

Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

Ely, Nev.

March 24, 2011

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:

Members Present:

Jeff White	(1) Energy/Minerals
Jack Prier	(2) Environmental
John Winnepenninkx	(2) Wild Horse & Burro
William Wolf	(3) Public-At-Large
Tom Connolly	(1) Federal Grazing
Tony Corone	(1) Energy/Minerals
Laurie Carson	(3) Elected Official
Jacob Carter	(1) Federal Grazing
Bruce Holmgren	(3) State Agency

Members Absent:

Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Larry Hyslop	(2) Wildlife
Cyd McMullen	(2) Archaeology

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Doug Furtado	District Manager – Battle Mountain District
Ken Miller	District Manager – Elko District
Rosemary Thomas	District Manager – Ely District
Michael Herder	Associate District Manager – Ely District
Patrick Gubbins	Branch Chief, Non Renewable - NSO
Gary Medlin	Egan Field Manager – Ely District
Schirete Zick	RAC Coordinator – Battle Mountain District
Michael Vermeys	Weed Management Specialist – Battle Mountain District
Patti Bute	Secretary – Ely District
Chris Hanefeld	Public Affairs – Ely District
Elena Montenegro-Long	SNPLMA Coordinator – Ely District
Robert Wandel	SNPLMA Coordinator – LVFO
Mike Stiewig	Acting Assistant District Manager – SNPLMA Div - LVFO

Other Attendees: (Public)

Doug Livermore
Bruno Bowles
Richard Orr
Maggie Orr

Newmont Mine
SNWA
Sustainable Grazing Coalition
Lincoln County Conservation District

Call to Order Jeff White, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. –The Chairman welcomed attendees and asked for self introductions.

Schirete Zick informed that this is her last meeting as RAC Coordinator. The Chairman and other RAC members thanked Schirete for her work and commended her for a job well done.

Minutes from previous meetings (9/2010 & 01/2011) approved as presented.

Patti Bute presented administrative issues.

Rosemary Thomas – SNPLMA Round 12 presentation. (On file) Provided brief presentation and an explanation as to what the RAC can do. There was originally \$6 million available for project submission, but it has turned out to be more. Funds were returned for projects that were not completed or not undertaken, so the amount grew. Monies come from land sold in Clark County and made available for approximately eight initiatives. Encourage RAC to provide feedback on submissions or suggestions for other projects. Typically three years given to complete a project. 46 nominations submitted, totaling \$29 million. Numerous questions were asked about the proposed projects and the ranking criteria. If the RAC wishes to provide a letter of support, or comments regarding projects, that would be appreciated. Elena Montenegro-Long said that \$550 million is in the special account right now and only about \$30 million not obligated at this time. Recommend letter of support for top five nominations within the area of influence for the RAC– Rosey will prepare draft letter for signature.

Ken Miller discussed land acquisition in Lander County, Rock Creek, which was a previous submission. The RAC supported and it was approved for \$650,000. Great Basin Gold is now the owner of these sections. This land will be donated to a tribal entity rather than being sold to the BLM. This is a great project and the \$650,000 now returns to SNPLMA. BLM will still be a partner in this effort to assist with handoff to tribal entity.

Patrick Gubbins – National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) Raul Morales is the lead, but is in transit. What components of Public Lands are part of the NLCS and how can additional components be added? There has been an increase in wilderness and a decrease in WSA's. There are 45 wilderness areas, or a little over 2 million acres, and 63 wilderness study areas. There is also the California National Historic Trail Interpretive Center, which receives some NLCS monies. Pony Express Trail, of which 300 miles is on BLM Nevada public land which equates to 50 percent of the

trail. Red Rock Canyon known for its climbing, rock art, etc. and a world class visitor center. This visitor center is funded by NLCS monies and visitor fees.

BREAK @ 9:35 to 9:45 a.m.

Patrick Gubbins – Wild Land Initiative Secretarial Order 3310 tasked us with developing wild lands and how we are suppose to manage them. We have 15 years to evaluate lands for wilderness values. There will not be land tenure adjustments. Our managers can make decisions not to manage due to higher use of an area. Example would be a higher recreation use, etc. These decisions will be made basically thru an RMP process. Need to evaluate on a project by project basis. BLM has an inventory of lands, so when a project comes in the door, we can look at that inventory and contemplate if that project is in an area with wilderness characteristics. What public was involved and how much did they participate? Doug commented public process will be two stages. When we are permitting an activity of public land and go thru the NEPA process, we will bring information forward for wilderness characteristics, etc. Wild lands do not preclude multiple use. Permitting will use the old inventory until they can go thru the Land Use Plan Process at a later date. Eventually there will be a GIS layer with this information. The intent is to assess and then designate lands with wilderness-like characteristics, so that it will become one more land-use planning tool. Wild lands will not remove public lands from multiple use.

Open for public comment period.

