

2006

Red Rock Desert Learning Center Community Outreach Activities Plan

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Red Rock Desert Learning Center (2006). Red Rock Desert Learning Center Community Outreach Activities Plan. 1-10.

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**Red Rock Desert Learning Center
Community Outreach Activities Plan
Revised November 2005**

This document outlines an activities plan through June 30, 2006 for the deliverables of Subtask 4 of Task Agreement #FAF040019 between UNLV and the Bureau of Land Management. This is not intended as a comprehensive outreach plan for the project, but it can be incorporated into a broader communications plan that suits Bureau of Land Management objectives and philosophies.

I. BACKGROUND

The Red Rock Desert Learning Center is being designed to teach participants about the natural world through inquiry-based experiential and interdisciplinary methods in a residential outdoor setting in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. The intent is for students, teachers, and researchers to gain an appreciation of desert ecosystems and to begin to apply and connect their knowledge to world ecological systems. The campus will incorporate many “green building” systems in its design and operation, and those systems will be an active part of the school’s curriculum.

There currently is no residential field school in Southern Nevada, and very few study centers for arid lands exist in the United States. The Center will fill an important niche that is lacking in the educational programming now available in Southern Nevada. The curriculum is designed to be involving, flexible, and experiential, with programming spanning anywhere from two to four days. While the primary focus will be the life and physical sciences, students will also participate in activities related to the cultural history of the area, astronomy, art, and literacy.

The Wild Horse and Burro Facility adjacent to the Desert Learning Center is intended as a complementary educational site to inform RRDLC students and invited groups about the ecological issues related to these animals, to provide a venue for research and study about these issues, and to serve as an adoption center for a small number of gentled horses and burros.

Research

The Bureau of Land Management is working with a variety of community groups, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Desert Research Institute, Outside Las Vegas Foundation, the Clark County School District, and committed local citizens to develop the concepts and philosophy for the Red Rock Desert Learning Center. A core group of approximately 40 community residents and stakeholders has been meeting monthly since June 2003 to research other science schools and to provide advice and guidance on the development of this project. The Core Group’s extensive discussions as well as formal and informal research have provided the context for this plan.

Since the project’s inception, the following specific research has been undertaken to date:

- Yosemite National Institutes Feasibility Study – June 2002
- Field trips to Yosemite National Institutes, Islandwood, Olympic Park Institute, and North Cascades Institutes – October 2003
- Line and Space Inc. Position Paper on Preliminary Research for Environmental Education Facilities – September 2003
- Public Scoping Workshops/Focus Groups – April 2004
- Field Trip to BLM Campbell Creek Science School - June 2004
- Meetings with Nevada Power Company, Clark County Regional Flood Control District, and Las Vegas Valley Water District – July / August 2004
- Meetings with Brown & Partners Public Relations – March 2005
- Discussions with Clark County School District – ongoing since 2003

Unresolved Issues

Like any major project, the RRDLC has generated some controversy. To residents of nearby Blue Diamond, water use, traffic impact, and aesthetic considerations are major concerns. Other unresolved issues must also be sufficiently addressed before outreach activities can effectively be undertaken, as it is likely that community members may raise questions about them at public forums and presentations. These include:

- Water Rights and Availability
- NEPA Environmental Assessment
- Security and Risk Assessment
- Bonnie Springs Residential Development
- Clark County School District Commitment

II. OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

This activities plan seeks to accomplish the following general objectives. Specific outcomes and measures of success may be found in Sections VI and VII.

- To provide continual public visibility for the RRDLC project, the BLM's role in the project, and how it furthers the BLM mission.
- To engender interest among and inform target audiences about the mission, goals, benefits, and progress of the RRDLC project.
- To ensure a consistent message among all parties with vested interests in the RRDLC project.
- To respond in a timely and accurate manner to all inquiries and requests for information.
- To ensure the public understands how SNPLMA funding is providing tangible quality-of-life benefits to their community.

