

Release Number: 2001-23
For Release: December 21, 2000

RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL NOMINATIONS BEING SOUGHT

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is seeking nominations to fill a position on its Mojave Southern Nevada Resource Advisory Council (RAC) in Nevada. Bob Abbey, BLM state director, said the nomination process will remain open until the close of business on Tuesday, February 20, 2001.

The position for appointment on the RAC is for an elected official in State, county or local government in Southern Nevada. Nominations should be forwarded to Phil Guerrero, BLM Las Vegas Field Office, 4765 Las Vegas Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89108. This RAC hold meetings in Las Vegas and in Nye, Lincoln and Esmeralda Counties.

Individuals may nominate themselves or other persons. The nominee must hold elected office. Nominations should include a brief biographical information sheet on the nominee. The nominee should also have demonstrated a commitment to collaborative resource decision making. All submissions must include letters of reference from the represented interest or organization. Nominees must be residents of Nevada. Members are appointed to three-year terms, unless they are replacing a member who left the council before the term expired.

The councils meet several times a year, usually at least quarterly, and advise the Secretary of the Interior, through the BLM field managers and the state director, on management of the public lands within a council's geographic area. It has been the practice in Nevada to hold one joint meeting of all three Nevada RACs in Reno, in October.

The councils advise BLM on such matters as land use planning, range improvements, and standards for the ecological health of the public lands.

In order to reflect a fair balance of viewpoint, the 15-member councils are made up of representatives from various interests concerned with the management of public lands.

The advice of the RACs is highly valued by myself and the six BLM Nevada field managers, said Abbey. I encourage all who are interested to submit applications.

For questions about the RACs or the application process, call the individuals listed above or the Nevada State Office, 775-861-6586.

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For More Information Contact: Jo Simpson (775) 861-6586 or Phil Guerrero at (702) 647-5000

Release Number: 2001-22
For Release: December 18, 2000

BLM Publishes Final Rule on Activities in Wilderness Areas

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a final rule that revises and updates management regulations relating to congressionally designated wilderness areas under BLM management. The final rule, which appears in the Thursday, Dec. 14, Federal Register, applies more than 5.5 million acres of BLM-managed wilderness areas in the continental United States. The rule does not govern activities in wilderness study areas.

This rule brings the BLM's wilderness regulations up to date with several legislative, policy, and technological changes that have occurred since 1985—the last time our agency issued wilderness regulations.

The final rule recognizes rock climbing as a legitimate use of BLM-managed wilderness areas. Under the rule, rock climbers do not need a permit to climb. Climbers may not, however, use power drills to install permanent fixed anchors. The final rule does not address the installation of new, permanent fixed anchors for rock climbing in BLM wilderness areas. The BLM decided to hold off, for now, on any regulatory action on the installation of anchors.

The final rule authorizes American Indians to use BLM-managed wilderness areas for traditional religious ceremonies, but does not grant Tribes exclusive rights. The BLM decided that a provision providing privacy for Indian ceremonial uses, which the agency had included in its proposed wilderness rule of December 19, 1996, is not necessary. BLM land managers already have authority under other regulations and Federal law to temporarily close an area to protect or accommodate this or any other type of use in appropriate circumstances.

The final rule, which takes effect January 16, 2001:

makes clear that sailboats, sailboards, parachutes, game carriers, carts, wagons, and similar devices are **non-mechanical transport** that cannot be used in wilderness areas. The rule also defines **non-motorized equipment** as including chainsaws, power drills and motor vehicles. The Wilderness Act of 1964 prohibits the use of mechanical transport and motorized equipment in wilderness areas.

implements the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 by allowing wheelchair use in wilderness areas by those individuals who need them. Consistent with the provisions of ADA, the BLM will not construct facilities or modify land conditions to accommodate wheelchair use.

makes clear that the use of horses or other pack stock is a legitimate activity in wilderness areas.

retains the existing prohibition against the holding of competitive events, such as foot or watercraft races, in designated wilderness.

consolidates existing provisions that prohibit aircraft from landing in wilderness areas or from dropping skydivers or materials into these areas.

affirms the right of miners with valid existing rights to carry on certain activities in support of their mining claims, consistent with BLM requirements to protect wilderness values.

allows grazing to continue in wilderness areas at the level that existed at the time Congress designated these areas as wilderness.

ensures access to owners of non-Federal lands that are completely surrounded by BLM-managed wilderness areas (known as inholdings). The BLM will approve an access route if it existed at the time Congress designated the surrounding area as wilderness; if such a route did not exist at that time, the Bureau will approve non-motorized access to the inholding.

