

Meeting Agenda
Sierra Front-Northern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
August 11, 2022

Dalling Hall Elko, Nevada

**RAC Attendees: Matt Gingrich, Paul Scott, Tim Dufurrena, Shawn Collins, John Ugalde,
Ben Veach, Greg Hendricks, Larry Hyslop, Ron Keil, Robert Jones, Tanya Reynolds,
Sherman Swanson – QUORUM PRESENT**

**BLM Attendees: Ester McCullough, Pat Ryan, Lisa Ross, Gerald Dixon, Melanie Mitchell,
Kim Dow, Susan Grande; other staff as listed in agenda**

Agenda Items:

8:08 a.m. - Welcome and introductions – Matt Gingerich (RAC Chair) – Introductions, review of charter and objectives by Matt G

Question – mention of USFS? Previous meetings have involved issues related to USFS, and if there are issues pertaining to USFS/BLM joint management or admin, they will be brought in. Does RAC have similar oversight for USFS? USFS has their own RACs for a different purpose than BLM RACs. USFS fee increases have been presented to BLM RACs.

Does group need to discuss merger of the RAC? The Sierra Front/Northern Great Basin RAC merged with the Eastern Great Basin, condensed three RACs to two approx. four years ago. The southern Mohave RAC held a meeting yesterday but need to conduct additional calls for new members to reach a quorum, once seats are filled in both RACS, there may be a Bi-RAC meeting

8:20 a.m. - District Managers' Reports (Elko, Winnemucca, Carson City) – Winnemucca (Ester M.) – review list of projects and associated map and fire group fine fuel loading and monitoring across Winnemucca District.

Fire report – many lightening fires in last week, so numbers reflected on report are undercount. At this time, all fires have been caught on IA, most fires private/fed nexus, most in Humboldt County few in Pershing. See report for fire staffing information. Fire danger very high at present, fuels projects include discing along highways and roads as most fires on district start along roads, also conducting rehab and re-seeding. Goal for treatments has been exceeded for the fiscal year. Noxious weed treatments also on-going, including one proposed in wilderness areas to curb medusahead and other noxious weed spread. This is not the norm; it is an attempt to maintain reason for wilderness establishment and characteristics.

New employees – vacancies down, was at about 45 vacancies down to about 35 and working to bring that down. Hiring range staff continues to be a struggle.

Minerals/Geothermal - Marigold mine (9 on map) expanding, Winnemucca District working on associated EA to add additional pits and waste rock. Colado mine also expanding and working through EA. Spring Valley mine new one proposed, exploration going on across district for solid minerals. Geothermal – Juniper EIS Ormat project, Winnemucca District is working with Pyramid Lake Paiute, project has cultural concerns related to Traditional Cultural Properties and Winnemucca District has been working with the Tribe to address concerns. Star Peak existing operation looking to expand, some of proposed locations outside of existing lease boundaries.

Resource confirmation (exploration) progressing to determine boundaries. Ormat is also conducting additional resource confirmation (see maps).

Recreation – Winnemucca Dunes – Winnemucca District worked with NV OHV and northern NV ATV - put in new restrooms, shade structures, and picnic tables. Water Canyon rec area, we are working to replace the previously identified as unsafe bridges and hope to have that completed soon.

Question – What is going on with the trail project near Soldier Meadows? – Winnemucca District is still working on road relocation. There is an endangered fish species, desert dace, located in the hot springs. The water is overflowing road putting dace in danger. Road will reroute around hot springs to remediate this. It is in National Conservation Area and ACEA meaning workload is much larger. Temporary fix is in place for the time being. Access to popular locations will remain, including to campground, soaking ponds, etc. Old road will be barricaded or blocked to ensure no use in the future.

Question - Will there also be a Tribal clearance in addition to archaeological clearance? Working with Summit Lake Tribe to ensure consultation occurs and any concerns are addressed. Tanya – making clear that archaeological clearances are not cultural clearances in the Tribes' eyes.

Lands – expanding Humboldt County shooting range, a land sale to remediate landlocked parcels, Orovada school has applied for R&PP grant to build new school and Lithium America working with county to fund the process and school. Where are they putting the school? Off Key Road, south of Orovada.

Question - Under mining, there is no mention of Thacker Pass mine? What is the status? All the appropriate BLM permits have been issued, ongoing litigation has it in the courts and BLM is waiting on court determinations.

Wild horse and burro – gathers on-going, working on Blue Wing complex to collect 800 burro, 200 horses. Calico is next. How many burros on district? Many thousands? Number unsure, but way over Appropriate Management Level.

Question - Are the burros getting water from surface riparian or troughs, if surface riparian, what is condition? Some are using surface riparian and the areas are not in good health, many troughs have been turned off so no access. This year is the worst seen, no runoff, no water. Surprised at lack of update on horse and burro in general. Add this to next RAC for information.

Question - Is there money or projects out there to protect riparian areas? Next item in the DO presentation discusses one of the district projects to do just that, yes. When ranchers are asked to turn troughs back on is there funding for them? Not to our knowledge, and it depends on water rights and how troughs operate (solar, generator, etc.).

