

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council Meeting
BLM Southern Nevada District Office, Las Vegas, NV or Virtual/Zoom
August 9, 2022

Agenda

- 1:00 p.m. - Welcome and Introductions
- 1:15 p.m. – Elect Chair and Vice Chair
- 1:30 p.m. – District Manager Reports
- 2:15 p.m. – Renewable Energy Applications and Prioritization Presentation
- 2:45 p.m. – Presentation and Update on Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Business Plan with Discussion
- 3:30 p.m. – Public Comment
- 4:00 p.m. - Make Recommendation on Red Rock Business Plan
- 4:30 p.m. - Adjourn

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present				
Stephanie Garcia-Vause	Transportation/ROW	Category 1	Term Exp: 8-26-22	In person
Robert Terril	Energy and Mineral Development	Category 1	Term Exp: 8-26-22	Virtual
Kimberly Reinhart	Grazing/Ranching	Category 1	Term Exp: 5-11-25	In person
Tara Kilpatrick	Wild Horse/Burro	Category 2	Term Exp: 8-26-22	In person
Douglas (Stretch) Baker	Dispersed Recreation	Category 2	Term Exp: 8-26-22	In person
John Hiatt	Environmental Organization	Category 2	Term Exp: 5-11-25	In person
Gary McCuin	Elected Official	Category 3	Term Exp: 5-11-25	In person
Shanandoah Anderson	Native American	Category 3	Term Exp: 5-11-25	In person
Mark Duvall	Public At Large	Category 3	Term Exp: 5-11-25	Virtual

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Absent				
Daryl Folks	Permitted Recreation	Category 1	Term Exp: 8-26-22	Absent
Susan Agee	Grazing/Ranching	Category 1	Term Exp: 5-11-25	Absent

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present		
Angie Bullets	BLM Southern Nevada District Office	In person
Robbie McAboy	BLM Ely District Office	Virtual
Doug Furtado	BLM Battle Mountain District Office	Virtual
Kirsten Cannon	BLM Southern Nevada District Office	In person
M. Ryan Chatterton	BLM Southern Nevada District Office	In person
Josh Travers	BLM Red Rock/Sloan Field Office	In person
Shedra Rakestraw	BLM Red/Rock Sloan Field Office	In person
Catrina Williams	BLM Red Rock/Sloan Field Office	In person
Greg Helseth	BLM Nevada State Office	Virtual
Samuel Ault	BLM Battle Mountain District Office	Virtual
John Asseline	BLM Southern Nevada District Office	Virtual

Members of the Public Present		
Jose Witt	Southern Nevada Conservancy	In person
Beth Schuck	Southern Nevada Conservancy	In person
Peter Foley	Member of the public	Virtual
John Hegyes	Member of the public	Virtual
Thomas Kotab	Member of the public	Virtual

Adam Fisher	Member of the public	Virtual
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1:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions & Elect Chair and Vice Chair-Angie Bullets

Election of Officers

- Douglas Baker motion to nominate John Hiatt as Chair. Gary McCuin seconded the motion, motion carried; John Hiatt elected Chair.
- John Hiatt motion to nominate Tara Kilpatrick as Vice-Chair, Douglas Baker seconded the motion, motion carried; Tara Kilpatrick elected Vice- Chair.

1:10 p.m. District Manager Reports

Doug Furtado, Battle Mountain District:

Introduction and Overview of Battle Mountain District

- 2nd largest public land district in BLM. Some of the largest programs managed in BLM including 28 HMAs, 3rd largest AUM billed district for livestock grazing, largest hard rock mining program with expanding lithium component. Renewable energy is also expanding.

