

**BOISE DISTRICT (BD) BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)  
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)  
Owyhee County Historical Museum and Marsing Community Center  
November 21, 2006**

**Minutes**

**Council Members Present:** Gilbert Green, Neil Rimbey, Ted Howard, Donna Bennett, Margaret Soulen-Hinson, Gary Aman, Patric Cudmore, Ralph Richardson, Richard Raymondi, Brenda Richards.

**Council Members Absent:** Ted Hoffman, Grant Simonds, John Robison, Dale Dixon, Nate Helm.

**BLM Advisory Present:** MJ Byrne, BD RAC Coordinator.

**Other BLM Managers and Staff Present:** Dave Wolf, Acting Owyhee Field Office Manager and Boise District Assistant Manager, Ryan Homan, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Rosemary Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager, Jim Johansen, Boise District Operations Manager, Mike O'Donnell, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, John Sullivan, Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) Manager, and Terry Heslin, Outdoor Recreation Planner for BLM's Idaho State Office.

**Public:** Tracy and Gerald Johnston.

**Other:** Becky Desmond, note-taker; Dustin Miller, Natural Resources Field Coordinator for U.S. Senator Craig's office; Jim Bowman, reporter for The Owyhee Avalanche newspaper.

**Statements attributed to individuals are not direct quotes unless so indicated. Titles of handouts are listed in the appendix following the minutes, and detailed notes are not provided for these.**

**Note:** RAC Members, BLM staff and managers met in Boise at 8:00 a.m. at the BLM's District Office, and traveled to the Owyhee County Historical Museum in Murphy, for a briefing prior to beginning a field trip. The purpose of the field trip was to view some of the recreation sites located in the Owyhee Front and discuss some issues and concerns confronting BLM, as well as planned improvements to the areas.

**Opening Remarks:** Mr. Green opened the meeting at the Owyhee County Historical Museum in Murphy. He welcomed two new members to the RAC. Ralph Richardson, representing the Wild Horse and Burro stakeholder group, said he was ranch-raised and now retired from business. He has experience with the wild horse and burro issue both here in Idaho and in Nevada. Gary Aman, Owyhee County Sheriff, representing the Elected Officials stakeholder group, has 26 years in law enforcement experience, and is currently also the Chairman of the Owyhee County Recreation Task Force appointed by the Owyhee County Commissioners. (The third new member, Ted Hoffman, representing grazing interest's stakeholder group, was unable to attend this meeting.)

**Briefing of recreation sites and issues at Hemingway Butte, Reynolds Creek, and Wilson-Hardtrigger, recreation areas.** Mr. Wolf introduced Ryan Homan, BLM's new Recreation Planner for the Owyhee Field Office, who spoke about travel management as the modern phrase

evolving from “ORV’s” (off-road vehicles) to “OHV’s” (off-highway vehicles). “Travel management” includes foot traffic, equestrian use, motorized and non-motorized use, including mountain biking, and four-wheelers.

He referred to a 1972 Executive Order from President Nixon that required all federal agencies dealing with public lands to declare them as “open,” “closed,” or “limited” with regard to vehicle use. BLM classified “open” as basically unregulated use; “closed” as closed to vehicles, and “limited” as limited to either type of vehicle, time of year, or to “existing” roads and trails. Most BLM land fell under the “limited” category. A major problem is the definition of “existing” roads and trails, because of a lack of accurate mapping or other data that may be obsolete. So, the term “existing” became “designated,” providing more specificity and definition. The Owyhee Resource Management Plan (RMP) is a hybrid of all these terms. Another recently recognized issue is that the old regulations deal with motorized use, but mountain biking, which is non-motorized, is an increasingly popular activity. BLM is now using “mechanized” as the preferred term, rather than “motorized.”

Hence, “travel management” is the umbrella concept that will have regulations and supplemental rules included in RMP’s and will deal with all the known traffic, recreational or administrative, occurring on BLM’s public lands.

One problem is differentiating between cattle gathering by horseback or ATV from recreational horseback riding or ATV use. BLM is probably not going to address the horseback riding specifically because it is not very practical and doesn’t seem to be necessary. However, BLM does not yet see a way to manage different rules for ATV users, whether they are recreational or cattle gatherers.

Ted Howard said any new regulations are nothing but paper unless there is some type of enforcement. Mr. Wolf agreed, saying there would be a third and possibly fourth ranger added to the Boise District, but that it wasn’t the whole solution. He said BLM needs help from other agencies, and education and peer pressure for the users of public lands.

Mr. Wolf provided handouts regarding the Owyhee Front travel management plan which is a work in progress. They related to Hemingway Butte and the Murphy sub-region. The group then embarked on its field trip, including stops at the new Black Mountain parking lot, an exposed and damaged part of the Windy Point pipeline that provides water to stock on grazing allotments, and the Hemingway Butte trailhead. The groups listened to explanations of the work in progress and how BLM hoped the improvements would direct safe off-road traffic and prevent degradation of the resource. Following the field trip the group continued to the Marsing Community Center for lunch and the remainder of the meeting.

