

**BOISE DISTRICT (BD) BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)  
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)  
Foothills Learning Center  
Boise, Idaho  
August 29, 2006**

**Council Members Present:** Gilbert Green, Ted Howard, Grant Simonds, Richard Raymondi, Neil Rimbey, Robert Baker, Dale Dixon, John Robison, Donna Bennett, Margaret Soulen-Hinson, Nate Helm, Brenda Richards.

**Council Members Absent:** Patric Cudmore, Robert Amidon, Chris Salove.

**BLM Advisory Present:** Jerry Taylor, BD District Manager; Dave Wolf, BD Assistant BD Manager; MJ Byrne, BD RAC Coordinator.

**Other BLM Staff Present:** Mitch Jaurena, Bruneau Field Office Manager; Rosemary Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager; Mike Truden, BLM real estate planner; Helen Ulmschneider, Bruneau Field Office biologist; Paul Makela, BLM state office, Shelley Davis-Brunner, and Kay Schiepan, Idaho State Office (ISO) BLM.

**Other:** Becky Desmond, note taker; Lane Jolliffe, representative from First District U.S. Congressman Otter's office; Dustin Miller, representative from U.S. Senator Craig's office; Andy Brunelle, U.S. Forest Service, Boise National Forest.

**Statements attributed to individuals are not direct quotes unless so indicated. Titles of handouts are listed in an appendix following the minutes. Detailed notes are not provided for these. Also, this meeting is the first for the new "issue paper" format. Detailed notes of the issue papers are not included, just the discussion regarding the issue papers.**

**ACTION:** Mr. Taylor and Ms. Byrne asked for RAC members to provide feedback on the "issue paper" format tried at this meeting. RAC members should also comment on whether sending out the information in the issue papers ahead of time is productive.

**The agenda for the morning session was the field trip showing RAC members some of the areas that BLM has received requests for land exchanges from developers for subdivisions adjacent to BLM-controlled land in the Four Rivers Field Office. These included Blacks Creek southeast of Boise, public lands near Columbia Village, the M3 project north of Eagle and Rocky Canyon.**

**A WORKING LUNCH** was then held at the Foothills Learning Center during which RAC members discussed what they had seen. The comments were favorable toward the field trip and the members thought it was beneficial to see the areas that are under tremendous growth pressures.

**CERTIFICATION OF MINUTES** from both the May and March meetings were approved with previous changes and corrections being incorporated.

**OPENING REMARKS:** Chairman Gil Green thanked Robert Baker on behalf of the entire RAC for his six years of service on the RAC council. Ms. Byrne invited him to join future RAC meetings at any time.

**HOT TOPICS:** Mr. Taylor introduced Dave Wolf, new Assistant District Manager for the Boise District, and announced that Peter Ditton will be the new state Associate Director for BLM. Mr. Wolf briefly described his background and career stations with BLM, including Las Vegas; Salmon, ID; Reno; Red Rock Canyon; Kanaab, UT; and Grand Escalante National Staircase. He has degrees in wildlife management and outdoor recreation and has worked in recreation and wilderness and the national lands conservation system. Mr. Taylor said Mr. Wolf will fill in as the Owyhee Field Office manager until a new one is found to replace Ron Kay, who retired from BLM in July. Mr. Jaurena briefly filled in for Ron Kay until Mr. Wolf arrived.

Mr. Taylor then said that the RAC subgroup meetings still pose an issue. BLM's regulations call for a notice to be published in the Federal Register prior to quarterly RAC and subgroup meetings, even though all formal advice is discussed and approved at full RAC meetings prior to being submitted to BLM. He pointed out that other federal departments such as Fish and Game or the Forest Service do not have these regulations. BLM is still trying to reconcile the meeting announcement requirement with the need to move ahead in a timely manner on certain issues.

#### **UPCOMING ISSUES AND ACTIONS:**

##### **1. Owyhee Field Office**

**a. West Antelope Burn Area issue paper** - Mr. Wolf shared information about the upcoming prescribed burn in the West Antelope Allotment and provided a map of the burn area. It is moving forward; the permittee and landowner are involved; and the bid for fire lane preparation is out. However, because fire conditions are at Planning Level 5 (see issue paper on this), and fire equipment and personnel are already at many other locations fighting fires, the burn may not happen. BLM hopes that weather and fire conditions will allow the burn to be implemented, since it will improve much of the land in the allotment.

**b. Owyhee Field Office Recreation issue paper** - Mr. Wolf said the Hemingway Butte OHV plan was appealed but BLM is moving forward on it because of safety issues. BLM is analyzing comments received on the Wilson Creek/Hardtrigger Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) plan, and expects to make a decision by the end of the week. He said the first steps were being taken on the area known as the Murphy Front, which has the majority of trails.

**c. Update on grazing litigation issue paper** - Mr. Jaurena discussed the current status of grazing litigation. He said the Silver City case will go to court and is defensible. Three cases will be remanded so that BLM can re-issue them in a more defensible way: Castlehead/Lambert, Pole Creek, and Red Mountain/Boone Peak. Ms. Richards asked where the permittee is left when a remand occurs. Mr. Jaurena said the previous decision remains in effect. He also said that retired BLM staff were contracted to do work on the renewals and did a fantastic job. They freed up the journeyman-level BLM staff to do necessary field work.

**d. Update on Court-ordered Permit Renewals - Self-explanatory (attachment #4).**

**2. Bruneau Field Office**

**a. Bruneau Resource Management Planning Process Issue Paper -** Mr. Jaurena reported that the RAC RMP Subgroup received a briefing on the Bruneau RMP.

**ACTION:** These subgroup members should send feedback by September 15 to Mr. Jaurena on this briefing. E-mail is sufficient, and these comments are to be considered as individual comments, not necessarily endorsed by the full RAC. A copy of these comments should also be sent to Gil Green, chairman of the RAC RMP subgroup.

Mr. Rimbey commended BLM for its move to this “adaptive management” process but warned that timelines, “trigger points,” and specific sideboards are needed. Mr. Jaurena agreed and said that BLM needs to know when something is not being accomplished and when there is a need for change. Ms. Richards also commented that more specifics were needed in the plan.

**ACTION:** Mr. Jaurena will research available dates for one-day informational field trips for RAC subcommittees working on Bruneau RMP issues.

**b. Sage-grouse lek survey flights -** Helen Ulmschneider, BLM biologist, provided a power point presentation on the preliminary results of lek survey flights for 2004, 2005, and 2006. She said historical data was largely non-existent. Helicopters are used to fly at approximately 100 feet above the ground in good weather, using a trans-sect method. She said the leks are concentrated in the high Bruneau Escarpment; there is Wyoming Sagebrush in the low elevations and Mountain Sagebrush in the high elevations. The low sagebrush to the west has lots of wildflower forbs and is a good summer place for the birds. She said certain leks seem to be “key” and include the most desirable males, while other leks are the “satellites.” Sometimes leks move, and males can use more than one lek. The birds are mobile and seem to be able to move locations when they have to.

West Nile Virus has attacked some sage grouse in the Big Springs area, and Paul Makela, state BLM biologist, said that there is very little natural immunity to the virus in the birds. There is about a 90% mortality rate. Ted Howard said there were also many radio-collared sage grouse lost to the virus in Duck Valley.

**ACTION:** Neil Rimbey moved and Donna Bennett seconded that the “Boise District RAC encourages continuation of the sage grouse lek monitoring efforts as detailed by Helen Ulmschneider, Bruneau Field Office biologist. This information, data, and analysis are critical to address questions in relation to sage grouse population numbers and trends, particularly in light of its status as a sensitive species. It is imperative to generate and maintain this information on a consistent basis through time.” RAC approved the motion.

Mr. Makela said the above information will be added to the scientific data included in the new statewide sage grouse plan headed by Fish and Game.

**3. Fire Preparedness Level 5 Issue Paper -** Rosemary Thomas discussed this item. In response to a question from Ms. Richards, she said that until BLM arrives on a fire scene, any citizens’ actions are their own decision and taken at their own risk. When BLM arrives and becomes the incident commander, it is then up to BLM whether to let local

activities continue. Coordination and communication is critical to the safety of everyone involved in fighting a wildfire. So far, there have been 115,000 acres burned in the Boise District, and 450,000 acres in Idaho. Sixty percent of the fires were human-caused and 40% by lightning. No extra funds have been provided for this fire season. However, due to the severity of the fire season, special funding was provided for additional air tankers, engines and fire crews.

**4. Recreation Resource Advisory Committee (RRAC) Formulation** - Shelley Davis-Brunner, Idaho RAC Coordinator, and Kay Schiepan, Outdoor Recreation Planner, ISO, BLM gave a short power point presentation on these “Rec RAC’s.” Andy Brunelle, Capital City Coordinator, U.S. Forest Service, Boise National Forest also assisted. To satisfy the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, RAC needs to establish a RRAC to provide public involvement in the establishment of recreation sites and rates of user-fee collected to maintain and improve the sites. Ms. Davis-Brunner offered alternatives that the RAC could discuss and choose. Discussion followed. BLM’s preferred alternative is a joint RRAC with the Twin Falls District. This committee would gather information, formulate recommendations, and present to the combined full RACs from Boise and Twin Falls. Then the combined RACs would send forward a single recommendation.

Most thought this was a good idea but did not see how fees could be separate from the use of the fees. RAC members still want input on the projects for which the fees would be used, as is the case with the Payette River Recreation system’s fee demo subgroup. The subgroup provides recommendations to the BD RAC annually on recommended maintenance and improvement actions paid for by recreation user-fees collected at points on the River system. The full RAC then forwards formal advice to the BD BLM.

**ACTION:** Neil Rimbey moved and Margaret Soulen-Hinson seconded that “the Boise District RAC supports the development of a joint Recreation subcommittee that will provide input to the agencies on BOTH the generation and use of users’ fees for recreation facilities and opportunities.” RAC approved the motion.

**ACTION:** Grant Simonds moved and Neil Rimbey seconded that “Boise District RAC endorse and retain the existing Payette River Recreation Working Group. This group will continue to perform its functions as before, including providing input on fees and projects associated with the Payette River System.” RAC approved the motion.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Dustin Miller, natural resources field coordinator from Sen. Craig’s office, commented on the morning field trip. He said the Senate version of the Foothills Land swap bill was stalled, but that Sen. Craig would like to see it passed. It may have implications for a future bill regarding the Eagle foothills. Ms. Thomas hoped that any bill that passed would have NEPA-exempt language in it.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN--Gil Green, Chairman.** Ms. Thomas reported that BLM is working with comments received from the National Guard, the Air Force,



7. BLM statement on US District Court for Idaho Action re: new grazing regulations, news release.
8. Western Watersheds Project vs. Joe Kraayenbrink, et al, defendants, memorandum decision and order.
9. Conservation Plan for the Greater Sage-grouse in Idaho, executive summary.
10. MS Eagle master planned community and map.