

BLM-Carson City District *District Manager's Report*

April 5, 2017
SFNWGB RAC Meeting
Elko, Nevada
Presented by: Ralph Thomas

Current:

1. Drought monitoring continues within both field offices;
2. No wild horse gathers are scheduled at this time within the Carson City District;
3. BLM is working on multiple land conveyances in response to lands bills including Storey County and City of Fernley;

Landscape Projects:

1. The Desatoya Landscape Restoration Project implementation continues successfully in its fourth year. Partners include UNR, NRCS, NDOW, USGS, USDA-ARS, BOR, GBBO, and Smith Creek Ranch.
2. Implementation of the Pine Nut Land Health project is still ongoing.
3. A decision on the Virginia Mountains Healthy Lands project was signed in February 2017. An appeal was received on the NEPA decision on 3/17/17 and is being processed. Implementation will begin this fall, pending the outcome of appeal.

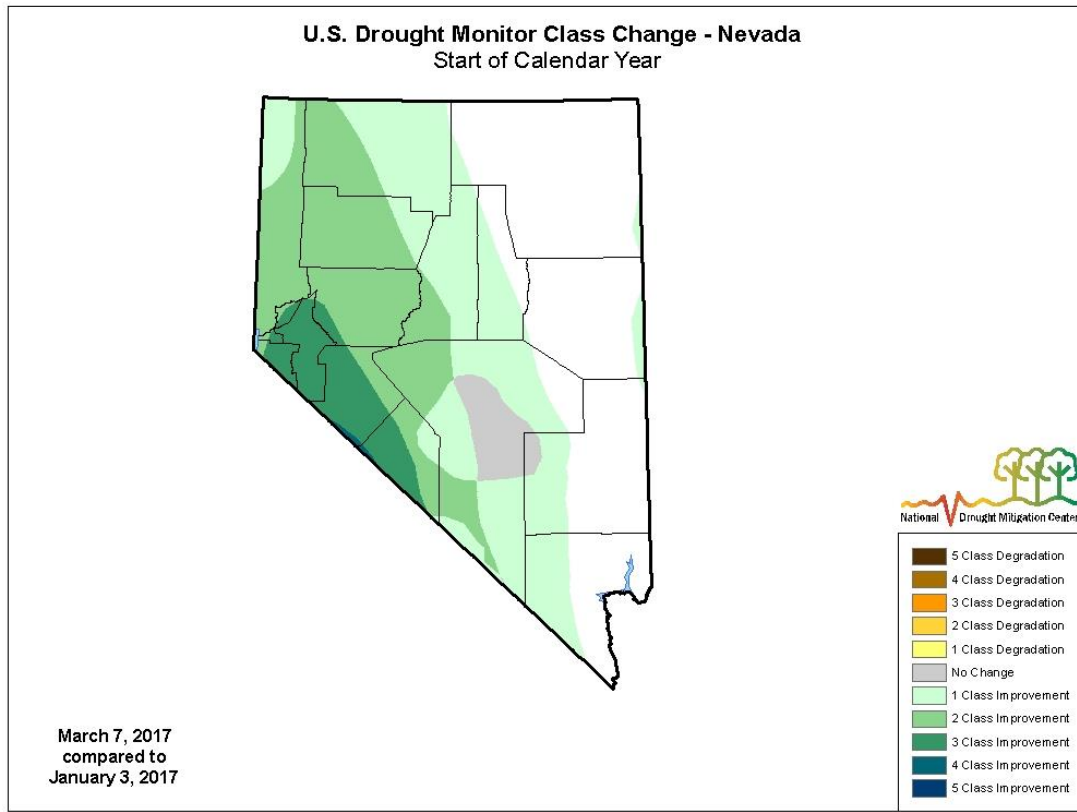
Carson City District Resource Management Plan Revision

The Proposed RMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being developed and is anticipated to be released to the public fall/winter 2017.

Finalized associated reports have been posted to the RMP website at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/carson_city_field.html and are available for public review.

