

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

**April 4, 2008
Winnemucca, Nevada**

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members, for providing this opportunity to speak before the Legislative Committee on Public Lands. My name is Jose Noriega, and I am the District Ranger for the Santa Rosa Ranger District on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. My testimony today will update the committee regarding the following projects, programs, and issues on the Santa Rosa Ranger District:

- 1) Martin Basin Rangeland Project Environmental Impact Statement;
- 2) Santa Rosa Ranger District Travel Management Project;
- 3) Noxious weed management;
- 4) Service First Agreement with BLM regarding fire management
- 5) Nevada First purchase,
- 6) Unauthorized livestock; and a
- 7) Summary of our successes.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

The Santa Rosa Ranger District is located in north-central Nevada in Humboldt County. The District contains slightly less than 300,000 acres. The District manages the Santa Rosa-Paradise Peak Wilderness Area, which is

EXHIBIT D-1 - LANDS Document consists of 5 pages. Entire Exhibit Provided Meeting Date: 04-04-08
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approximately 31,000 acres. The District has one developed campground at Lye Creek, and manages a historic worksite in Paradise Valley. The Santa Rosa Ranger District currently permits approximately 10,000 head of cattle within 13 allotments.

MARTIN BASIN RANGELAND PROJECT

On March 7, 2008, Pat Irwin, District Ranger on the Ely Ranger District, briefed this committee regarding the 1995 Rescission Act, which required the Forest Service to complete environmental analyses on all livestock grazing permits before 2010.

In 2003, the Santa Rosa Ranger District initiated the Martin Basin Rangeland Project, which analyzed the effects of reissuing grazing permits on 8 allotments covering approximately 190,000 acres. On June 2, 2006, then Forest Supervisor Robert Vaught signed the Record of Decision for the project.

Western Watershed Project appealed the Martin Basin Record of Decision to the Regional Forester for the Intermountain Region. On September 6, 2006, the Regional Forester remanded the decision back to the Forest for additional analysis. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest has been working to address the issues identified in the Environmental Impact Statement. A new Record of Decision is expected late in 2008 or early in 2009.

SANTA ROSA RANGER DISTRICT TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PROJECT

As this Legislative Committee is well aware of, there have been considerable concerns in recent years regarding resource impacts occurring from inappropriate uses of off highway vehicles (OHVs) on public lands. In response to these concerns and to comply with national direction, the District initiated the Santa Rosa Ranger District Travel Management Project. This project designates a system of roads and motorized trails which are open to vehicles on the Santa Rosa Ranger District. Additionally, the project restricts the use of vehicles off of these designated roads and trails.

On December 13, 2007, Forest Supervisor Ed Monnig signed a Decision Notice approving the project, which designates a total of 327 miles of roads and motorized trails that are open to all motorized vehicles. No appeals were filed regarding this project. A travel map is currently being prepared and should be available in the next couple of months at all Forest Service offices in Nevada and through the internet.

NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT

The Santa Rosa Ranger District is placing a very high priority and emphasis on working across boundaries to address weed problems. The following are some of the accomplishments and highlights of the program on the Santa Rosa Ranger District during the past year and our plans for the coming year:

- 1) Over 1,000 acres of noxious weeds were treated during the 2007 summer season.
- 2) Thousands of acres were surveyed and monitored for noxious weeds.
- 3) Forest Service crews and employees have worked closely with the Paradise Valley Weed District and other partners to address weed infestations across administrative boundaries.
- 4) Infestations of new weeds, like spotted knapweed, were identified and treated without regard to boundaries and through participation with the Humboldt County Task Force.
- 5) The District has and will continue to actively participate in local planning and meetings, such as working with the Paradise Valley Weed Board, Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs), and the Humboldt County Task Force.

SERVICE FIRST AGREEMENT WITH BLM REGARDING FIRE MANAGEMENT

Over the past year, the Forest Service has been working closely with Winnemucca BLM to capitalize on interagency efficiencies in our fire suppression organizations. Historically, Winnemucca BLM has employed a fire management officer and other fire leadership positions to manage their fire program. The

Forest Service has also had our fire management officer and duty officers stationed in Elko that supported the Santa Rosa Ranger District. This situation at times created confusion and duplication. Under the proposed Service First Agreement, the Forest Service fire suppression forces would work under the BLM fire management officer and duty officers, which will create efficiencies, cost savings, and reduce the potential for confusion.

NEVADA FIRST PURCHASE

During the summer of 2007, the Forest Service finalized the Nevada First purchase under the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. Under this purchase, approximately 10,000 acres of private in-holdings owned by Nevada First Corporation were transferred to the Forest Service.

This purchase protects valuable riparian areas, important wildlife habitats, ensures stability of valuable rangelands on numerous allotments, and secures permanent public accesses onto the Santa Rosa Ranger District. The Forest Service would again like to take this moment to again publicly thank the owners and managers of Nevada First, and specifically Gary Bengochea, for their many years of cooperation on this purchase and other public land issues.

UNAUTHORIZED LIVESTOCK

Unauthorized livestock on the Santa Rosa Ranger District is a continuing resource challenge on several of our allotments. Unauthorized horses on the District, specifically near McDermitt, Nevada, continue to be a serious problem. The District has been attempting to address the situation for over 20 years. I have personally discussed this issue on several occasions with the Fort McDermitt Tribal Council, as well as with the Tribal Chairperson, and we are trying to work towards finding a long-term resolution to the issue. Over the past several weeks the District has delivered numerous letters requiring removal of the unauthorized livestock. Several violation notices were recently written, and the District issued an impound notice.

SUMMARY OF OUR SUCCESSES

Most people who know me well are aware that I am a manager who believes in getting things done. I am also a firm believer in the old saying that a picture is worth a 1,000 words. I have provided each of you with a handout that shares many of our successes on the Santa Rosa Ranger District over the past several years.

The handout contains before-and-after photos of numerous projects that I consider to be our successes. I am not going to spend time discussing these projects. If anyone has questions regarding these projects or our methods, however, please feel free to call me directly, and I will discuss the projects with you.

CONCLUSION

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members, for this opportunity to speak before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have regarding my presentation or about the Santa Rosa Ranger District.

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