

Twin Falls District Resource Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2009
Ameritel Inn, Twin Falls

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present:

Marc Brackett - Category 1
Ken Sanders - Chairman, Category 3
Yvette Tuell, Category 3
Hank Mayland, Category 2
Mel Quale, Category 1
Joe Tugaw, Category 1
Gerald Orthel, Category 1
Denise Alexander, Category 2
Samantha Anderson, Category 3
Debbie Dane, Category 1
Lynn Messman, Category 2
Scott Boettger, Category 2

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:

Bill Baker – DFO, District Manager (DM)
Holly Hampton, Acting Shoshone Field Manager (SFM)
Mike Courtney, Burley Field Manager (BFM)
Rick Vander Voet, Jarbidge Field Manager (JFM)
Katherine Farrell, Planning & Environmental Coordinator
Heather Tiel-Nelson, Public Affairs Specialist
Beckie Wagoner, TFD Records Assistant
Dave Freiberg, Outdoor Recreation Planner
Codie Martin, Rangeland Management Specialist
Jesse German, GIS Specialist
Barbara Bassler, Environmental Coordinator
Christopher Simonson, Fire Management Officer (FMO)

Public Present:

Rochelle Oxarango representing Ranchers

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 9:03 am. RAC members and BLM employees and public were introduced. Brackett clarified some confusion between two

RAC members in the previous meeting minutes after research prior to the meeting with Wagoner. Minutes will be approved and posted.

I. Public Comment 9:15 am – 9:45 am

Public comment started at 9:15, Rochelle Oxarango is a permittee with a sheep grazing permit within Craters of the Moon National Monument. As background information, Rochelle shared that she had been on the tour with Bruce Babbitt prior to the Monument expansion, and she had expressed her concerns to him regarding its expansion. She said that there were promises made on that tour that were not upheld, and the expansion was far larger than what they had expected based on her conversation with Babbitt. She was also informed that grazing would not be affected, but she believes it has been affected. As a permittee she believes the promises should be kept, and rancher's access not restricted.

Oxarango is also participating in a local sage grouse working group. Their plan is scheduled to be out soon; in this plan they have addressed all possible sage grouse issues and mitigation measures, and nowhere is their plan mentioned in the proposed Craters Travel Management Plan (TMP) for which BLM is seeking public comment. Oxarango is frustrated because of some of the restrictions to the permittees trailing and bedding their sheep near sage-grouse leks that could be implemented within the proposed TMP. Oxarango fears that staff turnover could result in different interpretations of the plan in the future. She would like the RAC to address these issues. According to the Monument Plan, the livestock can't be within .6 miles of an active lek during certain hours. She believes that most ranchers will stay away from them, but there are times it may not be possible, as other factors can come into play. Oxarango received information that these new restrictions will be on their grazing permits, so she needs clarification as to if it applies to just grazing in the Monument areas or if it applies to the whole permit.

Oxarango stated that she does understand that the overall intent is to allow day to day operations but would like to be certain that it is written clearly in the Monument Plan, so there is no confusion or question on it later. She thanked the RAC for their time and consideration.

**In the spring there can be 15 - 20 bands of sheep in this area at one time.*

Brackett then thanked Joe Tugaw and Ken Sanders for their time and efforts while on the RAC, since it was their last meeting. Both members had spent 12 years serving on the Upper Snake and Twin Falls District RACs. Brackett then turned the time over to Bill Baker. Baker also thanked Sanders and Tugaw for their service on both RACs and presented both individuals with a plaque and vest. Tugaw and Sanders both thanked everyone and said this RAC was good to serve on and felt they made a difference and enjoyed their time on the Twin Falls District RAC. Then a slide show that Heather Tiel-Nelson put together highlighting their time on the RACs was presented.

**Yvette Tuell and Scott Boettger joined us during the presentation.*

II. Joint Resource Advisory Council Meetings Discussion – Marc Brackett

The Recreation Resource Advisory Council (RRAC) has been a frustration for the RAC in that it is dominating the RAC's time and BLM only has two sites that are involved. The group would like to stay involved with Boise District on the RRAC but would like a more simplified process so that it's not as time consuming. The RAC would like to entertain other options for the

process so that they don't have the extra meeting with the full Boise District RAC at this point, nothing is scheduled for approximately a year, so now is a good time to get the process changed. Brackett then proposed to the RAC in writing a way to simplify the process. Brackett informed the RAC that he read through the RRAC charter and bylaws and could not find anything stating that the joint meetings were required.