Carson City District (CCDO) - Drought Monitoring

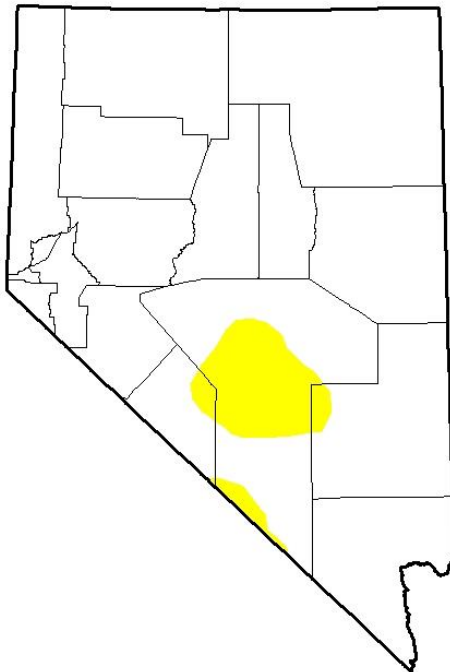
Drought conditions are subsiding in the CCDO. The drought monitor indicates improving conditions since the start of the calendar year and no drought conditions on March 7, 2017. Please see the Nevada drought monitor class change and drought condition maps below.



<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

U.S. Drought Monitor Nevada

March 7, 2017
(Released Thursday, Mar. 9, 2017)
Valid 7 a.m. EST



Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	93.82	6.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Last Week <i>2/28/2017</i>	93.82	6.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago <i>12/6/2016</i>	29.23	70.77	34.13	7.47	0.26	0.00
Start of Calendar Year <i>12/2017</i>	36.88	63.12	33.64	7.13	0.18	0.00
Start of Water Year <i>9/27/2016</i>	19.64	80.36	36.60	21.68	0.26	0.00
One Year Ago <i>3/8/2016</i>	5.75	94.25	60.38	37.11	23.20	4.56

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

Author:
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National Drought Mitigation Center

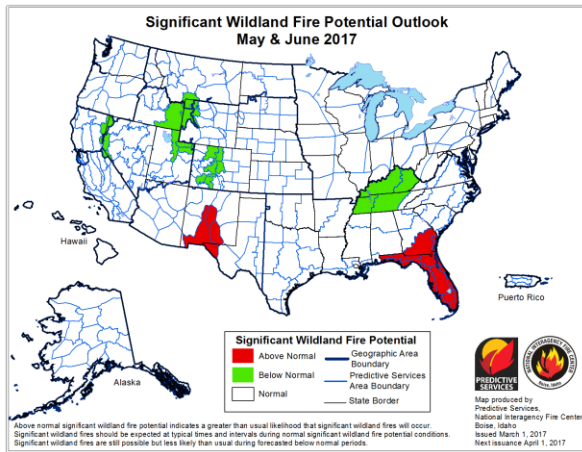
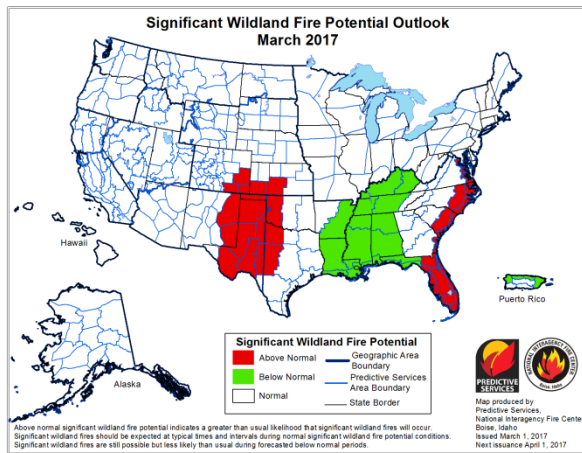


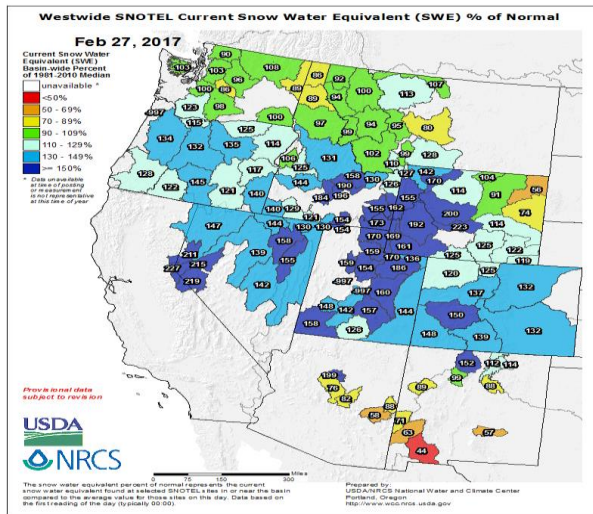
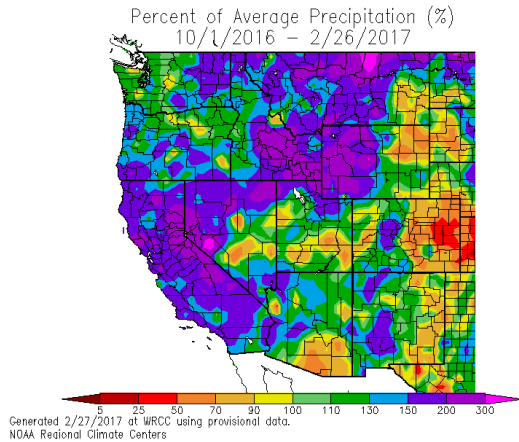
<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Carson City Interagency Division of Fire and Aviation

