

BLM Resource Advisory Council

Final Minutes

Approved February 16, 2011

September 21-22, 2010

Idaho Falls, Idaho

RAC members in attendance on Tuesday, September 21: Otto Higbee, Dave Farnsworth, Lawrence Fox, Ken Koller, Dallan Nalder, William Schutte, Vic Phillips, Louise Stark, Tom Bassista, Claire Casey, Chad Colter. Other attendees: Joe Kraayenbrink (BLM Idaho Falls District Manager), Karen Rice (BLM, Idaho Falls Associate District Manager), Dave Rosenkrance (BLM, Challis Field Office Manager), Steve Hartman (BLM, Salmon Field Office Manager), Wendy Reynolds (Upper Snake Field Office Manager), David Pacioretty (BLM, Pocatello Field Office Manager), Sarah Wheeler (BLM, Upper Snake RAC Coordinator), Liz Townley (Salmon FO Recreation Planner).

Dave Farnsworth and Wendy Reynolds welcomed everyone to the Upper Snake Field Office in Idaho Falls. Public comments were requested, but no comments were received. Wendy Reynolds went over the logistics for the RAC meeting and briefly went over the agenda. This was followed by introductions and the time was turned back to Dave Farnsworth to approve the last meeting's minutes. Tom Bassista had a few comments such as labeling the mine discussed in paragraph 4 on page 1 as "Champagne Mine" to clarify any potential confusion and to remove a typo of TMDL on the 2 paragraph on page 2. Once corrected, Bill Schutte moved to approve the minutes and Claire Casey seconded the motion. The remaining RAC unanimously approved the June minutes.

ROUND ROBIN DISCUSSION

Joe Kraayenbrink: New BLM Idaho State Director was selected. His name is Steve Ellis, he is coming from the Forest Service but has had a lengthy career in the BLM, with part of that time serving in Idaho. He reports October 13th. Susan Gianitino retired this year and was replaced by Jeff Foss.

Budget: The budget is very dismal for FY 2010 and it doesn't look like it will get any better for FY 2012. Ken K. asked what gets cut when the BLM doesn't have money for programs? Joe responded that the seasonal workforce will take a hit, recreation and other sub activities. The fuels projects will be prioritized at a national level with 90% of the funding focused on WUI areas.

Bighorn Sheep: Bighorn Sheep will remain another big issue for BLM this year. As many RAC members knew, the Forest Service was sued on Payette NF Bighorn sheep issue. They did a major plan concerning Bighorn Sheep and domestic sheep and that was recently released in the Payette decision document. Any potential interaction between Bighorn Sheep and domestic sheep within 30 miles could present changes in land use planning and whether people can continue with grazing allotments.

Energy: MSTI power line project is progressing and the EIS is estimated to be out next year. The Gateway project is progressing with its EIS. Tom B. mentioned that Gary Vecellio was appointed by the Governor to look at migration patterns and power line crossing.

Lawsuits: Working pretty heavily

Mining: The industry is definitely keeping the District busy

Wild Horse and Burro: There is going to be a major meeting in December/January to discuss comments received on the plan

Salmon Field Office- Steve Hartmann

Dugout Dick: The Dugout Dick EA is being closed to being finished. Want to keep some of the ice caves open but close everything else because of the danger hazards. Ideally they'll clean up the area and have it reclaimed and have a nice parking area with an interpretive kiosk. Using \$60,000 of AML carryover to do a coarse clean-up and then get more money to continue with plan. Currently, Salmon doesn't expect to develop a recreation site there. The emergency closure is still in place.

TMDL: Completed actual road maintenance work. Project will basically be finished this fall.

Thorium Reclamation: Reclamation is still working on this. Currently prioritizing projects in high use areas.

Grazing: Working on a comprehensive assessment on water base shed. Assessment is done but they are now beginning the NEPA process starting this fall. Permittees kick in 50% and looking at other funding sources and partnerships.

Lemhi Lawsuit: DOJ thought it best to settle. Agreed that on 9/15 the cows come off in bull trout occupied streams. Won't have much of an impact for Salmon but it will increase monitoring. Joe K. stated that Idaho BLM's EJA fees were more than \$400,000 for two lawsuits. Dallan N. commented that it is frustrating to see that grazing permittees may make good recommendations, but can't do it because paperwork gets in the way.

Pocatello- Dave Pacioretty

Dave P. Said that they had a very active field season and were able to effectively utilize their entire seasonal workforce.

