

**BOISE DISTRICT (BD) BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
Boise District Offices, Boise, Idaho
February 27, 2007**

Minutes

Council Members Present: Gilbert Green, Gary Aman, John Robison, Nate Helm, Richard Raymondi, Donna Bennett, Brenda Richards, Ted Hoffman, Grant Simonds.

Council Members Absent: Dale Dixon, Ralph Richardson, Neil Rimbey, Ted Howard, Patric Cudmore, Margaret Soulen-Hinson.

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

Other BLM Staff Present: Andy Delmas, BD Fire Management Officer; Rosemary Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office Manager; Mike O'Donnell, Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan; John Sullivan, Birds of Prey NCA RMP.

Other: Ron Kay, Idaho Department of Agriculture; Vince Moreno, State Assistant, Natural Resource for U.S. Congressman Sali's office; Ryan White, State Affairs Liaison, and Southwest Idaho Field Director of Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Senator Crapo's office; Dustin Miller, Natural Resources Field Coordinator, U.S. Senator Craig's office; Doug McConnaughey, facilitator for BDO-BLM and Shoshone Paiute Tribes monthly consultation meetings; Owyhee County Commissioners; and Becky Desmond, note taker.

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

AGENDA ITEMS

Welcome: Chairman Green opened the meeting and welcomed all, noting there was not a quorum. Ms. Byrne briefly discussed openings for RAC representatives, noting that the terms for Brenda Richards, Donna Bennett, Patric Cudmore, Ted Howard, and Neil Rimbey are expiring at the end of the 2007 fiscal year. Ms. Bennett agreed to run again.

ACTION: Ms. Byrne will let RAC members know about all positions which will be open at the next meeting.

ACTION: There will also be election of chairman and vice-chairman of the RAC at the next meeting.

Mr. Taylor also welcomed all the attendees. Mr. Green asked for approval of the November 21, 2006 minutes, noting there were some edits submitted by Ted Howard. These minutes were approved with one grammatical change by general consensus, no vote. The minutes for the December 18, 2006 meeting were also approved by general consensus with no changes and no vote.

Hot Topics: Mr. Taylor reported on his conversations with the BLM State Office regarding the delay of the Bruneau Resource Management Plan (RMP). He said there was no decision yet but that it was agreed there were some benefits to the delay. The delay would help ensure that there was consultation with the tribes and the affected counties, and that BLM would be

able to go forward with its work on the Standards and Guides process. Mr. Taylor has also talked with Owyhee County Commissioners about the inclusion of the Owyhee Initiative (OI) into the Bruneau RMP. The OI is now part of the County's plan. He said the OI is in close synchronization in some areas but not in others.

ACTION: BLM will go through the OI and the RMP point-by-point to see how they can be meshed. Also, in response to a question posed by Brenda Richards, BLM will include a narrative explaining the parts where the RMP and the OI cannot mesh.

Update on Recreation RAC Subcommittee, and Introduction of Carl Wilgus, possible new member of REC RAC. Ms. Byrne reported that there would be a "meet and greet" session of the REC RAC at Brown's Ferry in late April or early May. Members of the REC RAC representing the Twin Falls District will also be in attendance. She will have a more complete update then. She introduced Carl Wilgus, travel director for the State of Idaho, and provided RAC members with his resume. He spoke about his background and his interest in serving on the REC RAC. He said the main issue is access to public lands for tourism and recreation. He discussed the fee versus access problem and described a possible continuum of fees for amenities ranging from scenic overlooks (no fee--access to everyone) to upgraded campgrounds (fee charged--available to some). He said Price Waterhouse was doing research on the subject for the Forest Service, and that the private sector bases costs on quality of service all the time.

ACTION: RAC approved the appointment of Carl Wilgus to the REC RAC subcommittee by consensus.

ACTION: REC RAC members are asked to provide Ms. Byrne with their available dates for the April or May "meet and greet" meeting.

Review and discussion of BLM responses to comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA). Mr. Sullivan reviewed BLM actions to date on the NCA RMP. He said BLM had tried to stay "out in front" regarding public involvement with the plan and that perhaps the relatively small number of comments received reflected this. BLM is now meeting with groups and individuals who commented on the plan, including the RAC subgroup. He said the RAC subgroup had been clear in saying BLM should work with permittees in developing the withdrawal to the Department of Defense. He added that Bob Baker has been very helpful in coordinating this discussion with the permittees.

BLM has coordinated with the National Guard throughout the process to resolve concerns related to military training in the NCA. He said most of the comments asked for more clarity and background information. BLM would like to finalize the plan by the end of 2007, and begin implementation after the required protest period.

