

**Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes  
Grandstands Restaurant  
1003 Main Street, Buhl, ID  
9-11-08  
Minutes**

**RAC Members:**

Ken Sanders, Chairman, Category 3  
Hank Mayland, Category 2  
Joe Tugaw, Category 1  
Debbie Dane, Category 1  
Samantha Anderson, Category 3  
Denise Alexander, Category 2  
Marc Brackett, Category 1  
Mel Quale, Category 1

**BLM:**

Bill Baker, Twin Falls District (TFD) Manager  
Mike Courtney, Burley Field Office (BFO) Manager  
Rick Vander Voet, Jarbidge Field Office (JFO) Manager  
Lori Armstrong, Shoshone Field Office (SFO) Manager  
Heather Tiel-Nelson, Public Affairs  
Beckie Wagoner, District Records

*Note to readers: A copy of each attachment listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Twin Falls District Office. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Beckie Wagoner, (208) 735-2063*

The Meeting was called to order at 9:41 by Ken Sanders, who opened the meeting by calling for a moment of silence to honor the memory of those who lost their lives on September 11. Ken then gave the floor to Bill Baker. Bill announced Mike as Burley Field Office Manager, and then thanked everyone for coming.

**Rick Vander Voet JFO Update:**

The Murphy Complex continues to draw public attention even a year after the fire. The Murphy Wildland Fire and Livestock Grazing and Fuel Assessment Team's report on the Murphy Complex can be found at: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2008/1214>.

***Resource Management Plan (RMP)*** The field office plans on sending out a newsletter soon to give an update on the RMP. The bulk of the document is in rough draft and the Interdisciplinary (ID) Team is working on finishing Chapter 4. The contractor selected to do Chapter 4 was released because the BLM was dissatisfied with the contractor's work.

The RAC is welcome to attend the ID Team meetings. The Jarbidge Field Office would still look to the subgroup to stay involved as their comments are helpful to the project.

Rick also explained that the Jarbidge Field Office handles the resumption of grazing post-fire differently than other offices. The burned areas are monitored and several factors (drought conditions, vegetation type, soil type, etc.) are considered prior to a decision being made to resume grazing. If the criteria have been met and the ID Team is comfortable, grazing will resume. Additionally, if the allotment meets the criteria for grazing, grazing plans must still be followed. No criteria will be set forth in the RMP regarding the resumption of grazing after a fire as it is a broad, overarching document. Each fire is different so it would not be feasible to put anything other than general guidelines regarding the resumption of grazing after a fire. Monitoring is important to measure the vegetation re-growth as well as the establishment of roots as well.

Samantha asked if the Jarbidge Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) would be released --she had heard during a public meeting that WSAs were up for release. Rick replied that there are no WSA's up for release, and once an area is listed as a WSA, they remain one until congress releases them or names them Wilderness.

The draft is planned to be out in late fall of 2009, however, there is a crosswalk between the RMP and China Mtn. EIS. In order to avoid a plan amendment, the RMP needs to be completed first.

*The public comment period began at 10:05 am; no public commented.*

**Lawsuit** – There is a five day evidentiary hearing scheduled for the last week of October. There are currently ten motions in front of the judge on this case by the interveners which includes a motion to dismiss the case and schedule a tour for the judge instead. BLM is continuing to process the case as if it is going to court. . The first part of BLM's filing (beginning of August) included two DVD's on 36 allotments which included 20,000 – 30,000 pages.

Western Watersheds Project (WWP) believes no fences should be built and all grazing should be stopped. WWP also argues that all grazing should be removed from any sage grouse, slickspot peppergrass or pygmy rabbit habitat.

There are 36 allotments included in the lawsuit. JFO has approximately 96 allotments total, which all vary in size.

**Jarbidge Sage Grouse Working Group** - Is up and running, it would be great to see members of the RAC at some of these meetings.

**Lori Armstrong SFO Update:**

**Mining permits** – There are old mining cabins on public lands in Kelly Gulch. They were in place under an un-patented mining claim, and unfortunately have become hot spots for illegal activities. The people who held the mining permits (although not currently mining) have continued to camp in the cabins, so they are disappointed they are coming down. However, BLM has been working with the family, and has gone through the process to legally destroy the cabins.

**Craters travel plan** – Is still in works, once it is complete, BLM will work on the Blaine County travel plan. Some of the roads still need to be designated to determine maintenance responsibilities. Blaine County does not want to maintain the roads due to cost.

**Illegally Constructed Trails**– The Shoshone Field Office has been working with Blaine County as they have developed their travel plan. Within that travel plan, new trail systems have been designated.