Fire Potential

A significantly wet winter across western Nevada has the potential to produce an above average grass crop, possibly more than NV has seen in a number of years. With this significant fuel load, human caused fires may be on the rise. Additionally, fires may resist control efforts due to the increased fuel loading. Much of the potential will rest on timing of the drying of the fuels and amount of ignition sources (both human and lightning). Primarily due to the moisture received, we are in a “normal to below normal” potential for large fires for this spring and early summer. National monthly fire potential outlook:





2017 Fire Resources

In 2017, Carson City Interagency fire program is planning the following resources:

- 10 fire engines located at 7 fire stations
- 1 Type 1 Interagency Hotshot Crew (Silver State Hotshots, 20 person hand crew)
- 1 Initial Attack Module (Eagle Valley, 10 person hand crew)
- 1 Call When Needed Type 2 Crew (Western Nevada Agency, 20 person hand crew)
- Stead large and single engine air tanker base

Fuels Management

The fuels management program's efforts are focused on reducing the potential for large scale high severity wildfire and improving the health of sagebrush plant communities that provide important habitat for sage-grouse and other species.

To date in FY 2017 the Carson City fuels management program has treated 7,120 acres in Carson City, Douglas, Lander and Lyon Counties. The severe winter caused access

challenges delaying the completion of two treatments, both which are scheduled to resume next fall/winter.

Completed Treatment By Method:

Mechanical – 7,107 Acres

Prescribed Fire – 13 Acres



Pine Nut Mountains, Sunrise 1, Pre-Treatment



Pine Nut Mountains, Sunrise 1, Post-Treatment

The fuels management program continues to support the District's forestry, wildlife and riparian protection and enhancement efforts through planning, treatment design and treatment implementation.



Smokey Bear Sign

Fire Mitigation and Education/Trespass and Investigation

On September 30th, 2016, Carson City went out of Fire Restrictions and all the signage on the District were replaced.

14 origin and cause determination investigations were concluded for human caused fires on the District. An additional seven were completed for the BIA. We assisted cooperators with seven additional fire investigations. We've recommended that six trespass cases go forward for cost recovery and await the Solicitors judgement on those currently.

Smokey Bear participated in 33 events last year delivering prevention messages to thousands of kids and adults. His schedule looks to be just as full this spring. We will have another 30 or so elementary school presentations, Nevada Wildfire Awareness Month in May, and the Great Reno Balloon race just to name a few.

Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR)

The Carson City District experienced eight large fires during the 2016 fire season that were above threshold requiring Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) assessment. In the Eastern portions of the district, the Horseshoe and Little Den fires burned a combined total of 10,314 acres. The Western portions of the District saw the Virginia Mountains Complex of fires (7 Lakes, Rock, Sage, Anderson, Tule) and Jackpot fires burn a combined total of 63,036 acres.

ESR assessments were completed and activities initiated for each of these fires as described below, however at the present significant flooding and sediment movement has precluded further field work on all burned areas. It is probable that planned activities will have to be significantly modified to account for this second natural disaster once access is restored to these areas sufficient to allow for new assessment, as the plans as written reflect mitigations for the fire impacts and not the flood.

The Horseshoe fire, which burned 6754 acres in the previous fire scar from the Hoyt and Wall fires from 6/28/16 to 7/6/16, was deemed low priority due to already degraded habitat conditions from previous fires and expected high survivability of what perennial vegetation remained on site. An ESR plan was not completed for this fire based on cost/benefit assessment conducted by Stillwater Field Office and ESR staff after the initial assessment. Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) expressed some interest in conducting limited aerial seeding in higher elevations of the fire area but this plan was tabled in favor of implementing projects in more critical habitats damaged by the Little Den fire.