Mr. Sullivan then presented a power point briefing to RAC members, which reviewed: the Birds of Prey NCA; the enabling legislation; the purpose and need for the RMP; public involvement; and public comments. Public comments were received on:

1) *Energy and Utility Corridors.* No wind energy is planned as it was determined to be incompatible with the purposes for which the NCA was established because of potential

impacts to nesting and migrating raptors. The preferred alternative for energy corridors was revised to be consistent with the West-Wide Energy Corridor study.

In response to a question from Ted Hoffman, Mike O'Donnell said the plan can be amended to include wind energy if and when proof is shown that wind energy development is compatible with raptors. Mr. Robison said the Conservation League had submitted comments that reflected its concern about the addition of the extra corridor and its width, and wondered where the NEPA process is on this issue. Mr. Sullivan said the West-Wide Energy Corridor Study was being based on an assumed corridor width of 3500 feet unless specific concerns required a narrower width, which was the case for the NCA. The final corridor width is expected to be less than ¼ mile. Additional energy corridors will provide the energy industry with redundant capacity in the event of a catastrophe. Mr. Robison said he would still like a more detailed environmental analysis of different widths of the corridor. He wants BLM to "flag the concern." Mr. Green commented that utilities would only want about 250 feet within the 3500 feet allowed, and that the extra width provides them with the ability to choose the best route around certain features. Mr. Sullivan said the corridor itself has no environmental impacts, that only construction within the corridor does, and that any construction would require an Environmental Impact Statement with its accompanying opportunities for public input. Ms. Bennett said the preferred alternative corridor mostly follows Rte. 78 and that there was only one sage grouse lek in the corridor.

2) *Lands and Realty*. Mr. Sullivan said there had been a request that the Brown's Gulch allotment be excluded from the NCA. The request was denied because it only benefited one landowner and was contrary to the NCA-enabling legislation. If the permittee wished, this allotment could continue to be administered by the BLM Twin Falls office. Ms. Richards commended BLM for working with permittees on the lands issues.

3) *Special Designations*. Mr. Sullivan said there were a number of comments in this area. All river segments provide unique opportunities for viewing nesting and migrating raptors, but because of the private lands in the NCA, there were only two river stretches that were suitable for recreational designation under the Wild and Scenic River (W&SR) Act. However, no segments of the Snake River were being recommended for W&SR designation because the protection language of the W&SR Act is redundant to the protective language in the NCA-enabling Act. He added that BLM would continue to study the giant fairy shrimp and add conservation measures if warranted.

Slickspot peppergrass is already being managed under the conservation measures contained in the 2003 Candidate Conservation Agreement, which is currently being updated. BLM uses the monitoring data collected by the Idaho Conservation Data Center (CDC) to help manage slickspot peppergrass, while the National Guard is cooperating in the monitoring of the giant fairy shrimp, which they first discovered.

4. *Livestock Grazing*. Mr. Sullivan said the RMP will only identify areas that are open or closed to grazing. The Standards and Guidelines process will continue to be used for managing site-specific areas. Much discussion followed. Ted Hoffman raised concern that the public would be misled by language that leads it to believe that less grazing is always more beneficial to the habitat, when in fact the reverse may be true at times. Ms. Richards and Ms. Bennett agreed that the language could be misleading. Ms. Richards said she believes the language does reflect "adaptive management" but is still worried about what the public will perceive. Both Mr. Sullivan and Mr. O'Donnell reminded RAC members that the language of the EIS analysis does not go forward with the final document. Language such as

“when conditions permit,” “excluding grazing forever,” and “improving riparian areas without excluding livestock grazing” were all examples cited of possible misleading phrases.

5. *Military Training*. No changes to the alternatives.

6. *Transportation and Off-Road Vehicles*. Mr. Sullivan said there were several comments regarding the Canyon Creek area. BLM will allow the existing use to continue for one year following implementation of the plan, and will work with local groups to develop an acceptable management plan. If an acceptable management plan is not developed, the use will change to a “designated route” area. Mr. Taylor said liability was an issue since the area was formerly used as a dump by the Air Force.

At the C.J. Strike Reservoir road closures will not affect existing campsite areas. BLM will provide signage showing where off-road use is prohibited, and hikers and equestrians can still use the area.

Mr. Sullivan said the next steps for the RMP will be to continue briefing various groups including members of Idaho’s Congressional staff. In late March the BLM State Director will be briefed; in June the RMP will go to print. The Final RMP will probably be released sometime in July, followed by a 30-day public protest period.

ACTION: Ms. Richards moved and Mr. Green seconded the addition of a second public comment period to the agenda for the meeting following the break. The motion was approved.