The Twin Falls District (TFD) RAC will need to speak with the Boise District (BD) RAC and see what they are comfortable with. It was voiced that it also may complicate the process to have our own meetings rather than the shared meetings with BD RAC for the decision making process.

Discussion: Essentially the way the process is now the RAC is reviewing the information twice, the RRAC committee meets with the Forest Service (FS), the committee listens to the proposed changes for the fees and votes on them, then the RRACs take the RRAC decisions back to their respective RACs then both full RACs meet in a joint meeting for a final vote.

Since there is nothing stating that a joint meeting is required between both RAC districts for the voting it would be less time consuming if the RRAC continues to meet and bring back the RRAC decisions to their perspective RACs then each RAC vote at their own RAC meeting, eliminating the joint meetings.

The RRAC meetings provide a good opportunity to stay involved with what is going on with the camping areas and lands, the RRAC should stay involved.

**The RRAC members are committed for a specified amount of time; there terms are either two or three years.*

****Wagoner will check on RRAC terms and send them out. ****

It was suggested that a letter be sent to FS requesting the status on the formation of a FS RRAC. The RRAC has provided a lot of influence on the decisions and the FS cannot move forward with a fee proposal without a recommendation, so a RRAC is vital to their mission.

“Brackett moved that he write a letter to FS requesting the status on the formation of a FS RAC.”

Second - Motion passed.

“Messman then moved to pursue the RRAC simplification procedures outlined in Brackett's written suggestion with Boise District RAC, which stated that the RACs continue to have members of both RACs working together on the RRAC. The RRAC meets and is briefed in detail by the FS. RRAC develops recommendations which are then submitted to each RAC independently for an up or down vote, no amendments or modifying the recommendations.”

Second – passed.

Public comment end 9:45

III. Blaine Co Airport Re-location Update – Marc Brackett

Yesterday Brackett and Wagoner reviewed the original letter that the RAC airport team had come up with because there was a difference of opinion between a couple of RAC members on what the changes should reflect and what the meeting notes stated. After that review Brackett concluded that the meeting notes were correct. The actual wording of the new letter had been hand written by the team on the record copy that was in the file. Now that the information is clarified, the letter needs to be retyped to reflect what the RAC had decided on in the previous meeting. Once the letter is retyped it will then be submitted.

The Blaine County airport authority has recommended its choice site 10A; it sits between the Richfield canal and Wedge Butte. There is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) currently in the process for this area. While this is Blaine County's choice site the RAC letter reflects the concerns they discussed previously and recommends another site.

IV. Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve Travel Management Plan – Mel Quale

The Craters team has been working on a letter to the Monument Manager with the RAC's suggestions on what routes should be left open for certain travel and what should be closed. Some of the roads are slated to be closed except for administrative use. Quale asked for clarification on what administrative use was. Administrative use is use on a road when necessary to complete a task or mission. Permittees can also use these roads when moving or checking their animals; these roads are not open to the public for everyday usage such as sightseeing.

The light yellow handout is the proposal the Craters team put together. The deadline for comments on the plan is September 18, 2009 so the RAC will need to come to an agreement today on what they want to submit for comments as the RAC.

The bright yellow handout is background on how the team came to the draft plan in its current stage. Quale read this page to the RAC then explained areas of it. Quale then showed a slide presentation of some of the roads within the monument--particularly the ones he is proposing remain open. After the slideshow Quale asked everyone to review his write up and comment on it for input on the plan. A copy of Brad Brooks' email with his comments on the letter was handed out. Brooks sent it to Brackett since he was unable to attend the meeting. The RAC then took a 10 min break to review Brooks' email, and Quale's proposed letter.

Discussion: When the RAC reconvened they discussed open routes from a recreational stand point that are also open to permittees 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The permittees are also given administrative access during periods of closure. The roads identified for closure in red on the map have no need identified to keep them open, so they will be closed permanently and rehabilitated back to their natural environment.