Little Den Fire

The Little Den fire near East Gate, Nevada burned 3560 acres with very high severity from 7/20/16 to 7/24/16 in Greater Sage Grouse habitat and through Big Den creek, which is designated as Lahontan Cutthroat Trout (LCT) Threatened and Endangered Species habitat. A full ESR plan was submitted and approved. NDOW and US FWS were consulted during the formulation of this plan, with NDOW being instrumental in accomplishing timely aerial seeding to support sage-grouse habitat. Steep and denuded terrain surrounding Big Den Creek was commented on by all parties as a significant threat to the LCT habitat, with no feasible alternatives advanced for potential mitigation.



Big Den Creek

Ground crews conducted Lop and Scatter operations in numerous drainages to attempt to limit sedimentation into the LCT habitat per FWS guidance, but an early season storm resulted in the failure of this work and Big Den creek becoming a braided channel. It is unlikely that Big Den Creek will be suitable LCT habitat for quite some time due to these impacts.



Tule Fire Area, Sutcliffe

A National Burned Area Emergency Response (NBAER) Team was mobilized to assess the Virginia Mountains Complex fires that burned from 7/28/16 to 8/6/16 and included the Jackpot fire in the planning effort as well. The majority of the burned area exhibited fast moving, short duration and low intensity fire over a vast acreage, with perennial grasses and forbs expected to survive at adequate density to meet post fire ESR objectives in the absence of grazing. Grazing permit decisions have been issued reflecting the closure of the burned areas, in addition to the repair of 26 miles of fencing and a proposed construction of eight more miles of permanent and temporary fences to aid in cattle management and limit wild horse impacts. Large portions of the Sage, Rock, and Anderson fires burned in core sage-grouse habitat, and the NBAER team identified the need to bolster the Shrub cover in these areas. Aerial treatment with imazipik and overflight with Sage brush is planned for this fall, with hand planting of 2 year old sage brush and bitter brush plugs to be planted in additional areas in FY 19.

Monitoring and weed treatments are ongoing for the Cold Springs and Bison fires from previous years, with initial monitoring reports showing favorable outcomes, especially for the Bison ESR effort where aerial seeding and chaining occurred. Seeded species were observed in the Cold Springs fire, however were not at sufficient densities to be determined as successful at present.

Sierra Front Field Office (SFFO)

Pine Nut Horse Gather

The SFFO has prepared a Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) and E.A. for the Pine Nut Mountains Herd Management Area. The draft was sent out for public comment and the comment period is closed. Over 4,000 comments were received, however all but 375 comments were form letters.

In part, the proposed plan would remove approximately 500 excess wild horses from both inside and outside of the HMA, which would bring the wild horse population closer to the lower AML. Additional wild horses would be temporarily gathered, in order to vaccinate mares with PZP, a contraceptive and released back into the HMA. The final HMAP/EA is anticipated to be signed in April 2017.

SNPLMA Land Acquisition in the Pine Nut Mountains

The BLM, with support of several partners, has proposed to acquire approximately 14,522 acres of vacant land located in the Pine Nut Mountains. This proposal was submitted for SNPLMA Round 15 funding and was approved in December 2015. The acquisition would consolidate federal ownership and management for the protection of Bi-State sage-grouse habitat, cultural resources, riparian areas, and general wildlife habitat. It would also improve public access.

Legislated Lands Actions by the SFFO on two land conveyances that were authorized under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Act) are on hold. Conveyance to the City of Fernley, Nevada will begin upon request from the City to acquire the parcels. No request has yet been received. Conveyance to Storey County, Nevada is on hold until the BLM, working with the Washington Office of BLM and Storey County, determines how to proceed with certain provisions of the Act. In the meantime, the SFFO is continuing to prepare for the conveyance so that we are ready to move forward when direction is received.

In October 2016, the Nevada Native Nations Act was passed. That legislation transferred certain public lands within the SFFO to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to be managed for the Reno Sparks Indian Colony and the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. Approximately 2,560 acres of public land were transferred to the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation and 13,435 to the Reno Sparks Indian Colony. The SFFO has notified holders of land authorizations and mineral claims and is currently working through several administrative aspects of the transfer.

The transfer of lands to be held in trust for the Reno Sparks Indian Colony affected a substantial portion of the Hungry Valley Recreation Area. However, the Moon Rocks area, popular with OHV users, was not included in the transfer. The BLM is currently directing recreation users to the Colony for the most current information on what types of uses they allow on reservation lands.

