



## **Battle Mountain District Manager's Report For Legislative Committee on Public Lands**

### **DISTRICT UPDATE**

#### **Resource Management Plan Revision**

The Battle Mountain District (BMD) was initially scheduled in Fiscal Year (FY) 09 to revise the two existing land use plans within the District (Shoshone-Eureka and Tonopah Resource Management Plans (RMPs)). The planning revision will be district-wide and a community based collaborative effort. The FY 09 Washington Office (WO) Proposed Target Allocation does not contain funding for the Battle Mountain District RMP Revision. Although funding will not occur in FY 09, the District Staff will continue to work on the Prep Plan, Statement of Work and Analysis of Management Situation. The tentative date to initiate the revision is now FY 10.

#### **BLM Nevada Reorganization**

BLM Nevada is restructuring our state organization to better serve our constituents and meet the increasing demands on our public lands natural resources.

The Nevada State Office will realign from its present two-tier structure (State Office-Field Office) to a three-tier structure (State Office – District Office – Field Office).

The current BLM Field Offices will become the District Offices. The Battle Mountain District will be geographically divided into two regions; Mount Lewis and Tonopah. These Field Offices will be established to provide the on-the-ground management for these regions, which will improve customer service, management efficiency, and overall BLM administration of the public lands and programs within that district. With this change, we will no longer have the Division of Renewable or Non-Renewable Resources. Furthermore, the Field Manager for the Tonopah Field Office (FO) is Tom Seley and the Field Manager for Mount Lewis FO is Doug Furtado. Both of these managers will have subordinate supervisors and/or staff below them in the organization.

#### **Minerals**

- The Notice of Availability for the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Cortez Hills Expansion Project has been sent to WO for publication in the Federal Register.

- A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for Newmont Mining Corporation (Newmont) Phoenix Copper Leach Project is under way. The SEIS will analyze an Amended Plan of Operations for the Phoenix Mine to construct a solution extraction electrowinning (SXEW) plant and two new leach pads with ponds to process between 70 and 120 million tons of low grade copper ore. The copper ore is contained within the current permitted pits. The SXEW process would produce between 12,000 and 15,000 tons per year of high purity copper for direct use in commerce.
- Preparation is on-going for the publication of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Eureka Moly, Inc. (formerly General Moly, Inc.) Mount Hope Molybdenum Mine. The draft release is scheduled for the end of the FY 08.

### **Abandoned Mine Lands**

- Reclamation efforts for three abandoned mine sites are on-going. Clean Harbors Environmental Services is planning on resuming reclamation of the Norse Windfall Heap Leach facility this summer and fall.
- Final reclamation of the Monarch Mill (erosion control structures) is on hold until more funding is secured.
- The Bureau of Reclamation in Denver is revising the closure/reclamation design for the Paradise Peak Ketchup Flat heap leach facility based on BLM comments.

### **Energy**

- Currently processing the Trail Canyon geothermal exploration, production and injection field, for their proposed power plant project and associated transmission line.
- The Buffalo Valley Geothermal Developmental Project and the Jersey Valley Geothermal Developmental Project, which is located in the Winnemucca District Office, will be combined into one permitting process, and the Mount Lewis Field Office (MLFO) will be the lead office for the permit. The contractor is currently preparing the Environmental Assessment (EA), Operations Plan and Utilization Plan for BLM review.
- February 28<sup>th</sup> the BMD initiated coordination and permit processing for the Smith Creek and McGinness Hills Geothermal Exploration Plan. The contractor is currently preparing the EA and Operations Plan.
- The MLFO is preparing an EA for Oil and Gas Leasing within the Western Portion of the Shoshone-Eureka Planning Area.
- The Reese River Valley Geothermal Developmental Project permit is being processed by the MLFO. Sierra Geothermal Power, Inc is proposing a 10 to 15 megawatt power plant, a geothermal production and injection field, and a 60-kV transmission line approximately 20 miles long.



- Sierra Pacific Power Company has applied for a ROW to construct as many as 7 wind energy test towers on Bates Mountain east of Austin. Their application includes a 1,980 acre project area.

