

**MOJAVE-SOUTHERN GREAT BASIN
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 27, 2000
MESQUITE, NEVADA**

Resource Advisory Council (**RAC**) Members Present and Category Represented:

Susan Selby	Environment
Patrick Chicas	Permitted Recreation
Steve Mellington	Public-At-Large
John Hiatt	Wildlife
Jerry Helton	Transportation and ROW
Colleen Beck	Archaeology
Billie Gayle Young	Wild Horses and Burros
Mark Ioli	Mining
Marta Agee	Ranching
Mike Wickersham	State Agency
William Mull	Ranching

RAC Members Absent:

Stanley Smith	Academic
Maurice Frank-Churchill	Native American
Barbara Callihan	Dispersed Recreation
Gary Hollis	Elected Official

Bureau of Land Management (**BLM**) Representatives Present:

Mark Morse	Las Vegas Field Manager
Angie Lara	Las Vegas Associate Field Manager
Gene Kolkman	Ely Field Manager
Jo Simpson	Chief, Office of Communications, Nevada State Office
Mike Gates	Rangeland Management Specialist, Tonopah Field Station
Phil Guerrero	Public Affairs Specialist, Las Vegas Field Office
Debra Kolkman	Public Affairs Specialist, Nevada State Office
Mike Dwyer	SNPLMA Project Manager
Dan Fodrin	

Public Attendees:

Alan Levinson	Former RAC member
Tom Kuekes	U.S. Forest Service, Spring Mountain NRA

Bill Dickinson
Dick Birger
Alan O'Neill

National Park Service, Lake Mead NRA¹
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Outside Las Vegas Foundation

**A copy of each attachment is listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Las Vegas Field Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Phillip Guerrero, Las Vegas Field Office, at (702) 647-5046.*

Vice-Chairperson Susan Selby opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Members introduced themselves.

Selby stated that a quorum was not present from each POD so election of officers could not be held.

Setting of meeting dates for fiscal year 2001.

Members tentatively decided on the following three dates:

1. January 25 -26 in Las Vegas
The main topics would be the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA), the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project (ENLRP) and a field trip.
2. March 1-2 in Las Vegas (*scheduled the meeting close to the end of the comment period for proposed SNPLMA acquisitions which is mid-March.) Members asked Dwyer if the SNPLMA Project Office could get the necessary information out to them before the meeting? Dwyer answered yes.
3. June 21-22 (in the Ely area, possibly at William Mull's ranch).
4. August 9-10 in Tonopah
Tour of Round Mountain Mine and possibly a range tour
5. October 26-26 (?) next Statewide RAC Meeting

Selby stressed that they should try to stick with these proposed dates.

Selby asked if there were any deadlines the RAC needed to meet according to the proposed meeting dates? Lara commented that the Las Vegas Field Office hadn't set priorities yet, but the January meeting will be timely for discussing the Red Rock National Conservation Area (NCA) Management Plan. Kolkman stated that Ely will have the Lincoln County Land Act and some other major land exchanges to discuss.

Tentative Priorities - Fiscal Year 2001:

1. Great Basin Restoration Initiative and Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project President's Fire Plan
2. ****Wild Horses & Burros (RAC needs an update at every meeting from each Field Manager)**
3. Land Use Planning
4. Nellis Air Force Base Plan/Natural Resource Management Plan
5. Tonopah Test Range
6. Red Rock General Management Plan-Implementation
7. Tonopah Plan Amendment (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern)
8. Ivanpah Airport
9. SNPLMA
10. Discuss rewrite of RAC Charter
11. Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Plan Amendment—limit to existing roads and trails
12. ****3809 Regulations and Implementation**
13. 8100 Projects (Range improvement projects) - Monitoring
14. Noxious weeds-keep on radar screen

Priorities discussed during fiscal year 2000, in order of importance

SNPLMA

****Red Rock NCA General Management Plan-Final will go out and appeals will be forthcoming. RAC needs to hear what BLM is going to do to implement actions of decision.**

****Standing priority item**

Five grazing allotment decisions in the Tonopah area have not been done, but allotment evaluations have.