Copies of the final wilderness management rule can be obtained from any of the BLM's offices or accessed from the Bureau's national Internet web site (<http://www.blm.gov/nhp/index.htm>) or the Federal Register Web site (<http://www.gpo.gov/>).

- BLM -

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Permits Available for Harvesting Sagebrush and other Native Species Seeds

After two big fire seasons in 1999 and 2000, the demand for both sagebrush seeds and the seeds of other native plant species has increased considerably in the Great Basin. Such native species seeds are the preferred means of reseeded land that has been burned by wildfires, reclaimed after mining operations, or targeted for restoration measures under the Great Basin Restoration Initiative.

But those who want to harvest seed on the public lands must first get a permit from the appropriate federal agency. Requiring permits for harvesting seed on public land is important because permits:

- Enable Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to honor its seed harvesting agreement with the Nevada Division of Wildlife.
- Prevent competition between different groups trying to harvest on the same sites.
- Help BLM track where seed can best be located by gatherers.
- Track where harvested seed is gathered, in order to determine where it can be planted with the best chance of successfully germinating and establishing native plant species.
- Help the BLM and the Forest Service better manage the land being harvested.
- Help federal agencies keep track of how these harvesting groups treat the land.
- Help control poaching. Because of increasing demand for sagebrush and other native species seed, poaching has become a problem.

Permits for collecting these seeds from public lands, in either small amounts or in large commercial quantities, are available from all BLM offices in Nevada. Details on the nominal fees charged for these

permits can be obtained from anyone on the statewide list of contacts provided below.

Permits are required to assure that seed collection activities take place in separate areas. The seeds of native plants are very important not only because they are well adapted to the Nevada climate and environment, but because when planted early enough after fire or ground disturbance, these native plants help to prevent the non-native and very aggressive cheatgrass from literally taking over the landscape.

These seeds are difficult to find in the quantities needed, especially in bad wildfire years like 1999 and 2000.

Those who are interested in collecting native seeds should contact their nearest BLM office to obtain permitting information. Statewide BLM contacts for seed collection permits are:

- Battle Mountain Field Office: Mike Boyd, 775-635-4000.
- Carson City Field Office: Dan Jacquet, 775-885-6116.
- Elko Field Office: Skip Ritter, 775-753-0223.
- Ely Field Office: Harry Rhea, 775-289-1848.
- Las Vegas Field Office: Gayle Marrs-Smith, 702-647-5156.
- Tonopah Field Station: Travis Fletcher, 775-482-7842.
- Winnemucca Field Office: John F. Ruhs, 775-623-1726.
- (Reno) Nevada State Office: Duane Wilson, 775-861-6587.

- BLM -

For More Information Contact: Richard H. Brown at 775-861-6586

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BLM Seeks Comments on List of Land Purchase Recommendations

The group of federal, state and local partners involved with implementation of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 (SNPLMA) have announced their preliminary recommendations for expenditures in Nevada during 2001 of money received from sale of land in the Las Vegas Valley. The list includes 41 capital improvement projects, nearly a dozen park, trail and natural area nominations, 14 projects supporting development of a multi-species habitat conservation plan for Clark County, and 24 proposed purchases of environmentally sensitive land.

Public comment is invited on any and all of these recommendations, which were compiled by agencies involved with implementation of the act. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the lead agency, with involvement of the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. The State of Nevada and Clark County also participate in compilation of the list of recommendations.

Notebooks containing detailed information on each of the recommended properties and projects will be available in BLM field offices and the agency's Nevada State Office in early February. SNPLMA specifies areas in which money received from sale of land in Las Vegas Valley can be used. Purchases can only be made from willing sellers. BLM conducts two land sales each year under SNPLMA, and receipts are placed in the account for use in funding these programs.