Currently, BLM is working with Big Wood Backcountry Trails organization to identify illegally constructed trails, put those trails back to their native state, and construct trails that have been identified as appropriate within the travel management plan. Some of the illegally constructed trails cross private land, so that poses issues that need to be resolved. Unfortunately the more time BLM spends on illegal routes, the less time there is to spend on new legal routes. Most of the construction of new trails is by mountain bikers. Work has begun on a new Rotarun system of trails. Volunteers are hand building about three miles of a 25 mile trail system.

*End public comment time 10:35am*

**Energy projects - Gateway West** – The scoping report is out; most of the comments suggest adjusting the lines a bit here and there. They are aiming for a 2009 EIS; the proposed transmission lines currently follow new and existing routes.

**Mountain States Transmission Intertie** – Public meetings will be held next week. One of the alternative routes travels around Craters of the Moon National Monument; there is a vast amount of controversy from Blaine County and Arco for the alternative that brings a line near Carey.

**Sunstone Natural Gas Pipeline** – Public meetings are not yet scheduled, but are planned for this fall.

All three EIS's are proposed to have drafts out next year along with China Mtn.

**Land Tenure** - Wood River Land Trust has joined with Blue Canyon Corporation to submit an application for a land exchange along the Wood River, south of Ketchum. Some of the exchange would settle a trespass.

**Airport-** FAA came out with a draft that considered all 16 sites as well as other potential locations to site an airport. From this report, three sites were selected: Two are on private land; one is parallel to highway 20, the other borders Camas County and is just inside Blaine County. The third site is on BLM land south of Wedge Butte and adjacent to highway 75 within Blaine County - this one requires a crosswind runway.

BLM will present to the board what it will take to acquire the BLM land if they choose to go with that option.

FAA will come out in October and talk to the board again and give them their considerations. Each of these options comes with drawbacks.

Right now draft maps are available, actual maps will be available at the next meeting. The draft EIS will be out fall of 2009.

FAA did look at the existing airport to see if they could use it, but it could not meet the missed approach standard. It did however meet the safety standards for landing. Also, the main commercial carrier can only fly into two airports; Hailey, ID and St George, UT., so the manufacturer may not even keep that aircraft in service for just those two airports.

The Twin Falls airport will be affected by the construction of the replacement airport for Blaine County.

**Fire/fire rehab** - Two fires need rehab at this point:

*Sandshed* - North of Gooding totaling 3,800 acres; it will be drill seeded.

*Nature fire* - By Picabo near the Nature Conservancy. A draft rehabilitation plan is being composed right now; approximately 7,000 acres will be re-seeded. They are also considering placing erosion control structures on the drainage areas as well.

**Horses** – There were four abandoned non branded horses near Shoshone. BLM staff set the process in motion to impound the horses and turn them over to the State of Idaho. However, the horses have since disappeared, so no further action is necessary at this point.

**Mike Courtney BFO Update: Handout (H/O)**

**Bruce Bedke trespass** – There was a hearing in August where a stipulated settlement agreement was put into place. BLM forgave most of the debts owed but kept the willful trespass charge in effect. Mr. Bedke must follow the requirements of the Agreement, and BLM has assigned new rangeland management staff to work with him.

**Fire** - The Minidoka fire burned 30, 000 acres in five hours; 20,000 of those acres had burned in 2005, so we lost the sagebrush seedlings that were coming up as a response to the rehab that was done in 2005.

This area has consistently burned in the last several years, so BLM is going to change their rehabilitation strategies by using forage kochia to help reduce the threat of wildfire in the future. It will be used in strips which should help BLM to catch the fires. These strips will be strategically placed to provide fuel breaks.

**Energy projects** –Staff from the Burley Field Office is also involved in the Gateway West Transmission Line, Mountain States Transmission Intertie, and Sunstone Natural Gas Pipeline projects. There are also applications for geothermal exploration, and related to that – mining for gold minerals.

Clarification regarding slickspot peppergrass (LEPA) was requested:

It is a four to twelve inch high plant with lots of small white flowers. It usually can be found in “slick spots,” or dry playas within sagebrush habitat. It is found in Southwest Idaho which includes Ada, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Owyhee, and Payette counties.

If anyone wanted more information on LEPA, we can add it to our next agenda and make it a topic for the next meeting.

**Cotterel Mtn** – There was a meeting with Windland earlier this week. They have no buyer for their power at this point. It takes 18 months to two years to get a turbine once it has been ordered. The new transmission line projects coming in should increase the market of buyers. At this point they do not have the money to keep going without a buyer. The right-of-way (ROW) was only good for two years, so they extended the ROW for an additional two years.

**Wind development requests** – Two companies have filed applications for met towers:  
Enxco – two sites in the South Hills.  
US Geothermal – two sites in the Jim Sage narrows.

**Geothermal development** – US Geothermal has retooled the old Department of Energy geothermal power site and is currently producing power. Agua Caliente which is part of larger company (Terra Caliente) has purchased a geothermal lease in the Raft River Valley.

