

**Twin Falls District
Resource Advisory
Committee Meeting
Minutes
September 12, 2007**

Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2007

Attendance

RAC: Ken Sanders, Samantha Anderson, Yvette Tuell, Joe Tugaw, Denise Alexander, Debbie Dane, Scott Boettger, Kevin Wright, Mel Quale

BLM: Bill Baker, Scott Feldhausen, Heather Tiel, Brenda Gifford, Lori Armstrong, Rick Vander Voet, Chris Simonson, Sky Buffat, Holly Hampton, Jesse German, Beckie Wagoner

Meeting started at 9:30 with Public Comment Period; there was no public to comment.

Introductions and updates were then given for BLM; Bill Baker is new District Manager, Brenda Gifford is Acting Associate District Manager, and Scott Feldhausen is Acting Burley Field Office Manager

Fire Season 2007, Chris Simonson, Fire Management Officer

Chris updated on the fire season:

- 🔥 It has been another heavy season
- 🔥 700,000 acres burned within our zone
- 🔥 220,000 acres outside our zone that we responded to because of fire protection agreements we have with those areas
- 🔥 Another new fire season record for acres burned for the third year in a row (Nationally with all agencies)
- 🔥 Air Base loaded 1.3 million gallons of retardant this year
- 🔥 Fires burned this year
 - 🔥 182 Total Fires
 - 🔥 105 were caused by lightning strikes
 - 🔥 77 were human caused which includes power lines, trains, people, etc.
 - 🔥 37 were false alarms that were responded to which means they were burning without a permit or there was no fire
 - 🔥 Total responses this year thus far is 219
- 🔥 Murphy Complex fire started July 16, 2007, it was compiled of two fires (Elk Mountain and Roland) that burned together; approximately 200 power poles were destroyed, but there were no real injuries or structure losses on this fire.

- 🔥 July 16, 2007, there were 22 confirmed fires in our area, Elko area, to the South of us, had 44 confirmed as well as some fires to our East and West
- 🔥 Our resources' are able to handle 3-5 fires well depending on the fires and location
- 🔥 Even with all the help from other agencies we had too many fires to control at once
- 🔥 Due to the numerous fires we went immediately into a priority mode, prioritizing the fires by location and threats
- 🔥 This year a lot of time was spent improving crews with training and experience and it shows with the lack of injuries this year.

Chris posed the question of what the RAC's opinion is of why we have been having so many fires the past few years and what would help reduce the fires, some opinions were as follows:

- 🔥 Graze earlier
- 🔥 Burn off dry grasses
- 🔥 Reduce the amount of fuels earlier in the year
- 🔥 Cheatgrass has greatly increased and winds are too erratic to predict which way they will blow, there have been increasing winds the past few years, less rain so there are many factors that come into play so there is no one simple solution
- 🔥 Fire suppression ponds for helicopters and engines to get water quicker
- 🔥 More barriers
- 🔥 Nature is nature and this is a natural thing for the environment and we are limited even with tools to change what nature brings us

Chris also stated that the fires burned over roads and many of the fuels burnt this year were less than an inch high.

Bill added that grazing is set up for certain time frames throughout the year and those are regulated and there is no flexibility in those grazing dates. What does the RAC think should be added to the Resource Management Plan (RMP) under fire to help with the fires; come up with an alternative for the fire section of the RMP.

The theory of "let burn" was addressed; there is no such plan as a "let burn."

- 🔥 Fires are dealt with as they come in
- 🔥 Each fire is fought on a case by case basis depending on the available resources and location of that fire
- 🔥 Many factors come into play when deciding how to suppress a fire

- 🔥 We have to have the proper training to use the resources whether they are people or equipment and if we do not have someone qualified to handle the equipment or work a particular job then we do not put them out there it would be unsafe

Bill will get clear direction statewide on how to get equipment out so that we are not losing resources unknowingly because a volunteer did not let us know they were out there. We need to have individuals with resources sign up in the spring so that we are prepared when the season hits.

Chris adds that we want and welcome volunteers but they need to go through the proper channels to help us.

Shoshone Field Office Update, Lori Armstrong, Field Office Manager

Several fires this year within the Shoshone Field Office area (Handouts provided). The main fires are:

- 🌿 Red Bridge – Burned from Red Bridge Road up to the Shoshone Field office, rehab is planned for this fire. This was human caused not lightning. Big concern is the knapweed infestation on the other side of the Highway.
- 🌿 Shoestring - same place as the Hwy 47 fire last year. Still deciding whether to do rehab or not on this one.
- 🌿 Castle Rock – Bald Mountain Ski Resort Area and Timber Gulch (Sun Valley). Not sure on rehab yet. Currently looking for acceptable seeding for the area that will hold. There is a lot of cheat grass in the area so we need a seed that will not be over run by the cheat grass.
- 🌿 Bear Den Butte – Located at the bottom of Craters of the Moon National Monument. Rehab is planned for this area.
- 🌿 Turnbull - Same area as the Bear Den Butte fire, no rehab is planned for this fire, the area was in good condition before the fire and we believe it should come back on its own.
- 🌿 Cow Creek – Located above Hill City. It was human caused. Burned mostly private land. No rehab is planned for this area. There were three primary land owners affected by this fire.

