

Meeting Minutes

Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

July 15-16, 2008

Gerlach & Black Rock NCA, Nevada

I. RAC Attendance and Welcome

10:30 a.m., Tuesday, July 15, 2008 – Following a brunch buffet at Bruno’s Restaurant in Gerlach, the meeting was called to order by Chairman Gebhardt with the following members of the RAC present:

SIERRA FRONT – NORTHWESTERN GREAT BASIN RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

<i>COUNCIL MEMBER</i>	<i>RESOURCE/EXPERTISE</i>	<i>7/15-16</i>
John Gebhardt – Chair	State Agency	X
Patricia Herzog – Vice Chair	Elected Official	
William Bennett	Transportation/ROWs	X
Rochanne Downs	Native Americans	
Brian Doyal	Public-At-Large	X
Tim Dufurrena	Nevada Cattlemen	X
James Eidel	Wildlife	X
Charles Matton	Wild Horses & Burros	X
John Mudge	Mining	
Ernest Paine	Livestock	X
Will Roger Peterson	Recreation	X
Steven Siegel	Energy/Minerals	X
Sherm Swanson	Academic	X
Lee Turner	Environment	X
D. Craig Young	Archaeology	X

BLM Staff Present: Gail Givens, Roger Farschon, Shane DeForest, Pat Gubbins, Rodger Bryan, Elayn Briggs, Mark Struble, Desna Young, Dave Cooper, Glenna Eckel, and Aaron Collins.

Public Present: Mike Lunn (contractor), Bonnie Matton. Willie Molini, Robin Powell, Matt Ebert (Metric) Friends of Black Rock.

II. Summary of Motions Other Than to Approve Minutes

MOTION#1: on July 15 Jim Eidel motioned the RAC on what a great job of facilitating dialogue and communication Gail has done over his time in WFO with this RAC. Seconded by Sherm Swanson. Unanimously approved.

MOTION#2: on July 16, Sherm Swanson commended the Winnemucca and Surprise Field Offices for working together to accomplish the census for horses for which these HMAs are managed together as a complex and the RAC encourages the BLM to explore the multiple HMA complexes whenever appropriate. Seconded by John Gebhardt. Unanimously approved.

Discussion continued concerning what the Northeast California RAC is working on regarding the horse issues.

Motion #3: on July 16, Sherm Swanson moved that the RAC investigate S&Gs and invite other RACs to participate in joint subcommittees to embrace the AML issue as we understand it to be. Seconded by Tim Dufurrena. Unanimously approved.

III. Summary of Action Assignments

The RAC requested that the Winnemucca District provide a sample of monitoring photos of the Burning Man cleanup at a future RAC meeting.

IV. Minutes from the Meeting in Carson City, Nevada, April 28-29, 2007

The minutes for the April meeting in Carson City were recommended to be approved by Will Roger Peterson; seconded by Sherm Swanson; and approved unanimously with correction from Eidel to change his name from James to Jim.

V. RAC Subgroup Reports

WH&B Subgroup: (Matton) at the last full RAC meeting a discussion was held on the situation of solving the horse issues. No solutions; horse problem is worse than ever; will think about revising the S&Gs regarding euthanizing unadoptable horses. Will need to get the subcommittee back together. Gail: in talking w/ Ron we know we have issues; point is made that progress has been made in last 10-15 years. We have HMAs within AML. There are small issues but generally OK between Surprise RA & WFO.

Eidel: Two meetings ago situation concerning water sources north of Soldier Meadows Ranch (SMR) was a concern. Cattle hadn't grazed but there is considerable horse pressure documented through photos. The RAC will look at these on this field trip. He wanted to have the RAC keep in mind areas where horses may be an issue. Sherm: HMAs are at 80%.

Black Rock NCA Subcommittee: June meeting was cancelled and will reschedule for September.

VI. FIELD MANAGERS REPORTS: Written reports from Carson City and Winnemucca were provided to the RAC members about ten days in advance, so Gail and Pat quickly reviewed the handouts and answered clarification questions.

**RAC wants map of 5,000 acre CC Lands Bill area. They also wanted to know if there are any CC River easements in Round 10. They also want map of any pending acquisitions.

Surprise FO: Shane DeForest added to his report that the Modoc Washoe Stewardship reviewed their purpose and guidelines. They are suggesting that they may want to organize the RAC and themselves into one group. Surprise Field Office has sent a paper up to the Solicitor for and opinion.

Steven Siegel asked the managers that since the solar projects application moratorium has been lifted are applications still sitting or will any activity start happening with those? Pat replied that the majority of these are in LVFO. BLM has criteria to meet whether or not these applications are ready to move forward for processing. Siegel: Solar interest will grow as load grows. Eidel: the impacts from these projects will be immense.

VII. Public Comment Period

Robin Powell, Director of Audubon Bird Conservation, gave out copies of a new Nevada bird book that has elevated Very Important Bird Areas (VIPs) in addition to adding Mt. Grant.