Update on Status of Bruneau RMP. Mr. O’Donnell spoke for Mr. Jaurena, who could not attend the meeting. He said BLM had met with Owyhee County Commissioners as advised by the RAC at the previous meeting, and had met with Mr. Fred Grant, legal consultant for the County. He said although the mechanisms of the Owyhee Initiative and the Bruneau RMP are different, the breakthrough could be to look at both processes from the perspective of the “end-point,” the condition of the land at the end of the process. He said BLM would analyze this idea and get back with Mr. Grant and the commissioners, adding that Alternative B and the OI had much in common. The OI can’t be another “alternative” because the enabling legislation doesn’t allow for a legal way to do that. He also said BLM is clarifying the land and realty section and filling in details as requested by the RAC.

Mr. Taylor said that Mr. Howard Hedrick will be the liaison for the Bruneau RMP and the OI as a “special assistant” at the BLM State Office. Consultation with the tribes will be at the State level. He said a meeting is scheduled for the first part of March and that BLM continues to provide information to the tribes regarding the RMP. He anticipates getting back on a regular meeting schedule with the tribes.

Mr. Hoffman commented that some parts of the grazing section seemed to be allotment-specific. Mr. O’Donnell said this was not intended, rather the intent of the language is to address needs for some riparian areas. He and Mr. Taylor said BLM has a variety of “tools” it can use to get to the “desired future condition.” He said the analysis section is the important part of the language.

ACTION: Following much discussion on language, Mr. Taylor said BLM will review all the language in the RMP’s (both the Bruneau and the Birds of Prey) to clarify what it means

by its “range of tools” used to meet desired future conditions--i.e. the “could be’s, would be’s, up to’s, resting, exclusions from grazing, etc.”

Mr. Taylor said BLM is now using the adaptive management technique so that local involvement is increased. The Standards and Guides process is used for any implementation, and that requires NEPA documentation. He said BLM will look for the least invasive way, the least disruption of normal activity, to address any issue.

ACTION: Mr. O’Donnell will send out recreational maps and narrative when they get further along. (The realty maps he has already redone were given the okay for clarity by the RAC.)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Ron Kay stated that he was concerned about the long-term effect of RMP’s created today that have closure language in them. He said RMP’s could “evolve” into documents that have a lot of authority in them to do closures that don’t require a change of land-use plans, as is required at the present.

Mr. O’Donnell said in response, that any closed areas are already set and defined. These are inaccessible areas, not grazed at the present time, and these have already been discussed with permittees. Other areas have “resting” language based on the Standards and Guides.

Other: Ms. Byrne recognized the retirement of Mary Jones and thanked her for her many achievements as a BLM employee.

WORKING LUNCH

RAC Review and Comment on “BLM Fire Fighting Coordination and Cooperation with Permittees and Private Landowners.” Mr. Andy Delmas, BLM District Fire Coordinator, introduced two long-time incident commanders, Steve Acarregi and Todd Floyd, who gave a “test” power point presentation to the RAC. They provided an accompanying handout.

Mr. Acarregi said fire-fighting now is very different from the way it was ten years ago. The techniques are aggressive and BLM wants to have more interaction with ranchers and permittees on its fire-fighting priorities and procedures. The priorities are life, property, and natural resources, in that order. He said the level of fire (1 to 5 with five being extreme) is what triggers the appropriate response and depends on not just the local condition but also the national picture. He said real fires trump prescribed burns, even though there have been expenses and time involved in the preparation for the prescribed burns.

The incident commander is the contact person for ranchers and permittees in a wildland fire. The main instruction is for private parties to stop fighting the fire once the BLM fire team arrives. They can be of greater help to the IC in identifying property or animals threatened, and by pointing out egress and ingress, and by being available for communication. He said

BLM will be backed by the government as long as it follows policy. The incident commanders or other personnel can be held liable if they step outside standard policy.

Suggestions following the presentation were:

1. Advise what ranchers and permittees can do *BEFORE* BLM shows up. When showing the presentation, address this *before* the section that describes the incident-command system, then focus on liability issues.
2. Encourage ranchers who still want to fight fires to get the required training and qualification.
3. Consider who might be liaison-types in the ranching communities.
4. Mr. Simonds suggested that BLM encourage the Forest Service to create a similar presentation for recreationists to help educate them on fire behavior.
5. Make the presentation to county sheriffs.

Review calendars and set dates for next two quarterly meetings

Tentative dates for the full RAC are May 22 and August 28. The meeting was adjourned. Minutes prepared by Becky Desmond, note taker.

Certified by

<u> /S/ </u>	<u> 05-22-07 </u>	<u> /S/ </u>	<u> 05-22-07 </u>
Gilbert Green	Date	Jerry L. Taylor	Date
RAC Chairman		Boise District Manager	

Appendix

1. Boise and Twin Falls RAC Recreation Subcommittee Members--notebook.
2. Resume for Carl Wilgus, State Travel Director, Idaho--notebook.
3. BLM Fire Fighting Coordination and Cooperation with Permittees and Private Landowners--power point handout from Andy Delmas.