



United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management
3170 East Main Street
Cañon City, Colorado 81212



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING CANON CITY, COLORADO March 21, 2007

MINUTES

ATTENDEES

GROUP 1

Virginia Patton
Jim Coleman
Gene King
Keary Hallack
Charles Rech

GROUP 2

Donna Murphy
Aaron Clark
Tom Olson
Lucy Bambrey
Dusty Yaeger

GROUP 3

Francis Matthews
Michael Bush
Loren Whittemore

GUESTS: SeEtta Moss, Kevin Bradley, Tracy Boyd, Shell Exploration and Production Company

BLM/USFS PERSONNEL: Roy Masinton, Jim Rhett, Diane Chung, John Peterson, Jim Sample, Ken Smith, Paul Trentzsch, John Nahomenuk, Erik Brekke, Joe Vieira and Helen Crow

OLD BUSINESS

Nomination period ends April 2. Members whose terms end this year are:

Jim Coleman – Grazing
Donna Murphy – Environmental Groups
Dusty Yaeger – Dispersed Recreation
Vacant - Elected Official position
Michael Bush – Public at Large

Recreation Strategy. As requested by the SW and Front RACs, the State Director, is giving the 3 RAC's another opportunity to review and comment on the draft Recreation Strategy. The comments will be due by April 9. The comments on land health and other items requested from the RAC's first review are addressed in the latest draft.

Recreation RACs – the selection committee has met, and the Forest Service will be sending their recommendations to Washington soon.

Roy thanked SeEtta Moss, Donna Murphy and Dusty Yeager for their support in encouraging the Colorado Water Conservation Board, at their meeting the other week, to accept BLM's data for enlarged Instream Flow values for Badger Creek.

PUBLIC COMMENT: SeEtta Moss, Arkansas Valley Audubon Society, thanked BLM for their efforts in getting increased instream flows on Badger Creek. She had some public land health power point slides showing: Texas Creek and some birds in the area, some off road damage and big horn sheep in around McIntire Hills.

MANAGERS UPDATE:**San Luis Valley Issues; Diane Chung, Jim Rhett:**

Introduced Diane Chung as Pete Clark's interim replacement.

Ford Creek Project has not had funding for a number of years, however they are starting to get money for the restoration work. Jim will have a presentation on the project at the next meeting.

Travel Mgmt Plan – Mark Swinney is working on the final draft and is hoping to have that out to the public in May.

There was some discussion about the development at the Wolf Creek Ski Area and Jim said he could invite Bob Potts to speak to the RAC at a future meeting.

John Peterson, Deputy Forest Supervisor – Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands:

The Forest planning effort will be more complicated than the Grassland plan. They recently had a round of public meetings that went well. The Grasslands burned 1,700 acres yesterday. The Forest is gearing up for fire season.

Gene King commented on the Off Highway Vehicle map, it looks like 50% of the roads on the Forest will be lost to OHV use. He wanted to know the Forest's position on the issue. John said the Pike and San Isabel National Forest will participate in the "Colorado National Forests OHV Route Designation Workshop on April 26 and 27. There is little funding for travel management planning, so several Districts are coming out with their existing travel management plan because it is costly to do in-depth assessments on the other trails. Each District is updating GIS data and will put out a map in 2009. The map will be revised every year. If it is not on the map, it is closed.

There was some concern by Council members that while some of the routes are legitimate, some of the routes were never authorized, the planning should be done sooner and the regulations enforced. John said the Forest Service can not get the analysis done before 2009 and wants to do it correctly. The South Platte has done their analysis and the Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands are close behind South Platte.

Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site: The Forest is having a hard time getting information from the Department of Defense about what is being proposed. They are getting most of their information from the newspapers. The Forest Supervisor is trying to get a meeting with the General to get more information. A proposal is still in the early stages, however, depending on what is being proposed, it could impact the Forest Service's Land Use Plan for the Grasslands. It could also have an impact to Cultural Resources. While the Army still needs to go through an environmental process, more information would be helpful.

