

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Friday, January 20, 2006
Anasazi Heritage Center
BLM Canyons of the Ancients National Monument
27501 Hwy 184
Dolores, Colorado**

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Don Bennett, Category 1	Nik Kendziorski, Category 2
Mallory Dimmitt, Category 2	Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3
Kenneth Emory, Category 1	Betsy Marston, Category 2
John Field, Category 1	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2
Anthony Gurzick, Category 3	Ellen Stein, Category 3
Art Goodtimes, Category 2	Alan Staehle, Category 3
	Kathy Welt, Category 1

Not present: Drew MacLeod, Category 2; Vacancy, Category 3

BLM Staff

Steve Beverlin	Mel Lloyd
Barb Sharrow	Kenny McDaniel
Brian Davis	Kathleen Nickell
LouAnn Jacobson	Jamie Sellar Baker
	Mark Stiles

Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Ann Brown	Senator Salazar's Office	Durango, CO
Kelly Wilson	Self	Montezuma, CO
Bonnie Emory	Self	Montrose, CO

Opening Remarks/State Director, Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum.

Barb Sharrow informed everyone that BLM Colorado State Director Sally Wisely and staff was unable to make it because of weather. Sharrow advised the RAC that Wisely is concerned with submitting timely responses to their resolutions. Mark Stiles reminded RAC members to send letters and resolutions through the three DFOs to the State and/or Washington. Sharrow explained the updated RAC binders prepared by BLM and presented to members. Mel Lloyd talked about the travel reimbursement process.

New Member Welcome and Introductions

There was a round of introductions for the new members. Gerald Koppenhafer represents the elected official interest in Category 3. He is a Montezuma County Commissioner and holds a US Forest Service (FS) grazing permit. He was born and raised in Montezuma County. Kenneth Emory represents off-highway vehicle (OHV) interests in Category 1. Emory retired and moved

to Montrose about 3.5 years ago but has been recreating in the area for 25 years. He is active in several OHV organizations and works closely with the BLM and FS on various projects. Betsy Marston represents dispersed recreation in Category 2, is an editor at High Country News and current president of the Delta County school board.

Field Managers Update

San Juan Public Lands Center: Mark Stiles explained the importance of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the Federal Advisory Council Act (FACA) and the RAC Charter. Stiles also explained the combined FS and BLM management responsibilities as manager of the SJPLC. The 18,000-sq.ft. Anasazi Heritage Center houses artifacts from the Dolores Project. BLM staff here performs many important functions, along with managing Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM). Two alternatives were developed for the Northern San Juan Basin EIS, which is currently undergoing internal review at the State level. The final EIS should be out for review in April. Between the two alternatives, the RAC's recommendations from the November 2004 meeting are incorporated. A joint plan revision is underway between FS and BLM, and the CANM is working on their draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) as well. The new RMP contractor is onboard, and the draft should be out late summer 2006. The CANM Advisory Council, which has 11 members, provides BLM advice on comprehensive operations of the Monument.

Gunnison Field Office (FO): This is Kenny McDaniel's first RAC meeting as the new Gunnison field manager. He invited everyone to stop by and looks forward to working with RAC members. McDaniel offered copies of the recent news release on the Hartman Rocks Recreation Plan Environmental Assessment (EA), which is out for final review. The comment period closes on February 10. The Gunnison County Commissioners hired a conservation coordinator for issues surrounding the Gunnison Sage Grouse (GuSG). The Gunnison Valley Sage Grouse Strategic Committee, of which McDaniel sits on the Board, recently had its first meeting, and the next meeting is at 10 a.m. on February 22 at the Gunnison County fairgrounds. McDaniel informed RAC members that Buddy Green is leaving Gunnison for a position in Buffalo, Wyoming. Mike Hinkel, another range specialist, recently retired and, as a result, the GFO will only have one range conservationist for the next several months.

