

## Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

### Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2020

#### ATTENDANCE

##### BLM

Jon Raby, Nevada State Director (By phone)  
Ester McCullough, Winnemucca District Manager  
Colleen Dulin, Carson City District Manager  
Heather O'Hanlan, Winnemucca Public Affairs Specialist  
Lisa Ross, Carson City Public Affairs Specialist and RAC Coordinator

##### RAC Members:

(Name, Employer, Representing, Notes)

Matthew Gingerich, NV Energy, Transportation and Rights-of-Way (ROWs), **RAC Chair**  
Tim Dufurrena, Livestock Permittee, Grazing, returning RAC member  
Ben Veach, Civil Engineer, Environmental, transferred from Forest Service RAC  
Robert Jones, NDOW, State Agency  
Kyle Snyder, Ormat, Energy & Mineral  
Ron Kyle, (retired Forest Service), Public at Large  
Ken Tipton, Humboldt County Commissioner, Recreation  
Paul Scott, Sprint, ROWs  
John Ugalde, Livestock Permittee, Dispersed Recreation  
Pat Irwin, Public at Large (By phone)  
Jeanne Herman, Washoe County Commissioner, Elected Official (By phone)

##### Non- RAC Members Present:

Donovan Walker, Winnemucca District Fire Managing Officer  
David Kampwerth, Humboldt River Field Office Manager  
Mark Hall, Black Rock Field Office Manager  
James (Andy) Boerigter, Black Rock Field Office Assistant Field Manager  
Derek Messmer, Winnemucca District Fire Fuels Manager  
Garrett Swisher, Black Rock Field Office Wild Horse and Burro Specialist

#### CALL TO ORDER 8:03 a.m.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Greg Hendricks, former WHB RAC member, shared information regarding Virginia Range fertility control program. They are finishing up the first year of this program and have applied fertility control to approximately 3,000 wild horses. This is the biggest fertility control program in the world. There is be a mini-documentary filming about the project at Patagonia Outlet Store in Reno on March 12, 2020, 7:00 pm. The documentary "Wild Science Data and Darts Keep Nevada Mustangs Safe" will highlight fertility control and addresses public concerns.

Matt welcomed all and called the meeting to order.

Introductions were made by RAC members and BLM staff present.

## **RAC STATUS**

Speaker: Jon Raby

RACS play an important role in BLM. Assist with building relationships, fostering collaboration, and helping to form policy. Mr. Raby strongly supports RACS across Nevada.

Historically, there were three RAC groups in Nevada since the mid-1990s. An Executive Order in June of 2019 required BLM to review and evaluate RAC groups and directed federal agencies to reduce RAC groups by 1/3. Part of the basis for the Executive Order were persistent inactive RAC groups.

Mr. Raby hosted a RAC Chair meeting a few weeks ago. At that time, he thought the three RACS groups would continue to meet. However, he learned since then that the BLM recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget was to consolidate the three RAC groups into two. These would be the Sierr Front-Northern Great Basin encompassing Carson City, Winnemucca and Elko BLM districts; and the Mojave-Southern Great Basin encompassing Battle Mountain, Ely and Southern Nevada Districts. Mr. Raby notified the current RAC Chairs of this decision and provided guidance on how to move forward until new Charters could be developed. Mr. Raby also noted the existing RAC Charters expire today (March 5, 2020).

Question: Will the RACs continue with members already nominated? Will the nomination process continue?

Replay: Mr. Raby has asked these questions and is unsure of the process moving forward.

Question: Will there still be 15 members per RAC group?

Reply: Yes

Comment: This is a logistical challenge for Battle Mountain to be included with the Mohave RAC; although it makes sense based on the district's size.

Ms. Ross replied that an attempt will be made to hold meetings in locations that are mutually accessible. Telephonic conferences are also an option

Question: What is the time frame for new appointments?

Reply: Mr. Raby anticipates the BLM will know more within the next month. He recommends continuing with what the RAC group is currently doing. There is nothing to prevent forward movement and he is seeking more guidance for new configuration. The BLM may need to hold a Tri-RAC type meeting (a meeting with the two new RAC groups/three former RAC groups) to discuss next steps.

Mr. Gingerich noted it is important to keep efforts going.

Question: Will there be a savings considering there will have to be more meetings and more field trips to extended areas?

Reply:

Mr. Raby is not worried about financials so much. The work the RAC does is more important. Effective form of communications is more important than budget issues.

Mr. Gingerich noted personally he does business across entire state so it may not be that big of an issue. This could also be a potentially positive arrangement.

Other comments: Including Elko adds interest and possible opportunities.

Question: Have there been any comments from other RACS?

Reply: Mr. Gingerich and Mr. Raby are not aware of any. Mr. Raby offered to meet with other RACs to discuss the Executive Order. Other states, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, the Dakotas, are also affected by the Executive Order. Oregon is going from nine groups to four, Montana and the Dakotas from four to two. The main thing to focus on is how to make this work.

Question: Are other NV RACs meeting?