The RAC agreed that the letter needed revision; there are areas that need to be addressed. It was agreed that a team would get together during lunch to work on the letter to present to the RAC later in the day; the team consisted of RAC members Brackett, Boettger, Tuell, Alexander, Quale, Messman, and BLM representatives Hampton, German, Frieberg, Martin and Wagoner.

**Chris Simonson joined the meeting*

V. Gateway West Proposed Transmission Line – Debbie Dane

The Stateline Alternative - This alternative is not well supported because of the expense of it crossing so many jurisdictions. The original line

goes across private lands instead of state and public lands. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on August 24, 2009. Those signing the MOU include Bannock, Oneida, Power, Cassia, Minidoka, and Twin Falls Counties. The purpose of the MOU is to address the entry and exit points as the power line crosses from one county to the next. County Commissions have site authority within their county. Possible issues that may arise at a later date may have economic impact on private lands in the agricultural areas. Other areas that may be impacted include historical and cultural areas surrounding the City of Rocks National Reserve.

The Gateway West Transmission Line is not proposed to go through the City of Rocks but is within view shed of the recreational area. The draft EIS is being developed and is expected out in April, 2010, it is being written by BLM.

The large transmission towers are 140 – 160 feet tall so will need to have as much clearance as possible. If one goes down, there must be clearance so it won't take other towers out or other buildings near it. It is required to have a minimum of a 40 foot perimeter around each of the towers to include agricultural areas. Under the lines there can be agricultural areas but not within the 40 foot perimeter.

There are currently three additional lines proposed from Montana and Wyoming. All three of these lines will cross somewhere within the Magic Valley area. Dane encourages everyone to stay well informed and involved in this energy project and others like it as it will impact everyone at some point. Updates of this project can be found on either the BLM or Gateway West websites.

VI. Fire/Fuels Team Report Discussion – Ken Sanders

The team was not able to get a recommendation in prior to the project's completion date, so a decision was made without RAC comment. Simonson suggested a tour after the rehabilitation project to see how it is doing. The RAC thought this was a good idea and also requested that they be kept up to date on the project.

**Due to time the Wilderness Act Training Review was rescheduled to the next RAC meeting.*

****Continued with discussion and editing the letter for Travel Management Plan****

The RAC took the drafted Travel Management Plan letter and went through it paragraph by paragraph and incorporated some of the suggested edits the team came up with during lunch and added or removed other text. After much debate the RAC came up with a letter that they believed was appropriate to send to the Monument Manager.

VII. Round Table with Field Managers

Each of the Field Managers provided a handout of the updates within their office and reviewed it with the RAC, then answered any questions the RAC had. Highlights for each office included the following: Jarbidge – Resource Management Plan Revision, Proposed China Mountain Wind Energy Project, and Resumption of Grazing. Burley – Energy projects, Castle Rocks Climbing Plan, Grazing Permit Renewal. Shoshone – Craters of the Moon National Monument Plan and Litigation, Triumph Mine/ASARCO pipeline, Mountain States Transmission Intertie Update.

Next Meeting is scheduled for Jan 21, 2010, location to be determined.

Agenda Items will include:
Wilderness Training Overview
New Orientation
RMP
Renewable Energy/China Mtn.

“Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:19 pm.”
Second – passed

Handouts provided:
Agenda
RRAC Options
Email to Brackett for Draft Airport Letter
Draft Airport Letter
Draft Letter for Monument Travel Plan
Craters of the Moon National Monument & Reserve Travel Planning
Fire & Fuels Team Recommendations
UDSA Forage Kochia: Livestock, Wildfire, and Wildlife
Power Point for “The Wilderness Act of 1964”
Wilderness Management Training
RAC Minutes 4/2/09
Shoshone Field Office Update
Burley Field Office Update
Jarbidge Field Office Update

Maps provided:
Gateway West proposed lines
Bruneau-Jarbidge Rives Wilderness March 30, 2009
Roberson Trailhead Area 7/16/09
Parker Trailhead Area with Range Improvements 7/16/09

Minutes certified by:

<i>/s/ Marc Brackett</i>	10-14-09
_____	_____
Marc Brackett, TFD RAC	Date
<i>/s/ Bill Baker</i>	10-14-09
_____	_____
Bill Baker, TF DFO	Date

Minutes recorded by: Beckie Wagoner, TFD Records Assistant