Mining and Mining Exploration

- District is currently working on permitting eight mining exploration projects within proximity to the town of Beatty, NV; projects range from 3,000 to 4,000 acres.
- Gibellini Mine Project is located south of Eureka, NV and has up to 7 years of operation producing vanadium. BM has expedited the application and NEPA process for this mine and the NOA of the Draft EIS is published in the federal register for public review and comment. Gibellini will be the first mine in the country entirely powered by renewable energy; a zero-emission mining operation.
- Goldrush Mine Project is located south of Crescent Valley and in the Cortez Mining District operated by Nevada Gold Mines (NGM). To avoid impacts to surface resources including Native American/cultural resources, Goldrush Mine activities are planned to be largely underground. The Draft EIS is currently in the public comment period.

Recreation

- The district issues 15-16 special use recreation permits annually. Most SRPs issued on the district are road race SRPs. The Vegas to Reno race is scheduled to begin this Friday. This race draws approximately 5,000 spectators with a high media presence. Currently addressing safety concerns and protection of county roads with planned resolution this week.

Renewable Energy

- Greenlink West is a transmission corridor from Reno to Vegas and is in EIS status. Esmerelda is located west of Tonopah; potential for one regional level EIS. Currently have 4 wind applications for met towers.

NASA Withdrawal

- NASA is the lead agency for NEPA and has prepared an EA to go out to public comment. BLM regulatory process and authority for withdrawals of this size sit with the Secretary of the Interior.

Wild Horse & Burro

- The Fish Lake WHB gather is planned for this fall and located north of Tonopah; 250 horses are planned to be removed to reach AML. Forest Service is a cooperating agency for the gather.

Drought and Drought Response

- Historic drought 2012 through 2014 created management challenges. BLM facilitated rapid drought response through a district plan and EA that covers drought response actions supported by science. Agreements are reached between BLM and permittees to identify identifies any changes or adjustments needed in response to drought.

RAC Questions and Responses or Discussion

- *What are AML population estimates for the Fish Lake horse gather?* Low AML is approximately 350 and plan to gather to 250 AML.
- *What is status of Range Specialist Staffing? Short or well-staffed?* Range Specialist staffing is a limiting factor and priorities have been tightened up. BMD has a large range workload with 108 applications and projects all active at EA or EIS level. Currently have 1 RMS in Tonopah FO, 1 in Mount Lewis FO and a Supervisory RMS. Many college graduates do not meet the qualification required for these positions which is a big problem. NVSO is working on a plan for recruitment, hiring and retention; discussions and a plan are being worked on to address these issues currently.
- *How is the previously mentioned BMDO drought plan related to permits issued this year? Are ranchers allowed to do drought monitoring?* Intent of the drought EA is to define drought, identify indices that measure drought, include WHB body condition to facilitate emergency gathers, establish threshold. Use of this process is to hold conversations with permittees and consider any seasonal modifications. Drought monitoring by permittees and cooperative monitoring agreements between permittees and BLM is encouraged.

Angie Bulletts, Southern Nevada District:

Introduction and Overview of Southern Nevada District

- Southern Nevada District holds the BLMs largest law enforcement, fuels, lands and renewable energy programs. The district has the most visited National Conservation Area (NCA) and National Monument with approximately 250 dedicated employees.
- Office hours have changed and are now from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Renewable Energy Program

- The district has an energy and infrastructure team in place which includes 3 project managers and other staff and resource specialists. The renewable energy workplan projects work to 2025 and is 25% of the national goal provided through the workplan.
- Currently have 3 pending wind energy applications. Active construction includes Yellow Pine Solar Project, Gemini Solar Project, and Dry Lake Solar Project. Solar development is also supported on the Moapa Reservation.

Las Vegas Field Office

- Planning development for the Logandale Trails Off-Highway Vehicle recreation area.
- Preparing to initiate public scoping for the Gold Butte National Monument Plan.
- Finalizing Management Plan for Piute-Eldorado Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Pahrump Field Office

- Issued a decision and Final Herd Management Plan for the Spring Mountains Wild Horse and Burro Complex. There are joint management areas in Clark and Nye Counties and have worked jointly with the Forest Service. Fertility controls and gather period of up to 10 years.

Red Rock/Sloan Field Office

- Red Rock Canyon hosted a free day on August 4 (Great America Outdoors Day) for the anniversary of the signing of the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). September 24, 2022 will be hosting another for National Public Lands Day.
- Park Rangers are working on trail restoration for the Harris Spring Recreation Area Management Plan.

