

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

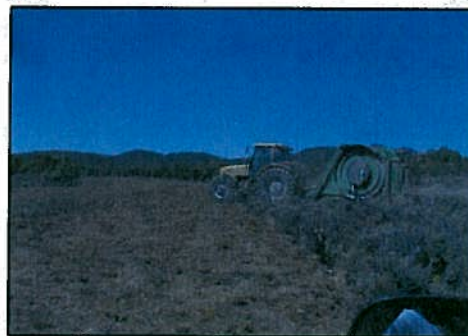


Elko District Manager's
Update
June 2008

Bureau of Land Management, 3900 E. Idaho Street, Elko, NV 89801
http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office.html 775-753-0200

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Fuels and Fire Treatments by Jeff Arnberger, FMO

- ❖ The Elko District is conducting internal scoping to meet NEPA requirements for proposed prescribed fire, chaining and other projects on Spruce Mountain to reduce hazardous fuels. The Elko District is preparing several Environmental Assessments for hazard fuel reduction projects and greenstrips in the area. These projects in the Ryndon/Osino area, the Dry Hills area, the Silver Lake area, and the Saddler Basin area will result in approximately 2,800 acres of greenstrips and areas of reduced fuels, with planned completion of these projects around October 1, 2008. The purpose of these fuels reduction projects is to provide firefighters with areas or locations that they can more easily stop the advance of a large wildfire to protect homes, structures, and critical wildlife habitat and livestock forage.
- ❖ The Elko District will also be implementing fuels treatments in the Little Owhyee area to assist scientists from the Joint Fire Sciences Project in gathering pre- and post-treatment data that will help fire managers plan and implement more effective projects in the future.
- ❖ The Elko District coordinates every fuels reduction project with its cooperators, including the Nevada Division of Forestry, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as numerous sportsmen's groups and private individuals. This cooperation has resulted in more beneficial projects and enhanced funding.

"The key to multiple-use success is a partnership between private and public lands."

Jim Caswell, BLM
Director

EXHIBIT C - LANDS
Document consists of 8 pages.
Entire Exhibit Provided
Meeting Date: 06-06-08

Fire Preparedness and Suppression by Jeff Arnberger, FMO

Summary of 2007 Fire Season:

Total number of fires in 2007: 237

Lightning: 134

Human: 103

Total acres burned in 2007: 593,422

Lightning: 584,476

Human: 8,946

Public Land: 417,018

Private Land: 176,404

Major accidents/injuries:

Burn of face and hands – West Basin Fire

Number of structures lost or damaged:

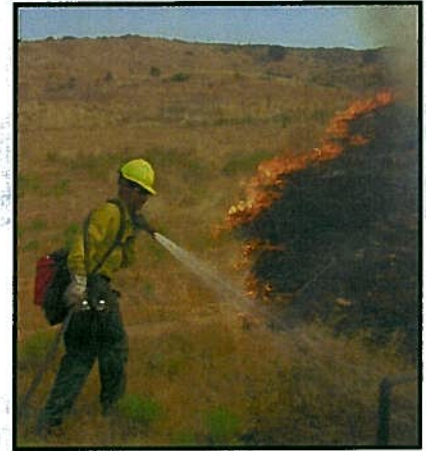
Primary: 4 lost / 3 damaged

Outbuildings/other: 19 lost / 15 damaged

Initial Attack Success:

Containment within 24 hours: 92% of starts

Total estimated suppression cost: \$11,132,531



- ❖ The Elko District, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs have combined their fire suppression organizations into a single interagency effort. This effort has resulted in a reduction in redundant management positions and refocused funding into additional firefighters on the ground. The interagency organization will have 11 fully-staffed fire engines, a helicopter with 10-person crew, an airplane to provide reconnaissance and aerial firefighting supervision, and one of only three national Initial Attack Interagency Hotshot Crews (IA IHC). These IA IHC's are highly-trained and mobile 20-person hand

crews whose priority will be initial attack of new fires. They will be pre-positioned in areas of expected lightning activity or high fire danger. The primary mission of these firefighting resources is to protect life and property from wildfire, as well as minimize impacts to sage grouse habitat, livestock forage, and other highly-valued natural resources.