There was some discussion and the Council requested more information on how it would impact BLM public lands. A letter will be sent to the Army stating the Council members are concerned and ask that they be put on the mailing list for more information. Members mailing addresses will be attached to the letter. BLM will try to get additional information for a future meeting.

Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Manager:

Milsap gulch: The Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety will administer the project. They are providing an estimated \$600,000 and BLM is providing \$150,000 to the project. Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Company has provided base mapping and rock material to cover the surface of the repository area. Total cost is estimated at \$750,000 assuming that cost savings are utilized through the use of Colorado Correctional Industries heavy equipment program. Work is planned to start this year.

Heath Right of Way Update: BLM has repeatedly tried to settle, however it looks like it will be going to Court on May 7. The last court date was let go because they thought it was settled.

Park Center Well. This 3000 feet deep BLM well is located next to 4-Mile Creek south of Garden Park, is artesian flow and is a non-tributary well. BLM leases the water to the Park Center District and they provide the north end of Canon City with municipal water. It was drilled in the 1950s for oil, however they found water. There is a law suit from the town of Cripple Creek who claims BLM is actually taking water out of Four Mile Creek 3000 feet below the surface. The law suit has been settled and Cripple Creek will get about 3% of the water that comes out of the well that is not currently being used. About 270 acre feet are currently used annually out of a potential 580 acre feet. They have an option to buy at the same rate as the Park Center District. The Park Center District's needs take precedent.

Tracy Boyd, Shell Exploration and Production Company: Mr. Boyd gave a power point presentation on the Mahogany Research Project and the technology being researched at the site in northwest Colorado.

Leslie Peterson, Overview of RGFO Oil and Gas Program:

The Field Office had approximately 65 Applications for Permits to Drill (APD) received in the office this fiscal year, with half of them coming from Berry Petroleum in Yuma County, and a third coming from Pioneer in Las Animas County, and the rest from Kerr-McGee in Weld County and Noble Energy in Yuma County. The drilling equipment used to drill the wells varies from conventional drilling rigs, air drilling rigs, and coiled tubing equipment.

The presentation covered the definition of spacing orders and Communitization Agreements. Because of the scattered number of federal leases in the Field Office, there are a number of Communitization Agreements to administer. They involve the review and approval of downhole and surface sundry notice applications in order to allocate production to the federal leases for royalty purposes.

Joe Vieira, South Park Land Tenure Adjustment Amendment Update:

This Plan will amend BLM's current Land Use Plan to re-identify those lands in Park County that will be retained as public lands managed by BLM and those that may be disposed to other ownership. The current Land Use Plan identifies most of these lands for disposal or restricted exchange. BLM is reevaluating these decisions by examining other possible land tenure scenarios that will identify those lands with important resource values to be retained in public ownership and those that will be available for disposal by varied means.

About 270 comments were received during the public comment period that ended March 1. A majority of residents and land owners in Park County who commented, are opposed to any disposal

of public lands. Public comments favor BLM retaining management of more public lands in the County to protect open space and support the South Park National Heritage Area. The comments from the public meeting and comment period will be considered in finalizing the alternatives and in completing the Environmental Analysis. A decision is expected to be made in early summer 2007.

Forest Service Plan Amendment for the Baca Mountain Track – Jim Rhett

A large part of the Baca Land Grant went to the National Park Service and some to the Fish and Wildlife Service to create the Baca National Wildlife Refuge. The Baca Mountain Tract in the northeast part of the SLV went to the U.S. Forest Service. They will do an Environmental Assessment to amend the Revised Forest Plan to include this Tract. The formal scoping comment period began in December and ended March 1. Some trespass and access issues need to be worked out during the process.