Black Rock FO – more geothermal, Burning Man is going on this year. Over 1/3 of all BLM Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) are out for event. Currently project manager for event is vacant. Drought monitoring ongoing, Jackson Mountain gather done March 31, Fox and Lake range gather next. Black Rock rendezvous happened, work done with Nevada Outdoor School and Friends of Black Rock Wilderness. International Trail Days project.

Question - Are BLM LEOs at Burning Man out there for resource protection? Yes, they are in the camp and are monitoring enviro issues, they are also able to assist Pershing County deputies. They are likely not focusing on areas around the event location as they are busy with event. (See full report). What happened to permit specialist for Burning Man? Took another position and went to AZ.

Matt G noted the rest of attendees in the back of the room were not introduced; provided quick intros: Matt Magaletti (BLM HQ) Carson City detailed District Manager prior to Kim Dow's permanent appointment, Susan Grande – Assistant Field Manager from WDO, Melanie Mitchell – Wells Field Manager, Karen Uhri – Wells Field Office Realty Specialist, Matt Murphy – Elko District Fire Management Officer, Jessica Montcalm – Elko District Tribal Liaison and minute taker for today's meeting

Carson District Office (Kim D) – PowerPoint and handout.

Fire and Aviation – early lack of moisture stunted fine fuel growth and fire activity just now starting (delayed due to drought). Fire in Pine Nut Mountain area early August is one District has been concerned about, but fuel break helped to keep size at 27 acres. Over 6000 acres planned for fuel treatments around Wildland-Urban Interface areas to support fire suppression. Living with Fire program making great strides along with Spark Safety, Not Wildfire joint project with Maverick gas stations.

LEO – stays busy in the Zone split with Winnemucca District. Program Lead very proactive with local county partnerships, many MOUs in place to facilitate this. LEOs also work closely with resource and rec staff. Transient camping, shooting, camping are big issues, along with increased use.

Question - Has the Sand Mountain buildout been completed? No, not yet. Moon Rocks incident resulted in two serious injuries, and this demonstrates some of the challenges at the rec sites and increased use. Working with local Law Enforcement to address nighttime and illicit use at the various sites. Focus should also include when folks leave, people leave trash, fires unattended, etc. and there should be a presence then, too. Urban interface and rec shooting is a big issue in that zone. Washoe County is primary focus to explain why shooting is not allowed on BLM lands in urban interface areas. Looking at various areas and potential solutions to address this with USFS and Washoe County (through R&PP leases or range infrastructure build-out or other means). Also looking at fuels redux projects around identified target shooting areas to reduce fire danger. Transient camping is also issue in the urban interface, working with state health and human resources departments to aid in finding alternatives and get folks to safe areas or access to needed resources and assistance.

Question – Washoe County has developed Sherriff's dept, is there hesitancy on the part of the County to partner? Yes, there has been reluctance and neither agency was able to take that on, but now we are working together to address jointly. Does that partnership include addressing illegal dumping? Not sure, the conversations so far have been to address more immediate public safety matters.

Botany program – see presentation – partnerships include working with Pyramid Lake and Walker River Paiute Tribes for seed collections, and part of the bi-state Tribal resources committee.

Renewable energy – mostly solar and geothermal, wind rarely. Solar – three projects have been authorized: two in Washoe, one in Mineral County. Four projects currently being processed.

Question - If these are in sage grouse habitat, there is mitigation associated with them, is there mitigation in areas not in habitat? All of these should be not in habitat.

Geothermal – annual lease sale happening in Aug, Dixie Meadows project ongoing, decision is being litigated and the Dixie Valley toad was identified as endangered meaning additional consultation with USFWS. Last Ormat project anticipated to be as controversial as Dixie Meadows, so additional effort anticipated. Nightengale project? WDO project.

Lands and Realty - backlog of over 200 applications and have developed prioritization method with team to work through. Budget is a challenge for L&R, many of applications are exempt from cost recovery so projects must be processed through base funding. Navy Fallon Training Range complex authorized for another 25 years, and Navy is seeking to expand. Lands are temporarily withdrawn from other uses until analysis and potential legislation dealt with. Douglas County conservation easement going through SNPLMA. Anaconda historic copper mine Superfund site, request has come in to purchase 2000 acres with mineral rights. Draft EA to go out to public comment this fall, appraisal process is taking a long time as appraisal of contaminated lands is not common. If purchased, will they still have to conduct remediation? Yes, and if BLM doesn't own lands, it will facilitate their remediation faster as they won't need to secure ROWs through us. First Net Comm Sites – processing along with other offices as a priority identified across state.

Minerals – several open pit mines in process of being evaluated for permitting, including one in the urban interface and has level of controversy associated with visibility.

Grazing – working through LHAs with goal of getting to term permit renewals. Outcome-based grazing ongoing to assess and provide flexibility in range management. Pilot Table allotment has been revoked, permittee's cattle remain on the allotment and CDO is working with solicitors. Drought continues to be monitored and is common issue, and work with permittees continues.

Question - Sheep on mountains for fuels reduction – is any of that on BLM? Do they go through the same grazing process? No, it is a research project through UNR, and focus is looking at use of sheep on soil structure to see how it works. Cows are too heavy on soils, so trying sheep.

