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Oliver Ranch Science School Complex & Wild Horse and Burro Facility: Quarterly Progress Report, Period Ending September 30, 2004

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QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Period Ending September 30, 2004

Assistance Agreement Number FAA010017

Task Order Number FAF040019

Oliver Ranch Science School Complex & Wild Horse and Burro Facility

Task 1: Project Coordination

Assist in project coordination between numerous stakeholders such as the Clark County School System, Desert Research Institute, Community College of Southern Nevada, UNR Cooperative Extension, Nevada State College, local museums, state parks, non-profit organizations, federal agencies, and the public to ensure appropriate educational curricular activities and venues are provided for in the conceptual design of the School and the Wild Horse and Burro facility where appropriate as well as assist in the NEPA process as needed. The activities will be conducted at least in part by university faculty, staff and students as part of the university's research, teaching, and service mission.

Deliverables: The project coordinator will meet regularly with the Oliver Ranch committees, the Line and Space design team and NEPA team to assure modifications in design or curriculum that are necessary and appropriate are incorporated throughout the process of developing the facility. These activities will be recorded and provided to BLM in quarterly reports.

PROGRESS AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2004

Since the university's last quarterly report, the Bureau of Land Management has determined a final name for the project: Red Rock Desert Learning Center (RRDLC). Over the past several months, the RRDLC Core Group has met three times: July 20, August 17, and September 21, 2004. For each of these meetings, the university assembled and distributed the agenda, committee reports, handouts, and minutes. For those persons who are unable to attend the Core Group meetings, electronic copies of the minutes and handouts are provided via e-mail.

In addition to the Core Group meetings, Public Lands Institute Director Nancy Flagg also attends the monthly meetings of the RRDLC Committee Chairs. At these meetings, which are held 5 days' prior to the Core Group, the participants share new information and prepare for the Core Group meeting. The Committee Chairs met on July 15, August 12, and September 16, 2004.

Many of the committees – with the exception of the newly formed Building Committee and the Educational Programs Committee – are not actively meeting at this time or activity is

taking place outside of structured committee meetings. This is primarily due to the current status of the project timeline. For example, the Other Uses Committee has little reason to meet until an operator is selected. Similarly, the role of the Design Oversight Committee is decreasing as the Building Committee becomes more active. The NEPA Committee is not meeting regularly while the environmental assessment is in progress. The Wild Horse and Burro Committee has not been meeting as a whole, but committee chair Billie Young has actively been pursuing various activities related to the Wild Horse and Burro Facility in collaboration with Michael Reiland, other BLM representatives, the architects, and community stakeholders.

The Fund-raising and Partnerships Committee is in transition because its chair may no longer be able to volunteer his time on a regular basis. At the September 16 Committee Chairs meeting, the group recommended that Michael Reiland determine whether the current chair could continue serving and, if not, to look into appointing a new chair. The university will continue to follow-up with Michael on this suggestion, as there is valuable work that could be done by the Fund-raising Committee at this stage of the project.

The university attended the Operations Committee meeting on August 3, 2004, where the group discussed the operator statement of work currently under development by the BLM. The committee provided Michael Reiland with its views about what the operator should be expected to provide and what the BLM would be expected to provide. Although it was initially thought that the statement of work would be issued during the month of September, the latest indication from BLM is that it may go out in October, with operators to be given 90 days to provide proposals.

Nancy Flagg and Special Projects Coordinator Bill Cates participated in a field trip to other regional wild horse and burro facilities at the end of July 2004, including the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Facility in Ridgecrest, California, the Palomino Valley Center in Nevada, and the Susanville facility in California. The purpose of these visits was to gather information on general operations, interpretive and educational needs, and public outreach. Special attention was devoted to investigating what the operators would have done differently if given the chance to redesign their facilities or change their procedures. The information is proving to be very useful to the design of the Nevada facility and has already led to changes in some of the initial design assumptions.

The university has two representatives on the BLM's Building Committee for this project, Bill Cates and David Frommer (Assistant Director of Planning and Construction), and they are actively participating in decisions about the physical siting of buildings on the property. The Building Committee met on August 17, August 31, September 21, and September 29, 2004. The university's representatives have been asked by Public Lands Institute Director Nancy Flagg to pay special attention to how the placement of buildings will address the curriculum design. As such, they are collaborating with the educational curriculum specialist recently hired by the Public Lands Institute.

Task 2: Educational Curricular Coordination

Provide educational thematic and curricular coordination between numerous stakeholders such as the Clark County School System, Desert Research Institute, Community College of Southern Nevada, UNR Cooperative Extension, Nevada State College, local museums, state parks, non-profit organizations, federal agencies, and the public and help develop a written curriculum that synthesizes the input of these stakeholders. In addition, suggest other compatible uses for the School including but not limited to science and educational research. The activities will be conducted at least in part by university faculty, staff and students as part of the university's research, teaching, and service mission.

