

**Arizona Resource Advisory Council
Final Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2010**

**Bureau of Land Management National Training Center
9828 North 31st Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona**

RAC Members in Attendance: Frances Werner, Thomas Kelly, Bill Brake, Carolyn Loder, Maggie Sacher, Jan Holder, Carl Taylor, Glendon Collins, Linda Binder, Richard Lunt, Steve Saway, Larry Howery, Josh Avey

RAC Members Absent: Matthew Hogel, Norman Perry, Laura Sagerman

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Staff in Attendance: James Kenna, Michael Taylor, Julie Decker, Deborah Stevens, Eddie Arreola, Angelita Bullets, Scott Florence, Pamela Mathis, Dorothea Boothe, Angie Lara, Susan Williams

Presenters & Guests: Chris Parrish (Peregrine Fund), Kathy Makansi (Coronado National Forest Archaeologist), Michael Lyndon (Kaibab National Forest), Cody Carter (Arizona Game & Fish Department), Chris Bockey (Logan Simpson Design)

Meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Frances Werner, RAC Chair and there was introduction of RAC Members, BLM staff and guests.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM State Director's Introduction, Update on Legislation, Regulations and other Statewide Issues.

Arizona BLM State Director Jim Kenna briefed the RAC on several topics.

Personnel changes:

- Helen Hankins, Arizona Associate State Director, is now the Colorado State Director
- Raymond Suazo is the Acting Associate State Director at this time.
- Angie Bullets is the new Phoenix District Manager.
- Angie Lara is the Acting Associate District Manager in the Phoenix District
- Teri Raml is now the BLM Desert District Manager in California.

American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) Update

We are making excellent progress in awarding the \$16 million allocated by the ARRA. The Contracting Process is working to get the dollars obligated. You will start seeing ARRA monies by mid-summer. To date, we have awarded 56 contracts and agreements obligating \$5,727,684 of ARRA funding. All projects will be awarded by June 30, 2010. Every dollar will be well spent. Some success stories include: Trail Crews were rebuilding the trail in the Hells Canyon Wilderness, work is currently being done at a Colorado River boating facility, and six deep abandoned mine shafts, ranging from 60 to over 100 feet deep, were filled and secured. These shafts posed serious safety concerns for citizens who recreate on public lands, especially for the

off-highway vehicle or all-terrain vehicle clubs. We have developed a BLM-Arizona webpage to feature the ARRA projects and the public and resource benefits.

Proposed Mineral Withdrawal EIS Update

Scott Haight and Scott Florence will provide a more in depth update on where BLM and its cooperating agency partners are in the proposed mineral withdrawal EIS. However, I want to thank the RAC for your help and recommendations that were used in the EIS alternative development. Several things have occurred in the process, including the release of the scoping report and a U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) report. The USGS report contains a series of short-term studies designed to develop additional information about the possible effects of uranium mining on the natural resources of the region.

As expected, this report resulted in media reports and public reactions on both sides of the issue. However, I just want to stress that the USGS report is only one of a number of scientific research materials to be used to develop the environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed mineral withdrawal scheduled to be released in August 2010.

Some of the other studies underway as part of the EIS process include examination of mineral economics, geology, surface and groundwater hydrology, wildlife, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural/ethnographic resources.

There is a lot of work to be done on the development of the EIS before the Secretary of the Interior makes a decision on the proposed mineral withdrawal. This includes completing several benchmarks in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, such as alternatives development, environmental impact analysis, and the opportunity for public comment.

Fire Season Update

Arizona experienced 100 - 400% times the normal precipitation in February, and temperatures below average. As the wet winter tapers off in April, and temperatures begin to warm up, the fire potential for Arizona will return to normal. Grass growth in the desert will begin to dry out and become fuel for fires, increasing BLM's chances for fire activity. Due to the significant rain and snowpack, current predictions are for a lower than normal fire season in the mid to upper elevations. Fire predictions for the desert regions of the state are normal to higher than normal fire season.

Drought conditions continues to improve in the Southwest and Nevada, but is expected to persist or worsen in the Northwest, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Drought conditions should also persist over northern Wisconsin. So Arizona firefighters may be assisting in other parts of the country this summer.

