

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
May 3, 2011
Dick Irvin Incorporated
Shelby, MT

Attendees

RAC – Mary Jones, Barb Cole, Aart Dolman, Wayne Fairchild, Ron Poertner, Larry Epstein, Mike Bryant, Jim MC Collum, Hugo Tureck, Pat Gunderson, Nick Schultz, Tom Carrels and Troy Blunt (Vice-Chairman)

BLM – Stan Benes, Stanley Jaynes, Gary Slagel, Kaylene Patten (Facilitator), and Victoria Kerns (Minutes)

Guests – Brian Sakahra (BLM Law Enforcement), Mike Waite (Public)

Public Comment Period – Public – Comments to RAC members on agenda topics

The decision was made to give the public a few minutes to show up and the Vice-Chairman felt that Kaylene should go over the agenda while waiting for any public commenters to arrive.

Welcome, election of Officers, Meeting Notes – Facilitator – Chairperson synopsis, election, approve notes – December meeting

Kaylene was asked (by Laura Riley from MRCDC – who has attended some RAC meetings) to distribute a hand-out on the Valley County Sage Grouse Presentation & Habitat Tour to invite the RAC to that. Kaylene made a head count for dinner reservations, and went over the agenda. No changes were made to the day's agenda, and Kaylene proceeded with the agenda for Wednesday. Introductions were made. Stanley Jaynes announced that he was standing in for Mark Albers who had other commitments and would not be attending this meeting. Kaylene presented the notes from the Dec. 12th meeting. Changes and corrections had been made. The minutes were signed. Kaylene moved on to the election of officers. She pointed out that Troy is the Vice-Chairman, Ron Moody, who is no longer on the RAC, was the Chairman. Kaylene went over the role of the Chair (to keep the meeting running, to write up letters of recommendations made by the RAC, and to create the agenda for the next meeting).

Motion was made by Mike Bryant to nominate Troy Blunt as Chairman and it was seconded by Barb Cole. Larry moved to close the nominations and the motion was seconded. Members voted and it was approved by consensus. Troy Blunt is now the RAC Chairman. Mary nominated Hugo Tureck for Vice-Chair, seconded by Larry – Ron nominated Mike Bryant, and Barb seconded the motion. A vote was taken and Mike Bryant was elected as Vice-Chair. Late comers to the meeting were allowed to vote, invited to dinner, and to comment on last meeting's minutes.

(There were no members of the public present who wanted to speak – the meeting proceeded)

Roundtable – RAC Members – What have you heard? How are we doing? What can be improved?

Stan Benes – Stan feels that this is very valuable part of the meeting and helpful to the BLM to keep us on track and to let us know if there is something we are missing.

Mary Jones – Mary mentioned that grazing is a topic of concern. Another concern is the wildlands. She understands that BLM has to do an inventory, but is concerned that designations might be made. She had also been approached by a rancher regarding the Bison issue.

Barb Cole – Barb expressed concern about Bison and eminent domain. She also expressed concern about wildlands and having land removed from productive use to be designated wilderness.

Aart Dolman – Aart expressed that wilderness designation is a concern, as well as eminent domain and productivity of the land. He expressed interest in cooperation with MSU regarding Camelina.

Wayne Fairchild – Wayne’s interest/concern centers around Outfitters –they are excited about the boat landing at Judith and the visitor center at Coal Bank. Gary Slagel pointed out that this is a check-in facility not a visitor center. It will be staffed by volunteers and visitor information will be available. Wayne feels that the facility will be good for recreationists. He expressed concern about the SRPs (23 available and 18 in use) and allowing a once a year operation and wondered why that is, and if this could be looked into. Wayne stated that it didn’t seem fair to the 18 outfitters to allow once a year groups to take out permits, and he expressed safety concerns. It was suggested that this (once a year operator permits) be an agenda item for the next meeting. Wayne also expressed that a lot of the outfitters have enjoyed working with the BLM/Mark Shafer on the river.

Ron Poertner – Ron expressed concern about the Monument litigation and court ruling. His concern is how the outcome will effect grazing, gas development, and road closures. He also discussed swapping out State-lands and private land buyouts (as it relates to Treasured Landscapes). Ron also mentioned Judith and Arrow Creek water rights, he wants to be kept up-to-date and informed as to what the BLM is doing he’d like to see more upfront education. He feels that brochures are great, but feels other media may be more effective. He also expressed concern about the Monument camping rule (of camping within 50’ of the road), and feels it is an issue that will affect hunters/campers. Ron also feels that almost monthly something comes out of Washington (regarding land preservation) and we have no knowledge about it. Ron would like facts about what is going on, and speculates that the public will draw their own conclusions if they are not informed.

