

RANGELAND

NEWS

TO FOSTER ADVANCEMENT IN THE
SCIENCE AND ART OF RANGELAND
MANAGEMENT



NEVADA SECTION – SOCIETY FOR RANGE MANAGEMENT

December 2019

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Zone 1: To Be Determined, interested?

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Zone 6: Chris Mayer, 775-293-5743

(see map on last page for zones)

**NvSRM WINTER MEETING THIS FRIDAY IN ELKO; FIND
REGISTRATION AT [http://nevada.rangelands.org/wp-
content/uploads/2019/11/SRM-winter-meeting-flier-and-reg-
form.pdf](http://nevada.rangelands.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SRM-winter-meeting-flier-and-reg-form.pdf). REGISTER TODAY!!!**

A PRESIDENT PONDER'S Maria Ryan, NvSRM President

It appears winter is upon us with snow laying down heavy blankets in the high country and manageable layers on the range. I am certain we are all hoping for another wet winter to replenish the soil, springs, creeks, vegetation, and our spirits. At least we're off to a good start.

With winter comes our annual Nevada Section winter meeting, which means a great program in Elko and dinner at The Star! Please plan on attending. Dave Voth has put together a great program to highlight and actually use the latest technologies to help us understand our rangelands better. The tools to be presented are super user-friendly and can go a long way to creating management plans that account for the variation of our rangelands and the need for flexibility in all that we do.

I urge you to attend our Section business meeting the following Saturday morning. We've covered a lot of ground this year and discussions will include our future plans. Your participation that includes new ideas and efforts is more than welcome. For one thing, our focus on educating and mentoring the next generation has grabbed a big breath this year with new opportunities for the upcoming range managers and scientists. We are in a very strong position financially, and with continued strong partnerships and potential new ones, we are looking at increasing our investment in kids at Range Camp and at the college level. There are many things that are changing, especially with Range Camp, and there's a lot of heavy lifting going on with which you could possibly help. Please consider where and how your time and talents might be used. Coming to the Section business meeting twice a year is very eye-opening and motivating. SRM is more than managing and studying rangelands, the culture imbedded in them, and comradery. It's about actively participating in the meat of keeping a section alive and vibrant. Besides, it's great fun!

It has been my honor to serve you this year as President. You make me proud. Please contact me at any time regarding Nevada Section business and ideas.

Happy winter! Merry Christmas! And may the New Year coming be a healthy, positive, engaging, and prosperous one for you and yours.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Trina Johnson, Membership Chair

The Nevada section currently has 156 active members. 76 members did not renew in 2019. This is a result of the Reno SRM meeting. The majority of these folks received a membership with their meeting registration and have not continued with registering any additional years.

Remember, now your SRM membership ALWAYS EXPIRES on December 31st!

NEVADA NEWS

~CABNR's Rangeland Ecology & Management degree program is now accredited by the SRM, and University of Nevada, Reno is now an SRM accredited university. This is the first time that the degree and the University have been accredited by the Society. Congratulations to UNR and CABNR and thank you for all the hard work by Tamzen Stringham and others for making this dream a reality!

~Nevada Division of Forestry is advertising the permanent positions of Stewardship Program Coordinator and Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities Coordinator. See the announcements at <http://forestry.nv.gov/ndf-jobs/full-time-jobs/>.

~Sherm Swanson will retire at the end of December 2019. Congratulations Sherm! Your decades of enthusiasm and service to Nevada Youth Range Camp and the rangelands and riparian areas of Nevada are appreciated. Your abilities to assimilate divergent thoughts into a coherence on the spot and make a needed point while asking a question are unparalleled!

~NvSRM will partner with Northeastern NV Stewardship Group and the Elko County Cattlewomen's Assoc. to bring Jay Hill, agriculture advocate from NM who gives a great presentation on reaching out to the public to share agriculture's story of conservation. The projected date is April 3, 2020. Check out Jay Hill on you tube.

~ Dr. Barry Perryman has agreed to a nomination for 2nd VP of SRM!

~Seven NV Conservation Districts (Lincoln County, Eureka, Mason Valley, Smith Valley, Northeast Elko, White Pine and Conservation District of Southern Nevada) have completed Resource Needs Assessments under funding agreements obtained by Nevada Assoc. of Conservation Districts. In whatever your capacity, look to be involved as they move forward with conservation action plans and Local Work Groups to address resource concerns in their area. For more information see NvACD's website at http://www.nvacd.org/?page_id=471.

