

Draft
Twin Falls District Resource Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2010
1050 Fox Acres Road, Hailey, ID

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present:

Marc Brackett - Chairman, Category 1
Kelly Crane - Category 3
Hank Mayland, Category 2
Mel Quale, Category 1
Jeff Williams, Category 1
Kevin Bell, Category 3
Gerald Orthel, Category 1
Samantha Anderson, Category 3
Debbie Dane, Category 1
Lynn Messman, Category 2
Charles Howell, Category 3
Denise Alexander, Category 2
Yvette Tuell, Category 3

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:

Bill Baker – DFO, District Manager (DM)
Ruth Miller, Shoshone Field Manager (SFM)
Mike Courtney, Burley Field Manager (BFM)
Rick Vander Voet, Jarbidge Field Manager (JFM)
Holly Hampton, Craters of the Moon National Monument Manager
Heather Tiel-Nelson, Public Affairs Specialist
Beckie Wagoner, TFD Records Assistant
Katherine Farrell, Planning & Environmental Coordinator

Public Attendees:

Trey Spaulding, Wood River Land Trust
Richard Baird, FMAA
Barry Luboviski, FMAA

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. Copies of certified minutes are posted on the Idaho BLM website at http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/res/resource_advisory/boise/meeting_minutes.html

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Marc Brackett at 8:38 a.m. RAC members and BLM employees were introduced. The chair noted that the minutes from the previous meeting had been approved, and that the minutes were posted on the internet.

I. Election of New Chairperson: Denise Alexander

Brackett turned the floor to Alexander and she opened for nominations for chair:

Orthel nominated Kelly Crane for Chair – there was a second
Brackett nominated Mel Quale for Vice – there was a second

Quale and Crane were excused from room for the rest of the RAC to discuss the nominations. The RAC voted unanimously to approve the candidates. Alexander then thanked Brackett for his past year service as chair and turned the floor over to Crane.

II. Friedman Memorial Airport: Kathy Farrell

The Draft EIS is anticipated to be available in February or March 2011. FAA and BLM have additional concerns, so the EIS has been delayed to acquire more information. One concern relates to available substrate at both Sites 10a and 12; FAA is proposing geotechnical drilling to gather information about substrate to help analyze potential construction costs. Water availability is another concern at the site; FAA is proposing to drill a test well to determine if water is available at site 10A. BLM expects to see an application in the near future. FAA is working with the Idaho Dept of Water Resources to make sure IDWR permitting requirements are followed. Site 10A is used by sage-grouse and is known to have pygmy rabbits. FAA and BLM are meeting tomorrow with Idaho Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss analysis related to wildlife. FAA will put out noise measuring equipment to measure ambient noise levels; the information from this monitoring equipment will be used in the analysis of noise impacts.

Public comment @ 9:00 a.m. – there were public present but they chose not to comment.

Time table:

Draft EIS - early 2011

Record of Decision - Jan-Mar 2012

Newly constructed airport open in 2016

FAA is the lead agency and has a specific process for analyzing new projects; BLM processes are different and we have struggled through in places because of our differing policies.

Typically, FAA waits until later in the process to complete certain work such as some engineering studies. FAA is also accustomed to working in urban areas where infrastructure is readily available. BLM and FAA have determined that more information is needed prior to releasing the draft EIS. BLM's right-of-way processes for authorizing utilities such as electric and telephone as a connected action is also something different for FAA.

As part of the FAA technical review and more detailed studies, Site 4 has been eliminated from consideration because of failure to meet technical standards. In earlier, preliminary studies, Site

4 seemed to be feasible. FAA completes more specific analysis to make sure that the sites will meet their technical needs.

Will the test well be developed? Yes, if it is a producing well it will be capped off and it would be used should site 10A be selected. If Site 10A is not selected, no decisions have been made about what will happen to the well. Options include permanently plugging the well, or BLM may request that the water well be transferred to either BLM or permittees, so it can be used. If the well produces water but not enough to run an airport, or if the well does not produce water, there have been some discussions about other ways to supply water to the site. The question was asked if water would be pulled from Magic Reservoir if they don't find water. At this time, there is no answer on what would happen if a test well shows there is no water. Some preliminary discussions are related to piping water, or trucking water in. Again, no decisions have been made and no decisions will be made until after a test well is drilled and results are available.

There is a current team which includes Brad, Scott, Yvette, Lynn

Public Comment End @ 9:30a.m.

