

**TESTIMONY ON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
ON THE
CARSON RANGER DISTRICT
HUMBOLDT-TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST
FOR THE
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS**

**March 18, 2010
Carson City, Nevada**

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Carson Ranger District**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and committee members. My name is René Mabe, and I am the Acting District Ranger for the Carson Ranger District for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The Carson Ranger District extends along the eastern front of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, straddling the Nevada and California border with a land base of 368,000 square miles. Of this total land base, 312,000 acres are situated within Washoe, Carson City, and Douglas Counties.

My testimony today will provide the committee information regarding the following programs:

1. Recreation Management;
2. Wildlife Management;
3. Wildfire and Fuels Management; and,
4. Noxious Weeds.

<p>Exhibit D - LANDS Document consists of 7 pages. Entire Exhibit provided. Meeting Date: 03-18-10</p>
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RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Urban interface, or “where the city meets the Forest boundary,” presents community residents with a unique opportunity to experience motorized and non-motorized recreation close to home. This fall, we will open the new Galena Visitor Center and Recreation Area. The center will provide visitors with information and maps of the vicinity. A new intersection through a Federal Highways’ project is being constructed this summer, and exhibits are currently being designed and fabricated. The operation of this new visitor center and recreation area is being made possible by our partnership with Washoe County Parks and Open Space and the Great Basin Institute.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funded several recreation projects, which included renovations to the Mount Rose Campground, trail maintenance, and Wilderness Stewardship projects within the Mount Rose and Carson-Iceberg Wilderness areas. The trail and wilderness work is being accomplished through the Great Basin Institute and Friends of Nevada Wilderness.

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association and the Carson Valley Trails Association have been successful in obtaining State Question 1 grants to fund new trails in the area. This includes the Rim- to-Reno Trail that begins at Mount Rose Summit and extends west to Reno. This non-motorized opportunity will provide 29 miles of new trails along the Carson Range. The Genoa Foothill Trail is being proposed along the Carson Valley front; this trail extends from Kingsbury Grade to Jacks Valley for approximately 24 miles.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

The Carson Ranger District does not have suitable habitat for sage grouse. However, the District has been diligently working to preserve and restore mule deer habitat. In partnership with Nevada Department of Wildlife and volunteers, the District has restored over 4,000 acres of critical winter range for mule deer that had been destroyed in wildfires. These acres have been planted with bitterbrush seed and native grasses.

Maureen Easton, a Wildlife Biologist on the Carson Ranger District, recently received a national award for her collaborative work with the Mule Deer Foundation. Maureen was recognized for her efforts in implementing the Jack's Valley Wildlife Management Area project, which reduced fuels and improved mule deer habitat. The project removed brush on 400 acres to encourage re-sprouting of overgrown and crowded bitterbrush and sagebrush. Native grasses were seeded following the brush treatments to reduce potential cheatgrass invasion.

WILDFIRE AND FUELS MANAGEMENT

Much of the Carson Ranger District provides backyard forest access to the residents of Verdi, Reno, Carson City, Genoa, Minden/Gardnerville, and the Galena area. This urban interface presents both an opportunity to provide recreation for these communities and presents a challenge in managing urban-interface issues associated with wildfire prevention and fuels management.

My esteemed colleague, Acting Bridgeport District Ranger, Grace Newell, has worked over 20 years in fire, and will address this season's outlook, address typical fire behavior on our respective Districts, and discuss how resources are shared across boundaries.

What I will address, however, are my District's suppression resources, fire prevention and education efforts, hazardous fuels reduction, and vegetation management.

We anticipate the continued stability of our fire suppression resources. The District will staff ten engines, and four fire-prevention positions this season. We will continue to host the Black Mountain Interagency Hotshot Crew, and provide the Sierra Front Interagency Dispatch Center with the Center Manager and four dispatcher positions, for a total of 65 fire personnel. This summer, we will break ground on an interagency fire facility, which will include new barracks to house the Hotshot Crew, warehouse, and a parking lot.

The District provides fire education and prevention messages to the public and communities with school and Smokey Bear programs, Fire Safe Council and Chapter meetings, and supporting the Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators. In addition, we also support the "Living With Fire" program, which informs local residents on how they can coexist with the threat of wildfire.

The Carson District has an aggressive hazardous fuels reduction and vegetation management program. Treatments may include conifer thinning, mechanized brush

removal, hand cutting and piling, and sheep grazing to reduce cheatgrass and other non-native fine fuels.

Wood byproducts may be sold as saw logs, personal and commercial firewood, or to the co-generation plants located at Loyalton or the Northern Nevada Corrections Center.

Prescribed fire activities on the District have been largely limited to the burning of slash piles created in fuels reduction and forest health projects.

The Fuels Management program on the District is, in part, funded by the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 or stimulus funding. In 2010, these funding sources have resulted in 1,600 acres of thinning, pile burning, and mechanical removal of hazardous fuels along the Sierra Front. While we have greatly benefitted from the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act funding these past few years, it is important that we all understand that this funding will likely be reduced in the very near future. The lack of funding, however, will not deter our ongoing efforts to continue to collectively reduce hazardous fuels in the many communities and across the many jurisdictional boundaries of the Sierra Front.

Many of our fuels projects are designed to meet multiple resource objectives. Although removal of hazardous fuels may be the primary objective, many of our projects result in improved forest health and enhanced wildlife habitat. A few examples of this include:

- The Clear Creek Fuels Reduction and Ecosystem Enhancement project, which was designed to reduce fuels, improve forest health and habitat for numerous species of wildlife, on over 3,500 acres.
- The North Washoe Valley Fuels Wildfire Risk Reduction and Ecosystem Enhancement Project includes 230 acres of mechanical slash removal, the burning of 130 acres of slash piles created by the thinning of small trees, and the ground-based and helicopter logging of 600 acres to thin conifer stands.
- The West Carson Habitat Improvement and Fuels Reduction Project reduce fine fuels within the Carson City urban interface using domestic sheep.

NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT

There are 4,800 acres of known infestations of noxious weeds occupying the Carson District. Our goal is to eradicate current sites as well as prevent new infestations from occurring. A few of the actions we have taken to achieve this goal include:

- We annually map and treat known weed infestations. Since 2005, over 2,400 acres have been treated within the Nevada portion of the District.
- We recently received a grant from Washoe County to treat 300 acres along the I-80 Corridor to return it to native species.
- For each ground-disturbing project, we conduct a Noxious Weed Risk Assessment. Based on the assessment outcome, mitigations and monitoring requirements are incorporated into the proposed action that minimizes spread of noxious weeds.

- The District coordinates weed management with local weed groups and agencies. We have partnered with the Truckee Meadows Weed Management Group, Nevada Land Conservancy, and Truckee River Watershed group to develop a treatment strategy for a massive infestation of musk thistle that occurs along the I-80 corridor from Truckee to Reno.

CONCLUSION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members, for providing this speaking opportunity. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding my presentation or about the Carson Ranger District.