



United States Department of the Interior

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Glenwood Springs Field Office
Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81602**



RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING #4

Wednesday, January 30, 2008 (5:00 PM – 8:30 PM)

Meeting Location: BLM Energy Office
2425 Grand Avenue, Glenwood Springs, CO

SUMMARY NOTES

Attendees: John Bailey (EcoTrails), Chris Beebe (Red Hill Council), Taylor Hawes (Colorado River District), Michael Kennedy (Roaring Fork Climbers Coalition), Ken Neubecker (Trout Unlimited), Greg Noss (High Country 4-wheelers), Steve Smith (The Wilderness Society), Tom Turnbull, Karl Mendonca (BLM), Mike Kinser (BLM), Isaac Pittman (BLM), Roy Smith (BLM), Brian Hopkins (BLM), Carla DeYoung (BLM), Angie Adams (EMPS, Inc.).

Handouts:

- Agenda
- Acronyms list
- Livestock Grazing Microsoft PowerPoint slides
- Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
- Suitability determinations criteria and guidelines (“What is a suitability determination...”)
- Vegetation Microsoft PowerPoint slides
- BLM Glenwood Springs & Kremmling Field Offices Preliminary Draft Alternatives, including Glenwood Springs Resource Area Resource Management Plan, 1984 Proposed Plan, Forest Management Map 3-8

WELCOME

Brian Hopkins (BLM) and Angie Adams (EMPSi) welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation. This was followed by a round robin of introductions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

- None.

RMP PLANNING PROCESS UPDATE

- Angie Adams (EMPSi) gave an RMP update. No major RMP milestones to note since the last meeting.

RESOURCE/RESOURCE USE DISCUSSIONS WITH GSFO STAFF

Livestock Grazing

- Handout: “Livestock Grazing” Microsoft PowerPoint slides (file name “Livestock Grazing RAC08”)
- Handout: “Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management”

- Isaac Pittman from the BLM GSFO presented an overview of the issues and preliminary draft alternatives for Livestock Grazing.
- Cooperating Agency question: Is reduction in actual use a normal trend? BLM response: The use fluctuates annual.
- Cooperating Agency question: Regarding loss of forage due to oil and gas activity, who prevails, oil and gas or livestock? BLM response: Oil and gas prevails because they have existing leases. BLM tries to work with industry so that two uses can work together.
- Cooperating Agency question: Have there been conflicts between ranchers and oil and gas industry? BLM response: Not too many problems or conflicts.
- Cooperating Agency question: Are active preference numbers tied into leases? BLM response: Yes. Permit specifies number of livestock allowed, on date, off date, and animal unit month number.
- Cooperating Agency question: Are vacant allotments used only part of the year? BLM response: No. the vacant allotments do not have any permits issued on them. Typically this is because the permittee gave up the permit because of access issues, steep terrain, lack of water, minimal forage, etc.
- Cooperating Agency question: Are vacant allotments not available for permitting currently? BLM response: BLM currently has applications for two of the allotments. Once allotments are closed, then you cannot permit grazing on them. Some of the areas could be combined with an adjacent allotment and still be a viable operation.
- Cooperating Agency question: Seems like wildlife improvement projects also would benefit cattle and vice versa? Cooperating Agency comment: Yes, that is the case.
- Cooperating Agency comments: Most BLM permits are for short, seasonal periods and access US Forest Service lands for longer use. Vacant allotments are an indication of decline in overall ranching in the area. The 1984 RMP numbers were generated in a time when elk numbers were not near where they are not, and elk use the same grasses. Main issues with livestock grazing are recreation conflicts, such as motorized use and keeping gates closed, etc. Is an educational process that helps public keep gates closed.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

- Handout: Suitability determinations criteria and guidelines (“What is a suitability determination...”).
- Roy Smith from BLM Colorado State Office led the discussion on the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Four stages of the process:
 1. Eligibility – Considers three characteristics: Free-flowing, Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs), and water quality characteristics.
 - No minimum segment length
 - Must consider perennial and seasonal streams (not ephemeral)
 - ORVs must be the best of the best
 - ORVs must be river or stream related
 - Free-flowing: Segment must be free-flowing, which means that it does not have physical restrictions *within* that segment; does not need to be a naturally flowing system overall
 - Water quality: must be at a level that can support the ORV over the long term, or there must be a plan in place to improve water quality
 - Wild Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report is available on the website
 2. Classification
 - Looking at what level of development is along stream segments
 - Three classes – Wild, Scenic, or Recreational
 - Preliminary classifications are contained in Wild Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report; these can be changed in RMP
 3. Suitability
 - Look at factors such as percentage of public lands, what valid existing rights exist, reasonable foreseeable development, support from other groups\
 - Is designation the best tool to protect the ORVs?
 - Controversial because there can be impacts on others
 - Suitability is only in effect for the life of the RMP; can be changed in next planning cycle (RMP amendment or revision)