Larry Epstein – Larry expressed concern about oil and gas development, and stated that a report would be nice in that regard.

Mike Bryant – Mike also addressed oil and gas development on the Black Feet Reservation, and shared environmental concerns. He also expressed concern about leasing in the Grass Range area, and in Bakken gas field. Mike feels that the oil/gas activity is frantic, and he raised concern about fracing. He is also concerned about safety and infrastructure (roads, pipeline, degradation to the land), and was curious about jobs associated with oil and gas development.

Jim McCollum – Jim expressed concern about the 50’ camping rule – feels campers/hunters are going to oppose that rule. He also addressed the questions of small parcel divestment. He understands that there is policy to divest isolated tracts of land, and wondered why nothing has moved forward on that, and wondered about the status of that program [Stan Benes will address this in his presentation tomorrow].

Hugo Tureck – Hugo explained he has been having health concerns and as a result he’s had the opportunity to speak to a larger community (people from Billings to Minnesota). Hugo got the impression that the larger community has a love affair with the open spaces of Montana. As a rancher/farmer he feels that the greater community cares about us and values public lands as other states do not have them. He also heard that access to public lands is an issue. In speaking to local ranchers/farmers, eminent domain is an issue. He also heard concerns about the protection of landscapes, and feels that the legislature is not addressing the issue, and that maybe no one is.

Pat Gunderson – Pat expressed that since the last meeting, the Glasgow area has had a touch of winter, and is now dealing with flooding. Winter has had an effect on wildlife. Antelope counts are down, and deer and fawns took a big hit. Pat mentioned that people are still concerned about the HiLine RMP, the KXL Pipeline, eminent domain, jobs, and they are concerned about the rivers in the path of the pipeline. In addition, there are also Northern Border Pipeline, and wildlands concerns. Pat mentioned that through a partnership a booklet has been put together informing the public on ponds. Winter also affected ponds (with a lot of winter kill). About the Bison, he felt that more concern is in regard to FWP. Lastly, Pat addressed access on the Bullwacker Road.

Nick Schultz – Four wolves were found in Nick’s area and wondered how the BLM addresses the wolf issue. He felt that his experience was an example of broken promises, and wildlife management. Nick also stated that there seems to be a lack of economic consideration on the part of the government. Nick pointed out that the NRCS in Lewistown has programs to benefit sage grouse and habitat (while the BLM does not). Nick was curious about how the federal budget is going to affect the BLM. And, in regard to

what Hugo was saying, Nick doesn't feel that people have a grasp on open spaces, and raised the question, "how do you reach those people?"

Tom Carrels - Tom addressed the issue of legislative action to curtail bison plans. He does not understand the threat of bison, and feels this issue needs to be discussed. Tom feels this is an economic issue. He also feels that there is room for bison on lands. Tom pointed out that wild-game hunting safaris generate big money and feels that hunting bison would generate money for Montana's economy.

Troy Blunt – Troy stated that winter and spring has been interesting – He followed the issue of Bison through the state legislature. Eminent domain is always an issue with land owners. Wildlands is a big issue in his area. Another issue is the *Grinnell Notch* in the Zortman/Landusky area in the Fort Belknap reservation; the tribe would like it back – it was bought from the tribe twice for mining, now the tribe wants it back which will affect reservation borders. Troy wondered about the converting process and expressed concerned that this is also a water conservation issue. Another legislative concern was school dollars and how they are affected by oil/gas drilling. June 15th is the Oil and Gas Counties Convention, and Troy thinks legislation will be a major part of the discussions. He also feels that we have lost track of where we are with the HiLine RMP and feels that it could come back and be thrown in our face at the last minute. Lastly, Troy mentioned the XL pipeline going through eastern part of the state feels that there will be economic benefits.

Troy welcomed Mike Waite from Denny Rehberg's office and asked him if he had any public comments (he did not)

Kaylene asked if there were any Go Backs – **Stan** reiterated the value of this discussion to the BLM. He is interested in listening to concerns (and even to rumors). **Jim** expressed concern about the CMR Refuge and their Comprehensive Plan, and their plans for well closures, and not maintaining reservoirs on the refuge. He has heard concerns expressed that if these changes take place, how they will get along with their neighbors in regard to conservation/grazing. Since the BLM is a neighbor, Jim was wondering what BLM's input is on what they are doing there. The question was raised about Stan's e-mail in relation to job creation; this will come up for discussion later on in the meeting.

(The decision was made to break for lunch)

Lunch

Partnerships with BLM – Benes & Albers – Share the partnerships & success of those partnerships at both Districts.