Royal Gorge Field Office Issues – Roy Masinton

Elk Mountain Permit Renewal: The Royal Gorge Field Office began the scoping period on February 1, for the grazing permit renewal process for the Elevenmile Canyon Grazing Allotment, in Park County. The current grazing permit includes authorization to graze bison on portions of the allotment. The allotment is comprised of 9,785 acres of public land interspersed and unfenced from substantial amounts of private and state land.

The Field Office has been dealing with a history of grazing trespass (non-willful and willful) problems on portions of the allotment. As part of BLM's ongoing public land health assessment process in the area, it was recently determined that resource conditions in the Threemile Creek area were not meeting BLM land health standards due to previous drought conditions and ongoing unauthorized grazing use. As a result, the Field Office issued a decision in December 2006 to suspend all grazing use on the Threemile Creek pastures for an additional 5 years. The Field Office has also recently issued an additional violation notice related to bison in the area. Two written comments were received during the comment period that closed March 2. A Decision on the Environmental Assessment is expected in the fall of 2007.

Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative: In 2005, the Alma Foundation, Trust for Public Lands, and Park County, unveiled the Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative (MRHI) Strategic Plan. Under the Trust for Public Land's (TPL) leadership, this group is planning to submit a proposal to GOCO for a Legacy Project (several million dollars in funding) to acquire key lands and heritage assets and develop recreation facilities that would enhance access to public lands (BLM and National Forest Lands) in the Mosquito Range near the towns of Alma and Fairplay. Land acquisitions made with GOCO funds would be managed by Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Parks, and/or Park County; however, the impacts and benefits of these land acquisitions will affect BLM and National Forest lands.

Undoubtedly, land acquisition and recreation facilities development in the Mosquito Range will result in increased visitor use of public lands in the area. BLM manages about 6,000 acres of subalpine and alpine terrain straddling the Mosquito Range that adjoins both National Forest and numerous private inholdings. BLM favors a collaborative, community-based planning process involving all stakeholders rather than independent planning processes by multiple agencies.

Cooper Mountain Exchange: On March 12, BLM completed an exchange of 8 parcels totaling 1,904 acres that are mostly inaccessible to the public and are mixed with private land. BLM has acquired 2,242

acres from the Phantom Canyon Ranch Land and Cattle Co. on Cooper Mountain northeast of Canon City. All land exchanges are based on fair market value. This land includes valuable Mexican Spotted Owl and Peregrine Falcon Habitat and will protect riparian habitat.

Over the River Proposal Update: Based on the evolving nature of the applicant's proposal, information gained from interagency consultation, and in response to public concerns about environmental impact, public safety, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, BLM requested delivery of a more detailed Design Proposal. This Proposal will include Engineering and Construction Plans, Traffic and Exhibit Plans, and Infrastructure removal plans. It is expected this will be delivered to BLM in March 2007.

Presently BLM and Over the River representatives are completing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that details roles and responsibilities of the agency and applicant in the funding and preparation of the EIS. BLM has invited the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado State Patrol, Fremont County, and Chaffee County to participate as cooperating agencies in the preparation of the EIS. A separate cooperating agency MOU is being drafted.

Biomass Utilization Update: The Royal Gorge Field Office was selected as a National Biomass Utilization Demonstration site for the BLM in 2004. Aquila received over 300 tons of biomass from the first stewardship contract during the fall of FY 06. Recent discussion with the Plant Manager resulted in their desire to increase biomass utilization in FY 07.

The Field Office is planning to utilize thousands of tons of forest biomass each year from mechanical treatment of forest health and fuels projects. This is an expensive endeavor which is offset by numerous benefits. It has the potential to: create a new industry or revitalize a diminishing logging industry therefore creating new jobs; utilize small low value trees as a renewable energy source; reduced wildfire suppression costs, wildfire intensity and severity; and reduced air emissions.

The next meeting is Wednesday, May 23, 2007

The meeting was adjourned.

Roy L. Masinton
Royal Gorge Field Manager
Bureau of Land Management

Loren R. Whittemore
Chairman
Front Range Resource Advisory Council