

A B l e s s i n g o r a B o t h e r ?

Towns and cities next to national parks, monuments and other public lands are typically rural and invariably affected one way or another. These “gateway communities” are entrances to the public lands and can face political, environmental and cultural impacts. Most gateway communities welcome a boost in economic prosperity through tourism, but they want to retain their cultural flavor, too.

The biggest challenge Nevada’s gateway communities face is to attract tourists and meet their needs. The adage “build it and they will come” sounds good, but development money and federal dollars are scarce.

The Department of the Interior, through the leadership of Secretary Gale Norton, is committed to working with local communities to enhance the visitor experience on public lands. That support includes overcoming jurisdictional conflicts among local, state and federal agencies, and protecting lands from being spoiled by overuse.

“Gateway communities are the welcome wagons for many public land attractions,” said Norton. “People come through these communities to get to the public lands. Each community has it’s own personality. We want federal management plans to meet the needs of the community, the visitors and the environment.”

Three of the communities BLM works with to promote the economy and welcome visitors to the public lands are Winnemucca, Elko and Beatty. Winnemucca’s Chamber of Commerce is an active partner in promoting outdoor recreation such as mountain biking at the Bloody Shins trail system and off-highway racing. The community is eager to develop itself as a gateway community to the Black Rock Desert National Conservation Area, too.

Public lands around Elko provide outstanding opportunities

for hunting, hiking, fishing and snow sports. The BLM is working with the community to build a new California Trail Interpretive Visitor’s Center.

“Gateway communities don’t want to be told ‘eat your vegetables, its what’s good for you.’ All we ask is some say in our communities that are by public lands.”

– Bob Warren

Beatty is a gateway to Death Valley National Park. Despite the availability of services, tourists didn’t stop or spend much time in the community. Beatty has formed a committee to develop a plan to protect habitat for the Amargosa toad, build an extensive trail system, picnic areas and a visitor’s center, and market the area’s good birding opportunities. The group has the support of many partners, including county, state and federal agencies and conservation groups.

The National Alliance of Gateway Communities (NAGC) is a nonprofit organization for communities that serve as gateways for millions of tourists to America’s public lands. The goal of the

organization is to form productive partnerships among Federal agencies and the community to increase the economic vitality of an area while maintaining and preserving the social, cultural and environmental values of its citizens.

Bob Warren, chairman for NAGC, summed up local sentiment at last year’s Gateway Community conference: “Gateway communities don’t want to be told ‘eat your vegetables, its what’s good for you.’ All we ask is some say in our communities that are by public lands.”

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State Director's Comments



Borrowing from the words of Bob Dylan, "The times they are a-changin'." Two highly valued members of BLM Nevada's management team have moved on, one to a new job in Washington, D.C., and one to retirement.

Associate State Director Jean Rivers Council is going to work on the Washington office staff of Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski. Jean's impressive array of skills will be an asset in her new position. During her nine years with the BLM in Nevada, Jean was instrumental in gaining BLM Washington Office support to increase fiscal resources to Nevada programs. She improved the quality of the work environment for all employees. During her tenure the BLM offices in Battle Mountain, Winnemucca, Ely, Carson City, Tonopah, Las Vegas and Reno moved into new leased buildings.

Tom Leshendok, deputy state director for minerals, retired with 31 years of federal service. He leaves an impressive legacy of cooperative approaches resulting in sound program guidance for those who use the land and those who are land managers and regulators. Tom is known for the partnerships he forged with the State and with individuals and companies throughout the United States. He also greatly influenced geothermal and oil and gas leasing and development, and the abandoned mine lands closure program.

Summer brings an upswing in recreational use of the public lands. Nevada is third highest in visitations among the states with BLM-managed lands. Last year there

were 6.4 million visitations to public lands in Nevada. That is up by more than a million since 2000. As visitation to the public lands increases, local economies around the state should see a boost in tourism revenue.

Many of the activities and events on public lands are commercial ventures. Commercial users must obtain a special recreation permit from the BLM. Last year the BLM Nevada received around \$2 million in special recreation permit fees. A little over half was collected at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area for guide services, weddings and other events.

BLM Nevada has the distinction of issuing the highest number of special recreation permits in the Bureau and managing the largest special recreation permitted event in the Bureau—the Burning Man. Through the recreation fee demonstration program, Nevada is able to keep 100 percent of the permit fees at the site where the funds are being collected for improvements and maintenance.