One member asked Morse if the RAC will be able to comment on impact studies for Ivanpah? Morse commented that BLM will start the studies then will do an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) on building the airport. The EIS will be informative more than anything else because the EIS just needs updated.

Ely will also be working on the Lincoln County Land Disposal (Congress directed the BLM to dispose of land {4,800 acres the first year} in Lincoln County around the town of Mesquite.)

One member asked if the RAC wants to deal with Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), because without Congressional action, they cannot do anything. Selby commented that the RAC hasn't let Congressional actions stop them before, so this shouldn't stop them. Selby commented that the RAC wrote letters referencing wild horses and burros, 3809, etc. Selby suggested that the RAC discuss this after the Presidential elections as things could change dramatically.

One RAC member inquired if the RAC had gotten a full report back on how the standards and guidelines on grazing are being implemented? No. It was noted that the RAC needs updates from BLM on issues such as the standards and guidelines. One main reason RACs were formed was for grazing. RACs need to advise BLM on issues that are important in Nevada because the RAC is here to be an advisory arm to BLM. It was noted that the major duty of the RAC is to let BLM know what is important to the public and to keep them on track to avoid pitfalls.

OHV-BLM will issue response to public comments on OHV use in December, along with the release of the National OHV strategy. Does this RAC want to comment on the strategy? Does RAC need to develop standard and guidelines on OHV? Chicas commented he wants to see the National Strategy before they discuss developing standards and guidelines.

On the issue of keeping cultural resources as an issue? The RAC discussed the question if anything over 50 years should be protected. Native American artifacts also need to be looked at. RAC members decided to keep cultural as a subcommittee so BLM can report on these issues. One topic that will be important for cultural sites is the Ivanpah area.

Field Office Priorities

Las Vegas Field Office

#1-SNPLMA

#2 Red Rock NCA General Management Plan

#3 Nellis Air Force Base Plan

Ely Field Office

#1 Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project

#2 President's Fire Plan

#3 Great Basin Restoration Initiative (part of ENLRP)

#4 OHV Plan Amendment

Battle Mountain Field Office

#1 Tonopah Plan Amendment (ACEC)

#2 Multiple Use Decisions

Members mentioned the need to discuss re-writing the RAC Charter and to strike the language that says a majority of the POD must be present. Instead put in language that a majority of the RAC must be present.

Las Vegas is getting a proposal for a 4,500-acre wind farm and another proposal for a wind generator to be located near Moapa. The Las Vegas Field Office will have to do an EIS on these projects.

Appropriate Management Level's for wild horses and burros have been set by most Nevada Field Offices.

The wild horse and burro adoption program needs to be updated each meeting.

Young commented that the Ely field office is talking about a possible land exchange and the possibility of creating a center that could be a holding facility for wild horses. BLM will need partners to help them take care of the animals once they are off the range. Young also added that the Oliver Ranch Interpretive Center is being proposed. BLM could incorporate wild horses and burros into this plan too. The plan for Oliver Ranch will cost \$100,000. Once BLM starts the plan, the RAC will need to be involved.

Updates needed for each meeting by the RAC:

1. Wild horse and burro funding
2. Noxious weeds
3. Ivanpah airport
4. Grazing Standard and Guidelines
5. 3809 Regulations and Implementation
6. Cultural resources
7. Land use planning -Sunrise
8. Wind energy project
9. Proposed gas fired power plants
10. WSAs

Priorities for January:

- SNPLMA--Preliminary discussion of acquisitions and capital improvements--4 to 8 hours
- Revising RAC Charter-1/2 hour
- Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project--Presentation by Robin Tauche 2 hours
- Category updates--1 to 2 hours
- Red Rock NCA General Management Plan
- OHV Comments (Ely will begin scoping for their plan amendment)
- Power & energy project
- Election of officers-1/2 hour

Priorities for March:

- SNPLMA and field tour of some of the properties
- Updates (listed earlier in meeting)
- Finish any necessary January items
- 8100 Monitoring--Give to RAC ahead of time--Brief discussion

Priorities for June:

- Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project
- Lincoln County Land Disposal
- Ely area issues

Priorities for August-Tonopah
–Round Mountain Tour
–Tonopah Plan Amendment ACEC

Morse stressed that the field offices need to get RAC members updates long before the scheduled meeting so members can see the topics that are driving BLM. Field offices will get with the new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson on this issue.

