

EASTERN NEVADA Landscape Coalition

Taking a sunshine and fresh air break on their Ely office front steps, the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition's two employees reflect on their first year of building momentum for a 10 million acre landscape project. "We're incorporated with the State of Nevada," said Betsy Macfarlan, the coalition's executive director. "And we're in the process of establishing our non-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service."

Macfarlan's administrative aide, Mindy Seal, is pleased the Coalition's website is up and running and a quarterly newsletter is being published.

Other successes include the election of a six-member board of trustees and progress being made on the ground as a team scientifically determines potential treatment areas by watershed and landscape.

Macfarlan and Seal deserve a moment to bask in the sun. They have a big group to keep informed and working together. The Coalition is a 55-member, community-based partnership with members representing agriculture, conservation, cultural interests, environmental organizations, private enterprise and the broader general public.

A sampling of the coalition's members include Nevada Bighorns Unlimited, Nevada Cattlemen's Association, Nevada Farm Bureau Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Red Rock Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, University of Nevada-Reno, and Utah State University.

Together, coalition members build partnerships, raise funds, and help implement projects. Alongside other public members, the coalition also provides advice to the Bureau of Land Management and other federal agencies, using the best available science.

The coalition is the very model that BLM Director Kathleen Clarke would like her agency to adopt. Clarke flew to Ely in March and spent two days with coalition members.

"I truly believe that conservation efforts in this country are going to work

only when you have such citizen-based stewardship," said Clarke.

The planning phase for any project is critical, necessary, time consuming, and can be frustrating to those who want to get work started on the ground. With the steady guidance of landscape team leader Larry Barngrover, the team



BLM Ely Field Manager Gene Kolkman, left, discusses the importance of the Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project with BLM Director Kathleen Clarke, right, during a March tour of north Spring Valley. Clarke visited Ely and discussed the project with members of the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition. BLM Ely Field Office Fire Management Officer Bill Dunn is pictured in the background.

Tackles Restoration Project

LANDSCAPE COALITION

is finalizing a preliminary plan. The next step is to initiate a watershed assessment plan.

“Once we complete the preliminary plan, we’ll offer a contract for a resource management plan and environmental impact statement,” said Barngrover. “We expect to begin this fall and finish in about two years.”



The Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition’s Administrative Aide Mindy Seal (left) and Executive Director Betsy Macfarlan (right) take a brief break on the office front steps. Joining them is Macfarlan’s dog “Chance,” a border collie-healer mix.

The Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project is the first project of its kind to emerge under the Great Basin Restoration Initiative umbrella. It is an ambitious goal: to restore and maintain, via collaboration, biological and ecological conditions of Great Basin landscapes in eastern Nevada. The Eastern Nevada project ties in with the objectives already established by the larger Great Basin Restoration Initiative. Those broad objectives include achievement of the appropriate plant communities and enhancement of riparian areas.

The Great Basin is one of the West’s most valued treasures, encompassing most of Nevada, the western half of Utah,

lower third of Idaho, southeast corner of Oregon and a narrow strip of eastern California.

As little as 100 years ago, the basin consisted of a complex network of ecosystems, each one supporting a myriad of diverse plant and animal species.

That vast and unique landscape is today changing at an alarming rate, partly because of wildfires the past three years that scorched about 2.8 million acres in Nevada. Also to blame are noxious weeds and exotic annual grasses, like cheatgrass, that, by establishing a foothold where fire has weakened or removed native plant species, are today spreading rapidly across the western states.

Quickly being established in the West is a cheatgrass-fire-cheatgrass cycle of expansion that is threatening watersheds, native plant and animal species, wild horse and livestock forage, and recreational opportunities.

Changing the landscape is a big job, to be achieved through diligence. Macfarlan and Seal understand the importance of momentum, so with a wave to passers-by, they get back to work.

–Chris Hanefeld
Ely Field Office

Check out the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition’s web site at www.nvlc.org

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