

## **BOISE DISTRICT RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

**July 13, 2011**

**Boise District Office - Main Conference Room**

**3948 Development Avenue, Boise, Idaho**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Boise District (BD) Council Members Present:** Gilbert Green, Dr. Neil Rimbey, Donna Bennett, Gene Gray, Brian McDevitt, Rick Raymondi, and Grant Simonds.

**BD Council Members Absent:** Dr. Ted Hoffman, Richard Just, John Robison, Ralph Richardson, Nate Helm, and Brenda Richards.

**BLM Advisory Present:** Aden Seidlitz, Acting Idaho Associate State Director/District Manager; Arnie Pike, Acting District Manager; MJ Byrne, BD RAC Coordinator.

**Other BLM Staff Present:** Amanda James, Acting Associate District Manager; Terry Humphrey, Four Rivers Field Office (FRFO) Manager; Matt McCoy, FRFO Assistant Manager; Tricia Roller, Morley Nelson Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) Manager; Aimee Betts, Acting Bruneau Field Office Manager; Lance Okeson, Fuels Management; Maile Adler, OMA Outdoor Recreation Planner - Implementation; Jon Beck, District Planner/Lead FRFO Resource Management Plan (RMP); and Barbara Albiston, Writer-Editor (Note taker).

**Guests present:** Michael McLaskey, a reporter for the new publication *Idaho Outdoor Journal* and Stacey Baczkowski, Idaho Power/RAC nominee.

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

Before the meeting began, MJ Byrne stated that she had the verbal proxies of Ralph Richardson and Brenda Richards, and the written proxy of Nate Helm; therefore, a membership quorum existed and the meeting could continue. Gil Green then opened the meeting. The meeting began at 9:40 a.m. with introductions from the people present, for the benefit of Mr. McLaskey. Gil thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

### **Approval of agenda/review of March 2, 2011 Action Items:**

A motion to approve the agenda for July 13 was presented by Brian McDevitt, and seconded by Gil. The vote was unanimous.

The **Action Items** from the March 2, 2011 meeting were reviewed.

1. Provide number of acres of key sage-grouse habitat and Leks burned in five large fires in BFO and FRFO this summer (Crowbar, Hot Tea, Pot, Turn and Blacksheep fires). Updated number of Leks and acres of key habitat burned will be reported when BDO responds to the annual Greater Sage-grouse data call. **Information provided 4/20/11.**

2. Grant Simonds requested BLM give a presentation for the Recreation river system sub-group. **Sub-group meeting held on 4/8/11.**
3. Lance will contact Ted Hoffman about dozing lines on private property. **Lance said this information was presented during the field trip.**
4. Ted will see if there is any private property closer to the field trip where he could illustrate the “dozing” problem. **The particular parcel was too far away from the scheduled field trip locations.**
5. Ted Hoffman will send comments to MJ on his proposed access guidelines revisions. **MJ received the comments from Ted.**
6. MJ will send out information on the cheatgrass and medusahead management field trip in Jordan Valley on June 6, 2011. **MJ sent out the information in May.**

### **Hot Topics:**

Aden Seidlitz welcomed everyone, and said he and Boise District Office had been busy since the last RAC meeting.

**Personnel situation at BDO:** He is now the Acting Associate State Director until August 6, and Arnie is the Acting Boise District Manager. Buddy Green, Owyhee Field Manager, is moving to the Wyoming SO as Deputy State Director, Resource Policy & Management; Steve Jirik, Assistant Owyhee Field Manager, was selected for the Idaho SO Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Lead, and Chris Robbins’ detail is up as Acting Supervisory Range Specialist. The Acting Owyhee Field Manager will be Glen Burkhardt, from the SO fire office, while Buddy's position is re-advertised. Dave Wolf, Associate District Manager, is retiring September 2.

**68 permit litigation:** An NEPA Permit Renewal (NPR) Team is being established. Jason Sutter, Wildlife Biologist, Owyhee Field Office, (OFO), and Brian McCabe, Archeologist, OFO, were selected for two of the positions, along with two individuals from the BLM’s Vale District Office. Aden said he will really need to focus his attentions to the OFO to back fill behind these vacancies. Jake Villapando, who previously held the Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist for OFO, who currently holds a Resource Coordinator position in Wyoming, has been selected to be the NPR Project Manager, with a report date of August 28.

Aden stressed to importance of active involvement and ongoing communications with ranchers who have permits to be renewed that are part of the Stipulated Agreement for renewal of the 68 permits, and other interested parties.

**Gateway West:** BLM will be coming out with a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but there will be no "preferred alternative." Instead, it is going to present all alternatives to the public and make a final decision following the close of the comment period in October, and publish it in the Final EIS. The document is presently at the BLM Washington Office (WO) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**China Mountain:** The project is out for comment on its draft EIS. It was stated that the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes have an agreement to monitor impacts from the project once it’s operational.

**Sage-grouse and bighorn sheep:** There was a meeting with all western BLM State Directors in Montana with senior US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) personnel over these issues. BLM will be discussing options to address these issues.