- ❖ In addition to the firefighting resources stationed in the Elko area, fire managers will continue to pre-position aerial resources (additional helicopters, Single Engine Air Tankers, heavy air tankers, lead planes, etc.) and ground resources (engines, hand crews, bulldozers, etc.) into the Elko area in times of high fire activity or high fire danger.
- ❖ At the present time, the federal agencies are beginning testing and implementation of a new fire budget planning tool called Fire Program Analysis (FPA). FPA is designed to encourage state, local, and tribal agency participation in the fire planning and management process. FPA incorporates geospatial data which provide the means to map levels of wildland fire risk on lands across the country, generates outcomes from the fire planning unit that inform the 2011 national budget planning process, will provide a way for land managers to compare trade-offs between wildland fire program components, and is a tool to ensure wildland fire management actions help meet performance measures outlined in the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy.
- ❖ Initial outputs if the model indicate that the interagency fire program in the Elko area could gain up to 5 additional fire engines, a water tender, and a dedicated initial attack bulldozer to achieve a higher initial attack success rate and help minimize the number of large fires in the future.

Fire Emergency Rehabilitation and Stabilization

by Tom Warren, ADM, Operations

- ❖ The following is a summary of Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Activities that have been completed in the Elko District since October 1, 2007.
 1. 35 miles of protective fencing around burned areas have been completed since the beginning of FY 2008. We currently have contracts for the construction of an additional 38 miles of protection fence. Additional contracts for fence construction and repair are being drafted.
 2. 85 miles of damaged fence have been repaired by BLM that will aid in protecting burned areas. A number of grazing permittees with an additional 35 miles of fence repair.
 3. 17,320 acres of fire damaged lands prone to cheatgrass invasion have been drill seeded with a variety of grasses and forbs.
 4. Over 17,000 acres of drainages and watersheds have been aerially seeded with grasses and forbs to minimize erosion and maintain the ecological integrity of fire damaged areas.
 5. Nearly 95,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat have been aerially seeded with sagebrush and forbs to promote the recovery of the Great Basin's most important vegetation types.
 6. Almost 2,000 acres of bitterbrush seeding has been completed in mule deer winter and intermediate range.
 7. Cultural inventory was completed on over 20,000 acres of public lands ensuring the protection of cultural resources where ground disturbing treatments occur.
 8. A total of 1,164 acres of noxious weeds have been identified for treatment in our ES and R plans. A total of 5,500 acres of noxious weed treatment work has been identified for the Elko District for FY-08. This total includes the normal 1020 weed program in addition to the ES and R Program. The weed treatment work will be completed with BLM crews and five weed treatment contracts.
- ❖ Between the fire seasons of 2006 and 2007 over 600 miles of fence was damaged. There has been a huge effort on the part of our staff and grazing permittees to complete this needed fence repair. A number of permittees have repaired interior fence with BLM supplied fence material.



*Drill Seeding on Susie Fire
May 2007*



*ES Protection Fence Marge Fire
April 2008*



Rangeland Management by Bryan Fuell, Wells Field Manager

- ❖ Thus far, 36 of the 241 allotments have new Grazing Permits. The remaining 205 allotments will be handled in Fiscal Year 2008 and 2009. Fire, fire rehabilitation, and other priorities (minerals, energy, litigation, and FOIA) have seriously impacted the range staff's ability to work on range permit renewals. Western Watersheds has protested or appealed all 36 of the Grazing Permits issued thus far.
- ❖ **Fire Closure** - The Elko District has experienced unusual wildland fire seasons in 2006 and 2007. Elko has prepared numerous rehabilitation and restoration plans to aid in the healing of the lands affected by fire. Elko has or is in the process of closing burnt portions of public lands to provide for soil stabilization, establishment of seeded species, and reestablishment of native species. The Elko District is working with livestock operators in regards to closing these lands due to fire to lessen the impacts of closure, to include construction of temporary fencing to allow grazing of unburned lands without impacting rehabilitation.

