

Water Resources and Socioeconomic Impacts are Highest Public Concern for the Southern Nevada Water Importation Project

The initial round of finding out what concerns people have about a project to develop and transport groundwater from eastern Nevada to Las Vegas is completed and summarized in the final scoping summary report for the Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Groundwater Development Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Southern Nevada Water Authority applied to the BLM for rights-of-ways (ROW) to construct and operate a system of pipelines, wells, treatment facilities and power lines. The majority of the proposed facilities would be on public land managed by the BLM in Nevada.

BLM will prepare an EIS that will evaluate the potential direct and indirect impacts of the project. SNWA anticipates they would convey about 200,000 acre-feet of water per year through the system. Groundwater would be withdrawn from Coyote Spring, Delamar, Dry Lake, Cave, Spring and Snake valleys. While the EIS will study the potential effects of pumping groundwater from these valleys, the approval of water rights and transfer of water is under the authority of the Nevada Water Engineer's Office.

Two scoping periods were held on this project. The first was April 8 through Aug. 1, 2005. A second scoping was conducted from July 19 to Oct. 18, 2006, after SNWA made changes to their original proposal. The scopings resulted in 1,210 substantive letters; 597 from Nevada, 459 from Utah, and 154 from other states or

countries. Nearly 4,960 form letters, mainly email from non-governmental organizations, were received.

The main concerns expressed are about water resources, socioeconomic impacts, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process, and possible alternatives to the proposed project.

The main concerns expressed are about water resources, socioeconomic impacts, the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process, and possible alternatives to the proposed project.

The BLM and 13 cooperating agencies will use the public comments to formulate alternatives for the draft EIS. After the preliminary alternatives are determined, the EIS project team will conduct an impact analysis on the various alternatives to help refine the alternatives and select the agency preferred alternative. The alternatives will be published in the draft EIS, which will be available for a 60-day public review.

Throughout the EIS process, the BLM will inform the public of all public meetings, hearings, and the availability of project documentation and information. Anyone that would like to receive information and updates on the project may email their name and address to nvgwprojects@blm.gov.

The scoping report is posted at <http://www.nv.blm.gov/GWProjects/index.htm>. To have a copy mailed to you call Kim Dow at the BLM Groundwater Projects Office, 775-861-6681.

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State Director's Column

We sometimes get an opportunity to "invent the wheel." The innovative Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) continues to present the BLM with new challenges. For example, BLM developed an original process for selling public land for affordable housing. The newest opportunity comes through an amendment to SNPLMA that provides grant funding for fuels reduction and restoration projects.

Like reinventing the wheel, inventing the wheel takes time. But the rewards when the process works are much greater. Affordable housing is identified by Clark County's Growth Management Task Force as a top priority. Affordable housing is a concern for growing communities in most western states. SNPLMA gives BLM a unique opportunity to assist the need by providing land at a discounted rate to accommodate affordable housing in Nevada.

On March 8, BLM celebrated a groundbreaking with the partners that made possible the sale of public land in Clark County for construction of the first affordable housing project authorized under the SNPLMA. Through the Act, BLM sold the public land at a 95-percent discount for affordable housing. The five-acre parcel at Harmon and Jones avenues, originally appraised for \$3 million, was sold for \$198,000 to Nevada H.A.N.D. The non-profit developer was selected by Clark County in coordination with the U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD).

Within a year or so, the Harmon Pines Senior Apartments will open its doors to low-income people who are 55 or older. BLM has more than 1,300 acres reserved for affordable housing in the Las Vegas Valley. A second application for affordable multi-family housing in Clark County is in the works.

BLM applauds the efforts of all the partners who made this effort a reality: the Nevada Congressional delegation for having the foresight to craft this legislation, the Office

of the Solicitor's Pacific Southwest Region, HUD, State of Nevada Housing Division, Appraisal Services Directorate, and especially Clark County for their work with Nevada H.A.N.D.