III. KEY MESSAGES

The key messages identified for public outreach concerning this project are as follows:

- **The Red Rock Desert Learning Center will provide a unique desert immersion experience for school-age children.**
- **The students at the Red Rock Desert Learning Center will improve their science and mathematics skills through inquiry-based instruction.**
- **The curriculum will be multi-disciplinary, including science, mathematics, literacy, art, and social studies.**
- **Students' experiences at the school will increase understanding of their individual and collective responsibility for serving as lifelong stewards of this nation's land and natural resources.**
- **The design and operation of the center will be environmentally sensitive, emphasizing sustainable systems.**
- **The Wild Horse and Burro Facility will inform students and the general public about the ecological, historical, and social issues related to these animals.**
- **The project is a collaborative effort among the Bureau of Land Management and numerous community stakeholders.**
- **The funding provided by the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act is improving the quality of life for local residents and their children.**

IV. KEY AUDIENCES

As a result of the formal and informal research conducted since 2003 and based upon the input of Core Group members, the following key audiences have been identified for this outreach plan.

PRIMARY:

A. Clark County School District

The RRDLC is a unique opportunity for Clark County School District to enhance science and math education and to participate in environmental education. The science curriculum will fully align with state and district fifth-grade science standards. The core curriculum is designed to provide additional value to literacy, art, and cultural education. District administrators – including the board of trustees, district superintendent and staff, regional superintendents, and principals – must be informed about the project to assure buy-in from the RRDLC's primary clientele. The RRDLC Core Group includes CCSD representatives who can assist in formulating strategies likely to be successful with district administration, teachers, students, and parents.

B. Parents and Guardians of School-age Children

Parents of school-age children should be informed about the mission and design of the school and provided with structured opportunities for input. The RRDLC is as an exciting option for fifth graders who currently have few other options for academic and/or outdoor residential camps. The center will be inclusive and welcoming to all children eligible to attend, including home-schooled, charter school, private school, and public schoolchildren. At an appropriate time, outreach also needs to extend to out-of-state parents and children as more operational details about the school and its Internet/satellite communication capabilities are determined.

**C. Environmentally Concerned and Aware Population
in Southern Nevada**

The environmental community should be cultivated for their support and endorsement of the school's philosophy and mission. The support of environmentalists is the first step in educating the general public, both about the school and about SNPLMA in general. These groups can become a focus for information about the project which will eventually broaden to the southern Nevada community in general.

D. News Media Outlets

There is a need to build media awareness of Red Rock Desert Learning Center and its educational and environmental objectives while also providing broader context to the benefits of the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act and the Southern Nevada Agency Partnership.

E. Congressional Delegation

The members of the Nevada congressional delegations are considered key audiences. Senators Harry Reid and John Ensign, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, and Congressmen Jim Gibbons and Jon Porter and their staff interact at various levels with administrators for the four land-management agencies.

F. Tribal Governments

Tribal representatives are a key audience because the school is located on land considered sacred and historical by various Native American groups.

G. Communities Surrounding the Proposed School

Communities like Blue Diamond will be most affected by the physical presence of the new school. While it is not realistic to expect full support for the project, it is an important goal to keep the community informed and to provide structured opportunities for community input and to respond to community concerns.

H. BLM and its Internal Partners

Key audiences include the employees of the Bureau of Land Management, environmental education team and the Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association.

SECONDARY:

I. Elected Officials

Elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels need to be informed regularly about the RRDLC to ensure they understand the benefits of SNPLMA projects to their constituents.

J. Local Civic Groups and Professional Associations

The civic and professional community should be informed about the school's philosophy and mission in order to encourage their support. These groups are an additional outlet for information about the project, which will broaden to the southern Nevada community in general.

K. Other Federal Land Agencies

Key audiences include employees of the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These organizations and their personnel are participants as well as audiences. The project's funding and ultimate success are based on interagency cooperation and understanding of these individuals.

L. Nevada System of Higher Education

This audience includes the staff, faculty, and students of the eight institutions of the Nevada System of Higher Education. In particular, the four Southern Nevada institutions – UNLV, Desert Research Institute, Community College of Southern Nevada, and Nevada State College – will be primary participants in educational and research activities to be undertaken at the school. Thus, faculty, staff, and students are potential ambassadors for the project, and their children are potential clients.

M. Community and Business Partners

Corporate and private citizens with the capability to contribute time, staff, and resources to the project are especially important to the long-term success of the center. Communication to this audience should focus on partnership and volunteer opportunities related to the RRDLC.

V. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The following activities may address one or several audience at the same time and will be adapted accordingly to maximize efficiency. The activities will be reviewed as needed to adapt to changes in the environment and/or to change policy or program direction.