In terms of field manager updates, members discussed the possibility of field managers getting RAC members a bulleted handout before each meeting so updates during the meeting will not take as long as they have in the past.

Hiatt pointed out that Native American concerns have not been addressed in the priorities list. Beck believes that cultural and Native American issues can go together.

Is 8100 discussion for the current year or the budget year? This addresses current year funding.

Helton pointed out that the RAC can work in other places besides at the meeting. If BLM puts together information and gets it to the RAC before the meeting, members can work on it outside of the meeting.

The RAC requested that they be kept informed on the wild horse and burro program since they went to bat for extra funding for this fiscal year. They need to know where things stand on this issue (e.g., AML and dollars).

Selby suggested they could deal with other issues as they arise. This priority list will be included in the minutes. ***Guerrero will retain chart notes and will give each RAC member a typed list.***

Selby told other members that suggested meeting dates are not set in concrete and can be changed, but it seems to work best if they stick with proposed dates. They do need information ahead of time from BLM, as it is very tough to make a decision when they receive materials at the last minute. Information for updates is fine, but the RAC needs important information ahead of time. Then RAC members need to be committed to looking at information before the scheduled meeting.

Selby recessed the meeting at 9:55 a.m., and reconvened it at 10:15 a.m.

RAC member Marta Agee informed members she now had e-mail: agee@penoyer.net

SNPLMA-Mike Dwyer, Project Office Manager

Dwyer told members that he wants to work with the RAC on other expenditures for SNPLMA:

Capital improvements

Parks and trails

Multi-species habitat plan

Dwyer introduced other SNPLMA group members: Tom Kuekes from the Forest Service; Dick Birger with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Complex; Bill Dickinson, National Park Service, Lake Mead NRA; and Alan O'Neill, newly appointed Executive Director of Outside Las Vegas Foundation.

Dwyer directed the RAC to look at the set of tables they had been given at the start of the meeting. These properties have been nominated for acquisition in Round 2; Capital Improvement Nominations (Dwyer has handout).

The question was asked as to what is the definition of Capital Improvements? Dwyer answered that it is something you have to build, but the SNPLMA group needs to define this meaning further. Federal partners need to take a look at this. The improvement needs to increase the value of the property. Restoration could count as a capital improvement. The Act does not define capital improvement, but the auditor has given them a few guidelines.

Dwyer commented that there is also a fine line in what they can use for operational money and what they cannot. They cannot use fee money for staff (day-to-day maintenance). The fear is that if we use fee money, Congress will see it as an opportunity to reduce our base funding.

Helton commented that the question arises that if you are going to use SNPLMA money to build things, why do you need fee money? Dwyer answered that Congress felt it was important to raise fees to get some improvements done. Dwyer used the example that Lake Mead had a group of consultants come in to address issues at Lake Mead. They identified a big backlog of maintenance items that needed to be done. Until the backlog of items is undertaken, the Park Service won't address a new building. The SNPLMA group will work with other agencies to help with monies for the backlog because the needs are larger than available funding. The laws require that you leverage money from other sources and SNPLMA is only one source for funding.

Two subcommittees have been set up to work through the capital improvement proposals before they come back to the working group. They will take a look at the nature of the project, if it benefits the public, and if it benefits visitors? They will come up with what they believe is the highest priority.

Round 2 differs from Round 1 in that the SNPLMA group put nominations together for Round 1 and the Secretary approved the list.

The group will try to squeeze the **Water Safety Center** into Round 1 because the Nevada Department of Wildlife is offering to share expenses. The executive committee will have to authorize this as a Round 1 project.

Dwyer commented that the group does not want to get into a situation where something is approved and they don't have money to maintain it.