SNPLMA (Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act)

- Las Vegas Field Office sold parcels for 138 million in online sales. Parcels offered for sale ranged from 2.03 acres to 50.8 acres and located throughout the Las Vegas Valley. Funds are used for parks, trails, conservation areas, including affordable housing. The district will be working on a new affordable housing project for seniors.
- Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area received SNPLMA Round 18 funds for approximately 19 million. Funds contribute to the design and construction of a visitor contact station at the Mount Sloan NCA. Sloan Field Office is also collaborating with 12 different Tribes for interpretive planning and program for the visitor contact station.

RAC Questions and Responses

- *What are AML population estimates for WHB?* AML is 63 to 93 horses and 103 to 192 burros. The district has been working cooperatively with Forest Service for several years and management will be joint.
- *Are there any grazing allotments on the district?* One active allotment not used; small range program.
- *Is there a timeframe for the Sloan Visitor Center?* It depends on when the contractor gets settled and will start figuring out timelines but hoping for fiscal year 2023. SNPLMA has deadlines and we work within those deadlines.
- *In the past there was reluctance to build a Sloan Canyon Visitor Center. What is the status of funding?* District is utilizing funds wisely and is also considering other funding sources. Additional funds have been secured to provide additional staffing and the district is preparing to be self-sufficient in the future. *If not relying on appropriated dollars, will you be relying on fees?* Considering looking at appropriated funding, national lands conservation funding or fees.

Robbie McAboy, Ely District:

Introduction and Overview of Ely District

- District encompasses 12 million acres located in White Pine, Lincoln and Nye Counties. In the last several years there has been increased interest in energy development projects and the district supports several large- scale, multi state energy development projects.

Energy Development

- TransCanyon Cross-Tie is a proposed transmission line project that is multi-state (UT and NV) and multi-jurisdictional between NV BLM, UT BLM and Forest Service. Utah BLM, Filmore Field Office is the project lead; 64 miles of transmission line is proposed to be located on Ely District and is within existing utility corridors. The NOI was published in the Federal Register in April of 2022 and the Record of Decision (ROD) is anticipated to be signed in 2024.

- Transwest Express is a proposed 735-mile, high voltage transmission line with 2 terminals and 2 substations and would extend through 4 states. The ROD was signed 12/2015 and a Right of Way (ROW) grant was issued 6/2017. Agencies settled on cost per acres for disturbance of lands with wilderness characteristics.
- Other transmission line projects Ely District supports includes SWIP North (Elko District office is project lead) and Greenlink North (Nevada State Office is the project lead).

Renewable Energy

- White Pine Pump Storage Project is the most notable renewable energy project. FERC is processing the license application; BLM is a cooperating agency. Completion of EIS is anticipated for 2024 with construction in 2025 and operation by 2030. Ely also has 12 applications for various wind and solar projects.

Fire and Aviation

- District is working a plan for the implementation of fuel reduction activities and landscape restoration projects including hand thinning, chaining, mastication, prescribed fire and rehabilitation.
- Completed mastication of established Pinion/Juniper on 550 acres in Johnson's Spring Basin which was aerielly seeded in January. Treatment part of multi-year project.
- Completed mastication on 433 acres in the Currant Mountain Range. 37,000 acres of fuel reduction last year with more this year.
- Largest fire was the Dodge Fire at approx. 6500 acres.

Mining

- March 31, 2022, Bristlecone Field Office published the NOI in the Federal Register for the Bald Mountain Mine Expansion.

Range

- Wilson Creek Allotment Term Permit Renewal (TPR) issued 10 final grazing decisions in December 2020. All 10 decisions received petitions for stay, 2 of which were granted.
- Bristlecone Field Office and Basin and Range National Monument working on TPR for Outcome Based Grazing allotment and projects.