Virginia Mountains Vegetation Treatments Project

The SFFO signed a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact on the Virginia Mountains Vegetation Treatments Project Environmental Assessment (EA) on February 13, 2017. The Proposed Action is to implement vegetation treatments on approximately 22,388 acres over a ten-year period in the Virginia Mountains, north of Reno and west of Pyramid Lake in Washoe County, Nevada. This project is using a landscape approach to identify and prioritize vegetation treatments to increase the

resistance and resilience of plant communities to disturbance. Vegetation management is needed to restore ecological balance and diversity to plant communities to:

- Reduce the potential of large-scale high severity wildland fire;
- Provide for public and firefighter safety and protection of property and infrastructure;
- Restore and maintain sagebrush habitats;
- Restore and maintain riparian plant communities and wet meadows/springs;
- Protect and enhance historic juniper woodland habitat; and
- Provide woodland products to the public, tribes, and commercial entities.

A large focus of this project will be to improve and protect habitat for greater sage-grouse and other sagebrush dependent species. This area was identified in the FIAT process and treatments will address threats to sage-grouse habitat from invasive annual grasses, wildfires, and conifer expansion.

Starting on July 28, 2016, the Virginia Mountains Complex, composed of five separate lightning-caused wildland fires, burned 63,036 acres over a ten-day period within the planning area for this project. Impacts of the fires on future treatment areas are yet to be determined.

An appeal was received on NEPA decision on 3/17/17 and is being processed. The decision for the Virginia Mountains Vegetation Treatments Project was signed on February 14, 2017. Implementation will begin this fall, pending outcome of appeal.

Pine Nut Land Health Project

The SFFO signed a Decision Record and Finding of No Significant Impact on the Pine Nut Land Health Project Environmental Assessment (EA) on April 29, 2014. The Pine Nut Land Health Project was proposed to treat approximately 24,564 acres and be implemented over a 10 to 15 year period.

The project objectives include:

- Restore and maintain sagebrush habitats, with special emphasis on improving habitat for the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment of the greater sage-grouse;
- Restore and maintain riparian plant communities and wet meadows/springs;
- Protect and enhance historic pinyon-juniper woodland habitat;
- Reduce the potential of large-scale high severity wildland fire;
- Provide for public and firefighter safety and protection of property and infrastructure; and
- Provide woodland products to the public, tribes, and commercial entities.

A large focus of the project is the complete removal of encroaching pinyon-juniper trees in sagebrush areas in order to maintain or restore sage-grouse habitat and movement corridors. The other prescription proposed for medium and high density woodland stands (9,500 acres) is selective thinning to achieve fuel hazard reduction, riparian stand health and hydrologic function, woodland stand health and diversity, and forest product removal as a byproduct of treatments.

Sage-grouse treatments: To date, approximately 12,929 acres have been treated for sage-grouse habitat restoration, including conifer removal on more than 9,000 acres in the Mill Canyon area to enhance habitat around an active lek complex; 471 acres of conifer removal in the Bald Mountain unit to enhance habitat around two active leks; and 1,217 acres of conifer removal along the crest of the Pine Nut mountains where sage-grouse telemetry shows frequent activity and movement. Two additional units (~1,400 acres) along the crest are planned for the fall of 2017. Grazing allotment permittees, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), and Natural Resources Conservation Service have been instrumental in helping to achieve these goals.

Riparian restoration: 484 acres of lop and scatter treatments in the El Dorado and Hackett Canyon units were completed in the fall of 2016. Additional work is planned for the fall of 2017. This work is being conducted under a Nevada Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant by NDOW.

Monitoring: Since 2011, USGS has been actively collaring sage-grouse to track their movements in the Pine Nut Mountain Range. This data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of sage-grouse habitat enhancement treatments. Other monitoring includes vegetation response to treatments and migratory bird response to treatments. These monitoring efforts will guide us in planning future treatments as well.

Livestock Grazing

Grazing Decisions

The Virginia Mountains Fire Complex consisted of six wildland fires. The fires impacted eight grazing allotments and seven grazing permit holders. The burned areas are being closed to livestock grazing for a minimum of two vegetative growing seasons and until the following objectives are met: 1) The average cover of perennial grasses is equal or greater than 15% (point intercept method); 2) The average perennial plant density is equal or greater than 3 plants/m²; and 3) Vigor of native perennial plant species (qualitative assessment) shows recovery from the burn disturbance, as indicated by seed production and plant root mass (lateral and vertical growth). Climatic conditions during the growing season will be factored into the vigor assessment.

