



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Nevada

Black Rock Desert-High Canyon Emigrant Trails

National Conservation Area

Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2014

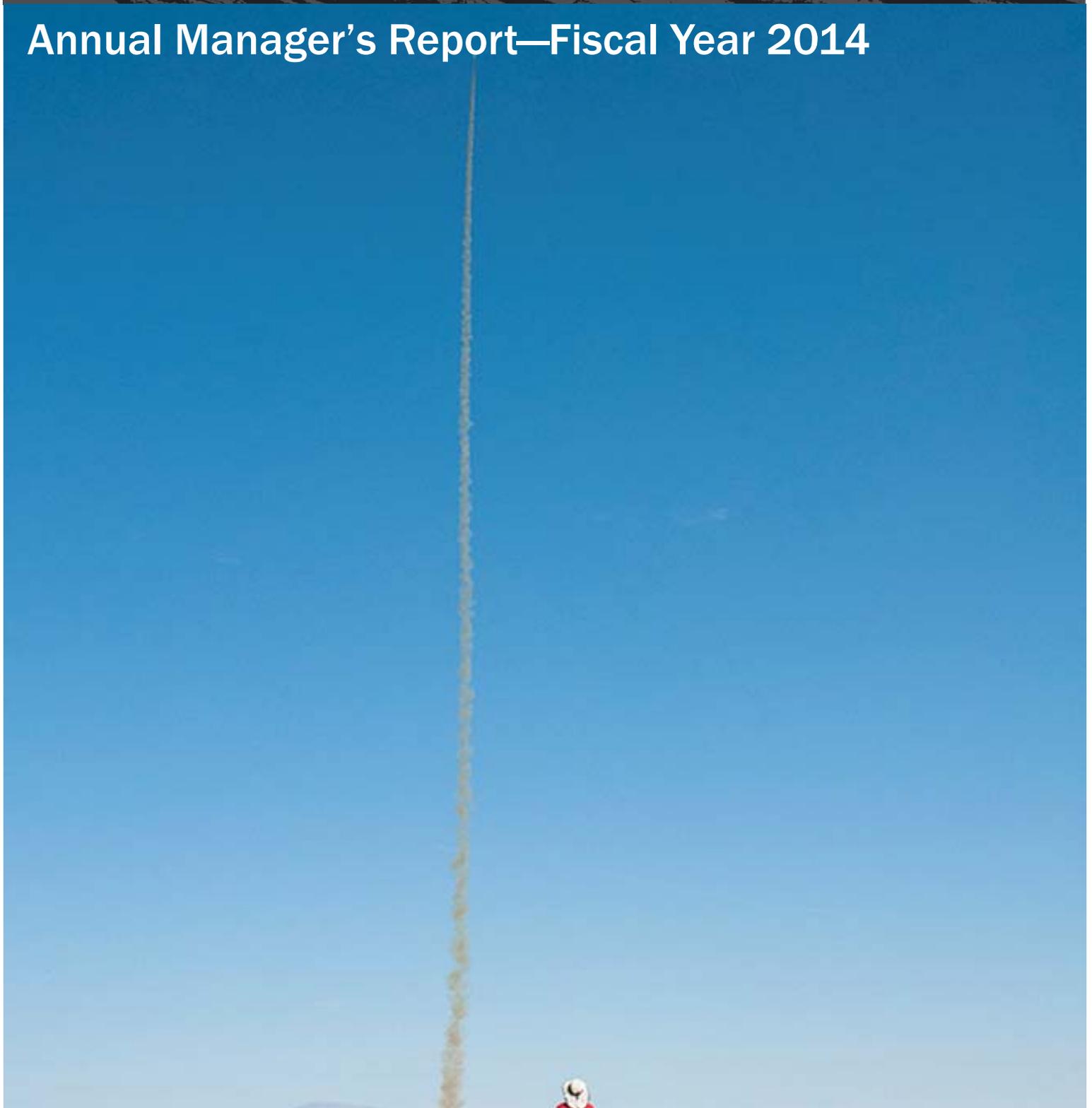


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1 Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails Profile

Designating Authority

Designating Authority: Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Act of 2000

Date of Designation: December 21, 2000

The NCA is located in Washoe, Humboldt, and Pershing Counties in northwestern Nevada. The NCA covers 816,941 acres, of that, 799,485 acres are BLM and 17,456 acres are non-BLM.