Reply: No because of a quorum issue

Comment: The current three RAC groups have a varied number of members. The goal is to take members from the Northeastern RAC group and spread those individuals to the consolidated two RAC groups. Even by doing this there will still be openings.

The Nomination process will come from the Washington Office.

## **CHARTER**

Current charter expires 3/5/2020 at midnight.

Charter lays out objectives and scope of RAC group. Also addresses the Designated Federal Officer (DFO)'s roles and responsibilities. Recommendations regarding land management is passed from the RAC group to the BLM through the DFO. Matt Gingerich is hoping for a similar charter for the new RAC but expects it will be in a different configuration.

Question: What kind of leeway will the RAC have to identify issues and provide recommendations to the BLM. Are they required to go through DFO to get to other District Managers?

Reply: Ester McCullough is open to any RAC members' identification of issues or recommendations. However, "official" recommendation must be routed through the DFO. Ester noted she has a good working relationship with the DFO and does not expect delays.

Question: How soon will the new charter be available?

Reply: It's coming from the Washington Office. It should be today or tomorrow, and Jon Raby expects it will be in place within next 30 days. This should not prevent this group from scheduling another meeting. However, there may be an issue with scheduling the next meeting this early because there may be new RAC members. Lisa Ross received three new nominations from the last call for nominations.

## **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

A copy of the Copy of the SOPs was included in the packet provided to the RAC members for review.

Question: Are there any current sub-committees

Reply: Yes, Grazing sub-committee. At one time there were three: Grazing, Wild Horse and Burro (WHB), and Sage-grouse (SG). The chairs for the WHB and SG chairs are no longer members of the RAC. Once this RAC groups becomes established new sub-committees can be created. Also, the new charter may have bearing on subcommittee.

Every member will be allowed to vote regarding initiatives.

Question: What is the quorum number?

Reply: There are three category groups within the RAC and each needs representation. Three people out of each category is needed for quorum. Each category should have five members to be considered full. Not all the RAC categories are full, but each has at least three members.

Comment for new members: In the past, members were encouraged to carpool for field trips. Ron Keil offered an open invitation or carpooling from Reno.

Question: Will there be a list of contacts sent out?

Reply: Lisa will send it out.

## **TRAVEL**

Lisa reported travel authorizations need to be completed before travel. Per diem will be reimbursed. Different locations have different per diem rates. RAC members are required to make their own hotel reservations. Ensure government rate is applied. Lisa will need a receipt for lodging and round-trip mileage. All travel is completed by the Carson City office. After the voucher is completed after travel occurs, a hard copy will be sent to RAC members for their signature. Reimbursement usually occurs within a couple of weeks. May be issue with end of fiscal year meetings that may have a delay in reimbursement. RAC members will be reimbursed for taxes paid on hotel rooms.

## **District Manager (DM) REPORTS**

### **Winnemucca District**

Presented by Ester McCullough

Refer to DM report provided with packet.

Key topics:

- Fluid minerals / geothermal
  - four operating geothermal plants
- Solid Minerals
  - expansions
  - extend life of mine

Question: What is the status of Hycroft?

Reply: They are still operating on the old heap leach. They need to complete the Reclamation Cost Estimate (RCE) for a bond refund or they may need to post a new bond. The Decision Record included phased mining. Hycroft can work in existing pit above water line. They still need to work out eagle take issue with Fish and Wildlife Service.

- New proposals
  - Issue: Staff shortages but working on filling staff to capacity
- Cultural projects
- ROW projects
- Recreation - Burning Man presentation to follow
- Outreach at Humboldt and Marzen House museums
- Volunteer projects
- Wildlife projects
  - SG mitigation
  - Lahontan Cutthroat Trout exclosures
  - Elk herd management area
  - Question: Where is the Elk Management Area?
    - Reply: Santa Rosas
- WHB gathers

Question: Are more gathers planned?  
Reply: This will be addressed this afternoon.
- Rangeland Management
  - Nevada Grazing Permit Renewal Team has been going district by district to renew grazing permits. They are almost done with Argenta and will be working in the Winnemucca District this year. Goal is to renew 22 grazing permits. This is a two-year process. After Winnemucca, the team will work in Elko. Currently, there are discussions at the state office regarding how the team will work in the future.
- Weeds/tamarisk removal
- Fire - 98% success rate on initial attack

Question: What is the update on the shooting range expansion

Reply: Due to shortage of staff, the Winnemucca District requested a prioritization of project from Humboldt County. They set the Pueblo Fire station as the first priority. The shooting range and landfill expansions will be addressed after the fire station. The baseline data for shooting range is being collected.

Question: Who is the Lovelock Cave Coordinator?

Reply: Peggy McGuckian retired. The current coordinator is Tanner Whetstone. Normally the district has five archeologists, and the district is down to one.

### General Questions/Comments

Question: Is the Black Rock sub-group RAC still in existence?

Reply: No. That sub-group was established for the Black Rock Resource Management Plan (RMP) development. That Charter was renewed after the RMP was signed but expired sometime between 2010-2015. No copy of that charter is available.