On August 24, 2016, BLM issued the post-fire recovery plan for emergency stabilization and burned area rehabilitation (ES/BAR) for the Virginia Mountains Fire Complex. The fires burned 63,000 acres and 48 percent of the area burned contained greater sage-grouse

habitat. Post-fire actions contained within the ES/BAR plan such as the seeding of forb and shrub species as well as prescriptions for natural recovery are intended to restore habitat conditions which meet or make progress toward the management objectives in Table 2-2 of the Nevada and Northeastern California Greater Sage-Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment.

Grazing Permit Renewals

The data analysis for the Plumas Station grazing permit renewal is complete and it is anticipated that a fully processed grazing permit will be issued by the end of FY17.

Stillwater Field Office (SFO)

Renewable Energy

Geothermal

Work at Ormat's Tungsten Mountain Geothermal Development Project is progressing. A Site License for construction of a power plant has been issued. Grading of the plant site has been completed and concrete work for the plant foundations has begun. The power plant is projected to be on line by the end of the year.

- 1) Ormat Tungsten Mountain Project in Edwards Creek Valley
- 2) Ormat Dixie Hope/Meadows Project in Dixie Valley

For Ormat's Dixie Hope/Meadows Utilization Project the most recent draft EA was returned to Ormat's contractor at the beginning of February with the ID team's comments. We are anticipating the arrival of the new version draft EA for ID team review sometime this month with a quick turnaround to have the EA out for its public comment period.

There is an upcoming Geothermal Lease Sale to be held October 24, 2017. The environmental review/analysis of the proposed lease parcels is currently underway.

Lands and Renewable Energy

EGP Salt Wells Solar LLC, a subsidiary of Enel Power is proposing to co-locate a solar generation facility at their existing geothermal plant in Salt Wells located just east of Fallon in Churchill County. This application describes a 150 acre site to produce 19 MW. The project processing will begin once the realty specialist vacancy is filled.

Minerals

Lithium exploration continues at the Teels Marsh area in Mineral County. Dajin Resources US Corp completed geophysical exploration and will commence drilling as weather allows. This project is less than 5 acres and is Notice-level operations.

Rawhide Mine in Churchill County recently submitted a plan amendment to expand their mining operations at their Regent site and our office will begin our environmental analysis.

Desatoya Land Health Project

The SFO signed a Decision Record (DR) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on the Desatoya Land Health Project Environmental Assessment (EA) in July, 2012. The Desatoya Project will treat approximately 32,700 acres over a 230,000 acre project area and be implemented over a 10 year period. Implementation and response monitoring is now in the fifth year. The first annual partnership meeting for the project was held on March 9, 2017 at the Carson City District Office. Project partnerships include USGS, NDOW, GBBO, UNR, USDA (ARS and NRCS) and Smith Creek Ranch. Additional coordination meetings have been held and are planned with various partners later this year.

Project Goals and Objectives:

- Enhance sagebrush and degraded wet meadow habitat for sage-grouse and other sagebrush dependent species
- Reduce fuel loads and catastrophic fire risk
- Enhance P/J woodland habitat for declining P/J dependent bird species and mule deer
- Protect or enhance riparian habitat that supports aspen, cottonwood and diversity of bird and mammal species

Project Treatments:

- Up to 100% P/J removal on up to ≈18,000 acres
- 20 to 75% P/J removal on up to ≈14, 000 acres
- Fuels projects-fire, herbicide, seedings
- 8 miles of meadow/riparian fencing for spring restoration
- Several pipelines and troughs, culverts/crossings
- Mowing/herbicide treatment of decadent rabbitbrush
- Hydrological assessment in Porter and Dalton Canyons
- Water/bait trapping of wild horses (includes fertility control)
- Wild horse gather

Permittee Outreach

The Stillwater and Sierra Front Field Offices jointly sent out a questionnaire to all range permittees in February to obtain feedback from the permittees on the bi-annual permittee meetings. The questionnaire will allow permittee input on the frequency of meetings, location, time of year, day of the week. As soon as the questionnaires are returned, they will be compiled and new dates set for future meetings.

Grazing Management

The agreement between The Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in order to allow BLM to assume the administrative management of 152,000 acres of grazing pastures within Churchill that are identified to be relinquished back to BLM are currently on hold due to lack of a realty specialist to process the work. Current management of the grazing pastures continues to be administered by BOR and will continue until the agreement is finalized. A date has not been determined at this point.

