

**Draft Talking Points  
prepared for  
Director Bob Abbey  
Nevada Pinyon-Juniper Restoration and Utilization Summit  
December 9, 2010**

- I appreciate your kind invitation to be here today. It's always great to be back in Nevada. I'm sorry I wasn't able to attend yesterday's session.
- This particular topic is one that I am especially pleased about for several reasons.
- First, the type of work you are undertaking is exactly the kind the President and Secretary Salazar has made clear is important to our country – indeed, the world.
- It's worthwhile to note that this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference is going on right now near Cancun. This year – this week in fact -- Agriculture Secretary Vilsack and Energy Secretary Chu are there representing our country.
- Last year, Secretary Salazar was among those who attended. And, just like he had from his first day as Secretary, he challenged all of us – both here and abroad -- to look at managing natural resources from a broad viewpoint – a landscape-scale perspective -- and I'm pleased to see that is what you all are doing here during this summit.
- A year ago tomorrow, Secretary Salazar was in Copenhagen and told the world that the United States of America understands the issues that climate change poses to our world and committed us to confront it.

- As part of this, he established the development of renewable energy as a priority. He also organized the Department of the Interior's climate change strategy around the development of landscape-scale partnerships.
- During his presentation, he told the international audience about the importance we need to place on partnerships, and specifically, about a network of Landscape Conservation Cooperatives that we – together with other Federal agencies, Tribes, local and state partners, and the public – were to set up around the country.
- He explained that these cooperatives would focus on natural resource issues that typically extend beyond the borders of any single National Wildlife Refuge, BLM unit, or National Park, and address such issues as invasive species, fire, drought, wildlife, and changing water supplies.
- He emphasized that no one government or no one landowner alone can solve these problems.
- Do any of these concepts sound familiar to anyone here today?
- Wallace Stegner once wrote, “The West is less a place than a process.” And I was fortunate enough to learn a bit of this when I lived and worked in Nevada for 12 years.
- As a result, the concepts the Secretary talked about in his speech in Copenhagen were very familiar to me, and I am sure, to many of you here today.
- Just a little over a week ago, I announced new national initiatives to address Bureau-wide complex resource management issues that incorporate these

concepts. They are based on Secretary Salazar's recognition that our efforts to address widespread environmental challenges need to transcend traditional management boundaries.

- This approach will help identify important ecological values and patterns of environmental change that may not be evident when managing smaller, local land areas.
- I'll briefly describe this approach. First, the BLM will prepare science assessments, called Rapid Ecoregional Assessments – REAs for short , to improve the understanding of ecological conditions and how they might be affected by climate change and other environmental trends.
- These assessments will integrate the best available information about resource conditions and trends within an eco- region. We've identified 10 eco-regions – and piloted this approach in three of them -- one of which was the Northern Great Basin. (The other two pilots were the Wyoming Basin, and Chihuahuan Desert.)
- During this assessment, areas of high ecological value, including important wildlife habitats and corridors will be mapped, which will help us gauge their potential risks from climate change, wildfires, invasive species, energy development, and urban growth.
- In addition, we will map areas that have high potential for energy development and relatively low ecological value. We'll consider whether these might be best suited for siting future energy development. Ultimately, REAs will establish landscape-scale baseline ecological data to gauge the effect and effectiveness of management actions.

- Now, here's where I need to stop for a minute and emphasize something. I know that these studies -- these concepts, all the data -- sound like they are being handed down from on high.
- But the truth is that without the success of the next part of this approach, we will utterly fail. It's important to me that you know that without folks like you -- here on the ground -- from all people in Nevada who care about and have a stake in how our public lands are managed -- our efforts will be fruitless.
- Because once we have these results, we will rely on-the-ground input -- from partner agencies, stakeholders, Tribes, and other interested people -- to identify key priorities for the public lands. Only then will we have a workable blueprint for coordinating and making these priorities a reality on the land.
- Once we begin the on-the-ground work, we will follow-up by gathering consistent, high-quality monitoring information to advance adaptive management of the natural resources.
- To support efforts like this, the Department of the Interior is establishing eight regional Climate Science Centers to provide scientific information and tools to help us anticipate, monitor, and adapt to climate change effects.
- In an era of profound environmental change, the Administration knows that an integrated approach is essential to public land management. It is the future.

