

**Twin Falls District
Resource Advisory
Committee Meeting
Minutes
May 15, 2007**

Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2007

Attendance

RAC: Ken Sanders, Hank Mayland, Kelly Adams, Samantha Anderson, Denise Alexander, Debbie Dane, Marc Brackett, Mel Quale

BLM: Bill Baker, Bill Freeland, Ken Miller, Beckie Wagoner, Rick Vander Voet, Lori Armstrong, Heather Tiel, Terry Smith

Public: Bert Brackett and Stanley Lehman

Meeting started at 9:35; it opened with the public comment period.

Bert Brackett and Stanley Lehman brought a proposal to the RAC members regarding the Resource Management Plan (RMP). A handout was provided titled, "Community and Environmental Stabilization and Improvement Alternative." The handout covered the different "issues" involved with the RMP and was presented as an alternative for consideration for the RMP. Mr. Brackett and Mr. Lehman were representing the 71 Association and their beliefs for what is best for the resources.

The RAC took some time to look over the handout and ask questions. The public asked for the RAC to send BLM a recommendation to support their alternative, knowing it was going to take more editing. However, without a quorum, the RAC was not able to make that decision. Therefore, Bill Baker said that BLM will accept their input and address it in the RMP process.

Public left at 10:10am.

Burley Field Office (BFO) Update, Ken Miller (handout)

Raft River Geothermal Lease:

- Four parcels in an area associated with the Department of Energy (DOE) test effort totaling 7,162 acres. It is located approximately 16 miles South of Malta, ID and approximately 10 miles East of Almo, ID.
- Raft River lease opportunity was set for December but was canceled due to new rules/regulations coming out. The new regulations are out now so the parcels will be leased through a public auction, which will be held in Salt Lake City on June 20th, 2007 in conjunction with another parcel in Utah. Minimum bid is \$2 per acre and once generation starts there will be royalties.
- Once the bid is won two separate permits will need to be obtained by the winner for drilling as well as exploring.

- The water will be re-injected back into the same aquifer source
- Bill Baker will look into the protection of the resources during the lease period.

Auger Falls (map provided):

- The city has proposed to work with private owners to pipe water through their lands to use for habitat improvement (wetlands) and recreation facilities.
- The water will run off into the Snake River when done.

Jarbidge Field Office (JFO) Update, Rick Vander Voet (handout)

Rick asked for comments from the RAC on the RMP public workshop.

- Samantha Anderson was host, she gave her view of the experience:
 - Three types of groups that attended
 - Radical ~ which did not want to agree with any changes
 - Permittee
 - ~ would like a grass bank for emergency situations such as fire
 - ~ would like help clearing cattle guards after grading the roads
 - Mapping
 - ~ would like to see more labels
 - ~ would like to see verbiage describing the drought
 - ~ would like to change wording on acceptable fencing
 - Overall it went well, lots of questions and comments
- Ken Sanders added his perspective:
 - Wasn't sure if the workshop benefited the BLM
 - Did see/hear many good comments
- Mel Quale added that for transportation limited access makes sense for season areas.

Rick felt we had a lot of good/constructive comments from the workshop.

BLM is working hard to stay on track for the RMP deadline but have had some challenges such as human resources, fires and other workloads.

Renewable Energy Systems Plan of Development:

A company is looking to put up windmills on private, state and BLM lands located off HWY 93 on the way to Jackpot, NV. BLM received the application two weeks ago and anticipates we will be the lead agency for this project. It is a large project so it will fall into the complex category and an EIS will be required. It will cover a large sage grouse/wildlife area as well as areas that are meaningful to the tribes. Due to the location it may also cause visual concerns.

The application will be processed and run concurrently with the RMP. A third party contractor will be hired for the EIS. BLM would like RAC to stay involved in this project.

Shoshone Field Office (SFO) Update, Lori Armstrong:

Blaine County airport – In March FAA selected consultants Landrum &-Brown for this project. One of the sub-consultants is North Wind. On April 23, 2007, FAA the contractor and BLM met to go over the information on the project. BLM is listed as a cooperating agency at this point.