Round 1 is already funded. Round 2 is what is proposed right now. One RAC member commented that the list is confusing because we call it "round" instead of saying the short list. Was there consideration for all older projects needing work and the priority they should take? The SNPLMA group relies on managers as there is no scoring. This part of the process is very subjective and we need the group's best professional opinion.

Dwyer told RAC members that for Round 2 it would be important to add safety as a priority. In terms of Lake Mead, the priority is to add to existing projects and not to create new projects, but they will address new issues such as new porta-potties for certain areas because of the heavy use parts of the lake receives. They will only address new issues when there is an overriding need.

Beck asked Dwyer if the RAC could get more detailed information for expenditures as the figures presented look pretty general? Dwyer commented that the agencies come up with the costs so they are a ball park figure. The amount they approved for expenditures is up to the amount shown as an estimated expenditure. RAC members stated they would like to see the actual amount spent for each project and would like a follow up discussion.

Dwyer stated that according to the Act only \$5 million worth of projects can be undertaken. The group put the projects in priority order and figured how far this money would go. This is the only category they are limited to what they can spend.

Parks and trails has no limitations. ***Provide RAC with Round 1 results.***

Hiatt commented that the SNPLMA has a lot of money to spend over time. Everyone involved in the process really needs to evaluate all plans.

Kyle Canyon Visitor Center Lead Paint Remediation—Lead-based paint will be removed from all historic buildings. They will have an interim visitors center that was funded in Round 1. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) priority is to restore the small cabin-or re-create it.

Birger told members that the FWS needs to take a look at the whole mission of Ash Meadows. It was clearly created for native species, but they are trying to build an understanding and appreciation for the whole area. FWS suffers from the public not understanding their whole

mission. Beck is glad to see Ash Meadows on the list because she wants to see cultural issues finally addressed and would like to give the public an opportunity to appreciate the whole area. Dickinson commented that they tried to provide diversity of cultural resource projects that would provide for more than one user group.

Dwyer pointed out that this is not the only list they are going to try to fund. Kuekes put together "Pillars of Support," which is a four-page document which shows all funding sources and the role of each of these sources (what they are used for). No single source of funding will allow managers to meet the challenges they have before them.

Birger said most of the FWS appropriated funds are used for habitat improvement.

Dwyer asked the group if they would like notebooks on the details of all projects. If so, RAC members will receive two more notebooks of information.

Young pointed out that she believes item number 9 is a very important issue as it is definitely a safety issue with the animals getting on the highway. There is going to be a fatality out there before long. She believes this should be further up on the priority list as this is a life threatening issue. Are there some general management plans that would fit into this?

Guerrero handed out a sheet of Capital Improvements for Round 1 (Guerrero has copy), plus the Land Acquisition Expenditure Schedule.

Dwyer pointed out to members that the list they are considering is the implementation of priorities that would not occur until May which is when money will be available.

One RAC member asked how much money would be available for improvements for Round 2? Dwyer said he was not sure of that figure at the moment, but that announcement will be made close to the May auction.

New RAC member Mark Ioli asked Dwyer if an agency has a project they want to get started on, does the agency need to get preapproval? Dwyer answered no, because all agencies do end up with some money for projects. They can use this money in the hope they will be reimbursed from SNPLMA.

Are projects all done on a competitive bid basis with in-house staff? Dwyer commented that the upcoming projects will be contracted out. Morse stated that projects haven't even been engineered yet. Funding for these projects is dependent on future land sales and they won't know the income from those sales until the sale takes place and they receive the balance of outstanding money.

Dwyer stated that the account is very dynamic and there is money coming in constantly so they do need to weigh the balance of the other two areas (parks & trails and multi-species.) as they may want to use money here.

Agee asked if there was any leeway in how long they can hold on to funds? Dwyer stated there was no deadline because it never goes to the Treasury.

RAC members stated they would like to know the actual available money for projects since so many projects have been on hold. There is a definite need to show potential projects up front.