As of March 3, 2010, BLM has already experienced eight human caused fires, consuming one acre, while all jurisdictions within Arizona have experience 35 fires for 8,513 acres. This is well below the 10-year average of 180 fires burning 45,488 acres.

RAC Call for Nominations

The call for nominations for RAC members to fill the five vacancies on the RAC next year should be out in the next few weeks. The five outgoing RAC members are Bill Brake, Carolyn Loder, Matthew Hogel, Jan Holder and Linda Binder. The Secretary of the Interior will make the selections from nominations submitted by the BLM.

Arizona Strategies

The BLM is getting out and talking about the approach to Renewable Energy and how we site renewable energy projects in conferences, and on TV.

The State Director will be engaged in the Renewable Energy Development Conference next month, and there is an upcoming Tribal Energy Conference and a Renewable Energy Forum

The decision-making process on renewable energy projects needs to be open and visible to the public, and both BLM and the Governor's Offices are trying to ensure a visible process

There are discussion about the U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) role at the International Border with Mexico. The BLM has had a Border Strategy for a number of years, and we are looking to see if and how we could do things differently.

We are making significant progress on several Arizona Strategies, including the U.S. Mexico Border, National Landscape Conservation System, Water, Tribal Relations and Youth strategies. We met with the Executive Leadership Team several weeks ago, and I am pleased to say that the Arizona Strategies align well with the Secretary's priorities. We are well along the process in identifying tangible goals and outcomes in our four business lines – Landscape Sustainability, Heritage Resources, Community Use and Operational Excellence. Arizona has positioned itself to offer meaningful proposals for funding of programs that contribute to the Secretary's goals of the New Energy Frontier, Treasured Landscapes and Youth.

BLM staff will be developing an Executive Summary on the BLM-Arizona Strategies that we will pass on to the RAC for feedback. In addition, we will also have a step down strategy for the broader NLCS strategy that will include a "10-year Score Card for the NLCS". We will be asking the RAC to work with us in developing recommendations for this strategy.

The RAC is a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) Chartered Group.

The Arizona BLM Resource Advisory Council is chartered under the authority of the Federal Advisory Committee Act which authorizes agencies to establish advisory committees and provides guidelines for how these committees operate. Arizona BLM probably needs to do a better job of briefing the RAC on the requirements of FACA.

The RAC is chartered to bring together people from different backgrounds and experience with public lands and resources to discuss major issues and make recommendations to the BLM. It is important that the discussions consider alternatives and end in recommendations to the BLM.

The RAC advice and recommendations are just one part of the public participation process of decision making which BLM uses to collect information and opinions from the general public through public meetings, comment periods, and environmental studies.

Renewable Energy Update

Planning for renewable energy generation and distribution continues to be a major issue for BLM in Arizona. The BLM is working to determine what the footprint of solar and wind energy development facilities and their transmission lines will be on the public lands. Energy generation and distribution is a complicated issue and the BLM, in conjunction with the Governor's Office, is looking at both the opportunities and the overall process for renewable energy development on federal, State and private lands in Arizona.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Questions on BLM District and Field Manager Reports

RAC members asked questions about:

- Why was the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) chosen as the lead agency to do the Environmental Impact Statement on the solar energy project in the Quartzite area? - Two Federal agencies are involved. WAPA, an agency of the US Department of Energy, must approve or deny the request for an interconnection to the federal powerline from Parker Dam to the Yuma area. BLM must act on the right-of-way application for the powerplant. When more than one agency must approve elements of a project the agencies work together on the NEPA documents with one as lead.
- Is the Yuma Field Office using the Arizona Site Steward Program to help prevent further vandalism at the Sears Point Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)? - Yes.
- What is happening on the Pacific Gas & Electric's Topock Groundwater Remediation Project? There are a lot of social issues with Native American Tribal members on this project along the Lower Colorado River, and several Federal, State and Tribal Agencies are working on them.
- Regarding the proposal to lease 280 acres of land to Lake Havasu City for development of park facilities, what happens to the permanent improvements if the City gives up the lease? Why doesn't BLM sell the land to the city? The City has applied for the land under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act which authorizes the BLM to transfer lands to local Government entities at reduced prices for recreation or other public purpose uses. The City can get either a lease or a patent, after completion of the development plan, but both will include a clause which requires that the land used for the public purpose specified in the lease or patent, or title reverts to the BLM.
- The Lost Dutchman State Park at Apache Junction is a Recreation and Public Purpose Act patent to the State Parks Department. If the park is closed by the State because of State budget problems, will title to the land revert back to the BLM? No, as long as the State Parks Department maintains park improvements on the land, and plans to reopen the State Park when funding is available, they are not in violation of the terms of the R&PP. Any attempts to sell the Park or use the land for some other purpose would be in violation of the R&PP patent. The City of Apache Junction has agreed to help run the park. Title to the Park could be transferred to the City of Apache Junction, with BLM's permission, if the City wanted to operate it as a City Park.
- What institutions have been selected for the peer review of the draft Rangeland Health Assessment of the six allotments on the Sonoran Desert National Monument? The names of those institutions have not yet been announced.