Recreation: Travel Management Plan in Bear Lake County is about ¾ the way done. The EA is pretty much complete. The recreation planner picked up grant funding to hire two seasonal to do the work. Maps are almost ready to go. After the Bear Lake plan is finalized, the FO intends to move to the Soda Hill Project.

ARRA: Staff is focusing on signing and inventorying Petticoat Peak WSA. The WSA is located just outside of Bancroft, and staff will be scheduling an open house in Bancroft to discuss the project with local residents.

Pocatello RMP: The protest period ended in June and Western Watersheds and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition protested the decision. Staff has responded and forwarded those responses to Washington Office for review and who will issue formal responses. The ROD is hopefully going to be issued the beginning of FY 2011.

Fire Season: Reasonably tame this year due to the amount of fuel loading and the fact that we had plenty of resources to respond to initial attack.

Lands and Realty: Working with the Shoshone Bannock Tribe on Soda Hills to acquire some desired property adjacent to BLM. Continue to work on Bear Lake NORA- smaller parcels.

Misc.: Pocatello hosting a National Public Lands Day (NPLD) event and the boy scouts and girl scouts are coming to clean up Goodenough Creek Recreation Site near Pocatello. Answered two congressional inquiries; one on the Morgan's Bridge Closure and one dealing with a creek crossing down near Fish Haven.

Challis- Dave Rosenkrance

Litigation: Dealing with the litigation is very time consuming. For the L&W Stone case, the court ordered an EIS be complete in 2005. The ROD was signed in August, but the injunction is in place so the EIS cannot continue. Lost the Burnt Creek case the judge felt that Challis didn't show that they weren't harming the WSA characteristics even though the specific examples cited by the proponents (i.e. fence construction, etc.) were reduced.

Thompson Creek Mine: Public scoping ended in August. They are still looking at the Broken Wing Ranch with the EIS. The scoping report should be out within the next month. The RAC's recommendation will be in the field of alternatives.

Misc.: Challis will be rebuilding the Deadman's Hole recreation site and consolidating and removing the boatramp. Looking at having a fire use EA which would allow Challis the opportunity to reintroduce fire back in the ecosystem rather than requiring 100% suppression. Bill S. asked how do we find the root cause of increased litigation. Field Office managers felt that the NEPA process itself just opens up more room for litigation.

Upper Snake – Wendy Reynolds

White Nose Bat Syndrome (WNBS): The WNBS is a disease affecting bat populations. The FS has closed a lot of caves in hopes of preventing the spread. The Upper Snake has approximately 150 caves but not all are occupied by bats. They are looking at being proactive and taking steps to mitigate the issue. The Fungus/virus is carried by humans from cave to cave.

Litigation: BLM/FS/Outfitter Guide Association is being sued by Black Dog outfitters because they feel like unallocated user days should be given to him for his commercial use. It ultimately boils down to the South Fork's capacity issues. The RMP (which is currently in process) will set the level of capacity on the South Fork.

Misc.: two deaths on the South Fork this year and 4 deaths on the sand dunes. The RMP is consuming a considerable amount staff time due to the decision to do it in house.

SALMON TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Liz Townley, Recreation Planner for the Salmon FO, discussed the STMP and Salmon's need to create a route system that was adaptable, implementable, executable and reasonable. The major contentious issue that resulted with this plan was the private/public land issue when individuals would be required to use private lands to access public lands. Salmon developed 4 alternatives:

1. Existing conditions/maximize access (this is what is currently there) – approximately 550 miles
2. Balanced approach which would decrease redundant routes – approximately 366 miles
3. Alternative 2 plus an additional 28 miles of routes (but this still needs to address some private/public land issues – of the 28 miles, most land owners do not allow public access) – approximately 366+28 miles
4. Minimum access- natural/cultural resource values are weighed more heavily than recreational use – approximately 147 miles.

Lawrence asked are there areas where only private land owners can access public trails. Liz answered yes. There is some concern that the BLM would not be able to secure all the land because they don't have a lot of recourse options (would not use eminent domain). Ideally the BLM would like to implement alternative 2 with portions of alternative 3, which would ultimately designate 336 miles of routes open and meet the goals of the TMP. In the next 2-3 weeks the public will be able to review the plan and the Salmon FO will incorporate any substantive comments. The FO is thinking about providing free downloads on GPS systems so users can just download legal routes and trails. Hope to implement the plan in the summer of 2011.

