

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes
Thursday January 10, 2008
BLM Las Vegas Field Office
Las Vegas, Nevada

In Attendance

Chairperson: Dr. John E. Hiatt	Wildlife
Vice-Chairperson: Stephen Mellington	Public at Large
Coordinator: Chris Hanefeld	BLM, Ely Field Station, PAO
Karen McAllister Eller	BLM, Tonopah Field Station, PAO
Doran Sanchez	BLM, Nevada State Office, Chief of Communications
Juan Palma	BLM, Las Vegas Field Office, Field Manager
Angie Lara	BLM, Las Vegas Field Office Associate Field Manager
Greg Seymour	Archaeology/History
Douglas "Stretch" Baker	Nye County Road Department (Right of Way)
Skip Canfield	State of Nevada
Claire Toomey	Permitted Recreation (Las Vegas Distance Rider)
Ed Higbee	Grazing
Julie Von Tobel-Gleason	Wild Horse & Burro
Dr. Peter Starkweather	Academic/ UNLV
Elise McAllister	Dispersed Recreation
John F. Ruhs	BLM, Ely Field Station, Field Manager
Tom Seley	BLM, Tonopah Field Station, Assistant Field Manager
Jeff Weeks	BLM, Las Vegas Field Office, AFM Non-Renewable Resources
Dan Netcher	BLM, Ely Field Office, Lead Geologist
Mark Chatterton	BLM, Las Vegas Field Office, Assist. Mgr Non-Renewable Resources

Public Present

David Brown	Kern River Gas Transmission Company
Brent Arnold	Kern River Gas Transmission Company
Fran Cherry	Kern River Gas Transmission Company, Environmental Specialist
Paul Aguirre	Nevada Power Sierra Pacific, Environmental Scientist
Steve Leslie	SWCA
Bob Maichle	Self
Ken Freeman	Off-Road Enthusiasts

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.

8:10 Hiatt called the meeting to order

Hanefeld took care of housekeeping issues and Palma explained that John Ruhs is at another meeting and will be there in the afternoon.

8:15 Members reviewed and the Tri-RAC minutes. McAllister motioned to approve and Mellington second; all approved.

8:20 Starkweather presented alternative global climate change power point (see attachment 1)

He explained that heat is being absorbed then released at a shorter wave length which means that most of it is retained. This is being reradiated as heat, which creates the greenhouse effect. Global change is not uniform with respect to temperature change and precipitation. When the temperature changes in an area more water evaporates, but also creates more precipitation. There are two processes that cause the temperature to change, anthropogenic (man made) and natural forcing. Albedo is whiteness or reflectivity. Solar irradiance is the sun and how much forcing stimulus we can account for. Methane, nitrous oxide, hydro carbons and ozone in the atmosphere are all heating influences, but aerosols are cooling influences. The forces are global in scope, but can be regional. Anthropogenic contributions outweigh natural forcing by volumes. There is no data as to the magnitude of the effects of anthropogenic forced, but it is known that they effect. Temperature changes and precipitation have the greatest effects at high elevations, and the lowest effects at lower elevations. Increased carbon dioxide creates greater plant production and greater invasions of invasive species plants. He noted that maybe the severity may or may not increase, but the number of natural disasters will increase and has been increasing in respect to these effects. Hiatt asked if there is some truth to this and how it can be incorporated into policies for land management. How do we plan for what appears to be what will happen? He pointed out the effects of the past in our lifetime and noted that category 5 hurricanes have increased in number. Palma commented that one thing is that other people need to be brought to this table. To change our thinking that if in the past the fire would consume 5,000 acres, now it will be 500,000 acres if we don't change the way we approach the fighting of fires. Hiatt commented that the amount of nitrogen coming back into our atmosphere is equivalent to what a farmer would put on a field. This increases the amount of growth when there is a large rainfall, which increases the rate of fire. Starkweather explained that data from 1962 was compared to 2005 and the vegetation has changed. More creosote bushes, etc. Climate change and changes in precipitation all contribute to this.

- Hiatt recessed the meeting at 9:25 a.m., reconvening at 9:38 a.m. -

9:38 Hiatt asked for the field managers reports.

Juan Palma presented Las Vegas Field Station's issues/concerns:

Palma explained that LVFO took an idea to Senator Reid that a group of individuals would take public lands and do conservation work on those lands. He stated that Reid seemed positive about this idea. A man named Charles Taylor created the "Pocket Ranger" idea. This idea is creating a "movie" regarding certain areas like Red Rock, etc. This would enable people to download information about Red Rock onto an mp3 player and then take a tour of that particular area and all of the information on wildlife, wildflowers, etc. would be there for them at their fingertips.