When looking at mitigation of medusahead in wilderness areas would sheep be a better option? Clarification, currently doing NEPA to assess treating in wilderness, NEPA still needs to be done to use sheep for that purpose. Would also need NEPA if permittee wanted to change from cows to sheep on allotment.

Wild horse and burro – monitored six HMAs, 44 horses and two burros adopted this year, one EA out for public comment and then decision will be issued.

Heritage, Ed, and Outreach – Skype a Scientist program, worked with Churchill Co and UNR to develop virtual tour of cave, Carson City school district – worked to develop curriculum re: milling, along with other outreach efforts.

Recreation – Moon Rocks, already discussed (see above), put in new pads for additional outhouses during big events and developed campsite area, working on larger archaeological inventory to aid in development and maintenance of trails. This will be through BIL funding. Indian Creek campground damaged during Tamarack fire, working with salvage operation to remove hazard trees. Next steps need to address flooding and day use area, will need to provide access to day-use but also provide safety measures. Sand Mountain – added to Rec.gov website so passes can be purchased virtually. Partnerships with medical services and local LEOs very good and serves as a good basis for others.

Elko District (Gerald D) – see handout –

Minerals across district, Carlin Trend, Hollister, Graymont aggregate/limestone, also now seeing phosphate exploration. South Railroad newer/more complex proposals received by office for consideration, currently conducting baseline studies. Gold Standard Ventures is current proponent, recently sold to Orla which is new operator in the area. Big Ledge will be separate presentation.

Renewable Energy – Elko District is not as big as other offices; we see mostly geothermal and

transmission lines. Crescent Valley Geothermal (Ormat) was exploration is now proposed development, currently in baseline studies to support additional effort. Elko District will be offering parcels in the statewide geothermal lease sale in August.

Question - Have the Tribes been contacted? Yes, and we are working to get the other big projects out to them, as well.

Oil and Gas - program is not very big, one valley is primary focus. Currently working to process one APD.

Question - When oil comes out of wells, is it piped? No, it is moved via truck. Is there potential for this to be another Nobel energy with fracking? We do not know for certain. Previous experience finds the oil here not profitable for processing.

Lands and Realty – skipping as a following presentation will address this.

SouthWest Intertie Project (SWIP) - already authorized (1994), SWIP north would tie the constructed portion to the northern terminus in Twin Falls area. Outstanding items remain prior to receiving NTP (archaeology, ethnographic study, wildlife). Working with Tribes (Ely, Goshute, Shoshone-Paiute, Shoshone-Bannock). Pay attention to areas north of hot springs (follow up with Shawn C on this).

Grazing and Lahontan Cutthroat Trout – continuing to work through biological opinion, working through Land Health Assessments (LHA) to get to term permit renewal kick-offs. Winecup-Gamble outcome-based grazing is the Elko District pilot, LHA conducted, permit decision issued, appeal filed by Wildlands Defense Council, currently working on response to appeal filing. Infrastructure covered under separate.

Wild Horse and Burro - Triple B gather on-going, surpassed 1000 horses yesterday, goal is 1900 with 100 to be treated and released.

Question - Is GonaCon being used for treatment? Yes.

Recreation – Lamoille trails: current local project with the goal of reducing the unauthorized trail construction around Elko. Organization secured grant funding and BLM will be working with them for design and planning throughout fall of 2022-2023. Not to be confused with other proposed trail that would follow current utility corridor going up and over Lamoille Summit.

Matt M will address Fire, Fuels, ESR/Weeds, forestry.

Tribal Relations program is our own internal development and have three primary areas of focus, Big C, little c/staff-to-staff, proactive (outreach, education, Elders' programs, etc.).

California Interpretive Trail Center – very important locally, COVID closures were felt heavily, then faced staffing and infrastructure issues, but center is now staffed and operational. Winter open five days, summer season open seven days a week. Trail Days happened for first time since 2019. The previously installed geothermal system has not been properly maintained and was part of the infrastructure issues, that will be addressed later.

LEOs - Elko District has a Zone 2 supervisor and one ranger, rest of Zone is Ely and Battle Mountain Districts. Currently working on updating patrol schedules and plan.

9:50 a.m. - Big Ledge Mine Closure Presentation (Field Day on August 12) – Aili Gordon: see presentation. Summary of Big Ledge. Project is uniquely challenging, split estate, private surface, public mineral.

Question – many areas private owners own both surface and mineral, why this split here? Was result of how it was patented under the Taylor Grazing Act. BLM administers the subsurface mineral, the mine owns some of surface, other surface ownership is local ranch.

Waste rock piles were not constructed in best fashion resulting in sulfur-bearing waste rock

comingling with other waste rock to produce acidic runoff and water quality issues. Acidic seeps were identified along bases of waste rock piles. State of NV issued finding of permit non-compliance, then BLM followed suit to note failure to follow applicable state guidelines and permits. National Oilwell Varco (NOV) did begin immediate work, but level of effort was immense. Waste rock piles needed to be regraded and re-sloped with the hope of limiting some of the runoff (2016). In 2017, NOV submitted plan amendment to work towards capturing the acid runoff, but data gaps persisted, and state oversight agencies were pushing for continued work at site.

Question – NOV did not mine this? They did for a brief time (2009-2013). Authority under 3809 allowed NOV to keep working forward to alleviate Unnecessary and Undue Degradation while they continued to gather more data to support the amendment. Through data collected in 2017, a collection trench was conducted along toe of waste rock, this allowed collection of water for evaporation.