Acreage

Total Acres in Unit	799,165
BLM Acres	0
Other Federal Acres	0
State and Private Acres*	17,776

*State and Private acres are not part of the total of the unit acres

Contact Information

Unit Manager	William Mack, Jr.
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Field Office Name	Black Rock
District Office Name	Winnemucca
State Office Name	Nevada

Budget

Total Fiscal Year 2014 Budget	\$445,157
Subactivity 1711	\$445,157
Other Subactivities' Contributions	\$0
Other Funding	\$0

Managing Partners

The BLM Surprise Field Office—Northern California District, headquartered in Cedarville, California assists with management of the northwest section of the Black Rock NCA due to logistical reasons.

Staffing

The NCA is part of the Black Rock Field Office and constitutes the majority of the field office land area. Staff members are assigned to the Black Rock Field Office, rather than to the NCA itself. Other than Range and Minerals, the majority of staff time is spent in the NCA. Several staff members have shared responsibilities with the Humboldt River Field Office; these shared responsibilities are noted in the table below. Road grading is conducted by staff from the Division of Support Services and the Division of Fire and Aviation on an as-needed basis. The list below lists the staffing over the 2014 fiscal year.

Position	Name
Field Manager	William Mack Jr.
Assistant Field Manager	Mark Hall
Wilderness Specialist	Zwaantje Rorex
Wilderness Ranger (Non-Law Enforcement)	Sandi Gracia
Outdoor Recreation Planner	Rory Glueckert
Recreation Technician	Victor Chan
Archaeologist	Kathryn Ataman*
Park Ranger-Visitor Use (Black Rock Station)	James Schenck
Wild Horse/Burro Specialist	Garett Swisher*
Rangeland Management Specialist	Angie Arbonies*
Range Technician	Vacant
Geologist	James Weiser
Wildlife Specialist	Kathy Cadigan*
Realty Specialist	Julie McKinnon*

*Shared positions are positions shared within the multiple field offices within the BLM Winnemucca District due to present staffing conditions and/or constraints.

2 Planning and NEPA

Status of the Resource Management Plan

The RMP and associated EIS for the Black Rock NCA were completed in 2004. A five year review was completed in 2010 and a second five year review was completed in October 2014.

Status of Activity Plans

A Recreation Management Plan for the Soldier Meadows Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) was completed in 2004.

The Wilderness Management Plan for the ten Wilderness Areas associated with the NCA was completed in 2012.

The NCA Sign Plan was completed in 2006. This sign plan includes transportation management objectives.

A study was completed for the NCA to initiate the further planning for a Recreation Area Management Plan

Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

A general implementation plan was not developed for the Resource Management Plan for Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area and Associated Wilderness and other Contiguous Lands in Nevada (Black Rock RMP). However, several of the activity plans identified in the RMP have been completed and are identified in the preceding section. Accomplishments in FY 14 towards meeting the goals and objectives of these plans include:

- Data Collection for the NCA Recreational Area Management Plan (RAMP): Through the use of an Assistance Agreement, interns from the Great Basin Institute have been collecting data for planning a benefits-based recreation area management plan. Several workshops have been held to elicit experiences of users of the NCA recreation resources. In addition, multiple recreation groups have been contacted for input. It is anticipated that the RAMP will begin in FY 15.
- The NCA was granted funds under the ARRA Program to install signs along designated routes and at the end of cherry stem and redundant routes that were decommissioned. Signage includes notification to visitors of vehicle access and camping areas.

In addition, as of the end of FY13, approximately 2,852 feet of barrier fencing around Trego Hot Springs has been completed and an additional 300 feet in FY 14. This effort

specifically meets the objective of the Transportation Management Objective 3: “Prevent cross-country vehicle use in the dune and hummocks that surround the playa.

Goal 4 of the Wilderness Management Plan states:

“To manage non-conforming but accepted uses permitted by the Wilderness Act and subsequent laws in a manner that would prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the areas’ wilderness character.

Objective: Maintain or enhance the natural appearance of the wilderness areas by removing unnecessary facilities and minimizing or restoring human-caused surface disturbance when opportunities arise.”

In the furtherance of this goal, partnering groups removed approximately 5,000 pounds of scrap metal from wilderness areas over the course of the year.

Objective WILD -2 of the Black Rock RMP and Wilderness Management Actions for signage states:

Wilderness boundaries would be adequately signed to identify boundaries for the public. Signs would consist of narrow, brown fiberglass posts. In areas where the fiberglass signs are repeatedly vandalized or damaged, steel posts of similar size and appearance would be used. These steel posts would be set in concrete.

