

## Workshop offers ‘low-hanging fruit’

March 31, 2012 Adella Harding, *Elko Daily Free Press*

ELKO — A number of ideas for easy actions rural communities in northern Nevada could take for proactive economic development came out of a two-day Scenario Planning Workshop that ended Friday.

“We’re not trying to save the world with these actions, but it is an opportunity to show” what can be done, Juliet Fox of Future IQ Partners told the workshop participants before they broke into groups to come up with suggestions she called “low-hanging fruit.”

The potential actions ranged from improving regional broadband capacity, investing in infrastructure for industrial development, improving networking, developing a shared vision, collaborating on infrastructure, developing housing and workforces, to participating in federal land management policies.

The final idea is to share the story that the communities aren’t boom and bust.

Earlier in the day, the attendees developed four scenarios of the region’s future — Fist in Air, Head in Sand; Rural Northern Nevada Successful Partnerships; the Road to Death, and Growth and Consequences.

All the attendees voted to pursue the Successful Partnership scenario, and the majority agreed that without intervention, the region is in the Growth and Consequences phase.

Fox said earlier this week that scenario planning actively taps “the collective intelligence” of the communities in the region as they look at possibilities for the future.

Elko Assistant City Manager Delmo Andreozzi, led off his report on the Road of Death scenario with a song before describing his team’s take on the scenario. They predict a brain drain, consolidation of schools, a loss of community pride, the eventual mothballing of facilities, closure of Great Basin College and more doom and gloom.

The Growth and Consequences scenario foresees growth, gold prices stabilizing at \$1,900 an ounce but mining profit margins dwindling due to more government regulations and difficulty in retaining diversified businesses.

“It’s kind of a company town,” said Greg Evangelatos, Elko city planner, who presented the scenario.

Under this scenario, the water table would drop, there would be a loss of habitat and more range fires, the listing of the sage grouse as an endangered species and cultural conflicts over water.



There also would be a transient population, an increase in crime and shortage of healthcare workers.

The Fist in Air scenario would also bring more crime and drug use.

“Along with a transient population comes crime,” said Andrea Rossman, cultural, tourism and economic development director for Eureka County.

She also said there will be water troubles because “water is more important than gold.”

The Fist in Air scenario is for a great economy that isn’t sustainable, where there aren’t funds for infrastructure development.

The Successful Partnerships scenario would be the result of an “over-riding theme of cooperation,” said Kelly Wilson of Pacific Steel and Recycling at Osino.

Headlines for 2015 would show the price of gold to be up, the U.S. Department of Interior managing fires better, education improvements and the Pequop Trend between Wells and West Wendover surpassing the Carlin Trend in gold production, he said.

Also, the sage grouse would be delisted and by 2030, Wells would have a population of 18,000.

The region’s population would include highly skilled and professional workers, there would be public and private charter schools, the culture would be family-oriented, there would be economic diversity and high per capital income. There also would be better regional air service and good infrastructure.

The state provided \$25,000 for the regional scenario workshop that the Elko County Economic Diversification Authority hosted at the High Desert Inn.

Fox said she and her partners work almost exclusively with communities with natural resource-based economies, such as the counties in rural northern Nevada that depend upon the mining industry.