~Check out the NvSRM business meeting Minutes at <http://nevada.rangelands.org/>.

NV HELPING LEAD EFFORTS TO INCREASE MANAGEMENT OF WH&B POPULATIONS

Gary McCuin, NvSRM Exec. Vice President

(Editor's Note: Gary McCuin went to D.C. in October to present the idea of "...a public/private partnership concept...Congress to create "Green Tax" credits and charitable contributions that provides a funding mechanism to incentivize private and other non-governmental groups that have already expressed an interest to BLM to assume the care of excess WHBs." Gary said, "I came away from my trip to DC feeling more encouraged than I had expected to be. I think progress is being made on this front." Explanation at <http://nevada.rangelands.org/>.)

2019 has been a busy year in respect to WHB's. As range managers and scientists in Nevada, you are all very aware of the magnitude of this issue and need for swift and significant action. (See the shocking statistics at the end of this article.) Over the last year, NV section members participated in the planning and delivery of a Reno "Free Roaming Equids and Ecosystem Sustainability Summit" May 29, 2019.

The Summit was hosted by The Wildlife Society, the Society for Range Management, and Nevada Bighorns Unlimited. Delegates from over 90 different organizations attended the Summit in search of common ground. The purpose of the Summit was "to develop a stakeholder-based comprehensive communication strategy and processes to managing free-roaming equids in concert with other public lands multiples-use to achieve western rangeland ecosystem sustainability."

The delegates shared the goal of sustaining 'Healthy Herds on Healthy Rangelands'. As such they agreed to seek wide public support and a vision for solutions that are agreeable to all the organizations and individuals represented by Summit delegates and society at large.

The delegates recognized that there is not one single solution, but that all solutions must be economically, biologically, ecologically, and ethically practical. They also recognized that the solutions must fully engage state legislatures, the U.S. Congress, interested non-governmental organizations, and private individuals in funding innovative ideas to be tested, and practical alternatives to be implemented that represent the values and desires of diverse public stakeholders, and are within the purview and management authority of the BLM, USFS, Native American Tribes, and the states.

New grassroots movement - FREES

The Reno Summit fostered a “non-political” grassroots movement now known as the **Free-Roaming Equid and Ecosystem Sustainability Network or FREES**. FREES seeks to enhance communication and engage diverse stakeholder groups in meaningful dialogue as we work together to realize a common goal of “healthy herds on healthy rangelands.” Participation in FREES is open to all individuals and organizations, regardless of perspectives.

All FREES communications will use the designated email: FREES@usu.edu. We are in the process of setting up a web page and an endowment. The webpage will house FREES information on past activities and recent communications. It will also be the portal for announcements regarding future summits, and for delegates to register to participate in upcoming meetings, trainings, and summits.

Reno Summit delegates identified and formed working groups to tackle the difficult issues associated with free-roaming equids. Three working groups were created to address Population Management, Rangeland Conditions and Habitat, and Outreach and Communication. Subsequent to the Reno Summit, the three working groups which were identified have begun meeting via conference calls and at meetings of opportunity. Their meeting minutes and action items will soon be posted on the FREES web site.

The working groups are being coordinated by FREES members and facilitated by Allison Adams with the Langdon Group. As outlined below, each working group has action items that they are tasked to complete. *If you wish to participate in a working group please email FREES@usu.edu and request notification for the monthly calls.*

1. **Population Management Working Group**, coordinated by Redge Johnson
 - a. Assess and improve gathering methods and population growth suppression strategies
 - b. Re-think the status quo for holding facilities and distribution of horses
 - c. Identify and understand successful efforts for collecting and analyzing data

2. **Rangeland Conditions and Habitat Working Group**, coordinated by Gary McCuin and Barry Perryman
 - a. Identify common misperceptions regarding federally defined Wild Horse and Burro habitat conditions
 - b. Identify ecological and cultural “hot spots”

3. **Outreach and Communication Working Group**, coordinated by Terry Messmer and Celeste Carlisle
 - a. Develop collaborative committee focused on public messaging/education and congressional strategy
 - b. Develop organizing structure and funding strategy for working groups
 - c. Establish forum/workshop to build trust/alignment within this group

Congressional Staffers Workshop

Following the May 2019 Summit, Congressional members reached out to FREES to better understand its potential role in the management of free-roaming equids.