- For me, when I was here as BLM's Nevada State Director, these lessons were driven home in the aftermath of those terrible two weeks of firestorms in August 1999. It was then that we first envisioned and then implemented the Great Basin Restoration Initiative – a precursor to the efforts we are working hard to institutionalize today.
- The Great Basin Restoration Initiative evolved through the public and private partnerships that today make up additional efforts, such as the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition and the Joint Fire Science-funded SageSTEP project – a basin-wide study on cheatgrass and pinyon-pine invasion into sagebrush steppe vegetation.
- Today, the hard work by many partners is leading us into the future by preparing for that day when we are ready to re-sow Nevada's native plants, courtesy of the Great Basin Native Plant Selection and Increase Project. This group is already preparing for the success of efforts such as the Pinyon-Juniper Partnership. It will ensure that we have the equipment and strategies to establish native plants. It will call on private industry – particularly the seed industry – to help establish the sometimes-temperamental species native to the Great Basin.
- It is clear that Nevadans, along with our friends in adjacent states, are ahead of the curve when it comes to building partnerships and managing natural resources on a landscape scale.
- From my perspective, many potential linkages exist for the Nevada Pinyon-Juniper Partnership, and I urge you to build on these links. I urge you to

leverage the partnerships and projects that already exist at all levels, even as you work to build new ones.

- I know from reading the agenda that you've heard about other success stories from across the West, including New Mexico and Idaho. And, I believe that all of these success stories have at their foundation a core concept – that success lies in building strong, diverse partnerships to achieve ecological objectives at a landscape scale.
- And it's clear that this is one of foundations of the Nevada Pinyon-Juniper Partnership. I applaud you all for this.
- As I said earlier, the Secretary also emphasized making renewable energy a priority in his speech in Copenhagen.
- The clean energy potential on America's public lands is staggering. In the western U.S. alone, Americans have an estimated 206 gigawatts of wind energy potential on public lands and an estimated 2,900 gigawatts of solar energy potential.
- While I know that solar and wind power are getting most of the renewable energy attention right now, I recommend that you to continue your work to raise biomass' potential use as a commercially viable clean energy source and push to address ways to mitigate barriers to that goal.
- Public lands have an estimated potential 210 gigawatts of woody biomass power. In addition, a statistic that I see as a good sign, if a bit surprising -- a 2009 Department of Energy report states that biomass generates 53 percent of all the renewable energy in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

- Support for efforts like the Pinyon-Juniper partnership is high – both for its clear environmental benefits and its economic potential to increase the commercial feasibility of biomass energy. For example, I hear from Members of Congress that we need to be doing more to increase the potential for biomass energy. I hear similar support from a variety of environmental, energy, and local rural groups.
- And, for some years now, the Western Governors’ Association has worked on a biomass initiative aimed at removing obstacles, improving technology, and promoting cohesive policies that would advance this cause.
- The benefits of treating overstocked pinyon-juniper woodlands and using the resulting biomass are many and may be very clear to us. But to build additional support it’s important to let others know as well.
- We need to get the word out about these benefits in ways that are meaningful to those who live in and love Nevada:
- A project like this will help restore the native sagebrush; it will improve habitat for wildlife and protect precious watersheds; it will reduce the number of catastrophic wildfires, help control invasive weeds and insects – in short, it can help return the Nevada rangelands to its natural character. It also has the potential to generate jobs in rural areas, particularly those adjacent to forest and public lands -- a perfect fit for communities interspersed with BLM lands.
- For those of us here who are BLM employees, it is a particularly appealing project because it would – in short -- help to meet our multiple-use mandate – a challenge even in the best of circumstances.

- The Secretary, in his speech last year, told the audience that we would achieve our objectives, “Together with our partners.” He went on to say, “And we will deploy American technology, American vision, and American ingenuity for the benefit of our planet and all peoples.”
- This is what I see you doing here. It is no small thing. I want to thank you for inviting me here today and I want to thank you for your vision and hard work.
- I’m happy to take questions or comments.

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<sup>i</sup> U.S. DOE, Energy Information Administration (EIA) (2009) *Monthly Energy Review 2008*.