### **Subgroup Reports:**

#### **1. Resource Management Plan (RMP) Sub-group/Four Rivers (Attachment A)**

Jon gave the RAC members a synopsis of the changes made to the Four Rivers RMP. Gil said there will be new RAC members coming on after September who might want to be briefed on the planning process. Ted Hoffman was not present to lead the discussion, so Jon continued. He said the changes are relatively minor, although some changes were made, primarily to the fuels management section. The RMP is Jon's #1 priority. The draft RMP/EIS will be reviewed by Idaho State Office (SO) specialists by the end of this fiscal year, and then goes to BLM's offices located in Washington, D.C. (WO) after their comments are incorporated into the document. He would like comments from the RAC as soon as possible so they can be incorporated into the draft RMP/EIS before it is sent to Idaho SO and WO.

There was no discussion on any points in the Management Actions (MA) Common to All; MA Common to B, C, and D; MA Alternative C; or MA Alternative D. (Hand out provided to RMP Subgroup prior to the RAC meeting)

#### **Section: MA Common to B and D**

- Realty and Wildlife: There was a question about conflicting criteria on the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's special wildlife tracts. Gil asked if this wording would preclude land transfers with the State of Idaho.
  - Jon said he would add clarification (i.e., possible exchanges with State agencies would be permitted).
- Wildlife, Recreation, Transportation: Donna asked about the Dewey and Parma closures. If they are closed, where would the people go?
  - Jon said there are two other areas that people can use near Emmett and Weiser.
- Special Designations, Economics and Recreation: Neil wanted clarification about definition of wilderness characteristics of area around Oxbow Reservoir and Wildhorse River near OX Ranch.
  - Jon stated that the language was changed from the original "wildlands" version per instructions from WO that potential lands would be managed for "wilderness characterists."

#### **Section: MA Common to C and D**

- Special Designations, Special Species Plants, Grazing: Jon provided clarification of Rebecca Sandhill grazing closure; it should say restricted grazing (closed in the spring).

#### **Section: MA B/C/D**

- Curlew Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): Jon mentioned that the Curlew ACEC has had considerable interest for development the last few years. Alternative C proposes to shrink the ACEC east of Interstate 84.
  - Neil asked if the Shirts' bought out Brad Little's grazing allotments in the ACEC? Are there any plans to change back to sheep?

**Action Item: Find out who has the permit for the Curlew ACEC now. (Terry will get to MJ)**

A meeting for the RMP Sub-group to go over the materials presented will be August 3, 2011. Gil suggested that the RAC "empower" the sub-group to come up with a recommendation to present to them concurrent with the SO review.

**Gene moved that the RAC “empower” the subgroup as specified by Gil. Gil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

Brian asked Jon if the RAC could also make a recommendation during the public comment period. Jon said, “ Yes”.

## **2. RMP Sub-group report on “Orchard Experimental Restoration Site Field Day” in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National conservation Area (NCA) (Attachment B)**

The BLM established 360 acres for a research station in the 1980s. Currently, BLM is conducting sage-brush studies, at the experimental station, the using local sage-brush species. Several District RAC Members attended and commented on the field day, held on June 28, 2011. Rick Raymondi indicated he was impressed by the presentation, but thought there was a bias towards native species; however, the number of species available was very good. Gene Gray asked why some of the seeds that were successes weren't harvested, and then used to see how they would work in the NCA? Dr. Neil Rimbey asked if BLM was using Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) weather data to correlate with their information. Grant Simonds commented about the diverse representation in attendance on the field day, many of whom were involved in some of the experiments. He was interested in hearing explanations from the scientific community about why over 1/2 million acres of cheatgrass has dies over the past decade, near Winnemucca, Nevada.

**Action Item: MJ will send out copies of the notes from the NCA field day to the RAC members.**

## **3. Breaking the Fire Cycle Symposium Subgroup (Attachment C)**

All RAC members received a DVD of the Fire Cycle Symposium held on February 1 and 2, 2011. One hundred copies were made to give out to interested people. Aden said John Biar and Ted Hoffman are working together on some management actions that could be implemented now in fuels management.

## **4. OHV and Travel Management/Owyhee Initiative Board (Attachment D)**

No report was available today since John Robison was absent.

**Action Item: MJ will send out the report when received from John.**

## **5. Sage-Grouse Habitat Management (Attachment E)**

Donna reported on the field trip to the juniper mastication site where work was done 18 months ago. It was an amazing improvement. New plants and sedges are coming up in the riparian area. The group had hoped to see the new machine, but it was unavailable; it had become stuck in a bog in eastern Oregon. The next removal project will be on private land. The other area where a restoration was done had forbs coming back within four months.

She had not talked to Michele yet about what the wet spring did to young sage-grouse. The grant

for the restoration plan "may" have been approved for funding despite what the letter says; there is some confusion at present. (**Attachment E**)

Neil said the projects are in the Stage 3 areas to try to bring them back into brood-rearing habitat. He was impressed with the tour, but thinks there needs to be long-term maintenance since the cost was ~\$175 an acre. Next step might be doing some prescribed burns in late fall-early summer when moisture would prevent the burning of sage-brush also.