Question - What stream is downhill? Ultimately flows into Tabor Creek.

NOV also started constructing catchment basin and pipeline up to the old pitlake for storage and evaporation purposes. Has any of the water seeped out? No, it is all currently being captured and effectively treated. An isotope study was done and determined there is no flowthrough from pitlake to the groundwater. Can't they use lime to change pH? They have done some lime application, more on that in a moment.

In 2018, NOV was able to finish the double-lined catchment pond from which the water is pumped up to the pitlake for evaporation. They also set up a reverse osmosis treatment system to treat water and return to tributary (meets state water quality standards). Through the RO treatment, the water quality in the pitlake decreased as the solids accumulated. In 2019, the west waste rock facility was finally closed; this stopped the meteoric water infiltration that was causing the acid rock drainage. The waste rock was capped with a liner, re-sloped to a more stable 3:1 slope, added evaporators and another RO system to keep water levels in pitlake down, and lime slaking took place to bring down acidity in the pitlake. In 2020 the NEPA EA was completed for the west waste rock closure, NOV completed the capping of the facility, and constructed a permanent pumphouse to keep water moving to facilitate continued water treatment. Hotspots (due to chemical reactions in waste rock) were an issue that needed to be worked through prior to installing the liner, and afterwards gas vents were placed to make sure things off-gassed appropriately. Perimeter storm water drainage channels were also installed; these utilized hydroturf as a base which was then cemented over. The synthetic hydroturf is used commonly in landfills but this is one of the first applications of it for mine reclamation in NV. Currently, NOV is doing characterization work on the east waste rock facility to see if it is appropriate for use in other reclamation activities.

Following closure at west waste rock facility, NOV began looking at final closure methods including closing and filling the pitlake. Water would need to be moved off-site, and ultimately evaporation ponds were constructed at the Dry Creek mill site. Anticipated duration of dewatering is 6-10 years, once empty the pit will be refilled. The east waste rock material may be used if testing supports use; if not, material east of the pit may be used.

Question - Is the road between mill and mine accessible to public? Yes, up to the private ownership, then there is a gate.

Clean/construction water hauled down from the RO units at the mine site to the mill site for construction, dust suppression, etc. during work at the Dry Creek evaporation ponds. Eleven miles of pipeline constructed along existing haul road to move the evaporation/treatment waters

from mine site to mill site for treatment, and initial piping of water started in December 2021. Milestones – transitioned from emergency management to planned and anticipated trajectories. Seepage coming out has decreased following installation of liner.

Question – so this shows it is not groundwater flowing through? No, it is meteoric water flow, and this bears out as the amount of seepage is decreasing. Water quality is also increasing over time.

NOV was nominated for the BLM reclamation award for their work on the west waste rock facility. The State of NV environmental department was also able to lift their notice of violation, which in turn meant the BLM was able to lift theirs.

Question – Does NOV have future plans to continue mining? No, NOV is in closure mode, and they are also working to close the mill site and remove some of the facilities. Does this impact their bond or how BLM moves forward with bonding in the future? They did not bond sufficiently for this, so much has been spent beyond collected bond. Barite mines were also not a significant concern for NDEP, but Big Ledge changed that. Did NOV do a reverse economic analysis? If they had known about this ahead of time, would they have moved forward? Likely not, to-date, NOV has spent \$50million plus. Is this a Super Fund site? No, it does not fall under CERCLA, since there is an operator, it was all able to be handled under 3809 regs. Is there a publicly available number for how much this is costing? Unsure, Aili isn't aware of one.

10:45 a.m.- BREAK

10:55 a.m.- Fire/Fuels Vegetation Program Overview & Ranchers' Liaison Program – Matt Murphy – Fire Management Officer for the Elko District and Eastern NV Agency (Bureau of Indian Affairs), see presentation. Fire suppression and repair activities: 1999 was start of significantly large fires in northeastern NV. Program is an interagency program (NDF, Elko County, BIA, USFWS, USFS). Approximately 12 million acres are covered under the joint management. Ten-year average is about 110 fires a year, 70% lightning, 30% people, seeing an increase due to increased recreation. Fire activity cyclic with drought patterns across the region. Overview of preparedness resources: refer to presentation. As severity increases, the Elko District has ability to bring in additional resources (engines, dozers, water tenders, etc.) to provide support throughout fire season.

Question - Do any of these resources get held over to do winter work? Not the additional support resources, but the local staff do have the ability to conduct winter work like fuels reduction or weed treatment.

Fuels management around here focuses on sagebrush habitat as opposed to urban interface as in other areas with higher population. Here the focus is on building back more resilient landscape and habitat. Herbicide application to manage cheatgrass, fuel break construction along roads and communities, greenstrip construction (planting of more fire-resistant vegetation).

Question – do you look at lightning alleys when considering treatments? Yes, but the entire district seems to be a lightning alley. We do not have data to support localized areas to focus on, the entire thing gets hit. When the overall area is 12 million acres, and it can take up to three hours to get resources to respond.