Deliverables: The Educational Curricular Coordinator will provide educational themes and activities for 5th grade outdoor environmental curriculum appropriate for the School in quarterly progress reports. The coordinator will collate the curricular contributions of the stakeholders identified for this subtask and attempt to synthesize these into an overall curriculum for 5th grade environmental sciences to be based at the school. Visitation to other similar outdoor schools will be included and their curriculum incorporated into the reports as appropriate.

PROGRESS AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2004

In early July 2004, the university began a search for an educational curriculum coordinator for the Red Rock Desert Learning Center project as well as for other SNPLMA Education in the Environment initiatives currently being managed by the university. As of September 1, 2004, Dr. Jeanne Klockow was hired and immediately began meeting with Project Manager Michael Reiland and other key individuals throughout the month of September, including:

Paul Buck – Desert Research Institute and Chair of the Educational Programs Committee
Loretta Asay – Clark County School District
Christy Falba – Clark County School District
Kathy August – BLM-Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area
Kay Rohde – National Park Service
Les Wallach – Line and Space Architects
Henry Tom – Line and Space Architects
Alan O'Neill – Outside Las Vegas Foundation

Additional meetings with these and other community stakeholders will continue throughout the term of this task agreement. Specific progress on the RRDLC curriculum is occurring in four areas noted below under the direction of the university. This work is in addition to the science lesson plans currently being developed by members of the Educational Programs Committee. That committee is focusing on a menu of science activities from which teachers would select specific lessons for their class to learn. However, these activities comprise only 30-40% of the total curriculum that will be required for a 4-5 day experience at the school. Thus, the university is focusing its work on the core curriculum that all students will participate in.

Curriculum Matrix

To provide thematic organization to the overall curriculum, a framework was needed from which all stakeholders in this project could operate. Within two and a half weeks of her hire, Dr. Klockow devised a curriculum matrix for the Education in the Environment initiatives. The science curriculum currently being developed by the Educational Programs Committee will plug

into this matrix, and from those elements the university will work backwards to create a comprehensive core curriculum for the Red Rock Desert Learning Center that also cohesively fits into other SNPLMA projects, such as the Forever Earth environmental science laboratory, Wonderful Outdoor World on the Water, and the Outdoor Environmental Education Strategy. The curriculum matrix was presented to the Educational Programs Committee on September 16 and to the Core Group on September 21, 2004. Each group provided Dr. Klockow with suggestions for minor changes, but overall the reaction to the matrix was very positive. It will be used from this point forward to guide the overall curriculum development

Curriculum Design Rationale

In addition to creating the curriculum matrix, Dr. Klockow has devised a written rationale for the curriculum design that addresses the mission statement of the Bureau of Land Management, the objectives of the SNPLMA Education in the Environment initiatives, and the mission statement of the RRDLC. This rationale will be useful background information for potential operators and it will provide a context for public presentations about the school as formal outreach begins to the Clark County School District Board of Trustees and to other local groups. Again, the design rationale is another piece of the overall curriculum framework and will assist in keeping all stakeholders moving toward the same vision.

Core Curriculum

While the Educational Programs Committee is devising science-related menu activities from which teachers will select prior to bringing their classes to the Red Rock Desert Learning Center, perhaps 60-70 percent of the school's curriculum will be comprised of lessons and activities that every student attending the school will enjoy. Dr. Klockow is coordinating the development of this core curriculum in concert with the BLM and other stakeholders.

Following the September Core Group meeting, the university sent an e-mail request to all Core Group members, inviting their initial suggestions for common experiences they wanted all students to have. We received a very good response and took those ideas into a meeting with Michael Reiland and BLM Education Specialist Kathy August on September 28, 2004. Prior to the meeting, Dr. Klockow grouped the suggestions into the four areas of the BLM's mission statement and grouped them by general thematic areas. The BLM and the university discussed the broad list of ideas and made some adjustments, including adding Geoscience as a thematic area. We also identified key priorities for initial development of lesson plans for the core curriculum. We agreed that the revised list of common experiences will be presented to the Core Group at its October 19 meeting, and the group will be asked for its input on key focus areas. From there, Dr. Klockow will work with various volunteers and stakeholders to develop lesson plans over the next year for the core curriculum.

Arriving at an initial consensus on the core curriculum is critical in order to provide the architects with direction on whether their conceptual design adequately addresses all foreseeable venues that may be needed to deliver the curriculum. And as the operator RFP is issued, it will be important for the BLM to have available for bidders a general blueprint for the core curriculum.

Web-based Lesson Plans

Another curriculum design element currently in progress is a template for individual lesson plans. Thinking into the future, the university sees value in having individual lesson plans for the RRDLC posted on the school's website. This would allow teachers to easily access the curricular activities, venues, and related materials prior to visiting the school. The template could be adapted for other potential users of the school, such as charter schools, private schools, and home schoolers. A demo of the Web-based sample lesson plan will be presented to the Core Group at

an upcoming meeting for review and comment. The university has also begun early investigations into the development of video compact discs that could directly demonstrate the RRDLC curriculum and venues to teachers throughout the nation.