Fighting noxious weeds is another summertime activity that is finally getting the attention it deserves. I see partnerships forming and continuing to grow as recreationists, ranchers and local governments join the fight to stop economically debilitating invasions of noxious weeds like leafy spurge, tall whitetop and yellow starthistle. The BLM is working closely with the University of Nevada's Cooperative Extension Service and many others to knock back the invasions we already have in the state.

As we prepare and watch to see what this year's fire season will bring, crews are busy taking actions to reduce the fuels that could feed a fire in areas where people live next to public lands. Our goal is to prevent catastrophic fires that burn property and threaten lives. Once again, with the help of our many

partners, these kinds of projects are being accomplished.

I encourage everyone to visit your public lands. Natural beauty, solitude, exercise, relaxation or excitement—there is something for everyone. Public lands USA—use, share and appreciate.

– Bob Abbey

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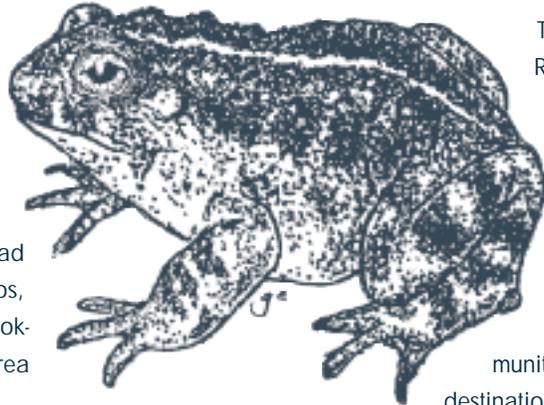
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ENDANGERED SPECIES

My Folks Went to Beatty; All I Got Was a Toad T-shirt

The town of Beatty is a gateway to Death Valley National Park. Tourists drive through, but don't stop for long, if at all. Capitalizing on their location next to the park has been elusive for local businesses.

Then the toad situation came up. In the mid-90s, a petition was filed to list the Amargosa toad under the Endangered Species Act. Chunky, short-legged and warty, *Bufo nelsoni* lives only along a narrow swath through the Oasis Valley and Beatty. The waters and mud the toad calls home were overrun with wild burros, crowdads and tamarisk. The BLM was looking to designate the toad's habitat an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC).



Cal-Poly State University in San Luis Obispo is under contract to develop a project design. The University of Nevada at Las Vegas and the American Landscape Architect Association are partners in the project.

The town is requesting a 6,300-acre Recreational and Public Purpose Lease for public lands managed by the BLM. Nye County has asked the Army Corps of Engineers to prepare a feasibility study on the Amargosa River.

Have they got it going on or what? Beatty is emerging as a successful gateway community, and, who knows, may become a tourist destination in its own right.

Possible ACEC designation alarmed the community and jump started them to action. The community started working with many agencies and groups to protect the habitat and avoid ACEC designation. That success is driving the community to build on their efforts to create a thriving community based on their vision of what they want their town to be like.

The list of cooperating agencies, governments and groups is as long as your arm, but the strength of the effort derives from a core group of local volunteers. An assessment of the community and strategy to develop tourism helped focus the community on projects that would be an appropriate fit.

Recreational trails are a centerpiece of the planning for along the river and on public lands around town, as well as an old rail line to the ghost town of Rhyolite that could be converted to a trail. Birding along the riverbed and at properties owned by The Nature Conservancy in Oasis Valley may increase since the Audubon Society designated the Oasis Valley an "Important Birding Area."

Grants and matching funds help with planning habitat restoration, trails and marketing. The Landscape Architect Department of

To find out more about the Beatty Community Planning Project, call the Beatty Chamber of Commerce at (775) 553-2130.

Gateway Community Assistance Programs

Catalog of federal domestic assistance programs:

www.cfda.gov

National Heritage Areas:

www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas

National Park Service:

www.nps.gov

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA)
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

National Alliance of Gateway Communities:

Phone (202) 251-6845

W I L D L I F E

Big Brother Is For The Birds

It's ten o'clock, do you know where the sage grouse are?

With the help of satellite telemetry and VHF radio transmitters, we may have the answer to that question for nineteen sage grouse in the Hubbard Vineyard Allotment north of Wells.

Using satellite telemetry to track sage grouse is an experimental study to find out the seasonal movements of sage grouse and identify nesting areas. The area selected for the study provides critical seasonal habitat for sage grouse. The area is also the site of an ongoing sharp-tailed grouse re-establishment study.

A long-term decline of sage grouse populations throughout North America has increased the potential for listing sage grouse as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. A listing would have the potential to affect most public land users and could have profound impacts on livestock grazing throughout the West.

"We expect to gain a better understanding of the potential impacts that livestock grazing may have on sage grouse nesting habitat," said Ray Lister, wildlife biologist with the Elko Field Office. "Increasing our knowledge of sage grouse seasonal movements and the specific habitat parameters being selected for nesting will help us develop adaptive grazing management strategies within the Hubbard Vineyard allotment and elsewhere in Elko County."

The yearlong study is a partnership among the Nevada Division of Wildlife, Boise State University, Idaho State University and the BLM Elko Field Office. BLM is working on national strategy that will mesh with state sage grouse conservation strategies and county conservation plans. The emphasis is being placed on local involvement and decisions using current sage grouse science.

- Mike Brown
Elko Field Office



Sage grouse fitted with a tracking device is expected to provide information about the potential impacts of livestock grazing in sage grouse nesting habitat.

S A G E G R O U S E

Build It and They Will Come?



Is an overhead transmission line like an open stool at a diner counter for golden eagles and ravens scanning the treeless sagebrush plain for sage grouse du jour?

That answer to that question is part of the mitigation for the 345,000-volt electric transmission line Sierra Pacific Power Company is building to link the existing Falcon Substation near Beowawe and Mt. Wheeler Power's Gonder Substation near Ely. The 180-mile line, expected to cost \$110.5 million, is a response to increase infrastructure to deliver energy to meet peak period demands by the summer of 2004.

The mitigation study is a funding partnership among Sierra Pacific, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, UNR Agricultural Experiment Station and BLM Nevada. The study will focus on the effects of transmission lines on sage grouse populations and habitat use.

"We have anecdotal and limited research evidence implicating transmission lines in the disappearance of sage grouse leks out to a distance of two miles," said Mike Stamm, BLM wildlife biologist.

"This will be the first large-scale anti-perching study on the impact transmission lines may have on sage grouse. The anti-perching devices are designed to discourage perching by raptors that prey on adult sage grouse and ravens that destroy sage grouse eggs.

"We won't know until we do the homework," said Stamm, "but if the anti-perching devices are effective in preventing depredation on sage grouse, placing these devices on transmission lines could be one of the most cost effective, least controversial sage grouse conservation measures that we can take."

Something as simple as an anti-perching device could be effective in preventing depredation on sage grouse. The device will be placed on the cross bars of the overhead transmission line. Transmission lines traverse sagebrush habitats that may be nesting or feeding grounds for sage grouse. Raptors and ravens use power pole cross bars as a perch, which may make it easier for them to prey on sage grouse and their eggs.

O U T D O O R

Sometimes You Have To Pay To Play

One of the best things about outdoor recreation on the public lands is that, for the most part, it's free. This is especially true in primitive areas where there is low user demand. High use areas lead to fee charges because services—restrooms, trash cleanup, ranger patrols—become necessary for public health and safety.

To hold an event on the public lands for competitive or recreation-related commercial enterprises requires a special recreation permit. In some cases the BLM is able to waive permit and fee requirements, but generally a permit applicant must:

- prepare an analysis of potential environmental impacts.
- pay an appropriate fee.
- obtain property damage/personal injury/comprehensive public liability insurance.
- post a refundable cash bond or other guarantee to pay for damages.

The range of activities and events for which BLM issues special recreation permits for indicate that the public lands provide something for everyone—high-speed races with off-highway vehicles, guided hunting, mountain biking competitions, horse endurance and trail rides, archery competitions, rocket launches, re-enactment events, dog trials, rock climbing guides, and special events.

By organizing areas with the highest demand for special recreation permits into recreation fee demonstration project areas, the

BLM Nevada is able to keep 100 percent of the money collected for the permit in the area that receives the user impacts rather than the money going to the Department of the Treasury general fund.

"I got so many calls to hold events on the playa, I almost started answering the phone 'playa reservations.'"

— Barb Keleher

recreation planner Barb Keleher said she felt like answering her phone "playa reservations." Fees collected for permits in the NCA last year were over \$580,000, mostly from the Burning Man Event. Fees collected for permits for the area outside the NCA were about \$2,700.

The demand for outdoor recreational opportunities is growing along with population increases in the West. More people are looking at the public lands as their outdoor recreational playground. The increase in recreation visits poses a management challenge to the BLM, since the cost of providing amenities and other services has dramatically outpaced the BLM's recreation budget.

Permit fees are charged one of three ways: cost recovery of actual expenses for monitoring and administering the event; three percent of gross receipts;

or \$4 per person per day. The method with the highest return is the one charged.



You never know what you'll see at the Burning Man Festival. The special recreation permit BLM issues for the event is the largest in the Bureau. One hundred percent of the money collected for the permit is reinvested in management of the Black Rock-High Rock Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area. PHOTO BY DAVE WORLEY

RECREATION

Last year, the BLM Nevada received around \$2 million in special recreation permit fees. The majority was generated in southern Nevada, where nearly \$1.3 million was collected at the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. BLM permits 22 guide services at Red Rock Canyon, and last year issued 25 event permits and nearly 400 wedding permits.

BLM Nevada issues the highest number of special recreation

permits in the Bureau and also manages the largest special recreation permitted event in the Bureau—the Burning Man Event.

The money collected through special recreation permits helps the BLM protect the public land resources and meet the demands and expectations of public land users. It is important that sponsors of competitive or commercial events pay a reasonable fee to offset BLM's costs to plan and manage group activities.

Mined Lands Morph into Bike Trails

A mine reclamation is evolving into an outstanding system of mountain bike trails in the Battle Mountain area. Jeremy Jarnecke, BLM hydrologist by trade and mountain biker by choice, enlisted the help of Lander County and Newmont Mining Corporation to develop the trails.

The Copper Basin Mountain Bike Trail System is off Interstate 80, about two miles south of Battle Mountain. The historic Battle Mountain Mining District and Copper Basin Mine are located in the center of the system.

From the mid 1860s, the Copper Basin Mine went through three generations of mining technology to extract copper, silver, and gold. Mining in Copper Basin has run its course and much of the facilities are being reclaimed by Newmont.

Mining activities in the region have left an expansive network of pack trails and jeep roads in the Battle Mountains. This network presents mountain bikers endless possibilities of riding experiences. The Copper Basin trails wind through sagebrush-covered canyons and across rocky ridgelines with elevations ranging from 4,500 to 6,000 feet. The dry climate allows riders access to the trails all year. Fourteen miles of trail are completed, offering five miles of beginner and nine miles of advanced rider terrain. All trails are marked with signs and route designations.

According to Jarnecke, future trail development will be on the Long Canyon Loop, 12 miles of “sweet” singletrack stretching into the Battle Mountains. The goal is to complete the loop this fall.

Maps of the Copper Basin Mountain Bike Trails and the surrounding Battle Mountain Range are available at the BLM's Battle Mountain Field Office.



Dill Canyon Trail is mostly singletrack that climbs up a canyon and past rocky buttes for a fast and technical descent through a narrow canyon. This trail is also the access for the Playground Trail. For those looking for an extended ride, the Limestone Wash Extension Trail adds three miles to the Dill Canyon Trail. A short and steep lung-burning climb pours over into Limestone Wash, for a fast and tight descent with banked turns, similar to the Dill Canyon descent.

The Playground Trail offers mesa-top panoramic views of the Shoshone Range and the Reese and Humboldt River basins. Don't look at the scenery too long though; this singletrack is a series of technical rock obstacles and ledges that demand constant attention. From the Playground, a steep and rocky jeep trail will land you back at the trailhead.

– Diane Hendry and Jeremy Jarnecke
Battle Mountain Field Office



Wild Horse and Burro Adoptions and Activities

Are you a person with an empty nest, looking for relaxation, recreation and a faithful companion? Some one who can take you on trail or buggy rides? Consider making a wild horse or burro part of your family. This summer and fall is a great time to investigate adopting and beginning to train your new friend for life. Adoptions and shows are scheduled throughout the state.

The **Western States Wild Horse and Burro Expo** kicks off at the Livestock Events Center, Reno, on July 18-20. Clinics, a horse show, demonstrations, a concert, dance and barbeque are planned. Expo information is at www.wildhorse-andburroexpo.com. The National Wild Horse and Burro Foundation convention includes workshops for youth and wild horse adoption mentors, a foundation dinner and field trips. An adoption is slated for Sunday, July 20. Adoption information is available through the BLM's National Wild Horse and Burro Center at Palomino Valley, (775) 475-2222.

On August 1, the focus turns to the television when Nevada BLM again presents an opportunity to adopt wild horses gathered from a variety of herd management areas in the state.

The nationally advertised adoption is conducted from Superior Livestock Auction studios in Fort Worth, Texas, while the animals are comfortably housed at a BLM facility near Fallon. Photographs of the horses are posted on the Nevada wild horse and burro website reached via www.nv.blm.gov. All adopters must be pre-approved and may receive a bidder's number by calling 1 (800) 633-6094.

The season winds down in southern Nevada when the National Wild Horse Association sponsors a show October 11 and 12 at the Henderson Saddle Association facility near Boulder Highway and Sunset Road. Sunday's adoption is coordinated by BLM's Las Vegas office, (702) 515-5000.