- BLM required to give protective management to suitable segments when considering discretionary actions
 - Draft Wild Scenic Rivers Suitability Report included with Draft RMP/EIS still working on it
 - RMP must consider three alternatives: 1) all eligible segments as suitable; 2) all segments as not suitable; and 3) the agency preferred alternative
 - RMP typically only includes suitability finding and not an active recommendation to Congress
 - What if the agency finds a segment *not suitable*? ... protective management is not carried forward on segments found “*not suitable*”.
4. Designation
- Only Congress can designate streams into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System
 - After designation a wild and scenic rivers plan is done
 - Includes a federal reserve water right (junior)...highly controversial aspect in Colorado

Discussion on Suitability in the GSFO:

Roy Smith (BLM Colorado State Office) gave an overview of segments that were found to be eligible and preliminarily suitable:

- Lots of streams with just one ORV.
- Several segments in the GSFO were eligible for a historic ORV and would be difficult to manage, access, etc. They could be protected without suitability... preliminary finding is not suitable.
- Hack Creek – Short segment, other protections in place ... preliminary finding is not suitable
- Several (Abrams Creek, Battlement Creek) river/stream segments were eligible for a fish (Colorado River cutthroat trout) ORV. There are management prescriptions in place to protect the fish. Preliminary finding is not suitable because there is nothing distinguishing about the stream and we already have management protections in place.
- Deep Creek: BLM did eligibility study with US Forest Service in 1995 - found it eligible. Has many ORVs including: caves, geologic, scenic, etc. BLM and US Forest Service own most of the land. Few land use conflicts. The only conflict is a conditional water right owned by the Colorado River Water Conservation District in the headwaters, although it does not appear that it will be developed in the near future. There is strong interest in protecting the watershed. Preliminary finding is suitable with concurrence with US Forest Service section.
- Thompson Creek: ORVs are scenic, geologic, historic (railroad route). BLM manages most of the land within the segment. In the 1990s, the Colorado Water Conservation Board granted BLM an in-stream flow minimum. Preliminary finding is suitable.
- Colorado River segments 1, 2, and 3 (east of confluence with the Blue River) have multiple ORVs. BLM owns very little land in segment. Flows are also historically often at or below the flow that is needed to protect the ORVs, particularly the fish population. BLM's finding is preliminarily nonsuitable, but that could be changed to suitable if there were interest by and cooperation with other agencies (e.g., Grand County, Colorado Division of Wildlife).
- There are four (4) Colorado River segments between mouth of Gore Canyon (at gauging station) and Glenwood Springs, which have several ORVs. It is unique because it is a major river corridor that is relatively untouched by humans – rare in Colorado. In addition, BLM owns a lot of lands in that segment, so manageability is much more feasible. There is typically enough flow in this segment; however, there is no long-term protection of flows (no in-stream water rights, etc.).
- There are several eligible segments on the Roan Plateau. Suitability of these segments is dependent on the final plan for Roan Plateau so cannot yet be determined.
- Have not heard from Eagle County ... Eagle County developing a Stream Management Plan to facilitate cooperative management
- Round Table – Stream Management Study - using the Colorado River for a pilot project for assessing water needs. Slow process. Got 400K for the study.
- Recreational study on the Colorado
- Land use implications of segments found to be “suitable” applies to only public lands.
- Looking at “recreational” classification for Colorado River – least restrictive of the 3 classes
- Only Congress can designate a W&SR

- Alternatives must include “all segments as suitable” and “all segments as not suitable”.
- Congress can also look at other ways to protect the values (e.g. National Conservation Area(NCA))
- Congressional actions are not part of this process – no guarantees.
- Perhaps a more suitable option to look at in Thompson Creek is a NCA because water already over appropriated.

