

NV-Rac Minutes August 20, 2004

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes Friday, August 20, 2004
BLM Tonopah Field Station

Resource Advisory Council members present and category represented:

Jerry Helton Transportation/Row (Chair)
Thalia Dondero Elected Official
Dr. John E. Hiatt Wildlife
Robert Maichle Environment
Claire Toomey Permitted Recreation
John Weisser Dispersed Recreation
Billie Young Wild Horse & Burro
Dr. Colleen Beck Archeology/Historic
Mark N. Ioli Mineral Development
Marta Agee Ranching/Grazing
Steve Mellington Public at Large (vice-Chair)

Resource Advisory Council members absent:

Dr. Steve Parker Academic/UNLV
Mark Hill State of Nevada
Ben Patterson Ranching/Grazing
Kenny Anderson Native American

Bureau of Land Management representatives present:

Chris Hanefeld BLM Ely Field Office PAO
William Fisher BLM Tonopah Assistant Field Manager
Mark Morse BLM Las Vegas Field Office Manager
Tim O'Brien Red Rock Canyon & Sloan Canyon NCA manager
Karen Eller BLM Tonopah Field Station PAO
Rhen Etzelmiller BLM Tonopah Field Station Wildlife Biologist
Valerie Metscher BLM Tonopah Field Station Rangeland Mgmt Specialist

USFS representatives present:

Tom Seley Austin/Tonopah Ranger District
Lance Brown Austin/Tonopah Ranger District

Public Attendees:

Lori Howard, VP, National Wild Horse Association

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.

Jerry Helton called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

Previous meeting minutes were approved by all members present.

8:10 a.m. –Rhen Etzelmiller discussed the Bi-State Sage Grouse Plans update and the current status of Nevada planning effort.

The Sage Grouse Conservation Team was appointed in 2000.

The Nevada Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy was produced. This outlined procedures to produce statewide sub-plans for local areas

- o Local planning groups were charged with developing workable solutions to specific on-the-ground challenges.

- o The challenges involved included habitat quality/quantity/nutrition/and fragmentation, wildfire, livestock grazing, wild horses, predation, changing land uses, hunting/poaching, disturbance, disease, pesticides, cycles, and climate/weather,

The final plan was submitted to the Governor's office in January, 2004.

The Governor's Team adopted and finalized the plan in June 2004.

Gerry Smith explained that in the South Central Plan Group there are 11 population management units (PMU).

He also stated that it is quite possible for these birds to become listed.

This group has 2 priorities:

Planning for PMU's. Two PMU's are complete; the remaining 9 are in the process.

BLM is trying to acquire lands where the Sage Grouse is present.

8:30 a.m. – Rhen Etzelmiller gave a short history of the Central NV Elk Plan and an update of the recent goings on of this plan

1979 - 50 Elk were released

- o Public meetings were held between 2000 and 2004.

o The Coordination Oversight Team was developed to oversee the effects on habitat through report requests and reviewing available information. If there are any issues this group appoints a sub-committee to discuss these issues and create a plan of action.

o This group meets once annually.

o The final plan was approved and signed in January, 2004.

9:10 a.m. –Bill Fisher discussed the forage bank establishment on vacant allotments.

Tonopah Field Station will establish allotments that are currently vacant for ranchers that would need to use them on a temporary basis.

Ranchers need to meet the following criteria in order to qualify for this option:

§ Have to have BLM grazing preference and be in good standing

§ AUM needs to have been temporarily suspended

§ Rancher's history does not include any suspensions

Helton recessed the meeting at 10:00 a.m., reconvening at 10:20 a.m.

10:20 a.m. –Bill Fisher discussed the trespass issues for the Tonopah Field Station.

Hage is still in trespass and has been moving his cattle from one allotment to another.

Final arguments in the Hage case will be heard in October 2004.

Colvin's grazing preference has been cancelled. There are two trespass actions against him. One for range improvements and one for livestock.

