

**Twin Falls District
Resource Advisory
Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2007**

RAC Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2007

Attendance

RAC: Hank Mayland, Samantha Anderson, Kevin Wright, Scott Boettger, Marc Brackett, Dennis Crane, Ken Sanders, Debbie Dane, Mel Quale, Kelly Adams, Joe Tugaw

BLM: Bill Baker, Jenifer Arnold, Rick Vander Voet, Beckie Wagoner, Ken Miller, Sky Buffat, Lori Armstrong, Tom Dyer, Heather Tiel, Chris Simonson, Scott Uhrig, Max Yingst

Other: Lilly Simpson from Blaine County

Meeting started at 9:30; it opened with the public comment period, there was no public to comment.

Ken Sanders asked if there were any questions or concerns for the meeting minutes for the previous meeting held on November 28, 2006. There were none so the minutes will stand.

Bill Baker updated on the new BLM positions within the District and state; Bill is now Acting District Manager, Jenifer Arnold is Acting Associate District Manager, Howard Hedrick has moved to a permanent position at the State office. Our new State Director is Tom Dyer and our new Associate State Director is Peter Ditton.

Tom Dyer addressed the RAC; he gave background on himself and his career with the Federal Government. Tom spoke about renewable resources and his experience with that field of work. Tom gave an update on the Grazing Regulations hearing scheduled for April 2, 2007, the three topics it is covering is 1) Shared ownership 2) One – two year fixed grazing, and 3) Public involvement. Tom also addressed the FY 2007 budget, and then opened the floor to questions and comments.

JFO Update - Rick Vander Voet

Rick requested that the RMP subgroup make comments, suggestions, or bring up concerns regarding the RMP process.

The Data Fair was successful; almost 80 people attended including six RAC members. JFO feels it was a productive and constructive meeting. There were many questions and much interaction with each other throughout the Data Fair.

Feedback from attending RAC members included; the amount of data collected was incredible, that they were amazed by the amount of data that had been collected and that a lot of work went into the collection process.

At this point the data that was collected is in the process of being compiled analyzed, and cataloged. At this time JFO is short on GIS help, so the maps are slow in coming right now.

There were very few negative comments about the data fair by the attendees, and the ones that were brought up were considered as good questions rather than as negative feedback. Some of these comments included grazing permittee's wanting to see a more specified map of their grazing areas, which in turn caused differences in opinions on how to create the vegetation maps.

JFO has been sharing the data they have collected with stipulation parties to show the quality of the data and hopefully answer any questions and concerns they may have now as opposed to later in the process.

The RMP ID team is pushing through with previous public issues by scoping. The team is also writing their goals for the vegetation and recreation experiences among others. The team is also looking at what other type of alternatives are available. The team meets almost daily, Rick encouraged the RAC to attend or stop by and sit in on areas that they are interested in learning more about. Aimee Betts is the team lead; if anyone would like more information or to be on her contact list please contact her at (208) 736-2388.

Rick asked the RAC's opinion on public involvement workshops to look at alternatives and potential actions. Rick also mentioned it would be good to have RAC sponsor the workshops. Possible workshops could include but are not limited to Forage Allocations and ACEC's to make sure they are still valid as well as nominate ACEC's. Rick suggested the workshops be planned 6-8 weeks out and they could be done separately or together. The workshops would be open to everyone. Marc was interested in sponsoring. Ken suggested the RAC have a meeting after the RAC meeting to discuss how they can help in this process.

The stipulated grazing settlement agreement request us to do annual grazing plans, there is no timeframe for this to be completed yet.

Slickspot Peppergrass (LEPA) was not listed as endangered at this time. There is much work trying to justify this decision. Monitoring will continue so it is still a portion of JFO's workload.

Sage Grouse: Marc gave an update on the working group plan for Sage Grouse; it is close to finished and will soon be submitted for the RMP.

BFO Update - Ken Miller

The main focus right now is grazing permit renewal; BFO is working hard to get on track and has made a significant gain in this process.

EA's are in process for Jim Sage, Goose Creek area as well as Cottrell North & South.

We are trying to get the word out on closures in the South Hills for the protection of crucial Mule Deer and Sage Grouse winter habitat and range. This is not a new closure, it has been in place since 2000, but one that needs to be enforced and the public educated more. There will be two additional gates added to this area and well as more signs to help the information on the closure get out. The current gates have no locks so locks will also be added to existing gates.

Castle Rocks (hand out provided) has a temporary suspension for climbing, bolts and rocks. This temporary closure is so that we can assess procedures. BLM, FS, and Idaho Parks and Rec (IDPR). IDPR will be joining to make this a larger multi-purpose park, together we will decide what needs to be addressed, and what actions need to be taken to make this park a place where we can entertain more types of recreation. The agencies will be speaking with the tribes during the consultation process. BLM has 300 acres of prime climbing area at this park; IDPR has acquired more land that is attached to the original property they want to add to the park. Currently there is a camp ground that was recently built that accepts large RV's; an admission fee is charged for this park. A management plan between the agencies for the maintenance and upkeep of the park is in discussion.