For 2014, in compliance with this objective, one new carsonite and 55 pipe post have been installed. Twelve carsonite and 3 pipe post wilderness boundary signs have been replaced. The purpose of these signs is to notify users of the location of the wilderness boundaries, the end of a cherry stem or that vehicle use is not permitted. Two new pipe-post road barriers were installed to prevent access to closed roads.

The road through High Rock Canyon is closed every year from February to May in order to protect nesting raptors and lambing big horn sheep from intrusions. The closure also protects the historic Applegate Trail from vehicle traffic during wet conditions in the winter.

Section 2.4.9.1 (Livestock Grazing Objectives states:

To promote healthy sustainable rangeland ecosystems and maintain or restore public rangelands to Properly Functioning Condition, and; To provide livestock forage on a sustainable basis for the foreseeable future, consistent with other resource objectives and with public land use allocations.

In compliance with this objective the BLM entered into an agreement with the Forest Service Enterprise Teams to monitor rangeland vegetation and riparian habitats within the Soldier Meadows, Leadville, and Buffalo Hills Allotments in 2012. This data will be used in the upcoming grazing permit renewals for these allotments. The Forest Service Enterprise Teams are currently working on compiling the monitoring data into Assessments and Evaluations for each allotment. The BLM also has the Great Basin Institute (GBI) Land Health Assessment (LHA) teams in those areas to collect additional vegetation data. The BLM will use the data compiled in the Assessments and Evaluations to fully process the grazing permit renewals.

Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

Please describe any NEPA actions or authorizations that affected the unit during the past fiscal year.

NEPA Number	Title Description	Decision Date
DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2014-0005-CX	Calico Mountains & Three Mile Creek Big Horn Sheep Releases	12/19/2013
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0013-CX	Black Rock Fireworks Display	06/24/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0017-CX	Soldier Meadows Road Material Sites	08/26/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0016-CX	Black Rock Station Directional Sign	09/08/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2013-0016-DNA	Rodeo Creek and Pole Canyon Livestock Closure	10/22/2013
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0007-DNA	Rodeo Creek Temporary Water Haul DNA	03/12/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0008-DNA	Summit Lake Research Proposal within Wilderness and ISA	03/21/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0006-DNA	2014 Tripoli Rocket Launches	04/23/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0010-DNA	Burning Man Gate Opening and Closure Adjustments	05/15/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0009-DNA	Burning Man Vendor Special Recreation Permits	05/23/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2014-0018-DNA	Happy Creek Temporary Water Use Drought Action	06/10/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0015-DNA	Bay Area Rocketry	06/18/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0014-DNA	Paiute Meadows Temp Water Haul Drought Action	06/24/2014
DOI-BLM-NV-W030-2014-0018-DNA	Burning Man 2014 SRP	08/01/2014

3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

General Accomplishments

It was a busy year in the NCA; a wide variety of projects were completed and several events were held to highlight the educational and recreational opportunities available. The preceding table (Table 2) lists the activities that were tied to a NEPA analysis.

BLACK ROCK RENDEZVOUS

The 2014 Black Rock Rendezvous is a great example of the BLM's Partner groups collaborating to implement a successful event. This Leave No Trace camping event attracted approximately 200 people who spent Memorial Day weekend on the west edge of the Black Rock playa. Participants included the general public as well as partner groups Friends of the



Black Rock Rendezvous participants listening to presentations

Black Rock - High Rock, Friends of Nevada Wilderness

and Nevada Outdoor School. This event involved a variety of educational and service related activities in a family friendly environment. Tours and lectures provided information to the participants on several subjects relating to the NCA. The tours, which included a geology tour with geode hunting, a historical trip through High Rock Canyon, a tour of Soldier Meadows ACEC, and a hike up Black Rock Point, let visitors explore the NCA with knowledgeable guides. Volunteer projects included installation an additional 300 feet of barrier fencing near Trego Hot Springs, training for on-going citizen-science spring monitoring project, and installation of wilderness boundary markers. People could also visit nearby rocket launches and in the evenings there was acoustic music, potlucks, and a Dutch Oven Cook-Off. There was also a free "Kids Camp" hosted by Nevada Outdoor School throughout the weekend.

DESERT DACE CONSERVATION PROJECT

On August 16, 2014, volunteers worked together with BLM to maintain habitat for the Desert Dace (*Eremichthys acros*), a federally threatened species, within the Soldier Meadows Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The volunteers removed riparian vegetation to increase water flow through culverts, and to prevent the water from pooling and allowing non-native fish to pass through the culverts. These culverts were installed in prior years to create a barrier and prevent predatory fish, such as the Green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*), from entering into the protected Desert Dace habitat. Six truckloads

of vegetation were removed from the streams, and three channels were opened to improve water flow.