The White Pine County Conservation, Recreation and Development Act of 2006, amended the SNPLMA to provide funding to continue the landscape restoration efforts for the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project, and to implement hazardous fuels reduction plans in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Carson Range and the Spring Mountains. The act, which is described more in detail in this issue, also gives us the ability to use SNPLMA funds for carrying out restoration projects in White Pine and Lincoln counties and actually offer grants for the study and restoration of rangeland in that portion of the Great Basin.

BLM will be able to move quickly to apply our experience with fuels reduction and habitat rehabilitation to take advantage of these new opportunities. There won't be any reinventing the wheel, but, if necessary, we're ready to invent a new wheel in the future.

– Ron Wenker

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Questions, comments and requests may be mailed to:

Editor

BLM Office of Communications

P.O. Box 12000 • Reno, NV 89520-0006

Email: jworley@nv.blm.gov

Office: 1340 Financial Blvd

Phone: 775-861-6515

Ron Wenker - State Director

Amy Lueders - Associate State Director

Doran Sanchez - Chief, Communications

JoLynn Worley - Editor

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We've Made a Deal on the First BLM Affordable Housing Development

BLM Nevada just added a new use to the multiple-use mandate – land sales for affordable housing purposes.

High housing prices in Las Vegas make it difficult for low-income seniors and families to find a place to live. Affordable housing is identified by Clark County's Growth Management Task Force as a top priority. Through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA), the BLM is able to sell public land at discounted rates to state or local government entities, including housing authorities, for affordable housing projects.

The first affordable housing development authorized through the SNPLMA broke ground in February when BLM completed the sale of a 5-acre parcel to Clark County. Clark County transferred the land to Nevada

H.A.N.D, a non-profit developer to build the Harmon Pines Senior Apartments, 103 units for low-income seniors. The \$3 million fair market value of the parcel was discounted to \$198,000. The land cost equated to less than \$2,000 per door. Discount rates are based on building costs, land sale prices and incomes for a specific area and may vary by area. BLM has more than 1,300 acres reserved for affordable housing in the Las Vegas Valley. A second, 10-acre parcel is in the process of being sold for multi-family housing.

BLM coordinated with the U.S. Department of Housing and Development, and state and local governments in Nevada to craft the policies and provisions, known as the Nevada Guidance, needed to implement the affordable housing provisions. This process is applicable throughout the State of Nevada.

Wild Horse Adoptions

LAS VEGAS : JUNE 22-23

Horseman's Park : 5800 Flamingo Road

RENO : AUG. 18

Western States Wild Horse & Burro Expo
Livestock Events Center

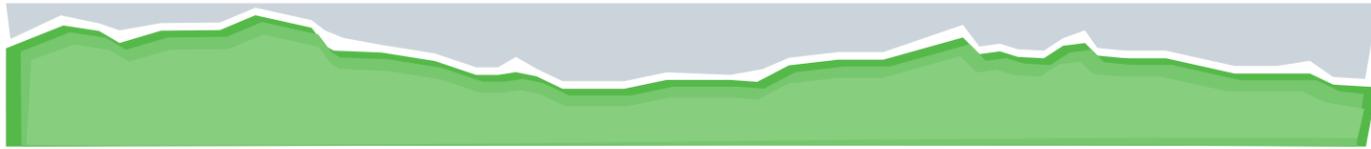
SPARKS : AUG. 18-19

Palomino Valley Center

FOR INFORMATION CALL

SUSIE STOKKE (775)861-6469





PUBLIC LAND ISSUES

The White Pine County Lands Bill

The success of county land bills in Nevada is growing. Three counties in Nevada have lands bills, Clark, Lincoln and, now, White Pine. The positive affects on local communities is getting the attention of other counties in the state, as well as the attention of other states with public land issues. The Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act in 1998, (SNLPMA) set the standard for county land bills, and each of the subsequent county bills has amended the SNLMA.

