



Nellis
United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
LAS VEGAS DISTRICT OFFICE
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LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89126



IN REPLY REFER TO:

1600
(NV-053)

AUG 7 1989

Teri Jay
Commission for the Preservation
Of Wild Horses and Burros
5500 Snider Avenue, Bldg.6, Rm. 137
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Ms. Jay:

In response to our telephone conversation of July 24, 1989, enclosed is the transcript from the public meeting held in Las Vegas to obtain oral comments on the Nellis Air Force Range Draft Resource Plan/Environmental Impact Statement. Due to printer and copier problems, the quality of the copy is less than perfect, but still readable.

If you have any questions, please contact either myself or Roger Alexander, the planning coordinator, at the above address or call (702) 646-8800.

Sincerely,

Ben F. Collins
District Manager

1 Enclosure
1. Transcript

Roger Alexander

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen. On behalf of the Bureau of Land Management, I would like to welcome you to the last of three public meetings being held to obtain comments on the Nellis Air Force Range Draft Resource Plan/Environmental Impact Statement.

My name is Roger Alexander and I'm the Planning Coordinator for the BLM in Las Vegas. Also, in attendance tonite from the BLM are Ben Collins, the District Manger; Dawna Ferris, archaeologist/writer-editor; Neil Talbot, State Office Planning Coordinator; Terry Driver, Wild Horse and Burro Specialist. Harley Dickensheets from the 554th Range Group, Nellis Air Force Base is also here tonight.

Before we hear your comments, I would like to give a brief overview of the planning process and review the events leading up to tonight's meeting.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to obtain comments on the Nellis Air Force Range Draft Resource Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. This document was prepared in response to Public Law 99-606 as amended which reauthorized the withdrawal of the Nellis Air Force Range and directed BLM to prepared management plan for the withdrawn area. The Draft Resource Plan was released to the public for a 90-day comment period on June 1, 1989. After this public comment period ends, we will prepare a Proposed Resource Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. This document will address all pertinent comments both oral and written that we receive during the comment period. Following the distribution of the final document, there will be a 30-day waiting period, then we will issue an Approved Resource Plan and Record of Decision. The Draft Resource Plan and Environmental Impact Statement analyzes the options for the management of vegetation, wildlife habitat, wild horses and burros, and cultural resources. It does not analyze the impact resulting from the military uses of the withdrawn area. In addition to these identified issues, BLM policy requires that we address other pertinent resources, such as visual resources, areas of critical environmental concern, timber, livestock grazing, and minerals. As the document was being prepared, it became apparent that the only real options for management were in the wild horse and burro program and even those were very limited. Management of vegetation and wildlife habitat on the Nellis Range is tied

Roger Alexander

into our management of wild horses and burros. And the management of cultural resources is strictly defined by law. Because of these limitations, the document analyzes only two alternatives. The proposed action, which is the preferred alternative, and the no action alternative. In case you haven't noticed, we're recording tonight's meeting. This is to insure that we have an accurate record of your comments and can address them when we prepare the Proposed Resource Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement. The tape will be transcribed and both the tape and the transcript will become part of the official record. To insure that we get your comments, please speak clearly into the microphone and identify yourself and who you represent, if anybody. Before we hear your comments, does anyone have any questions regarding the planning process or tonight's procedures? O.K., if not, then I'll call the speakers. We have three who would like to speak and I'll call them in the order in which they have arrived tonight. If you please come up to the podium and speak. This has a little built-in microphone. First, is Chris Brown.