The National Wild Horse and Burro Center at Palomino Valley, north of Reno-Sparks, continues to adopt horses and burros by appointment. The facility is open Monday through Friday, except for Federal holidays, but anyone can view the horses daily from a dirt road that skirts the facility.

- Maxine Shane
Nevada State Office

Las Vegas Based Group Wins National Award

Billie Young, Craig Leets and Shari Warren of the National Wild Horse Association (NWhA) received a BLM "Making a Difference" National Volunteer Award.

NWhA was recognized for the 25,000 volunteer hours they donated last year on a variety of projects including:

- Maintaining and monitoring springs
- Monitoring rangeland health
- Rescuing of wild horses and burros (NWhA has successfully raised more than 800 orphaned foals to adoption age in the last 10 years with a less than one percent mortality rate.)
- Assisting with wild horse and burro gathers
- Sponsoring an annual wild horse and burro show
- Providing wild horse and burro pre-adoption clinics and screenings
- Assisting with registration and delivering animals at adoptions
- Sponsoring monthly post-adoption clinics and compliance checks

In addition to the hands-on projects they are famous for, NWhA is active in public awareness and education programs concerning wild horses and burros.

- Kirsten Cannon

Las Vegas Field Office



PHOTO BY FRED W. CORNELIUS

Rhonda Serr and her wild horse Caesar carry the American flag in the 2002 Reno Rodeo. Serr is one of two members of the 60 member Reno Rodeo Flag team that rides a wild horse. Caesar, a liver chestnut horse, was gathered from the Nevada Wild Horse Range on the Nellis Air Force Range. Serr's family adopted Caesar from the BLM in 1991. Serr and Caesar competed in barrel racing and pole bending at junior and high school rodeos, and won the Open Division, Champion Reserve at the National Wild Horse and Burro Show in 2001 and 2002.

BEAUTY

Keep the Beauty; Reduce the Fire Risk

If you are a resident of the Alpine County towns of Markleeville or Woodfords in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of eastern California, two facts define your lifestyle: outdoor recreation and tourism are the basis of your economy, and your residence sits in a fire-prone wildland urban interface.

The BLM's Carson City Field Office manages about 19,000 acres of public land that backs up to numerous parcels of private property near these towns. The scenic characteristics that make lands in Alpine County a desirable place to live and recreate also make it a difficult place to suppress wildland fire. The vegetation consists of a diverse mix of Jeffrey pine, white fir, pinyon pine and mountain brush. Add summer lightning storms and strong winds to the rugged terrain with limited access and you have the annual risk of large, intense wildland fires.

Periodic severe fires in this landscape are inevitable. Alpine County has a history of large intense wildfires. In 1984 and '85, 19,000 acres burned and in 1986 and '87 there were two more 6,000-acre fires and 24 residences were destroyed near the community of Woodfords. The BLM's Carson City Field Office, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, Alpine County and local residents are concerned about the risk of intense wildland fires damaging private and public property values. In response to these concerns BLM is working with the Forest Service and Alpine County to reduce fire fuels in the area.



Small piles of trimmed branches and shrubs are burned when winds and temperatures are low. Reducing the amount of fuels available can lessen the severity of a fire.



Fire crews trim low growing branches that could provide a "ladder" for fire to move up into a tree.

Since 1990, more than 700 acres of BLM-managed land in Alpine County have been treated using prescribed fire and mechanical treatments in strategic locations to reduce the severity of potential future wildfires and improve timber stand health, vigor and resistance to fire, insects and disease.

The Markleeville Fuels Treatment Project was completed this past winter on public land adjacent to Markleevillage near the community of Markleeville. The project was to reduce crown fire potential and enhance fire suppression capabilities adjacent to existing residences and a new residential development under construction. Markleevillage is near the mouth of a canyon and the surrounding area is primarily roadless national forest land, which includes the Mokelumne Wilderness Area. The project included thinning, biomass removal, hand piling and pile burning to remove ladder fuels and open up the overstory canopy.

Local residents, Alpine County and the Forest Service were supportive of the project from its conception to completion for good reason: there is now a reduced threat to the life blood of their economy.

- Mark Struble and Tim Roide
Carson City Field Office

One Giant Step Back, One Small Step Forward

Fire crews are thinning selected pinyon and juniper trees in a fire reduction project at Ward Mountain that is moving forward in a greatly reduced version of planned, multi-year urban interface projects at Ward Mountain and the Mt. Wilson Guest Ranch.

