

**Minutes of the  
EUREKA COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION**

The Eureka County Natural Resources Advisory Commission (NRAC) held a public meeting on January 8, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at the County Administrative Facility, Eureka Nevada.

**Members Present:** Jim Baumann (Chair), Carl Slagowski (Vice-Chair), Chad Bliss, Paul Etzler, Gary McCuin, Jerry Todd, and Ken Conley

**Members Absent:** Mike Rebaleati and Ari Erickson

**Others Present:** Lance Brown, US Forest Service Austin-Tonopah District Ranger and Magee Braswell, Eureka County Natural Resources Department Assistant

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Baumann at 6:10 p.m., a quorum was determined to be present.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Commission Business**

*Approval of agenda notice with addition of any emergency item and/or deletion of any item.*

Carl Slagowski motioned to approve the agenda as written. Gary McCuin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

*Election of chairman and vice-chairman for 2020.*

Mr. McCuin motioned to keep the seats as is for 2020 being Jim Baumann and Chairman and Carl Slagowski as Vice-Chairman. Ken Conley seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Approval of minutes from September 18, 2019 and October 09, 2019 Meeting.*

Chad Bliss noted a typo on the September 18, 2019 minutes. Mr. Slagowski motioned to approve the both set of minutes with the noted correction. Mr. McCuin seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

*Member Updates and Reports.*

None.

*Discuss correspondence and natural resource issues affecting Eureka County and consider action items for the next agenda.*

Ms. Braswell handed out an overview update to the board members from Jake Tibbitts, Eureka Natural Resource Department Manager, which goes over current

correspondence and natural resource issues in Eureka County. The board read through the handout individually, with no discussion on the handout.

\*The update provided by Mr. Tibbitts is on file at the Natural Resource office.

Mr. McCuin reported that Congress is in the process of hopefully increasing funding for the Wild Horse and Burro fund for an additional \$21 million. Last May, a Wild Horse and Burro Summit was held in Reno, which was followed up by Congressman Stewart inviting multiple entities to be partake in a workshop for the Wild Horse and Burros. Through the joint efforts of multiple entities, the funding increase was made possible.

Mr. McCuin also mentioned that Senator Cortez Masto is in support of the "Green Tax Credit" concept, which could remove the wild horse and burros that have been removed from the rangelands from Bureau of Land Management (BLM) funding. Senator Cortez Masto is on the finance committee and may be putting the "Green Tax Credit" forward in a bill this coming year.

Mr. Bliss asked what the Green Tax Credit would do.

Mr. McCuin explained that roughly 60% of the BLM budget goes towards housing wild horse and burros in off-range facilities. Over the period of the next five years, the total holding costs for the program, it would be around \$2.2 Billion. The Green Tax Credit would help alleviate some of the financial burden from the BLM and incentivize private investment into care.

### **Agency Reports**

*Reports and updates from various natural resources and land management agencies in attendance.*

Ms. Braswell handed out an update from the new BLM Battle Mountain District Public Affairs Officer, Jess Harvey, to the board members. The BLM update covered mining, Sage Grouse, Weed Control, and Fuel Breaks along Highway 50. There were no new updates for the Wild Horses. The board discussed various points on the handout but did not deliberate on anything.

\*The BLM update provided by Mr. Harvey is on file at the Natural Resource office.

Mr. Slagowski asked if the Mr. Tibbitts had commented on the Nevada Gold Mines (NGM) Bank Enabling Agreement (BEA) EA. Ms. Braswell was unsure if Mr. Tibbitts had provided comment or not but would check into it.

Mr. McCuin commented that the Barrick (now Nevada Gold Mines) Bank Enabling Agreement (BEA) was originally a pre-arranged private agreement between Barrick and Department of Interior agencies, primarily US Fish and Wildlife Service. The BEA states it will be located on public and private lands. He believes this will cause some issue with the Nevada Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (SEC) due to being on public land where the

SEC has been working hard, with limited success, in being able to get "credits" for public lands projects.

**US Forest Service Austin-Tonopah Ranger District Vegetation Analysis, Prioritization, and Restoration**

*Discuss the Austin-Tonopah Ranger District Vegetation Analysis, Prioritization, and Restoration Strategy with USFS staff including Lance Brown, USFS Austin-Tonopah District Ranger, and consider response to the Strategy.*

Lance Brown, USFS Austin-Tonopah District Ranger, handed out an overview pamphlet of what he was going to discuss with the board in his presentation. He discussed the new vegetation analysis strategy that the district has undertaken. This analysis was modeled after the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Ranger District. The goal of the new strategy is to identify areas of interest from a fire management perspective. The new strategy is geared toward urban interface management, fire suppression tactics, and urban interface issues. The enterprise team (who is helping with creating the vegetation analysis) is comprised of two fuels fire ecologists, GIS specialist, a biologist, botanist, and ecologist. The Austin-Tonopah RD is working on creating a broad, landscape overview of the district, which will provide the basis to identifying pre-fire fuels reduction, restoration treatments, and develops purpose and need statements in collaboration with partners.