AGENDA ITEM: BLM Update on Renewable Energy Development and RAC Discussion and Recommendations on Issues to Consider for the Renewable Energy Footprint on Arizona's Public Lands

Mike Taylor, BLM Deputy State Director for Resources updated the RAC on the status of renewable energy development activities in Arizona and led a discussion of the issues, questions and concerns of RAC members.

RAC member concerns and advice included:

- Large amounts of water will be required for solar energy facilities and there are concerns that water will be taken away from farmers and ranchers in rural areas like Graham and Greenlee Counties and could force agricultural users out of business. The social and economic impacts of proposed solar energy developments need to be studied carefully.
- There were many questions about where the water will come from? The Central Arizona Project? Purchased from farmers and ranchers? How will nearby communities be affected when groundwater is used for solar energy development? What happens to the residual water that is saturated with minerals? Rural areas need to develop water plans. The 100 year water supply for development issue needs to be addressed.
- There were major concerns about the adverse impacts which solar and wind generating facilities and associated transmission lines will have on the wildlife and wildlife habitats, public recreation uses, landscapes and cultural resources of the public lands.
- Renewable energy uses should not block public access to other public lands.
- Projects should be located close to existing transmission line corridors so that new transmission lines can use the existing corridors.
- The mineral potential of public land needs to be evaluated as well as the surface resources to make sure that renewable energy uses of the surface do not preclude development of valuable mineral resources.
- Solar and wind energy facilities will not use resources on the BLM lands, the BLM lands are just sites to utilize the energy of the sun and the wind.
- State and private lands need to be strongly considered as options for solar and wind energy facilities developments instead of sacrificing the other public values that only the BLM public lands can provide. Let's protect the BLM public lands and promote the use of State and private lands.
- There is strong RAC support for the Restoration Design Project developed by Arizona BLM which proposes that renewable energy facilities be placed on lands/sites that have already been "disturbed" by mining, agriculture, or other commercial/industrial activities.
- RAC members had questions about how the permits would be issued. Open bidding could maximize revenue and competition. Will there be bonding requirements to insure restoration of the site after the renewable energy use is terminated? If the site is to be committed long term to solar energy development, perhaps the land should be sold instead of leased, so that the land can be taxed by the County.
- There needs to be local support for renewable energy uses of BLM lands. BLM needs to work with cities and counties to make sure that proposed renewable energy development facilities are not in conflict with local land use plans.
- The public needs to be better educated about the needs and impacts of solar energy developments and the options for where and how it should happen in Arizona.

Eddie Arreola, RECO Program Lead reported on the status of the Arizona BLM's renewable energy projects.

Currently there are 33 active right of way applications on file for sites for solar energy development facilities in Arizona. Three of the applicants have submitted plans of development. The BLM has no control over the pace of the progress by the applicants.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Sonoran Solar Energy Project south of Buckeye is still being worked on. There are public scoping meetings scheduled for April 27 in Phoenix, April 28 in Buckeye, and April 29 in Gila Bend. The EIS will be completed by the end of the year.

BLM has finished scoping on the Restoration Design Energy Project.