### **BREAK 11:10 - 11:25**

#### **Implementation Actions of the Owyhee Public Lands Management Act (OMA) - Update (Maile Adler, Outdoor Recreation Planner for OMA ) (Attachments F and G)**

Maile introduced herself to the RAC members. Her topics included:

- Personnel are reviewing State lands with OII for cherrystem roads. The next field trip is scheduled for July 28.
- Surveys and legal descriptions have been completed for Big Jacks and Little Jacks Creek Wildernesses Areas. They will be sent to BLM WO for review and to Congress.
- Three acquisitions have been completed. A 14.5 acre parcel was split out of the Anchustegui parcel to provide access/parking for the Little Jacks Creek area.
- Fence construction began on the Burghardt Allotment to allow buy-out/retirement of 1,599 Animal Unit Months for grazing.
- The feasibility package for the Riddle Ranch exchange only received one comment during the public comment period.
- Five public meetings were completed to discuss wilderness and wild and scenic rivers (W&SR) new legislation.
- A new boating guide of the Owyhee, Bruneau, and Jarbidge rivers will reflect changes to them from W&SR legislation and shifts in rapids and campgrounds due to high water in these rivers the last four months.

Donna said that there is a campground that is now within the wilderness and no place for hunters or recreationists to stage. Aden said that John Robison is working on a proposal to amend the boundary. However, this will require Congressional action to alleviate this problem.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

**Grant:** He wanted to take a few minutes during the public comment period to reflect on how the RAC has changed since he is retiring from the BD RAC this year that he felt would provide for a couple of stories. He has served under many Federal administrations. During the 1980's, the RAC didn't support "selling off land"; in the 1990s, subgroups were used extensively to help write the rangeland health standards and guides. The last time he became a member again, he helped with the organization of the Payette River sub-group and urged continuation of it. He volunteered to remain on the Recreation RAC, which provides advice to BLM and the U.S. Forest Service regarding the change in any fees for additional amenities/maintenance for various campgrounds located in south central, south western, and west central Idaho. He thanked Chairman Green for his relaxed management, style and MJ for her leadership and "great \$5 lunches," which were very much appreciated. He plans to continue to be involved in the Owyhee

Initiative Board of Directors for wild and scenic rivers (WSR). He appreciated serving with all members of the RAC, and wants to stay involved in the Payette River Working Group. He asked MJ to keep his email address on the RAC's distribution and mailing lists. Chairman Green thanked Grant for his attendance, being prepared and actively contributing during the RAC meetings. His leadership in the development of the subgroup charters, last year, is appreciated. MJ thanked Grant for his active and enthusiastic membership of the Recreation RAC Sub-Group. His leadership as Chairperson of that subgroup played a vital role in the successful deliberations and recommendations forwarded to BLM and the U.S. Forest Service, addressing proposed fee changes to several recreation areas across the Sawtooth, Boise and Payette National Forests.

**Michael McLaskey:**

Joe Evancho (Idaho Business Review) is the owner of this new publication which is set for its debut next week. It will be printed every two weeks and will be by subscription with a website. Its focus is coordination for outdoors groups. He thanked MJ for her invitation to attend the RAC meeting. He said there are a lot of interesting issues the RAC members have discussed, that will make for good articles for the Journal.

**WORKING LUNCH 12:00 -12:30 p.m.**

Aden thanked Grant for his time and work as a member of the RAC for the second time. He also thanked Gil for the job he's done as the Chairman of the RAC. MJ said that Gil and his wife, Renee' attended every BLM hosted public meeting during the development of the NCA and Bruneau RMP's. MJ presented BLM/RAC member insignia vests to retiring RAC Members Gil, Brian, and Grant in appreciation for their volunteer services to BLM.

**Action: MJ will present vests to Nate and John, who were not present, but are also retiring from the RAC.**

Donna asked Aden if there were going to be information kiosks along the edges of the wilderness areas where individuals of groups could sign in and indicate where they intended to hike, so others will have a record to know which direction a person was hiking if he/she did not return home at the expected date and time. She had heard of a person who had been "life flighted" out due to heat exhaustion.

Brian asked Grant if self-permitting would be established for the WSR sections. Grant didn't know about the self-permitting, but felt there needs to be some limits, because of river conditions (like this year) where 1/2 the season was lost due to high water.

**Fuel Break Project- "Changing the Paradigm" - Update by Kathi Kershaw, Botanist, and Lance Okeson, Coordinator, Boise District's Fuels Management Team (Attachment H)**

Lance Okeson was acting for Andy Delmas, District Fire Manager, and gave an update on fire activity on the District. There have been 27 human-caused fires so far this year; of that number 17 were associated with travel corridors, 26 fires were in the "Paradigm Change" Project region located east of Boise, and eight were off of Interstate 84 (I-84); all within the last month. Fuel load statistics have been taken since 1996 at the Orchard station and this is the highest year ever with 6,528 pounds (perennials, cheatgrass, and litter). Kathi explained how collections are done at the Orchard project. There are 12 plots, clippings are put in a bag, and then the components

are separated out. Researchers are presently doing sagebrush calculations on the moisture in the plants.