The board asked if the USFS has looked into hydrologic effects of pinyon-juniper (PJ) areas.

Mr. Brown said they are not particularly looking into that, however they do recognize that there is a fair amount of water being utilized by those woodland areas. He also said that PJ woodlands are included in the site specific analysis that they are working on. They are looking into a broader range for a multi species fuels treatment not just single species.

Mr. McCuin asked if they are looking into doing late phase 2 and phase 3 PJ treatments areas.

Mr. Brown they will be looking into that for cost benefit for that but it is on their horizon. There are points they need to look at and weigh the cost benefit of those projects. Most of these projects would be looked at in a site specific strategy.

Mr. McCuin asked about the grazing permits that are currently inactive currently and what is the chance of getting them reactivated.

Mr. Brown said the vacant allotment would need to need to go under a new NEPA analysis. After the analysis a development of a new management plan for livestock would be created. A grants process (a USFS process) would be addressed on who has preference to be issued that grazing permits too.

Mr. Brown said as of right now the USFS is working on finalizing the strategy. Once the strategy is finalized, this spring they will work in collaboration with partners on assisting the district on how to eventually implement and help provide input.

Mr. Bliss inquired about whether or not there is pre-coordination guidelines between the USFS and permittees on managing ongoing fires within their allotments.

Mr. Brown explained that within the Austin-Tonopah RD they use what is called a Red-Green Map of the district. Any fire that is encroaching on the red sections of the map are handled with quick suppression. If there is a fire on the green section of the map, the USFS would look at the vegetation in the area and would possibly manage the fire for resource benefit. Ultimately they try to work in close coordination with permittees in regards to livestock and pasture safety during fires, however, there is always room for improvement.

Mr. Brown also relayed that his district is working towards being able to work in coordination with the BLM for horse managing. They have outdated numbers of horses on all of their HMA's and are working on getting current numbers. They work side by side with the BLM to get current HMA numbers.

Mr. Brown thanked the board for listening to his presentation and asked if anyone had any more questions to please reach out to him.

\*A hard copy of the handout provided to the board by Mr. Brown in on file at the Natural Resource Department.

### **Mining**

*Discuss other mining projects and activities in and affecting Eureka County, including but not limited to the Barrick/Newmont Nevada Joint Venture, McEwen Mining Gold Bar Project, Barrick Deep South Expansion, Prophecy Development Corp Gibellini Project, Gullsil Prospect Project, General Moly Mt. Hope Project, all Carlin Trend operations, and consider response to any related issues or comment periods.*

The board had a short discussion regarding the mining projects in Eureka County, including those on Mr. Tibbitts' report, but did not deliberate on any specific item.

### **Grazing**

*Discuss and consider response on recent grazing actions, decisions, and proposals affecting Eureka County. Discuss and consider response to BLM Targeted Grazing of Annual Grasses in Great Basin Ecoregions in Nevada EA and related documents and matters.*

The board had a discussion about any amendments or changes they would like to make in regards to the Eureka Trailing Permit EA. The comment that was provided by Eureka County was in their packets they received. After reading the comments from the County the board decided they had no comment or changes to add and would just like to be kept updated on the EA. The board was also in agreement to not comment on the BLM Targeted Grazing of Annual Grasses in Great Basin Ecoregions in Nevada EA and will wait until the cooperating agency draft is available for review and at the time decide on whether or not to provide comment.

### **Sage Grouse**

*Discuss and consider response to recent activities and issues related to sage grouse including but not limited to the State Plan and associated mitigation regulations and adaptive management strategy and federal Plan Amendments, including litigation and injunction.*

Mr. McCuin informed the board that tomorrow, January 9, 2020, the South Central Adaptive Management process will be holding a meeting in Battle Mountain. There will be a video link to the Eureka and Elko extension offices from 10 A.M. – 4 P.M.

### **Water Resources**

*Update on and consider response to water resource issues including but not limited to the Diamond Valley adjudication, Groundwater Management Plan in Diamond Valley, and Humboldt River Basin conjunctive management and curtailment.*

Ms. Braswell asked the board members if any of them would like a copy of the tri-fold pamphlet that was put together by the State Engineer providing Best Management Practice for GMP participants. She will relay back to Mr. Tibbitts who would like a pamphlet.

### **Strategies and Initiatives for 2020**

*Discuss and consider natural resources issues, strategies and initiatives to prioritize for action in 2020.*

The board was in agreement to table this until the next meeting.

### **Next Meeting-**

Items suggested by the board for the next agenda include any updates on any ongoing agenda items. The board should get any other desired agenda items to Mr. Tibbitts for the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2020 at 6 P.M.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Adjourn**– The motion was made by Mr. Todd to adjourn the meeting and seconded by Mr. Slagowski. There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Magee Braswell, Secretary

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Jim Baumann, Chairman