White Pine County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act of 2006 The Act provides for the sale of up to 45,000 acres of public land managed by the BLM in the county under joint selection and competitive bidding processes.



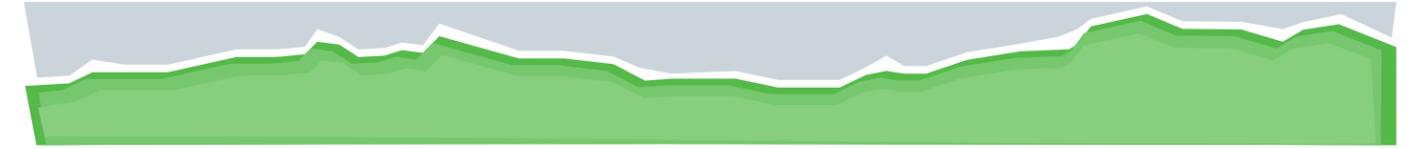
Through the White Pine County lands bill, 2,960 acres of federally-managed land will be transferred to the state to expand Cave Lake State Park near Ely.

Distribution of Land Sale Proceeds

- 5 percent to the State for use in the general education program.
- 10 percent paid to the county for fire protection, law enforcement, education, public safety, housing, social services, transportation and planning.
- Remainder will be deposited in a special account in the U.S. Treasury. Funds in the special account may be used to:
 - Inventory, evaluate, protect and manage archaeological resources.
 - Conduct a study of routes and develop and implement a management plan for the Silver State Off-Highway Vehicle Trail.
 - Assess non-motorized recreation opportunities.
 - Reimburse costs to prepare land for sale or transfer, including surveys, appraisals and NEPA documentation.

Land Transfers

- 6,291 acres to the state to expand the Steptoe Valley Wildlife Management Area.
- 3,526 acres of land in four parcels to the Ely Shoshone Tribe. The largest of the four parcels and the majority of the transferred land is designated only for traditional and ceremonial use. The three other parcels are for residential and commercial development. These lands may not be used for gaming.
- 2,960 acres to the state to expand the Cave Lake State Park.
- 1,551 acres to expand the county airport.



PUBLIC LAND ISSUES

- 658 acres to the state to expand the Ward Charcoal Ovens.
- 645 acres to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Ruby Lake National Wildlife Refuge.
- 202 acres to expand the county industrial park.

Habitat Restoration and Wildland Fire Prevention

The bill amends SNLPMA to provide grants to the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition, the Great Basin Institute, and other entities for the study and restoration of rangeland and other land in the Great Basin to:

- Conduct scientific analyses, hazardous fuels and mechanical treatments and related work on the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project, a landscape-scale restoration effort to reduce fire risk and maintain and improve critical watersheds.
- Develop and implement hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention plans for the Lake Tahoe Basin, the Carson Range in Douglas, Washoe and Carson City counties, and the Spring Mountains in Clark County.
- Conduct a feasibility study on the potential establishment of an interagency science center which could include a research facility and experimental rangeland in eastern Nevada.

The SNLPMA is also amended to provide funding for:

- Capital improvements at Great Basin National Park and public lands in White Pine County managed by the Forest Service and the BLM.
- Development of parks, trails, and natural areas in White Pine County.

- Acquisition of land, not to exceed 250 acres, in Washoe County and develop a regional park and natural area.
- Conservation initiatives in White Pine County.
- Reimbursement of BLM costs to clear debris from and protect land located in the SNLPMA disposal boundary that is reserved for affordable housing.