- The airport authority will request a grant to do phase one
- If airport is moved from Hailey it will be bigger than the current airport, if it stays it may be the same size
- All 16 sites will be looked at again
- FAA has not accepted the current proposed location from Blaine Co. yet.
- FAA will look at the other sites to see what will fit the needs best
- Result of the current preferred site of Blaine Co. is that there needs to be a lot of data gathered on the weather conditions.
- Lincoln Co. and Camas Co. will be contacted to see if they would like to sponsor the new airport.
- If the selected site is on BLM land then BLM will be a joint lead agency at that time.
- There has been talk about a Regional Airport which would remove both the Sun Valley and Twin Falls airports and replace them with one larger one.
- Concerns at this time are the size of the commercial aircraft and the clearance requirement if the existing site is chosen, most airports have a clearance of 200 feet but because of the mountains the clearance for Blaine Co is 1200 feet.

Craters of the Moon National Monument Transportation Plan:

Currently it is in the beginning stages for consideration. A determination on which roads can be used and which needs to be closed, as well as the type of roads they need to be; one way, two track, single track, etc.

Mel Quale will get with the Idaho Falls RAC to get some information.

BLM is hopping to get some good input this fiscal year (FY) so that they can get a draft out next FY.

It was requested this be a topic on the next meetings agenda.

Bald Mountain Master Plan:

Draft comments closed on April 9, 2007. There were three main discussion points in the comments:

- 1) leave Guyer Ridge as it is
- 2) cut a new run on Guyer Ridge
- 3) glade scheme (thin out the area) on Guyer Ridge

Installation of the gondola did not provide much comment, nor did the snow making or trail widening. The only controversy is on the Forest Service (FS) section of the land – Guyer Ridge.

BLM is currently working on getting the final draft out. We could get snow making as early as this coming season if a Decision Record is signed.

Healthy Lands Initiative, Bill Baker :

Covers 1.8 acres and is not currently funded but will be in the FY 2008 budget.

There are two regions:

- 1) Southern Idaho – Burley, Shoshone, Pocatello and Idaho Falls
- 2) Oregon/Idaho/Nevada – South of Snake River, NE Oregon, and SE Nevada

On the first region BLM is working on a list of projects to have NEPA done now. Second region will fall under Owyhee Field Office.

The function of the lands will be to help stop wildfires from spreading by using barriers.

SW Intertie Project, Bill Freeland:

In 1994, an EIS was prepared for 500kv power lines covering two Right-of-Ways (ROW) grants.

- 1) From mid-point Idaho to North of Vegas
- 2) From Ely Nevada to Delta, Utah

Great Basin Transmission, LLC, (subsidiary of LS Power Group) has the exclusive option to purchase the ROWs from Idaho Power. A supplemental EA was prepared on the south portion of the line. They are currently looking at the Northern portion from Ely to mid-point Idaho and will probably need to repeat the supplemental EA process. This will provide greater reliability to the western states transmission capability and enhance transmission capability to wheel electrical power during periods of high demand for electricity. At this time, we have little information to make any assessments as to what will be needed in the EA or how the company will be proceeding. There is a meeting scheduled for June 12 in Elko, NV. Bill Freeland, Jeff Steele and Ken Miller are planning to attend.

Fire Management Direction Amendment, Terry Smith (handout):

Covers 5.4 million acres of public lands that fall under four field offices, Burley, Pocatello, Shoshone, and the Upper Snake. The draft EIS came out in October of 2004 and had 18 comment letters. The preliminary final EIS/Proposed Plan Amendment will be out in July and will go to Idaho State Office/Washington Office in September 2007 for their review.

The purpose is to amend 12 existing Land Use Plans. Move vegetation types toward Fire Regime Condition Class 1 (FRCC1) to ensure: risk to human life and property is minimized; wildland fire suppression efforts are effective and efficient, key ecological components are protected and enhanced, and fire's natural role is considered when making resource management decisions.

The existing plans are not consistent with the Federal Wildlife Fire Management Policy (2001). It does not emphasize wildland fire suppression, and has limited use of prescribed fire/fuels treatments.

Concerns are public and firefighter health and safety, communities-at-risk/wildland urban interface, fire hazard and fuels reduction treatment methods, departure of existing fire regimes from historic conditions, the desired role of fire and how it can help meet resource objectives.

There have been two issues identified so far:

- 1) What effect would the proposed level of vegetation treatments described in the Cohesive Strategy have on the fuels and restoration needs of the Upper Snake River plain ecosystem?
- 2) What effects would various treatments in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem have on sage grouse and sagebrush-obligate species?

There are five alternatives, A – E. Alternative E is the proposed alternative.

Upcoming meetings:

Summer Tour will be hosted by SFO; we will meet at the Twin Falls District/Jarbridge Field Office at 8:30 am on June 29, 2007.

Next meeting – Sept. 12, 2007 in Twin Falls at 9:30 am.