

Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Friday, Jan. 18, 2002

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Visitor's Center

Resource Advisory Council members present and category represented:

Marta Agee	Grazing/Ranching
Dr. Colleen Beck	Archeology/Historic
Barbara Callihan	Dispersed Recreation
Patrick John Chicas	Permitted Recreation
Maurice Frank-Churchill	Native American
Billie Gayle-Young	Wild Horse & Burro
Jerry Helton	Transportation/Row (Chair)
Dr. John Hiatt	Wildlife
Robert Maichle	Environment
Steve Mellington	Public at Large (vice-Chair)
Ben Patterson	Ranching/Grazing
Dr. Steve Parker	Academic/UNLV

Resource Advisory Council members absent:

Thalia Dondero	Elected Official
Mark N. Ioli	Mineral Development

Bureau of Land Management representatives present:

Bill Fisher, Manager	BLM Tonopah Field Station
Phillip Guerrero	Public Affairs Specialist, BLM Las Vegas District
Eric Luse	Associate Manager, BLM Ely District
Mark Morse	Manager, BLM Las Vegas District
Jo Simpson	Public Affairs Specialist, BLM Nevada State Office

Public attendees:

Karen Shimamoto	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest deputy supervisor
Bob Vaught	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest supervisor

A copy of each attachment is in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, and also is on file with

the official copy of the minutes in the Las Vegas Field Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to review said minutes should contact Phillip Guerrero, public affairs specialist, at (702) 498-6088.

- Jerry Helton being scheduled to arrive late, and having a quorum present, vice-Chairman Steve Mellington called the meeting to order at 8:17 a.m. -

Deb Couche, a U.S. Forest Service ecologist, updated the RAC on the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area and the issues facing wild horses in the Cold Creek community, located northwest of Las Vegas. She discussed briefly a tour conducted Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2002, that was attended by several RAC members.

- Issue One - The area surrounding the Cold Creek community is over-grazed by wild horses and area wildlife, i.e., Elk, leaving little forage.
- Issue Two - The wild horses have been informally adopted by some Cold Creek residents and are being treated as pets.
- Work accomplished so far includes an ex-closure barring Elk and wild horses. The ex-closure, erected in Summer 2001, has resulted in a spring flowing again to the surface and a re-growth of forage.
 - ✓ Barbara Callihan asked Couche if local residents were involved in Wednesday's tour. Couche said the tour was informal only. She said that future efforts would include local residents, local, state and federal agencies, and representatives from various interest groups, i.e., Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) users, etc.
 - ✓ Deb Couche, a U.S. Forest Service ecologist, said only five-percent of the local residents are caring for the horses. However, she said the five-percent is extremely vocal.
 - ✓ Karen Shimamoto, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest deputy supervisor, said inter-agency cooperation must be achieved to accomplish the desired goals. Shimamoto said her agency must also deal with several internal issues, i.e., the use of helicopters for wild horse gathers.
 - ✓ Bob Vaught, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest supervisor, said his agency currently faces two big issues. Vaught said the number of issues has itself become a major issue. He also said hiring a district ranger for the local area is an issue. Vaught said his agency will make the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area a top priority in the upcoming year.

Eric Luse, BLM Ely Field Office associate manager, updated the RAC re Sage Grouse (refer to attachment A).

- Patrick John Chicas said there is an Internet site created by an organization that has as its goal placing Sage Grouse on the Endangered Species list. Chicas said he's concerned about the issue, especially in light of what happened in the Pacific Northwest with the Spotted Owl species. Bob Maichle briefly reiterated where the Sage Grouse issue stands today. Bill Fisher reassured Chicas that the BLM is working on the issue. Eric Luse confirmed Fisher's statements. However, Chicas voiced concern that nothing is being done. Hiatt explained that while the Nevada Division of Wildlife (NDOW) is the lead

agency in the project, local governments must get involved and many aren't taking the issue as seriously as they should. Marta Agee questioned why, in light of the issue, the Sage Grouse is still listed as a game species. Agee questioned the motives spurring the issue. Hiatt said the issue is real, and is caused by predation, nesting failures, habitat, etc.

- Maurice Frank-Churchill discussed briefly the importance of Sage Grouse to the Native American culture. Frank-Churchill noted the differences between Native American and European hunting practices, and cited as issues the impacts of mining, etc., on the habitat.
- Fisher explained that progress is being made in his district.
- Steve Mellington asked again for clarification re the process and lead agencies. Hiatt explained once again the overall plan and agencies responsibilities.
- Eric Luse said the BLM would provide the RAC with regular updates re the issue. Steve Mellington asked the BLM to watch closely the process. Hiatt suggested to Mellington that the issue be addressed formally during the June meeting.

Mellington distributed to the RAC, a list of names and numbers of those attending the U.S. Forest Service tour conducted Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2002 (refer to attachment B).

- Mellington recessed the meeting at 9:45 a.m., and reconvened the meeting at 10:05 a.m. -

Jackie Gratton, BLM Las Vegas Field Office, updated the RAC on several energy-related projects, which are or will be located on public lands (refer to attachment C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J).