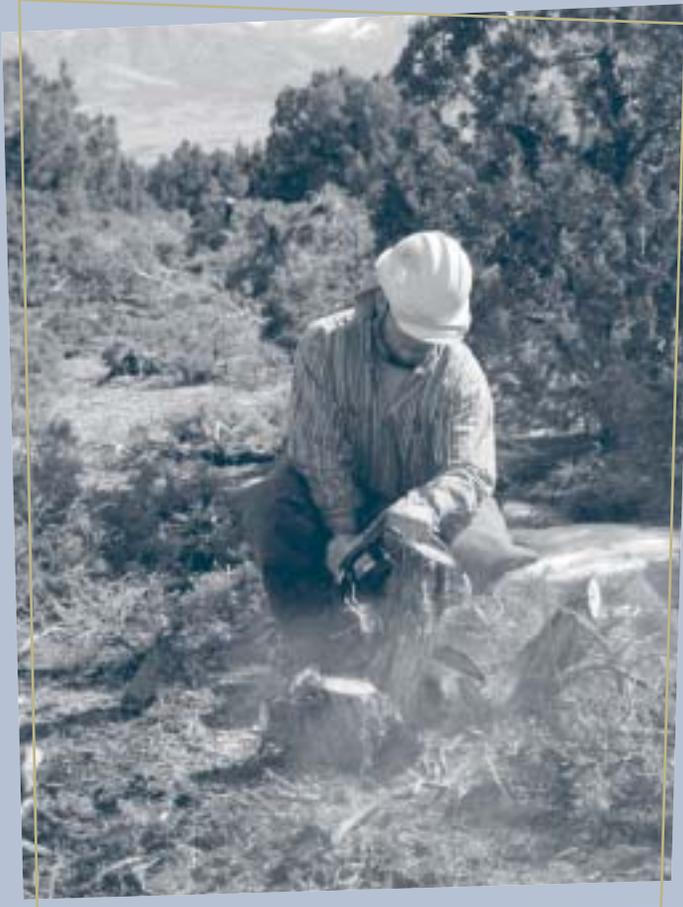
The BLM reached a settlement agreement with environmental groups by agreeing to prepare a district-wide resource management plan and environmental impact statement on the projects.

“Time wise and money wise it is better to come to an agreement on the projects so we can get started rather than come to a standstill and fight it out in court,” said Gene Kolkman, Ely field officer manager.

In the settlement, the BLM will implement pre-suppression type projects by installing or widening already existing firebreaks at strategic locations near Ward Mountain and the Mt. Wilson Guest Ranch Community.

The urban interface projects are intended to reduce hazardous fuels buildups that could result in extremely

hot and fast-burning wildland fires. Reducing the fire risk would help protect human life and property as well as help protect watersheds from erosion.



Both projects called for the mechanical thinning and chipping of selected pinyon and juniper trees. The three-year Ward Mountain project would have thinned trees on about 7,200 acres of public lands. The five-year Mt. Wilson Guest Ranch Community project would have thinned trees on about 22,000 acres of public lands in Lincoln County.

The BLM expects the resource management plan will take about two years to complete.

The downsized Mt. Wilson Guest Ranch Community Fire Hazard Reduction Project is scheduled to begin in July, selectively thinning pinyon and juniper trees on about 750 acres of public lands adjacent to the community of about 50 guest homes about 22 miles north of Pioche.

- Chris Hanefeld
Ely Field Office

Northeast RAC Takes on Noxious Weeds

Twenty-five thousand acres and counting—that's roughly the number of acres infested with noxious weeds in the Elko District. There are about 18 species of noxious weeds putting roots down in the district.

Concern with the spread of noxious weeds in the Elko area prompted the Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) to take action. That action was to bring 70 people, representing 20 agencies, political entities and groups, together at a public workshop.

The common goal is to improve partnering, cooperation, and organization. Their mission is to establish a committed partnership with all concerned to control noxious weeds. The group also established a steering committee with representatives from the Elko County Road Department and Board of Commissioners, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, the Spring Creek Region Cooperative Weed Management Area, the mining industry, and the BLM Elko Field Office.

The group formed a Cooperative Weed Management Area with the expectation to improve communication among the various weed control entities in Elko County, as well as to pool financial and physical resources to increase the efficiency of weed control efforts.

"While there are many ecological concerns in northeastern Nevada," said RAC Chairman Vince Garcia, "our RAC feels that noxious weeds is the most significant issue facing public land managers and private land owners." BLM weed specialist Mark Coca said, to him, the top three worst weeds in the Elko area are leafy spurge, Russian knapweed and perennial pepperweed.

"These three may not be the largest infestations, but they are the hardest to control because of their botanical characteristics," said Coca.