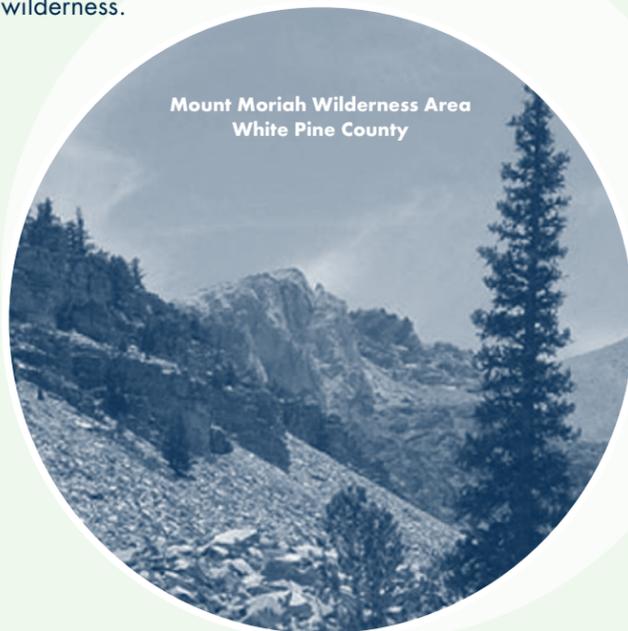
The White Pine County lands bill amends the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act to provide grants to the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition and other entities for the study and restoration of rangeland in the Great Basin. In the photo, a group of volunteers at an Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition workshop remove old barbed wire fence to protect wildlife and livestock from injury. Some of the accomplishments of the Coalition include thinning pinyon and juniper stands, sagebrush restoration and spraying noxious weed infestations.

WILDERNESS AREAS

White Pine County Bill Designates Wilderness Areas

For anyone who likes their outdoor adventures primitive, prehistoric and private, eastern Nevada is the place to go. Twelve new wilderness areas were recently added to the National Wilderness Preservation System and two existing wilderness areas were enlarged through the White Pine County Lands bill.

The wilderness areas are on lands managed by the BLM or the U.S. Forest Service. Both agencies manage the areas under the Wilderness Act of 1964. The designation withdraws these lands from all forms of entry, appropriation and disposal under the public lands laws, including the mining, mineral and geothermal leasing laws. Valid existing mining rights will remain intact and existing livestock grazing will continue in these areas. Water developments for wildlife may be authorized. The designation does not include any air space restrictions. If necessary, measures may be taken to control wildland fire in wilderness.

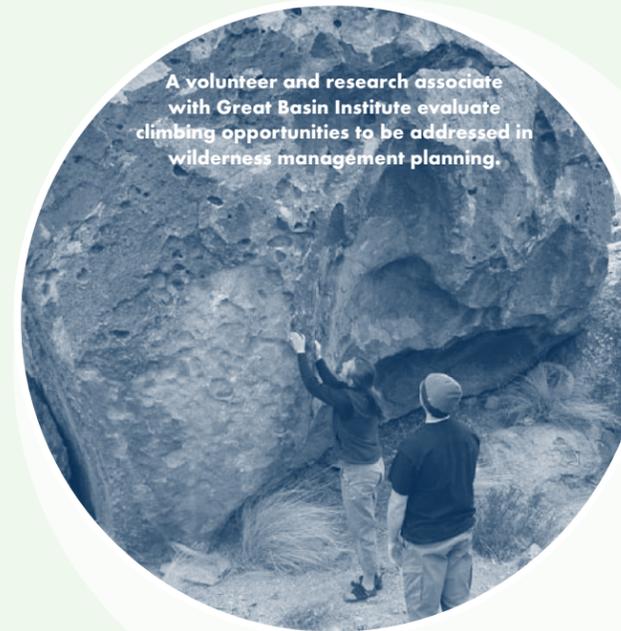


Mount Moriah Wilderness Area
White Pine County

- **Mount Grafton Wilderness:**
78,754 acres, BLM
- **South Egan Range Wilderness:**
67,214 acres, BLM
- **Highland Ridge Wilderness:**
68,627 acres, BLM
- **Government Peak Wilderness:**
6,313 acres, BLM
- **Red Mountain Wilderness:**
20,490 acres, FS
- **Bald Mountain Wilderness:**
22,366 acres, BLM
- **White Pine Range Wilderness:**
40,013 acres, FS
- **Shellback Wilderness:**
36,143 acres, FS
- **High Schells Wilderness:**
121,497 acres, FS
- **Becky Peak Wilderness:**
18,119 acres, BLM
- **Goshute Canyon Wilderness:**
42,544 acres, BLM
- **Bristlecone Wilderness:**
14,095 acres, BLM
- **Mount Moriah Wilderness:**
addition of 11,261 acres, FS and BLM
- **Currant Mountain Wilderness:**
addition of 10,697 acres, FS

