

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009
Saddle West Hotel and Casino, 1220 S. Highway 160,
Pahrump, Nevada

Resource Advisory Council members present and category represented:

Dr. John E. Hiatt, Chairperson	Wildlife	Category 2
Steven Mellington, vice-Chairperson	Public at Large	Category 3
Kenny Anderson	Native American	Category 3
Mauricia Baca	Environment	Category 2
Douglas "Stretch" Baker	Transportation and ROW	Category 1
Don "Skip" Canfield	State Agency Representative	Category 3
Joni Eastley	Elected Official	Category 3
Julie Von Tobel Gleason	Wild Horse and Burro	Category 2
Ed Higbee	Ranching/Grazing	Category 1
Greg Seymour	Archaeology/Historic	Category 2
Dr. Peter Starkweather	Academic/UNLV	Category 3
Claire Toomey	Permitted Recreation	Category 1

Resource Advisory Council members absent and category represented:

Elise McAllister	Dispersed Recreation	Category 2
Tim Carlson	Mineral Development	Category 1
Gracian Uhalde	Ranching/Grazing	Category 1

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:

Hillierie Patton	BLM Southern Nevada Public Affairs Specialist
Mary Jo Rugwell	BLM Manager, Southern Nevada District Office
John Ruhs, Designated Federal Official	BLM Manager, Ely District Office
Victoria Barr	BLM Field Manager, Caliente Field Office (FO)
Diana Hawks	BLM Acting Field Manager, Caliente FO
Patrick Putnam	BLM Field Manager, Pahrump FO
Tom Seley	BLM Tonopah Field Manager
Jerrie Bertola	BLM Wild Horse & Burro Specialist, Pahrump FO
David Fanning	BLM Geologist, Pahrump FO
Krystal Johnson	BLM Wild Horse & Burro - Contractor, Pahrump FO
Jayson Barangan	BLM Natural Resource Specialist, Pahrump FO
Marc Sanchez	BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner, Pahrump FO
Kathleen Sprowl	BLM Archaeologist, Pahrump FO
Wendy Seley	BLM Realty Specialist, Pahrump FO
Mark Chandler	BLM Realty Specialist, Las Vegas FO
Jeanne Tinsman	BLM Administrative Assistant, Southern Nevada District Office
Michele Pointel	BLM Administrative Assistant, Tonopah FO

Public

Susan Farkas
 J.C. Weeks
 Albert Verrilli
 Walt Kuver
 Eileen Christensen
 Mark Watte
 Jessica Singh
 Charles Lee
 Yuki Takagi

Represented Interest

Self
 Beatty Economic Development Corporation

 Nye County
 Pahrump Valley Times

 Self

A copy of each attachment is listed in the text of or at the end of these minutes and is also on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Ely Field Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to review said minutes should contact Chris Hanefeld, Public Affairs Specialist, at (775) 289-1842.

- 2:02 p.m. Dr. Hiatt, Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) chairperson, called the meeting to order and conducted introductions.
- 2:04 p.m. Solar Energy Field Tour Follow-up
 Discussions/Presentations
 Pahrump Field Office Staff

Wendy Seley, Realty Specialist, *Solar Energy (see Attachments 1-5):*

Section 211 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 sets the goal of having 10,000 megawatts (MWs) of renewable energy projects on public land by 2015. See the website <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/energy.1.html> for further information on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Renewable Energy program.

The BLM Solar Energy Development Policy (IM 2007-097) (Attachment 6) provides guidance on processing right-of-way applications for solar energy projects on public lands. The programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for solar energy has been started and can be viewed at <http://solareis.anl.gov> (Attachment 7). As of the morning of the date of this meeting, California has received 79, and Nevada 68 applications for solar applications (Attachment 8). Most of Nevada's applications are located in the Southern Nevada and Battle Mountain Districts.

BLM is the largest federal land manager with 261 million surface acres and 700 million acres of mineral estate. Land use planning is required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and determines what decisions will be made in managing the land. BLM has 150 land use plans. The wind energy PEIS was completed in June 2005. The geothermal PEIS was completed in October 2008.

The solar PEIS was started in May 2008. The moratorium on new applications was lifted July 2008. Completion goals for the solar PEIS are to finish the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) by Summer 2009 and the final EIS by Summer 2010. As part of the process, public scoping meetings have been held, and letters and comments received from the public.

There are different types of applications...photovoltaic and concentrated solar power.