Stan Benes – Stan did a presentation on "The BLM – A Sound Investment in America" (Brochure provided to the RAC). The focus of the presentation was about our partnership with America. This presentation pointed out that the agency makes more money than it spends. BLM generates \$5 for every \$1 spent. It also showed what the BLM Does for the community. The BLM invests in jobs (over 500,000 of which 17,000 are in Montana/North and South Dakota). Jobs support the community. Don's was shown as an example of a Lewistown business that makes money off of wildlife associated activities. The BLM also provides recreation opportunities through; the Wild and Scenic Missouri River, Campgrounds, and Trails. All activities support the community. Energy development also generates income as does timber sales. Grazing activity supports ranchers. We manage the habitat that supports many species of wildlife, this supports jobs and generates money to Montana, ND, and SD. Without BLMs open spaces, financial support would be greatly diminished. Wildfires and Prescribed Fires generate work for aviation contractors, equipment contractors, fuel suppliers, local restaurants/businesses, and they generate summer jobs. Special projects also generate visitors and these generate money and jobs. The contact station at Coal Banks was an AARA project and this site will encourage visitors (which support Outfitters). BLM has \$10-12 million dollars in projects/contracts and provides 80-100 jobs. BLM employees offer community support by providing volunteers that provide leadership to area organizations and sports

programs. Our landscapes draw visitors and provide solace to those who live here and enjoy the solitude. BLM is a good investment, and we earn our keep. This presentation, given at the state meeting generated interest in coming up with ideas for more jobs or opportunities to generate moneys for the BLM, communities and individuals, which is why Stan sent out his e-mail and would like feedback, from the RAC, about what more we can do to get another permit issued a year, or encourage tourism like canoe race or birding tours.

Stanley Jaynes (for Mark Albers) – Stanley discussed some of BLM’s current projects with partnerships while explaining that partnerships help our money go farther as well as expanding our mission. BLM has programmatic as well as project specific partnerships. BLM has partnered with National Wildlife Federation on “Adopt-A-Lek” to assist with the sage-grouse count. This program helps us as we have limited staff available and a small window of opportunity to get out to a wide range of sites and conduct counts. Our Weed agreement is one of our bigger funders. BLM has an annual agreement with Blaine and Liberty Counties where BLM gives money to the county and funds are matched with private land owners for treatments on public and private acres. This has been successful because weed management efforts need to be wide spread to make a difference. Stanley also pointed out that Universities have been a good partnership. Montana State University has helped provide manpower for an excavation on Beaucoup (a site North of Malta within the Big Bend of the Milk ACEC). The university provided field school training that helped us get the site examined. We hadn’t had the money to do this. The University of Montana also has Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) equipment for performing archaeological research. They did some research for us out on the Kevin Rim. This research helps us identify subsurface archaeological features within this ACEC. On a smaller scale, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has assisted us with pond aerating, they set-up and maintain the equipment. Also with the assistance of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and Fish and Wildlife Service, through North American Wetland Conservation Act Fund, and with help from grazing permittees, we were able to plug up some potholes, create a pipeline, and restore some wetlands. These are just some examples of the long and short term partnerships that we have entered. These allow BLM and other organizations to pool resources and extend the reach of joint objectives.

Law Enforcement Presentation – Brian Sakahra & Rangers – Perspective on the LE Program, where could RAC support apply?

Bryan Sakahara – Bryan presented on “What we do”. This is an introduction presentation usually shown to new employees. Bryan explained that the Ranger position has evolved over time. Initially the position was more interpretative in nature and has evolved into more of a law enforcement job. Our rangers have to be aware of a wide range of laws from federal to state. This requires a lot of knowledge. Rangers have to be delegated and sworn in. BLM Rangers attend extensive training in Georgia. Their means of patrol is varied by way of; vehicles, boats, snowmobiles, horseback, and atvs. Rangers also sometimes partner with canines. Teamwork is necessary for BLM rangers as each one covers (roughly) 2 million acres. Cooperation with field offices staff and public is essential. Your role (RAC) is to be a good witness, take good notes, not approach violators, and communicate with rangers, and field offices. Though we are remote, recreation use and population is increasing, and sometimes this brings people we don’t want to our areas– these visitors can generate destruction by; leaving trash, removing/shooting signs, having/creating accidents, increasing OHV use which creates issues (weeds/destruction), drug use/sales, fish and game violations, underage drinking (which causes people problems), collecting without permits, and site looting. We have more marijuana use taking place and there are growing concerns about marijuana eradication. Growers remove natural resources and leave holes and trash behind. Rangers are also active in fire investigations (looking for causes), and provide emergency response. BLM has a law enforcement Ceremonial Honor Guard. BLM law enforcement personnel have received awards. Bryan encouraged the RAC to report violations to the local Ranger or to Tipmont.