Comment: New RAC set up should include a Black Rock sub-group. Matt agreed, this is a sensitive area. That committee was separate, but it was designed to report to this RAC. There were meetings held for this subgroup but issues updating the RAC.

Question: How many grazing permits does the BLM expect to get through with the Permit Renewal Team?

Reply: These are ten-year permits. The BLM should be looking at these on a 10- year rotation. However, due to turn over and the renewal process, the BLM cannot estimate.

Question: Is the personnel shortage a Winnemucca District issue or statewide issue?

Reply: It is an across the state issue. There are several reasons for staff shortage. In rural areas like Winnemucca, the mines may pay an engineer much more than what the BLM offers so it is difficult to fill these types of positions. An engineer is at the state office working as a shared resource, but this is not a long-term solution. The other issue is field work. Staff cannot be in one field office and expect to do field work in another location.

Question: Is there an internship program?

Reply: The Direct Hire Authority (DHA) program worked well. Interns could qualify for permanent positions. However, the two individuals running the program in Washington were slated to move west and they chose not to. Currently there is no one running the program. There are other intern programs outside of the DHA program, but rural areas are still hard to fill. BLM is looking at this issue nationally and at the state level.

Question: Is there a possibility to consolidate renewal work? Could the State Office provide assistance? Is there a programmatic approach to renewals?

Reply: Grazing permit renewals are not programmatic because allotments need baseline data pertaining to each allotment. The Winnemucca District recently hired three new Rangeland Management Specialists. There are some training needs before they are up to speed.

### **Carson City**

Presented by Colleen Dulin

Refer to DM report provided with packet.

Key topics:

- RMP on hold
- Research Projects
  - Working with University of Nevada, Reno on research projects using livestock to control tall whitetop (invasive plant species). Livestock seems to be an effective method of controlling the invasives through trampling and eating
- Fire rehabilitation projects

- Question: Is there a reason why some fires are more expensive?

Reply: Depends on access to area, number of weeds present before fire and in surrounding area, need for aviation equipment

- Drought conditions
- Fire potential is above average this year because of grass crops from past wet years. There is a fire concern this year unless we continue to get precipitation this spring.
- Fire staffing
- Fuels management
  - Wildland / Urban Interface treatments
  - Focus on reduce high intensity fires
  - Programmatic fuel breaks in sage brush communities at the Great Basin landscape level
- Fire mitigation, education, and investigation
- New Issue: increase in abandoned vehicles, homeless camps, public land occupancy, due to growth of urban interface

Question: Is there a buffer area separating recreation camping from living camping?

Reply: Carson City is working with Washoe County to designate areas where no camping of any kind will be allowed within a specific distance of urban areas. However, limiting use in one area generally increases use in another area. BLM is also working with Washoe County to look at two areas for long term camping.

Carson City completed a big cleanup project along the Truckee River. This was done in collaboration with local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Project addressed several homeless camps and offered assistance.

- Solid minerals

Question: Is the Anaconda Mine going to be filled in?

Reply: OU8 is an area of the mine that covers a lot of BLM land. Remediation involves the filling of leach ponds and addressing ground water containment. The big pit may be on private. The remediation company is seeking disposal of BLM lands and working with SHPO re historic sites on public lands that would be disposed. There will be a public meeting on March 12 regarding historic resources and the public can comment on the cultural protection plan.

Question: Is Copper Canyon Mine on public lands?

Reply: Yes, in a checkerboard area

- Lands and Realty
  - Congress to vote on Fallon Naval Station proposal this fall.

Question: What is the Navy proposing with regards to fire suppression.

Reply: The BLM is working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Navy to address this issue.

Comments: There has been issues in the past where a fire is ignited from training activity and left to grow.

Question: How will ROWs be addressed in the withdrawal area?

Reply: The Dixie Valley training area will mostly be the same. The BLM office is working with the Navy to make sure the ROWs will not inhibit their ability to train safely. Transmission line heights pose risk to flight training. The withdrawal area is more of a buffer in case an explosive device does not meet the intended target. BLM is recommending multiple use in bombing areas and to have some flexibility with regards to existing ROWs. BLM will continue to manage ROWs in the Dixie Valley training area, but it is unknown how they will be handled in bombing areas. The legislation may decide to buy out existing ROWs or maintain them. ROW holders may need to coordinate with the Navy directly for ROW maintenance.

Question: Are underground options available?

Reply: Yes, but there is associated costs. The Navy discussed moving some of the existing ROWs underground. Eventually it is up to Congress. BLM can only make recommendations.

Comments: Resource Concepts is submitting comments for Churchill County. Congressman Amodei also provided comments. The Governor just release a letter regarding comments on the withdrawal. This is a very sensitive issue but not a BLM project.

- SNPLMA, other public lands acquisitions and land conveyances
- Carson City hired two realty specialists to work on back log for communication sites and NV Energy ROW renewals
- Abandoned Mine Lands (AMLs)

Question: What is involved with an AML closure?