AGENDA ITEM: RAC Discussion and Recommendations on Issues which need to be Considered in Evaluating Renewable Energy Developments on BLM Public Lands

At the December 2009 RAC meeting, RAC members were requested to send comments to the State Director about issues that BLM needs to consider in evaluating renewable energy developments on BLM public lands in Arizona. BLM took the comments received and drafted a list of the issues identified by the RAC. The RAC as a group discussed the issues and developed the following outline of issues and subjects:

WATER USE

- affects on users (plants, humans & wildlife)
- affects on ground water
- over committed surface water (existing & future developments)
- affects on water settlements
- affects on limited water
- affects on the landscape and wildlife (relationship w/surface water)
- demonstrates 100-year supply in Active Management Area
- source of water – private or federal

MINERALS

- evaluation of mineral potential where not known

USE OF PUBLIC LANDS vs. STATE, TRIBAL OR PRIVATE LANDS

- State and private lands are viable alternatives for utilizing solar energy which is everywhere
- Consider that renewable energy development would sacrifice the public values that only the public lands can provide
- Broad array of alternatives that includes non-federal
- Renewable energy on public lands will displace other values
- Location of generation vs. transmission – public or private

- Reference the **BLM Renewable Energy Conflict Analysis** with Changes as stated (See Attachment – Exhibit A)

TECHNOLOGIES

- High water uses vs. low water uses

ACCESS

- Restriction/loss of access for public use of public lands
- Impacts to surrounding lands – recreation destinations and OHV routes

PUBLIC EDUCATION ABOUT RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

- Assess public opinion

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Habitat Fragmentation
- Wildlife Connectivity
- Invasive Species
- Visual Impacts- Loss of scenic values (Visual Resources Management)
- Threshold – How much is enough

RELATIONSHIP TO PLANNED GROWTH

- Look at existing plans

AUTHORIZING MECHANISM

- Examine Options – lease, Right-of-Way, Sale, etc.
- Evaluate Tax Base Ramifications

SUSTAINABILITY OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

- Bonding, Reclamation and Restoration

RAC ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER IN NEPA PROCESS

- Use low water technologies
- Consideration of state and private lands, as well as federal
- Consider off-site mitigation with regard to loss of resource values
- Reference the **BLM Renewable Energy Conflict Analysis** with Changes as stated (See Attachment – Exhibit A)
- Use Restoration Design Energy Project where possible

The RAC also endorsed the **BLM Renewable Energy Conflict Analysis** in the development EIS Alternatives. This document, prepared by the BLM Arizona State Office Staff and amended by the RAC, is listed below, and made a part of the RAC’s “Issues Which need to be Considered When Evaluating Renewable Energy Developments on BLM Lands”.

BLM Renewable Energy Conflict Analysis

Regardless of the conflict category, *all* applications will be subject to site-specific review and NEPA analysis. On-site inspections may reveal conditions not detected by this high level analysis.

Exclude

These are areas that are excluded from consideration legally by Congress (National Conservation Areas and Wilderness Areas) presidential decree (National Monument Proclamations) or secretarial designation

- All National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) units, including
 - National Monuments
 - National Conservation Areas
 - National Historic Trails
 - Wild and Scenic Rivers
 - Wilderness Areas
 - Wilderness Study Areas

High Sensitivity

These are areas that have resource or Land Use Plan conflicts that would be considered not in compliance with our RMPs, or where mitigation to resolve conflicts may prove particularly difficult, costly, impractical, or impossible.

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Areas Allocated to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics
- Desert Tortoise Habitat Category 1 and 2
- Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes I and II
- Wildlife Movement Corridors
- Wild Horse and Burro Herd Management Areas
- Sensitive Species Habitat
- Right-of-Way Avoidance Areas
- Back Country Byways
- Areas of Tribal Concern
- On or over economically recoverable minerals*
- High value recreation settings*

* added by the Arizona RAC

Moderate Sensitivity

These are areas where resource conditions or Land Use Plan decisions would not necessarily preclude the project, but mitigation would likely be required. Some of these areas are flags that there may be considerable public opposition to proposals (Areas inventoried as having Wilderness Characteristics) as well.

- Special Recreation Management Areas
- VRM Class III

- Areas Inventoried as having Wilderness Characteristics
- Allocated Utility Corridors
- Desert Tortoise Habitat Category 3

Low Sensitivity

These are the remaining BLM lands that did not fall into the above categories. There may be conflicts with these lands as well, but these conflicts would surface during site specific review and NEPA analysis. All in all, these lands represent areas with the lowest *known* conflict.