Gail Marrs-Smith passed out a packet on Gold Butte (see attachment #2). She stated that she is the point of contact for Gold Butte. She added that the LVFO is working to get a better feel for what cultural sites are out there to get a better understanding of how much damage is actually happening. Palma recommended that the RAC look at this proposal when round 9 comes along. Palma commented that the public meetings have been much more positive this last year. He feels that there is an enormous amount of support for this project (the 70 mile closure) compared to what usually happens regarding road closures. BLM will monitor additional areas of concern, but no more roads will be closed until more concerns arise. Higbee asked what infrastructure will be included. Gail stated that the infrastructure will definitely be built because it is needed. Gail stated that McAllister was able to get \$250, 000.00 in funding from the state of Nevada and this will help enormously in attaining the goals that she has discussed. Seymour asked about the cleanup of the archeological sites and will there be an archaeologist out there supervising these cleanups. Gail stated that yes an archaeologist will be there supervising. Seymour commented that both of the sites identified for camping have archeological sites and that doing this study would cost considerable amounts of money and would it be a better use of this money to put up sites in another area. Gail stated that it is a balance, but is a necessary EA wherever the sites are. Hiatt commented that the biggest change may need to be a change in public attitude toward this area. He asked about what thoughts have been in changing the public opinion of what Gold Butte should be. Gail stated that layering (road designation, signing, kiosks) the structure should be the best way. Once the signage is up then law enforcement can enforce laws, but this will take time to do. Hiatt asked Palma about the new shooting/dumping sites he found around the Las Vegas valley. He asked what thoughts Palma had on this behavior on how to keep this from happening everywhere. Palma stated that some closures have happened and that has, in fact, turned people to go further into the desert. He added that he felt the only way would be to close these areas. Hiatt asked how BLM can discourage people from leaving their trash out there. He suggested giving someone a ticket for littering because they leave the trash when they are done. McAllister stated that education is what is needed. The little towns have a couple of little shooting ranges and suggested that this course be taken here in Las Vegas.

Tom Seley presented Tonopah Field Station's issues/concerns (see attachment #3):

- Grazing has been moved out of tortoise habitat in Beatty. This also falls in burro territory.
- The caretakers at Rhyolite that are out there as the winter caretakers are doing a wonderful job. Tonopah Field Station is actively working on making some changes to make the caretakers' stay more comfortable.

Stretch commented that the signage out at Reese River was very faded and offered his help to erect new ones if BLM would order them.

10:54 Hiatt moved the meeting on to Renewable Energy and said that comments on the Ely manager's report would be heard later in the afternoon.

Palma went over the Brown Fields Act and passed out packets (see attachment #4). He discussed the difference between the Brown Fields Act and the early transfer authority (ETA). There will be a lot of land that is contaminated on the tour on Friday. ETA does not relieve BLM of the normal procedures for transferring land. BLM still has to comply with the normal procedures. Starkweather asked if the costs were determined or negotiated beforehand and Palma answered that yes they were. He added that the cost will be very high so yes, the appraisal will be done prior as well and

then the difference will be paid. Hiatt asked if there is any provision for error. Palma stated that attorneys will have to be involved, but he is not sure of what will be done in regards to that. Hiatt asked if the cost ends up being much less than the initial estimates, would BLM get the difference back or it would be lost. Palma stated that he was not sure if a renegotiation would be an option. The appraiser will look at many aspects and the value will be derived for everything put together.

Palma moved on to LVFO renewable energy issues. A large company wants to store data in huge buildings and wants to have solar energy to power those buildings. They are looking at using 30,000 acres for this project. The land has to be flat and they need a million gallons of water. Once that water is brought in it will be recycled and used to cool the solar panels. This land will have to be completely cleared of any vegetation, etc. Palma added that LVFO has several thousand acres being requested for various renewable power projects. He suggested putting a team together that would be self contained and this team would address all of the issues that need to be done for these renewable energy projects. Palma stated that this team would be welcome to be based at the LVFO. Seymour asked what the process is for these projects. Palma stated that first, the application comes in first, then a preliminary assessment is done if the land does not have the limitations. LVFO then explains what steps need to be done in order to proceed with the project. Based on that information the LVFO then takes those steps and proceeds. Higbee asked what happens with the land. Palma explained that some companies want to buy the land or a right of way (lease) could be done with the land. Hiatt added that these projects are not confined to Nevada, that California has them as well. He stated that we are looking at competing technology for these projects. If land costs, then companies become more interested in making sure that the projects will follow through and not drop then as easily. There needs to be a "big picture" way to look at this issue and proceed cautiously. Seymour added that the biggest limiting factor is water for these competing projects. Starkweather commented that at the Tri-RAC one of the sentiments was that there has to be a much larger group that needs to work together in regards to these types of projects. Palma agreed that these organizations need to be brought on at the beginning or the bottom level so that everyone is aware. Palma suggested some type of summit including leaders of all of the organizations. Hiatt noted that there is suddenly a tremendous focus on renewable energy. A brief discussion ensues. Palma asked the question of what the RAC is able to do. He suggested that the RAC can help send any suggestions upward in the BLM more easily than the managers of individual office, and that a summit with the leaders of each organizations would be involved. Hiatt suggested writing a letter to the BLM director and the secretary of the interior. Mellington stated that TFS & LVFO realizes the enormity of what it's going to take, but that other agencies do not seem to. Palma stated that within the BLM there is that understanding, but other organizations do not understand the magnitude of this issue. He added that a summit could include technology folks and it could be well laid out to explain all of the different aspects that are involved in these types of projects. McAllister added that these types of projects bring in work forces, but also bring in crime and other issues associated with increased population. Hiatt reviewed the discussion and asked what would be the best thing for the RAC to do. Palma suggested starting with the Nevada State Director. Starkweather suggested involving sister states to include any knowledge that they may have. Starkweather motioned to draft a letter to the Nevada State Director requesting resources to accomplish this. Hiatt stated that he will draft this letter and will email it out to the RAC members next week.