Those characteristics include aggressive and extensive root systems, prolific and hardy seeds, and irritating milky secretions or thorns that repel most grazing animals. Cattle and horses won't eat most noxious weeds, but goats will—if they are managed as weed eaters.

"Using goats for weed control can be effective, and the BLM is looking at areas where goats could be used to control weeds," said Coca, "but using goats takes intensive management. A herder needs to be with the goats all the time and the goats must be confined to a specific area."

Other means of control are chemical sprays and mechanical methods to physically remove the plants.

"The spread of noxious weeds can be controlled if a concerted effort is made among public land users," said Coca. "Thanks to the RAC's initiative, leadership from the Cooperative Extension, and the participation of Elko County and many others, we've made a tremendous step forward. We have several joint projects to work on this year."

- Mike Brown
Elko Field Office



Russian Knapweed



Perennial Pepperweed



Leafy Spurge

Nobody Fights Wildfires Until the Dispatcher Sends Them

The public face of wildland firefighting is dramatic:

- Flames leaping through the treetops and jumping across a freeway.
- Soot-faced firefighters clearing a fire line with hand tools.
- Engines racing down a highway toward a distant pillar of smoke.
- An air tanker dropping a load of bright red retardant onto a flaming hillside.

Before the firefighters, engines and air tankers head out into the wildlands of Nevada to battle wildfires, somebody has to send them there. That somebody works long hours in an interagency dispatch center.

Dispatch centers throughout the country work through the partnership and cooperation of state, federal and local governments. In Nevada these cooperators include the BLM, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Nevada Division of Forestry, and local fire departments.

Nevada has five dispatch centers: Minden, Winnemucca, Elko, Ely and Las Vegas. Each center is responsible for managing wildland firefighting resources within its coverage zone. Each center has resources assigned to them such as wildland fire teams, air tankers, hot shot crews and trucks. Services that support the firefighters in the field are also ordered in by the centers, including meal catering, beds, tent cities, portable toilets and showers.

When vegetation is extremely dry, a weather system that generates lots of lightning but little rain can ignite so many large, intense wildfires that local initial attack crews, engines and tankers can quickly be overwhelmed. When adjoining zones can't share resources because they're also overwhelmed, dispatch centers go to a geographic area coordination center for help.

In Nevada, that is the Western Great Basin Coordination Center. The coordination center first looks for additional resources from other zones within Nevada, but when this will not fit the need, they will go to the Eastern Great Basin Coordination Center in Salt Lake City, which manages wildland firefighting resources in most of the rest of the Great Basin.

The next step from there is to the National Interagency Coordination Center in Boise, Idaho.

BLM Nevada has air tanker bases at Stead and Battle Mountain. Single engine air tankers are at airports in Stead, Minden, Winnemucca, Wells and Panaca.

– **Richard Brown**
Nevada State Office



Help slow the spread of noxious weeds.
Report sightings at
www.invaders.nv.blm.gov
Find out about noxious weeds and
other invasive species.

Can We Clone These Two?

For 77-year-old Norman Runyon and wife, 74-year-old Dottie, the first step toward cleaning the BLM Ash Springs Recreation Site is pulling protective rubber gloves over calloused hands.

Arriving daily at dawn, the couple work quickly in the early morning cool, stooping to collect refuse dropped by others the evening prior and kneeling to hand-scrub bathrooms. As shadows shorten toward midday, cooking grills begin to sparkle and picnic tables gleam.

For the Runyons, chopping weeds, raking gravel, and trimming and watering trees at Ash Springs has become a routine that has played itself out daily without falter since the couple became volunteers in July 1997. The daily routine includes a 47-mile roundtrip that begins and ends in their Alamo home less than 10 miles away.

"Norm and Dottie toss everything – cans, trash, tree limbs and weeds – in their pickup truck and haul it each day to the landfill, which is a long way south of Alamo," said Larry Martin, BLM Ely Field Office civil engineer technician. "All we provide them is reimbursement for their mileage."

Located alongside U.S. Highway 93 midway between Las Vegas and Ely, Ash Springs is virtually the only—and hence a popular—stopover for motorists. Southern Nevada's rapid growth is making the site a popular destination in and of itself. The clear warm-water pools and green cottonwood shade beacons—an oasis in the middle of the hot brown desert.

"You have to understand, we really love this place," Norman, a former cowboy and handyman, said.

"Absolutely," agreed Dottie. "For years, us locals took our children here during the summer to relax. Now, we take care of it for others to enjoy as well."

Martin said visitation to the site has quadrupled in the last five years to more than 60,000 people annually. Pollution and incidents of vandalism, meantime, have decreased ten-fold, which he credits to the Runyons.