Lance said the mowing project for I-84 is behind scheduled completion. The people who were supposed to do the work (co-operators) either retired or have other priorities. He thinks he needs to go up the "food chain" to get priorities changed so the work can be completed by the end of July. He also told the RAC that fire personnel proposed two additional sections for the Mountain Home-Glenns Ferry area. The green lines on the map he provided for the RAC, are the roads proposed to use as fuel breaks (all ground truthing done), but need BLM's standard clearances done. Red lines are preliminary (what's available now) to break large areas into smaller, more defensible areas. There will be some logistics problems with the Oregon Trail due to its special designation. There are existing green strips along the railroad, which has better connections.

The Boise Front fuels reduction project timeframe has been delayed until spring 2013. Clearances and assessment work will be done next summer.

Gene thanked Kathi and Lance for the quick turn-around time on getting this project started. Neil asked how much the lines changed from public comments and information gathered at the symposium. Kathi explained why a few small "tweaks" were made, and showed on a map where they were located. Brian asked how monitoring will be done. Kathi and Lance both answered. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has contacted BLM to provide support with this project so they can do similar work on private land. The proposed Mayfield community developers have promised money for the project also. Neil asked what the priority was. Lance responded that the "green lines" are the boundaries for the first phase (350 miles). MJ said that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was a cooperator at the symposium and said they have asked to help in this endeavor. Neil and Gil both stated that the RAC Symposium was a great effort that is only the beginning of a lot of hard work yet to be accomplished in order to achieve the goals identified after the symposium. The RAC and BLM can congratulate themselves on the first phase of this effort. It was noted that the group who went on the field trip hosted by Fire wanted to be included in future planning.

**Action: Lance Okeson will notify the RAC about the scoping period for the project's environmental assessment so they can have an opportunity for review.**

Neil suggested having the sub-group meeting on August 2 at 3:00 p.m. and the symposium sub-group meeting at 1:00 p.m.

**Action Item: MJ will send out the e-mail for the two meetings.**

**Action Item: MJ will send a hard-copy of the Scoping/Information Packet to Ted Hoffman**

**Break 1:40 - 1:55**

**Review and Discussion on the Field Office Reports** (provided to the RAC as handouts, copies attached):

**Owyhee Field Office (Appendix I)**

The big issues were changes in personnel, permit renewals, travel management goals, realty

actions, and a water rights issue with a Land Use Plan permit.

Brian asked for clarification on the water rights issue and was told the reasons why a new permit would not be issued. Brian wondered why it appeared as though BLM, a Federal agency, was enforcing State water laws. Buddy encouraged the RAC to explore this question with Idaho Department of Water Resources, and to ask for further updates from Aden.

### **Bruneau Field Office (Appendix II)**

The Bruneau issues are grazing permits and their subsequent decisions, litigation, restoration projects, and a land exchange.

The RMP is on hold, but Arnie hopes to get Chapter 3 out to the RAC in early 2012 and to those agencies that will either be cooperating or on the Intergovernmental Coordination Group (ICG).

There is a sage-brush mowing project proposed. Rick asked if mowing is a viable choice for fire suppression. Arnie told him how the sagebrush would be mowed down to 6-12 inches to reduce flame length. Donna said that the DuBois sage-grouse Local Working Group has done that for several years for fire prevention. MJ asked how many acres this would entail. Arnie replied that the field office was going to do small parcels at the project's beginning.

Donna asked about the Riddle Ranch land exchange. Arnie said that one comment was received. They are also in consultation with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes on this.

### **Four Rivers Field Office (Appendix III)**

The Boise City Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being circulated for signatures. The permit renewals are progressing. There were NEPA clearances on 25,000 acres this year.

There is plenty going on in realty (i.e., trespass, rights-of-way, etc.) Terry is not entertaining any exchange proposals until the RMP is completed. There has been a resurgence of mining notices lately with the increase in gold and silver prices. It is hard to keep ahead of them all because, by law, the notices have a 15-day response deadline. Transportation planning is starting for Big Willow area, located in Gem County northwest of Boise. Packard's milkvetch is a Candidate Plant Species under the Endangered Species Act which, to date, has been found in this area anywhere in the country. The plant's habitat is being impacted by Off-Highway Vehicle travel, therefore a temporary closure has been announced. BLM is communicating with OHV groups who have offered to help develop a travel management plan for the area in order to help keep some of it open for local family enjoyment. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Eagle for a parcel of land under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act is on-going. Neil asked about the MOU with the City of Boise addressing issues in the Wildland Urban Interface, the Boise foothills. Brian asked about the resurgence of mining notices. Are they for decorative rock? Terry said, "No; they deal with placer mining."

### **NCA Update- Patricia Roller, Manager (Appendix IV)**

Tricia said that a grant award of \$500,000 for a Joint Fire Science Project in the NCA will start with development of an EA in October, 2011. The project will last for three years. There are some changes proposed for the Swan Falls Recreation Site. The NCA received a Seeds for Success grant. There is an on-going golden eagle telemetry project to see where eagles are hunting and what, along with the winter raptor habitat use trend inventory and raptor migration projects. Her personnel are engaged in grazing permit renewals, environmental education programs, and a temporary vehicle closure due to resource damage/disturbance from a trespass.