Reply: Remediation - filling or gating depending on site

- Grazing: Carson City hired one RMS dedicated to the Outcome Based Grazing Initiative. The Preliminary Environmental Assessment should be released this spring.
- NPLD project: Photogrammic data acquisition - on-line story map will be released in spring of 2020 with photogrammic data sites
- Recreation
  - Sites available for reservation through recreation.gov
  - Site developments: Bats were captured at Indian Creek Campground and tested for White Nose Syndrome. All tested negative.
  - Unexploded ordinances cleanup in Hawthorne - sites are open and signed.



Question: what is involved in Pinyon Juniper removal?

Reply: Mostly lopping and scattering. Lopping to ground level. Cut vegetation is either burned or scattered to provide nutrients to soil. Re-treatments are required every 5-10 years. If sage brush can regenerate maintenance needs decrease. Pinyon Juniper (PJ) treatments are executed to improve Sage-grouse habitat and for fuels reduction, but mostly to improve sage brush community. PJ encroaching on sagebrush and meadow habitats. Other types of treatment are possible, including mastication. Each have pros and cons; each have maintenance or re-treatments needs.

Question: What is the status of the Long Valley and Perry Fire rehabilitation?

Reply: The Long Valley rehab is in progress. Carson City is seeking an Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) specialist for these projects. Not sure about future projects.

Question: Is there any data collected since the Indian Campground went to 100 reservable that indicates all campsites are being used or if there is a change in use? 100% reservable may lead to a reservable empty campground. Some should be available outside of reservation.

Reply: There is a campground host.

## **BREAK**

Break at 10:18

Resume at 10:38

## **WILDLAND FIRE**

Presentation by Donovan Walker

Handouts:

- 2019 Wildland Fire Update
- Map

### **Leadership**

- Staffing challenges: Still an Assistant Fire Management Officer position vacant
- Using detailers to fill position but there are pros (providing training) and cons (consistency)
- Dispatch: close to full staffing in dispatch
- Captain ranks are strong. Winnemucca District is encouraging growing through the ranks. This allows the Winnemucca District to maintain robust cadre of fire staff.

### **Collaboration**

- Two new agreements:
  1. A state-wide agreement with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) which replaces a 5-year agreement expiring soon.

2. A Service First Agreement with the Forest Service. Should be in effect this year. Since the Forest Service funding was cut, this agreement will benefit both parties.

### **2019 Summary**

- 111 fires - see map & handout
- 10 fires on BIA
- 1 state fire
- causes 40/60 split between lightning and human caused. Most human caused are roadside fires. Secondly, those caused by personal property maintenance (e.g. mowing and burning weeds)
- Average fire workload is increasing. Fire occurrence has been high and is now > 100 fires per year
- 2018 was an exceptional year because of the Martin fire.
- Staffing for this year is anticipated to be the same as last year.
- Mid July is the normal time for fire uptick.
- In 2019, the Winnemucca District was able to augment resources with neighboring agencies. This is a yearly collaboration.
- The Winnemucca District also hosted resources extending help to other agencies and districts. Continued collaboration is anticipated.
- Single Engine Air Taker base (SEATS ) 2019 report indicates the Winnemucca District retardant station is one of the busiest in the nation. However, it needs to be modernized. The Winnemucca District is seeking to move to an upgraded storage tank system to catch spills. We are working with NDEP. A Storm Water Protection Plan is in the works. We are currently abiding by Best Management Practices. The modernization should be completed in 1-2 years.
- The McDermitt fire station had a retardant spill. Cleanup took a few weeks. We are no longer storing liquid concentrate on this site. Retardant stored here is based on need. Station is cleaned up annually and reviewed.
- Gerlach is a seasonal station; staffed in summer
- The proposed Orovada fire station will replace the McDermitt fire station. The Orovada station will be bigger and allow an increase in response time to other areas in district. Winnemucca houses most of the fire protection resources because most of the activity occurs near Winnemucca but the long-term goal is to spread out resources to cover more rural areas. It is estimated the Orovada station will be ready for occupancy in 3-5 years.
- Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) program allows the BLM to transfer excess equipment to cooperators (i.e. volunteer fire operations, counties, Rural Fire Protection Districts). Last year the Winnemucca District transferred a Type 4 Engine to Rye Patch who are active cooperators. Five radios were transferred to Lyon County. This year three trucks will be available for transfer. Cooperators will get first bid. Next year two trucks will be available.

### **Dispatch**

- Challenge: infrastructure. There is a statewide effort to improve dispatch centers. By this spring we will have upgrades to the radio system.

## Fire Business

- Process in place that allows payment to contractors within couple of weeks. Last year we reported 0 errors
- Seeking innovative ways of conducting business
  - Rural Fire Protection Association (RFPAs) include a group of stakeholders, mostly ranchers, to help identify areas of concern, assist with fire fighting, being first on scene, assisting with logistics and planning. The Wildfire Support Group (WSG) RFPAs was the first one. Blue Mountain was established last year. Fields Andrews (Denio area) kick off meeting is this week. A draft agreement is in place and this RFPAs should be this year.