Public comment on the current list of recommendations will be accepted by BLM until February 28. The recommendations will then be considered by the executive committee, which is made up of regional heads of the federal agencies involved.

Several of the nominations for 2001 represent efforts to address environmental concerns in the state. Two land purchase nominations in the Muddy River area of Clark County are the Perkins Ranch and the Anniversary Mine in the Muddy Mountains. These complement two multi-species habitat conservation plan elements, the Upper Muddy River Restoration and Land Management Plan and the Muddy River watershed assessment.

A group of the nominations for acquisition are for land in the Virgin River area, to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species in Nevada. These include the 80 acre Tran property; the Hughes Property, 40 acres; the Bunker property, 15 acres; the Kusler property, 20 acres; and the 17 parcels making up "Virgin River 2," a previously nominated proposal which did not receive funding in the first list of SNPLMA allocations issued last June. A Virgin River 1 purchase proposal was funded last June and has been completed. Another recommended property, adjacent to the Lake Mead National Recreation Area (NRA) is on the Overton Arm near the confluence of the Virgin River and Lake Mead. In the South Virgin Mountains, the Delavan properties, with 865 acres in three parcels, have been recommended for acquisition.

The current list includes a total of 24 nominations for land acquisition. Several are in Clark County, in addition to the Muddy River and Virgin River properties. One of these is a property adjacent to the Spring Mountain NRA, the 165 acre Torino Ranch, which would increase access to and recreational values of the NRA. The second is an inholding in the NRA, the 80 acre Horseshutem Springs. Another recommended property, the White Beauty Mine, is adjacent to the BLM's Red Rock NCA. Two are inholdings in the Lake Mead NRA: the Eagle Mining Claims, 120 acres, in Eldorado Canyon; and the Rockefeller Mining Claims, 110 acres in Cottonwood Cove.

Other recommended properties in Clark County include the 160 acre Walking Box ranch near Searchlight, a purchase which would be contingent on a partnership with scientific or educational institutions; the two Frenchman-Sunrise Mountain properties owned by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, with a total of 529 acres; and McCullough Springs, nine miles north of Nipton, Calif., on the east slope of the McCullough Mountains.

The remaining seven properties recommended for acquisition are outside Clark County. Three are in western Nevada: 134 acres of Casey property west of U.S. 395 in Washoe County; 1,600 acres of the Schneider Ranch, at the north end of Douglas County; and nine parcels with a total of 172 acres along the Carson River in the city and county of Carson City. The Casey property east of Highway 395 was approved for purchase in the expenditures approved last June. Other properties recommended for purchase during 2001 are 10,374 acres north of Winnemucca in Humboldt County, located within the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest boundary and offered by the Nevada First Corporation, and 473 acres in the Knott Creek Reservoir area of northwestern Humboldt County. Also recommended are two forest inholdings: the 143 acre Idlewild Creek Boy Scout property north of Ione, in Nye County; and eight parcels around Pinchot Springs in the Inyo National Forest in Mineral and Esmeralda Counties,

comprising 400 acres.

The 41 capital improvement projects recommended for approval are all in Clark County, as required by the act. Several of these are on the heavily-used Lake Mead NRA, managed by the U.S. Park Service. Others are at the BLM's popular Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, the Forest Service's equally popular Spring Mountains NRA, and at the Fish and Wildlife Service's Desert National Wildlife Reserve.

Proposals for trail work, all in Clark County, include a regional trail link between Bootleg Canyon and the River Mountains Loop Trail; the Loop Trail itself, a Wetlands Trail Connection and a multi-use pedestrian pathway at the Las Vegas Wash, McCullough Hills Trail connection, trail heads and staging areas throughout the valley, and the Bonanza/U.S. 95 trail. Funding assistance for the Las Vegas Springs Preserve cienega/wetlands is also recommended.

Properties must present no health, safety or liability concerns that cannot be mitigated, and must be identified for protection or acquisition in an approved federal land management plan. The planning process involves public input and consultation with affected county governments. During the first half of 2001, the senior federal managers will make a final determination on the recommendations. This decision will take into consideration public comments received during the next sixty days.

