

Las Vegas Buckwheat Stakeholders Meeting

January 21, 2009

The Nevada Division of Forestry hosted a Stakeholders Meeting to discuss the Las Vegas Buckwheat (*Eriogonum corymbosum* var. *nilesii*), share information, and solicit input and comments from participants.

State Forester, Pete Anderson, opened with a general discussion on the rationale or impetus behind the proposal to list the Las Vegas buckwheat. He outlined the conceptual foundations of species conservation in the Las Vegas Valley and the Clark County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) a multi agency agreement for species conservation, that conservation reserves could be used to mitigate or allow take, loss and disturbance on private property.

Discussion, from several sources, concerned the status of a Conditional Permit for construction activity in protected species habitat at Nellis Air Force Base (Department of Defense). Mr. Anderson provided an update on the ongoing meetings between Nellis Air Force Base and NDF to work out differences in interpretation of the language of the permit requiring the establishment of a conservation area at Nellis for the Las Vegas Bearpoppy, and by association the Las Vegas Buckwheat. Nellis has provided NDF with a revised Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) with strengthened language for the protection of the Bear poppy. NDF is currently reviewing the modified INRMP.

Mr. Anderson addressed several questions, and comments, regarding the scientific data and sources of information that he was utilizing in the decision process. Specifically mentioned were population data and genetic data. There were also questions relating to the weight the State Forester was giving to specific data or information and what assumptions (if any) was he making. Mr. Anderson facilitated a discussion of the various research efforts, papers, and other data that was available on the species and has published on the NDF website.

The discussion moved to the listing process with many attendees suggesting that the State would be unfairly punishing or regulating private land owners whose land holdings contain a relatively insignificant portion of the known Las Vegas buckwheat populations if it were to list the Buckwheat. If federal lands are critical to the preservation of the Las Vegas Buckwheat shouldn't the US Fish and Wildlife Service be taking the lead on listing the species?

They were several stakeholders concerned that the State's "reasonable mitigation" measures for private lands with Las Vegas buckwheat present, was not sufficiently defined and they wanted the State to provide more specifics. Mr. Anderson discussed the State's record of working with individual landowners, and projects, on a case by case basis to allow development and protect listed plants and habitat. He cited several, recent, examples of projects completed on or adjacent to rare species habitat.

The stakeholders meeting ended with an agreement to have another information sharing meeting at a later date, as more information developed, and prior to any decision on the listing of the Las Vegas buckwheat.