Pitchfork, Rafter 7 and Flying M Ranches

The Stillwater Field Office is currently working with Nevada State Parks in their acquisition of the Pitchfork, Rafter 7 and Flying M ranches. These historic ranches, which lie along the East Walker River were donated to the State of Nevada for the purpose of a new state park, which will be known as Walker River State Park when completed. This donation is part of an ongoing conservation effort by the Walker River Conservancy - Desert Research Institute and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. These groups have a long term goal of restoring water flow to the desert terminus Walker Lake.

The acquisition of these ranches, while not BLM land, do hold grazing preferences to six (6) BLM allotments in the Stillwater Field Office. These allotments are Lucky Boy, Perry Springs-Deadman, Nine Mile, Gray Hills, East Walker and the River allotment. All these allotments sit within the watershed of the East Walker River west of Hawthorne, NV. Grazing management on these allotments is expected to follow similar terms and conditions.

Cow Canyon, Clan Alpine, and Dixie Valley Landscape EA

The Cow Canyon, Clan Alpine, and Dixie Valley Landscape EA was released for public review Sept 2016. Comments were received and have been answered and the document is currently in supervisor review. The Proposed Decision and the FONSI will be published and sent out for the 15 day protest period at the end of March. If there is no protest, the 30 day appeal period will start after which the new grazing permits will be issued.

Edwards Creek, Carson, and Porter Canyon EA

The Edwards Creek, Carson, and Porter Canyon Allotments S&G documents are written and are currently being reviewed. The draft EA has been written and is currently being revised by the ID team and will possibly be released for public review in April.

Eastgate Allotment EA

Work on the EA and permit renewal process for the Eastgate Allotment will begin this field season and will include the collection of photo points, frequencies, line-point transects, PFCs, rangeland health assessments and utilization.

Pilot-Table Mountain Permit Renewal monitoring

During the summer and fall of 2016, the Stillwater Field office ID team has completed Riparian Proper Functioning Condition assessments on 26 riparian areas, additionally 36 springs and wells were inventoried and assessed for functionality, range trend monitoring was completed on seven key area plots and ground cover and frequency studies were completed on three key area plots. During the upcoming 2017 summer, the ID team will be working to complete rangeland health assessments, utilization monitoring and more spring inventories. This data will then be used to complete an allotment evaluation and to make a determination of rangeland health for the Pilot-Table Allotment.

Heritage Program Education and Outreach

The Stillwater Field Office has provided several research opportunities to Academic Institutions to study the District's cultural and paleontological resources. A student from Texas A & M is conducting a multi-year study in the Walker Lake Valley to research prehistoric lifeways; another Ph.D. candidate from the University of Wyoming conducted a study a Hidden Cave to analyze paleoclimatic drought conditions by sampling tephra deposits; and a professor at Oklahoma State University is studying paleontological data in the Monarch Hill Formation near Eastgate, Churchill County, NV. The Stillwater field Office continues to encourage research opportunities to institutions of higher learning and these are fine examples toward achieving that objective.

The Stillwater field Office has also reached out to the community's primary and secondary educational programs. In November, heritage program staff provided an interactive presentation on the history of the region to students at the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Education center. The Stillwater Field Office also continues to support the Nevada State Office by coordinating the statewide Program Archaeology and leading the education and outreach programs.

Recreation

Sand Mountain

Visitor use at Sand Mountain will increase in spring. Plans are being designed to improve the camping area by leveling mounds and rock piles that prevent users from camping in some of the designated camp areas. Work is done weekly to maintain general signage and boundary markers.

2017 OHV Events

All but the Northern Mono Chamber of Commerce are currently pending a Special Recreation Permit.