Several comments and questions were raised by the RAC, many focused on OHV use/abuse and ways to deter violators. The Marijuana issue generated a lot of RAC discussions/questions. Kaylene asked for suggestions as to what the RAC can do – Bryan felt it important that the RAC be active players, and use their voice (about what the BLM does for public land). Bryan felt that the RAC would have a strong effect on local officials if they organized themselves – even going to the media (to get the word out about actual convictions for public land violations). Troy wanted to know about relationships with other law enforcement offices. Bryan stated that because of our remoteness we need to support one another. Some of our rangers have been deputized by sheriffs. This saves the county time and money.

Break

Fee Amenity Subgroup – Larry Epstein – Fee Amenity Proposal – RAC Decision

Larry Epstein - Although you can't put a price on recreation values – this group is trying to do just that. The handout (that the RAC received) covered a variety of issues that have been discussed (geography, fee amount, who, when) by the subgroup, and the BLM. The group developed alternatives to take to the community to get input regarding Amenity Fees for the river. One alternative is a 'no action' alternative. The area the group is focused on is for the Upper Missouri River Corridor. The alternatives cover a time-frame from June 15th to September 15th, and run from Coal Banks to Kipp State Park. Mike and Larry looked at a variety of rivers in the west to determine what amounts and types of fees are in place in other western states to get comparables from. Based on that data, the subgroup came up with their list of alternatives. The group considered seasonal passes in some of the alternatives. They also did not want to charge anyone under 16 years of age. The subgroup discussed, with the BLM, ways of collecting fees and where. The usage figures (see handout) for the past six years were used to come up with the amounts of revenue the fees could generate. Part of the process in establishing an Amenity Fee is to take the issue to get public input on the decision. Discussion ensued with the RAC members about fee collections methods and where to hold public meetings.

What the RAC was asked to do was to look at the alternatives, and make a motion to accept the list of alternatives to take to the public. Larry made the motion and Aart seconded it. Chairman Blunt asked for more discussion. After discussion, the Chairman asked for a show of thumbs to take this to the public. Motion passed with consensus.

Larry will discuss this with the committee and will schedule hearings and notices. The subgroup will work with BLM staff on public meetings. It was suggested that Craig Flentie (BLM) would be of help with public notices. Have Craig call Larry before the 12th of May and coordinate with the BLM staff on public meetings and getting comments on the possible alternatives suggested by the RAC subgroup.

2011 RAC Work Plan – Benes/RAC members – Approve 2011 RAC Work Plan – RAC Decision

The updated Workplan, handed out to the RAC, showed new items added to the plan in yellow. The RAC was asked if they could look this over and see if this is what they wanted to work on this year and make a decision (to accept/change) the plan. It was suggested that the issues be discussed now, and the RAC would decide at tomorrow's meeting so they would have time to think about the issues. Stan Benes began to go over the work plan and there were a lot of questions, so it was decided that the RAC would look over the plan and come prepared to make a decision on the work plan at the meeting tomorrow. With no further questions the meeting moved on to the OHV Subgroup.

OHV Subgroup – Nick Schultz – Update & RAC Decision

Nick addressed the RAC and began by stating that he had learned some things since the last meeting. The subgroup met with Rangers to discuss the OHV issue. Their discussions included where and when use

takes place. Nick raised the question to the RAC of what they and BLM can do to help with the situation. The RAC came up with the following list:

- Provide/create maps for users
- Involve OHV users in the development of travel plans for the RMP
- Utilize Public Policing
- Educate the Public

In the last RAC meeting there was a lot of discussion about putting some kind of vehicle identification number on OHVs, however; it was pointed out by the Rangers, that this was not very helpful to them. Nick felt that educating users, having maps for them, and involving them in travel management planning would be good. The next step is to meet as a group to come up with a plan.

Nick then wanted to know where the RAC wanted the subgroup to go (the RAC had the opportunity to review the travel management plan for the Monument), and they had the following ideas:

- Learn what Western MT RAC has done with this issue
- Focus on the HiLine Travel plan when it comes into play

The group will meet in the morning to set a date to meet. The group decided to get some more information and contact the chairperson from the Western Montana RAC and then set a date to meet.

Tour of NaturEner Wind Farm – Aaron Boles – Informational & HiLine RMP

The tour guide did not meet up with the RAC, but the RAC went out to the wind farm anyway. Larry Epstein led the group to the site. Several attendees shared what they knew about the farm and its construction.

Meeting Adjourned – 5:00 p.m.