Wild Horse & Burro

- Bristlecone Field Office and Wells Field Office/Elko District are currently gathering for the Triple B Complex. The gather is planned to remove 1800 horses but will still be more than doubled with high AML.

Tribal Relations

- Provided support for the Bahsahwahbee Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) to be elevated to a national level of significance; currently working with Tribes to develop a proposal for a National Monument.

Special Legislation

- Lincoln County Archeological Initiative (LCAI) Round 13 projects were just approved for 7 projects totaling 1.7 million dollars. The district Special Legislation Program Manager position is currently in process of being filled.

RAC Questions and Responses or Discussion

- *Status of Wildhorse and Burro program off-range holding facilities and capacity? Any more progress at getting any more pastures in mid-west? Gathers have been restricted due to capacity of off-range holding facilities. More follow-up to the question is needed.*

- *Does Ely have any special accommodations for drought conditions?* Range Management Specialists are working closely with permittees and coming to agreements on non-use or early removal. Late turn-out did also occur in response to drought.
- *Does NEPA need to be done for trailing permits now?* District Manager will check with Field Managers for that direction and determine if the direction is consistent to permittees. The area being referenced is for a particular situation currently being managed.
- *What does outcome based grazing mean?* Determine or identify a desired outcome and provide flexibility to manage to achieve that outcome. *How many outcome based grazing projects in NV are still active?* Most outcome based grazing projects are still active. A Battle Mountain District permittee asked to be removed from the program voluntarily, but the remainder are still in progress.

2:15 p.m. Renewable Energy Applications and Prioritization Presentation

Greg Helseth-Presenter, Nevada BLM State Office

Presentation

- IM out 2022-027- Renewable Energy Applications and Prioritization.
- Battle Mountain district has done prioritization and other districts are following.
- IM allows to prioritize correctly based on resources and where project is located in a proper manner and which projects should be moved forward. Still go through a variance process.
- NV is critical to the production of renewable energy in order to meet congressional goals.
- Greg is project manager for Greenlink West and Greenlink North transmission lines both of which are being managed and lead out of the Nevada BLM State Office.

RAC Questions and Responses or Discussion

- *Projects were described as large on BLM land. How are you addressing resource protections, for example wildlife?* Applicants apply for large acres of land but typically end of not using that many acres. This strategy blocks out other competition and creates the ability to move the project around within that footprint. Proponents conduct studies within the entire area and costs of those studies usually encourage the proponent to limit the acreage. Applicants always start out big and end small; reason is to block out competition, so no other development is in area.
- *With large and small projects how do you deal with disturbance and noxious weeds, for example, cheatgrass?* Mitigate for impacts and companies will have mitigation measures to address noxious weeds or will have stations available so they minimize spread of noxious weeds. Typically, can conduct studies in front of NEPA so have a good idea of what impacts will be and what to mitigate for, smart from the start approach. BLM also does compliance inspections 1 to 2 times per year. Pesticide use plans (PUP) for weeds is issued to companies as well.
- *Are they doing any reseeding to keep out cheatgrass, red brome etc.?* It may be a possibility to use sheep in these areas; pesticides use is managed under guidelines of what's approved.
- *There can be issues with flash flooding in areas where large-scale solar projects occur. How is BLM looking at mitigating potential flood issues in large areas of disturbance?* Storm water prevention pollution plans for every solar site is required or detention basins discussion.
- *Timing of solar applications. Many EISs are coming out in a very short time, how is timing managed?* BLM manages the timelines and coordinates and staggers meetings for the public in addition to providing additional time to comment on projects.
- *Will power generated from Greenlink North and Greenlink West stay in NV?* Yes, transmitting in NV and staying in NV according to NV Energy. Discussion on how power moves around. *District Managers presented more than 50 solar applications, how much of that power will*

remain in NV and how much will supply other areas with power such as CA? Depends and up to the balancing authorities, utilities and applicants on where to send power to get return on investment.