A. Publications

Audiences: All

Publications will be distributed at public meetings, speaking engagements, at community events, at BLM headquarters, at the Red Rock Canyon fee booth and/or visitor center, to teachers and parents, to community groups, and to potential partners. It is anticipated that large quantities may be required (e.g., it is estimated that there are 25,000 fifth-grade students in the Clark County School District alone, not including students attending charter, private, and home schools). Until a school operator is selected and unresolved project issues are settled, publication content must remain general. Any use of the BLM

logo will require approval by the state office and must conform to agency guidelines. Examples of desirable publications include:

- Produce an 8-1/2" x 11" newsletter-format brochure for distribution at public meetings and presentations (2 issues/year)
- Print a single-sheet flyer for use at community events, speaking engagements, and meetings (updated as needed).
- Produce a "Project At a Glance" postcard for distribution at speaking engagements.
- Produce an electronic newsletter for long-term communication to core group and other key audiences (quarterly)

Key Implementers: UNLV Public Lands Institute with oversight from and collaboration with BLM Project Coordinator, BLM Public Affairs Staff, and Interagency Environmental Education Team.

B. Website Development

Audiences: All

The existing project website, at present, contains only "business" information related to the project, such as Core Group minutes, a FAQ, technical reports, and factual history about the project. Housed on the BLM-Las Vegas Field Office website, public access has sometimes been prevented for months at a time as a result of security concerns. This outreach plan anticipates development of a more interactive, robust, visual, accessible, and welcoming website with segmented information for various audiences that will increase interest in the school and its curriculum. Much of the information for an expanded website, however, will be dependent upon the selection of a school operator.

- Expand and update existing web pages with additional general project information and construction updates.
- Create web portal for teachers, with information on daily curriculum, pre- and post- classroom activities, instructional venues, and video walk-through of campus.
- Create web portal for students, with science-related activities, daily schedules, hikes, and video walk-through of campus.
- Create web portal for parents, with information on daily schedules, estimated fees, facilities, safety and security, anticipated staffing, and video walk-through of campus.

Key Implementers: BLM Project Coordinator with assistance from UNLV Public Lands Institute.

C. Public Speaking/Outreach

Audiences: Clark County School District, Parents of School-Aged Children, Environmental Groups, and Civic Groups

A number of opportunities are available for speaking engagements that can highlight the RRDLC mission, brand, and materials. Some of these may include talks at the local

chambers of commerce luncheons (including Latin, Urban, and Asian), non-profit events and galas, labor group meetings, community meetings, civic groups, etc. Until unresolved project issues are settled, speaking engagements may need to be very selective. The primary speaker will be BLM Project Coordinator. Secondary speakers will be BLM Field Manager and BLM Associate Field Manager.

- Create multi-media Powerpoint presentations tailored for different target audiences.
- Prepare general talking points for use by BLM representatives and Speakers Bureau participants during public speaking engagements.
- Compile list of civic groups and organizations.
- Solicit Speakers Bureau participants from Core Group membership.
- Schedule informational presentation to Clark County School District Board of Trustees.
- Schedule targeted speaking engagements. Potential audiences include civic groups, chamber organizations, environmental groups, public lands' friends groups, parent-teacher associations, private school participants, home school groups, and charter school participants.
- Schedule presentations to school assemblies.

Key Implementers: UNLV Public Lands Institute, Core Group, and Outside Las Vegas Foundation, with assistance from BLM Public Affairs Staff as appropriate

D. Public Relations/Community Relations

Audiences: All

A variety of methods will be used to keep the various target audiences informed about the project on a continual basis. Efforts will also be undertaken to identify and establish partnerships with local businesses and organizations that may embrace the Center and assist with sponsorship opportunities, event collaboration, etc.

- Host periodic open houses and public meetings to present schematic designs, project timeline, official reports, and to seek public comment.
- Staff booths at community events, kid-oriented festivals, and environment events and festivals, such as Earth Day, National Public Lands Day, Children's Day, leisure events at public parks, etc.
- Create project displays with maps of the project site and architects' renderings.
- Prepare information packets for principals, teachers and parents – including CCSD, private schools, home schooled, and charter schools.
- Pursue partnerships with leading businesses, utilities, and organizations to support or enhance the project's mission and/or facilities.

Key Implementers: UNLV Public Lands Institute, BLM Project Coordinator, BLM Public Affairs Staff, RRDLC Fund-Raising & Partnership Committee, Outside Las Vegas Foundation, and BLM Field Manager and Associate Field Manager.