Weeks reviewed Ely's alternative energy projects. He presented a map (see attachment # 5) and explained that Ely has a slightly different mix of projects, but is just as busy as other districts.

Toomey asked what clean coal was. Weeks stated that he felt that it is cleaner compared to "old" ways of using coal and what the coal plants are doing now. Hiatt added the difference in the amount of pollutants now compared to back then. Now plants are much more efficient and less polluting than they used to be. A brief discussion ensued. Greg asked why the Ely locations were chosen instead of other areas. Weeks stated that the amount of water was a consideration and that another probability could have been that the air is a lot cleaner.

Seley discussed three renewable energy projects for the Battle Mountain District and passed out a map and some notes (see attachments # 6 & 7).

- Hiatt recessed the meeting at 11:53 a.m. for lunch, reconvening at 1:21 p.m. -

1:23 p.m. Hiatt opened the public comment period

Paul Aguirre an environmental scientist with Nevada Power Company explained that the company is performing renewables work for permitting on a project for a power company for a wind study which was originally 11,000 acres. They are amending wind study area to reduce acreage and add three more met towers. Private developers came to the company from other states with this proposition. Nevada Power Company informed them that projects on public land are a whole different process than private land. These companies came to him for potential projects across the state. He helps rule out some areas and he explained that these projects have been a big challenge in regards to renewables in the military air space. The military won't even tell you if they agree or not. There is a Solar thermal plant application in place with the LVFO of approximately 1800 acres. Solar plant technologies also use natural gas for backup generators. The water issue is also a big deal. Some symposiums have happened, but these are mostly about finance with nothing about processes. Next week at Bally's on January 15 there is a Geothermal conference and then there is a Powerjen conference at the RIO in February. The Dept of Energy draft EIS is currently out for public comment. There has been no mention about any thoughts or comments on that project with respect to Nevada.

Frank Cherry & Brent Arnold with Kern River Gas Transmission Company spoke about a very specific energy issue. Frank gave a short description of Kern River and passed out packets (see attachment # 8). Frank explained that one of the vital parts to this process is the question of how to get the gas to the markets. There has been a designation of certain corridors, the West wide corridor study. There is no room to put another corridor in the area. Seymour asked what NCA #2 was. Frank stated that it is a proposed power line. Frank added that BLM has asked that the Sunrise Mountain Instant Study Area be released. Kern River would like to request the RAC to make a proposal asking that the ISA be dropped, allowing Kern River to put a corridor through the ISA. He also stated that no corridors go through private land. Hiatt thanked Frank for his input.

Ken Freeman with Off-Road Enthusiasts would like to thank the LVFO Recreation Department for their continued support and assistance with off-road activities. He stated that there is one problem, however, with the finance department, they have been due back a credit for almost a year. He asked about the option of posting bonds for these activities. Again, he thanked the LVFO recreation department.

1:45 p.m. Hiatt closed the public comment period

Dan Netcher presented the Ely Field Office information on the Mine closures and remediation. Presented power point (see attachment # 9)

The Caselton Tailings is an area of concern because of its toxic condition and it can affect the Meadow Valley Wash thus carrying toxins downstream into agricultural areas as well as affecting aquatic life. There are also recreational users in this area which poses a threat because it is very toxic. Two full truck loads of various toxins were removed from a mining assay lab that was discovered in 2003. Hiatt asked if soil analysis is done to determine the possibility of plant growth. Netcher stated that, yes this is done as part of the reseeding process. Hiatt stated that the mine is on private land therefore does that owner have any connection with the mine and do they have any liability in connection with the tailings? Netcher stated that no, the company owning the land has no liability regarding these tailings.