Culverts—before Dace Project with overgrown vegetation



Stream with volunteer removing vegetation



Truckload of vegetation removed from stream

**OREGON AND CALIFORNIA TRAILS ASSOCIATION (OCTA)
TRAILS WEST APPLGATE TRAIL SURVEY**

BLM archaeology and partner groups (the Oregon and California Trails Association and Trails West) spent four days in late June camping and surveying the historic Nobles Route near Gerlach. The group also assisted Professor Carolyn White from the Anthropology Department at UNR with excavations at Granite Creek Station, a stop on the Nobles Route that later became a stage station and a cavalry outpost. Twenty volunteers participated in a metal detector survey along traces of the trail and attempted (unsuccessfully) to find the route of the trail as it led from Black Rock Point into the spring area at Granite Creek Station.

WILDERNESS 50th ANNIVERSARY

2014 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. A fun-filled celebration weekend over the July 4th holiday brought people together to share these special places. The weekend included many activities: Dutch oven-cook off, poetry contest, photo contest, and hike up Mahogany Canyon. Awards were given to our partnering groups in recognition of all their hard work over the last 14 years.



Backcountry Horsemen



Friends of Black Rock—High Rock



Friends of Nevada Wilderness

OTHER WILDERNESS PROJECTS

The Black Rock Backcountry Wilderness Ranger (Non-LE), volunteers from the Friends of Nevada Wilderness and Friends of the Black Rock-High Rock worked on several projects located in wilderness areas.



The BRFO, working with partnering groups, completed removing the abandoned range materials at Twin Springs (North Black Rock Range Wilderness), ending a multi-year project.



The road barrier on Donnelly Summit was replaced with the assistance of Friends of Nevada Wilderness volunteers. This road barrier is the end of the cherrystem in the Calico Wilderness. Carsonite markers are easily removed so some signs and road barriers are being replaced with longer-lasting metal pipes.



This year 7,000 lbs. of scrap metal and 3,000 lbs. of garbage were removed with the assistance of our volunteer groups (Friends of Black Rock-High Rock and Friends of Nevada Wilderness)

BURNING MAN EVENT



The Burning Man Event, the largest Special Recreation Permit event in the country, was held the week before Labor Day on the Black Rock Playa. This year's event attracted approximately 68,000 participants for the week-long art and music festival in August. BLM monitored the event, managed emergency and law enforcement services, and hosted an interpretive camp that focused on back country travel hazards and safety in the present and the past.

Current Areas of Focus

The majority of the NCA has been in a state of drought since FY 12 and it continued to be a serious concern in FY 14. BLM staff performed drought monitoring within the NCA throughout the year. Livestock permittees were encouraged to consider livestock management changes in response to the continuing drought, and many of the livestock permittees voluntarily reduced livestock numbers and/or the duration of their grazing period. It is anticipated that the drought will continue into FY 15. BLM staff will continue to work with and encourage the necessary livestock management changes, and monitor vegetation and water resources within allotments.

BLM staff has also been monitoring the condition of the wild horse and burros within the NCA. If necessary BLM staff may process NEPA actions in response to drought (temporary water hauls, wild horse and burro gathers, partial grazing closure, full grazing closure, etc.). The drought impacts other resources including wildlife and wild horses and burros. The BLM has been monitoring the condition of the wild horse and burros within the NCA. Thus far, encouraged change in livestock management by permittees has helped reduce impacts to wild horse and burros by conserving water and vegetation for their use. If the drought continues, additional options may be considered to reduce impacts to wild horse and burros since the majority of the Herd Management Areas (HMA's) within the NCA are estimated to be at high Animal Management Levels (AML's) or above.

In the Soldier Meadows ACEC, unauthorized earth moving equipment opened an abandoned irrigation ditch to channel water outside the ACEC. As a result Desert Dace, a threatened species which lives only in the ACEC, was exposed to the presence of a predatory fish. The channel was closed as quickly as possible by BLM and other state and federal agency staff, and the Dace were recovered and returned to the protected habitat area. This event is under investigation by the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

During FY 14 the issue of staff vacancies was a major challenge. Recreation staff was diverted to other priority projects which led to decreased visitor contact and patrols. The situation improved in FY 15 as vacancies were filled and partner groups spent more time on monitoring. Volunteers continue to be engaged in a variety of monitoring programs:

- Site Stewardship Program
- Invasive Plant Monitoring
- Spring Monitoring
- Wilderness Monitoring

Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

The Black Rock Station-Visitor Contact Center in Gerlach, NV was open for approximately seven months during the operating season. Interpretive panels installed inside and outside the contact center explain various aspects of the NCA, including history, natural resources, and points of interest around the NCA. Brochures on a variety of subjects and maps were also available at the station.