E. Media Relations

Audiences: Local and regional media outlets

Appropriate media outlets will be targeted to reach out to the various target audiences. UNLV will work with BLM to identify and coordinate mutually beneficial media partnerships will be pursued to increase news coverage and awareness of events and programs. To a great extent, media outreach is dependent upon resolution of key project issues, especially water availability and the environmental assessment report, and all media activities must conform to BLM guidelines (e.g., may require prior approval at state and/or national levels). Methods may include the following:

- Compile media contacts' list.
- Prepare contact list of environmental, preservation, and naturalist organizations.
- Prepare media kit for print, broadcast, and radio outlets for schematic phase.
- Prepare news releases and pitched stories to targeted media throughout process.
- Publicize milestones and achievements during architectural and construction phase.
- Schedule interviews on local talk radio and television shows.
- Compile electronic photo/video archive with digital videotape and digital photo documentation of architectural drawings and construction progress.

Key Implementers: Kirsten Cannon (BLM/Red Rock) and Hillerie Patton (BLM/SMPLMA), with assistance from UNLV Public Affairs Office and UNLV Public Lands Institute where appropriate.

F. Promotional Items

Audiences: All

Selective giveaway items and banners at community events will help establish awareness and create brand presence for the Center. These items are dependent upon available budget but *may* include:

- Design a project logo for BLM approval.
- Create project related web-based and hard-copy games for K-5 children, including but not limited to word scrambles, match shapes to animals, word searches, crossword puzzles, word identifications, coloring books, etc.
- Create a project banner/tablecloth for outdoor events.
- Assemble a traveling exhibit.
- Order giveaway items.
- Create signage at construction site.

Key Implementers: UNLV Public Lands Institute, RRDLC Fund-Raising & Partnership Committee, Outside Las Vegas Foundation, and Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association.

G. Special Events
Audiences: All

Special events can be created that appeal to particular target audiences and which are scheduled to maximize awareness throughout the year. Examples may include:

- Host a project-related contest/competition for CCSD students. Possibilities include a “Design the Playground Contest,” “Name the Dorms Contest” or a Green Building Science Competition. Winning entries could be published in local newspapers and through the CCSD Interact site, posted on the Center’s website, acknowledged by the Congressional delegation, and winners could be provided scholarships to the Center.
- Conduct site tours both before and during construction.
- Coordinate a groundbreaking ceremony and kick-off event with the national and state BLM directors, and other key Department of Interior and BLM officials.

Key Implementers: UNLV Public Lands Institute, BLM Project Coordinator, and BLM Public Affairs Staff

VI. DESIRED RESULTS / OUTCOMES

- Ensure at least 1 print communication is provided to every K-5 parent in the Clark County School District.
- Ensure no fewer than 2 print or electronic communications are provided to all other key audiences (non-CCSD).
- Hold 2 public forums in 2005-2006.
- Publish 2 issues of newsletter-brochures per year.
- Publish an electronic newsletter each quarter when construction begins.
- Host booths at no fewer than 4 community events/festivals.
- Schedule no fewer than 6 speaking engagements between 2006 and 2007.
- Schedule at least 1 school assembly in 200-2007.
- By January 2006, secure project endorsement from CCSD trustees and top administrators, either on the record at a public meeting or in writing.
- Increase website visits by 10% between 2006 and 2007 (assuming access to website is not prevented by BLM).
- Create ongoing news media interest in the project and its progress by demonstrating progressive media outreach as the project builds.

VII. EVALUATION OF SUCCESS

- Track user statistics on website visits, internal navigation points, and electronic requests for information.
- Track and analyze comments/feedback at public forums.
- Document number of public presentations and audiences reached.
- Document number of attendees at public meetings.

- Document number of community fairs and festivals attended and audiences reached.
- Document number of student participants in project-related contests and games.
- Document number of publications disseminated.
- Possibly contract with a news clipping service to track media outlets reached.

VIII. BUDGET

A budget of \$95,000 is currently available for community outreach activities through June 30, 2006. Beyond that date, some continuation funding for marketing and outreach has been identified (but not yet specified) from Round 5 SNPLMA appropriations. The university will allocate the currently available budget by category as indicated below. Approval of budgetary costs for individual publications and activities will be determined in consultation with the BLM project manager and public affairs staff.

Proposed Budget Breakdown

Publications	\$ 60,000
Website Development	\$ 10,000
Media Relations	\$ 5,000
Public Relations	\$ 5,000
Promotional Items	\$ 5,000
Special Events	\$ 5,000
Public Speaking/Outreach	\$ 5,000
TOTAL	\$ 95,000