Uncompahgre Field Office: Barb Sharrow reported that oil and gas leasing activities continue to impact workloads in the UFO. Staff is working with the Department of Energy (DOE), and BLM Dolores and Grand Junction FOs on renewing uranium and vanadium mining leases, for which some date back to the 1950s. A draft document is due out in June 2006, and the DOE website has additional information. Coal mining operations are seeking to explore and expand, which is also impacting staff workloads. The Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area (NCA) is implementing its new RMP. The grand opening of the Peach Valley Recreation Site will be celebrated on April 22. BLM would like to see a "friends group" formed for the NCA and asked members to contact Karen Tucker, the NCA Manager, or herself regarding this. Four recreation sites are being developed along the San Miguel River, and the two main sites are complete. A public celebration in late summer or fall is planned for these. Sharrow announced that the Center for Native Ecosystems has submitted an addendum to its 2005 petition to the Gunnison Gorge NCA/UFO, which petitions BLM to ban all OHV activities on Mancos shale on the Adobe Badlands, the North Delta OHA Area, as well as all other Mancos shale areas within

the UFO. Four separate RMPs guide activities on BLM public lands in the UFO, and all lands are currently open to cross-country travel. UFO will likely begin the process of limiting travel to existing routes on all public lands administered by the FO. The Dry Creek area is seeing increased rock crawling activities, and a RAC field trip to this area is planned for March 16, weather permitting. The Dominguez-Escalante Pre-Plan was submitted, but no funding was received for 2006. Discussions are still underway regarding Recreation RACs and what form they will take. The new Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) Habitat Stamp will impact some BLM lands. The BLM Vegetation EIS is available for RAC review, and the comment period was extended 30 days to February 10, 2006.

Update on National Energy Policy Act

Brian Davis from the San Juan Public Lands Center presented information to the RAC on the Energy Policy Act passed by Congress last year. There are several “report to Congress” deadlines, and federal agencies are working hard to meet those deadlines. Seven pilot offices have been established to meet the Act’s mandate, and they are intended to provide better customer service for those submitting Applications for Permit to Drill (APD). Staff from several federal agencies will be represented in these pilot offices, and a portion of national lease revenues will be used to fund pilot operations. Jamie Sellar Baker emphasized that the NEPA process plays an important part in the APD approval process. Expediting the process through such things as block surveys, geographical area plans and cultural resource surveys is important, but resources will not be compromised in the process. Industry is being more proactive as well in providing complete and thorough information upfront. A discussion on pipeline corridors addressed RAC questions and concerns. Eight out of 20 proposals are being considered for the BLM oil shale research development and demonstration project to extract oil from oil shale in an environmentally sound way. Davis explained categorical exclusions (CX) and assured the RAC that NEPA will not be compromised when using a CX. Through valid and existing rights, there is oil and gas activity as well as carbon dioxide developed in the CANM, which has some of the richest deposits of CO₂. The split-estate stakeholders group was formed to develop improved public outreach on BLM oil and gas activities, and public listening sessions are planned for the near future.

BLM Lease Sale Notification

Davis provided a presentation on BLM’s oil and gas leasing process, explaining its background. Mandated by the Mineral Leasing Act and the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Reform Act, BLM holds quarterly lease sales to develop mineral estate on both federal and private lands where there are federal minerals. Once an APD is received, BLM encourages all parties, including the private landowner and industry, to work closely together on a case-by-case basis to ensure that minerals are extracted in a safe and sound way.

The RAC took a lunch break and was given a Curation tour by BLM staff.

Discussions resumed on BLM’s lease sale notification process. Many of the RAC members feel that BLM should enhance notifications to private surface landowners within and adjacent to proposed federal oil and gas leases. Sharrow explained the outreach that BLM is currently providing: Sale notices are posted 45 days in advance at www.blm.gov, as well as on State Office websites. Press releases are widely distributed to the media in conjunction with the web

postings. FS is also posting the BLM notice in some locations. A letter is sent to all Colorado Boards of County Commissioners. The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Committee has a designated local liaison in each county who interacts with local landowners. Another way in which the public can be notified of upcoming lease sales is to subscribe to a “declining debit account,” which is available to the public through BLM. With a minimum \$50 deposit and \$5 per sale notice and/or results, the public will receive mailings. Mesa County and BLM Grand Junction partnered to develop a minerals ownership web page on the Mesa County website. BLM is working to gather data for southwestern Colorado to enable other counties to develop this same technology in their areas. Several public forums have also been held to help educate private landowners.