For Round 2-Parks, Trails and Natural Area Nominations, four local governments and the four federal agencies worked through this list. The total comes to a significant amount of money-- \$141,168,000. When they were working the list, they tried to link federal projects with local projects. Five actual projects were just put on this list to discuss at a later date.

Selby asked if the figures shown were really ball park figures? Do the actual proposals contain more information? Dwyer answered that sometimes the proposals do contain more information but not always.

Dwyer told the RAC that the press had been given the amount shown on their handout, but they were told the books were available at SNPLMA Project Office. Selby asked Dwyer if any summary materials given to the public and the press (e.g., the handout) could describe proposed projects a little more accurately and fully. Otherwise, the over-simplified project names made it look like very little was being purchased for very large amounts of money.

Helton commented that the SNPLMA group doesn't even know what the project entails, so how can RAC members?

Ioli commented that the project should provide a detailed proposal before it is approved to continue through the nomination process. The SNPLMA group needs detailed information up front.

O'Neill explained the proposed bike corridor around Las Vegas. The proposed bike corridor needs to have major links to federal trails system verified (any part of the corridor could link up with the major system). The idea is for people to be able to access public lands in a corridor. The River Mountain proposal was more detailed. Round 2 is more detailed than Round 1 because the public didn't have much time to produce the information in Round 1.

Selby suggested that the group put as much detail as possible in descriptions made available to the public, especially regarding the dollar amounts requested. The funding requested should include assumptions and calculations, even if the requested amount is only a rough estimate. The point is that someone had to make some assumptions to come up with the rough estimate, and the RAC needs to see those assumptions. Dickenson stated that should be no problem to submit with the description because the proposing agencies have to make assumptions and calculations to come up with the rough estimates anyway.

Dwyer acknowledged that they had received great comments from the RAC and they have time to implement these suggestions.

Helton suggested the group look at what each project is trying to accomplish (e.g, to save lives or expand the trail system) and base their decisions on priorities. He commented that he would really like to have the details on why he should consider each priority item. Then he could take a look at the dollar figure and what would be accomplished.

Guerrero agrees with RAC comments as he is the one that receives the comments and questions from the public. BLM puts together a detailed presentation for the Secretary to make a decision so we can do this for the RAC too. We don't need to give the RAC tons of paper, but with a detailed description with definitive cost figures. We want to be defensible in what we do as far as the public is concerned.

Helton believes we should turn the responsibility back to the people that submit these nominations. If they cannot get the necessary information, forget the proposal. We should follow procedures similar to grant forms and state what the person/agency needs to submit to us for a proposal.

Wickersham asked Dwyer what was his expectation of the RAC today and in the future? Do you want individual endorsements by project or help to determine priorities by project? What is the RAC's responsibility? He also asked the other RAC members how much material they really wanted to review? He cautioned that they should be careful for what they wish for because then the accountability of this group increases. An explanation of the project greatly helps them with the concept of ideas.

Dwyer answered that they had received very good comments back from the RAC on how to improve the process. He also would like RAC members to engage on the issues (i.e., what they like and don't like, what should they work through, what should be given a priority and what shouldn't). The RAC should give the SNPLMA group advice at a level they feel comfortable with.

Selby stated that the group may be wanting consensus from RAC members, but if that doesn't work, then Dwyer can educate the RAC members, they in turn can educate their constituents, and then come back to the RAC meetings with their constituents' comments.

Helton pointed out that this group was established as a group to reach a consensus, and make recommendations. These expenditures ultimately go to the Secretary of Interior to approve. Helton doesn't believe he needs as much detail as some of the other members. If RAC members bring back their constituents comments to the meetings, it is up to the members to see if they can come to agreement on recommendations on the list. If so, then they can take to the SNPLMA group to send on to the Secretary. The SNPLMA group is accountable for expenditure of monies.

Young asked Dwyer if the project office can provide the RAC with a one-page description of details so they can make a decision, because it isn't the RACs job to get involved with the actual accounting of each project. They need a reasonable estimation of cost to fit into their evaluation

of priorities. It should be up to SNPLMA group to be accountable for money spent not the RACs. The RAC should just comment on priorities, not actual dollars to be spent. Selby asked members if the RAC should try to come up with a consensus of projects that Dwyer will give them in January? They could list items they come to consensus on and then list those items that they don't agree on.