The processing steps of a right-of-way (ROW) application consist of:

- 1) Pre-application meeting
- 2) Submit ROW application
- 3) Request for cost recovery and plan of development (POD)
- 4) Submit POD (complete POD is critical)
- 5) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) preparation/review (site-specific EIS)
- 6) Land use plan amendment (may be required—dependent upon recommendations of PEIS)
- 7) Decision and ROW issuance

Ensuing discussion included the following points:

- 1) For solar applications, many applicants request 30-day extensions on the 90-day allowance for submitting a plan of development.
- 2) The engineering review is done at the BLM Nevada State Office (NSO).
- 3) ROW Applications
 - a. Cost recovery processing fees include the time required by specialists for working on the application.
 - b. The completed POD often looks very differently from the beginning POD.
 - c. Stacked applications are done on a first come, first serve basis.
 - d. At the present, we don't have a lot of comparative information to use for appraisals.
 - e. The initial bond calculation process involves doing a reclamation cost estimate; the process is still being developed. The footprint of the ROW acreage needed is the criteria for determining the reclamation cost.
 - f. Rent can be paid incrementally through the third year. At that time, rent is to be paid in full.
 - g. The rental rate begins upon authorization of a project.
 - h. Uniformity of policy across the BLM districts is being developed.
- 4) There is disparity in land use planning because some land use plans may already have a certain amount of acreage set aside for specific uses, such as solar.
- 5) The tortoise regulations will be completed March 1, 2009.

- 6) Wendy Seley and Marc Chandler have developed a standardized list to use in considering solar applications.
- 7) The factors of power supply were discussed.
 - a. Companies pay for studies regarding interconnect and place the information on their websites. Industry has given a time frame of 2-5 years for obtaining power for their solar projects.
 - b. Water rights are a critical issue. Whether development is being done on private or public land, each area of development is considered as a whole. The State of Nevada limits the amount of water available. Order 1197 was given as a reference for more information on water rights.
- 8) Cumulative impact assessment is in the process of development.
- 9) Infrastructure to support the power that will be generated on the acreage of a solar project is in process. The availability to accept power and water affects the number of systems that can operate simultaneously.
- 10) The application process doesn't apply to private land.
- 11) The current life span of proposed plants is 30 years. Applications to BLM are for 30 years with a right of renewal; the authorizing officer decides whether or not renewal is granted.
- 12) Power purchase agreements are the key to the success of a project.

There will be a Solar Technology 101 class available to the RAC members next Wednesday, February 11, 2009, from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

3:17 p.m. Break

3:25 p.m. Dave Fanning, Geologist, *Minerals (Attachment 9)*

In locatable minerals, Pahrump Field Office (PFO) has four mine plan operations and seven mining notices. For mineral materials, they have two community pits out of which 2 commercial sand and gravel operations run. 2008 saw production of 415,000 tons of mineral material. PFO also has 26 city, county, and NDOT gravel pits located near major roads.

There aren't any active leases in leasable minerals (oil, gas, coal, brines, geothermal) at this time.

Locatable Minerals

- 1) Sterling Gold Mine
 - a. Four open pits
 - b. Three underground workings
 - c. Heap leach process
 - d. Recent plan amendment
 - e. The balls on the ponds are for keeping the birds off of them. Chemicals are in the pond.
- 2) Reward Gold Mine
 - a. Proposed open pit heap leach pit approximately 6 miles south of Beatty
 - b. They bought some water rights from Barrick Gold.

- c. They have approximately 50 employees.
 - d. The comment was made that they will have to go around Death Valley National Park as commercial truck traffic isn't allowed in the park.
 - e. The comment was made that this company has a checkered history of performance; it may be beneficial to research this matter.
- 3) IMV Clay Mine/Sepiolite Clay Pit
- a. This mine is on the Amargosa Playa between 2 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).
 - b. The sepiolite has unusual gelling properties that allows it to be used in saltwater drilling, oil & gas, sheetrock mud, fillers and binders. It is 1 of 3 deposits being mined in the world.
- 4) Sugar Silica Mine
- a. It is located near the Mercury, Nevada, exit.
 - b. It is currently not producing due to air quality complications. Dry processing (occurring in the air) posed a hazard to the workers. They are developing a new process, but it is doubtful that it will begin production again.
 - c. Their main product was stucco.

Mineral Materials

Dave Fanning discussed the types of operations that occur in a community pit. He also covered the history of a trespass of unauthorized tailings on 38 acres of BLM land. The tailings don't dry. They have been fenced off as they are a hazard. The company states that the subcontractor is responsible. The Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) says that BLM is to determine who is responsible for reclaiming the area.

3:47 p.m. Marc Sanchez, Recreation Planner, *Recreation (Attachments 10-12)*

Big Dune Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)

- 1) Big Dune SRMA is a 1.5 square mile complex with a highest point of approximately 500 feet above the valley floor. It is the second most popular dune in Nevada.
- 2) It consists of 11,600 acres of SRMA, of which 1,920 acres are ACEC. Two hundred acres of the ACEC are closed.
- 3) The portion of Big Dune SRMA that is open is being proposed for solar use.
- 4) There aren't any designations set up so that people will know which areas to use.
- 5) Currently, fees are not currently being collected at Big Dune SRMA.