Social/Dinner at Dixie Inn – Barb Cole

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RAC – Mary Jones, Barb Cole, Aart Dolman, Wayne Fairchild, Ron Poertner, Mike Bryant (Vice-Chairman), Jim McCollum, Hugo Tureck, Pat Gunderson, Nick Schultz, Tom Carrels and Troy Blunt (Chairman)

BLM – Stan Benes, Stanley Jaynes, Gary Slagel, Jody Peters, Kathy Tribby, Brian Hockett, Matt Comer, Chad Krause, Kaylene Patten (Facilitator), Victoria Kerns (Minutes)

Public –Gail Abercrombie, Lorraine Blunt

Public Comment Period – Public - Comments to RAC members on agenda topics

Gail Abercrombie (Representing Devon Energy & the Regulatory Affairs/Montana Petroleum Association)

Gail understood that there was some discussion at yesterday's meeting about hydraulic fracturing. She wanted to let the RAC know that the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation, which is the regulatory agency for oil and gas, has accepted draft rules to go for formal rule making. They will be published in the Montana Administrative Register in May. The public hearing will be June 15th at the Board Oil and Gas Conservation Hearing in Sidney, at 1:00 p.m. The comment period will close a few days after that. Gail will forward the rule making on that to Kaylene, to forward to the RAC. That way they will know that there are rules in place with information about fluids and techniques frequently used. They (the rules) are likely to be accepted by the board at the August meeting. The public hearing will be June 15th, at 1:00, public comment will go slightly beyond that date, they will accept public comment through the public comment period, then the board will have time to review the comments and make necessary changes to the rules required by the comments, then they will be presented to the board in their final format at their meeting in Billings in August, then they will be published in the Administrative Register, and that will be their formal, and they will be effective. The name of the regulatory agency for oil and gas is the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation they are administratively attached to the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. What they are going to probably do is have a list of, let's say, a formation in central Montana and what a standard frac job would be for that formation, at that depth, and what types of chemicals are in that. Normally it is 1/2 to 1% of the liquid volume of mostly corrosion inhibitors and lubricity types of things. This is a generic formula because there is some variation depending on the site. There will be complete disclosure when the oil and gas operation posts their frac job on a website. The website is new and it is something like fracfactor.org that is the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission and the Ground Water Protection Council. On that site you can locate a well by state, and county. Fracfocus.org may be the actual name Gail addressed other questions from the RAC. Kaylene asked her to get her the name of the website so she can provide it to the RAC as soon as possible.

(The rest of the time was reserved in case others public members wanted to speak.

At 8:30 public comments were closed)

Roundtable Discussion - Jobs that support our communities

Stan Benes - Stan wanted to kick around ideas for generating jobs for our communities from yesterday's presentation on BLM's Investment in America as follow-up to the leadership meeting at BLM where the discussion came up about ways to generate jobs for the community. Stan threw out the ideas like hiking guide permits, and a canoe race. Stan had sent an e-mail out to the RAC to think about this and bring ideas to the meeting. The list started with Mike and the following ideas were collected to;

- Generate income from BLM land consolidation
- Issue collecting permits for individuals for our Paleo resources,
- Log (in front of pine beetles)
- Renew oil and gas leases
- Get the word out about our big-game resources - big horn sheep hunting
- Have a bike race 'Alzada to Yak' using partnerships
- Canoe, bike, run thru the Monument
- Route a historical trail from Fort Benton to Walla Walla
- Use old RR tracks and make them into trails.
- Promote "The River" for movie production
- Hold a "Round-Up" (like Winifred) with traditional clothing/activities
- Have a wildlife viewing shuttle bus/auto tours
- Lease BLM mineral rights on private lands to oil/gas developers
- Generate public interest on the Nez Perce trail for trail rides
- Do something like ROW (out of Alaska)
- Develop aquaculture
- Organize bird watching events

The question came up (from the RAC) about what kinds of feedback people have about the river experience, do they want something more, how are booksales...at the Fort Benton Interpretive center. Connie (from Fort Benton) has an aggressive educational program (Take it Outdoors). If desired we can bring in more information for the next meeting.