Question: Are the mines chipping in?

Reply: Yes, under a separate process. We use MOUs but this process is changing to an umbrella MOU (e.g.: NV Gold).

Mining stipulations address fire safety. BLM should be collaborating with mine managers for collaboration on specific incidents.

- Budget for pre suppression will not see an increase. Operational budget will see an increase largely due to higher grades of captains and tenure, fuels budget also increasing
- Handout has a page of summary statistics; fires by county & billable fires; still working on accounting
- Page 22 in packet is a success story brought up by cooperators at the End of Year Briefing. Successful because of good communications, robust dispatch, working together with cooperators. Fire in Grass Valley had some property damage but no injuries.

Question: Are water resources being considered in the grazing permit renewals? Particularly important considering the Martin Creek Fire. Is this something BLM can address in a MOU?

Reply: Ester will bring up with State Office. Another possibility is the Ranch Liaisons Program. The Winnemucca District is looking at developing this program, starting with certain areas within the district. RFPAs may also be an avenue to identify water resources.

Question: Will the fire crew continue road maintenance?

Reply: depends on funding

## FUELS

Presentation by Derek Messmer

- ESR program moved back under fire program
- Martin fire accomplishments in hand out. Success! Monitoring shows seeded species at 40% and excellent natural recovery.
- Obstacles included funding and shutdown. NDOW was a great help during the shutdown last December.

- This year we were able to do more rehab for the Martin Fire burned area because funding from the fuels program from previous years is available.
- The WD hired a fire planner.
- Push to get all information into a geospatial format. Use of the Collector App for mapping and collecting fire data increase efficiency. Fuels and the ESR program are also now using Collector.
- Mitigation- continued promotion of defensible space and fire prevention.
- Late funding for 2109 will allow BLM to increase number of acres for rehab this year.
- NDOW also providing funding.
- Sagebrush seed was not available last year but is for this year. The NDF has a nursery in the Conservation Cam and the prisons are also participating in this program. These are sources of sage brush seedlings. The Winnemucca District will be bringing in more seed and seedlings this year to put out more next year on the Martin rehab area.
- We are currently working under recent Programmatic Vegetation Plan completed in 2017 that allows the Winnemucca District to respond more quickly to rehab projects. The plan has a mechanism for responding to cheatgrass and will be used for the Martin fire area.
- Pueblo Fire Station - currently working on the Environmental Site Assessment and baseline data collection. Once these reports are done the Environmental Analysis can be released. The conveyance needs to occur no later than one year after reports are completed.

Question: What is the timeline for the Pueblo reports?

Reply: A couple of months. The NEPA is completed up to certain point. In April we may doing a sensitivity plan.

Question: For sage brush reseeding, do you use same type of sage brush?

Reply: Seedling selection is based on site potential and habitat. Seeds collected locally are used. We match the best we can, but it depends on what is available and the size of the area to be seeded.

Question: Are non-natives being used?

Reply: Yes. But site (elevation) also plays a factor. Forage kochia mostly used along roadways. Non-natives used mostly on low elevation areas and areas with potential for cheatgrass spread. Generally, mixes include native and non-native. Above a certain elevation non-native will outcompete natives. Species selected for broadcasting depends on location; what was there before and what could grow there.

Question: Are seeds collected through seed permits bought back?

Reply: Yes. This last year we put out 4,000 lbs. of seeds. We need many sources of seeds.

- The Martin success is partially due to good water year. We will be rehabbing for a couple of years. The Hallway fire rehab is still occurring.
- Martin Fire research projects:
  - Soil loss (in collaboration with USGS)
  - Soil treatments to increase germination (ARS, BYU and UNR)

- Seeds of Success program - expand locally adapted seed collection some of these seeds used on Martin Creek will monitor and compare how SOS seeds do in comparison to commercially bought seeds.
- Integrated Plan of Work (IPOW) working with wildlife habitat improvements
- We anticipate 40k acres this year for fuels projects, growth in program over the years
- Road improvement projects double as fuel breaks. We will be working in the Martin Fire area, making areas accessible with treatments along roadsides for effective fuel breaks
- Other focus areas:
  - Holloway fire
  - Cooperatives in Kings River & Montana Mountains areas
  - Revisiting old fires for better rehab and reseeding.

Question: Is livestock grazing being considered for fuels reduction projects?

Reply: Livestock grazing is an option under the Programmatic Vegetation Plan. This is also being looked at the State Level

Question: Are human caused fires broken down?

Reply: Yes. The greatest causes are vehicles /equipment and usually along roadsides. There have been a few cases of arson. BLM is working with cooperators to investigate.

Question: Will there be prosecutions?

Reply: Yes, based on success of investigation. BLM seeks restitution for human caused fires as appropriate.