Warm spring water flow at Ash Springs.

"Not only do Norm and Dottie work hard, they greet visitors pulling through the gate and, believe me, that makes a big difference in people's behavior – no doubt about it," Martin said.

Martin estimates that the Runyon's efforts, estimated at about 3,500 volunteer hours in five years, have resulted in a cost savings to the BLM of at least \$9,600 a

year. Their work also helps to protect critical habitat for the endangered

Pahranagat Roundtail Chub and White River Springfish that inhabit the spring and overflow.

"Norm and Dottie are really special people," said Martin. "We'd love to have more people like them."

Volunteer opportunities abound at the BLM. To find out more about caring for your public lands, call Debra Kolkman at (775) 289-1946.

– Chris Hanefield
Ely Field Office

Be a Friend

The Black Rock Desert has the power to capture the heart and fire the imagination—just ask those who have fallen under its spell. That would be any of the members of the Friends of Black Rock-High Rock, Inc., a group of volunteers who work closely with the BLM to promote stewardship, environmental education and responsible recreation in the Black Rock Desert High-Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area.

Some of the group's good works include rehabilitating sections of roadways, and hauling off thousands of pounds

of trash and debris. The Friends also collect data on visitor use and impacts, restore closed routes in the recently designated wilderness areas, and place signs.

If you'd like to find out more about the Friends of Black Rock, drop by one of their meetings, the third Thursday of every month at Denny's in Sparks, 205 Nugget Avenue near the intersection of I-80 and East McCarran. The Board meeting starts at 5:30 p.m. and the general membership/public meeting starts at 7 p.m.

REHABILITATION

Outside Las Vegas

The Outside Las Vegas Foundation is a private non-profit organization dedicated to caring for the seven million acres of federal public lands surrounding Las Vegas. The goal of the organization is to enhance the quality of life by enriching the outdoor experience for local residents as well as visitors.

A direct relationship exists between the quality of life issues for Las Vegas residents and health of the federal land surrounding the Las Vegas Valley. The importance of public lands will grow as people look for places to reconnect to nature and reduce the pressures of urban living.

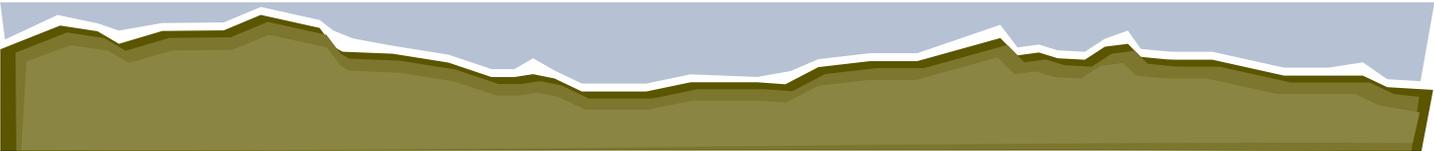
The core group of partners is made up of the four federal land management agencies: National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Outside Las Vegas Foundation has many other partners on their board.

Since its inception four years ago, Outside Las Vegas is implementing an anti-litter and illegal dumping campaign and clean-up program; restoring native plant and animal habitats; protecting natural, historical and archeological sites; developing environmental education programs for Southern Nevada; and creating new trails and maintaining existing trails.

This fall, Outside Las Vegas received Forever Earth, a floating environmental laboratory and learning center at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The primary goal of Forever Earth is to help support and encourage needed environmental monitoring and study at Lake Mead that leads to improvement and protection of environmental conditions and enhanced understanding and learning by school groups, researchers and the public.

- Kirsten Cannon
Las Vegas Field Office

FOREVER EARTH



Wander around Nevada and you'll find figures etched on rocks by Native Americans. Rock art represents some of the significant cultural resources on Nevada's public land. This year, the BLM and the Nevada Rock Art Foundation took the top honor in the Society of American Archaeology's National Archaeology Awareness Week poster contest. More than 40 posters were submitted and judged by the Society's membership of about 2,300 archaeologists from across the United States.

cultural resources in Nevada," said Pat Barker, state archaeologist for the BLM. "The poster helps the BLM and the Nevada Rock Art Foundation promote Archaeology Awareness Week."

Watercolors by Battle Mountain artist Sidne Teske were the basis of the award winning design by MeshCreative. Copies of the poster are available at BLM offices. Copies signed by Teske are available at the Nevada Rock Art Foundation's website, www.nevadarockart.org for \$35.

"Winning best poster raises the awareness of the importance and magnitude of



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