

NEVADA STATE OFFICE NO. 2003-12
FOR RELEASE: Dec. 20, 2002

Additional Lands In Clark County Nominated Under The SNPLMA

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability for public comment of a list of properties within Clark County nominated under the Round 3 extension for land acquisition with funds raised under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act of 1998 (SNPLMA). The comment period ends January 20, 2003.

The properties were nominated in response to a public call for additional Clark County nominations issued November 13. The nominations include two properties along the Muddy River and 11 in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area. Information about the nominated properties is available at the Internet website www.nv.blm.gov/SNPLMA, at the BLM Las Vegas Field Office at 4701 North Torrey Pines, or by calling 702-515-5114.

The comments received from interested parties on the newly nominated lands are important. They will help the federal agencies evaluate these additional proposals to develop a final recommendation for approval by Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton. Comments should be sent in writing to the BLM SNPLMA Office at 4701 North Torrey Pines, Las Vegas, NV 89130. Following the comment period, the nominated properties will be ranked according to their natural resource values and public benefits, in preparation for making a final recommendation to the Secretary. The lands recommended for approval under Round 3 will be selected from these additional Clark County nominations and others recommended, but not yet approved, by the Secretary under the initial Round 3 process.

In her initial Round 3 approval, Norton approved all the recommended lands in Clark County and two properties in Washoe and Storey Counties. She requested an additional opportunity for nominations of lands in Clark County, and set aside almost \$9 million for further Round 3 acquisitions. Norton makes the final decision on which properties will be purchased in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture. Emphasis is given to Clark County lands as the Act requires.

The SNPLMA provides for the sale of public land in the Las Vegas Valley. The proceeds may be used to purchase environmentally sensitive lands in Nevada, with priority given to lands located in Clark County. As a minimum, nominated lands recommended to the Secretary must have a willing seller; be included in a federal land use plan; and have no health, safety, or other liability issues which cannot be reasonably mitigated. The Act requires the federal government to consult with state and local governments where the lands are located, as well as other interested parties, before acquisition efforts are undertaken.

-BLM-

For more information contact: Public Affairs, (775) 861-6586

NEVADA STATE OFFICE NO. 2003-11
FOR RELEASE: Dec. 18, 2002

Crescent Valley Trespass Continues

Elko, Nev.-The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) this week served Mary and Carrie Dann, and the Western Shoshone National Council with an Unauthorized Use and Order to Remove Notice for unauthorized livestock grazing on public lands in Crescent Valley and Pine Valley on the South Buckhorn allotment, about 60 miles southwest of Elko.

Recent aerial and ground surveys showed more than 250 cattle and 980 horses on public lands in the allotment. The unauthorized livestock are causing significant resource damage and are severely straining the grazing capacity of the allotment, which is shared by five ranchers with valid grazing permits.

"We have urged the Danns to remove the horses they claim as private livestock and put them on their private land to avoid impoundment," said Bob Abbey, BLM Nevada State Director. "BLM is extremely concerned with the on-going resource damage to the public lands in the allotment. The Danns moved some horses and cattle to their private land last summer and in the fall; however, there are still more than 1,000 animals on the allotment.

"The State of Nevada Department of Agriculture will determine ownership of the horses. Horses determined to be wild horses will be handled in accordance with BLM policy and the wild horse and burro law. Horses determined to be stray will be handled under state law. Horses branded and grazing without permits will be subject to impoundment.

On Sept. 22, 2002, the BLM removed 227 of the Danns' cattle that were grazing in trespass on public lands in the South Buckhorn allotment. The cattle were sold at auction.

-BLM-

For more information contact: Mike Brown (775) 753-0386 (Elko) or JoLynn Worley (775) 861-6515 (Reno)

NEVADA STATE OFFICE NO. 2003-10
FOR RELEASE: Dec. 12, 2002

Cave Looter to Pay \$2.5 Million

Reno, Nev.—An Oregon man was handed a \$2.5 million civil penalty for destruction of archaeological resources on public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Nevada. On Dec. 6, an administrative law judge with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Hearings and Appeals ruled on the civil penalty, the fourth largest ever assessed for archaeological theft according to a database kept by the National Park Service.

Jack Lee Harelson, 62, of Grants Pass, was sentenced by Oregon State Court to 18 months in jail, fined \$20,000 and placed on two years supervised probation in 1996 for illegally excavating a site in northwest Nevada called Elephant Mountain Cave. The civil penalty ruling is for the restoration and repair of the archaeological resources damaged plus the archaeological or commercial value of the archaeological resources destroyed or not recovered.

In looting Elephant Mountain Cave, Harelson destroyed the value of what could have been one of the five most important archaeological cave sites discovered in the Great Basin. Before it was looted,

Elephant Mountain Cave contained a 10,000-year record of human life in northern Nevada. This cave could have helped all of us understand how people lived in the past. Harelson dug through and discarded all but the most pleasing or unusual material in the cave. Archaeological materials are useful if they are excavated and recorded in place. Once they are removed during illegal excavations, the data potential is lost.

"The desecration and loss of this site to all Americans is staggering," said Bob Abbey, BLM Nevada state director. "While we are pleased the judge ruled completely in BLM's favor, money can't bring back what was lost."

Administrative Law Judge William Hammett noted in his ruling that the insult to Native Americans from the desecration of burials in the Cave far outweighs the commercial value of the materials in the illegal collection, leading him to use the archaeological value rather than the commercial value to determine the civil penalty.

According to court documents, Harelson and his wife discovered two large baskets in the cave; one contained the body of a boy, and the other contained the body of a girl. They removed the bodies and associated artifacts from the baskets, kept the artifacts and the baskets for their collection and placed the bodies in plastic garbage bags and buried them in their back yard.

"The BLM has a permitting process that is essential to the protection of archaeological resources," said Abbey. "The permitting process helps us ensure that only qualified individuals are allowed to excavate archaeological resources."

The Oregon State Police and Oregon's Josephine County District Attorney's Office worked with BLM law enforcement and the Pyramid Lake tribe to bring Harelson to justice in 1996.

"Catching and prosecuting illegal archaeological looting is difficult because we rarely catch looters in the act," said Abbey. "Thanks to an excellent law enforcement effort and outstanding work by our state archaeologist to determine the archaeological value, we are successful in putting Harelson out of the artifact business."

Any monies collected in the civil penalty will go to the U.S. Treasury.

For more information contact: JoLynn Worley, 775-861-6515