## **BREAK**

Lunch: 11:56 to 1:08

## **GREATER SAGE GROUSE UPDATE**

Presented by Matt Magaletti and Carolyn Sherve

- 2010: Fish and Wildlife Service listed greater sage-grouse as Warranted but Precluded. This listing was based on lack of adequate regulatory mechanisms for protections.
- 2015: Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA), amended approximately 98 land use plans.
- 2016: LUPA litigated by the State of Nevada and other organizations. Also, new administration (Zinke) signed Secretarial Orders 3353 and 3355 (requiring EISs to be completed in one year).
- 2018: Nevada State Executive Order 2039 requires offsite mitigation for no net loss of habitat.
- 2019: Revised LUPA re-amending amendments. BLM adopted state habitat maps, removed SFAs (which are still being managed as priority habitat), adopted new adaptive management strategy in collaboration with SETT, compensatory mitigation changed to voluntary unless required by state law, changes in timing exceptions for more flexibility to allow beneficial actions .
  - Change in policy happened in middle of planning processes
  - 2019 plan was not litigated by Nevada or counties but was litigated by NGOs (Western Watershed, Center for Biological Diversity, Wildearth Guardians, Audubon Society)

- BLM enjoined from implementing 2019 plan, reverting management under 2015 plan.
- 2020 supplement 2019 plan
  - February 21, 2020 Supplemental EIS was released for public comment which will end on April 6<sup>th</sup>.
  - The 2020 EIS is a mirror of the 2019 EIS but includes portions of the 2015 plan.
- Next step? the Idaho District Court must rule on injunction. It is unknown when that will occur.
- Carolyn Sherve is the Sage Grouse Implementation Coordinator while Matt Magaletti is on a one-year detail.
- Implementation of projects in sage-grouse habitat requires reporting to the State Office. Since 2015 there have been approximately 600 projects state-wide.
- The BLM is under an agreement to monitor activities in Sage-grouse habitat
- Current direction is to follow the 2015 LUPA until the judge lifts injunction. Exceptions to this apply to the following the NV State Adaptive Management and Compensatory Mitigation plan.
- For EISs and large EAs offices are recommended to address alternatives under the 2015 and 2019 plans to be prepared for lifting of injunction.
- Fluid mineral leasing was affected by the 2015 / 2019 LUPA shift. Oil and gas leases for October sale were impacted by injunction. They were sold but cannot be issued until Idaho Court decides on injunction.

Question: A recent article in the Reno Gazette indicated leases near the Rubys were voided. Is this correct?

Reply: The leases were not voided, but the leases cannot be issued until the court decides on the injunction. The Forest Service has their own Sage-grouse management plan. BLM manages oil and gas leases. BLM analysis includes estimation of probability of finding oil and gas and in the case of the Ruby area the probability is very low. Another factor considered is habitat and Rubys have valuable habitat.

Question: What happens if the court ruling is a favorable outcome?

Reply: The current leases will be issued, and nominations can be considered.

Question: Are mitigation credits off the table?

Reply: The State of Nevada has its own credit conservation system (CCS). this was not enjoined by the Idaho court. The CCS was in place since 2012. It is anticipated it will start picking up this year. It will be a while before we see an impact. The mineral withdrawal in the SFAs was dropped.

Question: What are the sage-grouse population numbers?

Reply: Population is low now. Populations tend to be cyclical. The Martin fire removed a large amount of sage-grouse habitat. Recent discover of sage-grouse moving from the great basin to bi-state areas.

Question: Is this discovery based on science? Why the movement?

Reply: Sage-grouse were observed / tracked via GPS. Study conducted by the USGS. On-going activities were impacting their habitat.

Question: What impact did the Martin fire have?

Reply: Every trigger was tripped. This year is an important year because complete cycle has occurred and there are islands of sagebrush.

Question: Will the PowerPoint presentation be available?

Reply: Lisa will send out copy of PowerPoint presentation.

## **GOVERNORS COLLABORATIVE ON WILDFIRE**

Presented by Donovan Walker and Derek Messmer

Two handouts: Agreement for Share Stewardship and Collaborative process

- Statewide meetings in 2019 regarding catastrophic fires
- Interagency summit (August 2019) focused on communication, coordination, sharing resources
- November 2019 was the first interagency collaborative workshop focusing on solutions. Result was the Agreement for Share Stewardship
  - Outlines goals for protecting habitat while preventing catastrophic fires
  - Addresses process for cross jurisdictional fire fighting activities, fire prevention, and fire preparedness
  - Focus on sharing of resources
- Fire toolbox includes many tools:
  - Working with counties and partners on targeted grazing
  - Fuel breaks - 11,000 miles of fuelbreaks is great but not the only answer
  - Vegetation modeling and planning to allow for vegetation communities surviving fire events (e.g. islands of sagebrush)
- January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting:
  - First NV Shared Stewardship meeting
  - Action items and decisions:
    - Quarterly meetings (next one in April)
    - Short term prioritization of projects before April
    - Identify 2 projects for completion by 2021
    - Collaborative selection of 2 landscape projects
    - Increase cross jurisdictional projects by 2025
    - Develop modeling team
      - Winnemucca and Elko district are piloting fire modeling project
- Winnemucca District is seeking local support of larger efforts. Working with counties, NDF, etc., to identify areas where we can work together. Local fire chiefs have approached Donovan Walker with ideas for project.
- County manager has equipment and can work with BLM funding through assistance agreements.
- Forest Service identified areas with roads issues. County offered to help.
- Next week Winnemucca District Fire Program will be meeting with Pershing County, similar to meeting with Humboldt County, seeking areas for projects

Question: What are the hurdles to getting fuel break projects finalized?