### **Recreation**

- A cooperative planning effort is under way for the development of managed off-highway vehicle (OHV) opportunities in the Shoshone Range south of the community of Battle Mountain. Current plans call for the Shoshone Range OHV Trail System to offer full day riding opportunities that will primarily be of interest to recreational OHV users living in the communities of northern Nevada. We expect to issue a decision by the end of the FY.
- Plans for refurbishing the Hickison Petroglyph Recreation Site are progressing. The existing recreation facilities at the site, which consist of an accessible interpretive trail, a day use area and a 16-unit campground, are in need of upgrades to modern standards. Consultation with interested publics has been ongoing. Discussions to date have centered on the possibility of upgrading the existing day-use area and campground and adding 3-8 horse user campsites, a trailhead parking area, and more hiking/equestrian trails. We have completed mapping all three phases of the proposed hiking/equestrian trails. In addition, the public has expressed an interest in more hiking/equestrian trail opportunities in the Simpson Park Range immediately north of the site. We expect to issue the EA and provide for a comment period in August 2008 with a decision by the end of the FY.
- Marathon Racing Inc. submitted a Special Recreation Permit application. They were planning an attempt to set a new world land speed record on the Diamond Valley playa, near Eureka. Marathon was requesting authorization to use the playa for several test runs in spring/summer 2008. An EA was prepared and sent to interested parties earlier this year. Currently, the project is on hold do to funding issues.

### **Lands and Realty**

- Eureka County has applied for a right-of-way (ROW) to upgrade their aging water system which collects water from a number of springs in the surrounding region. Extensive field work will be required to update the MLFO's maps for this ROW application which may be handled as an amendment to their existing ROW.
- The MLFO is processing the ROW, and Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP) applications for the Austin Water and Sewer District's new wastewater ponds and pipeline. The wastewater delivery line will be authorized as a ROW and the treatment ponds will be authorized as an R&PP action that is required to go directly to patent. Both actions are covered under the same EA.
- The proposed Austin Land Sale has been scaled back to a small 2.6 acre direct sale to resolve a long standing inadvertent occupancy trespass.
- The MLFO is processing the R&PP patent to Lander County for the Kingston landfill to establishment a permanent transfer bin facility.

- Eureka Fire Station R&PP application is being processed. Currently, the R&PP process is pending negotiations with Richardson Production Company to release that portion of land within their existing oil and gas lease.
- The proposed 409 acre Antelope Valley land sale is progressing. A segregation Notice of Realty Action was published in the Federal Register and an appraisal has been ordered. An environmental assessment was prepared and went out for a 30-day public review in June 2007. This is a modified direct sale with bidding limited to the adjoining landowner and the grazing permittee.

### **Rangeland Management**

- Draft monitoring reports for the permit renewals for the Big Smoky Valley Complex (Wildcat Canyon, Trail Canyon, Nielson Individual, and Millett Individual), Potts Allotment, and the Battle Mountain Complex (Copper Canyon, North Buffalo, and sheep use on the Buffalo Valley Allotment) are completed and are in the processes of being internally reviewed by the interdisciplinary team. The MLFO has issued consultation letters to the permittee(s) and interested publics for these allotments to provide information on the permit renewal process. Preliminary meetings with the permittee(s) to discuss resource issues that have been brought forward through the assessment of monitoring data collected and analyzed have occurred. Currently, conducting discussions with the permittee(s) on management alternatives.
- Monitoring of the Santa Fe/Ferguson, Willows Ranch, 3-Bars, Roberts Mountain, Home, Tierney Creek, O'Toole, and South Smith Creek allotments will be initiated this year in preparation of permit renewal efforts for these allotments in FY 09.
- The MLFO issued a consultation letter on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 to applicants and interested public for the Underwood Allotment. Through a rating system that analyzed requirements through the grazing regulations for authorizing grazing use, it was proposed to adjudicate the grazing preference and issue a new grazing permit to Great Western Land & Livestock, c/o Larry Korgan.
- Range improvement projects in the planning phase include Kobey Valley Seeding and Antelope Valley fencing in the Lucky C Allotment along with riparian enclosures throughout portions of the Carico Lake and Simpson Park allotments.

### **Wild Horse and Burro Program**

- The MLFO has completed three large wild horse gathers on the Newpass/Ravenswood, South Shoshone, Roberts, and Whistler Herd Management Areas (HMAs) since the beginning of the fiscal year.

