kathryn Dyer	35
10	Work with the livestock grazing permittees to develop cooperative monitoring agreements.	Sam Ault	36
11	Dates for the end-of season monitoring, CMG's November 2017 EOS meeting, collection of additional baseline MIM data, and assessing key species on some KMAs will be formally scheduled in February 2017.	Laura Van Riper	

¹⁷ To the livestock grazing permittees, consultants, and the Mount Lewis Field Office.