## **Lunch**

## **Follow-up Discussion--miscellaneous comments.**

Mr. Heslin commented that the improvements in the Rabbit Creek Trailhead seemed to be having the desired result and the area looked much better than it did five years ago. He said it “sends a good message to the recreating public.”

Sheriff Aman said the Owyhee County Recreation Task Force was meeting on December 5, and needed BLM plans for Wilson Creek so that the process could be sped up.

**ACTION:** Dave Wolf will assign a BLM representative to attend this meeting.

Ms. Soulen-Hinson asked how the BLM deals with hikers and horseback riders in “closed” areas. Mr. Wolf responded that historically “closed” referred to motorized vehicles and that any new terms would probably have to be modified. Mr. Heslin said the term “mechanized” will probably be included in any supplemental rules to RMP’s, including the Owyhee RMP. He said BLM wants to help the state of Idaho to come up with a statewide rule.

In response to Ms. Soulen-Hinson, Mr. Aman said the average sheriff’s office expense for emergencies on the trails was approximately \$10,000 per year, but that did not include air or ground ambulances or any volunteer time from search and rescue groups.

Mr. Raymondi liked the designated parking lot idea, but was rather overwhelmed by the looks of the Hemingway Butte Trailhead. He expressed concern about trails through the gulches. Mr. Heslin said BLM had to look at riparian areas in the gulches. Ms. Bennett said that sometimes it was difficult for horses to go through the washes after biker use because the trails tended to change so much. Mr. Rimbey said after seeing the sites on the field trip that he hoped education and enforcement keep the areas in good condition for a long period of time, and that he saw recreation groups helping with trail maintenance providing a substantial private investment and adding to the value of the public lands and adjoining areas.

**ACTION:** Mr. Howard requested a map of cultural sites and sage grouse leks in the Murphy Front from BLM, since they will be affected by the travel management plan. Include sensitive plants on one map so we could see where the cultural sites, leks and other sites are in relation to the trails

**Public Comments:**

1. Gerald Johnston said he and his wife, Tracy, saw the meeting on the “Americans Responsible for Recreational Access” website, and then were invited to attend. He had the following observations: a) wondered if there would be any backfill to the entrance at Hemingway Butte (answer was “yes”); b) recommended more signage and billboards advertising responsible use; c) likes the sand washes as they are forgiving of bike use; d) said that the Forest Service sends out CD’s containing trail information and encourages use of GPS; e) likes the idea of mountain bikers buying stickers and designating their fees to certain areas; f) thinks the Reynolds Creek “No Parking Signs” are unclear.
2. Tracy Johnston said she would like to have *detailed* maps made available to the biking public, not “*simple*” ones.
3. Ms. Richards said the “No Parking Signs” should say “Park in DESIGNATED Lots ONLY.”

4. Ms. Desmond said the sand washes can get so deep after trail bike use that horses can't safely be ridden there at more than a walk. Normally they are good for galloping.

**RAC input into BLM projects, time constraints, and potential for calling special meeting. RAC certification of minutes. Gil Green.**

Mr. Green welcomed the new members and encouraged input from them. He said he has challenged the RAC to put forth issues, which is the reason that a special meeting has been called in December. He said if RAC really wants to be more effective it will need to meet more often. He has asked Ms. Byrne to provide information to the RAC members more in advance of the meetings. Ms. Richards reminded RAC members they must be willing to "do their homework."

Mr. Howard also welcomed the new members and explained that he represents not only Native Americans interests but a sovereign government, a government whom the federal government has treaty/trust obligations to. He does not represent a special stakeholder or interest group as do the other RAC members. He said that the BLM is mandated to consult with federally recognized tribal governments, it may be necessary to slow the process of some of the projects BLM is working on. He said BLM has not consulted with the tribes since September because of an expired Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). It does not require an MOU to consult with tribes, it's their mandated obligation.

**ACTION:** The RAC approved and certified the minutes of the August 29, 2006 meeting with no changes or additions.

**Hot Topics**

Ms. Thomas commented that the Idaho Lands Enhancement Act (Boise Foothills Land Exchange) passed in both the House and the Senate and has gone to the President for signing. However, once signed the conveyances of the land exchanges must be done within 180 days, and the language in the bill was unclear about whether or not these exchanges were meant to be NEPA-compliant or NEPA-exempt. She said BLM is discussing this issue with U.S. Senator Craig's office. Senator Craig has led the efforts in gaining successful passage of this Act.

Ms. Richards said the Cattlemen's Association voted to support the Owyhee Initiative as long as funding was included in the bill for compensation to the ranchers and funding for required implementation actions by BLM. She said grazing regulations were also a big issue. Ms. Bennett said the Owyhee County Sage Grouse Local Working Group had all their proposed projects approved by the statewide funding group, including a joint Chubby Spain fire rehab project with BLM.

**Break**

**Review of Comments Received on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area's (NCA) RMP. Mike O'Donnell and John Sullivan.**

Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. Sullivan provided a handout and a power point presentation detailing the comments received. There were 17 comment letters received, with 300+ comments, mostly