There was a question from Brian about where the seedlings were being grown. The seedlings are being grown in greenhouses located at the Idaho Botanical Gardens/Old Penitentiary site located west of Boise. The greenhouses are owned by Boise State University.

Donna asked if the excessive amount of water, from this spring's very high precipitation, in the LEPA slickspots has affected them. Tricia said, "Yes, the water depths have delayed their growth."

Neil asked if the NCA's fire science grant could be used along/within the fire polygon. Tricia said that it cannot, since it is just for the NCA because the proposal was sent in two years ago.

Neil wanted to know if there could be some cross-boundary communication between RACs to see if there are common issues they could work on together. Gil said there had been state-wide meetings the last several years. MJ asked if the RAC members would like to draft a letter to the SO putting forward this idea. Terry felt that Neil was looking at a broader area. Neil said a letter to the SO could start the process, but it might also be helpful to address to Bob Abbey, BLM Director, and Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

Gene moved that the RAC send a letter to Idaho's BLM Director suggesting a joint Idaho RAC meeting to discuss "areas of concern." Brian seconded the motion. It was approved. It was also suggested that there be a "Great Basin-wide" RAC meeting be held to discuss issues on a regional basis.

**Action Item: Neil will draft the letter to Idaho BLM State Director Steve Ellis.**

Gil thanked everyone for the work they do as a RAC, and the ideas they advance. "No one is afraid to speak up and that's good for a group". Neil thought that BLM is evolving from a "BLM has to do this so just listen and rubber-stamp us" attitude to actually listening to ideas/concerns/recommendations from the RAC and implementing some of them.

**Next RAC Meeting:** None. MJ indicated is the last meeting for this fiscal year until new appointments are made to fill vacancies. **Note: After checking the record, it was noted there is one more meeting during FY2011, scheduled for September 21.**

**Reminder of dates discussed for sub-group meetings/Identifying dates for field trips**

Both sub-group meetings will occur on August 2, 2011. No field trips are planned.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Barbara Albiston  
Note taker

Minutes certified by:

\_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_  
Gil Green  
BDO RAC Chairperson

09-30-11  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_/S/\_\_\_\_\_  
Aden L. Seidlitz  
District Manager, BDO

09-30-11  
Date

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Owyhee Field Office Update Resource Advisory Council Meeting July 13, 2011**

#### **I. Personnel Changes**

- Buddy Green, Field Manager, is transferring to the Wyoming State Office to be the Deputy State Director, Resource Policy & Management.
- Steve Jirik, Assistant Field Manager, is transferring to the Idaho State Office, ESR/Weeds Coordinator.
- Glen Burkhardt, Fuels Specialist, Idaho State Office (ISO), is to be Acting Field Manager, in the interim. The hiring process is underway to permanently fill the position.
- Jason Sutter, Wildlife Biologist, will be joining the ISO Enterprise Team.

#### **II. Range Program**

##### ***Trout Springs Allotment***

- Environmental Assessment for the renewal is nearing completion.
- Hanley Ranch Partnership Litigation:
  - OHA Administrative Law Judge Holt ruled in favor of BLM.
  - Hanley Ranch Partnership appealed to IBLA.
  - BLM submitted response to the Statement of Reasons.
  - Owyhee County Filed a Motion to Intervene.
  - BLM is now preparing a response to the County's Motion.
  - IBLA should rule in approximately September/October 2011.

##### **-Payne Ranch LLC**

- Permit to be issued after IBLA ruling for Hanley Ranch Partnership.
- Protest/Appeal anticipated when the Payne Ranch LLC permit is issued.

##### ***Pole Creek Allotment***

- Environmental Assessment for the renewal nearing completion.
- Proposed Decision to the Moore's to be issued soon after incorporating technical review comments to the EA.
- Protest/Appeal anticipated on Moore Permit Issuance.

##### ***Nickel Creek FFR Allotment***

- Public Scoping completed.
- Interdisciplinary Team doing field review of land health assessment findings July 20-21<sup>st</sup>, 2011.
- Upon finalizing the assessment and alternatives, work will begin on the Environmental Assessment.
- Protest/Appeal anticipated on permit issuance.

### ***Fossil Butte Group***

- A second public scoping has been completed.
- Currently undergoing alternative development and clarification.
- Upon finalizing the alternatives, work will begin on the Environmental Assessment.

