

BOISE DISTRICT (BD) RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC) MEETING
Boise District Offices
Boise, Idaho
September 25, 2008

BD Council Members Present: Gilbert Green, Richard Just, John Robison, Neil Rimbey, Richard Raymondi, Grant Simonds, Nate Helm, Tod Wernex (RAC subcommittee).

BD Council Members Absent: Brenda Richards, Ted Hoffman, Ted Howard, Donna Bennett, Margaret Soulen-Hinson, Ralph Richardson, Dale Dixon, Gary Aman.

BLM Advisory Present: Aden Seidlitz, Boise District Manager; MJ Byrne, BD RAC Coordinator.

Other BLM Staff Present: Mike McGee, Wildlife Specialist; Ryan Holman, Recreation Specialist; Rosemary Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager; Jon Beck, Four Rivers RMP co-lead.

Other: Becky Desmond, Notetaker.

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

Welcome and Approval of Minutes. RAC Chairman Gil Green opened the meeting, welcoming all. RAC member Rick Just introduced Tod Wernex, attending as a RAC subcommittee member interested in travel management. Mr. Seidlitz introduced Mike McGee, who is part of the BLM's "Emerging Leaders Program." He also noted there was no quorum but thanked RAC members for attending, saying that there were other meeting commitments that prevented many of the other RAC members from attending this one.

Minutes from the July 2008 RAC meeting and field trip were discussed, with some changes recommended.

ACTION: The minutes of the July 2008 RAC meeting will be certified after the noted corrections have been made by MJ Byrne.

Hot Topics. Mr. Seidlitz said he had received the final BLM internal report resulting from extensive interviews on general management evaluation. He is working on the action plan which will address three major issues. 1) Upfront communication—a lack of this was identified within the District from managers to employees regarding BLM's priorities and rationale; between the District and State level; externally in regard to effective use of the RAC; and relationship to the Tribes. 2) Litigation—a review panel will be established for NEPA documents in an attempt to avoid unnecessary court time. In answer to a question from Richard Raymondi, Mr. Seidlitz said the panel will be made up of Matt McCoy (who works on NEPA documents all the time), Dave Wolf, BD assistant manager, and all the resource coordinators plus a representative from the state office. The panel will be aiming toward high quality documents plus timeliness. 3)

Budget issues—BLM will probably be working under a “continuing resolution” when this year’s budget closes at the end of September. Mr. Seidlitz said the District had fared well considering the turnover in employees, and that he would be working on setting the priorities for a limited budget.

Mr. Seidlitz also announced two new hirings—Arnie Pike as the new Bruneau Field Office Manager and Buddy Green as the new Owyhee Field Office Manager. Both have strong range backgrounds including work in the Gunnison, CO and Buffalo, WY areas. Both will begin their jobs on October 12, 2008. Tim Carrigan will be assistant manager for the Bruneau FO; Steve Jirik for the Owyhee FO.

Mr. Seidlitz discussed a management team workshop scheduled for early January, which will involve discussion on the vision of future BLM accomplishments. He would like to involve the RAC, and get the whole BLM team going in the same direction.

Neil Rimbey congratulated Mr. Seidlitz on the great press release describing the accomplishments of rancher Chris Black and his family and the resulting recognition by BLM.

Review and Discussion with RAC Members on Pre-decisional Draft EA for Murphy Sub-region Travel Management Plan. Mr. Seidlitz introduced Ryan Holman, BLM Recreation Specialist, who presented an overview of the draft Murphy Sub-Region Travel Management Plan. He also provided a copy of the plan to RAC members. Mr. Holman said the Owyhee RMP, completed in 1999, directed this project. Deferred maintenance funding was made available and the project started with the Hemingway Butte area, followed by the Wilson Creek area in 2006. This is now the EA for the 230,000 acres known as the Murphy Front, which includes approximately 1300 miles of roads and trails. Scoping issues were derived from public open houses and special interest group meetings. The ID team used these issues to set up a plan to help BLM guide the process for developing management alternatives in the EA. He asked for discussion and questions.

Mr. Rimbey asked why the economic issue was directed solely toward ranching interests. Mr. Holman said this came from the scoping process, and that the section was taken from the Wilson Creek EA. Other comments related to costs incurred by the sheriff’s office and trail maintenance costs. Nate Helm said that Mr. Rimbey, professor of range economics at the University of Idaho, had produced an economic report that might be beneficial to this EA.