WILDERNESS AREAS

Wilderness Rules



A volunteer and research associate with Great Basin Institute evaluate climbing opportunities to be addressed in wilderness management planning.

The BLM's Ely Field Office now manages 22 wilderness areas in White Pine and Lincoln counties. While 54,093 acres previously managed as wilderness study areas were released in the White Pine bill, there are still three wilderness study areas with a combined acreage of 104,632 acres.

BLM manages 45 wilderness areas totaling 2,056,545 acres. Forty-four of those wilderness areas have been designated by Congress in the past seven years. Among the states with BLM-managed public lands, Nevada is now second to California in acreage designated as wilderness.

MAPS OF THE NEW WILDERNESS AREAS ARE AVAILABLE AT

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/prog/more_programs/geographic_sciences/maps.html

WILDERNESS RULES

- Personal equipment such as a backpack stove and camera are allowed in wilderness.
- Wheelchairs may be used in wilderness by those individuals who need them. However, BLM will not construct facilities or modify land conditions to accommodate wheelchair use.
- Rock climbing is a legitimate use of wilderness. Rock climbers may not use power drills to install permanent fixed anchors.
- Mechanical transport and motorized equipment may not be used in wilderness. Mechanical transport includes bicycles, hang gliders, parachutes, game carriers, carts and wagons. Motorized equipment includes chainsaws, aircraft, generators, motor vehicles and snowmobiles.
- Commercial enterprises and competitive uses such as endurance races, survival exercises or war games are prohibited in wilderness.

2006 FIRE SEASON Stabilization and Fire Rehab Efforts Focus on Elko County

Elko County bore the brunt of Nevada's 2006 fire season, with nearly 947,000 acres burned out of 1.35 million acres burned statewide.

Three periods of dry lightning storms wreaked havoc in Elko County:

- **June 22 to June 27**, there were 125 lightning fire starts; 32 became large fires torching more than 400,000 acres. The Winters Fire occurred during this time, burning more than 238,400 acres. The Winters Fire was the second largest fire reported in the nation during that time.
- **Aug. 6 through Aug. 20**, there were 51 lightning fire starts; 17 became large fires consuming more than 250,000 acres. The Charleston Complex occurred during this time, burning more than 190,400 acres becoming the fifth largest fire reported in the nation.
- **Sept. 2 to Sept. 4**, produced 39 lightning fires; eight becoming large fires accounting for nearly 300,000 acres. The Sheep Fire and the Amazon Fire were number seven and 15 at that time nationwide.

Wildlife and livestock grazing permit holders were hit hard. In Elko County, the fires affected 65 of the area's 190 grazing permittees, resulting in the suspension of more than 116,000 animal unit months (AUMs). A few allotments were completely burned.