2:45 p.m. Presentation and Update on Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Business Plan with Discussion

Josh Travers-Presenter, BLM Red Rock/Sloan Field Office

Introduction, Background and Presentation for Red Rock Canyon NCA Business Plan Modification FY22

- Asking for modification to:
 - Add standard amenity fee for the RRCNCA Scenic Drive
 - Add an expanded amenity fee for Red Rock Campground
 - Modify the exiting names of the Red Springs/Calico Basin fee site
 - Add standard amenity fee for Calico Basin core area
- All Red Rock Canyon fees stay in red rock.
 - Spending 2017-2021: 36% operations, 64% labor, 14% grants/agreements
 - Managing Red Rock Canyon more than what are collecting in fees.
- Impacts of high visitor use:
 - Impacts to resources
 - Diminished visitor experience
 - Health and safety

RAC Questions and Responses or Discussion

- *Where do rec.gov fees go to for a night stay? Comes back to BLM for operational use of that system. An example would be a 5-night stay is equal one service fee if it is in same transaction.*
- *Discussion regarding fees and credit card transaction fees and distribution.*
- *Concern over funds for conservation or other funds not being utilized for Red Rock facility.*
- *Comment that fees may need to be raised higher duet to inflation.*

3:30 p.m. Public Comment to Red Rock Canyon NCA Business Plan (opportunity to comment was provided three times)

Jose Witt, Director Southern Nevada Conservancy

Comment 1: Saw an impact when reservation system was introduced in 2020. Reservation system guarantees entry and avoids long wait times and enhances experience. Encourage BLM to continue to seek means to provide access.

Peter Foley

Comment 1: Calico has been a long-established free resource. Increase in fee from zero to over \$20 will block access to disadvantaged people and minorities. Calico does get crowded, but video in presentation is not accurate as to what use is. Why introduce a fee system to Calico during the week and not on weekends? Reservation system is a barrier to entry and will drive use in less prepared areas.

Comment 2: There is a petition that has strong opposition. Legacy Trail is projected to cost 100 million, this trail benefits rich cyclists, not the average user. Making way for very few rich residents and locking

out lower income and less able residents who currently use it as a free resource. Adding complexity to the entrance will reduce the number of users.

Comment 3: Access-benefits of Calico Basin is that it is close to Vegas and hikers and climbers use it. Reservation system will prevent people from getting much needed recreation and make it available early morning and evenings at a minimum. Offer to help on committee, no charge.

John Hegyes

Comment 1: Appeals in place at Interior Board of Land Appeals. Issues brought forward today: problem with Calico Basin not fee but construction of toll booth damaging to landscape. Reservation system by a 3rd party should not make money off access to public lands. Residents in Calico Basin will have access, public does not; public will be locked out of public land.

Comment 2: Calico Basin has received increased visitor impacts. Have not seen a ranger on the trail when hiking, lack of law enforcement presence. Changes should be made more incrementally and deliberately. Close to Vegas, easy to access; BLM will be held directly responsible for increasing use in Calico Basin and locking out local hiking and climbing population by building a toll booth.

Comment 3: BLM has been pushing a management and business plan hindering public access with toll booth and reservation system. Save Red Rock board members are notable for proposing building toll booths. Nevada State Highway will see increase in public usage. Aware of one ethics complaint in the way the management plan has been manipulated through the public process. Has reduced public confidence in the BLM, loss of integrity and impartiality. Plan serves interest of adjacent landowner and well-connected business owners. Thomas Kotab repeatedly applied to membership of RAC; consider him for RAC membership.

Thomas Kotab

Comment 1: Congress appropriates approximately .5 million to run entire the NCA, BLM collects \$3.50 reservation fee from approximately 2 million people. Public would be more receptive to fees if fees were staying with NCA. It allows a defense contractor to siphon more of the annual budget of the entire NCA. System is nothing special and is a reservation like any other. Any competing system could do it a fraction of the price.

Comment 2: General budget ideas: executive summary is misleading by showing 7 items BLM wants to fund. Request to board to investigate where money is going. Plan should be more short term. Board should investigate the plan more frequently. Must make determination of numbered amount.