ACTION: Mr. Holman will research the economic report produced by Neil Rimbey (used in the Owyhee RMP) that discusses economic costs and benefits to other activities in Owyhee County in addition to ranching.

Mr. Holman then continued a review of the draft EA. He said the EA recommends that no speed-based ATV events be allowed, hill-climbs will be rehabilitated or closed using signage or boulder placement, seasonal use will be considered for some activities, buffer zones will be created for sage grouse, sound compliance standards will be set for

snowmobiles and ATV's (working with SIDRA), monitoring will be enacted to check for compliance, weed control techniques will be used, and overall, adaptive management techniques will be incorporated as in the Wilson Creek plan.

RAC members had questions on monitoring, enforcement, general public closures, self-policing from individual recreation groups, general outreach and education, and how BLM will distinguish between hunters and recreationists. Mr. Holman said spring and fall are the two seasons in which the trails and roads are used the most, and BLM will concentrate on that. Mr. Green asked about cultural sites and whether or not the Tribes have had the presentation of the draft EA. Mr. Holman said it had, and that Ted Howard will provide their comments to BLM.

Mr. Holman further reviewed specific differences between management alternatives A, B, and C. Alternative C is the plan developed by the Owyhee County Recreation Task force, which was formed to help with the Hemingway Butte Travel Management EA and is made up of representatives from all user groups including ranchers, recreationists, and environmentalists—chaired by Sheriff Gary Aman. John Robison asked about the apparent discrepancy between BLM's preferred alternative and the more stringent plan adopted by the County. Mr. Seidlitz replied that as the land use manager, he must have more evidence of resource damage before he can administratively close roads and trails. Mr. Robison said the difference was “striking” considering that the County had approved its plan and that the task force was made up of such a diverse group. He said more review of the discrepancy was needed during this draft period. Nate Helm agreed that the County's plan should be given more consideration. Mr. Holman said that the County had given BLM certain “caveats” in a resolution added to the County's plan. Mr. Holman asked that comments be made by October 24. The group then looked at maps of the area provided by BLM.

ACTION: Two upcoming public meetings are scheduled for the Murphy Travel Management Plan: Oct. 1, 2008, 5-8 pm, Owyhee County Historical Museum; and Oct. 2, 2008, 5-8 pm, Boise District Office.

ACTION: Mr. Seidlitz will check with Sheriff Aman to be sure that representatives of the Owyhee County Recreation Task Force are present at these meetings to help explain Alternative C, which is the task force recommendation.

ACTION: MJ Byrne asked RAC members to submit comments on the Murphy Travel Management draft EA to her by Oct. 20 or to Mr. Holman by Oct. 24. Ryan's e-mail address was provided to RAC members in a handout at the meeting.

BREAK

PUBLIC COMMENTS-none

ADDED TOPIC—Grant Simonds suggested that a press release from the Western Slope No-Fee Coalition be forwarded to RAC members and to the Twin Falls REC RAC group. The press release basically charged that BLM provided only limited access to the public regarding its work and decisions on public lands fees. The Coalition is Colorado-based but Hailey resident Scott Philips is an active member. REC RAC members John Robison, Nate Helm, and Grant Simonds all expressed their belief that the Boise and

Twin Falls REC RAC group followed an exhaustive and comprehensive public process that set high standards for this type of decision-making. They said there was no “rubber-stamping” of anything, and that the group studied maps, charts, pictures, and costs data extensively. Mr. Helm said that no formal response could ever address the Coalition’s philosophy, only its accuracy, and could provide “ammunition” to the group. Mr. Simonds repeated that this group followed a great and thorough process and wondered how well other REC RAC’s around the nation performed.

ACTION: MJ Byrne will forward the press release to involved parties (including the Twin Falls RAC) regarding the REC RAC procedure for approval of fee increases.

ACTION: MJ Byrne will also research how other REC RAC groups did in their fee approval process, including asking the Forest Service representatives for their input.

WORKING LUNCH

Review and Discussion of Public Issues with RAC Members on Four Rivers Field Office’s Resource Management Plan—Draft Scoping Report. Rosemary Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager, introduced Jon Beck as the co-lead for the Four Rivers Resource Management Plan (RMP), and Barbara Albiston, assistant. Ms. Thomas gave some background on the plan, saying it will replace three existing RMP’s, and that the target date is completion within four years.