Public comment is invited on the list of recommendations. Comments may be mailed or delivered to the BLM Southern Nevada Special Project Office, 4765 West Vegas Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89108.

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For More Information Contact: Jo Simpson at (775) 861-6586 or Mike Dwyer at (702) 647-5000

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BLM to Hire More Than 85 Additional Wildland Firefighters

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will be hiring an additional 85-plus wildland firefighters in Nevada for the coming fire season, thanks to new funding from the National Fire Management Plan.

With the addition of these new hires, BLM Nevada will be filling a total of 288 wildland firefighting jobs in 2001. The 85 seasonal and nine-month, career-seasonal positions will include 50 career-seasonal (permanent) firefighters- full-time positions that qualify for benefits.

"These career-seasonal positions are expected to not only enhance the BLM firefighting program in Nevada, but also to help retain employees and provide them with career opportunities," said BLM Nevada Fire Management Officer Kevin Hull. "The new hires will enable us to increase operations for some stations and crews to seven days a week, as well as allow seasonal firefighters to start earlier and stay longer through the fire season.

"We also plan to hire an additional 15-20 full-time fire crew leaders," Hull added.

Those interested in applying for seasonal (temporary) firefighter positions should check out the Quickhire web site at: [http://www.nc.blm.gov/jobs/](#). Career-seasonal and supervisory positions are expected to be posted at

Those interested in applying for seasonal (temporary) firefighter positions should check out the Quickhire web site at: <http://www.nc.blm.gov/jobs/>. Career-seasonal and supervisory positions are expected to be posted by Monday, Dec. 18, at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>. Applications will be accepted for 30 days after the posting date. Potential applicants may also contact any BLM office in Nevada for information about these positions. The telephone number for the BLM Nevada State Office in Reno is 775-861-6400.

The National Fire Management Plan will not only increase the number of firefighters on duty in Nevada, but will also make additional funding available for a contract air tanker in Elko, a new helicopter contract in Winnemucca, and placing a new Hotshot crew in Elko.

The highly trained and organized 20-person Hotshot crew will be used both locally and nationally to combat wildland fires, in cooperation with federal, state and local firefighting agencies. The new Elko crew will augment the existing BLM Hotshot crew in Carson City.

"We'll also be improving radios and other communications equipment," Hull said.

Under the National Fire Management Plan, the Bureau of Land Management will create 1,700 new firefighter positions throughout the West. The new positions are being created in the wake of the 2000 fire season, when firefighting resources throughout the nation were stretched to the breaking point by 90,000 wildfires that scorched 7.2 million acres across the Western United States. The plan also provides funding for reducing excess vegetation in wildland-urban interface areas.

Nevada alone lost 635,000 acres to the recent fire season. During the record 1999 fire season, 1.6 million acres burned in Nevada.

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For More Information Contact: Richard H. Brown at 775-861-6586

Release Number: 2001-18
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BLM Publishes Draft National Off-Highway Vehicle Strategy

The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Draft National Off-Highway Vehicle Strategy is available today for public review. The draft strategy offers guidance for creating a local framework for reviewing and resolving off-highway vehicle (OHV) issues. The purpose of the draft strategy is to help public land managers implement solutions to OHV issues and protect public land resources. A 30-day

comment period on the draft strategy begins today and will run until Jan. 3, 2001.

Nevada's public lands are popular destinations for OHV recreation, said BLM Nevada State Director Bob Abbey. BLM's goal is to work locally to manage OHV use.

These issues include OHV designations; signs, maps and other public information; existing OHV regulations; route inventory needs; impacts on resources; road and trail design, maintenance and restoration; monitoring; education and law enforcement.

The draft strategy reflects extensive public input. The BLM received comments at 49 listening meetings held last summer. The agency also received nearly 5,000 written comments.

The draft strategy is published on the Internet at <http://www.blm.gov/nhp/index.htm>. Printed copies will be available at all Nevada BLM offices. After the 30-day public comment period ends, the BLM expects to issue a final National OHV Strategy in late January.

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For More Information Contact: JoLynn Worley, (775) 861-6515