Question – how is lightning reported? There are several methods, public, satellite, heat signature tracking, infrared flights, cameras on the repeater sites. These methods have resulted in the identification of numerous single tree starts and enabled crews to put them out.

Question – is conifer removal related to fuel breaks or reduced fire use? We do not plan

reduction projects specifically for fire use, it is more geared towards habitat restoration. EKDO also utilizes targeted grazing as a fuel reduction technique, it is located just north of I-80 by Boulder Valley. The BIL will see an increase in funding for fuels reduction, we will need to increase capacity to utilize monies being funneled for projects.

Partnerships – work closely with NDOW to better resilient landscapes and habitat, and NDOW helps act as a conduit to private landowners to facilitate holistic treatments across jurisdiction. They also provide assistance with funding and implementation.

O’Neil Priority Planning Area – identified through the FIAT tool, encompasses land from Charleston to Utah, I-80 to Idaho. This is a landscape level planning approach that combines restoration, conifer reduction, fuel breaks, etc. Still in NEPA process. Implementation will be phased over a ten- to fifteen-year timespan, and then there will be on-going maintenance long-term.

Question – is there detriment to not having money available when needed? Yes, there are challenges. Seems like as a RAC the request could be made to provide more funding for ESR. Matt clarifies often the timeframe the monies are needed is the issue, we need to spray for cheatgrass in the fall, but we may not see the funds until spring. Gerald reminds we need to have the appropriate NEPA shelf-stock to ensure the projects have the supporting infrastructure and approvals to proceed.

Question – just because a plan may be put together does not mean it is put in place? See ESR discussing.

ESR - following a fire we have a 21-day window to submit an ESR plan for review and approval. Just because we develop the plan does not mean the plan gets funded, we compete with other offices for the funding and depending on severity of other areas we may or may not receive funding.

Question – how are priority areas identified in busy years? We work with stakeholders to determine where effort is best spent, identifying critical resources or habitats, infrastructure needs, etc. Martin fire is an example, much energy went into planning and restoration efforts and after three years of work spraying and seeding slowly the results are starting to show. Burned Area Rehabilitation carries on after the ESR and is what guides treatment, monitoring, continued work.

Question – how do we react to drought? BLM plans to treat and hopes for moisture. We work to get seed in the ground as best able and hope the moisture shows up.

Question – fencing repair – is it only repair or can fences/facilities be reconsidered to help facilitate recovery? We can put in emergency fences to address revegetation goals, but pasture rearrangements are handled through other means. Is there an option to move fences to places where permittees want them as opposed to what was existing if it is for the benefit on the ground? That conversation needs to happen with the Field Offices, not necessarily through fire.

Question – NEPA, it does not allow for non-native species? Our NEPA is more flexible, and we do utilize non-native species when appropriate. The goal is to make the habitat and landscape a properly functioning landscape and we try to have all the tools in the toolbox to make that happen.

Weeds management – early detection rapid response is goal. The program utilizes a lot of contracts to ensure work is completed, in addition to the handful of staff and seasonals.

Cooperative agreements are also key to reaching goals and treating across jurisdictional boundaries to make sure treatments address all the problem, not just on BLM.

Rancher Liaison Program – unique to northeastern NV. When we get hit by large incidents,

often an incident management team comes in to take control of the fire. They may not have familiarity with the area, the fuel type, the ranching community. The rancher liaison program grew out of past years when ranchers offered to assist and were not included. Previous FMO worked with local ranchers to establish program whereby the ranchers and the designated liaisons communicate critical information back to the BLM or the IMT. The district is broken into Zones and each Zone has an assigned Liaison who serves as a conduit to get information to team and to other ranchers. Reports on where animals are, where roads may be impassible, what water is available where, etc. to support suppression efforts. BLM hosts preseason meeting for Liaisons as well as AAR meetings after big fires.

Question – how does South Fork Band find out who their liaison is? – Matt will follow up with Tanya.

The pocket guide for contacts and liaisons includes information like size-ups, general information, and guidance.

Question - Winnemucca has a program to provide old equipment to community, does the Elko District do the same? Yes, and many of the ranchers have their own equipment and work with fire crews. Can folks take action to do their own work? Yes, they can and do.

Question – does the USFS use the same ESR or rehabilitation work? They have different processes and there have been recent changes, but Matt can't speak to that.

Observation is the wet years at first may not be the issue, but the accumulation of fuels over time, and that could be beneficial to put more animals out to graze on vegetation still standing. Is there a way to achieve this? Changes in turn-out time is based on permit, but what we do see in the targeted grazing areas has not overlapped with a heavy vegetation year, but we have been able to ask folks to keep animals out on fuel breaks longer to meet objectives. Can the rancher be encouraged to congregate their animals to make a fuel break without additional analysis or paperwork? Tanya - Ranchers do have the ability on their private grounds to adjust like that and as responsible parties of the lands they should be seeking to manage appropriately. On BLM allotments, hopefully the rancher is working closely with the Field Offices and the range staff to be making the appropriate decisions on the ground. Comment - Sage brush ecosystem council – adaptive management, in sage grouse habitat grazing off fuels would be more effective. Targeted Grazing EA is in place and may be able to provide that flexibility across the landscape. Water for animals is one concern, if you are going to congregate then there needs to be water for animals and getting that there needs to be considered/analyzed/accounted for. With such short staffing, we may not be able to do the appropriate analysis or revision of permits or plans, so we do need staffing increases. Water management plan update is needed, can the BIL be used to fix water developments? If they are private water rights, then perhaps the state agency or NRCS can oversee that.