District Managers Updates – Benes & Albers - Informational

Stan Benes (Central District) - Stan began by stating that we (BLM) are trying to be relevant, trying to be part of the solution rather than the problem, we generate income and we pay our way. We also try to generate jobs. We are trying to improve or maintain land access. We would like to get more realty support, as we could use more staff in this area. We have opportunities for acquisition, but we don't have the time or expertise right now. The Kipp Homestead could be an exchange, but we do not have the staffing to support this. We have ranchers that want to get involved in seller exchanges, but we are lean on staffing. BLM has three times the land and one- third the staff as the Forest Service. We have a number of vacancies, which affects how we move forward. We have litigation on the Monument RMP. Gary and staff are moving forward with implementing the RMP. The decision was made to go forward with the Missoula RMP instead of the Lewistown RMP. We need to get some current assessment in our area. It doesn't look like we will get to it (the Lewistown RMP) until 2013. We had a follow-up in March on the Riparian Study. Our staff worked well with the national organization (NRST). The river was deemed to be in "Proper Functioning Condition". While not perfect, it was a good report. From this, we saw some improvement in river management over the past ten years. The recreation fee program would help generate funds for the Monument. We completed an MOU with Friends with the Monument (they are going to help with a spring clean up, we have seedlings and we are going to get help with the planting with the Friends); there are some ARRA projects we'd like to move forward on. The Gus Nelson Homestead has been put on the national historic register. We are looking for more support for another documentary – either Native American influence or the steam boat era (or maybe even something on the Nez Perce Trail). Fire season could be busy; we have excellent cooperation in this area with our partners. In closing, Stan said that he even after thirty-seven years; he loves what he does and believes in what he does. He appreciates the time the RAC gives to participate and work with us.

Stanley Jaynes (for Mark Albers) (HiLine)- Stanley began by stating that Casey Buechler (Glasgow Field Office) is moving to Billings – they will be advertising for a new Field Manager – Steve Klessens is acting in his place. There is a new Budget Analyst in the HiLine, Joe Garza was a Controller from Kalispell for Flathead Count. Tessa Salor was hired as a Natural Resource Specialist and Hazmat

Coordinator. She will be in the GF office; she is finishing up her Master's Degree in geology from Montana Tech. Stanley updated the RAC on the HiLine RMP, stating that we've had some set-backs regarding stipulations with oil and gas, and wind energy. We also had to update our RFD (for oil & gas development), and that we are hoping to get the draft RMP out for public comment this year. Another issue affecting the progress of the RMP is the Secretarial Order regarding the inventory for lands with wilderness characteristic. We will get these pieces together and get the draft to Washington soon. Then we will get this off for public comment. We have been remiss in not scheduling a cooperators meeting, but we hoped to resolve these issues and show them the changes. Another issue is that we have had a transition with the air quality specialist and the transition has taken time. Stanley took questions from the RAC (regarding small parcels tracts and the RMP) and then moved on to a PowerPoint presentation on the spring melt along the HiLine. Stanley mentioned that there had been a lot of snowpack this year. Most of the problems have been in the east. Low water crossings have become impassable. The Anita Reservoir has been dry until this spring, but it has been full since 4-21-11 and is overflowing. They are now looking at stocking it. Stanley then went on to discuss, rather technically, the issue of a breached dam (in the BR12 area) and the efforts it's taken to deal with that situation. He also commented the HiLine District has over 19k water rights and many need re-visiting. The Hydrologist in Glasgow will be looking at all the water rights in the area to help define where there may be issues. Stanley took questions from the RAC regarding the status of the dam, its drainage, and construction.

Break

Lands with Wilderness Characteristics & HiLine RMP – Brian Hockett & Kathy Tribby - Informational

Brian Hockett – Brian is the Planning and Environmental Coordinator for the HiLine District. Kathy is the Outdoor Recreation Planner for the HiLine.

Brian presented background information regarding BLM's responsibility for inventorying and managing Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC). He provided a brief synopsis of guidance provided by the Wilderness Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the Norton-Leavitt Settlement and Secretarial Order 3310. Three new BLM manuals were released on February 25, 2011 that contains policy, direction, general procedures, and guidance for: (1) conducting wilderness characteristics inventories, (2) considering LWC in the land use planning process, and (3) considering LWC in project-level decisions for areas not analyzed in a land use plan.

Brian explained the process the HiLine District was using to update the LWC inventory as directed by Secretarial Order 3310 and the new BLM Manual guidance. He mentioned that many of the areas that met the size and naturalness criteria in the original wilderness inventory in 1980 appeared to still meet those criteria today. Before the LWC inventory update was completed, Congress passed the "Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011" that essentially stayed implementation of Secretarial Order 3310. On April 21, 2011 Montana BLM received the following guidance from the Washington Office, "BLM is not to conduct wilderness inventories until the Secretary provides direction on the path forward in light of the budget rider. We will provide updated guidance as soon as possible." Brian explained that the HiLine District has stopped updating their LWC inventory and is still waiting for additional guidance. He mentioned that the Secretarial Order, the new BLM manuals, and numerous press releases and fact sheets regarding LWC and "Wild Lands" are available on-line and can be accessed through the National BLM website (<http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en.html>). In wrapping up Brian went over the tentative schedule for the HiLine RMP planning process. A copy of Brian's PowerPoint is attached to the minutes.

Sage Grouse Dancing – Adam Carr & Matt Comer - Informational

Kaylene introduced Matt Comer, Matt is a Biologist and works out of the Lewistown Field Office. Matt's presentation focused on wildlife concerns for the Central Montana District and what we are doing to address those concerns.