In May, the Black Rock Rendezvous offered a series of educational talks and a wide variety of interesting tours to the following locations: The Applegate Trail into High Rock Canyon; Various hot springs around the NCA and a geology tour to a geode bed north of Black Rock Point.

BLM partners also conducted a variety of educational events focused on the NCA. The Nevada Outdoor School presents Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly programs to schools in the region around the NCA including Winnemucca, Gerlach, and Lovelock. The Friends of the Black Rock-High Rock conducted a field trip to the Black Rock Desert Playa with students from the Gerlach School and taught them about bees and their value to the ecosystem. The Friends also hosted a program with a group of high school students from Reno called “Envirovolution” who visited Coyote Dunes on the Black Rock Playa to discuss environmental stewardship of the dune environment. Friends of the Black Rock High Rock also participate in Earth Day and provide information to participants about the NCA. At the Burning Man event, BLM hosted an Interpretive Camp for the eight days of the event with displays focused on safety in the backcountry today and in the past when emigrant wagons passed through the NCA on their way to California and Oregon. A replica emigrant wagon, complements of the California Trails Center in Elko, added interest to the exhibits. Several workshops focused on NCA wildlife, orienteering, and other subjects were also offered to the participants.

Partnerships

Friends of Nevada Wilderness

Friends of Nevada Wilderness, a non-profit organization, has been working closely with the Black Rock Field Office staff in management of NCA and wilderness areas by assisting with removing debris and non-functioning range improvements. They have also been instrumental in the development of the Citizens Spring Inventory program. They are considering conducting additional spring inventory trainings for FY 15. They are also major partners in our larger public events such as the Black Rock Rendezvous and National Public Lands Day.

Friends of the Black Rock-High Rock

Friends of Black Rock-High Rock, has an office in Gerlach, NV and provides maps and other information to NCA visitors. They also conduct a wide variety of educational and stewardship programs in the NCA, including rare plant and toxic plant surveys, spring monitoring, educational events and range projects. They are also major partners in our larger public events such as the Black Rock Rendezvous and National Public Lands Day.

Nevada Outdoor School

The Nevada Outdoor School (NOS), based in Winnemucca, is a major NCA partner. NOS does extensive environmental education and environmental ethics outreach to schools in the region. NOS has contacted many schools and other groups who recreate on public lands and they provide Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly programs and they also now do “Train the Trainer” classes for those programs. They are now starting to develop ATV safety training focused primarily on children and are conducting courses at some BLM events. At

some of the NCA public events, NOS provides a “Kid’s Camp” so that parents can participate in events their children might not enjoy, while the children have an enjoyable time learning conservation ethics.

Trails West, Inc.

The Oregon and California Trails Association and Trails West, two historic trail interest groups, work with NCA staff to conduct a project every year in June. This volunteer group maintains a series of trail markers along the Applegate and Nobles Trails in the NCA. Made of railroad rail segments, the trail markers contain a passage from an emigrant diary describing conditions along a given trail segment. The group visits the markers, performs repairs and replaces plaques when needed.

High Rock Trekkers

High Rock Trekkers a non-profit organization has been working with the Surprise Field Office staff in maintenance of Stevens Cabin within the NCA. They also hold Historic Trail tours for members where the history of the emigration across Nevada in the nineteenth century is highlighted.

The Nevada Site Stewardship Program

The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office manages this program by training site stewards to monitor the condition of selected archaeological sites and report back the results of their monitoring trips. In FY14 there were four active site stewards working in the NCA.

Volunteers

Last year was very successful in volunteer activity in the NCA. A total of 102 volunteers worked a total of 2,735 hours on a wide variety of volunteer projects with an estimated value of over \$61,674. The most hours were expended in Wilderness and Recreation, primarily for the repair and removal of range improvements followed by Environmental Education and Interpretation.

	VOLUNTEER HOURS
Recreation	1175
Biological Resources	360
Wild Horse and Burro	0
Cadastral Survey	0
Wilderness / WSA	400
Riparian / Watershed	500
Cultural / Historical	100
Minerals	0
Support Services	0
Environmental Ed. / Interpretation	200
Other	0
Total	2,735 Hours

Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

There were no land acquisitions or interests in lands activities for Black Rock-High Desert Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area completed in fiscal year 2014.