Bald Mountain EIS:

- 🌿 The Ski Resort portion did not burn; some back burning was done which helped save the resort.
- 🌿 The EIS was pushed back while the fire was burning.
- 🌿 The final EIS is being finished up to send in.
- 🌿 The Federal Register Notice is in Washington DC for approval.

- ✂ Final decision should be back within the next month or two.
- ✂ They are pushing to have it before ski season starts so they can use the new snow making equipment that is in the proposal.

There are four major Corridor Projects in the works right now with right-of-ways:

- ✂ Wyoming - Midpoint – Boise; this proposal came in last summer for 500 kv transmission lines.
- ✂ Nevada – Midpoint; proposed last summer.
- ✂ Montana – Midpoint; proposed last summer.
- ✂ Canada – Nevada – Midpoint; 500 kv DC line.
- ✂ Potential projects include:
 - ❄ An upgrade of lines from Sun Valley area to Midpoint.
 - ❄ Natural Gas

The Blaine County Airport is in the process of getting the grant money to Blaine County so they can hire a contractor to start the EIS (Phase I).

Burley Field Office Update, Scott Feldhausen, Acting Burley Field Office Manager







52 fires totaling 24,371.7 acres suppressed on BLM or adjacent ground to prevent the spread to BLM ground; 23 human caused and 29 natural caused.

4 BLM assisted fires totaling 56 acres







12 false alarms

Four fires requiring Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation:

Black Pine II

-  13,773 acres of the Burley Field office burned along with 2,195 acres of the Pocatello Field office.
-  7100 acres of drill seed have been done
-  5,810 acres of brush rehab is proposed
-  7 miles of fence repaired
-  16 miles of fence reconstructed
-  2.5 acres of temporary protective fence

Jim Sage

-  4,307 Acres burned
-  450 Acres of Drill Seed
-  2,060 acres Ariel seed covered
-  3,550 acres of brush rehab proposed
-  3 miles of fence repaired
-  5 miles of temporary protective fence

Two Spot

-  3,086 acres burned

- 📍 500 acres of drill seed
- 📍 1000 acres of brush proposed
- 📍 2 miles of fence plus a gate repaired

📍 Gun Canyon

- 📍 4,058 acres burned
- 📍 450 acres of drill seed
- 📍 950 acres of aerial seed covered
- 📍 2,280 acres of brush rehab proposed
- 📍 1.5 miles of temporary protective fence plus two gates

Cottrell Wind Energy – Close to signing the MOU, but it may still be awhile before any towers are erected.

Impoundment – BLM has worked hard with the permittees in question for a resolution; the fact that these permittees are not recognizing BLM as land managers has made it difficult to resolve amicably. Trespasses have been issued on two allotments, 31 cows were impounded and put up for bid, and sold. We are continuing to work through all our administrative options, but it will likely be a while before the issue is completely resolved. So far, the community and county have given BLM a lot of support.

Summer Tour Report, Wood River Area, Lori Armstrong tour host

Handout provided; meeting min.

The tour was on June 29, 2007 and started at 8:30 am leaving from the Twin Falls Office. The stops included:

- 📍 North Rim
- 📍 Airport revised site #9
- 📍 Airport original site #9
- 📍 Timmerman Hills fire rehab
- 📍 Airport site #10
- 📍 Lower Rock Creek
- 📍 Hwy 20 Camas/Blaine Line
- 📍 Airport site #13
- 📍 Little City of Rocks

Suggestion for next tour was the Bruneau River to help with studies there.

Jarbidge Field Office Update, Rick Vander Voet, Field Office Manager

Handouts provided; Fire & draft letter to interested parties.

Murphy Complex fire was our main fire this year. Emergency stabilization plans are required to be done within 21 days of the end of the fire. We received many letters from the public on suggestions on how to stabilize the burnt area. We looked at all the suggestions and took the information into account.

- ▼ Murphy fire was not a cheatgrass fire, lightning and weather conditions contributed to the overall outcome.
- ▼ The Rowland fire moved from 800 – 8,000 acres in a matter of seconds. It burned all day and all night for 5 days.
- ▼ BLM caught 20 of the 22 fires at that time leaving the Rowland and Elk Mountain fires which later became the Murphy Complex fire.
- ▼ Approximately \$22 million will be spent on the Emergency Stabilization and Rehab Plan.
- ▼ We have approximately 50 drills to use this year for rehab which will complete approximately 50,000 acres of rehab this year. Leaving about 90,000 acres of rehab left.
- ▼ Luckily because of all the data that has been collected for the RMP we know what was out in the burnt areas.
- ▼ At this point we need to prioritize what we will drill seed since we are short on time before the ground gets too hard.
- ▼ 80,000 acres have potential to be over run by cheatgrass, so will have to be watched closely. If it looks like it will be overrun then we will spray and reseed.
- ▼ Sage brush seeding is planned and will be strip seeded.
- ▼ There is a lot of fence work that needs to be done because of the fire.
- ▼ Seed mixes will depend on the soils, land uses, and locations. We have consulted several other agencies but are unable to get enough of the same seed and none of some of the seed type we want to put into the mixes.
- ▼ Plan to put some forbs in the mix; planting for drought changes.
- ▼ Most of the grazing land has been impacted by the fires this year. We are waiving subleasing fees so larger companies, permittees can lease to the smaller ones. Some permittees are burnt out completely, and many are 40% or more burnt out.
- ▼ 60 – 70% of the critical winter range has been burnt. Last three years has burnt over half of the Jarbidge field office area.

