

Meeting Minutes

Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

June 15-16, 2011

Gerlach, Nevada

I. RAC Attendance and Welcome

9:00 a.m., Wednesday, June 15, 2011 – meeting was called to order by Will Roger Peterson with the following members of the RAC present:

SIERRA FRONT – NORTHWESTERN GREAT BASIN RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEMBER	RESOURCE/EXPERTISE	06/15/2011
<i>Will Roger Peterson (Chair)</i>	Recreation	X
<i>D. Craig Young (Vice Chair)</i>	Archaeology	
<i>Tim Dufurrena</i>	Livestock Permittee	X
<i>Ernest Paine</i>	Livestock Permittee	
<i>Dennis Laybourn</i>	Mining	X
<i>Deborah Lassiter</i>	Energy/Minerals	X
<i>Mathew Gingerich</i>	Transportation/ROWs	X
<i>David Von Seggern</i>	Environment	
<i>William Molini</i>	Wildlife	X
<i>Mark Freese</i>	State Agency	X
<i>Charles Matton</i>	Wild Horses & Burros	X
<i>Jim Billingsley</i>	Elected Official	X
<i>Michael P. Drews</i>	Public-At-Large	X
<i>Dr. Tamzen Stringham</i>	Academic	X
<i>Vacant</i>	Native Americans	

BLM Staff Present: Gene Seidlitz, Chris McAlear, Rolando Melendez, Kristine Struck.

Public Present: Harley Dubois, Ava Dubois, Dan Heinz, Jim Linebaugh, Dennis Porter, Norvie Enns, Terry Hardwicke, Jim Kudrna and Tine Nappe.

II. Summary of Motions Other Than to Approve Minutes

No motions were made by the RAC during this meeting. While not a formal motion, RAC members did ask that BLM provide a detailed presentation on the wildlands evaluation process to the entire statewide tri-RAC at the annual fall orientation meeting, to be held fall 2011 in Las Vegas.

III. Welcome & Introductions

Will Peterson welcomed all. Members of the RAC's Black Rock Subgroup were introduced.

IV. Minutes from March meeting in Carson City, Nevada

Minutes were approved as submitted.

V. RAC Subgroup Reports

- **Black Rock Subgroup** –Will Roger Peterson. The subgroup members were invited to address the RAC with any comments that they felt pertained to the Black Rock NCA. One member was concerned about the proposed expansion of the Hycroft Mine and the potential impact to the viewshed of the NCA; in particular the concern that lights at the mine will impact the dark skies in and around the NCA. Debbie Lassiter on the RAC indicated that Allied Gold was accepting public comments such as these during their expansion EA public comment period. Jim Linebaugh of the RAC urged the BLM to not be biased and consider all uses of public land when evaluating for wildland status. Tina Nappe said that whether or not BLM appeared to be biased was a matter of perspective; she went on to thank the RAC on behalf of the Black Rock subgroup for the RAC's support on wild horse issues.

The next Black Rock NCA subgroup meeting is scheduled for September 17 at the BLM-Nevada State Office in Reno.

Wild Horse and Burro Subgroup – Chuck Matton said that the subgroup did not have a report to make at this meeting, but he did have a question to Jim Kudrna of Soldier Meadows Ranch who was attending as a Black Rock subgroup member: what is the status of the idea of forming a wild horse eco-sanctuary at the Ranch? Jim explained that the idea of "Return to Freedom" sanctuary there may

be dead because the private group that was interested can't meet BLM's requirements. Dr. Stringham announced that the Society for Range Management will be having a workshop in Spokane this coming January 2012 and that a major part of the discussions will involve the science of wild horse management. She suggests that BLM send officials to attend since there will also be officials from Australia who have wild horse management challenges of their own.

VI. District Manager Reports

Carson City: Chris McAlear, DM – See DM report.

Winnemucca: Gene Seidlitz, DM – See DM report.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Tim Dufurrena said that he is concerned that roads in the northern portion of the Winnemucca District are in dire need of repair due to above-normal rainfall and erosion. Gene Seidlitz asked for a list of specific roads that need priority work so that he could coordinate repairs with his staff.

Jim Linebaugh said that he doesn't like Wilderness designations to be pushed onto us; it is better if the counties initiate the process. When wildland evaluations are made then it is important that BLM is honest and call a road a road and not call things roadless when they are not. He then discussed the need for saying more about successes in the conservation of Sage Grouse habitat; the public seems to have a false idea that BLM and NDOW are not doing enough to be proactive.