11:55 a.m. - LUNCH

1:10 p.m. - Recreation Fee Plan – presentation and proposal – Elisabeth Puentes – seeking RAC review and input on proposed rec fee increases across district. The district has been collecting data regarding use for the last two years, prior to drafting fee plan. Last fee plan and associated increase was 20 years ago. EKDO has four campsites meeting rec site requirements (Wildhorse, Wilson, Tabor Creek, Zunino-Jiggs). See presentation for current fees and amenities at each location.

Question – how many camp sites at Wildhorse? Refer to proposed business plan.

Question – why is the cover shaped the way it is? Adaptive design for the area, best sun protection; it's unique, but not sure for reason.

Question - Are there restrooms at the campsites? There are three at Wildhorse, only one was damaged during fire.

Question – do any of these offer water? Some used to provide potable water.

Question – is there someone on-site to collect fees? No, it is a trust system with the iron rangers and fee envelopes. There is one camp host for three of the sites, but they are not involved with fee collection.

Question – how much use is seen at these places? Most traffic is from May to September, at Zunino use is in the spring if there is water in the reservoir.

How analysis was conducted – policy and guidance allow for two different tools to review; the Elko District chose to use comparable market analysis to draft proposed fee modifications. This compared amenities found at the Elko District sites with nearby fed and private facilities with similar amenities. For the comparative sites, day use was \$5 for all, camping ranged from \$10-25 per night, the only other group site charged \$45 per night per vehicle. Based on the comparative analysis, the proposed fee plan would increase in FY2023 and gain in FY2028.

Question – how often are the campgrounds visited to clean toilets and sites? May to September the camp host visits each of the three sites assigned once a week, fees are collected once every two weeks, garbage is picked up depending on use, LEOs visit regularly.

Question – is the money collected sufficient to cover costs? Not at present, there is a slide to detail that breakdown.

Question – what is purpose of fee increase? To cover maintenance, operations, construction, or updates needed at each site.

Question – what is the total percentage of the people who use the campsites pay? Around 12% is best guess of actual use at any given time.

Question – Is there water provided at any of them? No, nothing potable.

Review of annual operating costs (see presentation). Annual fee revenue review (see presentation).

Question – do any of these increases account for senior pricing? There are national program passes for seniors, vets, disabled, 4th graders, etc. and all these work at the sites.

Question – is that under the local office? The passes cover sites administered by six different fed agencies, including BLM. Passes can be purchased at any office and can be used across the country at federally administered campgrounds and sites. Revenue to cost to operate difference review (see presentation).

Question – when was last fee increase? Twenty years ago, for the Elko District. Review of proposed fee increases for the four Elko District sites (see presentation).

Question – Can you go over fee increases? See presentation table.

Question – if purchasing a camping site does that include day use? Yes.

With these proposed increases we would see revenue go up to 18 and 25% of total costs in 2023 and 2028, as opposed to the current level of 3% recovered through use fees.

Question – how do you think fee increase with impact the 12% of people (estimated) who pay? Good question. Without increased fees we will likely not be able to maintain the sites as well and we will see further reductions of service.

Question – how did you reach the 18% estimate? The calculations are included in the proposed business plan.

Question – any sense of how much dispersed camping is occurring in the areas? We are hoping

the amenities help to keep folks in the developed areas. Similarly, hopefully fire restrictions keep folks to the developed areas. We also hope that the increase in fee sites does not detrimentally impact low-income families, but having dispersed camping still allows for them to access public lands. First time campers will also be more likely to use the developed sites, so fee increases need to take that into account.

Question – garbage collection happens, how does that help? We must meet at least 5 of 9 requirements to charge fees, garbage is an easy one to maintain.

Digital payment services – the plan also includes for scan and pay services at each site through Recreation.gov, scan QR code, and complete purchase on-site. This can function even without cell service. There is a charge for the service, based on the price of the transaction. For visitors who do not want to pay additional service fee, the iron rangers will remain in place. *Question* – how does that work without internet connection? Download the app, enter in payment information to app (credit card information), then when on site scan the code and when you return to service the app updates where you have been. Transaction would be processed upon return to cell service.

Question – would the enforcement person be able to prove payment in real time? Yes, the transaction does provide a confirmation number that stays pending until return to cell service to show payment.

Future expenses and development (see presentation).

Question – would the kiosk be a good spot to provide Wi-Fi service? Could that also be a spot for emergency service? Are there any plans to install horse pens at any locations? Not at present because that has not come up as a suggestion from anyone yet. The known projects are presented here, there will be more we just have not thought of yet.

Public scoping – the draft business plan has been released for public scoping. Information has also gone out to state and local government agencies, and we have been accepting feedback in various fashions.

Question – do any of these have a fire suppression support at them? No, they are not near fire stations, and they are not equipped with materials.

Question – what were the comments received? Only one comment was received, and it was in support of the fee increase if the monies went back to maintain the sites.

As RAC, this is where motion may be made to support or not.