Wild Horse Management by Bruce Thompson, WH&B Specialist



- ❖ The current wild horse population in the Elko Field Office is 1657 and the Appropriate Management Level (AML) is 1338 animals. There are eight HMAs in the Elko Field Office.
- ❖ One wild horse gather is scheduled during Fiscal Year 2008 in the Owyhee HMA. The population estimate for the Owyhee HMA for 2008 is 450 animals and AML is 231. The primary concern for the Owyhee HMA is drought affecting the habitat. This gather could be threatened by funding short falls with the Wild Horse and Burro Program.
- ❖ The Elko and Ely Field Office completed a gather in the Antelope and Antelope Valley HMA's in early January 2008. The gather was prompted by drought and lack of forage combined with Highway 93 fencing has trapped part of the herd in the eastern portion of the Antelope Valley HMA. Eight hundred and one horses were gathered and removed.



Wildlife by Wendy Fuell, Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist

- ❖ The Elko BLM staff is currently working on providing information requested for Pygmy rabbits in regard to WWP FOIA. The USFWS is currently conducting a 12 mos. status review of the pygmy rabbit in response to a petition to list.
- ❖ Biologists are working to develop a monitoring protocol for China Mt. Wind Energy Project located in Nevada and Idaho.
- ❖ The staff is working with NDOW to schedule approximately nine days of helicopter sage grouse lek inventories.
- ❖ Staff is providing input into four ongoing mine EISs.
- ❖ There is an extensive large energy (renewable and non-renewable) workload including oil and gas leases, power line corridors, wind energy, coal-fire plants, etc.
- ❖ Upcoming workload for District staff associated with the court ordered re-examination of the status review of sage grouse.

Sage Grouse Conservation by Wendy Fuell, Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist

- ❖ **Lek Monitoring** - Working cooperatively with NDOW and providing funding (20k to 30k per year) over the past seven years to monitor historical leks and conduct searches for new leks.
- ❖ **Fire Suppression Practices** – Elko District ensures that fire suppression efforts take sage grouse and their habitat into account at all times. To include:

- Annual review of fire management plans to incorporate new sage grouse habitat information
- Locate fire camps, staging areas & helibases away from known sage grouse habitat
- Incorporate known sage grouse habitat information into each Wildfire Situation Analysis to assist in determining appropriate suppression plans.
- Minimize the amount of sage grouse habitat burned by giving priority to suppression efforts when possible.
- Pre-position suppression assets near key sage grouse habitat when ignition events, e.g. lightning, are within fire weather forecasts.
- Limit back burns in sage brush, retaining unburned areas of sage grouse habitat when possible.

❖ **Riparian Improvement** - Through partnerships, work to improve key riparian sage grouse nesting and brood rearing habitat through the construction of riparian exclosures and riparian pastures. Examples include the following:

- BLM/NDOW/Barrick Goldstrike Mines, Inc. /Devils Gate Ranch – **Devils Gate Riparian Project** – Riparian pasture creation (8,000 acres), six miles of pipeline, spring development and protection, and reservoir construction.
- Barrick Goldstrike Mines- BLM, NDOW and Barrick Goldstrike – **Spring Enhancement Project** - Cooperatively enhancing 15 springs on the Squaw Valley Allotment and other areas. Five completed in FY07.
- BLM/Newmont Mining Corp. – **Maggie Creek Watershed Restoration Project (MCWRP)**. Initiated in 1993 as mitigation for mine dewatering, the MCWRP represents a **cooperative watershed level** restoration effort for Lahontan Cutthroat trout (LCT) and other wildlife species including sage grouse, encompassing more than 40,000 acres of uplands and 80 miles of stream in the Maggie Creek Basin. Other partners include: Trout Unlimited, Barrick Goldstrike Mines, Inc., NDOW, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Elko and Eureka counties, and the TS Ranch.
- BLM/Barrick Goldstrike Mines, Inc. – **Upper Willow Creek Habitat Enhancement Plan (UWCHEP)**. Initiated in 2003, as mitigation for mine dewatering, a cooperative watershed level restoration effort designed to enhance habitat for LCT and other wildlife species, including sage grouse. It encompasses approximately 20,000 acres and 20 miles of stream in the Willow/Rock Creek Basin. Other partners include: Trout Unlimited, NDOW, and the Squaw Valley Ranch and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- BLM/Maggie Creek Ranch/Heguy Ranches/Newmont Mining Corp/USFWS – **Susie Creek Restoration Project**. Cooperative project to fence and protect more than ten miles of Susie Creek on both public and private lands to provide habitat enhancement for LCT as well as other wildlife species including sage grouse. Tying into existing restoration projects will result in more than 20 miles of protection on Susie Creek.