- No judgment has been made as to the suitability of these lands for any kind of renewable energy production. In its raw form, it has not been clipped to the NREL solar production zones, wind production zones, geothermal production areas, Western Governors Association “Western Renewable Energy Zones”, or any other data set that would bias the outcome.

MOTION: Following discussion, in consideration of input received, the RAC created a document “Issues Which Need to be Considered When Evaluating Renewable Energy Developments on BLM Public Lands”. Maggie Sacher moved to approve this document and Carolyn Loder provided the second. The RAC approved the motion as presented.

AGENDA ITEM: Public Comment Period

Mr. Paul Roetto, representing the Friends of Saddle Mountain, distributed handouts describing the Friends of Saddle Mountain Public Lands Appreciation Day on April 10, 2009, in Tonopah. More information at www.fosmaz.org

Ms. Peggy Biegler, Executive Director of the Friends of Agua Fria National Monument, displayed artwork which had been prepared for the 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM). The painting was done by Gary Bennett of Black Canyon City. The Friends Group is very active in helping BLM with the Agua Fria National Monument. They have installed interpretative signs, pulled weeds, scheduled trash cleanups, and provide public education. The AFNM is being cared for by the community instead of being destroyed by the community. Recently they persuaded the Arizona Department of Transportation to install a gate at the western end of the Sunset Point Rest Area exit so large trucks don’t sit idling and scare the wildlife. They will be conducting wet/dry mapping on June 19, 2010, working with the Arizona Non-point Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) project.

AGENDA ITEM: Update on the Proposed Mineral Withdrawal EIS, Draft Alternatives and Interdisciplinary Team Activity

Scott Florence, Arizona Strip District Manager distributed a handout which summarized the progress being made on the EIS and report to the Secretary of the Interior on the proposed withdrawal of BLM and Forest Service lands in the Grand Canyon area from the location of new mining claims. The Interdisciplinary Team is developing Alternatives in the report and EIS. The next step will be the public review of the draft EIS. Scott thanked the RAC for the “Summary of RAC Comments on the Proposed Withdrawal Environmental Impact Statement,

December 9, 2009” which helped the Team develop the report and the Alternatives. In February the U. S. Geological Survey released a report on the uranium resources and impacts of uranium mining in the areas. That report is posted on the BLM’s website. The Arizona BLM’s report will be sent next year to Interior Secretary Salazar who will make the decision on the proposed withdrawal.

The RAC recessed at 2:30pm.

AGENDA ITEM: Recreation Resource Advisory Council (RRAC) Session.

Meeting was called to order at approximately 2:30 p.m. by Steve Saway, RRAC Chair.

1. Report from Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Work Group. Steve Saway gave a brief introduction to the RRAC process and summarized results of a REA Work Group meeting held on February 3, 2010. The Arizona RAC is chartered to review recreation fee proposals from both BLM and Forest Service. Today’s RRAC agenda includes two fee proposals. Both proposals are for cabin rentals, one in the Coronado National Forest and one in the Kaibab National Forest. The REA Work Group met with the Forest Service via teleconference to understand each facility and how the fee structures were determined. Both proposals have demonstrated good public outreach and are located in highly desirable places for the public to enjoy. The REA Work Group agreed that these proposals were ready for the RAC’s review.

2. Forest Service Fee Proposal Presentation (see handout), Kent Springs Cabin, Coronado National Forest, and Hull Cabin, Kaibab National Forest (Jeff Saari, Region 3 Developed Sites Program Manager; Kathy Makansi, Coronado National Forest; and Michael Lyndon, Kaibab National Forest). Jeff Saari introduced Kathy Makansi and Michael Lyndon who gave a PowerPoint presentation on the two fee proposals. The Kent Springs cabin on 4 acres was constructed in the 1960s and purchased by the Forest Service. Was previously used under a special use permit of the Santa Rita Lodge and returned to the Forest Service in 2008. The Hull Cabin was built in 1884-1889 and located south of the Grand Canyon. Originally built by a private interest, the facility has been used as an administrative site by the Forest Service. Adding these two cabins to the cabin rental program would make a total of 14 cabins. Cabins are reserved via an online system that takes credit cards. Primary goals are to protect historic structures and provide unique opportunities to the public. Justification: fee revenues are the only source of funds for landlord-type maintenance. Did 33 types of public outreach for comments, gave presentations to the public, Federal Register Notices, etc. Have had three negative comments. Have had a lot of public support in favor of cabin rentals. Question: Are deposits required? No. The Forest Service has three cabins on the Coronado National Forest and has not had any major issues. Regarding the Hull Cabin proposal, jeep tours (2 per day) with special use permits are allowed to ride through the area for interpretation and photographs, but cannot exit their vehicles. Businesses (jeep tours) existed before the cabin rentals started so they should not be pushed out. Regarding the proposed fee levels, the RAC members expressed differing views, ranging from too low to too high. Steve Saway asked if the fee should be based on a sliding scale, so that a group of four or less could pay a lower fee. Jeff Saari mentioned the concept of a minimum/maximum fee range, so that the Forest Service could charge a lower fee to attract visitors during low use seasons. He may pursue that concept for future fee proposals.