Mr. Orr – sustainable grazing organization. Reviewed process for permit renewals and generally very pleased with rangeland monitoring handbook. Several recent concerns though. It appears that BLM is going outside of their policy; in particular, utilization is being used as an absolute for grazing management issues. The monitoring handbook is a short term tool, not an absolute removal of livestock. The use of criteria such as the riparian evaluation (PFC). If you look in the front of the handbook and the rangeland health guides are NOT to be used to make livestock management adjustments. Further analysis is needed. Mr. Orr was concerned that some of the recent permit renewals are going down a track that creates inconsistency. The resource advisory council identified riparian grazing and some of the related issues as items that we wanted to discuss. There will be a meeting in August and a field trip to discuss these topics and will visit 7-mile. Doug suggested that we address Mr. Orr and we will have a presentation on our permit renewal process at that meeting/field tour. Ken Visser from NSO could also attend. This will be a future agenda item.

Return to previous topic, but public comment will remain open (Formally closed at 11 a.m.)

Kevin commented on the Land Use Plan; what is required in that? Wilderness characteristic inventory or designation? And does that extend the land use designation? Ken Miller said inventory is required now and is a stand-alone item. It is another component, but ideally will overlap many data gathering efforts. NACO and others have already shown resistance to this proposal.

Newmont Update – Doug Livermore, Proj. Mgr. for Phoenix Copper Leach Project (On file)

Located about 15 miles southwest of Battle Mountain, the project is an incremental addition to the existing project. Newmont is taking a low-grade copper resource, currently considered waste, and will convert to a revenue source.

Closure strategy discussed.

Ken Miller informed that the stakeholder intent was to provide insight into the way that we do mining, and in this case a somewhat unique method. This fits in with the RMP update due to the importance of mineral resources and advances our overall program of staying informed.

District Manager's Reports/RAC Engagement.

Discuss the top four items in each District. Ken Miller said we want the RAC to feel that their time is well spent and we would like to make sure we are on the right path.

Ken Miller provided the RAC with a handout that included "BLM seeks horse eco-sanctuaries." National Strategy out for public comment and this would be a good time for the RAC to comment. The comment period ends in March. A severe concern is Herd Management Areas that are above numbers now. It was suggested to prepare a letter of support for the wild horse eco-sanctuaries.

State water engineer is having discussions and classifications regarding the wild horse. State Senate passed legislation opposing sanctuaries, yesterday. Ken Miller said at this time, we are moving forward with the belief horses will have access to water. It was suggested to see a temporary flight restriction over gather areas due to what happened during Antelope gather. RAC could make this recommendation, as well.

The letter should also stress all of the work that has been done by BLM in achieving AML, and try to maintain it, that it can slip out of our grasp in an instant if we make the wrong decisions, we will be back to square one within two to three years.

Numbers need to be controlled through either gathers or contraception. Keeping in mind that the administration of contraception is a problem. There has to be some type of quality control when it comes to volunteers, etc. Need to control who is out there, somehow. Rosey feels that the voices that you hear are not necessarily the most knowledgeable, and yet we are not hearing from those with knowledge. More often the radical. The most vocal have the means to spend their capital in these efforts. Laurie seconded the letter concept. The Chairman will not be available to sign the letters, so we will have Winnepix sign the letter. Motion passed.

Pickens proposal will be topic of field trip. Please keep your copies provided today. It is still in play at this time (the proposal). Pickens is still working to be a partner with the BLM. The intent to develop long term holding facilities is currently on the street and we expect a solicitation for proposal for the use of public and private ground in the next few weeks. It was stated you cannot place horses where they did not exist in 1971. Unless legislation is introduced, per Ken, Pickens proposal is not doable at this time, but legislation could be adjusted.

Ruby Pipeline Natural gas construction – photos presented. Been in play for approximately one year and there has been a lot of work accomplished. Commitment shown by federal agencies to show sage grouse is important.

Rosey reported on Spring Valley Wind, stating that today, in Reno, there is a hearing on this project which was an 80-turbine wind farm east of town in Spring Valley. We were challenged on our decision by WWP and others. Last week there was a settlement, but we do not know what that was. The hearing today is whether we should grant a Temporary Restraining Order/Preliminary Injunction on Notice to Proceed. How this plays out will set a precedent. If we prevail, it sets a positive tone.

Doug Furtado – RMP update. Concluded public scoping and received thousands of comments. We are in process of working with MOU's with neighboring counties. We will then begin to develop alternatives. The RAC will, at that point, need to become a cooperating agency in alternatives. It will be important for the RAC to make recommendations.

Geothermal – Currently a project in Grass Valley. One issue that continues to present itself is how geothermal presents itself and the permitting process. Consumptive use of water for cooling allows for year-round production of geothermal. As we go forward and release lands, we will start to have more and more exploration requests on public lands and there will be environmental issues. Ormat should be asked to come in and make a presentation.

Adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Next meeting will be June 15 & 16

Spruce Mtn. Tour at Elko District Office

Focus on wild horse management and Pickens proposal.

Ken Miller will prepare discussion documents.