4 Science

Science

Several science-related projects were initiated or continued from previous years in the NCA during FY14.

Climate Change Project

BLM has contributed \$300,000 to a climate change project being conducted by the Desert Research Institute and USGS. The project is comparing characteristics of water, vegetation, and aquatic organisms before and after artificially induced stress related to water flow. USGS has been performing simple hydrologic measurements to inform long term trends of groundwater levels, to record current precipitation, and record stream/ spring discharge at selected sites within the NCA. This work is intended to help inform a study being conducted by DRI which has targeted several perennial springs on which to conduct water quality and benthic macro-invertebrate (BMI) analyses on in conjunction with the application of water diversion treatments. The water diversion treatments are expected to imitate the reductions in spring flow that are expected to occur as a result of predicted climate change. DRI is hoping to identify a correlation between BMI communities at springs and the water quality/ discharge at those springs as well as develop an understanding of how quickly and to what degree BMI communities change as a result of modified water availability. The project is scheduled for completion in 2015.



USGS crew recording data for climate change study

Spring Monitoring Project

This project allows volunteers to help to collect data on the status of springs in the NCA. It is an on-going effort manned primarily by members of Friends of the Black Rock and Friends of Nevada Wilderness and is supervised by BLM. BLM has contributed approximately \$15,000 towards the purchase of supplies and equipment to fill study kits that each participant carries when they are collecting data. A new purchase this year is electronic tablets to record data that will automatically upload to a database, thus saving the data entry step of the process. FY 14 focus identified springs in Greater sage grouse nesting areas to assist BLM biologists with habitat protection measures. FY 15 focus will continue looking at springs in Greater Sage Grouse habitat to keep assisting the BLM.



Participants at a Citizen's Spring Inventory training session

Sierra College Paleontological Inventories

A group from Sierra College has been conducting paleontological surveys in the northern NCA for several years. Each summer they have spent a week recording vertebrate fossils and conducting a study of calderas in the area.

Crosby's Buckwheat Transplant Project

As part of mitigation for a gold mine expansion outside of the NCA, Allied Nevada Gold has sponsored a project to transplant seedlings of Crosby's buckwheat, a threatened species, from their original location in the mine expansion area to the NCA, where they are less likely to be disturbed in the future. Seeds were collected and propagated and adult seedlings were directly transplanted in FY13. Some of the seeds were reserved in a seed

bank. In FY14, approximately 500 seedlings grown from the collected seeds were planted in two areas of the NCA. The success of the seedlings and the previously transplanted plants will continue to be monitored in FY15.



Crosby's Buckwheat seedling grown from collected seeds



Crosby's Buckwheat seedling being planted.

Soldier Meadows Archaeological Inventory Project

An archaeological inventory was conducted in the Soldier Meadows ACEC in the fall of 2014. The inventory focused on concentrations of artifacts to provide BLM with better data to manage the special designation area. A contract was awarded to Far Western Anthropological Research Group of Carson City to inventory 800 acres in the ACEC; a draft report is expected in February 2015.

Greater Sage-Grouse Collaring

The Nevada Department of Wildlife continued conducting collaring of several Greater sage grouse to monitor their geographical ranges in and outside of the NCA. This collaring effort was located in the High Rock Canyon Wilderness. The project was coordinated by the Surprise Field Office.

The Summit Lake Paiute Tribe initiated a study this fiscal year to determine migration patterns of Greater sage-grouse in and around the Summit Lake Paiute Reservation. The areas included in the study are the North Black Rock Range Wilderness and the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) Instant Study Area.

5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

Wilderness

There are 10 Wildernesses associated with the NCA that were designated concurrently with the passage of the NCA legislation. Seven of the ten wilderness areas are located inside the NCA boundaries (378,329 acres) and the majority of the remaining 3 wilderness areas are located outside the NCA boundaries (373,515 acres). The size of the wilderness areas range from 23,439 acres (North Jackson Mountains Wilderness) to 314,835 acres (Black Rock Desert Wilderness) respectfully. Each wilderness area possesses unique features, and as a group share a commonality in that they are part of the view shed for the Emigrant Trails that traverse the NCA.