Chris Brown

Boy, I didn't have to wait hardly at all. Um, my name is Chris Brown and I am the Southern Nevada Coordinator for Citizen Alert. Um, the Draft Plan contains evaluations of wildlife and cultural impacts without any surveys of those resources in the plan. It clearly states that there have been no surveys of wildlife or cultural resources in the planning area; and yet then goes on to say that it will make estimations of those, ah the impacts, ah on those particular resources. It comes out with the evaluations that there are no endangered species and that there will be no significant impact of cultural resources and yet there is no survey of those resources in the plan. We feel that it is not logical nor valid to come up with those conclusions, if there are no surveys; and this plan should not go forth until such surveys are done. Um, we also question why the Desert National Wildlife Range has been left out. Is this to indicate that the Nellis Air Force Range is going to release the Desert Wildlife Range once again to public use? And if not, if they intend to keep that as part of the Nellis Air Force Range, then we feel that this should be part of the EIS and Range Plan...Range Management Plan. There is no reference to the impact of ordinance on water or wildlife. And yet, several times in the report it mentions the fact that the primary reason why the public is not allowed to use these lands is because of the military use of them. The chemicals, the possible radioactivity, and other sorts of problems created by the releases of exploded ordinance or other types of weapons, which we're not sure what they are, should be dealt with in

Chris Brown

this plan. There's potential impacts on both wildlife and water resources. Water resources, of course which may be very important not just for wildlife but for the public in the future of the ordinance that's used on Nellis Air Force Range. There's no reference to the effect of lasers or to the types of weapons used on the Air Force Range. Ah, we feel this is also, ah missing in the plan, in the sense that lasers have clearly, ah shown negative impact on both the public and on wildlife and previous reports ah, about other weapons, ranges, and we would like to see if in fact lasers are being used on Nellis and what the potential impact especially since parts of the Air Force Range are very close to public highways. The...another comment we have is that in the Groom Range Land Grab by the Air Force a number of years ago, there was a promised mitigation of a paved road from Rachael to the Nevada Test Site. That road has not been paved as of this time, and we would like to see, ah the reasons for why the mitigation that was promised has not been carried through. Um, there is also reference in the plan to opening the Bighorn Sheep Range um, near, I think it is the Stonewall Range, to hunting. The...yet, it's only mentioned in a few very short paragraphs. There's no reference to the impacts of human beings. The hunters themselves buy weapons, ordinances...the potential danger to them. Nor is there a reference of, ah, what the impact those hunter themselves would be on the range, um, in terms of the danger to, ah, wildlife or threatened habitat, ah, on the range. And the final comment that we have, is that, Citizen Alert has been active in this state for the last 14 years. And um, we have even sent representatives to comment on this particular plan in Washington, D.C. in the past. And yet, we are not listed as one of the groups to receive the report, and did not receive a copy of the report mailed to us. We do not understand why the BLM does not consider Citizen Alert to be a community organization deserving of receiving this report in its first form.

Roger Alexander O.K., thank you Chris, the next speaker is Dart Anthony.

Dart Anthony Um, I'm conceding, it means I'll give up Southern Nevada's time to Mr. Brink, of the U.S. Wild Horse and Burro Foundation, for right now.

Roger Alexander O.K. then we'll just proceed on to Keith Brink.

Keith Brink My name is Keith Brink, I am the Executive Vice-President of the U.S. Wild Horse and Burro Foundation. Ah, I have a group of questions that I would like to read that we would like to see answered by the BLM on this study and this activity. Ah,...

Roger Alexander May I interrupt? Ah, are you going to followup with a written ah, submission of your questions also?

Keith Brink Ah, I can if you so desire.

Roger Alexander I would appreciate that, sir.