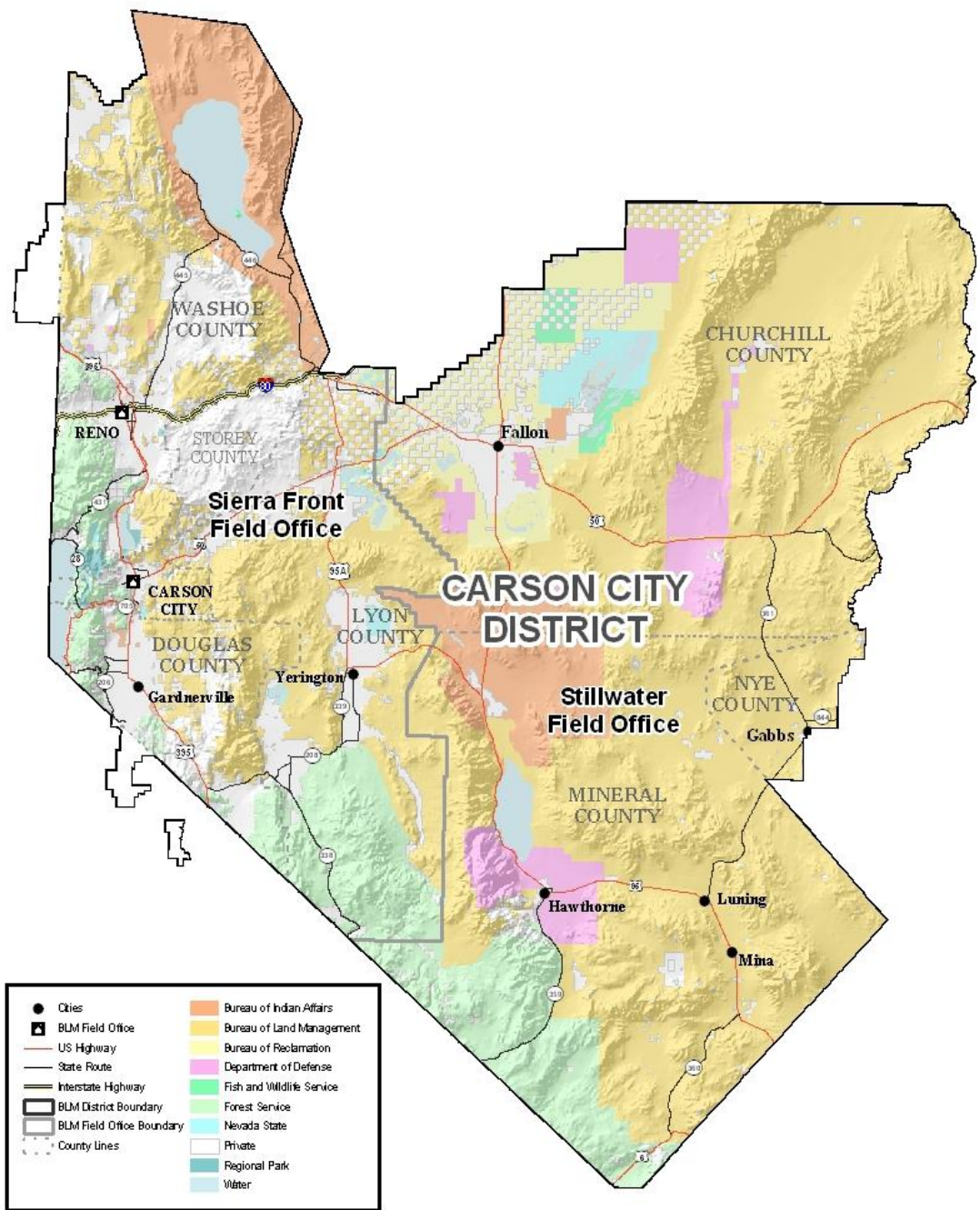
Valley Off Road Racing Association Hawthorne 5/27-28: competitive, commercial OHV race on a 54 mile loop

Sierra Trail Dogs 7/15-16: group, non-competitive dual sport motorcycle ride from Hawthorne to Wellington, NV and back
Vegas to Reno 8/17-19: OHV race from Tonopah to Dayton
Valley Off Road Racing Association, Fallon 9/1-2: competitive, commercial OHV race on a 42 mile loop
Northern Mono Chamber of Commerce 9/26-30: ATV and UTV Jamboree west and south of Walker Lake
Rebelle Rally 10/13-20: Women's Off-Road Auto-Navigation Event

Other Recreation Staff work includes Wilderness Study Area monitoring and public outreach events.



Rebelle Rally 2017



● Cities	■ Bureau of Indian Affairs
■ BLM Field Office	■ Bureau of Land Management
— US Highway	■ Bureau of Reclamation
— State Route	■ Department of Defense
— Interstate Highway	■ Fish and Wildlife Service
▭ BLM District Boundary	■ Forest Service
▭ BLM Field Office Boundary	■ Nevada State
⋯ County Lines	■ Private
	■ Regional Park
	■ Water