Wilderness Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Wilderness Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	0	751,901	563,896

Stressors Affecting Wilderness

Management of wilderness areas continues to be one of the BLM's top priorities. Workloads that are currently being processed include litigation for issues within wilderness areas, completion of the Black Rock RMP evaluation and the Winnemucca District RMP, as well as conducting lands with wilderness characteristics reviews. The numbers of new vehicle trespasses within wilderness areas are declining; however, monitoring and enforcement practices continue. The implementation of these practices continues to aid in the naturalizing of traces of trespass and/or the placement of wilderness boundary signing within and around wilderness areas.

Emigrant Trails

Two National Historic Trails cross the NCA. The Applegate Trail, a branch of the California Trail passes through the center of the NCA, and an alternative route to California, the Nobles Route, also passes through the NCA. The route of the explorer John C. Fremont, whose 1843-44 expedition preceded the establishment of these trails, roughly follows part of the route of the Applegate Trail. The NCA was designated, in large part, to protect the setting of these trails, which is basically unchanged since mid-nineteenth century

emigrants to California and Oregon traveled in wagons along these routes.

Emigrant Trails Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Emigrant Trails Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	121	2300	230

Stressors Affecting Emigrant Trails

Please refer to the stressors common to all section.

Biological Values

There are two ACECs within the NCA that contain important biological resources. The High Rock Canyon ACEC contains Bighorn Sheep lambing habitat and nesting habitat for raptors. The Soldier Meadows ACEC contains habitat for desert dace (a threatened fish species), soldier meadows cinquefoil (an endemic plant species), and 4 spring snail species that are endemic to the springs in Soldier Meadows. The NCA also contains rich diversity of habitat types, including areas of sagebrush steppe, aspen, mountain mahogany, juniper woodlands, cliff & rock slopes, abandoned mine shafts and adits and natural caves.

Biological Values Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Biological Values Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	30	815,941	100,000 (with 4 populations monitored)

Stressors Affecting Biological Values

Please refer to the stressors common to all section.

Archeology / Cultural Resources

The NCA is rich in archaeology and cultural resources. In addition to the emigrant trails mentioned above, there was prehistoric occupation in much of the NCA since approximately 12,000 years ago. At that time a vast freshwater lake occupied the Black Rock Desert and Black Rock Desert Wilderness and the extinct lakeshores have revealed not only the presence of early prehistoric human occupation, but also the presence of extinct Pleistocene fauna such as the Columbian mammoths found at the edge of the Black Rock Desert Wilderness.

Archeology / Cultural Resources Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Archeology / Cultural Resources Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	1000	unknown	9

Stressors Affecting Archeology / Cultural Resources

Please refer to the stressors common to all section.

Paleontology

In addition to the mammoth remains mentioned above, the area is home to a 40 acre petrified forest (just outside of the NCA) and an abundance of ancient vertebrate fossils preserved in volcanic tuff and exposed in the canyons of the NCA's wilderness areas.

Paleontology Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Paleontology Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	500	unknown	0

Stressors Affecting Paleontology

Please refer to the stressors common to all section.

Geographical Resources

The geography of the NCA is extremely varied. Features such as the Black Rock Playa, considered one of the flattest, largest places on earth, which is the lakebed of ancient Lake Lahontan. In contrast, the mountainous areas of the NCA are rugged, with several peaks over 10,000 feet. It is generally a dry landscape with mostly small springs, streams and riparian areas. Fault zones crossing the area have produced hot springs several of them along the Black Rock Fault, which forms a boundary between the East and West arms of the Black Rock playa.

Geographical Resources Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Geographical Resources Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	0	815,673	0

Stressors Affecting Geographical Resources

Please refer to the stressors common to all section.

Recreation Values

While the Black Rock Playa is the most visited area of the NCA, many of the special points of interest such as hot springs, designated campsites in the Soldier Meadows and High Rock Canyon ACECs are seeing increasing visitor use and visitor interest. The opportunities for solitude abound in the ten wilderness areas and spots of striking beauty are hidden in remote places.

Recreation Values Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

Recreation Values Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	55,000	816,941	25,000

Stressors Affecting Recreation Values

Please refer to the stressors common to all section.

Wild Horse and Burro

There are portions of at least six Herd Management Areas within the NCA boundary. The opportunity for the public to observe the iconic mustang within these areas is abundant.

Wild Horse and Burro Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Stable

Wild Horse and Burro Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
816,941	816,941	254,816	816,941

Stressors Affecting Wild Horse and Burro

The opportunity for the public to observe the iconic mustang within these areas is abundant. Currently, most of the HMA's populations are estimated to be at high AML or above. The AML was developed based on the amount of forage and water that was available to all species and then distributed between wildlife, wild horses and burros and livestock. The increasing numbers of wild horses and burros within these areas increases the demands on forage and water resources in these areas past the point of what was originally allocated or available for use. If numbers were to increase above high AML, the native ecosystems could be under a continual strain and might begin to decline at a more accelerated rate.

