

BLM Nevada Statewide TRI-RAC Meeting Agenda
Suncoast Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas Nevada
January 26-27, 2012

Day 1: January 26, 2012

Amy Lueders, BLM Nevada State Director

Sage-Grouse

This is a huge effort unlike any done before and we need everyone's help to move forward. Nevada is a key player in this effort due to the fact that 80% of the sage grouse population is in Nevada.

Renewable Energy

We continue to be successful in terms of permitting a broad array of projects including wind, geothermal and transmission line projects. There is a lot of mining activity, and mining prices are high. Nevada has done well with streamlining processes and maintaining consistency, especially compared to 12 months ago. Our focus for this year is developing long term trust.

Horse Gathers

There are currently two gathers in progress. Our priorities are to maintain healthy range lands and healthy horses, as well as maintaining transparency with the gathers. It is imperative that the gathers are conducted humanely. We encourage all to be involved and help set standards on how we want lands to be used. BLM encourages all to voice opinions and let your thoughts be heard on how you think your topic should be handled.

Grazing

We have renewed half of the grazing permits to date. -- 94 renewals are expiring. Staff is challenged with renewing at this time due to other priorities. We have received extra funding from the Washington office to help with work load.

Energy

President Obama's goal is to be at 20% renewable energy use and we are currently at 10%.

Special Legislative Program

We are not currently selling lands so there is no revenue going into this program. Many projects have been scaled back due to lack of funding. When we were selling land we turned in many projects to be completed. We got a commitment from partners saying these backlogged projects would be completed. We have a budget of \$8-10 million. We will be seeing round 13 projects coming around for comments. The round 14 budget will be bigger and excess money is being returned to the project. We will follow up on partnership meeting to get a commitment from partners. We are not anticipating large land sales. We may sell 485 acres out of Henderson. Lincoln/White Pine counties have no land sales anticipated.

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Landscape Conservation Cooperative

LCC is a new program lead by the USFWS except in Nevada. Linda Kelly, a BLM employee, is leading the NV effort for LCC. There are 22 LCC's between the U.S. and Canada. Each LCC has a science coordinator -- 4 out of 22 LCC's involve sage-grouse. We are discussing how we can leverage funding amongst the four teams and how we can work jointly and be most effective.

Q&A

Jeff White: Are habitat improvement projects being coordinated with Great Basin Consortium?

Raul Morales: Yes, we are affiliated with both groups and this ensures a link between the two.

Gary Johnson, Deputy State Director, Minerals Management

Saleable/Fluid Minerals and Mining

Gary presented a public lands map indicating that Nevada has the most public lands in the U.S. Saleable minerals such as sand and gravel are not as active due to the economy. Solid leasable minerals are prominent due to pot ash and lithium mining as well as locatable minerals due to gold mining.

We have over 50,000 abandoned mines in Nevada. The BLM is attempting to reclaim these mines in the interest of safety; abandoned mines are a public danger. We have inventoried over 10,000 and will continue to do more. The first priority is the mines closest to populations in Reno, Carson City and Las Vegas.

Mining is extremely active in Battle Mountain, Elko and Winnemucca. There are over 40 principal mines in those areas. State Director, Amy Lueders and Gary Johnson meet with district managers in those areas regarding permitting mines in these areas while being cautious about over permitting and degrading the areas.

The Notice of Availability (NOA) process was discussed with regard to the time it takes. We have created a policy that encourages these issues to be addressed early in the process. BLM also meets with mining companies early on to discuss all baseline studies required. There is still some criticism but BLM continues to refine this process.

At the next gold belt meeting we will discuss loopholes in the regulations. If unnecessary degradation becomes an issue we can enact NEPA. There are currently 188 plans of operation in Nevada.

We have 100% bonding in saleable minerals program in order to restore the environment. Adjudication is a large part of what BLM does. BLM has processed over 1 million mining claims in Nevada; 200,000 claims are currently active.

Q&A/Comments

Joni Eastley: Nye County is the one district that has both oil and gas however the county does not receive funds from oil and gas leases. How are the monies being distributed?

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Gary Johnson: 50% goes to the state, 25% to the county and 25% to fund the program.

Jeff White: Thank you for working with industry and working on permitting process. Jeff's company has recently experienced a turnaround within hours. Thank you for working with the industry on processes to ensure future success with protecting the environment.