Total Captured	1,370
Total Removed	1,132
Total Euthanized/Died	21
Orphans Adopted	3



- The MLFO is preparing the documentation for the Callaghan Complex wild horse gather. This Complex includes the Callaghan, Rocky Hills and Bald Mountain HMAs, and portions of five grazing allotments. A gather is tentatively scheduled for fall/winter 2008/2009. This gather will include the capture of nearly 1700 wild horses with the removal of approximately 1,400 wild horses to leave a post gather population of 359 within the three HMAs. Fertility control research may be conducted. The MLFO also plans to incorporate trap site adoptions with the gather activities.

### Wildlife

- A Pinyon-Juniper (PJ) thinning to improve sage grouse habitat was initiated by the Battle Mountain Bootstraps Program in the Fish Creek Population Management Unit (PMU) located south of Battle Mountain in Lander County. Three hundred acres were completed in October – early November 2007 and an additional 200+ acres are planned to be thinned during the 2008 field season. This project was identified in the Central Nevada Sage Grouse Working Group Conservation Plan for the Fish Creek PMU. In addition, the Bootstraps crew is scheduled to initiate PJ thinning in the Roberts Mountain area near Willow and Gable Canyons.

Battle Mountain and Tonopah HMAs -- At or below AML shaded GREEN, Exceeding AML in RED BOLD								
HMA Number	HMA Name	AML		Population Estimates			Last Gather Completed	Next Gather Scheduled
		High	Low	Feb-08	2008 Post foaling	End FY2008, Sept 31		
311	Augusta Mountains	89		Winnemucca Field Office			Nov. 2007	?
601	South Shoshone	100	60	63	74	74	Jan. 2008	?
602	New Pass/Ravenswood	476		268	315	315	Nov. 2007	?
603	Bald Mountain	215	129	517	610	607	1981	Jan. 2009
604	Callaghan	237	147	847	995	995	July 2002	Jan. 2009
605	Rocky Hills	143	86	141	166	166	Nov 1999	Jan. 2009
606	Desatoya	82		Carson City Field Office			2003	?
607	Roberts Mountain	150		123	145	145	Jan. 2008	?
608	Whistler Mountain	24	14	5	6	6	Jan. 2008	?
609	Diamond	151		129	153	153	July 2004	?
610	Hickison Burros	45	16	108	127	127		?
611	North Monitor	8		19	22	22	Feb 2006	?
612	Fish Creek	180	107	100	118	118	Feb 2006	?
613	Sevenmile	100	60	200	235	235	Feb 2006	?
314	Pilot Mountain South (Dunlap)	69		Carson City Field Office				?
614	Little Fish Lake	39		50	58	58	Feb 2005	?
616	Hot Creek	41		11	13	13	January 2005	?
618	Stone Cabin	364		171	198	198	January 2007	?
619	Reveille	138		57	66	66	January 2007	
620	Saulsbury	40		34	39	39	January 2007	
621	Paymaster	38h		39h 6b	45h 7b	45h 7b	October 2006	?
622	Fish Lake Valley	54		19	22	22	2003	?
623	Silver Peak	6b		2h 2b	2h 3b	2h 3b	October 2006	?
624	Palmetto	76		0	0	0	N/A	NA
625	Montezuma Peak	4h 10b		37h 3m 18b	43 h 3m 21b	43 h 3m 21b	1996	?
626	Goldfield	37b	24b	7h 7b	8h 8b	8h 8b	1996	NA
627	Stonewall	8b	5b	20b	23b	23b	1996	?
628	Gold Mountain	78 b		5h 1m	6h 1m	6h 1m	1996	NA
629	Bullfrog	91	58	75b	87b	87b	1996	?
630	Sand Springs West	49		48	56	56	January 2006	?

Status	Totals	Field Office Totals			District Totals	
		Number of HMAs	Number at (or below) AML	% at (or below) AML	Number at AML (of 27 total)	% at (or below) AML
2008 -- Current	Battle Mountain	12	6	50%	16	59%
	Tonopah	15	10	66%		
Projected end of FY2008	Battle Mountain	12	5	42%	15	56%
	Tonopah	15	10	66%		

HMAs administered by an adjoining District are not counted in the totals here (Desatoya, Pilot Mountain, Augusta)