Roger Farschon introduced Mike Lunn, with National Riparian Team. He will be organizing a November workshop focusing on wilderness, riparian areas, WH&B, and wildlife for the WMC/Surprise region. Drought and compaction issues were suggested to add to the agenda. The details are being worked out and the RAC will be informed of the date and agenda.

Will reviewed what we may be seen at the 2007 Burning Man site on the afternoon field tour. He mentioned the success with community projects, such as the Solar Project in Gerlach.

VIII. Field Trip Report

The RAC moved from a formal meeting setting at Bruno's Restaurant to a field trip of the Black Rock Playa and several other sites on the way to an overnight at Soldier's Meadow Ranch/Lodge.

Gerlach

The RAC toured the Friends of Black Rock Museum located in Gerlach. The building, on the National Register of Historic Places, is completely renovated and now serves as the headquarters for the Friends of Black Rock as well as displaying some of the history of the area. The Information/Interpretation Visitor Center was also on the tour stop. This mobile trailer is staffed with volunteers. Regional information and interpretation is available.

200-2008 Burning Man Sites

The group drove out onto the Black Rock Playa and went to the center of the Burning Man Site by using GPS. Will Roger Peterson gave a brief presentation on the impacts that the annual event has on the playa surface and the cleanup standards. Jim Eidel asked if the RAC could see monitoring photos in the future. BLM staff noted that the surrounding mountains contain ten wilderness areas. Off-highway vehicles are causing indiscriminate damage along the playa edges. This is dispersed use and there is little if any association with Burning Man event. Staff stressed that more public education was necessary.

Coyote Springs

Again, the site is being seriously compromised by indiscriminate dispersed OHV use. Signs must be placed in order for Law Enforcement to be able to issue citations and have them stand. RAC is tasked with trying to come up with recommendation on further educating the public through signs or any other viable means. Signage within the NCA is an issue.

Double Hot Springs

The RAC stopped at Double Hot Springs to examine the "5 million dollar fence" that resulted from a law suit by the family of two people that jumped into the springs to save their dogs.

High Rock Wilderness

BLM staff reviewed some of the successes and issues with managing wilderness. The volunteer program is showing to be very instrumental in assisting BLM with management. The Draft Wilderness Plan will be out October/November 2008. All 10 of the Wilderness areas will be in this document.

The RAC adjourned for the evening at 5:30 p.m. at Soldier Meadows Ranch/Lodge.

Day 2 - July 16 Tour

The RAC continued with their field tour by leaving Soldier Meadows Ranch at 8:00 a.m. in route north to the Summit Lake area.

Spring Site Review with Soldier Meadows permittee

Developing seeps and springs was the focus of this stop. There was much discussion on this topic. WFO is working with the permittee through the NEPA process.

Summit Lake

Discussion continued about the horse impacts to springs; private/public management, fencing issues. Water quality concerning the LCT remains an issue. Fencing may or may not contribute to the degradation of future water quality.

Horse Trough Springs

The RAC examined the results of heavy horse use of the springs; maintenance is an issue. Horses and perhaps people visiting the area are destroying the improvements. Ernie Paine suggested the RAC make an effort to put the emphasis in writing to get to encourage the BLM State Director to get to AML immediately. The census shows approximately 600 head and the AML is between 150-175.

Sherm Swanson made the point that for BLM to be at AML across a wide area such as a State or District, the total number of horses would have to be well below the combined maximum limit of AML. Just as some should be close to their lower limit of AML for the time being, other HMAs should be close to the upper limit if management is proceeding appropriately. The total would approach the collective median for the AML ranges. If our total number is above the mid-point in AML, this suggests some areas are over the maximum for AML and the State or District is therefore not at AML. This suggests that some areas are not at a thriving ecological balance and this is the issue for horse habitat, the land, and other land uses.

The RAC was in consensus that there are obvious impacts; resource mitigation does not appear to be the direction and gathers in this region should be emphasized. Last census flight (together with Surprise) showed well in excess of AML. The group stressed that both offices should be managing this HMA in the same way.

Steel Buck and Rail Spring on the Sheldon NWR

Jim Eidel put the question forward if the RAC should get corrected information out concerning the articles appearing in Newsweek, AP, and other national press releases. There is much misinformation floating around. Bonnie also thinks that BLM should get this out. BLM has photos of the areas that are being compromised by increased numbers of horses. The group suggested that with the correct information out that BLM may be better able to compete for budget to perform gathers, etc.

John Gebhardt responded that the S&Gs may be the appropriate place in which to bring this forward. Can we have BLM adopt these changes perhaps making the language stronger to reflect attaining AML? The RAC also talked briefly about drafting a letter to the delegation to emphasize getting to AML. Sherm commended WFO and Surprise for working together to manage the census work.

The RAC adjourned at Rail Spring, with members of the group returning home in three different directions.

The next Sierra Front-Northwestern Great Basin RAC meeting will be November 12-14, 2008, in Las Vegas, as part of the annual Nevada tri-RAC's meeting.