### **III. Recreation**

#### ***Winter/Spring 2011***

- Continued implementation of the Murphy Travel Management Plan
  - Installed closure signs between Rabbit Creek Road and Silver City Road. Last season we completed everything from Reynolds Creek Canyon to Rabbit Creek Road. Estimated 40% complete with closure signage.
  - Rehabilitated approximately 20 miles of routes with SWECO dozer.
  - Maintained approximately 50 miles of ATV routes.
  - Partnered with IDPR again this season who maintained an additional 20 miles of ATV routes with a SWECO dozer and 10 miles of single track trail with a mini excavator.
  - Continued partnership with Great Basin Institute who is about 90% complete in installations of numbered signs on designated routes for entire subregion.
  - GBI also maintained approximately 30 miles of single track trail and rehabbed another 15 miles of closures with 10 person hand crews throughout the spring.
  - Implemented 4 new seasonal closures for the protection of Golden Eagles.
  - Implemented 68 miles of closures for sage grouse
  - Produced an interim paper map of the trail system and made available to the public via website. Next season we will apply for grants to publish a 24x30 two sided colored map, as well as kiosk and informative materials to make available to the public.
  - Applied for IDPR grants with GBI in December to continue implementation and maintenance of the Murphy Plan and maintenance of the Wilson Creek Plan as well.

Due to a lack of funding, this season we focused mainly on maintaining what was implemented in 2010 as opposed to implementing more of the subregion and losing the progress we have made. With two consecutive wet springs, the area from Reynolds Creek Canyon South to Rabbit Creek Road is doing well.

- Worked with SWIMBA mountain bike group and performed single track trail maintenance in Wilson Creek Travel Management area.
- Worked with Idaho ATV Association on 2 trash cleanups along the Owyhee Front.
- Held a National Motorcycle event in March (SIDRA), National Bird Dog Trial event, mtn. bike Race, equestrian endurance rides, running race, pioneer trek, and a motorcycle poker run.
- Worked with motorcycle groups to develop more protective measures for resources during events.

- Cleaned and repaired some major vandalism issues at the Jump Creek Rec site. Working on maintaining road into rec site.
- Involved in public meetings for the Owyhee County Travel Plan as well as meetings for wilderness and wild and scenic river plans.

#### **IV. Realty Program**

##### ***Silver Falcon Mining (SFM)***

-BLM issued a five year ROW to SFM for the haul road on lower War Eagle Mtn.

-BLM issued a FLPMA ROW to Owyhee County for the Silver City Road from the highway to Ruby Junction. SFM must work with the County on the use of Silver City Road.

-No hauling until Memorial Day or the County officially opens the road.

-Snow clearing off later this year.

Update:

- BLM has not observed nor have Silver City residents reported any trucks hauling this year.
- Silver Falcon submitted a ROW application for roads on the top of War Eagle to access their tailings piles from the top.
- Environmental Conservation Services (ECS) provided clearances which were reviewed by BLM specialists and found inadequate.
- BLM specialists have provided information for ECS to beef up their clearance reports.
- BLM is waiting for those reports for final review / ECS will be writing the Environmental Assessment with review by BLM specialists.
- Silver Falcon has also submitted an application to amend the ROW for their road to the Diamond Creek mill facility to include the blacktop that was not part of the original ROW
- Silver Falcon has also submitted an application to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality for a permit to add chemical processing to their mill facility on Diamond Creek.
- The County is still awaiting engineering plans from SFM for upgrades to the Silver City Road so that the County may apply for a ROW with the BLM.

##### ***Macks Creek Ponds/Farming (Owen Orndorff)***

- On March 10, 2011 the OFO sent Owen Orndorff a letter notifying him that it had been brought to BLM's attention that he does not possess a water right to irrigate the 20 acres of public land associated with his May 2009 land use permit (LUP) for farming this area.
- Orndorff's previous attempts to acquire a water permit for this parcel were protested by other water users in the drainage and had been denied by the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR). Since he does not possess a water right for this area, BLM is canceling his LUP to farm these 20 acres.

- Whether he is able to obtain a water right for this area or not, BLM will not reissue a LUP for this area for the following reasons:
  - In addition to many other nondiscretionary work load requirements, the OFO is under a court ordered deadline for the reissuance of grazing permits.
  - The resources required to litigate the water rights concerns with the water users of the Reynolds Creek area in order to allow farming 20 acres of public land is not a cost efficient or a productive use of tax payer dollars, and are counterproductive to accomplishing our work plan objectives.
  - There are questionable wildlife benefits derived from farming this parcel of public land, especially in light of our other responsibilities.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Bruneau Field Office Update Boise District Resource Advisory Council Meeting Wednesday, July 13, 2011**

#### **Range Management**

1. Camas Creek Pocket & Nahas FFR Allotments
  - Allotments are meeting the Standards for Rangeland Health
  - Final decisions were sent out yesterday
2. West Castle Creek Allotment
  - Staff is working on the assessment and evaluation
3. Big Spring Allotment
  - The evaluation is complete, but the EA is on hold to make progress on other workloads and the RMP
4. FOIA
  - FOIA request from Katie Fite (WWP) for information on the Battle Creek, East Castle Creek, and West Castle Creek allotments, including information regarding Wilderness
  - West Castle Creek and East Castle Creek portions completed on May 23 and June 20, respectively
  - Battle Creek portion will be completed on July 18
5. Battle Creek Projects
  - Hutch Spring project on hold pending litigation
6. Battle Creek Lawsuit
  - BLM filed an administrative record on May 31
  - Is being handled as a hearing by motion at this time

