

The Honorable Board of Lander County Commissioners met jointly in special session with Elko County Board of Commissioners at Tomera Ranch 3855 Old Highway 8A, Old Martin Ranch in Battle Mountain, Nevada on May 17, 2014 at 8:45 a.m.

PRESENT: DEAN BULLOCK, COMMISSIONER
STEVEN STIENMETZ, COMMISSIONER
DAVID MASON, COMMISSIONER
PATSY WAITS, COMMISSIONER
SADIE SULLIVAN, COUNTY CLERK

ABSENT: BRIAN GARNER, COMMISSIONER
ANGIE ELQUIST, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Vice Chairman Dean Bullock called the meeting to order.
Opening Prayer was led by Decan Dennis Cahill and the Pledge of Allegiance conducted.
Let the record reflect a quorum of four Commissioners.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ARGENTA ALLOTMENT GRASS TOUR

*(1) "Grass Tour" of the Argenta Allotment to begin at the Tomera Ranch, 3855 Old Highway 8A, Old Martin Ranch, south of Battle Mountain. A majority of the Lander County Board of Commissioners may attend the tour that will leave Tomera Ranch at 9:00 a.m. The public is welcome to attend but must provide their own transportation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

JOINT MEETING BETWEEN THE ELKO COUNTY COMMISSION, THE LANDER COUNTY COMMISSION, AND OTHER NEVADA STATE AND COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES. A joint meeting was held for a "Grass Tour" of the Argenta Allotment. A majority of the Lander County Board of Commissioners attended the tour. The Grass Tour was organized by Elko attorney and Elko County Commissioner Grant Gerber and state assemblyman John Carpenter. Bob Schweigert, of

Intermountain Range Consultants was present to advise on the drought and vegetation conditions. Various elected representatives present included Nevada State Senator Pete Goicoechea, Assemblymen Ira Hansen and John Ellison, Elko County Commission, Pershing County District Attorney, the Humboldt County Deputy District Attorney, and Nevada Cattlemen's Association President Ron Torell. U.S. Senator. Dean Heller and U.S. Representative Mark Amodei sent staffers to voice their support. Approximately, two hundred concerned citizens turned out for the Grass Tour of the Argenta Allotment south of Battle Mountain. No Bureau of Land Management Representatives Present.

PUBLIC TOUR

A Tour By The Tomera Family And Report By Bob Schweigert of Intermountain Range Consultants to Advise And Discuss the Bureau of Land Management's Decision on the Closure of the Argenta Allotment, Concerning Drought and Vegetation Conditions.

Tour and Report:

Tomera Family gave a Tour of Argenta Allotment south of Battle Mountain that was closed for grazing earlier this year by the Bureau of Land Management's District Manager Doug Furtado. The tour showed thousands of acres of tall, green grass. The 340,000-acre allotment, which is 56 percent private property, is grazed by the extended Tomera and Filippini families. Furtado says the closure was necessary in response to the drought of the past.

Bob Schweigert, an expert in range rehabilitation, had facts and figures he gathered over the past several weeks after conducting a scientific evaluation of the allotment on behalf of the ranchers. Schweigert, said "The range was in good shape and fully capable of supporting cattle." "The BLM likes to say all this green grass is not forage, but recovery," "I'm here to tell you it is not recovery, it is recovered."

"I would call it a normal year," Schweigert stated, "certainly not drought conditions by forage standards. Last year, and other drier years, I have measured seed-stalk height of squirrel tail and Sandberg's bluegrass at three to four inches at full maturity. Here, we are at around 11 to 12 inches tall."

The range consultant explained he purposely analyzed the "worst case scenario," the lowest elevation sites in the summer-use area. Additionally, he pointed out, the BLM has ignored the fact the Argenta Allotment had significant rains last fall that resulted in a lot of green new growth during the "so-called drought."