Agee commented that she felt like she was on the first inch of a learning curve. There is so much money to expend and the scope is huge. She would rather see the RAC develop some broad development projects because they cannot possibly assess the merits of each project. This scope is a long ways from the purpose of the RAC. Maybe they need to reassess their roles. Agee asked Dwyer if he was talking eminent domain of private land or what.

Helton asked if we have to go through a condemnation process on parks and trails or other capital improvement projects.

Shelby asked members what they wanted to do. Hiatt suggested they should prioritize 20 projects. The RAC could have three levels of the approval process: 1) go for project; 2) maybe go for project; and 3) no way. They could give these ratings to projects and prioritize according to majority.

Mellington believes Hiatt's approach is a good suggestion because there is no way the RAC can keep up with the SNPLMA group. The RACs need to jointly develop criteria on how to give priority to proposals. It's hard for the RAC to say they know the process better than land managers. There needs to be a generic process. As far as the financial part of the process, no one is certified to do this. He believes this is way outside of the bounds of where the RAC should be. The best process would be Hiatt's suggestion. Ioli suggested they could rank as far as consensus.

Mull stated he agrees with Dwyer. The SNPLMA group has obviously done their work to develop a list. The RAC needs to rely on this group.

Agee commented that the RAC category groups don't really have a consensus opinion from industry throughout Nevada. Members are really dealing with personal preferences instead of what they were sent to represent. Wickersham pointed out that a person can always abstain from voting. Chicas believes this group has come up with some good projects. Helton stated the he is not going back to his category group and tell them what is proposed. He will go to them and ask them what they think should be promoted (e.g., with expenditure of funds, how should money be spent as far as categories). Then the RAC should let the specialists decide what is the best way to spend the money.

Hiatt reminded everyone of what happened when the press told the public how much money was being spent on restrooms for a certain project. What would the whole nation think of these projects if they saw these estimated figures? Dwyer said that was a good point, but anything regarding public safety should go to the top of the list.

Selby asked Dwyer if Hiatt's proposed method of ranking ("yes," "no," or "maybe") would be sufficient for the SNPLMA group? Dwyer answered yes. The RAC can recommend that they go with a package, if that meets their broader objectives, or whatever their preference would be.

Beck commented that she was uncomfortable with putting projects into three categories or saying safety comes first. The RAC needs to give consideration to the list they have been given. She just doesn't see how they will get a handle on these issues.

Dwyer suggested the RAC take more time at the next meeting to have him discuss more on how they can absorb all of this information and resolve some of the issues.

Selby stated they should at least try to come to consensus, because the RAC has been able to do so in the past. Then they could agree to disagree on the remaining issues.

Young suggested that if the RAC cannot come to consensus, they should give Dwyer information on their concerns. Beck suggested that maybe the RAC could agree on the lowest priorities.

Dwyer asked members to take a look at the last table on the multi-species plan. He would like individual comments. He will discuss with the RAC in more depth at a later time.

The RAC received a list from Guerrero on Round 1 but they don't see full expenditures and Clark County is receiving \$4.2 million to develop lands.

Dickenson told RAC members that he has been listening to the RAC today, and he can see they need more information in their package so they can help the public understand the process. They do provide details in the final package, but the RAC is the first sounding board for the process and can sometimes give them a heads up on what they need to come up with for information. He really appreciates their comments and suggestions.

There being no further discussion, Selby adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

DATE:
January 25, 2001

APPROVED BY:
Susan Selby, Vice-Chairperson
Mojave-Southern Great Basin
Resource Advisory Council

Minutes provided by Debra Kolkman, Office of Communications, BLM Nevada State Office

Attachments:

***LAS VEGAS FIELD OFFICE (PHIL GUERRERO) MAINTAINS COPIES OF ATTACHMENTS.**