RMP:

- ▼ 13 of 28 allotments in the windmill settlement burned. The impact of this is it will reduce our range monitoring but increase our rehab treatments so the time will remain the same or possibly it will be more time consuming.
- ▼ The State Director excused the RMP working until the fire rehab is completed.
- ▼ There is significant change to lands due to fires. We won't know for three years what will come back from fires which will leave us a

block of ground that we won't know what will happen on it for the RMP.

- ▼ Looking at existing to date management areas.
- ▼ We are approximately nine months behind on the RMP at this time. This delay will have to be addressed with the courts.

RES Wind Energy Project – affected by the fire 30% of the project was burned by the Scott Fire. RES still wants to pursue the project and move forward. The project sits in an important habitat area so we will have to discuss at length with RES before moving ahead.

Craters of the Moon Transportation Plan, Mel Quale, Craters Sub-group

Handouts provided; Outline for Craters of the Moon Travel Planning Discussion and Record of Decision.

Mel briefly went over the Proclamations of 1924 and 1928 by President Coolidge, 1930 by President Hoover, 1941 by President Roosevelt, 1962 by President Kennedy, and 2000 by President Clinton.

The Management Plan contains additional direction:

- The Comprehensive Travel Management Plan (CTMP) will identify seasonal limitations and closures, vehicle type and size and size restrictions, road construction and maintenance standard for all roads and trails within the Monument.
- There will be no net increase in the road mileage within the Monument.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for the Craters Management Plan

- Criterion for the CTMP is outlined in the ROD.
- The CTM planning will follow the NEPA process.

Agency Specific Decisions:

- BLM – Grazing is only authorized on the BLM portions of the Monument. All decisions regarding management of livestock grazing pertain to BLM administered land only.
- NPS – Decisions affirming that implementation of the Monument Management Plan will not result in impairment of National Park System resources. Values within Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. NPS decisions on management of wildlife and hunting are in accordance with the NPS Organic Act and 116 Statute [Stat.] 1052.
- Joint Agency Decisions – Pertain to all other aspects of the Monument Management Plan.

Management Zones – must meet the purpose and significance of the Monument and comply with Proclamation 7373.

Class 2 trails – can only be created from decommissioned roads that will no longer be open to use by full-sized vehicles. No new class 2 trails will be created in any other matter.

Class D/Class C User-created Roads – only user-created roads in existence as of the date of the Monument Proclamation and included in the map of the proposed plan/FEIS. Any routes created by cross-country vehicle or mechanical use since the date of proclamation are considered illegal and will be closed.

The question was asked: What changes could the travel planning team make or propose within the guidelines?

Answer: An existing road that is wide enough for a full sized vehicle could be downgraded to an ATV route or a single track trail for example, thus affording opportunity for a wider variety of users."




Jesse German, Shoshone Field Office, added:

- The scoping for the plan is almost done
- Classifying existing roads and trails
- The monument is closed to OHVs
- Zones are established; six classifications:
 - Country roads - Class A - 30 miles
 - Gravel – Class B - 107 miles
 - Two-track - Class C with maintenance – 307 miles
 - Two-track – Class D not maintained – 169 miles
 - Trails – two types of trails; mechanized and non-motorized – Classes E & F – 7 miles

Recreation RAC Initial Meeting Report, Samantha Anderson, RRAC member

Handouts provided; RRAC contact list and RRAC Draft Charter.

The first meeting consisted of:

-  Introductions – participants included Twin Falls District and Boise District RRAC members, BLM from SO, BDO, and TFD, as well as Boise, Payette and Sawtooth NFS representatives,
-  Elections – a president was nominated and elected – Grant Simonds.
-  Meeting mechanics – Joint meetings will alternate between Boise and Twin Falls or use webcast at BSU and CSI. First joint meeting will be held in Boise. November 7, 2007, is *tentative* meeting date. RRAC will meet prior to the joint meeting (looking like it will be postponed).

- 🌿 Fee approval process – No fee changes for the BLM but FS has several, FS was asked to gather more info along with pictures to show upgrades or reason for fee increases.
- 🌿 Review of the charter - Several changes were suggested as well as clarification on wording.

Next meeting is set for Nov 29, 2007 in Twin Falls at 9:30.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20

Agenda items for next meeting include:

- RRAC (Samantha)
- Craters plan (Mel)
- Time after meeting for Craters discussion among RAC members