Mark Chatterton presented the LVFO mine closures and reclamation of abandoned mine lands. The process of closing/securing these abandoned mine lands started about 7-8 years ago. A lot of the securing is being done by the Scouts, putting up fencing, etc. A few mine companies are providing volunteers and physically closing shafts and portals. Over seventy-five sites have been closed since this program began. Bats have been one of the "road blocks", but an initiative has been added to round 4 for funds to be used to do site inventories. Other requests for round 6 have been added to do additional closure work and inventories. Chris Ross is doing the work from those now. Chatterton explained that an orphaned mine is generally a mine operation that was launched prior to the Introduction of the 3809 Surface Management Regulations of 1980, but the operator did not reclaim the site before they left it for whatever reason. During round 6 initiatives LVFO put in for funding to clean up these orphan sites. Four to five of these were completed by the time round 6 closed. LVFO has been using the fire crews in the winter to perform site cleanups and they have been doing a very good job. Last year 9-15 sites were cleaned up. The first one had 5 structures, and a lot of trash and debris. This year the fire crew is working on their third project. Chatterton stated that in 1988 he came up with about 700 now down to about under 100 of cases with someone tied to these cases. Out of these about 50 are orphaned sites. The cost to eliminate the Gold City Mill Site was approximately \$250,000. This was a two story building with a lot of debris. Canfield asked if any debris could be sold to recoup fees. Chatterton stated that it costs more to try to resell than just pay someone else to do the work. Hiatt asked Netcher about the sites where the bond was inadequate for the site. Chatterton stated that all plans of operations have a review cycle and the LVFO has met this cycle. Notices have a two year review period. The operator has the option to change the bond amount, either up or down at the end of this two year period. LVFO has two sites that are still not covered with an appropriate amount of a bond. Netcher added that most of Ely's pre date 3809 regulations. Hiatt asked about Jean Dry Lake Valley and commented that the first pit on the left appears abandoned and has trash in it. Chatterton stated that it is actually a community gravel pit and that the trash gets cleaned up periodically.

Seley passed out two handouts (see attachments #10 & #11) describing the Battle Mountain District abandoned mine lands & cleanup. He reviewed each and gave a short description of each of the mines included on the map. Many of the sites that have been cleaned up have been cooperating efforts of several companies and organizations. Hiatt asked the position of the NDEP on mine closures. Seley stated that they have been very good to work with across the board, very helpful and

very communicative. He stated that there is a standard reclamation cost estimator and the Battle Mountain District has been using this tool since its creation. He feels that this tool is very helpful and with this three year review cycle it keeps all of the information "fresh" and up to date. Starkweather stated that this sounds like a cautionary tale. He asked about the implications in terms of substantial impacts, who will pay for these projects that use the 30,000 acres? Seley stated that he cannot speak in regards to renewable energy, but in regards to mining under the 3809 regulations, BLM updates the reclamation cost estimate every three years. If a project such as the Phoenix Mine EIS indicates a potential for long term issues like acid rock drainage, LBM has implemented long term contingency fund accounts to guarantee that there is money 300 years out. Hiatt asked about Barrick Bullfrog mine that was closed less than 10 years ago. How did we get into a situation that they didn't finish the job. Seley explained that this may have been because there was private mineral patent land involved in this and it is the private land that has not been cleaned up. How many of these big sites does Nevada have with little reclamation done to them? Seymour stated that there are a lot of historic mines in this situation, but the number of new ones is unknown.

Hiatt explained that the old hollow tube claim mine markers have been illegal since the 1990s and that NDOW has been working with NDEP to remove them. He asked if BLM is BLM doing anything in regards to these types of markers that are basically trapping and killing thousands of birds each year. BLM is working with NDOW up in Eureka and some work has been done in Tonopah. A brief discussion ensued.

- Mellington motioned to adjourn at 3:03 pm Seymour second; all approved. -

3:04 p.m. Hiatt adjourned the meeting

Meeting notes approved by:

Date

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

- Minutes provided by Karen Eller, BLM Tonopah Field Station Administrative Support Assistant -

Attachments

1. Global Climate Change Causes and Consequences (for the World and for Nevada)
2. Gold Butte Update
3. Tonopah Field Station Manager Update
4. Brownfields Mine-Scarred Lands Initiative
5. Map of Ely's Alternative Energy Projects
6. Battle Mountain Renewable Energy Projects
7. Map of Battle Mountain Renewable Energy Projects
8. Kern River Packet
9. Ely Field Office Mine Closures and Remediation packet
10. Battle Mountain Mine Reclamation Projects and Funding Source
11. Map of Battle Mountain Mine Reclamation Projects and Funding Source