3. Public Comment on the Forest Service Recreation Fee Proposals. Public comment period was opened for members of the public to comment on the fee proposals under consideration. There being no public comments, the public comment period was closed.

4. RAC Fee Proposal Recommendations to BLM State Director.

MOTIONED by Carl Taylor to recommend approval of the Forest Service Recreation Fee Proposals as presented. SECONDED by Richard Lunt. MOTION APPROVED BY THE RAC.

There being no further business, the RRAC session was adjourned at about 3:30 p.m.

After a short break the RAC reconvened.

Report from Standards & Guidelines Working Group

(Thomas Kelly and Bill Brake, Co-chairs) Roger Oyler, staff representative

1. There was discussion about BLM documents using evaluations and recommendations that were developed by interested parties. This came from hearing the presentation on the Aravaipa Land Use Plan in another Work Group. We were informed that a NGO had been hired to be a participant in the development of the LUP. Bill Brake will draft a letter for the Director expressing our concern about using this approach. The RAC will discuss sending it at their next meeting.
2. A written update on permit renewals was provided.
3. The Grazing Monitoring Handbook that is being developed by representatives of a number of agencies is under final review. A “standardized” type of monitoring will be helpful when the rancher holds leases from several agencies.
4. The need to have RRT protocol reviewed was discussed along with how to keep the RRTs more involved in the permit renewal process.
5. A date was set for standards and guidelines training. (Note: session was later canceled for lack of participation)
6. An update on the Western Watersheds vs. the Sonoran Desert Monument lawsuit was provided. The court has set a completion date for the Land Use Plan ((Dec. 15, 2011).
7. RAC members expressed concern about the frequency of lawsuits re grazing practices that are being filed. A letter will be drafted for discussion at the next meeting expressing our view that the processes being used in grazing reviews are correct and defensible.

Mr Oyler presented a written quarterly report on the Horse & Burro program at this time and answered questions.

AGENDA ITEM: Report from Recreation and Communities Working Group (Steve Saway, Chair)

Steve Saway summarized the following topics discussed during the previous day’s meeting.

1. Travel Management Plans. Bill Gibson summarized various plans in process. In the Yuma Field Office, the La Posa plan has been delayed due to a problem with the route inventory. Other travel management plans (TMPs) under development include the Ironwood Forest National Monument, Aravaipa Ecosystem, Tucson Field Office Middle Gila Canyons, and Safford Field Office Gila Unit. The work group requested that a written Travel Management Plan Update be provided for future work group meetings similar to the written Land Use Planning Update. This report should list all of the travel management plans in progress and what stage of development they are in. Also, the work group wishes that email notification be provided to all RAC members when comment periods are opened for travel management plans. This notification should also be extended to County Governments as well. There is a National BLM Travel Management Handbook under development. Bill stated that an Arizona BLM Instructional Memorandum (IM) will be prepared to forward the Handbook to the Field Offices when completed. The IM will also incorporate the RAC OHV guidelines.