III. Camas Forest Restoration Environmental Analysis– Ruth Miller

The draft EA should be out around the end of August. BLM would like to know if the RAC has any issues or comments on the project. Public comments would be requested by the end of September. There are three alternatives; none of these alternatives would change the treatment plan, just the roads.

Most of RAC terms expire in September, so if RAC is going to comment they need to do it prior to the change of RAC members because the new members have not seen the site nor have the background information. **BLM can get RAC a draft EA in August for review for recommendation.**

The topic was opened up for discussion. Crane suggested that he thinks the treatment plan is a good idea but he would like to see Aspen be opened up and allowed to grow. Aspen are natural fire breaks and wildlife seem to prefer them. Other RAC members agreed with this idea.

Baker suggested we do a Federal Register Notice and have a meeting on just this project at the BLM office.

*New road is only 2.5 – 3 miles long in the proposed alternative.

Subgroup formed last meeting: Brooks – chair, Mayland, and Anderson

IV. Jarbidge Field Office Draft Resource Management Plan – Rick Vander Voet

It takes 5 - 6 weeks to get the EIS printed and mailed out. BLM is waiting to hear that it has been approved for printing; it should come any time now. The BLM would like to see RAC members

involved in public meetings for the RMP, and to get the word out to their constituents and bring any feedback back to the BLM so we can get the information incorporated into the comments. The RAC holds a lot of weight on these projects.

Baker suggested that the RAC come into the office and let Aimee Betts, RMP Lead, and Amanda Nisula, RMP Writer/Editor, walk them through the project. BLM would be happy to put something together for the RAC, even with short notice.

Vander Voet offered to get information into the mail to the RAC on the RMP and then he can provide a briefing to the RAC prior to the open houses, and public meetings. Vander Voet will let the RAC know when the public meetings are scheduled and would like to see members of the RAC at the meetings talking with the public.

V. Nominations – Heather Tiel-Nelson

The Washington Office is reviewing the RAC applications - we are required to have both a nomination and an alternate nomination. New nominations are due by Aug 29, 2010.

There is concern that the RAC will not have a quorum due to the terms that will be ending on September 20, 2010. Bell, Brooks and Brackett will be leaving the RAC, Boettger and Tuell are still waiting to hear if they will be re-nominated.

There may not be anyone to fill those individuals' positions if the new nominations are not selected yet, so there will not be a quorum until those positions are filled.

Brackett moved he draft a letter to make the RAC nomination more timely then give the letter to Crane to sign and send to the other districts. The letter would also express support to more than one term on the RAC.

The motion was seconded, the RAC voted and the motion passed unanimously.

Quale requested Tiel-Nelson give more information about what the RAC could do to help with the nominations: Word of mouth, get the information out to the public that we are looking for RAC members, they can look at the website to see what we are doing. Anyone interested can talk to Tiel-Nelson.

*If someone is no longer on the RAC that does not mean they have to be removed from the subcommittees, they will not be able to vote but they can still give recommendations.

Messman departed at 10:05am

VI. Wild Horse & Burro – Bill Baker

Baker provided a power point presentation and gave information on the new process the BLM is undertaking to improve this program. There are five teams: Baker and Courtney are each on a different team. The teams consist of:

- 1) Treasured Herds
- 2) Place Excess Animals into Private Care
- 3) Communication
- 4) Animal Welfare
- 5) Science and Research

Baker and Courtney have attended several planning meetings. There is a lot of concern about the horses, and their conditions. There are close to 20 million acres where the wild horses currently exist.

The RAC needs to think about how they want to be involved in this program. The WH&B act was passed in 1971. We manage horses within Herd Management Areas and Herd Areas - where they were located when the Act passed.

During wild horse gathers, trap sites are set up closest to where the horses are located to limit the amount of travel necessary to bring them to the trap, trap sites are also chosen based on the availability of water. On occasion, these sites were located on private land, and in some cases this prevented members of the public from observing gather activities. Where possible, BLM works to locate trap locations on public land to accommodate members of the public who want to watch the gathers.

The 1971 Act states that over population can be taken care of by destruction or sale, but these two options are not something BLM is considering.

It is challenging to obtain exact counts of how many wild horses there are, and usually these numbers are underestimated, so there is always a continuous issue with the numbers.

There are six herd management areas in Idaho that provide for approximately 996 horses.

- Challis
- Saylor Creek - south of Glenns Ferry
- Four Mile - north of Emmett
- Sands Basin - southwest of Marsing
- Hard Trigger - in the Owyhees
- Black Mountain - in the Owyhees

*Definition of a wild horse is an unclaimed, unbranded horse in a herd management area.

Since 2004, 2000 mares have been treated with PZP. The demand for adopting wild horses has not kept pace with the removal rate. There are about 35,000 horses in excess in long term and short term care facilities. In FY 2009 BLM spent nearly \$53 million, largely on the long and short term care of wild horses.

*BLM now has a WH&B Facebook account so it would be good to have the RAC “friend” our program, and comment back to the postings.

Dane departed at 11:06 am

The way the BLM decides who and where an adoption is held is based on budget and time since the last adoption at that location. BLM does not want to have adoptions in the same place too often, and we are trying to reach all market areas.

The BLM provides education and gentling demonstrations during the adoptions.

Several RAC members voiced that the public needs more education on how the BLM helps the horses and why there is a need to move them and do adoptions/gathers. The public is only hearing the negative information on what the BLM does with the wild horse program; they are not seeing the beneficial side of the program.

The RAC needs to decide what role they want to hold with this issue.

VII. WH&B discussion strategy – Samantha Anderson

Anderson started with a few proposals for the BLM to better manage the herds, BLM should be able to use all of the tools in the toolbox available to BLM. BLM should work more with the permittees to help manage the herds that are in the areas they graze.

Anderson typed up a proposal and the RAC reviewed it on the projector, then made comments. The RAC considered the proposal a draft and wanted more time to review it.

Quale moved to have the proposal emailed out to the subgroup and then everyone return comments to Anderson by Aug 2, 2010.

Motion was seconded and passed with one opposition.

Subgroup: Anderson - chair, Howell, Tuell, Crane, Mayland, Quale, Trey Spaulding.

VIII. North Rim Vegetation Treatment Environmental Analysis: Joe Russell (EA handout)

The EA was posted on the Shoshone NEPA website in May for public comment, but the RAC still has time to weigh in. The BLM would like to see comments from the RAC on this project. The project is a prescribed burn over five tracts, with two not having livestock grazing on them. The two tracts without grazing on them are Jerome and I-Farm. The prescribed burn will remove the vegetation cover to prepare the seedbed for spring herbicide spraying and fall drill seeding. The Blue Lakes Tract would not use herbicide because of the proximity to the Snake River rim and water sources. A more competitive seed mix would be used on the Blue Lakes tract due to no use of herbicide.

Alternatives:

- 1 - No herbicide use for seedbed preparation, just burn then seed that same fall
- 2 - OHV closure except in designated routes during treatment

The start time on this project would be 2012, and not all of the tracts would be done at once. We would probably start with the largest one, the Canyon tract. At the boundaries of the Idaho State lands we would have to do some type of dozer work for a prescribed fire control line. The cost per acre is about \$50 – \$75/acre, with approximately 6,000 acres to be treated in all. So far we have had good success with this type of treatment. We want to reduce annual vegetation and hazardous fuels and establish fuel breaks in strategic areas. This will help firefighting efforts in the future by having fire breaks ready, especially near developed areas. Forage kochia fire breaks can be effective and it is competitive with annual vegetation. Once a fire hits an established forage kochia break it pretty much stops.

The Tribe's perspective is that this land should be maintained regardless of costs. They support planting native plants in this area. There are also many cultural resources in this area, as well as it is a highly visible area, and it presently looks like it is not maintained.

*For wildlife issues there are three listed snail species in the Snake River.

VIII. Field Office Updates - All Field Managers

Each of the field managers provided a briefing packet of what was going on in their respective areas and gave a brief update and answered questions the RAC had on the current projects.

Burley FO – Courtney
Energy:

- Geothermal Exploration – The University of Utah has conducted seismic and magneto telluric (MT) studies on Public Lands in the vicinity of the US Geothermal power plant. The data is being used to gain further understanding of the aquifer.
- Gateway West – (Glenrock, WY to Hemmingway, ID) Six counties in southern Idaho developed a routing alternative for this project. The counties are Bannock Power, Oneida, Minidoka, Cassia and Twin Falls. This alternative is referred to as the southern route and is currently being considered in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. An internal draft of the Gateway EIS was released on March 15, 2010, a public draft EIS is scheduled to be released in Fall 2010.
- Southwest Intertie Project – This project spans an area from Harry Allen substation near Las Vegas, NV to Midpoint, ID. LS Power is currently working on a reroute that will move the right-of-way (ROW) several miles west of the Minidoka Internment Camp National Monument.
- Cotterel Mountain Wind – Shell Wind Energy has bid on a recent request-for-power and currently is negotiating details on a power purchase agreement. They have started conducting biological inventories in the project area.
- Agua Caliente submitted an application to drill 5 geothermal wells last summer. The EA, FONSI and decision record have been issued. Agua Caliente plans to begin drilling in the fall.

Recreation

- Castle Rocks State Park and Inter-Agency Recreation Area Climbing Plan-

The Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer did not concur with BLM's plan to allow climbing in Castle Rocks. The reason for this is adverse effects to cultural resources. Castle Rocks will be closed for two years. The decision was modified and does not allow rock climbing, camping or trail building.

The decision has been appealed by the Access Fund and BLM is waiting for a ruling by the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

- Milner Recreation Site

Three new outhouses have been installed and three existing outhouses have been replaced.

- Lud Drexler Recreation Site. Three existing outhouses have been replaced.

- South Hills Through an assistance agreement with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) the Burley Field Office will get a full inventory of the network of user created mountain biking trails in the South Hills. IMBA will also make recommendations on which trails are sustainable and need to be moved or eliminated. This information will be used to develop a comprehensive trail plan.

Fuels

Desert Fuel Breaks

In the fall of 2009, 577 acres of the 1120 acre Desert Fuel Breaks project were bladed, harrowed and seeded to forage kochia. The areas completed were along the Arco/Minidoka Road and the "gap" between the Great Rift and the Wapi flow. Field observations from 2010 indicate large areas of the seeding have successfully germinated.

Currently working with the University of Idaho on a graduate project to establish long term monitoring and produce peer reviewed research that can be used by BLM in future seeding efforts. Subjects such as plant density, population expansion/contraction, effectiveness as a fuel break, use by wildlife etc., will be examined by the graduate student.

Jarbidge FO – Vander Voet

Jarbidge Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision

The Preliminary Draft of the RMP has undergone review in the Washington Office. We hope to receive permission to print the Draft RMP/EIS soon. Publication of the Draft RMP/EIS begins a 90 day public comment period. BLM will host open house public meetings during the 90 day public comment period. We continue to meet regularly with the Parties (Western Watersheds Project and livestock permittees) to the 2005 Stipulated Settlement Agreement. The Settlement Agreement lays out expectations, requirements and the schedule for the RMP revision process. BLM also discusses the RMP at regular meetings with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes and Owyhee County.

Proposed China Mountain Wind Energy Project

Work continues on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Project. An updated newsletter will be released this summer. A Draft EIS for the project is scheduled for

release to public in December 2010. Substantial information about the project is available at:

http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html

Implementation of Owyhee Public Lands Management Act

This portion of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 was signed by the President on March 30, 2009. The Act designated Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers and released Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) in Owyhee County, among many other provisions. For example, the Act also included what is in effect, a cross county vehicle closure in all of Owyhee County by limiting travel to existing routes. BLM is working with livestock permittees and the Board of Directors for implementing the Act, confirmed inventory information on roads/trails and range improvements within Wilderness Areas. This work is also being closely coordinated with the Boise District. We have also removed WSA signs from released WSA's and replaced WSA signs with Wilderness signs where appropriate. Boundary surveys and planning are also underway with close coordination with the Boise District. Informational Kiosks have been designed and will be installed at entry points this summer. Visitor information and education continues to be a high priority for field going staff.

Special Status Species Management and Conservation

Preliminary observations of LEPA (Slickspot Peppergrass) by the Heritage Program monitoring crew indicate that there are quite a few plants this year. Monitoring conducted by the Heritage Program found only two tripped triggers within the Resource Area despite the wet spring. LEPA potential habitat (approximately 2/3rd of the Resource Area) and Biological Assessments for LEPA are becoming a major workload for Field Office staff.

During the week of June 28th, the Field Office participated in an INFISH Bull Trout Review. This review occurs every five years, and evaluates how the Field Office is implementing INFISH. The review went very well, and the review team provided positive feedback to staff and managers for their implementation of INFISH.