Paul Petersen, Fire Management Officer

Fire Program Overview

Public safety is our #1 priority. So far 2012 has proven to be an unusual fire season. The fire crew was reinstated as of January 2012. The average acres burned annually is 381,000. We have significantly surpassed our average this year. Sage-grouse habitats are at risk due to fires. BLM will use resources to protect these habitats. BLM uses a liaison through the Cattleman's Association. This allows the permittee the best resources to acquire the information we need. BLM is currently planning for the use of 4 engines but may increase to 8-10. The air fleet was decreased from 17 to 13 due to the budget. This year we brought air tankers in from other areas which we plan to do again. We are reporting 97% initial attack success. Most areas burned due to high temperatures, high winds and low humidity. 103,000 acres burned prior to September 2011. There were 70 fires at the end of September due to lightning. There were 54 homes burned and 2 casualties in the Washoe Valley fire from human cause. Fuels funding is stable with interest in priority habitat.

Raul Morales, Deputy State Director, Natural Resource, Land & Planning

Sage-Grouse

Sage-grouse has been in decline for a long time. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has until 2015 to decide whether or not to place the bird on the Endangered Species list. We are the driving agency in terms of habitat conservation and management but we do not have the final say. USFWS is in charge of managing the bird. Nevada is a major player but 10 additional states are involved in the effort. We hope our challenges will be minimal due to our strong science backing up our efforts. We have 60 years of research of the bird's habitat including biology backing our efforts. NRCS has been a major player in providing funding and have been very committed to keeping the bird off the ESA list. The official planning sunsets in 2014 but that does not end our efforts. We will continue to address sage-grouse and other species in our planning efforts.

Each state is in the process of identifying sage-grouse habitat maps. Nevada BLM planning efforts include: ensuring regulatory mechanisms (split into eastern and western regions). Eastern oil and gas development is the biggest threat. We must ensure conservation measures and incorporate them into land use plans. The Forest Service has joined us with overlapping borders. They have 8% of the habitat and 19 units with sage grouse habitats. We are ensuring consistency with common lands.

Interim policy and conservation measures have been developed based on best available science. We have also developed regional management teams in order to address any issues with

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inconsistency. We also have sub-regional teams in order to develop plans and alternatives and focus on sub-regions and reflect sub-regional differences. They will work across state lines and ensure issues are resolved.

Timeline of critical steps:

12/2011 – Interim Guidance Issued

2/7/2012 – Scoping meetings will be done

2nd Qtr. FY 2013 – Draft EIS issued

1st Qtr. FY 2014 – Final EIS issued

4th Qtr. FY 2014 – Record of decision

2014 - All plans will be amended and we will have an EIS to include all land use plans.

Q&A/Comments

There is concern regarding implementing plans on the ground. BLM states we have no choice but to implement interim guidance. All leaders are committed to implementation.

Joni Eastley: Nye County: Have we developed an overlay for the FCC's?

A: We are working with NDOW and they are completing the habitat characterization maps. That will be further refined as we go through the land use planning and incorporate them into our maps.

Debbie Lassiter: National Technical Team document should be reviewed for scoping. Conservation measures will be commented on. There is concern that scoping is almost over and there are no maps to review. How do we know if we hold an interest? Are we stakeholders?

A: If you use public lands for personal or professional use you are a stakeholder. An initial map would only be revised anyways.

Joni Eastley: How do we become a cooperating agency?

A: Contact Brian Amme, Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Wild Horse & Burro

Nevada has the largest Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B) Program in the nation. We have nine WH&B specialists throughout the state and our budget for the WH&B program in NV is \$8.5 million.

Nevada has not had great success with adoptions especially with the state of the economy. In 2012 we anticipate gathering 3,800 horses with very few fatalities resulting from gather practices.

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PCB is a method used to keep females from reproducing for a period of 1 to 2 years. We have had mixed results with its effectiveness. Effectiveness depends on timing and when it is given to maximize efficiency. We are currently pursuing a longer term alternative such as gelding males and having a more same sex population. An eco-sanctuary in Elko County has been proposed. We anticipate this would lessen the burden on long term holding facilities.

Public Comment Time

Ken Freeman, Southern Nevada Off-Road Enthusiasts, spoke about the placement of solar projects that are being evaluated for placement in special management areas of southern Nevada. He explained that his group believes they will impact recreation users in general and OHV users in particular.

Patricia Van Betton provided comment about the possibility of incorporating the land contained in the Red Valley West Disposal Area into the Red Rocks National Conservation Area. She explained that the land is close to the existing national conservation area and the idea of preserving the land has broad support. Patricia offered copies of disposal area legal description.

Sheila Billingsley, Save Red Rock, spoke about a proposed development within the Red Rock National Conservation Area and is concerned that the developer might be able to participate in a land swap that would negatively impact the NCA.

Sophia Peranteau, spoke about the possibility of discontinuing wild horse gathers in winter and making sure that horses aren't run until their hooves slough off.

Tracy Hamilton, presented comments about the possibility of birth control for wild horses in an effort to control their population.