All told, tremendous progress has been made on the school's curriculum in a short period of time, and further progress should move relatively quickly with the overall matrix now in place.

Task 3: Operational Analysis

Provide coordination for the business model with curriculum development to elucidate the potential operations and maintenance cost and projected revenues for the School as the design evolves and potential funding sources are more predictable. The activities will be conducted at least in part by university faculty, staff and students as part of the university's research, teaching, and service mission.

Deliverables: The tasked coordination will be developed as the curriculum and design evolves. These plans will include estimated operational and maintenance costs and projected revenues. Progress on these business plans will be submitted in quarterly reports to BLM and will be prepared at least in part by university faculty, staff and graduate and undergraduate students.

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On September 2, 2004, Nancy Flagg sought further clarification from Michael Reiland about what, if anything, the university should be doing on Task 3 at this time. The university offered to develop basic parameters for a business plan that could be included with the proposed statement of work for an operator RFP, but Michael suggested that UNLV undertake no activity in this area until an operator is hired. At that time, he viewed the university's role as coordinating the operator's business plan with the school curriculum and ensuring that each supports the other as the project moves forward. Thus, there is no progress to report under Task 3 for this reporting period.

Task 4: Community Coordination

Provide community outreach coordination to the public and facilitate collaborative processes with the Oliver Ranch committees including but not limited to the core committee and its designated subcommittees as outlined in the current BLM Oliver Ranch minutes. This role will include the calling of meetings, development of meeting agenda, recording and distribution of minutes, meeting facilitation, and other communication and coordination as needed for the smooth functioning of the Oliver Ranch committees. This service will be provided at least in part by university faculty, staff and students as part of the university's research and service mission.

Deliverables: Community outreach activities will be recorded and reported quarterly. These may include over the two years public Web page development, printed brochures, public forums, radio and television spots, school visitations, and establishing a mechanism for accepting donations.

PROGRESS AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2004

Website Development

A full-time Web Communications Specialist, Megan Iudice, was hired by the university on August 1, 2004, to produce websites for various SNPLMA initiatives, including the Red Rock Desert Learning Center. During her first week on the job, Megan met with Michael Reiland to discuss technical and procedural requirements for the RRDLC website. They also discussed the basic template for the website, including the links that Michael desired. For the next month, the university worked on the overall graphic design of the site as well as the text for the various pages, which included:

- Home
- History
- Project Management
 - Line and Space Architects
 - Otak, Inc.
 - University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Interest Groups
 - Core Group membership
 - Listing of committees
- Progress
 - Project timeline
- FAQ
- Calendar
 - Past meeting minutes
 - Future meeting dates

At present, the university has delivered the design template and website content to the BLM, where it is under review by Public Affairs Specialist Kirsten Cannon. The website will go live as soon as BLM makes final changes to the text. We fully anticipate that the RRDLC website will continue to develop and expand as progress on the overall project continues.

Public Relations and Outreach

The university began a search in June 2004 to hire a contractor to provide public relations/marketing services for various SNPLMA initiatives, including the Red Rock Desert Learning Center. Mary Peterson was hired by the Public Lands Institute in September 2004. She spent her first week of employment familiarizing herself with all of the historical files related to the RRDLC and has been asked to devise a strategic communications plan for public outreach. She next will meet with Michael Reiland and Kirsten Cannon to discuss process and procedures related to publicity and public outreach. Once the university understands the parameters under which it may conduct community outreach, we fully expect to actively proceed with producing deliverables in this area during the next quarter.

At the Core Group meeting on August 17, 2004, Michael Reiland announced that the BLM would participate with the National Wild Horse and Burro Association in hosting a booth at the annual Clark County Farm Festival on September 21, 2004. The university was asked to provide a simple, one-page flier about the RRDLC project for distribution at this event. As an off-shoot of this flier, and assuming we get the go-ahead from the BLM, the university plans to begin work soon on a new and better brochure for public distribution that provides a general description of the RRDLC and its mission.

Finally, some initial public presentations about the Red Rock Desert Learning Center have already begun. On September 1, 2004, Michael Reiland provided an update on the project to the BLM's Local Partners Group. This group is comprised of numerous stakeholders from local, state, and federal government who are working on various SNPLMA projects. Michael also provided an overview of the RRDLC project to the Southern Nevada Environmental Education Committee on September 8, 2004. This committee is working in collaboration with all four federal land-management agencies to provide community input on Education in the Environment initiatives. On September 29, 2004, Nancy Flagg presented an overview of the Oliver Ranch project and other SNPLMA initiatives at a meeting of the Environmental Law Society, an organization within the William S. Boyd School of Law at UNLV. With PR Advisor Mary Peterson now on board, we expect that a more formal plan for public outreach of this nature will be determined in collaboration with the BLM.

Summary

With staff now hired to assist the university with coordination of the Oliver Ranch project, considerable progress has been made on development of the core curriculum and the website, in particular. We look forward to still more progress in these areas, as well as in public relations and outreach, during the next quarter.

Submitted by: _____

Margaret Rees, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator