

Idaho Falls District BLM RAC Meeting:  
June 7/8, 2005  
Challis, Idaho  
Final Minutes

**Attending Members:** Eric Tilman, Dino Lowrey, Pat Avery, Louise Starck, Loyd Briggs, Dennis Thornock Jim Hawkins, Doug Hancey, Ben O'Neal, Rick Snyder, Garth Taylor (No Quorum). Also attending for the Upper Snake BLM Office, Joe Kraayenbrink (BLM District Manager), David Howell (Public Affairs Specialists), Carol McCoy Brown (Field Manager) and other BLM employees (Scott Feldhausen/Salmon Office, Dave Rosenkrance/Challis Office).

Welcome by facilitator David Howell (Public Affairs Specialist-BLM, I.F) and overview of agenda. For Tuesday, June 7:

- 1) Rangeland Health Training: Ken Sanders (Twin Falls RAC member), University of Idaho professor.
- 2) District managers Comments
- 3) Field Tours
- 4) Evening Entertainment

Ken Sanders, Twin Falls RAC: Historic Perspective of Western Rangelands-Ecology  
Began by asking significance of various dates (1607-Jamestown founded, 1803-Louisiana Purchase, 1814 Pre-emption Act (similar to the Homestead Act), 1849 Department of Interior founded, 1862-Homestead Act, 1878-Timber and Stone Act, various Railroad Acts, 1909 the Homestead Act enlarged from 160 acres to 320 acres, 1916 Stock Raising Act. The aforementioned Acts, to varying degrees, dealt with the disposition of western rangelands, and because these Acts were designed and established by Eastern standards, they set the West up for certain failure. The arid West was much different in nature than the land (and climate) back East. The West was (and is) typified by:

- variation in land quality
- needing much larger tracks of land to survive, so pioneers had to utilize lands in common
- greater water issues
- the need for livestock management on public lands

Ken followed with a brief history of the introduction of livestock into the West. In 1540 the Spanish arrived, and the first Mormons arrived in Lemhi/Idaho in 1855. Shirley/Gamble brought 3,000 head of cattle from Texas to Fort Hall. The famous winter die-off of 1889/1890 occurred and Sparks lost 30,000 head in Elko and Cassia Counties. In 1903, there were 2.6 million sheep in Idaho and cattle-sheep conflicts began in earnest. In 1940, there were approximately 1.8 million sheep in Idaho, with numbers declining after WWII (due to lack of demand, consumption went down, i.e., the GI's were sick of mutton).

The creation of forest reserves began 1891 and grazing was not regulated until 1897. With restrictions, the National Forest (NF) rangelands started improving in condition, but restrictions forced greater use of more arid, public domain lands. Local livestock operators pushed to have more NF cleared, and pushed to gain control of grazing on public domain lands.

Other notable dates presented were: 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act; 1935, Soil Conservation efforts; and last, but not least, in 1946 the Bureau of Land Management was created.

The development of the range management profession was spurred by several factors; the 1890's drought which resulted in a large loss of stock, the 1917 establishment of the Sheep Experimental Station in Duboise, and the establishment of Land Grant Universities, starting in 1910. By the first third of 20<sup>th</sup> century, basic principles of ecology were embraced.

Ken then spoke about range trend on BLM Lands.

1936 most lands on downward trend

1986 upward 16% - downward 14% - Static or no apparent trend 64%

1996 static or no apparent trend

In the late 70s early 1980s, range condition started going down slightly, with an increase in invasive weeds and litigation tying up money and agency hands.

Litigation is costing BLM

- direct cost of staff and resources
- indirect cost of deferred work
- direct costs of settlement actions
- direct cost of legal support
- employee morale
- indirect costs of loss of public support

Who is filing the litigation? 61% environmental organizations and 10% from industry. Most challenges are not based on the condition of the land per se, but on BLM "processes" (i.e., people are asking if there is adequate public involvement or are questioning the EIS processes). This means that a lot is not getting done, that litigation comes with the added expense of not being able to do much needed regular business (i.e., noxious weed programs, lower allotments not complete).

Ecological principles, Plant ecology, specifically autecology and synecology. Ken provided the definition of an ecosystem, and the components of ecosystem (climate, topography, parent materials, soil, fire). He noted the strong relationship between soils and vegetation, and urged that care and conservation of the soil are extremely important. He also stated that a consistent "Rangeland Classification" is necessary in order to inventory, determine management goals and plans, to monitor and evaluate rangelands. The current classification system is based on two concepts or theories:

- 1) climax plant community
  - a. this theory does not hold for sagebrush land, but sort of worked for the plains
- 2) succession community(primary and secondary)

He introduced the term "disclimax": a stable state below climax.

The question asked was should we manage for climax or PNC, and Ken replied this depends on the goals, i.e., the management goal may be a seral stage below PNC.