❖ **Grazing Management Decisions** designed to improve habitat for sage grouse as well as other sensitive species. One example of this is the issuance of the Sheep Complex, Big Springs, and Owyhee Grazing Allotments Sensitive Bird Species EIS which resulted in the establishment of grazing systems designed to enhance habitat specifically for sage grouse and sensitive raptor species. It also outlined specific mitigation measures and Standard Operating Procedures in regard to implementing range improvements identified in the document that were designed to decrease impacts sensitive species including sage grouse. Another example is the incorporation of sage grouse habitat objectives through the Holistic Management process in the Cottonwood and Hubbard Vineyard Allotments.

❖ **Habitat Assessment** - Partnership between Elko BLM/Northern Nevada Stewardship Group (NNSG) and NDOW to obtain Question 1 Money (\$150,000) to complete the Tuscarora Watershed Assessment to determine habitat conditions for sage grouse within the Tuscarora Watershed/Tuscarora PMU and recommend actions to enhance habitat.



Noxious Weed Management by Mark Coca, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist (Weeds)

- ❖ The Elko Field Office plans to complete at least 1 million acres of inventory for noxious weeds during fiscal year 2008.
- ❖ We plan to treat at least 6,000 acres of noxious weeds in fiscal year 2008.
- ❖ Weeds specialist is working with the Elko County Cooperative Weed Management Area for a joint project in fiscal year 2008.



BLM crew at a Scotch thistle control project in Elko County.



Weed Treatment 2007.

"This is the way federal land management should work. Cooperation, not confrontation, should be the hallmark of conservation efforts."

Dirk Kemthorne, Secretary of the Interior

OHV Travel Management by Tamara Hawthorne, Outdoor Recreation Planner

- ❖ The Elko District recreation planner is continuing to work on the Spruce Mountain Travel Management project and the Spruce Mountain Settlement Agreement. A summer intern will be hired in June of 2008 to assist the recreation planner in preparation of a draft Travel Management Plan for the 464,000 acre project area referred to as Spruce Mountain. Work on the travel management document has been delayed in 2008 due to a shortage of recreation staff but compilation of data and a draft NEPA document will be ready to go out for scoping by February of 2009. The draft Travel Management Plan will identify routes to be designated as "open", "seasonally open" or "closed" within the Spruce Mountain area using route inventory data and visitor use counts.
- ❖ The BLM is continuing consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office on the Spruce Historic Properties Management Plan. This Plan is expected to be completed along with the draft Spruce Travel Management Plan by February of 2009.
- ❖ Route inventory throughout the Elko District is ongoing in preparation for a new Resource Management Plan (RMP), or an amendment to the existing RMP. Scoping would not occur until Spring 2010.



Lands and Minerals by Deb McFarlane, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist

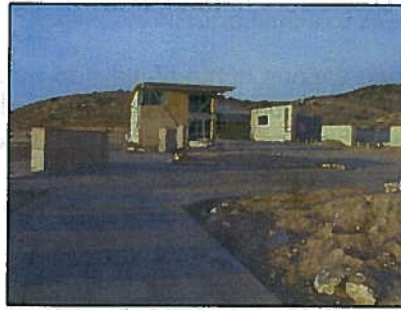
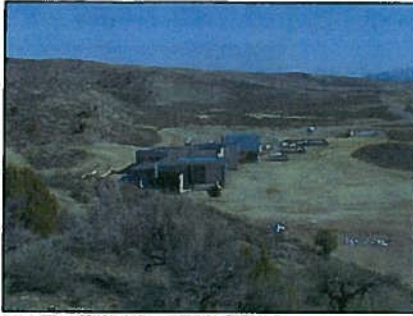
- ❖ Elko Field Office will continue processing various rights-of-ways to meet public demand. In addition, existing Recreation and Public Purpose Act applications will be addressed to the extent possible. There is currently a backlog of realty actions including the Jackpot (children's park and shooting range), Ryndon (fire station and park), Elko (motor-cross track and Snowbowl Expansion), and Contact (NDOT Maintenance Station).
- ❖ The Emigrant Mine Project EIS, Barrick Expansion EIS, and Leeville and South Operations Area Project Amendment SEISs are currently underway. Newmont's proposed Emigrant open-pit gold mine would be located south of Carlin, Nevada. Barrick is proposing to expand the Goldstrike open pit mine and related facilities. Leeville and SOAPA SEISs are expanding and updating the cumulative effects of the projects consistent with the 2006 Decision by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.
- ❖ The Elko Field Office has submitted a Notice of Intent to the Federal Register for the Newmont Genesis Project. The District Office will prepare an EIS to analyze the environmental effects of the proposed amendment to Newmont Mining Corporation's Plan of Operations for Genesis-Bluestar, an open pit gold mine. The amendment includes seven main components: expansion of two open pits, development of a new open pit, backfilling of four open pit excavations, expansion of two waste rock facilities, construction of new haul roads and access roads, processing of 60 million tons of ore, and twelve additional years of mining employment and economic activity in the local area. The amendment involves 43 acres of new disturbance, including 24 acres of public land and 19 acres of private land.