Robinson summarized her Resolution, presented at the July 22, 2005 RAC meeting, regarding BLM lease sale notification. The RAC had previously agreed on six points originating from this Resolution that the BLM needs to address regarding notification. Those points were discussed at the October RAC meeting, but there was not a quorum to allow a vote or decision. Robinson appreciates the efforts of the local field managers to improve the notification process, but many people remain oblivious to the quarterly lease sales and that they may be impacted by them.

Goodtimes suggested that the task of notification lie with the nominating party. Private landowners, whose land is nominated for lease, and those owners with contiguous properties should be contacted. The sale notices should also be posted 60 days in advance, not 45 days. There should also be a limit on the number of parcels nominated, in each lease sale, for any one specific area. The successful bidder should also send letters to affected landowners after the leases are sold. Extensive discussion ensued on the notification topic. The RAC still wants the six points from the October 2005 meeting addressed.

A Resolution was drafted over the break and will be finalized by Betsy Marston and Tony Gurzick for distribution by email. The paragraphs regarding time period and notification were approved unanimously by the RAC. The DFOs will bring the Resolution to the attention of the State Director.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment offered.

San Miguel Working Group: Gunnison Sage Grouse

Kathleen Nickell, BLM wildlife biologist from the Dolores FO, chairs the San Miguel GuSG Working Group. She provided an update on efforts to conserve local populations of the bird. The various local conservation plans for the GuSG have been combined to form one effective plan. A land purchase near Dove Creek will enhance habitat for those populations. Nickell works closely with CDOW, and RAC members Mallory Dimmitt and Goodtimes are in this working group, which holds several meetings a year. GuSG guidelines for range management will be incorporated into BLM grazing permit renewals this year. The Rangewide Conservation Plan is posted on the CDOW website. Goodtimes reported that San Miguel County is working with local landowners to educate them about the GuSG and caring for its habitat. The Nature Conservancy has worked to get 22,000 acres set aside for GuSG habitat. A decision by US Fish & Wildlife regarding listing the GuSG is expected in March.

Statewide Special Recreation Permit Application Fee

A statewide recreation committee developed a strategy to develop a consistent recreation program statewide. One objective is to bring in additional funding for supporting on-the-ground management of recreation. Application fees are proposed that will only impact those applying for commercial Special Recreation Permits (SRP) or organized events. These are above and beyond the user fees already assessed and authorized by Congress. The additional funds would go back to the FOs for use in their recreation programs. Ellen Stein feels this is just one step closer to charging additional fees for the use of public lands and an analysis is needed before implementation. Others feel it's the BLM's right to recoup fees from those making money off public lands. The RAC objects to one-time use applicants paying the proposed fee but supports assessing fees on the commercial and organized event applicants. The RAC feels the wording of the proposal should be more specific, such as describing the number of individuals allowed in a group, but in general, the RAC supports the proposal. Robinsong motioned that the RAC support the proposal as discussed and it was seconded. It was passed unanimously.

Chair/Co-Chair Elections

Robinsong nominated Co-Chair Art Goodtimes for the position of 2006 chair, and John Field nominated current Chair Kathy Welt. Dimmitt seconded the nomination of Goodtimes, and Don Bennett seconded the motion for Welt. Tony Gurzick nominated Dimmitt for chair. The vote was taken by secret ballot with Kathy Welt chosen by 7 to 6 votes to again chair the RAC. Goodtimes was nominated as co-chair, and it passed unanimously.

Potential Topics for March meeting:

BLM Report on RAC six points addressing Oil and Gas Lease Sale Notification
Environmental Concerns Regarding Oil and Gas
Mountain Studies Institute proposal
Gunnison County conservation coordinator presentation: GuSG (May)
San Miguel Water Coalition: Watershed Health Assessment
Uncompahgre Plateau Project Update
Stormwater Regulations Advisement on Federal Land: Require Operators to Meet State Regulations
Statewide Special Recreation Permit Application Fee Follow-up
Uncompahgre FO Travel Management Planning

Closing Comments

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.