



March 10, 2010, Julie Wootton, Staff Writer, *Elko Daily Free Press*

Elko's gateway to economic diversification

ELKO — The opening of the Northeastern Nevada Regional Railport is a historic moment for Elko County, Commissioner Sheri Eklund-Brown said Tuesday.

She said the primary goals of the project were to build a much-needed transloader facility and to recruit businesses.

"We can all attest that it's been a very long and demanding process," she said.

About 50 people, including county commissioners, county staff and business representatives, attended the grand opening ceremony.

Officials spoke about the process of completing the project, which was spearheaded by the Elko County Economic Diversification Authority.

Commission Chairman Charlie Myers said the railport will help boost the county's tax base and create jobs.

"From the inception, ECEDA nor the county looked back," Myers said. "Everyone felt it was a fit for Elko, Nevada."

He said the project was mainly the vision of one person: former ECEDA executive director Elaine Barkdull-Spencer.

"Without her, this project never would have gotten completed," Myers said.

He also thanked Union Pacific, TranSystems, Savage Services, other businesses that operate at the railport, and the Ellison family, which sold the land for the railport.

"We (the county) wanted to give the project back to private businesses because that's where it needed to be," he said.

Other Elko-based companies, such as Newmont, supported the project.

Mary Korpi, director of external relations for Newmont Mining Corp., told the Free Press that Newmont supports the railport "because it's a way to expand and diversify the economy."

The first train arrived at the railport last month. The project cost the county about \$12 million.

Myers said the Nevada Legislature appropriated \$1 million for the project to help it get off the ground.



“We wouldn’t have had community support without the funds,” he said.

Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki, as well as former lieutenant governor Lorraine Hunt, presented the county with two checks, each for \$500,000, to use as seed money to purchase land and infrastructure at the railport.

Eklund-Brown thanked the railport committee, which includes Myers, County Manager Rob Stokes, Assistant County Manager Cash Minor, Elko County Planner Randy Brown, Kristin McQueary from the District Attorney’s Office, Executive Assistant Michele Petty, Elko County Public Works Director Lynn Forsberg and Elko County Building Official Thomas Ingersoll.

Myers presented plaques on behalf of the county commission to Brown; Barkdull-Spencer; Kelly Wilson, manager of Pacific Steel & Recycling; and Steve McLaws, Union Pacific’s industrial development director.

Commissioners also presented Savage Services with an American flag.

Savage is operating the 60-acre site, which has begun receiving loads of pipe for the Ruby Pipeline natural gas transmission project.

The company is ready to serve all private businesses. Operations Manager Chris Goodall may be reached at 385-3572.