Energy by Bryan Fuell, Wells Field Manager

- ❖ **Ruby Pipeline-** Nevada, Utah, Wyoming and Oregon BLM is working cooperatively with Ruby Pipeline to construct a natural gas pipeline from Opal, WY to Marlin, OR. The pipeline is proposed to be placed across the Elko District. A scoping meeting was held in Elko in March 2008. A Draft EIS is expected to be completed for public review in mid to late 2009.
- ❖ **South West Intertie Project (SWIP) Northern portion-** Great Basin Transmission LLC is proposing to build a 500kv electrical transmission line from Ely, NV to North Twin Falls, ID. The right of way for the line was purchased from Idaho Power who completed an EIS on the project in 1993. Wells Field Office is working with GBT on analyzing the 1993 EIS for NEPA adequacy, updating wildlife surveys and information, and completing the Construction, Operation and Maintenance Plan.
- ❖ **China Mountain Wind Energy Project-** Renewable Energy Resources of North America is proposing to construct electrical energy producing wind mills within the Twin Falls and Elko District Offices. The project proposal includes a right of way for 25 wind mills in Nevada and 175 in Idaho each producing 3.5mw. Public scoping meetings are scheduled to begin in June or July 2008.





California Trail Center by Dave Jamlel, CNHTIC Manager

The Trail Center Building was turned over to the BLM in February 2008. BLM now has full responsibility for the Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of the Trail Center complex. The Trail Center staff is working with local community leaders to organize a foundation to raise money to address O&M costs and other Trail Center needs. However, it is probable that BLM will have to cover these expenses until such time as other means can be found to pay the O&M. Trail Center staff will also continue to work with the officials from the City of Elko County, and State of Nevada.

- ❖ The State of Nevada has provided \$191,000 that has been identified for plaza exhibits at Trail Center exhibits. BLM has also been notified that \$211,540 is being made available for the construct interpretive hiking trails and an events area at the Trail Center. In both cases these funds will be managed by Elko County but will work with Trail Center staff, through an assistance agreement to develop the associated scope of work for each project and to implement the work at the Trail Center.
- ❖ \$738,000 has been identified for Trail Center exhibits in the FY 2008 DOI appropriations budget. These funds will be expended in FY 08 on the highest priority interior interpretive exhibits at the Center. This will be made possible through a financial assistance agreement between the Southern Nevada Conservancy and BLM that was signed on May 27, 2008.
- ❖ The \$738,000 that was appropriated will fund only a portion of the proposed internal and outdoor interpretive exhibits indicated in the exhibit plan that was completed by Condit Exhibits, in March 2008. An additional \$3.6 million is needed to complete the fabrication and installation of the exhibits.
- ❖ BLM staff is scheduling a variety of interpretive programs and special events for the public at the Trail Center. Many of these programs will be based on the programs that have been given in local schools or at venues in Elko County since 2003. On May 30-31, 2008, BLM (in cooperation with our partners) held the Fourth Annual California Trails Day Event – for the first time at the newly completed Trail Center. Over 50 volunteers assisted with the event which attracted approximately 1,000 people.

