

Testimony on the Implementation of and Activities Relating to the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) From the Perspective of the USDA Forest Service

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and committee members. My name is Stephanie Phillips, and I am the Deputy Forest Supervisor for the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. I am also the Forest Service representative on the SNPLMA Partners Working Group and very involved in the implementation of SNPLMA on National Forest system lands. Today I will be addressing the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) from the Forest Service perspective. Steve Tryon has provided an excellent overview of the SNPLMA program, so I will move right into the discussion regarding the Forest Service's perspective.

I will start with an overview of the two newest categories: (1) Hazardous Fuels Reduction, and (2) Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Projects (ENLRP). The White Pine County Act (2006) amended SNPLMA to provide funding for these categories.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Specifically the White Pine County Act stated that hazardous fuels reduction plans are to be developed and implemented for three geographic locations:

- Lake Tahoe Basin (California and Nevada)
- Carson Range (Douglas and Washoe Counties, and Carson City, Nevada)
- Spring Mountains (southern Nevada).

These plans are to be comprehensive, cost-effective, and multi-jurisdictional. In addition to addressing hazardous fuels reduction and wildfire prevention, the

plans should include sustainable biomass and bio-fuels energy development and production activities. These plans are to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior and should not be for more than 10-years in duration. The plans must be approved in order to receive SNPLMA funding for treatments.

The Forest Service is the lead agency for all three plans, and we are working with the other jurisdictions in developing and implementing the plans. The Lake Tahoe and Carson Range plans are expected to be approved by the Secretary in early January 2008; therefore funding for treatments is available in Round 8. The Spring Mountains plan is expected to be approved by March 2008; and funding available in Round 9.

An important point is that jurisdictions other than the federal agencies can receive funding for treating hazardous fuels. This will greatly enhance the various agencies' ability to create defensible space in and around high risk communities in order to protect lives and private property. Wildfire does not recognize jurisdictional boundaries, so it makes sense to treat all the lands within a high priority area, whether it is private, city, county, state, or federal lands.

In Round 8, it is likely that 14 fuel reduction projects at Lake Tahoe and on the Carson Range could be funded at over \$14.6 million dollars. Entities such as Nevada Fire Safe Council, Nevada Department of Forestry, Nevada State Parks, Nevada Division of State Lands, and Carson City could receive funding for projects in addition to the Forest Service.

Eastern Nevada Landscape Restoration Project: This category provides funding for activities which promote resilient and healthy ecosystems within the Great Basin. The funding is available to federal agencies in Lincoln and White Pine Counties, and treatments may occur on federally managed lands and on Ely Shoshone Trust Lands. This category promotes projects that cross jurisdictional boundaries and involves the scientific community.

This new category provides the opportunity for the Forest Service and BLM to work together to restore eastern Nevada landscapes, including woodlands, rangelands, aspen stands, and wildlife habitat through a variety of activities and program deliveries.

In Round 8, three nominations totaling \$1.8 were submitted. These projects include sagebrush restoration, aspen stand treatments, and noxious weed treatments.

Now I would like to touch upon the SNPLMA Capital Improvement Program for the Forest Service.

Capital Improvement Program: The Forest Service has received over \$100 million in SNPLMA funding for capital improvement projects on the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area. Most of the funding is for constructing new recreation facilities and reconstructing existing facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas. Our goal is to construct recreation capital improvements that are sustainable – financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable. We want to ensure that the operations and maintenance costs of new facilities constructed with SNPLMA funding is not a burden for future Forest Service managers. Therefore, we made the conscious decision to move forward slowly with the construction projects until we determined what we could sustain into the future.

We conducted market studies to determine what activities are socially sustainable on the Spring Mountains NRA. The market study considered what activities were occurring or being developed with SNPLMA funding on nearby lands managed by the BLM, Nevada State Parks, and Clark County. The idea was to not duplicate or compete with activities occurring on nearby lands, but instead offer a quality experience that may not be offered elsewhere in Clark County, or if it was offered it was not meeting the market demand. We found that in addition to the usual day use activities such as hiking and picnicking, that there

is a high market demand for mountain biking on the east side and OHV use on the Pahrump side of the Spring Mountains .

To achieve financial sustainability will require constructing facilities that are market (or socially sustainable). It will also require a combination of fees, fund raising through non-profit associations, improved design of facilities, and increasing the workforce through volunteers. The long term operations and maintenance costs of the planned new facilities are very high. However, we believe that by working closer with non-profit associations and volunteer groups we can be financially sustainable. Therefore, we will be moving forward with several of the reconstruction projects in the fall of 2008 (including the reconstruction of the popular Cathedral Rock Picnic area) and finalizing the plans for the new Middle Kyle Canyon project.

In Closing: The Forest Service continues to be competitive in receiving SNPLMA funding for projects. Our overall goal for activities funded by SNPLMA is to leave a lasting legacy – one that the Forest Service can be proud of. The SNPLMA has provided us with the opportunity to engage in activities that other Forest Service units can only imagine. For instance the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest may be the only forest in the nation with funding for new recreation construction projects. Those who follow in our foot steps will be quick to judge us by how well we utilized the SNPLMA funding to provide for a lasting legacy.

The year 2008 marks the 10-year anniversary of the SNPLMA legislation. The first 10-years the Forest Service strived to built the workforce capacity to utilize SNPLMA funding. I believe that during the next 10-years our challenge will be to determine how to sustain some of the great programs we have initiated after the SNPLMA funding is no longer available.

Overall, the SNPLMA legislation has been a real catalyst at bringing the various entities together to work collaboratively to improve the quality of life in Nevada. The BLM leadership has done an outstanding job at establishing groups and committees comprised of representatives from local governments, and state and federal agencies for the purpose of developing implementation policy and making recommendations for SNPLMA funding. We have all come to realize the benefits of working together across jurisdictional boundaries to accomplish common goals.

Thank you, for this opportunity to speak to you regarding SNPLMA.