- Existing:
 - ✓ Apex Co-Gen power proj.
 - ✓ Harry Allen power proj.
 - ✓ Reid-Gardner power proj.
- Proposed:
 - ✓ Ivanpah Energy Center
 - ✓ Kern River 2003 Expansion proj.
 - ✓ Meadow Valley generating proj.
 - ✓ Mirant Energy power proj.
 - ✓ Moapa Energy power proj.
 - ✓ Navajo Transmission proj.
 - ✓ Overton Power District power proj.
 - ✓ Reliant Arrow power proj.
 - ✓ Sempra Energy Pipeline proj.
 - ✓ Table Mountain Wind Generation
- Steve Mellington asked Gratton if the BLM intended to conduct a cumulative
- Environmental Assessment (EA) on all the projects combined. Gratton explained that within each project proposal is a cumulative impact section.
- John Hiatt requested that the BLM obtain specific project details, especially in light of the current economic issues and potential environmental impacts. Gratton said all such

- information would be found within the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Robert Maichle questioned the use of specific roads within the Table Mtn. area. Mark Morse said any potential issues would be addressed in the EIS. Hiatt expressed concern for wildlife inhabiting the Table Mtn. area.
 - A question was raised as to whether the road specified would obliterate Cave Spring. Construction of the proposed road could destroy the spring and/or drive out wildlife.
 - Gratton suggested the RAC address their concerns within the EIS process, writing their comments and/or questions carefully and selectively so as to be clear in their purpose.
 - John Hiatt asked about the proposed pipeline for the Ivanpah Energy Center (Diamond Energy). Distributed information indicated the line would be for water supply.
 - Gratton explained that, because the project is new, information re Sempra information was scant.
 - Steve Mellington requested that Gratton supply the RAC with a so-called master schedule detailing all document time-lines so as to allow RAC members an opportunity to respond to each, as appropriate.
 - Marta Agee asked if the sheer number of projects currently under consideration by the BLM Las Vegas District was unique to the area. Saying yes, Mark Morse pointed out the district's proximity to the Los Angeles energy market as the cause. Agee asked what the instruction from Washington D.C. was. Morse said Washington had only instructed the district to make the proposals a priority. Gratton said the BLM was not, and would not, waive any legal requirements.

Stanton Rolf, BLM Las Vegas Field Office, re Native American Government to Government consultation (citing the energy plant proposals as an example).

- Said consultations are improving both in frequency and level of discussion.
- Attempting to initiate a dialogue with the Native American peoples so as to enhance public lands processes.
- Today's legal requirements are such that BLM staff is required to identify cultural artifacts and resources, mitigating said artifacts and/or resources as necessary.
 - ✓ Robert Maichle asked about a specific site near Christmas Tree Pass, aka, Spirit Mountain. Rolf said that previous discussions, re Spirit Mountain, concluded in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), due to sensitivities.
 - ✓ Maurice Frank-Churchill said that most Government to Government consultations take place with tribal leaders, or decision makers. He said too that not all sacred sites are historic, and that, in fact, additional sites will be determined in the future. Frank-Churchill said also that future MOUs should be inclusive of all tribes statewide, not tribe-specific.
 - ✓ Billie Gayle-Young asked if Native American cultures would, in the future, be displayed more in-depth via displays, etc.

- Mellington recessed the meeting for lunch at 11:55 a.m. -

LUNCH

- Chairman Jerry Helton reconvened the meeting at 1:05 p.m. -

Angie Lara, BLM Las Vegas Field Office, updated the RAC on the Oliver Ranch Environmental Education Center.

- The “vision” is to construct on-site a residential area for students involved with center programming.
- Plans call for inclusion of the site’s “spiritual” aspects. Plans call also for a quasi-interactive Internet site.
- Area school officials are excited about the proposed center and have established a subcommittee to assist in the planning process.
- ✓ Robert Maichle asked Lara to better define program parameters, focusing on those children who can best utilize the education. Marta Agee asked if Maichle was suggesting that only “at-risk” children be involved. Maichle said it was not his intention, but that he was concerned that the facility could handle only a small portion of the number of individuals in the school district could benefit from the experience. Maichle suggested that some form of fair selection process might be necessary. One possibility would be to take the program to the schools, allowing all students to implement center programming. Mark Morse said the issue is partly the school district’s limited number of field trips. Marta Agee asked Morse when the BLM began focusing on student education programming. Morse said the BLM has been educating people for years, adding that the agency has to either educate the children today or “correct them tomorrow.” Helton said similar ocean studies programs in Southern California have historically provided a quality hands-on learning experience for young people, and that the center can as well, provided it focuses its programming on those particular students who will best utilize it. The RAC discusses briefly the importance of environmental education and possible methods of dispensing it. Callihan asked about site suitability. Lara said a study is being conducted. Maurice Frank-Churchill cited education’s importance, reminding the RAC that today’s decisions affect tomorrow’s children. Responding to John Hiatt, Lara said a feasibility study is scheduled for completion in Spring 2002. Ben Patterson asked Lara for guidance on what she wants from the RAC. Lara said she would like help with planning issues. Jerry Helton suggested the RAC participate in a to-be determined manner at the appropriate time. Callihan suggested that Lara return with a presentation at a later date.

The RAC discussed potential agenda items for the upcoming March meeting.

- There being no further business, Helton adjourned the meeting at 2:22 p.m. -

APPROVED BY:

Date

Jerry Helton, Chairperson
Mojave-Southern
Great Basin Resource Advisory Council

- Minutes provided by Chris Hanefeld, BLM Ely Field Office public affairs specialist -

Attachments:

- A / Sage Grouse Update, BLM Ely Field Office
- B / U.S.F.S. tour contact list
- C / Abstract, Calpine project
- D / Map of existing/proposed power generation plants in the Las Vegas area
- E / Executive summary, Arrow Canyon Project EA
- F / Mirant Energy, Apex Generating Facility
- G / Project information, Moapa Energy Facility Transmission Line Project
- H / Summary, Nevada Power Company, Crystal Substation expansion
- I / Meadow Valley Generating Project (MVGP)
- J / Navajo Transmission Project