Because of this interest, FREES was invited to host a workshop for congressional staffers in Washington, D.C. on October 28, 2019. The workshop briefed staffers on the issues, possible solutions, and role of FREES in the process. **As a presenter at this workshop, I feel that there is a definite interest on both sides of the aisle to find a solution to the WHB issue. Thank you, NV Section, and SRM for the support and assistance to take this incredibly important and difficult issue on. While I am encouraged by our reception in D.C. and the ongoing efforts of FREES, there is much more work to be done. If you have any interest or concerns about this issue, your individual participation in FREES is welcomed and needed. Please contact the email address provided, or me, to see how you can participate and stay tuned for the upcoming website.**

The Shocking Numbers

As of March 2019, BLM estimated the on-range WHB population at 88,000+ head range wide with 47,468 head in Nevada. The carrying capacity or AML range wide is 26,690 and in Nevada 12,811 so range-wide we are +/- 66,000 head over AML and in Nevada nearly 35,000 over AML. BLM's off-range holding facilities are maxed out with +/- 50,000 head at an annual cost of \$50 million (62% of BLM's WHB program appropriations). In conjunction with the excess on range populations we have seen tremendous rangeland degradation on many HMA's as well as starvation and thirst of horses and wildlife which is unacceptable and preventable. Now for the really scary part, the most horses BLM has ever gathered in one year was about 18,000 head in 1986. At that time BLM was geared up with contractors to accomplish the feat and horses were sold under unrestricted sale and removed from BLM care. With 88,000 head of animals on-range and a 20% reproduction rate the annual foal crop would approximate 17,000 head. BLM does not have the contractors, facilities, or budget to gather the number of animals required to even keep pace with the reproduction rate. It will require a combination of significant gathers (>16,000 hd/yr) in addition to persistent and effective long-term fertility control just to keep population levels at the current unacceptable level. When Deputy Director Pendley stated that "wild horses and burros are the biggest threat to public lands in the West," he was correct.

2019 NEVADA SECTION SUMMER TOUR

The Martin Fire: Living with Fire

Charlie Clements, Dave Voth, Melany Aten and Dan Harmon

NvSRM held their annual summer tour on June 27th in Paradise Valley; the focus was the Martin Fire that broke out on July 4, 2018 and consumed some 439,000 acres or 686 square miles of rangelands during the second year in a row that over 1 million acres burned in Nevada. These wildfires impact land owners, grazing resources and wildlife habitats at an overwhelming magnitude. The rehabilitation of such large areas of land is an overwhelming task requiring strategic actions to maximize effectiveness. Collaborative efforts between land managers, producers and researchers can increase the effectiveness of such efforts.

The meeting started out with a Producers Forum where livestock operators Shane Hall of Crawford Ranches, Steve Lucas of Lucas Livestock and Pete Marvel of the Marvel Ranch all gave a brief introduction of their operations. All the operators discussed the challenges this specific wildfire had on their operations such as fencing, loss of permits for the immediate future that can impact AUM's, added labor in operating on alternative allotments, added trucking of cattle, the added costs associated with purchasing hay as well as rebuilding of fences at \$15,000/mile. In the case of Steve Lucas, the Crawford Ranches offered private land for Steve to operate

on so that he did not have to sell cattle; this is the epitome friendly neighbors in rural communities. All the operators complimented BLM on good working relations and their hard work to allow for increased flexibility in the various grazing allotments.

These operators discussed what they would like to see as far as rehabilitation following wildfires. They are partial to any natural recruitment that can occur and understand that it is wise during this natural recruitment to stay off the land with cattle until after the second growing season. However, in many areas where natural recruitment does not occur, they favor the more successful species used in rehabilitation such as crested wheatgrass, Siberian wheatgrass and forage kochia. They did voice their concern that the agencies did not contact them for any ideas they may have for the rehabilitation planning or the planning and implementation of seeding efforts on a few thousand acres, yet the agencies require them to keep their cattle off of the hundreds of thousands of acres not seeded.

They also commented on the importance of paying attention to the facts on the ground; if grazing is not causing harm then don't just make a ruling that cattle will be off for 2-years, end of discussion. Derek Messmer, Fuels Program Manager/Fire Planner for the Winnemucca BLM District commented that the Winnemucca District does not follow a 2-year rest policy but rather an objective-based approach. There was also a concern about the lack of water distribution and the fact that fuel buildups will occur due to lack of dispersal of livestock. This will just lead to another wildfire, especially in the wake of the current amazing spring precipitation the range received.