Tina Nappe said that she likes the improvements being made on the Black Rock NCA. On the subject of range management, she feels that BLM's scope is too narrow, that livestock use is just a subunit of range management. We need to address "range" as something we are trying to protect. BLM needs to look at range economics on a landscape-level of analysis.

Jim Kudrna said that the Calico wild horse gather from 2010 has shown phenomenal success in range regeneration. Normal moisture getting horse numbers down closer to the AML is helping a lot.

John Wollers encouraged the Winnemucca District to take full advantage of a training opportunity for an Americorps female intern working for the District Archaeologist.

Tamzen Stringham is concerned that the Winters Ranch is “turning into a weed patch” and that options for future management need to be explored.

Dan Heinz said that western US culture is unique and that having wild country to roam in is fading fast. He said we need to preserve large tracts of wilderness.

XIII. Meeting moved to the field tour at 11:45 a.m.

XIV. Tour Stops on June 15:

Black Rock NCA Visitor Center: RAC members were given a walk-through tour of the new Black Rock NCA Visitor Center. BLM has just been given access by the contractor so there was no furniture in the buildings yet; planned public opening of the facility is expected in late July. The structure features solar water heating on the barracks and a solar photovoltaic array on the carport structure. There is also RV hookups for up to four trailers for the use of BLM staff and volunteers working out of the Center.

Hycroft Mine: the RAC members were given a behind-the-scenes tour of the Hycroft gold/silver mine operation. Warren Woods and Debbie Lassiter discussed mining operations, with an emphasis on their reclamation efforts and expansion plans.

Burning Man Festival Overview: Will Peterson and Harley Dubois gave a briefing at an overview point to the northwest of the Black Rock Playa (the Burning Man event site was beneath water still sitting on the playa from the late spring rains). Will discussed the history of the event and plans for 2011. Harley answered questions regarding event logistics.

RAC Overnight at Soldier Meadow Ranch: the RAC arrived at the Ranch at about 8:00 p.m. and adjourned for the evening.

XVIII. Tour Stops on June 16:

High Rock Canyon: the RAC took a 4x4 trip to the top of High Rock Canyon with stops at the immigrant historical markers. The major points of discussion were on travel management and road maintenance in and around the NCA.

Soldier Meadows Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): the RAC spent several hours at the 2,000 acre area for endemic fish, plants and invertebrate species. BLM Host Jeff Gallerdi provided a review of public visitation to the hot springs and campground. There are concerns about members of the public damming up the stream and making it difficult for spring snail habitat. Visitors have also used soap and bleach at the springs which have

impacted wildlife. Leave No Trace camping ethics is an important theme at this site.

Ruby Pipeline Route: the RAC drove north from Soldier Meadows Ranch past Summit Lake to the route of the Ruby Pipeline (currently under construction). The RAC members told Winnemucca District Manager Gene Seidlitz that they felt BLM had done a good a job as possible on the Ruby project, but they are concerned that the contractor comes through on site rehabilitation as it has been stipulated and promised. Will the pipeline route become a major east-west running road or be totally rehabilitated? Tamzen Stringham is concerned that the Ruby reseeding/green strip will just become a magnet for wild horses in the area.

Wild Horse Issues for Upcoming Calico Gather: the RAC discussed the planned late fall wild horse gather to get closer to AML in the area. RAC members said that they appreciate the need to do back-to-back horse gather at adjoining HMAs since horses in this area are known to move back and forth between units.

Final Thoughts: each RAC member was asked on any final thoughts they have for the minutes before the RAC adjourned. Mark Freese is concerned regarding illegal dumping on public lands in the wildland-urban interface along the Sierra Front and would like to see the RAC assist in some way (Mark Struble invited RAC members to assist on the September 17 Carson River Cleanup in Carson City). Will Peterson said that he would like to see an NCA tour for the RAC every year to keep on top of events in the area. Debbie Lassiter thanked all RAC members for attending the Hycroft Mine tour and invited to them to provide comments during the mine expansion EA comment period.

The next RAC meeting is in January 2012 in Las Vegas.

Submitted by Mark Struble, Retiring Public Affairs Officer, Carson City District.