Comment 3: Second the previous comment. Conduct being proposed is illegal; there are requirements on what can charge fees for. NCA cannot charge an entrance fee; entire fee structure should be rethought. BLM is bringing attention to its illegal conduct and will likely attract another lawsuit. Ask board to return proposal to BLM for a much further study for a legal analysis of what it can do and how it's going to repair the issue it has created; need more detailed accounting on how money is to be spent.

Adam Fisher

Comment 1: Private citizen. Concern about business plan that has not been discussed. Original business plan which only authorizes fees for Calico Basin site which is small area surrounding Red Springs picnic area; this area has amenities. Proposed Calico Basin area is not subject to fees because the gate that charges fees is the only access point. Much of the use in Calico Basin is happening during off times or less used areas in the basin.

Comment 2: Follow up on earlier comment/expansion of fee area. Clear distinctions between different types of fees and fee areas. Previously what has been approved is Red Spring fee site, fees could have been charged for the picnic area, but BLM chose not to in order to remain a free access to area. Now language in the plan refers to Calico Basin core fee area and fee areas have different requirements. Requires publication of notice in Federal Register, not done in this case. May not be proper to approve this.

4:00 p.m. Make Recommendations on Red Rock Business Plan

- *RAC-Clarification on what is being proposed. Is the ask to add \$2 fee or is ask to build a fee booth and charge \$20 fee and add \$2 onto that?* BLM-Ask is to expand fee to include \$2 or \$3 reservation fee increase. Fee area will modify name and expand area from Scenic Drive to Calico Basin. Asking to clean up name references to the area. Will be 3-5 years from having a fee booth in the area to begin collecting fees; no current touch point to collect fees right now. *No matter what is approved, cannot collect fees for 3-5 years?* BLM-correct.
- *RAC-What's the deal with the Legacy Trail? Will it go through Calico Basin or along Highway 59?* BLM-still working on the design but will go through portion of NCA. Legacy Trail provides free access into Calico Basin.
- *RAC-What is the timeline for the Legacy Trail?* BLM-project is divided into 5 phases with segment 1 construction summer of 2023 to approximately 2028 for full construction. *RAC-Messaging should be more clear so public understands; some of the public comment indicated lack of understanding how fees are collected, where money goes and how it is collected. The pandemic influenced fee collection; need to explain that to the public so they understand it.*
- *RAC-Has BLM looked into other fee providers for the collection?* BLM-contract is done through the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service oversees the contract. BLM is mandated to use rec.gov. NCA charges standard amenity fees.
- *RAC-How often does rec.gov change service fees? Can you add that service fees may be adjusted in the future to stay in step with rec.gov service fees? May not have to change business fees if don't have to.* BLM-rec.gov doesn't adjust fees until entering into a new contract with agencies; may be every 10 years.
- **Robert Terril motioned to move forward with the plan, Douglas Baker seconded the motion. John Hiatt offered a friendly amendment to the motion if Robert agreed, Robert did not agree. John Hiatt offered clarification to the motion- approve fees as proposed with the understanding that Calico Basin does not have the ability to collect fees at this time but will in the future. Motion carried.**

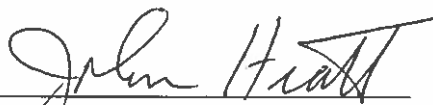
Identified Action or Follow up Items

- 1) Gary McCuin requested that the Mojave/Southern Great Basin RAC and preferably all RACs review and update the Standards and Guides to Land Health. Angie will take this topic/proposal forward to the Nevada State Office range staff for consideration.
- 2) BLM maintains WHB population estimates by HMA. District Managers will provide maps to Kirsten to distribute to RAC members. Follow-up with Alan Shepard for maps and information may be needed.
- 3) Robbie will provide follow up to the question presented to Ely District regarding NEPA requirements for livestock trailing permits and consistency in that direction.

4:34 p.m. Adjourn

APPROVED BY:

Date: 8/16/22



John Hiatt, Chairperson
Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC

Attachments: