



## **BLM-WINNEMUCCA FIELD OFFICE PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Presented to the:

**Legislative Committee on Public Lands**

Chairman: Senator Dean A. Rhoads

Vice-Chairman: Assemblyman John W. Marvel

**August 22, 2008**

Presented by Rodger Bryan, Acting Field Manager

### **3-TIER RE-ORGANIZATION**

The Winnemucca Field Office (WFO) 3-tier re-organization is expected to be completed by October 1, 2008. Upon completion of the re-organization, the WFO district will be divided into two field offices: the Black Rock Field Office and the Humboldt River Field Office (FO). A manager will be named for each FO. Staffing will come from existing personnel in the current WFO. A District Manager will also be named to oversee the entire Winnemucca district with a small staff, again coming from the existing staff of the WFO. A map is attached for reference.

### **ENERGY**

#### **Geothermal Exploration and Development**

- A geothermal lease sale recently held by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) brought in a record-breaking \$28.2 million. The state will receive about \$14 million and the counties of Churchill, Elko, Esmeralda, Humboldt, Lander, Mineral, Nye and Pershing, where the leases are located, will receive more than \$7 million, which will be distributed by bid amount and acreage.
- The WFO has authorized a geothermal operating plan for the Blue Mountain Geothermal Power Project and work continues at this site.
- The WFO received a preliminary proposal from Ormat for exploration of their geothermal leases in the area of Fireball Ridge, but this project is now on hold.

### **MINERALS**

#### **Coeur Rochester**

With high silver prices, Coeur is hoping to resume mining at the site. The company is currently working with the BLM and State of Nevada to pursue permitting for continued operation. Agencies and the company are also planning for long-term closure.

#### **Hycroft Mine**

Exhibit C-1 - LANDS Document consists of 6 pages. Entire Exhibit Provided Meeting Date: 08-22-08
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Hycroft Resources and Development has resumed operations at this site after a shut down. High gold prices have enabled the mine to re-open. The mine is west of Winnemucca near Sulphur.

### **Mining Notices**

This year the WFO has seen an increase in mining notices, reflective of the active minerals exploration taking place across the region.

## **LANDS AND REALTY**

### **Land Sales**

The WFO is working with the Las Vegas Field Office in hopes of using their staff to assist with future land sales. Since the WFO has dozens of parcels nominated for sale, extra help from Las Vegas will provide much-needed assistance. This combined effort is expected to begin in fiscal year 2009.

### **SNPLMA Acquisitions**

Mr. Todd Jaksick is currently working with the BLM for a sale of approximately 18,000 acres in northern Washoe County. The sale will involve three field offices, and the WFO portion is approximately 11,000 acres, mostly in the Granite Range northwest of Gerlach. The sale is nearing completion, and expected to conclude at the end of next month. This sale would bring important wildlife habitat into the public domain.

### **Major Rights of Way Projects:**

- The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is the lead agency for the proposed 650-mile Ruby Pipeline Project from Wyoming to Oregon. About 140 miles of the proposed route crosses the Winnemucca district. WFO staff is working with FERC and the applicant to prepare the environmental impact statement.
- The Springer Mine in Pershing County has submitted requests for at least five rights-of-way needed to reopen the existing tungsten mine on private land. Work is underway on an Environmental Assessment (EA).

## **RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

- A local "Friends" group is forming in Winnemucca. These groups typically establish themselves as non-profit organizations and partner with land management agencies such as the BLM. Current members of the group include visitors that enjoy a wide variety of recreation in and around the Sonoma Range. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm at the Martin Hotel in Winnemucca. The group is planning a fall cleanup in a local canyon.
- A volunteer host is now working in Water Canyon, providing onsite stewardship of the area and accomplishing important maintenance work.



- Earth Day activities took place in Water Canyon on April 19, 2008, with hundreds of native trees and shrubs planted in the burned riparian areas of Water Canyon. Partners included: Nevada Outdoor School (NOS), Northern Nevada ATV Association, the "Friends" Group, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial Court Juvenile Work Crew.
- May was Archeological Awareness and Historic Preservation Month. This year's theme was "America's New Deal Heritage" in honor of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the New Deal. During the 1930's there were many Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects completed for the Grazing Service as well as other agencies in the area. On Saturday May 31, the cultural staff, assisted by Mike Whalen from the WFO Division of Fire, led a public tour of CCC sites starting from the Humboldt County Museum.
- The WFO, in conjunction with the NOS, conducted field trips for several hundred students from Winnemucca, Lovelock and McDermitt schools to Lovelock Cave (May 6-8). This event is an annual affair and is part of the agency's observance of Nevada Archeology Awareness and Historic Preservation Month. We are also continuing to work with NOS to develop a docent program for Lovelock Cave and Water Canyon, where volunteers will lead interpretive walks and programs.

## **FISHERIES**

- Work is continuing on an EA for the Mud Meadows Fish Barrier near Soldier Meadows to protect the federally listed desert dace.
- The EA for reintroduction of Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) into Pole Creek in the Montana Mountains was completed.
- The WFO completed a Categorical Exclusion for the augmentation of LCT into Riser Creek in the Montana Mountains.

## **WILDLIFE**

- Work is continuing to maintain, and GPS the locations of, wildlife exclosures.
- The wildlife staff is providing input into numerous use authorizations, including range permit renewals.

## **WILD HORSES AND BURROS**

- Field tours of the Tobin Range and North Stillwater Herd Management Areas (HMAs) were conducted in April, and the Fox & Lake Range in June, to assess resource conditions and evaluate the gather schedules. Drought is a concern for the entire WFO district but especially in the Tobin Range, North Stillwater, Fox and Lake Range, Warm Springs Canyon, Buffalo Hills, Black Rock East and West HMAs. Due to drought conditions two gathers were conducted in July in the North Stillwater HMA and in the



Fox and Lake Range HMA. From these gathers, 335 head were removed from the North Stillwater HMA and 233 head were removed from the Fox and Lake Range HMA.

- A post-gather census of the Jackson Mountains (gathered 9/07) is scheduled to be flown in August or September to confirm the number of wild horses currently utilizing the HMA.
- With the arrival of Jerome Fox in late April, the WFO now has two full-time wild horse/burro specialists.
- From 1977 through July 2008, 45,344 wild horses and 2,166 burros have been removed from public lands administered by the WFO.

## **RANGE**

- The WFO is continuing to work on grazing permit renewal EAs. All of the proposed decisions are being protested by Western Watershed Project (WWP). Some of the grazing permittees are also protesting the proposed decisions, resulting in the delay of issuance of final decisions.
- WWP has appealed several final decisions; however WWP normally drops their appeal if their petition for stay is not granted. WWP did not drop their appeal of the Soldier Meadows Allotment decision even though the petition for stay was denied.
- Currently the WFO has four (4) active appeals from WWP and two more from grazing interests regarding permit renewals.
- The WFO is conducting compliance inspections on the allotments where unauthorized livestock were removed and impounded last January. The same individuals still have livestock in trespass. We have two (2) active appeals regarding unauthorized use in the Dolly Hayden Allotment.

## **FIRE MANAGEMENT**

### **Fire Operations**

- As of 8-15-08 29 fires have burned a total of 2,944 acres.
  - 19 Human caused fires for a total of 48 acres
  - 10 Lightning caused fires for a total of 2,895 acres.
- Eleven (11) fire engines, one (1) Dozer, two (2) Water Tenders and one (1) Single Engine Air Tanker are available for fire suppression.
  - Winnemucca
    - Six (6) fire engines (various types)

- One (1) D6 Dozer
- One (1) Type 2 3500 gallon Water Tender
- Winnemucca Airport
  - One (1) Single Engine Air Tankers
- McDermitt
  - Two (2) fire engines (850 gallon Type 4)
  - One (1) Type 2 3500 gallon Water Tender
- Lovelock
  - Two (2) fire engines (850 gallon Type 4)
- Paradise Valley
  - One (1) fire engine (750 gallon Type 4)

### **Fuels Management**

An EA will be out for public review and comments are due by the end of August for an 800 acre Joint Fire Science research project in coordination with the Elko Field Office this fall in the Little Owyhee Allotment, approximately 15 miles northeast of Chimney Reservoir.

### **Mitigation/Education/Prevention**

The WFO has an active mitigation/education/prevention program. Fire restrictions will most likely not be implemented this year.

### **Fire Planning**

Work is continuing on the next phase of the Fire Program Analysis to develop investment alternatives.

### **Wildfire Support Group (WSG)**

WSG personnel and equipment are fully trained and available.

### **Rural Fire Assistance (RFA)**

Received and distributed a total of \$37,993.68 in funds to volunteer fire departments in Humboldt and Pershing counties

## **WINNEMUCCA RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN (WFO RMP)**

An extension of the RMP due date has been requested of the BLM Washington Office. It was approved to push back completion of the plan from December 2008 to July 2010.

The draft RMP/EIS is currently being reviewed by the Washington Office. That review process is expected to take another 6 to 8 weeks.

## **BLACK ROCK DESERT – HIGH ROCK CANYON EMIGRANT TRAILS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA (NCA) & ASSOCIATED WILDERNESS**

**Wilderness Management Plan** - Work continues on the Wilderness Management Plan for all 10 units with a draft scheduled for public release on or before November 1, 2008. The NCA Resource Advisory Council Subgroup assisted with development of alternatives for the plan.