The first stop occurred just inside the Martin Fire boundary on the Lower Owyhee Road where Ron Cerri, Humboldt County Commissioner, spoke about the importance of good relationships with the state and federal agencies and how he cannot remember this relationship being any better than it is at the current time. Ron also spoke about the cost of range fires to Humboldt County. Ron stated that he received 2-3 calls per day from the BLM on where cattle were present and the movement of the fire as it related to danger to cattle. An estimated 80-90% of all fires that Humboldt County is called to are rangeland fires, and even though BLM is the main source to fight these fires, it is often the County resources that are first on scene. Not only is there an expense of updating and maintaining firefighting equipment such as fire trucks, there is also a loss of revenue when cattle AUM's and hunting opportunities are reduced due to wildfires.

Following the Martin Fire, the insurance agreement between Humboldt County and Nevada Division of Forestry increased from \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year which makes it very difficult for counties to cover these enormous costs. Ron pointed out that many of the habitats within the Martin Fire had not burned in nearly 70 years, and that even though the fuel build-up was obvious, cattle numbers have decreased since 1984 from 700,000 down to 420,000 AUM's. Derek Messmer provided information on the green strip seeding efforts with Siberian wheatgrass and 'Immigrant' forage kochia. Even though it took some time to get the seed and deal with the Government shutdown, the partnership with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) allowed progress to be made. The green strip looked very good with an excellent initial stand of forage kochia that is well on its' way to providing a much-needed green plant material that will deter wildfire through August as well as provide important nutritional values to wildlife.

The second stop occurred a little further into the Martin Fire edge where the BLM and NDOW presented seed mixes and seeding methodologies (broadcast and drill seeding) used to rehabilitate thousands of acres of burned rangelands. These rehabilitation efforts are essential to provide critical habitat to numerous wildlife species as well as improve grazing resources. Ed Partee, Wildlife Biologist with NDOW pointed out that these

wildfires are devastating to game and non-game species. Since this particular wildfire, mule deer have lost their transitional and wintering habitats for the near future and the male sage grouse peak counts have declined from 762 in 2017, to 408 in 2018, and down to 126 in 2019.

The difficulties associated with successfully rehabilitating big sagebrush back into these environments can be very frustrating and significantly impact sagebrush obligate species such as sage grouse and mule deer, but fortunately due to the persistent and continued efforts of BLM and NDOW, significant improvements in the seedings of big sagebrush and other nutritious forage such as western yarrow, forage kochia and perennial grasses are the norm and not the exception. BLM and NDOW personnel added positive comments on the excellent relationship and cooperation among the livestock operators and state and federal agencies. This cooperation resulted in more than 120,000 acres being seeded or in the process of being seeded following herbicide treatments to reduce cheatgrass and improve seeding successes.

Following a nice lunch sponsored by the Paradise/Sonoma Conservation District, the tour saw a fuels break (green strip) where the BLM mowed and sprayed Plateau (pre-emergent herbicide) to break up woody fuels and promote perennial grasses. The project was funded by the Hazardous Fuels program of the BLM which has a goal to return every 6-10 years to maintain these green strips. These green strips are about 150' wide on each side of the road and run for miles; they aid fire fighters by changing fire behavior to increase the odds that the firefighters can successfully suppress the advancement of the wildfire.

The group then moved on and heard from Shannon Swim of the Institute for Applied Ecology on their sagebrush transplant program where their mission is to conserve native species and restore wildlife habitat. Shannon pointed out that the program will produce and plant 300,000 big sagebrush seedlings in 2019 throughout Nevada and northeastern California. The program utilizes inmates to grow out the seedlings, with the goal to plant another 100,000 in addition to the 70,000 sagebrush seedlings transplanted in the Martin Fire in 2018.

BYU Assistant Professor Matt Madsen gave an enlightening presentation on seed coating technologies to improve seeding success. One of the difficulties associated with sagebrush seeding is the complications that arise with the delivery of sagebrush seed through a broadcast seeder. With such small seeds, the potential for drift from the targeted area is a significant problem. The addition of a seed coat increases the seed size which can make seeding of sagebrush through a rangeland drill much more successful. When broadcast seeding from a ground rig, seed coating allowed for a more even flow rate of seed on uneven ground compared to non-coated seed. Seed coating can also provide a platform for applying various seed treatments such as fungicides, herbicides, plant growth hormones, fertilizers, etc. Seed coatings may also aid in increasing the potential of seeds to germinate under conditions that are unfavorable for plant establishment.