#### **Bruneau RMP**

1. Completed the wilderness character inventory
2. Staff has had weekly meetings to review and revise alternatives for each resource and use

- Suspended weekly meetings to complete West Castle Creek evaluation and field work
  - Will work on RMP again in the late fall and winter
  - Plan to present draft alternatives to the RAC in the winter (Jan-Mar)
  - Plan to have public meetings on draft alternatives next spring
3. Sent invitations to 9 Federal, State, and local agencies to establish cooperating agency relationship or to participate through the Intergovernmental Coordination Group
- Accepted Cooperating Agency invitation:
    - Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
    - Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
    - Mountain Home Air Force Base
  - Will participate through Intergovernmental Coordination Group:
    - Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
    - US Fish and Wildlife Service – Idaho Fish and Wildlife Office

### **Fuels/ESR**

1. Fuel breaks in sage-grouse key habitat
- An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared for a fuels project to mow vegetation adjacent to well-used roads in the east-central portion of the Bruneau FO to protect sage-grouse habitat
  - Roads with sagebrush on both sides of the road would be mowed on both sides
  - Some of the roads in the project area have grass on one side and sagebrush on the other; in this case, greenstrips would be created on the grassy side of the road to protect the sagebrush on the other side of the road
  - Proposed fuel breaks will also provide a safety measure for fire fighters and a defensible fire line by lessening fire intensity at the edge of the road
2. Deer Water Spring project: Protection of pictographs
- Pictographs located in fissure with tumble weed accumulation
  - Area burned in Crowbar Fire on 08/04/2010 causing heat damage to pictographs
  - Construction of a fence to trap tumbleweeds outside the fissure is underway

### **Lands and Realty**

1. Riddle Ranch Land Exchange
- Exchange includes Riddle Ranch lands in the Owyhee River Wilderness at the mouth of Battle Creek and BLM lands surrounding Riddle Ranch private land in the Riddle area
  - Feasibility report was approved by the WO
  - A Notice of Exchange Proposal was published in the Idaho Statesman on May 6 and provided for a 45-day public comment period
  - An EA is being prepared

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Resource Advisory Council Meeting**

**July 13, 2011**

### **Four Rivers Field Office**

#### **FIRE/FUELS/FORESTRY**

- Scoping document for the Paradigm project is ready for RAC review.
- Ada County WUI MOU should be finalized this month, pilot projects to follow.
- Logging on Bennett West Fuelwood/Round Ridge sales should begin in July & mid-August.
- Field crew is working on stand exams in Crouch - Garden Valley area.
- Working on Pumpkin Brainard Fuels Forest Restoration and Fort Hall Hill Forest Health/Fuels Reduction.

#### **RANGE/BOTANY**

- Bennett Mountain grazing permit renewal process focus is on trend monitoring, discussion of proposed projects, clearances, and NEPA analysis.
- NEPA analysis beginning on Goodrich permit renewals post field visits.
- Slickspot peppergrass Stage 1 and 2 surveys are in full swing; at least 25,000 acres have been surveyed.

#### **LANDS and REALTY**

- Currently have 6 lands trespass cases involving agricultural uses, old cabins, and access roads.
- Work proceeds on numerous rights-of-way renewals.
- We received an exchange proposal for the land around Quartzberg, Centerville, and Placerville. The proposal will be considered following completion of the RMP.
- The Dewey exchange is at the WO for review. Review will be delayed as the WO reviewer retired.
- Basin School District #72 R&PP was issued in June.
- Aeromodelers R&PP – expect to issue by first week in August.
- M3 Eagle LLC ROW – the contractor is revising the Biological Assessment and environmental assessment to account for potential critical habitat for LEPA.

#### **MINERALS**

- Another Mining Notice was received in the Horseshoe Bend area.
- In process of finalizing EA for the Almaden Competitive Mineral Material Sale this week.
- Working on numerous compliance inspections for both saleable and locatable minerals, and processing numerous permit and contract renewals for Free Use Permits and Negotiated Sales.
- Working on bonding re-determinations and Notices of non-compliance for a couple of locatable sites near Pioneerville and Old Centerville.

## **RECREATION**

- Held 3 public meetings in Payette and Emmett in June regarding the Big Willow Temporary Closure for Packards Milkvetch. Federal Register is still in the Director's office. We are moving forward with an activity plan for travel management. No enforcement issues so far.
- City of Eagle is reviewing a recreation MOU for cooperative management of foothills above Eagle.
- Operations will be grading BLM's portion of the 8th Street road in the foothills.

## **PLANNING**

- Met with the Blue Ribbon Coalition to discuss long-term options for OHVs in the FRFO RMP.
- Reviewing Chapter 4 of the draft RMP and making changes to maps in Chapter 3.

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Resource Advisory Council Meeting July 13, 2011 Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA**

#### **Joint Fire Science Grant**

With the USGS/Arid Research Station and the Rocky Mtn Research Station, we did receive the grant for the proposal submitted to the Joint Fire Sciences Committee for an Applied Restoration in Cheatgrass Monocultures Research Proposal: to identify Changes in Fuels & Fire Behavior Research Proposal for areas characterized as cheatgrass monocultures. This funding will be made available next FY and will support this project for 3 years. We are putting together the ID team and starting to develop the scoping package.