Bill made a motion to endorse the current range of alternatives and plan with a heavy recommendation to encourage RAC members to add their specific comments during the comment period. Tom B. seconded the motion. Claire stated that she felt the quiet recreation community had been left behind and that hikers were not considered in the range of alternatives. Chad C. was not prepared to endorse the EA portion of the plan at this time because he had not been able to review it in depth. Bill's motion passed with 7 in favor and 2 opposed. Dave F. urged members of the RAC to make their concerns known during the comment period.

UPPER SNAKE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Presentation given by Terry Smith, project lead for the USFO RMP. Joe K. started out by saying he would like to get the RAC's endorsement on the range of alternatives and see if they thought the BLM was headed in the right direction.

Background, Key issues and Timeline

- Upper Snake planning area 7.1 million acres across 13 counties. Field office manages 8 million acres; 6 million acres are managed under 4 land use plans completed in the early 1980s.
- This current plan will have a more interdisciplinary approach and will allow for more consistent management of resources

Upper Snake identified key issues to develop range of alternatives:

1. Public Access
2. Land Tenure Adjustment

3. Sagebrush Steppe
4. Livestock grazing
5. Recreation
6. Travel Management
7. Socioeconomics

The scoping document was prepared after scoping period and is available online. It incorporates public comments. The team is now asking themselves how to group these issues/conflicts together to form action alternatives. So far, they have come up with the following alternatives:

- Alternative A (no action)
- Alternative B (conservative restoration, resources take priority)
- Alternative C (personal because it differs from person to person. Found a shift in sense of place from east to west)
- Alternative D (looking more at uses and extraction of uses while still managing resources)
- Alternative D-1 (subset to Alternative D because it is a use commodity production)

RAC members asked how long the plan will be effective; the answer was about 10-15 years. Chad mentioned that access was key to all of the points in change of place, so why not keep access common to all the alternatives. The RAC liked the sense of place concept but felt that the devil would be in the details.

Bill Schutte moved to endorse the methodology the Upper Snake Staff Members were utilizing to develop their resource management plan, and the belief that the range of alternatives that the staff were proposing were reasonable. Ken Koller seconded the plan. All RAC members approved

CHAMPAGNE MINE

Presented by Dan Kotansky

Champagne Mine is located 15 miles northwest of Arco. Mining has been there since 1880s, in the mid 1980s a gold mine company came in and left in the 1990s. In spring of 2010, the BLM was called by Monty McClellan, a local rancher, about water quality in Champagne Creek. Upon further investigation, the BLM found the unnamed drainage had exceptionally high mineral (aluminum, copper and zinc) content and was flowing more each year (water level of 2.8PH). The BLM started emergency action to treat water before it goes into Champagne Creek. Kinross Gold (the current owners of the mine) have entered into an agreement with the BLM to complete work to reshape the waste rock dump area to allow for more effective water runoff so it doesn't leach into the waste rock. They will be reshaping the area to prevent ponding and will then be backfilling some of the erosion and gully channels. Wendy mentioned that the company is voluntarily doing this because their bond was returned in the 1990's so technically they didn't need to do this work. Lawrence Fox asked where the top soil was coming from. Dan answered that Monty McClellan, the local rancher would be providing top soil in the area.

JEFFERSON FIRE REHABILITATION

Presented by Ben Dyer and Glen Gunther

The Jefferson fire started on July 13th and burned 109,000 acres (of that approximately 25,000 was BLM). The fire burned native sage brush and destroyed habitat for the sage grouse. The BLM submitted a recovery play 7 days after the fire was contained which focused on soil and water stabilization, wildlife, invasive species, BLM structures and facilities, and restoring native vegetation. A Post-Fire recovery plan was submitted 21 days after the fire reached containment. This plan was a little more specific and focused on revegetating treatments. The BLM plans on conducting native grass drill seeding, sage brush drill seeding, sagebrush aerial seeding and sage brush plug planting. The total cost is expected to be somewhere around \$618,000. The BLM will be using 2 different methods of monitoring for cover and density.

The Jefferson fire brought up an interesting component of potential creating a grazing refuge where individuals whose allotments were destroyed in a fire could supplement their animals feed. An idea was proposed to set up areas for “temporary” grazing but no authorized long term grazing solutions. However, no one was willing to relinquish their allotments. Some questions that arise when looking at grazing refuge are: Can the grazing advisory board buy some AUM’s? Will people relinquish some of their AUM’s? Who gets to decide what to use or who gets to use it? Show should qualify? Who takes care of maintenance?