Keith Brink You'll be able to transcribe them from the tape. Hopefully, because I'll speak very succinctly, clear-free for your secretary to get them typed. Ah, we would like to have a copy of the BLM's monitoring study for this area, and the amount. Ah, we would like to know the status of your range monitoring studies. Ah, we would like to know what is the carrying capacity of the range in this area. Ah, there is two-part two million acres of land here? We would like to know what percentage of that is grazable, ah, for horses. Ah, what is the water situation? Ah, we would like to know how old is the BLM's range data? Ah, what is the range data used to determine excess animals? Ah, we are aware that there are some restrictions of access due to security classifications here. How you gain access to those areas to determine exactly how many animals may be all over this area? Ah, how many trespass cattle are still on this range? Ah, when were the cattle last observed out there; ah, compared to your range data studies? Ah, if the range data was obtained just after the removal of the grazing cattle, then the range study is inaccurate as the forage hasn't had the time to recover from the devastation of the cattle herds. Ah, what is the current condition of the range? Are there written analyses of monitoring studies available? Ah, I would like to know, how will the removal be in-line with the current IBLA rulings? Also, we would like to know if there have been any studies done to review the impact of ah, nuclear weaponry that may have been used or radioactive weaponry...let me correct myself...delete nuclear...radioactive weaponry that may have been used on these ranges. It's very common knowledge, anyone can pick up a Janes Book on fighting airplanes and see that the A-10 uses a depleted plutonium round. That would leave some radioactive residue in this area. We need to know what the impact is on the wildlife and forage in that area. That's all I have.

Roger Alexander Thank you Mr. Brink. The next speaker is David Tattum.

David Tattum Ah, I'm David Tattum with the National Wild Horse Association, and ah, basically we have a couple of concerns. Ah, under their existing projects on D7 in here, they've discussed the water and fencing up at the Test Site. And ah, I noticed under fencing, they're referring to...fiscal...what will be constructed in Fiscal Year 1985, and I assume that the water is the same situation, that they're still working off the basis of four or five years ago, figures that were derived at that time. And that is one of our major concerns, is that we have updated information and that this is an updated plan as to what will have taken place up there. That's about it.

Roger Alexander Thank you for your comments. Thank everybody for their comments. Those were good comments. And ah, we'll certainly address them in the document. I would like to open it now if anybody else has any questions or comments. Sir!

Ken Struthers Thank you, I'm Ken Struthers with the Nevada Wildlife Federation. I just like to add one more question on the issue that was brought up by the gentlemen from Citizen Alert on the Groom Range....Groom Mountain Range, ah Withdrawal Area. Also, in that mitigation there was promised some money to replace some ah, quail guzzlers, that money was going to go to the Nevada Department of Wildlife. I like to know if those funds were ever appropriated and paid to the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

Roger Alexander They were.

Ken Struthers O.K., thank you.

Roger Alexander Is there anybody else whose....Dart?

Dart Anthony I'm Dart Anthony, President of the Humane Society of Southern Nevada. I just had one question, if I could. Ah, once again the Humane Society will be very anxious to know. What new techniques have been or even being considered by the BLM to do ah, wild horse counts in this particular ah, management area?

Roger Alexander I can't address that right now. I don't know of any new techniques that are being developed. We do helicopter counts primarily.

Dart Anthony I know you have been doing that, but there were...at one meeting that we had there was a referenced to there was some new techniques being considered in conjunction with the U.S. Air Force. And what we would like to know, is to address that issue...has that ever, has that ever borne fruit...I should say, and we would like to hear from that.

Roger Alexander O.K., Dart

Dart Anthony O.K. Thank you.

Roger Alexander Is there anybody else would like to ah, make a comment or have any questions? If not, then I would like to thank you for taking the time to attend tonight's meeting. I know it's been a short meeting, but ah, that's....those are the best kind in my book, ha ha.... M'am, did you have a comment?

Barbara Eskildsen I just..... Just to back up for just a second, just a question. I know that it said written or oral tonight, after this is over are you still going to accept oral

Roger Alexander Yes, m'am the comment.....

Barbara Eskildsen and written.....

Roger Alexander Yes m'am the comment,... yes, the comment is open, the comment period is open until September 1st and the address that you want to address your comments to is right up there on the wall. It's the Area Manager, Caliente Resource Area. He's the responsible line manager for this document.....which just takes care of the rest of my paragraph here of ah, speech, ha, ha; I was going to tell you where to do that. Alright, your comments will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. We will transcribe them, and ah, answer all of your questions that are pertinent and if not we'll explain why we're not answering them. So I would like to thank you all once again, and that will conclude tonight's meeting.