Sage-grouse - Matt ran a DVD to show the Sage-grouse dancing while he began talking about them. Matt explained that Sage Grouse mate in spring between March and April, and a little into May. A small lek will have less than ten males on it. When lek counts are done, only males are counted because they are easier to spot than females. What the grouse look for in a lek is a good vegetation area. It is usually one or two of the males that do most of the mating. The DVD was taken in Idaho, about 10 years ago. It was difficult to identify leks then, even more so now. Leks have been greatly affected by West Nile Virus. Leks that once had 100 grouse now have 50. Another factor affecting Sage-grouse numbers is loss of habitat. Oil and gas pads/pipelines/infrastructure/development threaten habitat. Fences also have an effect on Sage-grouse numbers as they cause injury to birds and this means they are easy prey. Flagging the fences helps protect the grouse. Winter can have a negative effect on hatchlings. The grouse are dependent on sage-brush for their habitat, and we have seen some positive effects (on habitats) from not using some of the pesticides that had been used in the past. Matt answered questions from the RAC regarding sage-grouse habitats/predators, and then went on to discuss other biological concerns in the district.

Grizzly Bear – In 2004 we had about 765 bears in the area. We've had a three percent increase in the area annually. We have been working with Fish and Wildlife Services and with the state focusing on food storage (keeping food sources from being accessed), and grazing management. In looking at grazing management we do not want to change grazing rights from cattle and horses to sheep as they are more vulnerable (as a food source). We are also encouraging proper disposal of (cattle) carcasses (to not tempt the bear). We are also looking at vegetation management and roads access. The grizzly population is now 941.

Cats – Outdoor cats are a problem and Fish and Wildlife Services is working on making Lewistown bird friendly with \$70,000 grant they have applied for. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is rerouting a portion of Big Spring Creek, and FWS is partnering with them and are going to plant some native vegetation, install some Osprey towers, and they want to educate the public on birds, that's where we come in. We are trying to put together some educational material to inform the public about the threat outdoor cats are to the bird population. There are about 100 million outdoor cats in the US. Cats kill about one million song birds a day (their numbers are dwindling). Indoor cats live longer while outdoor cats are exposed to dangers like; predation, parasites, disease, car accidents, collisions and poisonings. Outdoor cats die tragic deaths. Cats can spread disease like; rabies, plague, ringworm, and salmonella. We are encouraging people to keep cats indoors and fixed, and to report feral cats, trap them, and take an unwanted pet to a shelter. We also want to educate children about owner responsibilities. Lewistown has a leash law for cats, but is rarely enforced. Matt listened to comments and answered RAC questions on the subject.

Effects of Lead Bullets on Humans –Lead bullets are an issue for humans and for wildlife. Matt provided examples and statistics about the effects of the lead content in wildlife. One example is that fifty percent of the eagles at Roger's Pass have elevated levels of lead in their blood from eating meat that had been shot with lead bullets. Lead levels affect IQ levels. There is no policy written about the use of lead bullets. Elevated levels of lead also affect the nervous system and growth. In Jackson Hole forty-seven percent of the eagles were found to have elevated lead levels during hunting season. Our response is to educate the public on effects of lead bullet use, and to encourage nontoxic alternatives. Lead is toxic, leads bullets fragment, fragments are in the gut pile and can be left in meat (you could consume fragments), and scavengers eat the gut pile. There are alternatives.

Lunch

National Service Team Update – Chad Krause & Jody Peters – Present findings of research done in the summer of 2010

Chad Krause presented on the Missouri River PFC (Proper function Condition) Assessment: Past Present Future. Chad is the Hydrologist out of the Lewistown office, and Jody Peters is a Wildlife Biologist out of the Havre office.

Background -

This presentation was presented to update the RAC about the findings of the assessment that was conducted on the Upper Missouri River Breaks and Scenic River last summer. Chad wanted to point out to the RAC where the team was, where they are now, and where they are going.

How Did We Get Here –

There were regulatory requirements and social issues surrounding the river. From a regulatory standpoint standards and guidelines have to be met for rangeland health, and we are required to assess our conditions to meet certain standards to ensure riparian and wetland areas are in Proper Function Condition (PFC) and that our water quality meets Montana standards. We had a lot of social conflict surrounding our riparian area management on the river and livestock grazing this is why we brought in the NRST.

NRST (National Riparian Service Team) -

NRST is an Interagency group, they came here in 2008 to help with the project. They did situation assessments and held workshops. Because there was no protocol on river assessments, the project was approached according to riparian methodology. The team gathered all the information they could about the river (pre-work) and then went out on the river to do field work. Today the team is developing the final PFC checklists and those are being posted on the website. They are also working on a report.