Mr. Beck then discussed the draft scoping report, and said his goal for using the RAC was to get comments concerning RAC issues within the RMP. He provided handouts for the following: a summary of 270 public comments received so far from nine scoping meetings; a two-page comment on those public comments from RAC member Ted Hoffman; and a calendar listing upcoming county/community economic profile workshops.

Mr. Beck said that 96 people showed at the scoping meetings, mostly at Council. South of Emmett, most comments concerned land tenure adjustments. North of Emmett and north of Eagle, there were major concerns expressed from the equestrian and hiking recreationists, who want continued use of trails as they are. Some comments were on environmental issues including LEPA and milkvetch. Transportation management was a big issue, including concerns about OHV use in the Eagle Foothills. There were also comments concerning shooting issues. E-mails were also received as comments.

Mr. Beck said that issues from those comments were identified and compiled into 34 categories using “CommentWorks,” an electronic cataloging system found in ePlanning. He said his planning team also ran the issues by the intergovernmental coordination group made up of Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Fish and Game, county governments involved with adjoining BLM land in the area, City of Nampa, Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho Department of Lands, Mountain Home Air Force Base, Gowen Field/Army National Guard, Payette National Forest, Idaho Department of Agriculture, Ada County Development Services, Ada County Parks and Waterways, and the Soil Conservation Commission. He said the Boise National Forest has been invited but has not yet participated.

RAC members were then asked for comments or questions. Neil Rimbey said that the “shotgun” land ownership within the RMP makes travel management very difficult, and different from the other two RMP’s. Ms. Thomas concurred that travel management in the Owyhee Field Office area could either be impacted or relieved by the travel management plan in the Four Rivers RMP. Mr. Beck said he is open to Owyhee County’s participation, and that now is the time. Alternatives will be developed during the next few months. Grant Simonds asked for elaboration on p. 14 in the scoping report concerning recreation. Mr. Beck replied that they are seeing a huge demand for special recreation permits for events such as equestrian endurance rides, motorcycle races, and outfitter packing trips. BLM is trying to foresee at least 20 years ahead and decide what large group events will be allowed or not. Other comments included some from the Weiser River group on using goats to control weed growth.

Mr. Beck then said that BLM is using Dick Gardner, expert in demographics, to help project specific population growth in areas within the RMP. He said recreation issues will probably make up 80% of management decisions. Also there will be many new community developments and interstate exchanges built in the area.

Mr. Beck said the next steps in the process will be: to sign the scoping report; work on development of alternatives using internal workshops within the next two to three months; review by the Intergovernmental coordination group (ICG), RAC review; then development of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Identification of the existing conditions and management alternatives will be done during 2009.

Richard Raymondi wondered about noxious weed control and whether there were any more recent reports to include. Mr. Beck said there was a 2007 noxious weed report, but that his planning team would also try to get feedback from local working groups such as the sage grouse groups. He said weed management will not work unless other lands besides BLM are also included. He has received comments on cheatgrass and medusa rye, but nothing yet on invasive mammals or aquatic life.

Finally, Mr. Beck discussed the six upcoming economic workshops being hosted by Dick Gardner. Anyone who has a stake in the local economy is welcome.

ACTION: Mr. Beck will e-mail RAC members with information on upcoming economic workshops hosted by Dick Gardner, as part of the scoping process provided by BLM on the Four Rivers RMP.

Ms. Thomas then asked RAC for its help during the upcoming year in development of alternatives by representing the members’ special interests. Mr. Raymondi asked for some “after-hours” times for participation. Ms. Byrne reviewed the RAC RMP subcommittee members as being Gilbert Green, Brenda Richards, John Robison, Neil Rimbey, Ted Hoffman, and Richard Raymondi. Ms. Thomas said a facilitator will be used for development of alternatives as was used in the Birds of Prey RMP.

PUBLIC COMMENTS—none

Field Office Updates

1. Bruneau Field Office. Mr. Seidlitz said the East Castle Creek EA will be released soon. He also reported on a public safety issue that involved a “loose” bridge stuck in the river near Bruneau with no claim of ownership.

2. Owyhee Field Office. Mr. Seidlitz briefly mentioned the already discussed travel management plan. He also said the office was trying to stay on the court-ordered timeline for issuing grazing permits. He said the office was making use of very good seasonal employees. Mr. Holman added that the Castlehead –Lambert prescribed burn had been rescheduled for next year. He noted that parts of the Indian Meadows prescribed burn on South Mountain were very successful.

ACTION: MJ Byrne will provide Nate Helm with information on the Castlehead-Lambert prescribed burn rescheduled for next year.