2. Land Use Planning (see handout: Arizona Land Use Planning Update, March 2010). Mike Taylor announced that final Agua Fria National Monument/Bradshaw-Harquahala Plan will be signed by the State Director on March 19th. Next, Tom Schnell of the Safford Field Office gave the group an overview of the Draft Aravaipa Ecosystem Management Plan. This plan has been under development since 2005 and will be going out soon to the public for comment. Tom's presentation gave the group a good understanding of the project area and major issues, e.g., travel management and level of use. Steve Saway mentioned that the public had been involved in the early part of the planning process in 2005, but after that it was BLM/Arizona Game and Fish/Nature Conservancy working on the issues and alternatives. It's now time to re-engage the public and conduct good outreach to gather public comment. Bill Brake expressed concern regarding the BLM's decision to hire Nature Conservancy to prepare the draft plan and environmental assessment. It presents an appearance of a conflict of interest. After Tom's presentation, the work group heard from Tom Dabbs and Angie Bullets on upcoming plans that will be presented to the RAC in the near future. These plans and tentative RAC briefing dates are: Ironwood Forest National Monument (April 19th); Baboquivari and Coyote Mountains Wilderness Plans (June 16th); and Lower Sonoran/Sonoran Desert National Monument (middle of May). The RAC will be notified by email and interested members are welcome to attend these presentations.

3. Status of Program to Name Blocks of BLM Lands. Mike Taylor gave the group an update. As the State Director visits with communities across the state, this initiative is being received well. Intent is to name blocks of BLM lands for better identification. Names do not imply management changes. Some blocks have geographic names. Ty Kelly suggested that BLM gather suggestions from the public. Mike Taylor confirmed that it is a double process - both BLM and public suggestions are being considered. Steve Saway suggested the RAC be given a copy of the BLM map (electronically if possible) to help members develop suggested names.

4. National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) Scorecard. Mike Taylor discussed how the NLCS is part of the State Director's overall strategies. This one is close to being a final product and is being linked to the budget process. Regarding the possibility of a national NLCS Scorecard, there is no additional information available at this time.

5. Heritage Resources and Status of Kingman Field Office Shooting Range. Mike Taylor gave the group a summary of BLM's efforts to address and mitigate tribal concerns over location of the proposed Mohave Valley shooting range. Actions have been ongoing for over 12 years to replace a closed shooting range. An advisory council from the Washington Office provided input. The Alternative Dispute Resolution went on for 10 years. The State Director was personally involved in trying to find common ground with the tribes. Mitigation actions have been incorporated in the project. The BLM approval document has been signed and there is one protest. Frances Werner discussed some additional background and indicated the need for a new shooting range actually arose in 1985. It was also the subject of a recent bill introduced by Congressman Franks with much constituent interest.

6. Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Sub-Group. Steve Saway summarized the results of a REA Sub-Group meeting held via phone conference on February 3rd. Members of the REA Sub-Group heard from the Forest Service on two cabin rental fee proposals: Hull Cabin, Kaibab National Forest; and Kent Spring Cabin, Coronado National Forest. The group gained a good understanding of these proposals and felt they were ready for the full RAC's review. It was helpful to hear a public perspective on these proposals as well. At the February 3rd meeting, Kitty Benzar of the Western Slope No-Fee Coalition provided her thoughts and suggestions during the public comment period. The group's opinion was divided over the fee structure and whether it was too high or too low. Steve Saway and Kitty Benzar suggested a sliding scale for the fee so that smaller groups could pay a reduced fee. A concern raised by Maggie Sacher was access for day visitors to the Hull Cabin grounds – a traditional stopping point for Grand Canyon tour guides. The Forest Service will consider all of the discussion and develop a final proposal. Steve Saway distributed a copy of the draft February 3rd meeting minutes for the group's review. The minutes were approved as presented. After the fee proposals are presented and public comments are taken at the RAC meeting, the REA Sub-Group will provide a recommendation on each proposal.

ACTION:

1. Bill Gibson will provide a written Travel Management Planning Update for future work group meetings.
2. RAC members will be alerted via email when public comment periods are opened for travel management plans.
3. County Governments will also be notified when public comment periods are opened for travel management plans.
4. RAC members will be alerted via email when RAC briefings are scheduled for the following land use plans: Ironwood Forest National Monument, Baboquivari and Coyote Mountains Wilderness Plans, and Lower Sonoran/Sonoran Desert National Monument.

Discussion on Future Meetings/Locations/Proposed Agenda Items

(BLM State Director and RAC Members)

Next RAC Meetings:

- June 16-17, 2010, at the BLM National Training Center, Phoenix
- September 14-15, 2010, location to be determined

Meeting Adjourned at 4:00 pm.