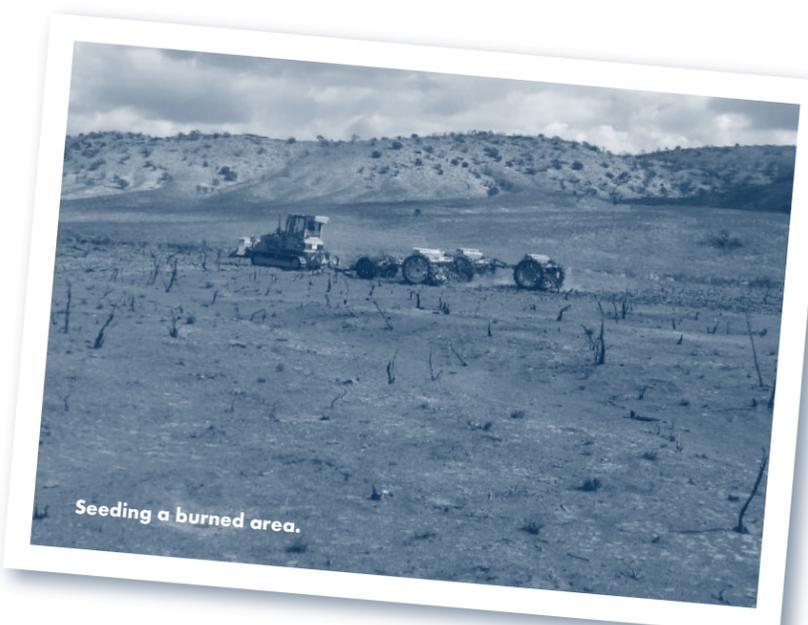
Key areas of wildlife habitat were also decimated by wildfire. Last summer's fires eliminated habitat for more than 10,000 sage grouse, burned more than 60 percent of the winter range for one of Nevada's largest and most productive antelope herds and decimated much of the remaining transition and wintering habitat for mule deer in an area that was already reeling from decades of devastating fires. Wildland fire over the past years has

reduced habitat that supported a deer herd that numbered close to 30,000 in the 1960s to habitat that will be barely able to support 6,000 deer now. An estimated 76 sage grouse leks have been lost in northern Nevada over the past two years to wildland fires.

The major challenge of rehabilitating lands after a wildland fire is time. We can and do plant thousands of pounds of seeds with the hope of receiving enough moisture at the right time for successful germination and growth. We need to get results quickly to sustain wildlife and livestock grazing and prevent soil erosion. Over many years, the burned lands will naturally re-vegetate, that is if they aren't repeatedly burned by wildland fire that is fueled by cheatgrass and other invasive species.

BLM has two levels of work and planning for post-fire activities. The first level is emergency stabilization and includes work for erosion control, first-year weed control and repair of allotment boundary fences. Stabilization work is normally done within the first year following a fire.

Stabilization work in watershed areas



is important to keep communities safe from the danger of flooding. While rain and snow are needed to sprout and grow seeds and shrubs, rain on a denuded slope usually results in flooding or mud slides.

As the fires are put out, BLM starts working on emergency stabilization plans.

The second level is rehabilitation, which is aimed at planting shrubs and seed for wildlife habitat and rangelands, and planting trees on forest land. Other work includes repairing or replacing small structures such as pasture fences or wildlife guzzlers. Rehabilitation plans usually span two or three years. A key effort of rehab planning is to place seed on critical habitat areas during the fall and winter following the burn to capture the winter's moisture.

Fire rehab plans call for seeding shrub species on more than 200,000 acres. Big sagebrush and various subspecies of sagebrush seed will be planted on a site-specific basis with a major emphasis on wildlife habitat rehabilitation.

To prepare for this massive stabilization and rehab effort, BLM bought nearly one million pounds of seed of various species. Another 250,000 pounds of sagebrush seed and 14,200 pounds of bitterbrush seed is on order.

PROJECTS IN ELKO COUNTY

More than 106,000 acres for drill and aerial seeding of grasses and forbs are targeted in Elko County.

- Nearly 30,000 pounds of seed was broadcast by helicopter on more than 3,500 acres of public and private land burned by the Mudd Fire. BLM crews are planted bitterbrush seedlings in the burned rocky, steep areas.
- In watershed areas, 20,000 acres have been drill seeded and 10,000 acres have been aerial seeded. An additional 165,000 acres is slated for aerial seeding.

■ Bitterbrush seed has been hand-planted on BLM public lands on an estimated 750 acres on the Snow Canyon Fire burn area.