Special Recreation Permits (SRPs)

- 1) There are 2 competitive commercial and 1 commercial touring SRPs in the Pahrump Field Office.
- 2) Last Chance Park
 - a. Subcommittees are being formed to oversee the different aspects of the process of creating the park.
 - b. The park will provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, including activities such as rock climbing and nature photography.
 - c. There will be an open house on April 30, 2009, and possibly another in May 2009, for presenting conceptual designs of the park.

Goals

- 1) Engage the community in the development and implementation of the recreation program
- 2) Build, support, and sustain partnerships
- 3) Complete a Resource Area Management Plan (RAMP) for Big Dune SRMA
- 4) Inventory all roads, trails, and drywashes and inventory use
- 5) Provide interpretation, environmental education and informational services

Dr. Hiatt commented that under the regulations, services must be provided in order to charge fees.

4:02 p.m. Jerrie Bertola, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist, and Krystal Johnson, Wild Horse and Burro Intern, *Wild Horse and Burro (Attachments 13 & 14)*

A history of the Wild Horse & Burro program was presented. There are five Herd Management Areas (HMAs). The proposed solar projects are located in the middle of the burro area.

The Wild Horse and Burro program covers the following areas of responsibility:

- 1) Census
- 2) Monitoring
 - a. Rangeland Health
 - 1) Line-point intersect
 - 2) Belt transect
 - 3) Gap intercept
 - 4) Soil stability test
 - b. Water Sources
 - c. Utilization
- 3) Gathers
- 4) Adoption/Compliance
- 5) Herd Management Area Planning
- 6) Educational Demonstrations

2008 Highlights

- 1) Census data collected on all actively managed HMAs
- 2) Emergency gather of the Nevada Wild Horse Range (NWHR)
- 3) Improved water developments on the NWHR
- 4) Rangeland health assessments completed in Johnnie, Red Rock, Gold Butte, and Wheeler Pass
- 5) Promoted wild horses and burros with National Wild Horse Association (NWAH)
- 6) Southern Nevada Lands & Public Management Act (SNPLMA) projects
- 7) A NWHR Emergency Gather was conducted due to limited water and forage. The processes used were water trapping and helicopter-assisted gathering. Nine hundred forty-six wild horses were removed.

Reconstruction of various water developments is underway at the following sites:

- 1) Cactus Springs
- 2) Cedar Well
- 3) Corral Springs
- 4) Silverbow
- 5) Tunnel Springs
- 6) Rose Springs

A SNPLMA update was given.

- 1) Round 4
 - a. Contraceptive planning is in process.
 - b. The census has been completed.
 - 2) Round 6
- They are still working on the virtual adoption program.

2009 Goals

- 1) Partner with the Forest Service to develop a comprehensive HMAP (Herd Management Area Plan) for the Spring Mountains Complex
- 2) Evaluate other water development work
- 3) Promote wild horse and burro adoptions
- 4) Hold educational events
- 5) Complete rangeland health assessments on the NWHR

Answered Questions

- 1) Doing the census by air saved a total of \$200,000.00.
- 2) BLM saved approximately \$70,000.00 by utilizing water trapping techniques during the Nellis gather.
- 3) The United States Air Force didn't want water to be wasted due to continually flowing water, so water troughs without parts (which would last longer as parts wouldn't deteriorate, etc.) are not being used in development projects.

- 4:22 p.m. Hillerie Patton, BLM Ely District Public Affairs Specialist, Housekeeping
- Dinner will be at the Red Sky Barbeque. Please meet at 5:45 p.m. in front of the casino to carpool.
 - Questions? None.

- 4:25 p.m. Dr. Hiatt adjourned the meeting.

APPROVED BY:

Date: _____

John Hiatt, Chair
Mojave-Southern Great Basin
Resource Advisory Council

- Minutes provided by Michele Pointel, BLM Tonopah Field Office -

Attachments:

1. BLM Renewable Energy Program – Solar Energy – Mojave – Southern RAC Presentation February 5, 2009 (Powerpoint Presentation)
2. Northwest Nye County Renewable Energy Applications (Map)
3. Southern Nye and Western Clark County Renewable Energy Applications (Map)
4. Nye County Renewable Energy Applications with parts of Esmeralda & Clark Counties (Map)
5. Nevada Solar and Wind Energy Projects (Map)
6. Instruction Memorandum No. 2007-097 Solar Energy Development Policy
7. Solar Energy Development Programmatic EIS Website (Printout)
8. List of Solar Project Applications as of January 20, 2009 (Printout)
9. Pahrump Field Office Minerals Summary (Powerpoint Presentation)
10. Pahrump Field Office Recreation Program (Powerpoint Presentation)
11. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern: Southern Nye County/BLM Sensitive Invertebrate Species at Big Dune (Handout)
12. Archaeological Protection on Public Lands Brochure
13. Southern Nevada District Wild Horse & Burro Program (Powerpoint Presentation)
14. BLM Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act 1998-2008 Brochure