

Meeting Minutes
Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
August 25, 2011
Eureka, Nevada

I. RAC Attendance and Welcome

Jeff White, Chairman	(1) Energy/Minerals
Jacob Carter	(1) Federal Grazing
Tom Connolly	(1) Federal Grazing
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation
Jack Prier	(2) Environmental
Larry Hyslop	(2) Wildlife
Cyd McMullen	(2) Archeology
Bruce Holmgren	(3) State Agency
William Wolf	(3) Public-At-Large
Laurie Carson	(3) Elected Official

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Doug Furtado	District Manager – Battle Mountain District
Mike Herder	Associate District Manager – Ely District
Ken Miller	District Manager – Elko District
Chad Lewis	Fuels Manager – Battle Mountain
Steve Foree	3 Bars Project Manager – Battle Mountain
Lesli Ellis-Wouters	Public Affairs Representative – Elko District
Jackie Suther	Administrative Assistant – Battle Mountain

RAC Members, BLM Staff and public attendees arrived at the Eureka Opera House, Eureka, Nevada at 8:20 a.m. Jeff White brought the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and did general introductions of those present.

Minutes for the March and June 2011 meetings were reviewed and approved. Ken Miller noted that the time for public comment would be from 10 to 11 a.m.

Ken Miller stated that he had spoken to Mr. Dahl, Elko County Commissioner, and wanted to pass on the comment that Mr. Dahl appreciates the efforts of the RAC and the work that is put into the Council. Ken Miller also stated that he had attended the swearing in of new Nevada BLM State Director, Amy Lueders on August 24, 2011 in Reno.

Wild Horse Sanctuary submissions: Ken Miller met with Robert Abbey and there were submissions to establish wild horse sanctuaries. Submissions were for fully private lands and private/public lands, including Pickens and Spruce Mountain. The submissions were received six to eight weeks ago however they are being reviewed to ensure that the plans submitted meet the solicitation package.

7 Mile Hazardous Fuels Project: Chad Lewis, Fuels Manager for the Battle Mountain District BLM presented a power point regarding the 7 Mile Hazardous Fuels Project (on file with Elko District Office, RAC Coordinator). Chad's presentation began with an overview of the work that has been done; what

changes that have occurred since 2007 including a review of the Memoranda of Understanding with the Fish and Wildlife regarding the Migratory Bird Treaty and the actions the Treaty has impacted. Due to the Treaty, there will be no large scale burning in the spring. He continued with the conclusions that have been reached throughout the project.

Discussion:

- Treatment alternatives – Bull Hog, Brush Hog, controlled burning, 30' canopy to keep fire from running, removal of pinion and juniper within mountain mahogany areas, fuel breaks along Antelope Valley Road which will make suppression activities easier.
- Vegetation management – mosaics versus polka dot patterns, stringers where practical. All mosaics are based on terrain and the objective of the project in process. Monitoring of p/j encroachment in the event that funds are found and can be used for mitigation. Boot Straps program works approximately 500-600 acres per year. Saving the healthy sage brush is a priority.
- Not good amounts of grass under story, but little cheat grass. Broadcast seeding is an option that is being reviewed.
- Has there been soil compaction from mechanical use? Not a problem. Mowing leaves two to four inches, and terrain has shown no impacts.
- Permittees are taking voluntary non-use (grazing) and the Gardner's are moving cattle as needed. After seeding, there is no grazing for two years. Due to the fact that this area does contain a herd management area, fences are not practical.
- Chaining has not been used. Public perception of chaining is negative, and due to the slope and topography, is not a viable option. Doug Furtado suggested chaining a small area, and then use that as an example of success to sway public opinion.
- Public helping through firewood cutting? Free use to tribes when appropriate. A wood cutting designation is a possible option.

3 Bars Restoration Presentation: Steve Foree gave a power point presentation (on file with Elko District Office, RAC Coordinator) regarding the 3 Bars Restoration Project. This project is one of the largest in the state at 750,000, and of great interest to the State Director. The EIS and ROD are signed, and the NEPA work done works directly within the RMP.

Discussion:

- Treatment areas are based on identified areas of higher need. Concerns were based on weed management, grazing, wildlife and threatened and endangered species, fire and fuels management, riparian management and vegetation management.
- Birch Creek and Pete Hanson Creek that support the endangered Lahontan Cutthroat Trout are showing nicks and head cuts. The lack of understory is a real problem, as there are sage grouse leks in the areas.
- Thinning pinion will increase the quantity of pine nuts and reduce the potential of a catastrophic fire.
- Money from fuels management as well as other states that cannot put projects on the ground has been used for this project.
- While this is the largest scale project in the state, other Districts have smaller projects, requiring EAs, while the size of this project demands an EIS.

- Scoping meetings are showing minimal attendance. There have been a good number of letters and emails regarding the project. Once actual ground work is done and there is a project to show, interest will increase.

Public Comment (10 to 11 a.m.):

- Rick Orr – Standards and guidelines are not being followed in regards to adjustments of grazing permits. BLM is not following a standard throughout the state, with every District using a different methodology to determine what adjustments are needed.
- Jake Tibbets – Eureka County is very supportive of the 3 Bars and 7 Mile projects. Concerns are regarding the basis for the decisions. Are they based on existing standards and theories? What is to be done regarding the old growth trees, and will there be a focus on that particular item. The Apple Bush area is closed to grazing, due to the proximity to the areas.
- Jake Tibbets – What is the definition of “significant progress”? Is progress measured from where a project is started or is it compared to the goal?

Standards and Guidelines:

- CFR 4180 lays out the process for rangeland health. CFR4180 covers stubble height, riparian management, weed management, etc.
- What are we managing towards? The baselines are established, and a determination needs to be made on what is working and what is not.
- Regarding renewal processing, information collected can be objective. Is the data provided viable? Is data based on a 30 – 40 year history, or what we have now and what we want to have in the future?
- Cooperative monitoring (between agencies and permittees) is very important. Permittees know the historic conditions and the current conditions and can assist with data inventory.

Break for lunch. Reconvene at 12:30.

Riparian Management: power point (on file with Elko District Office, RAC Coordinator) presented by Doug Furtado.

- Riparian areas are the areas that are most impacted by grazing. The stock goes to where the water is, and the damage can be very detrimental to the few riparian areas available.
- Head cuts, nicks and adequate vegetation to handle spring run-off are the top concerns.
- Permittees and agencies need to work together to minimize damage to riparian areas.
- Discussion on grazing options to match different situations.
- Discussion on use of triggers as terms and conditions of grazing permits.

Discussion:

- Currently in a state of “paralysis by analysis”. How can RAC help agencies in the development of a plan that lasts years? Jeff White will draft a letter regarding “precision in terminology, emphasis on use of tools, recommendation of completion of ecological site prescriptions to state transition models, and suggest a workshop on standards and guidelines application and usage.
- Agencies cannot use fixed study methodologies. Assessments have to be made, then decision issued before the issuance of permits.

- This is a Tri-RAC issue; there are standards and guidelines, but the nuances of the permits are what is in need of clarification.

Jeff White thanked everyone and entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made, seconded and carried. Next meeting will be the Tri-RAC in Las Vegas, Meeting time TBD.