3. Four Rivers Field Office. Rosemary Thomas, Field Office Manager, provided a comprehensive report on its activities, noting no report from the last RAC meeting/field trip.

a. Initial Point human bones, discovered in 2004, along with leather artifacts, were repatriated to the Shoshone-Paiutes for reburial.

b. The Birds of Prey RMP has had one protest, and she is waiting for a response from the national office. The RMP is completed unless challenged in court.

c. Lands updates. Sales included Cascade Land Sales (all but two parcels); Pickles Butte completed; Clay Peak not completed. Exchanges included Table Rock with Idaho Department of Lands, Ridgeline Vista (160 acres near horse corrals for 190 acres in the Curlew ACEC); Idaho Lands Enhancement Act 2007 done; Ada County Community Sports Complex LLC (7200 acres BLM near Kuna-Mora Rd. for unknown properties or purchase); Oregon Trail (43 acres BLM on Hwy. 21 for 120 acres east of Hwy. 21, with ruts.)

d. R&PP applications: Eagle - for a 2000 ac. regional park; Caldwell for a 29 ac. park; Mt. Home for a 160 ac. water treatment lagoon and wetland; Kuna for an 80 ac. park; Star for an 80 ac. park; Tipanuk Fire Dept. for a 10 ac. fire station site; Idaho ATV for the 300 ac. canyon Creek Play Area

e. R&PP (talking only): City of Boise - 800 ac. regional park; Ada co - 800 ac. regional park; Southern Valley County Rec. District - 9 ac. park on Payette River in Cascade; Idaho Vets - 40 ac. to buffer cemetery

f. R&PP (no further action; incomplete) Idaho Shooting Park LLC for 3000 for a shooting complex in Curlew ACEC

g. Energy or other major rights-of-way (ROW) applications.: Gateway West 500 KV powerline; Boardman

to Hemingway 500 KV powerline; Sunstone 42" high pressure natural gas pipeline; IPC natural gas powered generation plant; Mountain Home to Mora rebuild; Horseshoe Bend to Garden Valley 230 KV powerline; King Hill Wind Farm; King Crown Wind Farm; Lockman Butte Wind Farm; Elmore Ada Water Project (48" water pipeline); Crane Creek Geothermal leases

h. Also mentioned: Hells Canyon Complex FERC Relicensing update; Holmes Split Estate District Court Case; Joint Land Use Study; Northwest Foothills

Transportation Study (ACHD), and Southern Beltway Transportation Study (ACHD and Nampa Highway District)

i. There will be a public presentation for the nuclear power plant proposed in Elmore County next month.

j. LEPA update. LEPA is up for listing again; a decision will be made this winter.

k. Grazing update: Goodrich 34 decisions; Sunnyside 14 decisions complete (appeal dismissed); 2 trespass cases this summer

l. Fuels and forestry: Foothills East fuels Project; Salvage Sales on Grays Creek Fire, Chief Parrish Fire; blowdown salvage near Pioneerville, and trespass salvage on Bennett Mountain.

PUBLIC COMMENTS-none

Other discussion.

ACTION: MJ Byrne will provide RAC members with the “Questions and Answers” on the King Hill Wilderness Study Area after completion of the report.

ACTION: The next RAC meeting is tentatively set for January 14, 2009.

ACTION: RAC members were invited to the White House Conference on Wildlife Management in Reno, Oct. 1-3, 2008.

Neil Rimbey suggested that a big loop from Jordan Valley to Grand View to Chris Black’s ranch be a possible field tour for next summer. Part of the tour could be Art Talsma’s presentation of Owyhee County Sage Grouse projects or Dave Turrell’s Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation presentation. Mr. Simonds also suggested that Art Talsma provide information on the 45 Ranch irrigation project.

Ms. Byrne reminded RAC members to put in their requests for travel reimbursement.

The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by Becky Desmond, Notetaker

Certified by

_____ /S/ _____	04-02-09	_____ /S/ _____	04-02-09
Gilbert Green	Date	Aden Seidlitz	Date
RAC Chairman		Boise District Manager	

Appendix

1. Letter from Steve Jirik on the Murphy Subregion Travel Management Plan.
2. Draft EA on Murphy Subregion Travel Management Plan.
3. Issue Summary of Four Rivers RMP scoping report, Jon Beck.
4. Four Rivers Field Office Economic Profile Workshop Calendar.
5. Comments on Four Rivers Scoping Report Comments, Ted Hoffman.

