

Coeur d'Alene Resource Advisory Council Meeting
December 14, 2005

Moscow, Idaho
Labor and Commerce Department
Career Center Conference Room

RAC Members in Attendance:

Category 1: Bruce Brewer, Cliff Osborne, Sheila Barteaux, Ronald Hood

Category 2: William Barteaux, Tom Crimmins, Cora Patterson, Jerry Shriner

Category 3: Aaron Miles, JR Van Tassel, Susie Borowicz, Holly Jaleski

BLM Staff in Attendance:

Lew Brown – District Manager

Stephanie Snook – RAC Coordinator

Greg Yuncevich – Cottonwood Field Manager

Ron Grant – Cottonwood Realty Specialist

Public Attendees: None

Note to readers: A copy of each attachment listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes I son file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Coeur d'Alene District Office. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Stephanie Snook, 208-769-5004.

Welcome - Lew Brown welcomed the RAC members to the meeting and thanked them for taking time to be at the meeting. He hopes we have a productive year as Stephanie Snook completed the orientation for new RAC members prior to the meeting. Brown emphasized that, "Management of public lands is important business; especially for those of us living in the West. Our lives are tied closely to the management of the public land and we appreciate you being on the RAC."

Introductions

Housekeeping/Reviewed agenda items

BLM Overview (Lew Brown)

BLM opened its doors in 1962 at its current location in Coeur d'Alene. We have always managed the lands in the Idaho Panhandle. When the office first opened, there were considerably more acres of public land. A lot of acres were transferred from BLM in exchanges, the State in-lieu selections, and legislated land exchanges. The district presently manages about 250,000 acres scattered over the 11 northern counties; down to Adams county line near McCall. In 1984, BLM went through reorganization and from 1994 to 2004, also administered lands in the Salmon and Challis areas. Since October 1, 2004, Idaho reorganized to better serve folks in Twin Falls. Now the Coeur d'Alene District has two field offices, Cottonwood and Coeur d'Alene. We have 66 employees

including the two Field Offices and the administrative staff. This is a small number compared with offices in the rest of the state. Our lands are very similar to those of the FS, which causes problems because we are not like southern Idaho where livestock grazing is the primary use. Up here, our primary use is forestry. We used to cut 28-30 million feet a year and are down to 6 million a year now. The largest public domain, BLM timber sale program in the state is in our district.

Despite the fact that we have so many small scattered lands, we have the most valuable lands:

Recreation:

- 80 miles along the Lower Salmon River with whitewater recreation program.
- In 2005 the Lower Salmon had 662,000 visitor days of use.
- Other sites in the Cottonwood Field Office had about 560,000 visitor days of use.
- Several recreation sites on the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers.
- Newest premiere facility, Blackwell Island, is located just downstream of Lake Coeur d'Alene along the Spokane River where about 70 boats launch each day during the summer.

The Lower Salmon River canyon is one of the few areas in the United States that is well known for endemism; certain species of plants and animals that have evolved in the area that are separated from other contiguous populations. Some plants, snails and mollusks, are only found here.

BLM has been involved, for the first 20 years in the cleanup efforts in the Silver Valley. These lands were associated with mining claims leaving slivers and bits of public land with hazardous materials. This is a hazardous material area with the largest cleanup effort in the U.S.

Scattered BLM lands with timber values; often lie between other private lands. FS and State lands are important for access to reach other ownerships. We also deal with access issues for rights-of-way and utility corridors. We came close to having caribou habitat but we have grizzly bear and wolf habitat. South of I-90 contains an experimental population of wolves with slightly different regulations than on the north side which are endemic. We have a large number of wintering bald eagles attracting visitors from all over the world.

Public land, abutting private land, within the wildland urban interface present issues which are the "most burning" for us.

This is a well-managed district with a well-tenured staff; quality individuals; and I am proud of our group. Issues we are going to deal with here we'll talk about later in the day including expectations for the RAC.

Stephanie led the group through a review of the RAC Highlights from FY-05 meetings held December 2 and 3, 2004, May 17, 2005, and September 8 and 9, 2005.

Lower Salmon River Mineral Withdrawal Proposal

Greg Yuncevich and Ron Grant came in after lunch to discuss the Lower Salmon River Mineral Withdrawal (see handout). This stretch has been closed to mining for 30+ years. The 20 year withdrawals will be expiring soon. Public comments were received through the mail and from meetings held in Lewiston and Riggins. We received about 90 written comments; including non-profit and other organizations. Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Outfitters and Guides Association, Nez Perce Exec Council, Idaho County Commissioners and others submitted comments. All comments received were in favor of continuing the withdrawal. We are working on updating the information that was compiled 20 years ago which will be incorporated/referenced in the NEPA document, mineral reports, etc. Idaho BLM will make a recommendation and forward it to the Washington headquarters office.