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Schweigert said that "Particularly the cheat grass needs to be eaten now, while it is still green and full of protein and nutrients." "Cows will get pig-fat on this grass right now," he said, but in a couple of weeks it will dry out and lose most of its benefit.

Schweigert and many of the other speakers pointed out, the dried grass becomes a tremendous fire danger. Gerber explained that the government's own figures state that, on a very low average, three animals are killed in every acre that burns in a wild fire. Using that figure, more than a million animals would die if the entire 340,000-acre Argenta Allotment burned. On top of that, millions of tax dollars would be wasted fighting the fire and the lives of hundreds of firefighters would be put at risk.

Assemblyman Hansen, R-Reno, accused Furtado of pushing a political agenda with flawed science and also accused him of intimidation and deceit. He told the audience that he had firsthand knowledge of the district manager's deceit. He explained he was encouraged by Senator Goicoechea to attend a meeting this winter between the ranchers on the allotment and Furtado. However, Goicoechea didn't know the exact time of the meeting, so Hansen called the Battle Mountain BLM office and asked to speak to Furtado. Furtado told him that no meeting was in the works.

But within an hour of his phone call to Furtado, Hansen received another call from a rancher who reported the meeting was definitely being held and Furtado had just warned him that if Senator Goicoechea and Assemblyman Hansen attended, he would cancel the meeting. Despite that warning, Hansen called his bluff and attended the meeting. He told the Saturday gathering that encounter with the director serves as testimony to the character of the man.

To back up his claim of intimidation, Hansen explained when a petition to remove Furtado from office was started in Battle Mountain, Furtado sent out an armed ranger dressed in "full SWAT costume" to the hardware store where the petition was available. The ranger warned it was "a federal offense to threaten a BLM employee" and proceeded to take pictures of the petition.

The intimidation backfired, however, and petitions now are also available in Elko, Winnemucca and Eureka. Gerber guesses close to 1,000 signatures have been collected so far.

The county commissioner also reminded everyone that the petition is not a threat, but the exercise of the rights guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution. The First Amendment reads,

"Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech ... or the right of the people ... to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

"The citizens of the Battle Mountain BLM District have been harmed by the decisions made by Director Furtado and it is their right to petition their elected representatives. Now it is the duty of those representatives to remedy the problem," Gerber said.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Assemblyman Ellison, R-Elko, addressed the crowd during one of the stops along the tour and pointed to children playing on the surrounding hills. "There is a truly endangered species — our future generation of ranchers," he said. He then cautioned everyone to stand together or the federal government would destroy them one at a time, "just like a predator attacking a herd."

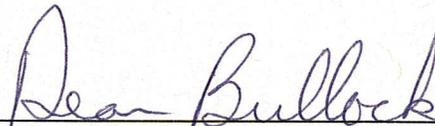
Alan Dueck of Battle Mountain echoed that theme and added, "This tour should not end on this mountain. The real work begins when we leave." He implored everyone in attendance to go home and begin writing letters to their elected officials and the BLM. "Letters work," he said.

Elko County Commissioner and longtime states' rights advocate Demar Dahl reminded those in attendance that the problems they were witnessing were typical. "Washington makes the decisions about our public lands from thousands of miles away," he said. "You can only vote for a few of those in Congress and you can vote for none of the bureaucrats whose decisions impact your life directly. It is time to transfer the management of the lands closer to home."

Lenny Shepard of Battle Mountain was one of the last to address the assembled citizens. "We have our elected officials here supporting us, we have a range consultant that says the allotment can support the cows, and we have our sheriff here. Open the gates," he demanded.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Board at this time, Commissioner Bullock moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Waits for the meeting of May 17, 2014.



**CHAIRMAN/VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE
BOARD OF LANDER COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS AND THE
LANDER COUNTY LIQUOR BOARD**

ATTEST: 
LANDER COUNTY CLERK

NOTE: The Board of Lander County Commissioners serves as the town Board for the unincorporated towns of Battle Mountain and Austin, Nevada.