Don Emigholz, raised concerns about the discontinuation of data from the BLM's GeoCommunicator website. He explained that it is harder to get the information now and as a small prospector he finds it difficult to reach someone who understands his information request.

Melissa Ohlsson, American Wild Horse Advocates, commented that her organization feels that the BLM wild horse population numbers are not accurate. She also said that the goal of removing 3,800 wild horses will lead to unsafe levels genetic diversity. She also felt that gelding and spaying horses will further contribute to genetic problems for the wild horse populations. Additionally she asked why the BLM is not considering reducing cattle on that range. She commented that the BLM would like the horses removed from the range so that mineral leases could be increased.

Arlene Gawne, American Wild Horse Advocates, presented a handout that talked about the water impacts from the Southern Nevada Water Authority, mineral and solar industries and the

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livestock industry versus wild horses and burros. Arlene presented the idea of eco-tourism based on “safari-style” tourism for wild horse viewing.

Denise and Robin Delucia, presented a petition started by 11-year old Robin with 3,000 signatures to stop wild horse slaughter and keep them from being raised for human food.

Mark Freese – Nevada Department of Wildlife, Western Region Habitat Biologist

Greater Sage-Grouse Planning and Conservation

Covered the life of a sage-grouse and its habitat.

Mike Herder, BLM

Impact of a listing decision

Listing would mean sage-grouse would be designated as either an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Under section 7 of the ESA, BLM is required to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) if the project may affect a listed species. BLM’s own policy directs us to conserve species and avoid the need to list them.

Consultation and the resulting mandatory terms and conditions would apply to all sage-grouse habitat within the project area. If the species is not listed, discretionary conservation measures apply to preliminary priority habitats (PPH). While preliminary general habitats may also have applicable conservation measures, they are less restrictive. In other words, terms and conditions would be mandatory and apply across a broader area than optional conservation measures.

For actions with no federal nexus, such as private land projects with no federal involvement, the only process available for applicants to obtain an incidental take permit would be to write a habitat conservation plan and get approval from the Fish and Wildlife Service. This process typically takes 1-5 years to complete. It is the right thing to do to prevent or avoid pushing the species towards extinction.

Day 2: January 27, 2012

2012 Northeastern Great Basin RAC meeting dates are as follows:

Chair – Jeff White

- **April 19 – Elko (California Trails Center)**

Topics: *Rangeland Health, Battle Mountain RMP, Greater Sage-grouse, Recreation*

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- **July 19-20 – Ely (Shared with MOSO RAC)**

Topics: *Greater Sage-grouse, Lek habitat, Spring Valley Wind, Falcon-Gonder/Online (SWIP), Optional - Shared tour to Pickens Ranch with MOSO RAC*

- **Sept. 20 – Battle Mountain**

Topics: *Wild horses, Shoshone OHV Trail*

2012 Sierra Front Northwest RAC Meeting dates are as follows:

Will Roger Peterson – Chair

Craig Young – Vice Chair

- **June 14-15 – Carson City**

Topics: *Grazing Permit Renewals*

- **Sept. 27-28**

Topic: *Sage-grouse*

2012 Mojave Southern Great Basin RAC meeting dates are as follows:

- **March 16 – Las Vegas**

Topics: *Round 13 SNPLMA, status of renewable energy development and transmission projects*

- **July 19-20 – Ely (shared with Northeastern Great Basin)**

Topics: *Wild horse & burro, HMA's, wild horse sanctuaries, review transmission projects, vegetation identification 101, Optional - Shared tour to Pickens Ranch with NEBG RAC*

- **September 20th - Ely**

Topic: *Sage-grouse, tour to wind farm in Spring Valley and Swift power line*

Break out into Wild horse sub-group and recreation sub-group.

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Comments/Suggestions:

- It was suggested that the TRI-RAC meet again in January and possibly have a conference call earlier;
- Members discussed coordinating efforts on overlapping issues;
- State Director, Amy Lueders, states we must formalize coordinated efforts;
- All TRI-RAC members agree it would be beneficial to form a horse sub-committee.
- Renewable energy permit renewals and sage-grouse are overlapping issues within all TRI-RACs. It was questioned as to whether or not there was interest in forming a sub-group for each of these. NEGB reports they already have a sub-group for sage-grouse and renewable energy. Jeff White from Northeastern will take the lead on the sub-group for rangeland health;
- RAC chairs needs to communicate to look for opportunities to coordinate field trips. Revisit dates and go together;
- Amy Lueders thanks all for their time, commitment, participation and interest in public lands. Please let Amy or BLM District Managers know if we can help or make our meetings more valuable. We want to maximize the use of your time. Thank you for working together.

Next statewide meeting is January 2013 in Carson City. Exact date TBD