Field Office Wildlife Biologists Jim Klott and Ben Toole have been spending substantial time this field season conducting sage-grouse habitat assessments. This spring, many of our staff was able to watch the sun rise as they spent many early mornings on lek-route surveys in coordination with Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Judge Winmill's March 2010 Ruling

On March 23, 2010, Judge Winmill issued a Final Order of Judgment in the case of Western Watersheds Project (WWP) v. K. Lynn Bennett, Director, Idaho State Office, BLM; Edward Guerrero, Jarbidge Field Management, BLM; and BLM. Judge Winmill ruled in favor of the BLM on the first and third supplemental claims alleging NEPA and FLPMA violations. On the second supplemental claim alleging NEPA and FLPMA

violations, Judge Winmill ruled in favor of the BLM regarding NEPA violations and ruled in favor of WWP regarding FLPMA violations.

Shoshone FO – Ruth Miller

Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve Travel Management Plan

Craters of the Moon National Monument Travel Plan September 30, 2009 decision was appealed by Blue Ribbon Coalition in November 2009. The reason given for the appeal was the loss of a motorized recreation loop opportunity (Route 785) in the Bear Den/Thumb area. There is a single route restriction at issue (a 1.7 mile route went from open to administrative use only). On June 25, 2010, the Interior Board of Land Appeals affirmed the BLM's decision to close Route 785 to motorized public access.

BLM would like RAC to join them Aug 21, 2010, at Craters for the 10th anniversary of the cooperative management between the two agencies at Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve.

Shoshone and Burley Resource Management

Community Assessments have been held in several communities in the two field offices this winter and will finish up this summer. These assessments collect data from local communities regarding what values they consider important for public lands and what they would like to see for the future management of BLM lands. The start of the RMP has been delayed until at least 2012 (fiscal year).

Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI)

Routing Alternatives through the Hidden Valley are controversial. There has been discussion of a proposed route through the Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. NPS and BLM staff spoke to the MSTI Concerned Citizens Task Force about the Monument at a meeting in Power County in December.

A Draft EIS was reviewed by the agency this spring. A draft for the public is expected later this summer. Northwestern has been meeting with the landowners in the area regarding the route down the eastern side of Craters.

Rock Creek (Rinker) Land Exchange

Mr. Rinker sent a letter to the BLM this spring and stated that he no longer wished to pursue this project.

North Highway 20 Travel Plan

The purpose of the North Highway 20 Travel Plan is to designate travel routes and types of use, and to identify parking areas/trailheads and trail construction corridors on public land to facilitate travel through public lands. This allows the BLM to provide trail-based recreation opportunities. The Blaine County Recreation and Travel plan recommendations submitted to the BLM SFO indicates evidence of that need. There is a need to be responsive to current and future demand for access and travel to and through public lands for recreational opportunities and other uses such as supporting livestock operations, realty actions and private in-holdings. The planning area is BLM

public land north of Highway 20 within the Shoshone Field Office. Boundaries on the west include Chimney Creek and on the east Craters of the Moon/Fish Creek. The planning area consists of 239,145 acres of public land.

Magic Geothermal Lease

Ormat Nevada Inc. has requested two geothermal leases in the area at the north end of Magic Reservoir in Blaine and Camas Counties. If leased, the primary lease term is 10 years. The primary lease term may be granted two 5-year extensions prior to production, and 40 year extensions for producing leases. The proposed action is for leasing only. Any ground disturbing activities must be analyzed under separate environmental analysis.

Tuell departed @ 3:10

Orthel departed @ 3:28

IX. Other business – Poster Presentations.

Anderson and Tiel-Nelson gave poster presentations providing back ground and history about themselves.

Marc moved to continue the “getting to know me posters”

There was a second – motion passed

*Mike Courtney and Denise Alexander will be doing the next meetings “poster presentations.”

Agenda Items:

Recognize outgoing RAC members

Timber sales

JFO RMP

WH&B

Big Horn Sheep

Gateway West EIS

SFO EIS Assessment

Upcoming Meetings:

Timber Sales – Aug 31, 2010 at 10:00 am at the BLM Twin Falls District Office (TFDO)

RMP Briefing – Aug 31, 2010 at 1:00 pm at the BLM TFDO

Next Meeting - Sept 16, 2010 at the Jerome Best Western

Meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

Executive session started @ 3:58 p.m.

Handouts provided:

Field Office Updates

RAC Categories

Previous Meeting Minutes
Chinese Zodiac Signs List

Minutes certified by: /s/

Kelly Crane /s/
Kelly Crane, TFD RAC

October 4, 2010
Date

Bill Baker /s/
Bill Baker, TF DFO

October 8, 2010
Date

Minutes recorded by: Beckie Wagoner, TFD Records Assistant