SFO Update - Lori Armstrong

Last week the Draft EIS for the Sun Valley Company permit was sent to the Federal Register Notice so it is now open for public comment; the document was 450 pages.

Sun Valley Company put forward a new permit that covers phase I of the EIS (CD available upon request). Bald Mountain wants to remove the old chair lift and add a gondola. They also want to widen the ski areas to Olympic size adding a boundary on the FS side as well as decreasing on the BLM side. They would also like the capability to make snow. The main point of controversy at this point is the water rights for the snow making. Comments are due to BLM/FS by April 9, 2007. The existing permit that Sun Valley Company is working under will expire this summer. The permit can be renewed if it should expire prior to the

improvements being completed. The project will not expire with the construction permit. John Kurtz is the ESI team lead for this project he can be reached at (208) 732-7296.

Next week Lori along with one airport official for the County Airport will go to Seattle to meet with FFA for quote presentations that were received from four interested companies. The decision on which contractor to use will be made shortly after all the presentations are made. The actual airport project date has not yet been determined. Sponsors are being looked for in the Blaine, Camas and Lincoln County areas. Other counties can be the sponsor, but they will need to come to us. If no one from Lincoln or Camas County comes forward to sponsor the new airport then Blaine County will automatically be used. The EIS will take several years to write. The EIS will be paid for partially by a FFA grant and someone exterior to the BLM will pay for the NEPA if the site is on all or part of BLM ground.

The Minidoka National Monument (map handout provided) which covers 80 acres of BLM land has an old landfill dump on it. The National Park Service (NPS) has requested to congressionally transfer the landfill out of the BLM land and to them for historic purposes. Hunt Camp was torn down and the materials were dumped at this landfill. There are currently two Idaho Power ROW's for power lines and seven AUM's within this area. There were 40 acres withdrawn under an act of congress in the year 1913 that will need to be cleared prior to any transfers. BLM is opposed to this transfer and from a historical aspect we know that NPS is better able to preserve any historical material recovered from the landfill.

There are currently four sage grouse working groups for the SFO they are (handout provided): 1) Shoshone Basin – successful group 2) Berger – just a couple of years old so still getting started 3) North Magic Valley (West Shoshone & North Burley FO) 4) Raft River (South Magic Valley area) – just getting started, no meetings yet.

Wild Horse & Burro – Tom Dyer

There are no fee changes for wild horses at this time.

Nationally BLM is the closest they have ever been to getting to a management level of the wild horses. There are more horses in long term holding facilities, approximately 20 – 22,000, that are waiting to be adopted. These facilities are contracted; usually in the mid-western areas, but they can be located anywhere including Idaho. These facilities are bid contracted.

Energy Discussion – Bill Baker

Bill proposed having a meeting at the BLM office for those who are interested while these items (energy) are still a hot topic rather than waiting until the next RAC meeting because many times the information needed is past by the time the next RAC meeting comes around. Bill suggested a two week notice prior to these meetings. Key topics for these meetings would be: corridor – new regulations for geothermal leasing, wind energy and oil and gas leases.

Lori Armstrong, covered West wide Energy Corridor (map handouts were provided). Lori showed us on the map the corridor on the Federal lands. This information is also located on a CD that is available.

Southern Idaho Tourism – Debbie Dane

Debbie provided a handout on the “North Rim Park Plan” it was a summary of the stakeholder input. In October 2006, the public process was kicked off for the second time. In November 2006, stakeholder input was gathered over a two day period, 77 people came and spoke with the stakeholders. On November 28, 2006, the information from this event was compiled which is listed in the handout. In January 2007, three design charette’s were held; one for the committee the second in Twin Falls and the third in Jerome. They found that the people mostly wanted the same things for this project. The site goals are to 1) Protect the underlying Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer 2) Protect important cultural and natural resources 3) Promote diverse responsible recreation through preservation and 4) Create new park identity that is clearer, safer, more diverse, and welcoming to the users.

Blaine County Travel Planning – Lilly Simpson – Blaine County

Lilly Simpson was hired to map all the roads that were not previously mapped for this project (handout provided). The major concerns for this project are damaged vegetation and riparian areas. You can get a copy of the plan at www.Blainecounty.org

Nominations

Marc Brackett, Mike Tylka, Scott Boettger, Kevin Wright and Yvette Tuell’s terms are up in September of 2007. Mike will not be returning due to relocation, Marc, Scott, and Kevin are working on their paperwork for another term. Yvette was not present at the meeting to indicate either way. Mike will need to be replaced on the RRAC for the winter motorized position.

Operations Update – Scott Uhrig, Acting Ops Manager

Operations is actively spraying the weeds and working on getting the weeds under control.

Next meeting will be at the Burley Fire Office on May 15, 2007.