Motion to approve business plan, timelines, and fees as present made by Greg Hendricks.

Seconded Paul Scott. Demonstratable outcomes from fee increases are included in the proposal, these would show folks where the increases are going. How to best explain to incoming campers why the fees are being increased? Perhaps op-eds, public announcements, kiosks, and make the information available to public through those various means. Also, possible to develop fact sheet/poster explaining increases. Term it as “your fee monies go towards...” Clarification sought regarding purpose of RAC, RAC is not supporting the actual fees, RAC is supporting the business plan after review.

In USFS, there used to be policy if there was no potable water there could not be a charge for the site. It seems as if the costs proposed here are high, and with no water there is a hesitancy to pay the costs for use.

Question – it is a done deal, no? No, not yet. For the purposes of the plan, it needed to be reviewed by RAC for input, and then DM makes decision

Greg Hendricks amends motion to “recommend” not approve, Paul Scott seconds amendment.

Motion to recommend business plan, timelines, and fees as presented be carried forward for

consideration and potential implementation.

Vote – Aye: 9, Nay: 2; Abstention: 1; motion carries following review of votes to ensure appropriate distribution of votes across designated pods. **(The majority of RAC members present can approve, if a quorum is present, a motion regardless of how many within a category vote for a motion).**

2:20 p.m. – Land Disposals – briefing of recent efforts and proposals – Elisabeth Puentes & Brady Owens – Gerald providing overview with recent efforts (Jackpot, Wendover, Carlin, Wells) to identify how to acquire lands.

Elisabeth providing review of options available to public and municipal entities: FLPMA, R&PP, special legislation. FLPMA Part 2710 land disposals can be authorized by Secretary of the Interior as identified in the appropriate Resource Management Plan. Competitive, Modified Competitive, or direct sales may be authorized depending on buyer or purpose, and all sales must be at fair market value.

West Wendover Direct Land Sale – started as R&PP Act lease for the purposes of municipal offices and city governance. City then decided they wanted to bring in commercial ventures to make more of a Main Street for the City of West Wendover, so had to transition from R&PP to land sale. This also transitioned the lands from the lower priced lease option to the fair market value purchase price since the land use the city wanted to pursue was not compatible with R&PP stipulations. The Elko District worked with the city to get them lined out with the path forward, got fair market value, and Notice of Realty Action, prepared the Determination of NEPA Adequacy, and facilitated the purchase.

Recreation and Public Purpose Act – lands can be transferred to state, local, Tribal governments for the purposes of operating a public facility (definitions are in regs as to what qualifies as a public facility). Applicants must accept the lease or the lease with option to purchase to ensure the proposed development occurs. If it does not occur within five years, the lands revert to fed jurisdiction.

Question – do the terms and conditions include things like maintaining open space if that was the original intent? Yes, if it was originally leased for a park, then it would need to remain as a park. There are options to change over the public purpose of the parcel, but they could not sell the lands to a private developer for something else. Examples of R&PP leases in EKDO include shooting range, Adobe Middle School, landfill expansion, water treatment plant expansion, City of Elko expansion area, fire station, bus complex.

Special Legislation/legislative conveyance – proponent works with legislators to secure the legislative conveyance through passing of a Public Law (or rider thereto). The BLM is not involved in drafting conveyance language but may provide maps or input on language for appropriate identification of conveyance lands. The 2015 National Defense Authorization Act included three different parcels for conveyance: Te-Moak land expansion of 373 acres to BIA to hold in trust (fed to fed transfer of lands); Elko Motocross racing area (275 acres) transferred to Elko County. This one could have been done under R&PP but was processed this way.

Question – for Motocross and Te-Moak transfer, the conditions, or restrictions? Were there restrictions on the Te-Moak transfer like the motocross? They were different, and under legislative conveyances any conditions can be different for each one.

West Wendover Legislative Conveyance – authorized in the NDAA 2003 and directed the USAF to convey lands identified as excess to the City of West Wendover and Tooele County. The USAF first had to identify which parts were no longer needed for mission. Currently we are

reviewing NEPA (EA is open for public comment) analyzing the conveyance of 6366 acres of the originally identified 14595 acres (USAF has determined other lands still needed for mission). Also working through archaeology and cultural concerns, there are no Section 7 endangered species in the area, but there are environmental hazards that need to be disclosed (Landfill K). The BLM's role is that of broker, we will not be taking control of or administering this land at all; it will go from DOD/USAF directly to City and County.

City of Carlin legislative conveyance – has not yet been completed, but legislatively directed to convey 1129 acres to City, city is responsible for reasonable costs associated with processing and fair market value will be paid for lands, but there will be no restrictions on the lands conveyed (BLM will not retain minerals, for example). We have prepared a cost recovery agreement at the City's request in 2015, but nothing moved forward at that time. An updated cost recovery plan has been prepared in June 2022 and the City will be presenting to Council to see if they want to move forward at this time.

There has been continued interest from state, local, and Tribal governments regarding land purchases.

Question – all the communities looking for lands are blocked in by BLM? It is very checkerboarded and there is a lot of BLM lands around each community.

Question – Fallon Naval expansion? Is that a conveyance? No, currently it is a withdrawal for 25 years. It could come back to BLM, but it will likely remain withdrawn as have other withdrawn lands. Militarily withdrawn lands do come back to the BLM, many withdrawn for WWII have come back. Legislative conveyance is not a quick way to move, and these options often take decades.