Range Site/Ecological Site Discussions

Ken discussed "soil series mapping level" where production potential is identified (i.e., soil depth, salt levels, etc.). A habitat type may include 2 or more soil series, which are named by the dominant shrub and grass series. Ken also presented information on the Theory of Succession: the driving force is the competition between organisms for: moisture, nutrients, and light, and Primary succession = natural succession and Secondary succession = induced

succession. He talked about a new theory from Australia: stable states and thresholds, state and transition models. The idea of a “threshold: an unstable state does not return to its original level after disturbance, but crosses a “threshold” and continues to decline. The term “transitions”: changes between states and within states.

Ken completed his presentation with a brief slide show that demonstrated the variability over time of a plot of land that had not been grazed (the changes were mostly related to rainfall), however, the changes were so impressive that some might attribute them to overgrazing, which shows the importance of accurate assessment and monitoring of rangelands. He closed with this important advice when considering weed control: “Do not control a weed and leave an ecological void. You must replace the weed with a ‘desired’ plant.”

Following Ken’s presentation, Joe Kraayenbrink (BLM District Manager) provided the RAC members with these general comments:

- 1) There is a push for “Cooperative Conservation”, i.e., to raise the bar to work with other agencies, cities, general public, etc.
- 2) Budgets: flat to declining (downward trend for all agencies, not just BLM)- this will be challenging and triage will occur.
- 3) Rights-of-ways: new policy; full cost recovery for applications, sliding scale over 50 hours of work = full cost recovery, less than 50 hours = not a full recovery but sliding scale. There will be a 60 day turn around for these new applications which is a very tight time frame and most people are not aware of how much work required for right-of-way.
- 4) Fire: fire crews are hired and trained, but it’s anyone’s guess as to what the season will produce.
- 5) L & W lawsuit: EIS for BLM to write, maintain current operations.
- 6) State Sage Grouse Planning: Up and moving again, some resolution expected in August. Input from all RAC’s expected.

Jim Hawkins asked about the “fiscal health” of the noxious weed program and Doug Hancey reported back from the State meeting that other RAC’s supported the program, but the high bar on weed control comes at the expense of other programs within BLM.

Laurel Hall was introduced (she is a member of Idaho Representative Mike Simpson’s staff ), and she gave us a very brief introduction to the history of the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA -2005). She urged members to visit the web site specific to this Act for more details ([www.house.gov/simpson](http://www.house.gov/simpson)). Again, this Act has been a long time coming, and Cecil Andrus and Jim McClure worked over 15 years ago to craft a piece of legislation that would have addressed, among other issues, the future management of the Boulder-White Clouds. The timing simply wasn’t right then, but they believe that the timing is right now. Simpson has pushed to find a right and fair balance among the various groups who would be affected by this legislation (such as, ranchers, outfitters, recreationists, motorized, non-motorized, hunters, local citizens). Laurel Hall stressed that CIEDRA is an economic development bill and mentioned two concerns associated with the Bill: East Fork ranchers concerns over future AUM use, and economic impacts to Challis/Stanley areas which are 94% public lands. There are concerns over the fact (and logistics) that some federal lands will become “city lands” to manage.

The biggest concern voiced (by most interest groups) is “will this fly?” Hall stated that no group is totally pleased with the final Bill, therefore it’s probably a well-balanced Bill, and she stated that many have concerns over how will the bill be perceived. Some may feel that there is too much give and take.

Following lunch, participants toured the L&W Stone Corporation (Three Rivers Stone), a privately owned business in financially depressed Custer County, which currently employs 84 people. Scott Laine, who is the COE and president of L&W Stone, accompanied us on the tour. A lawsuit has been brought against the BLM and L&W Stone by the Western Watersheds Project over whether the BLM violated environmental laws by allowing previous expansions at the quarry. Laine would like to expand his operations but the expansion plan may depend upon a favorable ruling by U.S. District Judge Lynn Winmill in the current lawsuit. Three Rivers Stone's 2005 expansion plans include a new manufacturing facility in Challis for fabrication, tumbling, and packaging, resulting in 30 new jobs and the expansion of quarries, amounting to an additional 50-70 new jobs over the next three years. Tumblers would be moved from California to the local site for the new processing plant. The tumblers add value to the unique flagstone paving stones by rounding off the edges and making them look stream-washed, Laine said. All of the local Three Rivers quartz sandstone is now hauled to a processing plant in California. A local plant would save the company a lot of money in transportation costs.

L&W Stone was recently honored as one of 10 eastern Idaho companies named as outstanding businesses and contributors to their local economies in January (2005). Laine said he would keep his promise to Judge Winmill to hold off on any expansion plans until the judge rules. The current mining and distribution facility in Custer County grew from 20 to 80 year-round and seasonal workers in 2004, contributing \$3 million annually to the local economy through payroll and mining supply purchases.