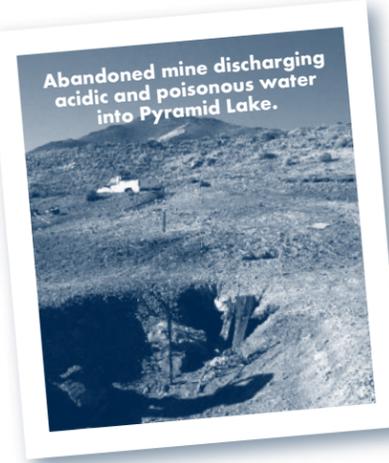
- The Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW) will assist in seeding bitterbrush on portions of the 148,000 acre Charleston Fire.
- Concurrent NDOW and BLM efforts will seed drainages on private land in the Amazon, Snow Canyon, Basco, and Mudd Fire areas with special seed mixes for watersheds.
- Volunteers will supplement BLM efforts in planting seedlings in the Basco and Mudd fire areas, focusing on stabilization.
- NDOW and the BLM will cooperatively plant seeds to create greenstrips around islands of unburned wildlife habitat in Suzie Creek Fire area.

PROJECTS IN OTHER PARTS OF NEVADA

- In Nye County, BLM completed 426 acres of drill seeding on the Adavan Fire and is working on 2,209 acres of drill seeding on the Sherwood Fire.
- Lincoln County aerial seeding plans for this winter have targeted more than 58,500 acres of the Texas, Hambly, Range and Higby fires.
- In Washoe County, BLM plans to drill seed 1,700 acres and aerial seed 1,600 acres on the Poito Fire south of Gerlach.
- In Humboldt County, the Bureau has completed 800 acres of drill seeding and 4,400 acres of aerial seeding on the New York Peak and Trident fires near Denio.
- In Lander County, BLM plans to drill seed 3,600 acres, aerial seed 400 acres and construct 4.5 miles of temporary protective fence on the Gap Fire, south of Battle Mountain.

– Richard Brown
Nevada State Office

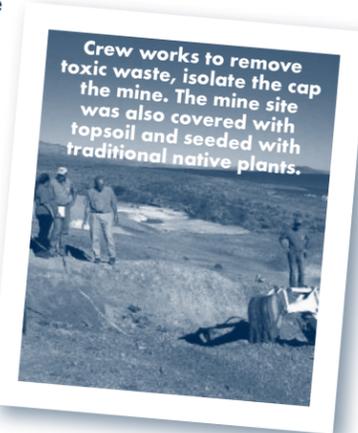
Abandoned Mines: A Hazardous Historic Legacy



Aging and abandoned mines in the Pyramid Mining District left a legacy of chemical and physical safety hazards. The district, just north and east of Sparks, got its start in the mid-1800s when the Comstock was providing enough silver to build San

Francisco. The Pyramid District is still actively explored and claimed for minerals, mostly gold. Now there are other competing users placing heavy demands on the area—all terrain vehicle riders, hikers and hunters. Abandoned mines and recreation in the same area is an accident waiting to happen.

Reclamation work in the district started in 1999 with the clean up the large, bankrupt Olinghouse cyanide heap leach operation. The Olinghouse cleanup was important to prevent runoff from the mine from flowing into the Truckee River and on to Pyramid Lake. After Olinghouse, the Perry Canyon area was targeted for backfilling 18 very dangerous shafts. After characterizing the discharge of acidic and metal-laden waste from adits in the canyon, the Carson City Field Office worked with a claimant on part of the sites to move acid-generating waste rock from the drainage and run acidic drainage from the adits through limestone drains to assist neutralization.



The latest reclamation work in the Pyramid District was to remediate the Guanomi project, a long-abandoned mine on the shores of Pyramid Lake that has discharged acidic and poisonous water into Pyramid Lake for decades. The toxic waste has been removed, isolated and capped. The entire site was covered with topsoil and seeded with traditional native plants.