DISCUSSION:

The interest and support appears to be unanimously in favor of continuing the withdrawal. The public land involved is along the river, above the high water line, for one-quarter mile on each side of the river.

Other constraints BLM already have to deal with include Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, etc. BLM doesn't have as much discretion on mining activities and can only include mitigation. The price of gold has changed which could increase interest.

French Creek to Hammer Creek is open for dredge mining under Idaho law but other sections are closed by the state.

This issue was originally brought to the RAC in hopes that the RAC could help with the initial steps of the withdrawal process. Before the RAC had a meeting, however, BLM received the green light from the WO and have continued to keep the RAC up-to-date; with these discussions and the field trip last September to see the area.

Motion made by Clifford Osborne: The Coeur d'Alene District RAC recommends the BLM keep the lands along the Lower Salmon River withdrawn from mineral entry.

Seconded by: JR Van Tassel.

Discussion: W.Barteaux thinks it is a good idea; 662,000 visitor days looking for a natural experience. If the area is opened, the jet boaters will line up to file claims.

"There is more money floating down the river than there is along the banks."

No further discussion; RAC reached consensus.

Recommendation: *The Coeur d'Alene District RAC recommends keeping the lands along the Lower Salmon River withdrawn from mineral entry.* Jerry Shriner will write the letter to Lew.

Whiskey South Project

Greg Yuncevich updated the RAC on this project where the judge ruled that BLM did not meet the standard for NEPA cumulative impacts (catalog of all past events to determine impacts). Heard how BLM and FS is doing it; FS is doing an EIS now in the Elk City

Township. FS is/has negotiated an agreement. We are optimistic that we will be able to meet the requirements.

A. Miles – added statement about the stewardship portion of Whiskey South - existing contract was underway and then stopped until this is resolved. BLM has to go through the NEPA process again; make adjustments to the contract; and then the contractor can move forward.

Yuncevich reported that the restoration work was done first on Whiskey South: Repaired fish barrier culverts; rocked roads and approaches to culverts to reduce sedimentation, harvested 147 acres of lodgepole pine. More restoration work is pending, including road obliterations on the FS. There was not enough timber sold to pay for this work. Timeline to complete the new NEPA document has slipped due to other workloads (RMP and Eastside Township projects).

RAC Expenses

Stephanie reported the RAC travel/meeting expenses incurred for FY-2004 were \$6,436 and in FY-2005 4,463.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Discussed the roles and responsibilities of the RAC members, RAC Coordinator, RAC Chair and how to address public comments.
- RAC Decision-making process:
 - Voting and consensus are both mentioned in the Charter.
 - Define Consensus
 - Consensus-can modify and tweak the decision to satisfy everyone's needs
 - More people have ownership and more commitment -depends on the issue

OLD BUSINESS:

Update on RMPs – RAC Members are encouraged to review and comment individually on the Coeur d'Alene DRAFT RMP/EIS. Asked for a preference to receive a hard copy or CDs of both RMP/EISs.

Public Meeting Scheduled for Coeur d'Alene RMP. Encourage RAC members to attend these meetings:

- February 7 in Wallace
- February 8 in Couer d'Alene
- February 9 in Sandpoint

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of Officers

RAC Chair: Jerry Shriner was elected

Vice-Chair: Cora Patterson

Recreation RACs – nothing new at this time. FLREA information handed out

A. Miles invited the RAC to hold a future meeting or field trip to learn more about the Nez Perce Tribe; Snake River Basin Water Rights Adjudication and settlement almost resulted in a recall of elected tribal officials. Optional field trip depends on the issues.

Dates considered for next meeting – sometime the first two weeks of March.

Potential agenda items: RMP updates, Recreation RACs, WUI/Healthy Forest Projects

Meeting adjourned by RAC Chair at 4:06 p.m.

Minutes recorded by: Stephanie Snook, RAC Coordinator

Minutes approved by: Jerry Shriner, RAC Chair

Date: 3/9/06

Handouts:

Lower Salmon River Withdrawal

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA)

Statement of Lynn Scarlett, Asst. Sec. of the Interior concerning FLREA

Recommendations: *The Coeur d'Alene District RAC recommends keeping the lands along the Lower Salmon River withdrawn from mineral entry.*