RAC members found it interesting that all the stone-cutters were from Mexico. Ads for cutters were placed in the Challis newspaper, however, no locals applied. The wages and benefits at L&W Stone are excellent. The company's stone splitters start the season's work in mid-March, Laine said, and end in December.

RAC members were curious about the stone at the mine, and Ken Gardner, the mining geologist for the Challis BLM, provided the following information. The primary ore deposit in the quarry is an argillite with some sandstone and quartzite. The term argillite refers to a rock derived from claystone, siltstone or shale. Argillite results when these sedimentary rocks undergo heat/pressure or cementation from weak metamorphism, which occurred in this area from Challis volcanics being emplaced adjacent to bedding. The original deposition of sedimentary and meta-sedimentary rocks was in the Precambrian (>570 million years ago) and Paleozoic (570 to 245 million years ago). These are called basement rocks, because they were deposited earliest, sit on bottom, like a basement or foundation of a house. These basement rocks were both intruded by the Eocene Challis Volcanics (51 million years ago to 39 million years ago) and there is some intrusion from the Idaho Batholith (100 million years ago to 70 million years ago-Cretaceous). It is from the intrusions of the granite batholith, but mostly from Challis Volcanics that "cooked, i.e., heated and applied pressure to the original basement rocks turning them into argillites.

Uplifted, folded and faulted as the reddish volcanic material pushed up, the quarry area finally was exposed via erosion, to reveal beautiful argillites. The stone color varies from medium gray to pale purple, bluish gray, to greenish, golden brown. The beautiful range of color is complimented by crystalline formations called dendrites, the Greek word meaning "tree", which the formations resemble. The dendrites in Three Rivers Stone appear like fossilized leaves and this beautiful stone is very strong, withstanding pressure up to 18,000 lbs. per sq. inch.

The tour group left the quarry and headed up Herd Creek for an overlook of one of the CIEDRA boundaries. Wayne Baker, a local rancher, shared his story about the Sawtooth Wilderness Act, and how he lost all of his grazing rights (with no personal input) when the Act

was passed. Obviously, he and other grazers have similar concerns, “takings without representation”, if CIEDRA passes. Under CIEDRA, the five-mile road to the Herd Lake Campground that has been closed will not be reconstructed, however a new campground and facilities will be constructed below Herd Lake.

That evening, after the tour, members enjoyed the best cookout food ever in a pouring /driving rain.

### **Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>:**

Terry Heslin, OHV coordinator from the BLM State Office in Boise and Barry Rose, a BLM Public Affairs Specialist (also from Boise) discussed their Off Highway Vehicles Project, a State and Federal collaboration to promote responsible use. The growth of OHV use, as shown by a ski jump chart, has seen a 400% increase in registration of ATV's and motorcycles over the last 5 years. Resource issues that have been identified with this increase are: impacts to soil, introduction of weeds, effects on wildlife (especially T&E species), and user conflicts. There are also safety concerns as thousands of new riders (mostly young folks) are reporting more injuries. Idaho public “opinion” poled indicated that ATV use (including motorcycles) should be limited to designated trails (82%), ATV's should not be restricted (8%), ATV's should not be allowed (8%), a commanding show of support and a dictate for “designated trail” design, but BLM does not have the budget to mark/sign and police trails. And the budget situation does not appear to be getting better.

3 messages they want to convey:

- Don't travel cross country (i.e., make new tracks)
- Use designated (established routes)
- Follow safe riding practices

They related the successful efforts of Arizona from 2001-2003, as the state used a “Nature Rules-Stay on Trails” message to promote OHV safety. They stated that media campaigns are effective, the campaigns increase public awareness as tests and follow-up surveys have shown.

The Idaho Concept (E.S. Drake, INC).

- Target Audience: men 18-54 years of age
- Two key Groups:
  - Hunters/in Fall
  - Hobbyists/Spring (more recreational)

Communication Strategies:

Empower versus Command

Use mass media to raise awareness Media Plan:

- Outdoor Billboards (75% of population will view these)
- Radio Advertisements (provide a more detailed explanation)
- Support Products (for shops, agencies, and users) such as posters, stickers.