Question – if the DOD is restricting access does that limit other uses? Depends on use of military and if that use is compatible with other public uses. If it is a bombing range, probably not, but for other mission-related things there is a possibility it could be compatible with grazing, rec, or mines.

3:05 p.m. – BREAK

3:20 p.m.- Infrastructure Investments BIL and related: Gerald providing intro, happenstance has the Elko District looking at a sizeable number of infrastructure projects planned for the next few years. Duncan Welch – the projects discussed today are projected out to about 2025 and the review will happen according to proposed timeline for completion chronologically.

Orange Bridge – Sept-Oct 2023,

Wells SEAT Base apron and Environmental containment – planned for 2023-2024

California Trail Interpretive Center – planned for 2024

New District Office 2024-2025

Wilson Reservoir campground road – 2025

BLM-Elko County Road maintenance agreement - TBD

Other campground improvements - TBD

Orange Bridge currently at 3-ton load limit which means fire vehicles cannot use the bridge and it is a general safety hazard for users. NEPA analysis has been completed and now moving towards construction. Construction time will be limited due to biological constraints. An alternate creek crossing location will be provided along the Hanks Creek Rd. which will be improved prior to the start of construction of the new bridge.

Question – when was it built? Current bridge put in place in 1990s. Will it be reused? No, there are stress fractures that make it hazardous. Could it be used for the Lamoille Trails system? That is not an answer Duncan can provide. Does road configuration currently allow for waters to flow over road in the floods? Yes, but that will likely be addressed and potentially changed during construction. Engineering design has been in hand for a while. Sherm would like a sidebar conversation.

Wells SEAT Base apron and environmental containment – there is not any permanent infrastructure at the Wells airport for the SEAT base to conduct loading operation. Under the proposed apron construction, any retardant that leaks or is not properly loaded it would flow into constructed catchment/containment area. Additionally, the apron area not paved under FAA funding would be paved.

CTIC – HVAC and electrical system upgrades to address past issues with electrical and HVAC at site. The original HVAC on site is not functioning and minisplits were installed to alleviate the issue until replacement can happen. Similarly, the electrical system needs upgrade. These upgrades are funded through Great American Outdoors Act funds and anticipated completion is 2024.

Question – will the water feature be brought back online? Duncan and current manager looking into options to make it look more like a water feature (tiling or other options not using water). Gerald asked for a summary of the existing geothermal system for heating/cooling. It has not been consistently maintained over its lifespan, and when it was installed, there were not a sufficient number of wells installed to run the system.

Question – is there anything other than HVAC using phased electricity? Not that Duncan is aware of? Unsure.

Elko District Office rebuild – conceptual at present, studies have been done regarding what the needs of the office are and from that a proposed layout has been drafted. Scoping from that proposal is on-going. Proposed campus layout may include a location for a new USFS office as well. Continuity of operations through the construction schedule is key, so measures are in place to limit disruptions to services for the public. Construction anticipated through 2024-2025. This is also funded through the Great American Outdoors Act.

Question – how do you know it will be large enough to accommodate future growth? Per GSA, we must design based on current staffing levels, so the base designs are built around those guidelines. It is being designed as if every position on the table of organization is full.

Question – is there a fire warehouse? Yes, that will not be part of the replacement and will remain. It will eventually be up for replacement.

Wilson Reservoir campground access road improvements – funded through FHWA to provide safety improvements, increased sight distance, graveling the entire campground and roadway into campground, culverts will be replaced, and design/construction will span 2024-2025.

BLM-Elko County roads agreement for maintenance purposes – in early discussions with County to facilitate cross-jurisdiction road work and have a mechanism to provide the county with reimbursement for work they conduct on our behalf.

Other campground improvements are proposed for Tabor Creek (resurface road at campground, add turnarounds) and Zunino-Jiggs (shade structures through BIL funding). If these move forward, construction would likely be 2023.

3:55 p.m. – Public Comments (limited to three minutes) – No public attendees via Zoom or in person.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair – term of current chair has ended, need new chair and vice. Seeking nominations:

Jon Ugalde makes motion to nominate Ron Keil as Chair, seconded by Tim Dufurrena. Vote – Aye: 13; motion carries, **Ron Keil elected as Chair.**

Ron Keil makes motion to nominate Greg Hendricks as Vice, seconded by Jon Ugalde. Vote – Aye: 13; motion carries, **Greg Hendricks elected as Vice Chair.**

Next meeting location – previous meetings have been held in Winnemucca and now Elko, that would make Carson City the next logical location. Date will be TBD. In the interim, a call can be held for coordination purposes, no special topics until the actual RAC meeting in Carson City. Doodle Poll recommended to find a date that works best for membership (Lisa will coordinate this).

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Sherm Swanson. Carried, adjourned at 4.10pm.

Field Day –August 12:

Big Ledge Mine closure (Barite) – Wells Field Office & operator National Oilwell Varco (NOV) – northwest of Wells. *Arrive at Elko District Office (3900 Idaho Street) at 0730 for 0800 departure.*

Eleven total attendees for field tour per hand count on Aug 11.