

**TESTIMONY ON RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
ON THE
ELY RANGER DISTRICT
HUMBOLDT-TOIYABE NATIONAL FOREST
FOR THE
LEGISLATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS**

**July 12, 2024
Eureka, Nevada**

**Jose Noriega, District Ranger
Ely Ranger District**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you 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 Ely Ranger District on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. I have been a District Ranger in Nevada for over 23 Years and have been the District Ranger in Ely for over 15 Years.

My testimony today will update the committee regarding management activities on the Ely Ranger District. I would like to focus my presentation on Southern Nevada Public Land Management Projects (SNPLMA) and Shared Stewardship/Partnerships. At the end of my presentation, I will answer questions about any projects or programs on the Ely Ranger District.

BACKGROUND

The Ely Ranger District is located in east-central Nevada. The District contains approximately one million acres on five mountain ranges. The bulk of the land area is within White Pine County. Approximately 25% of the District is within Nye County and approximately 40,000 acres are within Lincoln County. We have 20 permanent employees. We also employ approximately 10 seasonal employees annually, and 15-20 Youth Conservation Corp enrollees (15-18 years old).

SOUTHERN NEVADA PUBLIC LANDS MANAGEMENT ACT PROJECTS

The Ely Ranger District is actively managing 15 SNPLMA Projects and is a partner with the National Park Service on one additional project. I am going to focus on Restoration and Recreation Projects below.

Ellison Meadows Restoration (Round 18 of SNPLMA)

- The intent of this project is to implement restoration activities to restore and improve Ellison Meadows where downcutting, encroachment of non-riparian vegetation, and unstable stream channels are affecting the health of the meadows and the stream.
- Project activities will include bank stabilization, allotment and pasture fence reconstruction, vegetation treatments and planting, noxious weed treatments, a riparian exclosure, road improvements, seeding and other activities.
- We have been working closely with NDOW and the livestock permittees on the details of this proposal.

Multi-Jurisdictional Noxious and Invasive Weed Partnership (Round 18 SNPLMA)

- This Project involves the inventory and treatment of Noxious Weeds across all administrative boundaries within a large portion of White Pine County.
- Treatments can occur on Federal, State, County, City, Tribal, and even Private Lands.
- Agreements with Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition and Tri-County Weed Control to implement the project are currently in place.
- ENLC has taken the lead on the educational component as well as working with the Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMA's). Tri County Weed has taken the lead on inventory and treatments.

Ely District Noxious and Invasive Weeds Phase II (SNPLMA Round 19)

- This Project continues with the ongoing efforts to treat noxious weeds on the Ely Ranger District.
- The project involves just under 1 million dollars over 5 years.

South Schells Restoration Project (SNPLMA Round 19)

- This Project covers over 200,000 acres of Forest Service, State and Private lands from Connors Summit to Kalamazoo Road.
- The Project involves the following activities:
 - Fuels Reduction

- Wildlife habitat improvements
- Aspen restoration
- Prescribed fire
- Riparian restoration and riparian exclosures.
- Fence reconstruction
- Road reconstruction

Illipah Watershed Restoration Project (SNPLMA Round 19)

- This Project covers the entire Illipah Watershed and includes Forest Service, BLM, and Private lands.
- This is a Joint Forest Service/BLM SNPLMA Project.
- The Project involves the following activities:
 - Fuels Reduction
 - Wildlife habitat improvements
 - Reestablishing beaver populations in the Watershed.
 - Riparian restoration and riparian exclosures.
 - Fence reconstruction
 - Road reconstruction
 - And finally, we plan to dredge the upper portions of Illipah Reservoir to increase capacity. Islands may be constructed to provide habitat for waterfowl and other birds.

Ely RD Vegetation Treatments Project (SNPLMA Round 18)

- This Project is a landscape scale project which treats pinyon juniper to meet two objectives. Improving wildlife habitats for sagegrouse and mule deer in some areas and thinning to increase pinenut production in other areas.
- Approximately 12,000 acres are planned for Treatment.