Goals & Objectives -

- Complete a PFC assessment for a BLM administered lands
- Identify issues
- Address water quality concerns
- Provide a basis and rationale for future monitoring

Methods – 3 Major Steps -

- Substantial pre-work which included review of existing documentation
- Field evaluation of all BLM administered lands on the Upper Missouri within the UMRBNM
- Development of final PFC checklists, report, and general management recommendations

Six different sections of the river were analyzed

- Reach #1 - From Benton to Marias River
- Reach #2 - Marias River to Rattlesnake and Lonetree Coulee's
- Reach #3 - Rattlesnake and Lonetree Coulee's to 86 (above PN Bridge)
- Reach #4 - PN Bridge to Stafford Ferry
- Reach #5 - Stafford Ferry to Sturgeon Island
- Reach #6 - Sturgeon Island to CMR Boundary

The presentation provided maps, photos and information about each reach in terms of size, potential, vegetation, and a summary determination. As Chad went through the presentation he was descriptive and detailed in providing information about each reach. Jody added information about wildlife, and the RAC asked questions and made comments throughout.

There are three different rating categories:

- **Proper Functioning Condition (PFC)** – when a riparian-wetland has adequate vegetation, landform, or large woody material to dissipate stream energy, reduce erosion, improve water quality, filter sediment, capture bedload, create floodplains, hold water, stabilize stream banks, develop diverse wildlife habitat, and support greater biodiversity
- **Functional – At Risk (FAR)** – when riparian-wetland areas are in a functional condition, but an existing soil, water, or vegetation attribute makes it susceptible to degradation.
- **Nonfunctional (NF)** – when a riparian-wetland area is clearly not providing those items of PFC.

All of the reaches were rated at Proper Functioning Condition and Chad reviewed the details relating to each reach's specific rating.

Where we are going –

We needed an assessment to determine where we are (in terms of river condition). This put us in a position to ask questions that are relevant to the river – these questions influence the direction of our management on the river.

Stan interjected that he feels that this was a progressive program that embraced good science as a responsive action to public concern. Chairman Blunt encouraged everyone to take a tour of the river if they haven't. Stan said that he was scheduling a river trip in the next few weeks (an invitation was extended to the RAC).

2011 Work Plan -

Chairman Blunt suggested that the Workplan is way too long for the RAC's overall agenda considering they will have maybe two more meetings this year. Troy suggested that the Work Plan be revised to reflect what can be addressed in the next couple of meetings, and make the other items bullet-points. Stan made the following suggestions:

- I. Action Items
 - a. Recreation Fees
 - b. RMP
 - c. Small Parcels
 - d. Field Trips
 - e. OHV Subgroup
 - f. Youth Programs
 - g. District Manager Updates
- II. Information Items
 - a. Noxious Weeds
 - b. Judith Moccasin Landscape Projects
- III. Bullet Points
 - a. Federal Reservation of Water Rights
 - b. Mineral Withdrawal and Gas Leases
 - c. Travel Management Plan – Judith and Moccasin Mountains
 - d. Watershed Planning, Grazing management and Grazing permit Renewals
- IV. Delete
 - a. Limekiln/Ruby Blow-down

The RAC was asked how they felt and there was a consensus. Kaylene will update the Workplan and send changes to RAC for signatures.

1910 Fire Video – DVD – Informational

The Fires of 1910 was a component of the DVD *Century of Fire: The 2010 Fire-line Safety Refresher* The documentary was shown to the RAC in response to questions generated at the last meeting in regard to Fire Management Planning. The DVD provided an excellent example of the historical significance for the need for, and the development of, Fire Management Planning.

Agenda & Travel Vouchers – Facilitator – Next meeting agenda & complete travel vouchers

Kaylene handed out voucher forms to the RAC to fill out. She then went over a list of items for the agenda for the next meeting. Those items are:

- **Youth Education Program** – Connie (Fort Benton)
- **Small Parcel List** -
- **One Time Permits** - Mark Shafer (Fort Benton)
- **District Manager Updates**
- **Roundtable**
- **HiLine RMP Update**
- **State Land Exchange**

Discussion ensued regarding date and location for the next meeting. The following was decided:

- **When:** Sept 20-21
- **Where :** Lewistown District Office
- **Times:** 10a.m.-5p.m. & 8a.m.-3p.m.
- **Public Comment:** ½ hr daily
- **Field Trip:** Open
- **Social:** Calvert Bar and Grill

Stan thanked Kaylene and Victoria for all of their hard work.

It was suggested that perhaps a thank you note be sent to Mark Cole and DII for the use of the facility, Kaylene will follow-up with the note.

Meeting Adjourned – 3:30p.m.