**Mining** – Terra Caliente and Hydrothermal Metals plan to start mining for gold and mercury at ten sites in the Upper Raft River Valley this fall. Exploration will consist of drilling and collecting core samples.

**Grazing Permit Renewal** – Burley is behind, there are 102 that have been renewed and 271 left to complete. So far this year we have completed 20 permits, all were appealed, but all were dropped.

Permit renewal is a big work load and the progress is slow. The permits have been grouped geographically, rather than doing each permit separately, to get through them faster.

**German Lake Clean Up** - North of Rupert, it has become a dumping ground for agricultural waste; cement ditches and numerous other items not wanted over the last few years. We have been working for the past couple years to get the area cleaned up. We are hoping to finish the clean up this year and start rehab on the lake.

\*RAC then looked over the minutes from June 19 – 20, 2008 meeting in Jackpot, NV and the China Mountain Tour.

*Hank Mayland moved the minutes be approved as written.*

Marc Brackett seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

**Ken Sanders RAC Goal Setting & RMP Direction:**

Everyone needs to start thinking about RAC goals for the next meeting. We will discuss the ideas at the next meeting since we will have the new members then.

Ken asked the Field Managers if there was anything specific they wanted to see the RAC involved in.

Discussion followed. There are many projects the RAC could be involved in, particularly when considering the amount of energy projects there are, maybe the RAC could help to inform the public about these projects. The lack of attendance at the scoping meetings is a concern – advertising of the meetings takes place, but the public doesn't attend or express interest – until they see the project implementation on the ground. It was suggested the RAC consider hosting an information fair for each of the proposed energy projects. Members of the RAC also asked how much their input mattered in the big picture – will their suggestions really change the course of these energy projects? The answer was “potentially” – it is always important to submit comments on projects, because they are carefully considered, and routes can change because of certain concerns being expressed. Bill Baker suggested the RAC focus on the Blaine County Airport and the RMP – the projects BLM has responsibility for and for which the RAC can make recommendations.

RAC Subgroups Review: Discussion centered on the importance of each RAC member receiving the information that the subgroup is reviewing, so when a recommendation is brought forward by the subgroup, each member of the RAC will have had the opportunity to look over the material as well. The subgroup has the responsibility to study the material at length, but this way, the RAC members will also have the ability to review the material. The recommendations the RAC forms are important to the BLM and the public it serves.

**Lori Armstrong & Debbie Dane North Rim Park Update:**

Congressman Simpson's office is putting a legislative package together that would include funding for the Park. The big issue is water and wellhead protection for Twin Falls City and Jerome County. There is a group of three people spearheading planning efforts and education

of the North Rim Park. There will be an Idaho Fish and Game wildlife viewing area included in the park, and BLM is working on a land acquisition package as well.

**Samantha Anderson King Hill WSA Presentation (DVD & H/Os):**

Samantha gave an overview of the WSA tour, and showed the area they toured on a map. At a previous joint RAC meeting with the Boise District RAC, members of the RACs were asked to tour the area and help with issues that concerned Mr. & Mrs. John McCallum, private land owners, next to the WSA. The tour was well represented by both BLM and RAC members from both districts.

After the tour the RAC members believed the best way to help the McCallums would be additional signage. The RAC also wrote a letter to the BLM Idaho State Director recommending road closures. BLM has since held a public meeting and closed some unauthorized roads by putting up closed markers on the closed roads.

Lori (h/o) clarified more details of the restriction order, and added that all hunters who drew in the area were notified of the changes.

The Four Rivers Field Office Manager is also trying to work out a ROW through state lands to access the WSA since all access roads are on private property.

There were only eight people at the public meeting in Mtn. Home and five at the Boise public meeting on the WSA. There is a new brochure on WSA's with all the updated information that can be picked up at the BLM Field Offices. You may also find information on WSA's on the BLM website at:

[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/blm\\_special\\_areas/wilderness\\_study\\_areas.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/wilderness_study_areas.html)

Rick then clarified what is and is not allowed on a WSA:

- snowmobiles on existing ways only
- mechanized vehicles on existing ways only
- exception would be emergency response, law enforcement, and permittees who have authorization to use vehicles
- there are no roads in WSAs only "ways"

**Agenda Items for next Meeting:**

Wood River Land Trust presentation  
Goal Setting  
New Member Orientation  
Election of New Chairman

**Next Meetings:**

RAC - Jan 8, 2008 location TBD  
RRAC - Feb 5 & 6, 2008 TBD

\*send notice of date out to rest of RAC so they have plenty of time to schedule.

Minutes recorded by: Beckie Wagoner, District Records

Kenneth Sanders /s/ \_\_\_\_\_ 10/9/2008 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Kenneth Sanders** **Date**  
**Chairman**

Bill Baker /s \_\_\_\_\_ 10/6/2008 \_\_\_\_\_  
**Bill Baker** **Date**  
**TF DFO**