Ward Mountain Bike Trails (Round 18 SNPLMA)

- We are looking to create a high quality Mountain Bike Trail System adjacent to the City of Ely.
- We are proceeding with a Cooperative Agreement with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) to reconstruct and expand the current trail system.
- This project will involve up to 40 miles of trail, multiple trailheads, upgrades to access roads and information kiosks.

East Creek Campground Renovation Project (Round 17 of SNPLMA)

- This project involves the reconstruction of the East Creek Campground.
- The project involved campsite upgrades, new tables, grills fire rings, improved roads and spurs, and the addition of one restroom.
- This project also added several new campsites to increase capacity.
- There are a few minor work items remaining in the summer of 2024. Once those items are completed the project will be closed out.

Timber Creek Horse Campground Renovations (SNPLMA Round 17)

- The Forest Service was awarded approximately 2 million dollars in Round 17 of SNPLMA to complete upgrades on the main Timber Creek Campground and to upgrade the Timber Creek Horse Campground.
- Construction is nearly complete with just a few items to complete during the summer of 2024.

Mount Moriah Trails Project (Round 19 of SNPLMA)

- This project involves the reconstruction of all non-motorized trails, trailheads, and access roads on Mount Moriah.
- The Forest Service was awarded over 2 million dollars in Round 19 of SNPLMA.
- We are currently working on a cooperative agreement with Friends of Nevada Wilderness to reconstruct the trail system.

Ranger OHV Trails Project (Round 19 of SNPLMA)

- This project involves the reconstruction of the Ranger OHV Trail from North Creek to Mattier Creek with a side loop through Frenchman Creek and possibly Faun Trail to the Kalamazoo Campground.
- The trail will provide safe trail riding opportunities for ATV's, Mountain Bikes, Horses, and UTV's up to 65 inches in width.
- The Forest Service was awarded over 1 million dollars in Round 19 of SNPLMA.

Kalamazoo Campground Reconstruction Project (Round 19 of SNPLMA)

- This project involves the reconstruction of the Kalamazoo Campground.
- Sites will be upgraded with new grills, fire rings, tables, information kiosk, and RV Pads. The project will also construct a small OHV Trailhead, install new fencing/cattleguards to keep the cows out of the campground, and reconstruct the access road to provide better RV access from Spring Valley.

- Following reconstruction we plan to implement a \$5 per night charge. These fees will be used to maintain the campground.
- The Forest Service was awarded over 1 million dollars in Round 19 of SNPLMA.

Youth Engagement in Natural Resource Management (Round 19 of SNPLMA)

- For the past 6 years the Ely Ranger District has been hiring summer Youth Conservation Corp Crews (YCC Crews) that are youth crews 15-18 years old.
- This project takes youth engagement in Natural Resource Management to a new level for the next 6 years.
- In 2024 We hired 3 Crew Leads through an agreement with Great Basin Institute (GBI). We then hired 18 YCC Crew members between 15 and 18 years old.
- The project also involves interpretive and educational work in the schools, at the fair and at other venues to raise awareness about Natural Resources.

SHARED STEWARDSHIP/PARTNERSHIPS

One of the greatest strengths of the Ely Ranger District is our relationships and partnerships. Our most recent success story is a partnership between the Forest Service and the Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) to fully staff the Arc Dome Wildland Fire Module. Both agencies have struggled to hire fire personnel in Nevada's rural areas. This is a first ever partnership in Nevada for a State and Federal Agency to bring together their employees to fully staff a crew.

The following table provides a list of all the other active and recent partners with the Ely Ranger District:

Friends of Nevada Wilderness	Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act
Great Basin Institute	Nevada Department of Wildlife
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Great Basin Trails Alliance
High Desert Trailblazers	International Mountain Bike Association
Ely Outdoor Enthusiast	Nevada Division of Forestry
White Pine County	Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition
Tri-County Weed Control	Ely District Bureau of Land Management
White Pine County Tourism & Recreation	WP County Conservation District
Nevada OHV Committee	Back-Country Horsemen

Cooperative Weed Management Areas	City of Ely
Great Basin National Park	Livestock Permittees

THE SECRETS TO OUR SUCCESS

See the attached handout and photos.

CONCLUSION

This concludes my prepared comments. Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have about any project, programs or management of the Ely Ranger District.

END OF TESTIMONY