The BLM's abandoned mine land program provided labor, technical expertise, oversight and monitoring for the remedial work. Other partners in the efforts include the Pyramid Lake Tribe, Nevada Division of Minerals, Nevada Mining Association, Nevada Natural Heritage Program, University of Nevada, Cashman Equipment, Paul Delong Trucking, Round Mountain Gold and private volunteers.

Almost all of the abandoned mines in Nevada are more than 100 years old. The modern mining industry did not create these abandoned mines, and they basically have nothing of value left in them. BLM estimates there are 300,000 abandoned mines throughout the state; 50,000 of those are considered to be safety hazards in part because they are located where people recreate. The hazardous mines closest to population centers and recreational areas are prioritized for closure.

So far, 255 abandoned mines in urban areas and areas of high public use in Nevada have been permanently secured. The abandoned mine land program was started in 1999 with the closure of six mines. In 2006, a BLM record 118 abandoned mines were secured; 52 of those were in the Tonopah area.

Nationwide, about 25 people die each year from accidents related to abandoned mines. Hazards include falls, loose ground, rotten timbers, poisonous snakes, bad air, old explosives and rodent-borne hantavirus.

Chicago Botanic Garden Partnership Helps Track Sensitive Plants

A botanical internship program between the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG) and BLM's Carson City Field Office provided a valuable learning experience for college students and helped BLM monitor sensitive plant populations. During the 2006 field season, Andra Forney (Nova Scotia, Canada), Sarah Kulpa (Massachusetts), Cheyenne Schalue (Missouri), and Kathryn Zimmerman (Pennsylvania) spent five months working with BLM Botanist Dean Tonenna. The interns completed a wide range of projects, including monitoring populations of two sensitive plant species, William's combleaf (*Polycytenium williamsiae*) and Churchill Narrows buckwheat (*Eriogonum diatomacium*). Both species are on the BLM sensitive species list and Churchill Narrows buckwheat is listed by the State of Nevada as critically endangered.

William's combleaf is a rare plant found growing around ephemeral (dry) lakes within the pinyon-juniper/sagebrush vegetation zones. It was described as a new species in the early 1980s, but very little is known about the plant and the factors affecting its abundance and distribution. The interns completed a third year of monitoring populations of William's combleaf in the Virginia Mountain Range and Pine Nut Mountains. This data will be used by the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for writing an inter-agency conservation plan for this species.

Churchill Narrows buckwheat was discovered just ten years ago in patches of exposed diatomaceous soil in Lyon County. This specie

is found in only fifteen small subpopulations on public land within the Churchill Narrows area of the Pine Nut Mountains. The interns completed a second year of reading monitoring quadrants and permanent photo plots, providing valuable information on this very unique and rare plant.

Along with sensitive plant monitoring, the interns also collected native seeds, conducted habitat assessments and botanical field surveys, native plant research, mapped GIS projects, and made fire assessments. The students said the CBG internship was a valuable learning experience. All four interns have plans to complete advanced degrees and work in conservation biology and resource management.

– Mark Struble

Carson City Field Office
with Sarah Kulpa and Andra Forney





Elko Boy Scout Shawn Howe chose to plant trees along portions of Sherman Creek as his Eagle Scout Project. Enlisting members of his troop, members of the Bangin' Bones 4-wheeler club, and BLM volunteers, Howe's team carried the seedlings to the site in backpacks and on horseback, planting about 140 aspen and narrowleaf cottonwood. Sherman Creek is important habitat for Lahontan cutthroat trout. In time, the trees will help prevent erosion and will provide shade to moderate water temperatures for fish.

Shown in the photo: Rick Weight, son, Justin and daughter, Bailey, all members of the Bangin' Bones. BLM fisheries biologist Pat Coffin is standing in the background. Coffin transplanted the first Lahontan cutthroat trout to Sherman Creek in 1962.

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