#### **Swan Falls Recreation**

Swan Falls Dispersed Campground Maintenance (Small 5 acre area) – Continue to rehabilitate (i.e. stabilize and reseed) two-track trails in and around access roads to the dispersed campsites down river from Swan Falls and Idaho Power property. We have started to reinforce the barriers limiting off-road access, while continuing access to the campsites. We are posting interpretation and public education signs about the unique Snake River Canyon resources within this special National Conservation Area.

#### **Seeds of Success Grant**

With the Seeds for Success Restoration Grant for \$30,000 from the Fish and Foundation we have completed assistance agreements with the Idaho Fish and Game for seed collection this summer and with Idaho Botanical gardens to grow out a wide range of local native forbs for planting in restoration efforts within the NCA. The focus for this project is to increase forb diversity for pollinators

### **Golden Eagle Satellite Telemetry project**

Satellite telemetry will be used to study habitat use for Golden Eagles. This project will provide focus for important areas of restoration to improve overall habitat and thus prey base for golden eagles residing in the birds of prey. Numerous fires have reduced sagebrush steppe habitat within the NCA, thus reducing suitable habitat to support a dense prey base. Blacktailed jack rabbits an important prey base for golden eagles have lost thousands's of acres of sagebrush steppe habitat. The NCA has lost approximately 1/3 of the initial inventory of nesting pairs of golden eagles; part of this decline is contributed to reduced prey base due to lost habitat. Golden eagle nesting surveys and territories had been derived back in the 1980's. Numerous fires since then have seen a decline in the number of nesting golden eagles and likely a change in foraging behaviors. The RMP signed in 2008 directs a major restoration effort to provide for the conservation, protection and enhancement of raptor populations. The golden eagle was identified in a 2009 workshop as the raptor species of greatest concern for enhancing habitat.

### **Wintering Raptor Habitat Use in the Birds of Prey National Conservation Area: Current Trends and a Historical Comparison**

The purpose of this project is to inventory wintering raptors in the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, understand wintering raptor distribution patterns and habitat associations, and compare current information to historic data (1991-1993) to gain insight on how changes in habitat and climate may affect wintering raptors in the NCA.

### **Ongoing Raptor Migration Project Challenge Cost Share**

Information gathered from the last two years indicates CJ strike within the birds of prey is an important stopover for migrating raptors. The Mountain Home Airforce base has provided additional funding and is adjacent to the NCA. A letter of interest soliciting additional funding from the OTA , and US Fish and Wildlife Service Regions 1, 2 and 8 will be sent out for 2012 funding. Both agencies have shown an interest in the project. This ongoing telemetry study we will attempt to expand the type of raptor species the units are attached to. There is a possibility of some new less expensive prototypes that would allow us to acquire elevation data as well.

### **Grazing permit renewal status**

Craters (NCA – 2 allotments, 2 permits) – The scoping period has closed and we received no comments from the general public. We are finishing the stage one surveys for LEPA and are working on the biological assessment for this listed plant species and moving forward on development of the Environmental Assessment

### **Environmental Education Program**

So far this fiscal year we have conducted 106 environmental educational programs covering topics related to raptors, habitat, the Snake River and low desert sagebrush steppe ecosystems and heritage/cultural resources. We have reached a total of 6,741 students and 3,483 adults through these programs (10,224 total). Our rehabilitation raptors: Marley, Copper, Merlin and Little Hawk were utilized to enhance educational opportunities at many of these programs.

### **Temporary Motorized Vehicle Closure near Sinker Creek Butte**

We are temporarily closing 65 acres near Sinker Creek Butte due to resource damage/disturbance from a pipeline repair on a ½ mile pipeline. The closure includes 600 feet on each side of the

pipeline. Due to the extremely steep location of the disturbed area along the Snake River Canyon to the Snake River, the closure assists in preventing erosion into the River. In addition, due to the steep nature of the area, the public is being asked to not use motorized vehicles in the area for their safety.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- 1. Action Item:** Find out who has the grazing permit for the Curlew ACEC now. **(Terry will get to MJ). Completed:**
- 2. Action Item:** Send out copies of the notes from the NCA field day to the RAC members. **(MJ) Completed: 7/22/2011**
- 3. Action Item:** Send out copies of the OHV/Travel Management report when received from John Robison. **(MJ) Completed: 7/21/2011**
- 4. Action Item:** Send OMA's draft livestock policy paper to the RAC **(Maile/MJ) Completed: 7/20/2011**
- 5. Action Item:** An e-mail will be sent out for the two meetings scheduled on August 2, 2011. **(MJ) Completed:**
- 6. Action Item:** A hard-copy of the Scoping/Information Packet will be sent to Ted Hoffman. **(MJ) Completed:**
- 7. Action Item:** A letter will be drafted to send to Idaho BLM State Director Steve Ellis about a state-wide RAC meeting. **(Neil) Completed: July 21, 2011**