Reply: Other than NEPA, there is no other issue

Question: Does the RAC need to provide input?

Reply: The Carson City Programmatic Vegetation Management Plan is open for comments until March 13. Winnemucca District already has Programmatic Vegetation plan in place.

Question: Can fuel breaks serve a dual purpose? For example, to allow for energy or communication site ROWs?

Reply: The BLM can include fuel breaks in conjunction with ROWs but ROWs have their own authorization process. Ruby Pipeline is an example of a collaborative ROW and fuel break.

- Fuel breaks are designed to have interaction with fire crew on and incident. They are not stand-alone devices. The fuel break on the north end of the Martin fire was effective until the winds picked up. Fuel breaks modify fire behavior.

Question: Is there extensive grazing allowed in ROWs?

Reply: We have considered this, but it is difficult to get the number of animals needed in concentrated area. This is due to availability of water, size of area, weather, etc. An area may need more grazing than what is available at the time.

Comments: If there is an opportunity for fuel reduction with livestock, we should pay the rancher to haul water to make it happen. It is a possible tool.

Reply: The south end of the Martin fire is an example of an area where livestock is being used to maintain fuels. BLM agrees this would be useful tool, have looked at it through additional NEPA, but it needs to be in appropriate location and set up for success.

Comment: Fire history is an important factor in using livestock grazing - grazing in areas that have been burned vs areas that haven't been burned and have grown sagebrush.

Reply: Range regulations are being reviewed and open to public scoping.

## **BREAK**

Break: 2:20 - 2:38

## **BURNING MAN**

Presented by Mark Hall

- 2015 Burning Man Special Recreation Permit (SRP) expired.
- 2016 - 2018 events held under SRP permitted through Documentation of NEPA Adequacy (DNA).
- Burning Man proposed up to 100,000 people so an EIS was necessary.
- 2019 EIS completed, signed by Joe Balish. Record of Decision authorized 10-year SRP renewal (through 2028), two-phase closure order, capped number of vehicles at 34,000, capped population at 80,000 (cumulative)



- Population cap based on analysis. It was discovered that the reporting of peak populations allowed people to leave and more come in ending up with a population exceeding 80,000.
- Burning Man must work with US Army Corps of Engineers because the playa is classified as a wetland. The Army Corps has jurisdiction of over fuel storage, roads, buried power lines, etc. on playa.
- Because of the 747 incident, large art objects or special theme camps will be required to post bond
- Burning Man will have to pay for a Sexual Response Assault Team in Gerlach. This is Pershing County Sheriff's Department's jurisdiction. Prior to the ROD for the EIS, sexual assault victims would have to be flown to Reno which was problematic.
- Additional stipulations can be added and invoked through adaptive management. This was always the case but is now formalized in the ROD.

Question: How can areas north and east of the event be accessed?

Reply: The southern boundary of the closure order is the three-mile access. Travelers can go around the event this way. There is also a west road heading north, but this road is closed for one week (during the event).

- The only people who have authority to stop someone in the closure area is law enforcement.
- The pentagon area on the map is the fenced area. There are also T-posts posted in various areas marking the boundary of the closure order area.

Question: What are the consequences of Burning Man stopping people?

Reply: They can be placed in non-compliance. Ranchers now have hang tags that allow them to pass through the area during the event.

Comment: There is an issue with hunting season at same time

Reply: Agree. Access to soldier meadows could be by going around event or access Soldier Meadows Road north of event.

- Reason for population cap is based on the strain the higher populations place on agencies. The NHP and local tribes requested a 50,000-population cap which would have an adverse economic impact.
- Burning Man support staff is approximately 10,000 people which was not addressed in the 2012 EA.
- The EPA has concerns with air quality regardless of the event size.
- The 2019 BLM team consisted of 139 federal and contract employees, most of which are law enforcement.
- All SRPs, if they require more than 50 hours, are required to provide cost recovery. The cost recovery for the 2019 event was approximately \$ 2.71 million which covers BLM labor and operations.
- Forecasting increase in BLM staffing for planning purposes