The field tour ended with a presentation by Harry Quicke, Western Stewardship Manager for Bayer Chemical, about the potential of the new herbicide Esplanade on controlling annual grasses such as cheatgrass, medusahead and ventenata. Currently Esplanade is permitted in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana and he expects it to be permitted in Nevada very soon. Bayer Chemical has teamed up with USDA, Agricultural Research Service, Great Basin Rangelands Research Unit to study the efficacy of Esplanade on cheatgrass in Nevada and its potential to improve perennial plant establishment through rehabilitation practices. The first clearance of Esplanade through EPA cost \$280 million, there was no negative impact to fish and wildlife and it in fact increased pollinator species for bees. The current cost of using Esplanade at 5 oz/ac rate is \$60/ac, but through the ability of Esplanade to restrict root growth and increase invasive annual weed mortality, this herbicide has a very high

potential not only to control annual weed densities, but also to improve existing perennial grass stands as well as the establishment of newly seeded species.

The day wrapped up with a nice Dinner-Banquet in Winnemucca at Chihuahuas. Thank you again for all that attended and presented, the Nevada Section-Society for Range Management (nevada.rangelands.org) is working hard to bring multiple sectors together to improve the functioning and sustainability of rangelands for future generations.

NEVADA YOUTH RANGE CAMP AT DECISION POINT

Maggie Orr and campers

NvSRM and its partners held another outstanding Range Camp at Smith Creek Ranch in June with 29 students attending. Trail Boss Cade Crookshank with runner up Leann Sarman will attend the High School Youth Forum at the Denver SRM meeting in February. The Section approved the purchase of a Conex to protect the Sonoma kitchen. Don Henderson is communicating with The Nugget about possible ongoing financial support.

Along with all this good news comes the possibility of change. With Sherm Swanson's retirement, the curriculum director position is open. Is Smith Creek Ranch still available as a location or is there somewhere better? Do we need to change the duration or dates? These and other questions give impetus to the Section taking a comprehensive look at overall Range Camp operations to determine if any changes need to be made in the future. The conversation has started; please participate. The main question is who is going to fill what position or help with preparation and follow up. It requires many to put on a successful Camp; please consider how you can help. We need it to keep this important function available to Nevada.

If you need evidence for why we need to keep Range Camp alive and well, just read the comments of two campers from the 2019 camp:

Savannah Callahan

I have always loved Nevada backroads, and learning about Nevada's history. I wanted to know about the plants that grow native here, and had an interest to a job working in the field of Rangelands. I didn't really know what to expect going into Range Camp, but I was excited because the camp was what I loved to do.

Range Camp gave me so much knowledge, and I feel like I know my state even better. I learned how different animals could use the same plants in different ways, I got to identify plants, see how streams and rivers affected the plant life and soil around it, as well as how riparian plants hold the soil on river banks. We even got to do an investigation on a wildlife death, learning how to identify what had happened, that was one of my favorite parts. I really enjoyed listening to Smith Creek Ranch's ranch manager, Sam, talk about the daily tasks and the bigger operation aspects of running a large ranch, with so many cows on rangelands, and how they properly manage and make the land better, allow it to regrow, and be able to sustain their cattle. The time listening to Sam talk about the ranch made me realize how much I love Rangeland, and how I wanted to help manage them.

I really loved all the learning aspects but I enjoyed the social aspect as well, and how I made a few new friends. The camp fires every night were so much fun, everyone would be laughing or telling each other what happened to them during the lessons that day, everyone would just have a good time sitting around the fire, and of course

Sherm's tooth brushing time song was everyone's favorite thing to end the night. The food was always good, and reminded me of home cooking, so it added comfort while I was there. I am very excited to go back to refresh and learn even more about Nevada Rangelands!

David Kimball

I am more than happy to share how much of an amazing learning and social experience I had at range camp. The counselors were very kind and useful teaching the campers about wild life, plantation, and how the world outside of home functions. It was a down to earth program with an amazing curriculum. My favorite subjects are about the plants and hydrology, and how they affect each other in symbiotic ways. At camp I have made many friends and look forward to seeing them next year!