ROUND-ROBIN DISCUSSION ON RANGE OF ALTERANTIVES

- Instead of focusing on compatible uses, focus on *how* to make different uses more compatible to plan for the long term with increasing population, etc.
- Need to focus on what is broken in the current RMP and what is needed to fix it.
- Consider additional/new access to public lands not currently being used.
- Close vacant allotment on Red Hill.
- Lot of mountain bike community enthusiasm for The Crown.
- Consider buffer zones outside the more urbanized areas.
- Thompson Creek/Barber Gulch citizen’s wilderness proposal is not protected. Citizen’s wilderness proposals do not expire.
- Livestock grazing range of alternatives presented tonight (more, same, less than current) capture the appropriate range.
- Exclusive uses are less acceptable than uses that incorporate a lot of different people. Consider using zones to separate uses within areas.
- Range of alternatives goes from preservation to development. One end of range: for areas near towns (backyards), etc., then those areas need to be managed for recreation. As you get further from towns and more remote, then you might move towards preservation. Other end of range: more preservation across the board.
- Conservation alternative: Have fewer Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) because under that alternative, there would be less intrusion and fewer infrastructures (trailheads, etc.). Use would be more restricted.
- Development alternative: Emphasis would be more on community recreation and community uses (community market). Conservation alternative: Would be restrictions on uses and less use.
- Need to consider traffic induced by management decisions, such as campgrounds, etc. It impacts livestock grazing.
- In some areas with higher use, may need to consider campgrounds to concentrate use instead of allowing dispersed camping. Dispersed camping is appropriate in some areas.
- RMP needs to build in flexibility to handle future population increases. Put systems in place now in foresight of growth.
- Increased population and visitation are also reasons to look more closely at preservation, at least in one of the alternatives.
- In some areas, appropriate to focus on recreation, but in other areas, appropriate to focus on preservation.
- Dead-end routes should still have some accessibility for dispersed recreation, such as camping, so people can get away from other people. Do not cut them all off.
- Would like to see more emphasis on generalized, multiple uses rather than on specific uses. That would be in one alternative.
- BLM asked group to think about wildlife and recreation issues/compatibility/etc. between now and the next meeting.
- There is more wildlife on private lands than there used to be; they are not using public lands as much.

RESOURCE/RESOURCE USE DISCUSSIONS WITH GSFO STAFF *(continued)*

Vegetation (Uplands & Weeds & Special Status Plants)

- Handout: “Vegetation” Microsoft PowerPoint slides (file name “Veg-SSPlants Coop-RAC 1-30-08.ppt”)
- Carla DeYoung from the BLM GSFO presented an overview of the issues and preliminary draft alternatives for Vegetation – Uplands, Vegetation – Weeds, and Special Status Plants.

- Cooperating Agencies comment: All the proposed management presented indicates getting back to ideal conditions. Are there places where those ideal conditions already exist, and could those areas be considered as control points/reference areas? BLM response: That occurs in certain vegetation community types that are relict areas. Where there are not relict areas in GSFO, then there are other reference sheets that can be used. Cooperating Agencies: Need RMP to consider keeping those areas in their current, good state and using them as control points/reference areas.
- Cooperating Agencies comment: Has BLM considered cultivating an area to then introduce native non-weed species? BLM response: Typically BLM would not till or cultivate an area because it distributes seeds into the soil, but BLM could use other means to reduce weeds, such as livestock grazing, tamarisk beetles, other biological controls, etc.
- BLM: Cheatgrass studies show that it not only out competes natives, but it also changes chemical and physical composition of soil.
- Cooperating Agencies comment: Should RMP include restrictions on some activities that spread weeds or access to areas that need weed treatments, etc.? BLM response: Difficult to monitor activities that spread weeds. Could be considered on site-specific scale in RMP where certain activities might be restricted at certain times during rehabilitation.

Vegetation (Riparian)

- Did not cover this topic due to time constraints.

Forestry

- Did not cover this topic due to time constraints.
- Handout: "BLM Glenwood Springs & Kremmling Field Offices Preliminary Draft Alternatives," including "Glenwood Springs Resource Area Resource Management Plan, 1984 Proposed Plan, Forest Management Map 3-8"

OTHER ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

- None.

NEXT MEETINGS

- Wednesday, February 6, 2008 (5:00 – 8:30pm):
 - Topics that BLM will present: Energy and Wilderness Study Areas/wilderness characteristics. Also may cover topics that were not discussed tonight: Vegetation (Riparian) and Forestry.
 - BLM will provide large maps of the GSFO broken into three geographic areas (Lower Colorado, Roaring Fork Valley, and Upper Colorado (Eagle/Gypsum area) so group can discuss alternatives geographically.
- Wednesday, February 20, 2008 (5:00 – 8:30pm):
 - Meeting will focus on getting the group's feedback on range of alternatives.

ACTION ITEMS

- For future meeting dates, see "Next Meeting" above.
- BLM:** At February 6, 2008, meeting, provide large maps of the GSFO broken into three geographic areas (Lower Colorado, Roaring Fork Valley, and Upper Colorado (Eagle/Gypsum area) so group can discuss alternatives geographically.

AMA – January 30, 2008