- FLREA: recreation events on federal land will cost a permittee a minimum of \$110 + 3% if their gross sales exceed \$110. The funds are funneled back to the field office for project and maintenance of area. SRP funds are being used for:
  - Reconstruction of Sold Meadows Road
  - Sulphur Jackson road work
  - Improvement of access throughout the NCA for fire suppression
- Burning Man has their own Leave No Trace program which BLM monitors and reviews.
  - Fuel storage is a big issue
  - Another issue is the amount of BLM staff time taken up by large theme camps that routinely fail to comply with environmental stipulations. In 2018 Burning Man kicked out a camp because of these issues.
- Under the EIS the BLM will be stricter on theme camp compliance.
- Citations are issued for these issues
- BLM inspects burns, looking for public safety issues. Seeking to prevent people running into buns (2017). Also inspecting for decompose granite layer under burns to avoid scaring the playa. Burning Man's burn program has stepped up in these areas.
- Air quality - 2017 baseline study air monitoring study - exceeding ppm hazard level on even clear days; industrial hygienist working with BLM employees and are now issuing air quality warning during the event. Year-round air quality monitoring at Coyote Dunes shows good air quality until approximately 2,000 people are on site.
- EPA does not have jurisdiction because the city is not considered a point source because it is moved every year.
- Law enforcement is required by FLPMA (public health and safety). BLM is also required to provide assistance to local counties for events this big.
- LE to participant ratio was much higher when the population was lower. Now it is approximately one law enforcement official per 1,000 people.
- BLM law enforcement staff is working directly with Pershing County law enforcement

Question: How is BLM handling marijuana under the new laws?

Reply: There are no active drug searches. However, if, on a regular traffic stop, a law enforcement official searches a car and discovers a personal use amount, the items can be confiscated, and a misdemeanor citation issued. Last year opioid use elevated. Arrests for large amounts of drugs for sale.

Question: Has there been any thought regarding Burning Man and the Corona virus?

Reply: Burning Man posted statement about this. Reno Tahoe International Airport reported Burning Man season to be the busiest season for them. There is potential for the virus to spread.

Question: What about a mass shooting type event?

Reply: This was discussed and analyzed in the EIS. Homeland security supplied strong recommendations. FBI representatives are also present during the event.

Question: Is the public subsidizing this?

Reply: The Black Rock Field Office is getting the funding we are supposed to be getting through the SRP fees.

Question: What was the economic impact from reducing the population cap to 50,000?

Reply: In the tens of millions. Bulk of impact affects Reno.

Question: Do you look at other impacts from other uses of the playa?

Reply: This was addressed in the EIS. However, this is a dispersed recreation area, so it is hard to estimate use.

## **WILD HORSES AND BURROS**

Presentation by Garrett Swisher

- Gather operations update
- Fox & Lake Range Herd Management Area (HMA) gathered because of post fire emergency.
- Buffalo Hills, Granite Range (horses), Seven Troughs (burros) gathered because of public safety issues. Animals on highways
- No firm plans for 2020

Question: What is water trapping?

Reply: Set up water, fence the area, and close fence when horses are in trap.

- Monitoring done by aerial population inventory flights. Planned monitoring for FY 20 includes Fox & Lake Range, Jackson Mountains, McGee Mountain, Warm Springs Canyon

Question: Are there plans on number of captures for this year?

Reply: Nothing yet set in stone but planned for 8,000 to 12,000 animals collected statewide.

Question: Are water captures considered less dangerous?

Reply: Public perception is yes, seems to be more favorable. This type of capture has cons as well. There can only be few people around, catching other wildlife in trap; removing access to water for other wildlife

- The list from the Washington Office is at the state office but it hasn't reached the District Office yet. Each district puts in requests which must be approved by the Washington Office.
- Almost all our NEPA is done for our proposed areas so we should be ready to go once we receive the list.

Question: Do emergency gathers affect planned numbers? Is the issue with holding? Is the number of horses based on holding capabilities?

Reply: Yes. Also based on how many animals are adopted and how many can be held. BLM started adoption incentive a year ago which increased adoptions.

Question: Any tweaks to incentive program?

Reply: Unknown currently. The training programs through the prisons have been very successful.

#### **PUBLIC Comments**

Matthew Giltnor, off road group

Question: Regarding OHV grant for Winnemucca Sand Dune Project; are we going to make deadline?

Reply: Funding is good until 2021, grant was issued, we are down a recreation planner.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **Election of Vice Chair**

- New charter is available, and Lisa will send out. Since Charter has not expired, we can move forward. New Charter is for 2 years. Each RAC will have 15 members and will meet two - four times annually
- Ron Keil nominated. No other nominations. No oppositions. RAC voted. All in favor. Motion carried.

##### **Meeting date and location**

- Next meeting will probably be held in Carson City. This will be a two-day meeting (Thursday and Friday) and will include a field trip.
- Looking at the end of June/July.
- Recommendation is to wait until the two RACS are set up (approximately 30 days) then Lisa will send out an email with possible dates. Lisa will work with the three District Managers to set up meeting.

##### **Housekeeping**

- Call for hotel receipts
- Provide Lisa with mileage
- Can e-mail information and receipts to Lisa.

#### **ADJOURNED**

Meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m.

Notes taken by Zwaantje Rorex, Winnemucca District GIS Specialist.