LOST RESOURCE – CHUCK SAULISBERRY

NvSRM lost its last surviving charter member of the Section when Chuck Saulisberry died August 20, 2019. Chuck graduated from UNR and worked for the Soil Conservation Service in Nevada and northeastern California. He loved his work but his true passion was flying his Cessna 182 both for business and pleasure. Chuck was dedicated to rangelands and the many civic and church organizations to which he belonged. He served in nearly all NV officer and committee positions over the years; he was an SRM Fellow and received a Sustained Achievement Award for almost seven decades of service to SRM. He always gave much encouragement to new members of NvSRM. Rest in peace, Chuck. Thank you for all you gave.

Donations in his memory may be made to:

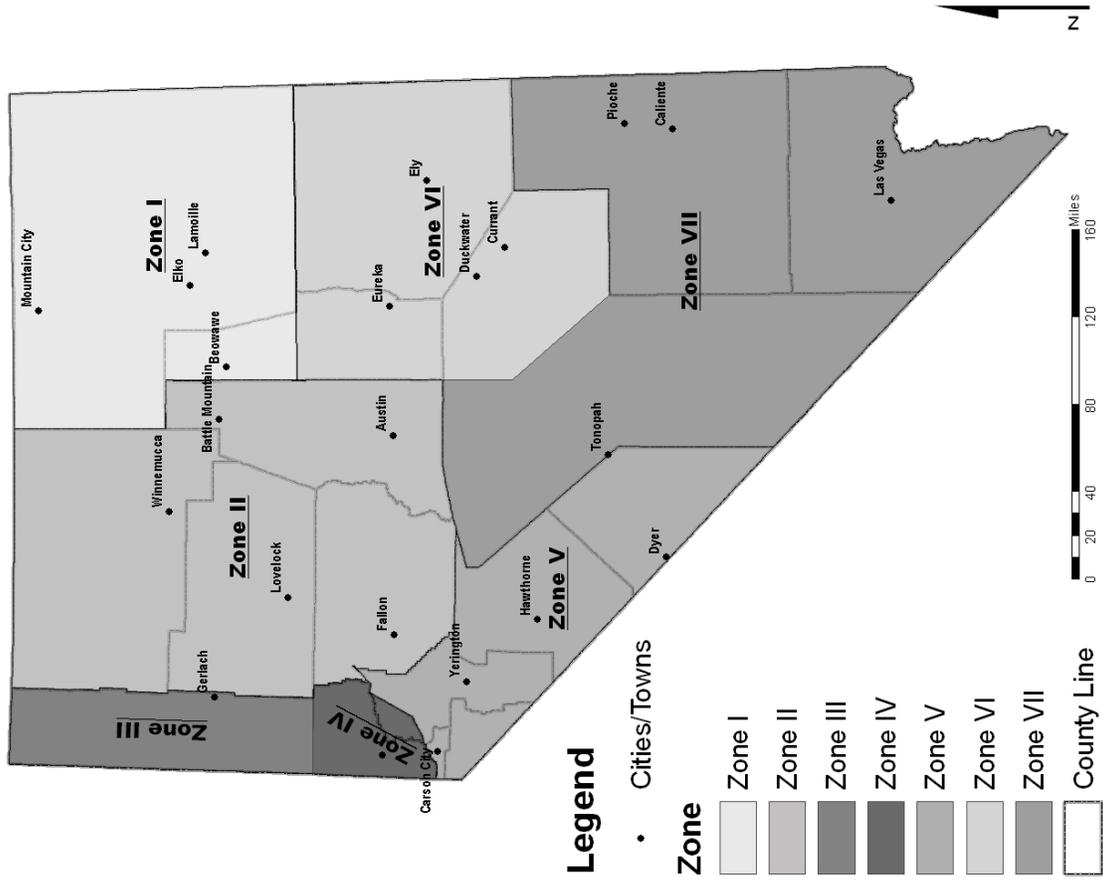
Range Conservation Foundation, PO Box 1595, Carson City, NV 89702, or,
SRM, 6901 S. Pierce Street, Suite 230, Littleton, CO 60128.

REGISTER FOR THE SRM ANNUAL MEETING IN DENVER

The PreConvention Trail Boss which answers every conceivable question
can be found at:

<http://www.srm2020.org/trail-boss.html>

Nevada SRM Section Zones



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