SAND DUNES

The RAC traveled to the St. Anthony Sand Dunes where Bill Boggs, recreation planner for the Upper Snake FO talked about issues occurring up there. The St. Anthony Sand Dunes is a special recreational management area. You can have motorized vehicles in this WSA because motorized vehicle use already existed prior to it obtaining that status. By creating a better and more formal access to the dunes, we could keep people from ruing some of the vegetation. It is tough to keep a balance of ensuring natural values thrive and allowing people access. The Sand Dunes keep moving but the WSA boundaries do not change with it. There are 3 developed campgrounds on the WSA: (1) Sand Hill resorts, (2) Desert Oasis (Idaho Sands RV) and Egin Lakes (public and ran by BLM). Electricity is available at the A&B sites of Egin Lakes and the BLM is currently working on getting electricity to section C.

Boggs discussed the Egin Hamer winter closure area and why the Dunes are closed but the roads are open. This helps with Big Game and wintering elk herds. Approximately 3,000-5,000 elk winter at the Dunes.

DAY 2 – SOUTH FORK OF THE SNAKE RIVER

An interagency fee program began in 1997 and it works although we have a lot of land management agencies as key players. We have about 10 boat access sites from Palisades to just below Menan in Roberts. We share funds and it is highly successful (about 85% compliance rate). 100% of the fees go back into the program. BLM manages all the recreation sites even though it is comprised of many agencies. Karen Rice explained that the BLM is in the river management program because the when the U.S. began to survey the west, they did a great job until they got to a major river. Rather than meander with the South Fork of the Snake, they just walked outside the cotton wood forests and ran it to the top of the canyon wall instead of the river bank. People started getting concerned about their deeds so in 1950 the government did a resurvey of the area and found a significant difference between the legal descriptions and what was actually there, so in 1962 Congress passed the Snake River Omitted Land Act which essentially said if there was no improvement on the land it remained in public access. In 1980, the USFWS determined that this area was unique because of its biodiversity and so the BLM designated it as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in their land planning process and continued to work with the FS to implement and interagency river management plan.

LWCF program: The BLM tries to purchase land or conservation easement from private land owners to conserve land along the river. We have partnered with 3 land groups/nonprofits that help with major projects. Partners have levied \$10 million for conservation projects.

Outfitter Program: There are 8 (4 BLM and 4 FS) permitted outfitters on the South Fork. All are licensed by the state. Each outfitter can have four boats per section (no more than 12 total), but typically they don’t max out their capacity. The BLM has designated areas for camping to protect bald eagle nesting sites, unique plants and certain riparian areas. The public wanted designated areas set aside for outfitters so they can set up their sites for the season and take them down later.

Resource Management Plan: Currently the BLM is working the University of Idaho to determine a use/data/visitor study. In 2009, they specifically focused on the South Fork and held focus groups to collect feedback on public use/conflicts with motorized vs. non motorized/camping/commercial use/etc. They also did

an online survey and sent out 2,000 not cards. Information received from these surveys will be incorporated into the RMP. From the information gathered so far it appears that people are pretty happy with the status quo and not very supportive with implementing a permit season. Some ideas that keep popping up is having a reservation system for camping locations in the busy season. Since Idaho has jurisdiction over waterways and has delegated that to the counties the BLM cannot really control motorized use on the river.

River Enforcement Issues – Shannon Bassista

BLM does weekly river patrols in the summer. In the early morning they hit a couple of camps but they all have a lot of garbage and ash along every campsite. It is hard to keep up with cleaning with the amount of use the river gets. The Upper Snake will be implementing supplemental rules to require fire pans and toilets along the river to help eliminate the garbage problem. The proposed rules state that fire pans will be required on the south fork and people have until the end of the month to comment on it. Second, the FRN specifies what is classified as a portable toilet and requires individuals who are camping overnight to carry them. Law enforcement can now write tickets, but the new regulations will apply to day visitors as well as overnights so hopefully the human waste issue will decrease.

Dave Farnsworth suggested having the next RAC meeting on February 15-16, 2011 in Idaho Falls or Pocatello and suggested that in the future the BLM set aside one full day for discussing issues and then 1 day for a tour. This would allow the RAC more discussion time on pertinent issues for the BLM. The meeting was adjourned until February.