10:40 a.m. – Valerie Metscher discussed the Appropriate Management Level (AML) setting and the current status of wild horses and burros in the Tonopah Field Station Planning area.

Herd Management Area's (HMA) are set conservatively in the Tonopah planning area due to the consistent drought conditions.

The range of precipitation in the Tonopah planning area is very large. 5-7 inches in some areas and 8 inches in others.

Allotments to evaluate are the Fish Lake Valley, Emigrant Peak, Ice House, Silver Peak and Springdale.

The vegetation for the Tonopah planning area consists of pinion juniper, creosote and salt brush. Some of the areas have a good grass base.

11:15 a.m. – Public comment received:

Lori Howard, VP, National Wild Horse Association, announced the Farm Festival which is a collaborative effort of the Dept. of Agriculture, 4-H, and Tom Collins.

It will be September 21 – 23 during the school day from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm.

She suggested that Oliver Ranch School would be a positive influence to bring in along with all partnerships associated with it.

If anyone is interested in volunteering please call Michael Reiland at (702) 515-5026.

11:40 p.m. – Mark Morse gave a short update on the Oliver Ranch School.

The official name for Oliver Ranch is now the Red Rock Desert Learning Center.

There is a standing meeting the third Tuesday of every month from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. This meeting alternates between UNLV and BLM.

Helton recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:00 p.m., reconvening at 12:30 p.m.

12:30: a.m. – Valerie Metscher discussed the noxious weeds of the Tonopah Field Station planning area.

The most common weeds are the Russian knapweed, salt cedar, short whitetop, puncture vine and tall whitetop.

BLM treatments in 2004 focused on the Russian knapweed. Nye County treated for short whitetop.

In 2005 there is a cooperative agreement between BLM and Esmeralda County to spray noxious weeds.

1:00 p.m. – Steve Williams presented the update on the Tonopah/Austin Forest Service Ranger District.

Range Management

- o The primary issue for range management is unauthorized livestock grazing. They are taking action to deal with this.

- o 32 allotments are permitted for livestock grazing which is approximately 33,000 Animal Unit Months (AUM).

Wild Horse and Burro

- o Wild Horse and Burro is also a challenge, but they have hired Tom Seley, and one of his primary goals is to revamp the WH&B Program.
- o There are 15 active territories containing approximately 1700 horses.
- o This district is working in conjunction with the BLM to enable them to initiate regular gathers.
- o AML's will be determined in 2005
- o No gathers are scheduled for 2004 although they are planning to remove 233 horses from the Butler Basin area.
- o Budget is not a concern as there are adequate funds to complete necessary gathers once AML has been set.

Wildlife

- o Habitat monitoring will be conducted the second week of September in the Table Mountain area.
- o Habitat improvements are planned for the Spotted Frog in the Upper Reese River Valley.
- o Three guzzlers that will be primarily be used by Mule Deer and Antelope are scheduled to be in place this year in the South Monitor area.

1:45 p.m. - Field Manager's Updates

Las Vegas Field Office:

Mark Morse explained that an environmental process was hired for Round 4 and they will determine what footprint that area can handle

Much of what was sought after in Round 4 was also sought for in Round 5. He stated that bringing on project managers has captured the process well.

Round 6 is beginning, packages are being assembled.

Red Rock capitol improvements

Red Springs has been shut down and a yearlong restoration has begun.

Ivanpah sold to County for an airport.

Mesquite is vying for an airport as well. Land has been set aside for that.

Ely Field Office:

Please see attachment BLM Ely Field Office Mohave Southern Great Basing RAC programs update.

Tonopah Field Station:

William Fisher please see attached Battle Mountain Field Manager update.

- There being no further business, Jerry Helton recessed the meeting at 2:45 p.m. -

APPROVED BY:

/s/ Jerry Helton, Chair, October 22, 2004

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

- Minutes provided by Karen M. Eller, BLM Tonopah Field Station -

Attachments:

BLM Ely Field Manager's Report

BLM Las Vegas Field Manager's Report

BLM Battle Mountain Field Manager's Report