RAC members looked at and commented on 3 billboards being reviewed, and agreed that “Use your power responsibly - Stay On Trails” worked best. Everyone recognized that there is no easy way to deal with national advertising campaigns that suck in young riders with “thrilling” (hormonally enhanced) off-trail ads. RAC Comments on the proposed billboard:

\* Need larger ATV icon

- \* More contrast in letters
- \*Use Your Power Responsibly-Stay on Trails more positive than “Blaze no Trails”
- \*Use bumper stickers, Key ring cards, posters, internet, drivers ed, etc. to get message out

The Medial Plan: Radio Ads, costs for one month= \$70,000 (radio = 25k, outdoor billboards 40K, support=5K) second month, cut out most start-up costs, estimate 50-5K. BLM= 30 K seed money, IDPR= 30K, other agencies 10K. Funding is an issue as they need federal dollars to get the state IDPR match. The BLM plans to concentrate efforts from mid-September to mid-October. Hunters range off-trail more than recreationists, if recreationists are directed to designated trails and established routes.

Terry Heslin gave a brief update on the proposed long distance trail (patterned after Utah's) planned through “resource based” towns like Challis, Salmon, Mackay, and Arco. The idea is to entice recreationists into these areas, where riders eventually can access gas, restaurants, shops, and motels. The proposed “Lost River Trail” route was complex and too large a scale, so now local residents are looking at more discrete areas or segments for trails, and the concept is evolving in a more pragmatic way. When it comes to proponents versus opponents, the BLM is stuck in the middle. It was acknowledged that state parks leadership need to meet with the BLM to provide more local input and muscle behind such projects. Garth Taylor said, there are some sections already established around Arco, but the trail needs to have community grassroots decisions and support to make a larger system work.

Overview/Miscellaneous: Planning Handbook Appendix C emphasizes travel management (OHV strategy should expand to take in other forms of travel)

- 1) Completed Land Use Plans, each field office needs to complete a travel management plan (funding an issue)
- 2) Land Use Plans in Progress, Pocatello and several other districts
- 3) Issues to consider: Consistency in developing plan direction, route inventory (how much is enough), designation of areas as open-closed-or limited in the LUP, and financial/budget issues (flat and declining budgets).

Recent Activities and Direction: Idaho Leadership Team met April 28<sup>th</sup>- Doug Hancey reported on decisions and issues

- Interim OHV area designations (in the Boise district)
- Route inventory-statewide data standards and data direction
- Consistency in LUP, Appendix C
- Completion of comprehensive travel plans
- Route designations (do not prescribe limited to existing, use “limited to designated”)
- Law enforcement
- Education: continue to support and fund OHV education campaign statewide as a high priority)
- Idaho Leadership Team (State Director, Field managers, District managers, Deputy Sate Directors, and RAC Presidents) Interagency Partnerships encouraged
- House Bill 102 ATV; can close highways at designated spots (without turn signals, license plates) LLCC?
- Idaho is behind the curve in providing trails/areas for ATV's, need to designate areas for them, but always contingent upon funding/manpower.
- REC FEES
- Noxious Weeds

Doug Hancey, also brought this back from the state meeting: Every RAC felt strongly about the Noxious Weed Program, that the BLM can't give it up or lose ground, and it is not a divisive issue for any group/users of public land. Draft Motion, passed by Upper Snake River RAC, although changed a few words. Passed unanimously, Dave Howell will call other members for quorum.

Legislation Update on the WHB Act (197 – Public Law 92-1951 Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burro Act). The BLM continues to manage wild horses and burros as part of its overall mission to manage the public lands for multiple uses. Towards that end, the Bureau gathers thousands of wild horses and burros from public rangelands each year, then puts them up for adoption to private citizens. Those not adopted are cared for in short- or long-term holding facilities. RAC members toured the temporary holding corrals in Challis, where it was explained by BLM's Lee Redick, that it costs approximately 1K per horse (to gather, worm, and give shots). The Conrad Burns Rider Bill (2005 Appropriations ) gives the BLM "sale" ability/authority if an animal has been to three adoptions or more or if the animals are over 10 years old. Adoption costs \$125 at a minimum, but a sale often has bidders so prices for animals can vary. With a sale, the buyers immediately have "ownership" of the animal and the BLM relinquishes it's authority. In the case of adoption, the BLM still owns the animal legally for one year, and then the title is given to the new owner. The BLM wants to keep sale authority, but this ability is in jeopardy due to a few slaughters that occurred without the BLM's knowledge and outside of it's control. There are six herd management areas in Idaho and the average herd size around Challis is 185-253. The corrals in Challis are state of the art, and it cost approximately \$300,000 to move operations from Salmon to Challis. Salmon had very outdated corrals and equipment which could result in injury of the animals or individuals working with the animals. One of the primary goals of the BLM is to increase the adoptability of the horse or burro, and Redick stated that young horses under five are the most desirable and adoptable. The BLM hopes to engage in partnerships to train horses.

**Next Meeting tentatively scheduled for Salmon on September 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>**

Tentative Agenda

- Sage-Grouse State Plan Update
- Legislation Update on WHB
- Field Tip Watershed/ Allotment Rangeland tour (with T&E fish issues)
- Noxious Weeds Program, possible updates on status