Stressors Common to all Resources, Objects, and Values

Drought

The decrease of available water can have far reaching negative effects on natural resources. Plants will have reduced growth which limits germination and seed production. Wildlife, wild horse and burros, and livestock are affected by drought due to decrease of available water and decrease in vegetation growth (decrease in forage and cover).

Resource Competition

Vandalism/Looting/Unauthorized Disturbance

In FY13 there was an instance of unauthorized disturbance in the Soldier Meadows ACEC. Existing and abandoned irrigation ditches were dredged and realigned, creating potential danger to the Desert Dace population by connecting their habitat to other water bodies containing predator fish and by grading a prehistoric archaeological site. The disturbance has now been addressed and effective for Desert Dace fish population in the interim. A comprehensive rehabilitation plan will be implemented in the future.

Invasive Species

BLM staff and partners are working to inventory all Invasive species found in the NCA and develop a baseline. An inventory of invasive species is planned to be completed by the end of 2015, by partner group Friends of Black Rock—High Rock, of the NCA and surrounding areas.

Large Scale Recreation Permits / Events

The annual Burning Man event had an estimated number of 68,000 paid participants in 2014. The organizers of the event have pledged to provide BLM with funding for additional staff devoted to the processing of the special recreation permit (SRP) for the event.

Staffing and Workloads

As the NCA becomes more accessible, with information on the internet and the presence of the Black Rock Station Visitor Contact Center in Gerlach, NV; more visitors are coming to the NCA and inquiring about area conditions, access, maps, and interpretive information on a more regular basis. Improvements in the handling and processing of customer service workloads are being made as vacant staff positions are being filled.



6 Summary of Performance Measure

Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table		
Resource, Object, or Value	Status	Trend
Wilderness	Good	Stable
Emigrant Trails	Good	Stable
Biological Values	Good	Stable
Archeology / Cultural Resources	Good	Stable
Paleontology	Good	Stable
Geographical Resources	Good	Stable
Recreation Values	Good	Stable
Wild Horse and Burro	Fair	Stable

7 Manager's Letter

Every year, the BRFO administers the largest Special Recreation Permit in the bureau with the Burning Man event. Coordination between the BRFO, the permittee, local Law Enforcement volunteers and emergency services is required to run this event successfully. This is a remarkable accomplishment for not only the BRFO, but the BLM as a whole.

In FY 14, several positions within the BRFO ranging from resource level staff to upper management were filled. By filling these positions it allowed for a more balance and productive field office staff. A constant workload focus was to maintain boundary and end of route markers leading into the Wilderness areas.

As we move forward, there are a number of opportunities for the NCA in FY 15. The office is currently working to hire a second full time Outdoor Recreation Planner with funding provided by Black Rock City LLC. This will allow for a more balanced focus within the recreation program within the field office. In addition, other key positions have been filled, including a Recreation Technician and Park Ranger that allows for the expansion of the interpretation and education programs in the NCA and to provide customer service to those visiting the area.

Collaboration with partner groups and the cooperative management of the area with the Surprise Field Office have increased the ability of the Black Rock Field Office (BRFO) to accomplish NCA goals. The number of volunteer hours remains high for such a remote NCA. New restoration projects are being initiated, such as a project to restore Greater sage-grouse habitat, which are currently in the planning stages and should be completed by the end of FY 15.

The BRFO has the unique opportunity to be proactive in respect to working with and providing experiences for the public. The BLM sponsors multiple events including National Public Lands Day, the Black Rock Rendezvous and the Oregon and California Trails Association/Trails West weekend, which allow partnerships with several friends groups and interested parties to accomplish work in the NCA that may not have been accomplished without the assistance of these partnerships. New research, field work and monitoring projects are also being completed with the assistance from these partnerships as well. The work provided by the partnerships increases the understanding of the cultural aspects of the region, allows for the restoration of important habitats and the education of the next generation to the importance of the resources found within the NCA. In the event additional funding can be provided for management of the NCA, it will directly increase the ability of the BRFO staff to attain the goals established for the NCA in upcoming years.

/s/ William Mack Jr.
Black Rock Field Office Manager



**NATIONAL
CONSERVATION
LANDS**

Black Rock Desert-High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails

National Conservation Area

Bureau of Land Management
Black Rock Field Office
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, NV, 89445
Phone: 775-623-1500

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