

Western Montana Resource Advisory Council

Field Trip - 05/31/2001 - Dillon, Montana

Members Present: Doug Abelin, Sue Marxer, Rob McCulloch, Bruce Farling, Doug Rand, Ted Coffman, Hank Goetz, Dan Lucas, Mel Montgomery, Bob Zimmerman

Members Absent: Katie Deuel, Roger Peters, Cedron Jones

BLM: Jean Nelson-Dean (Facilitator); Scott Powers, Designated Federal Official (Dillon Field Manager); Mark Goeden (Assistant Field Manager, Dillon); Dave Pacioretty (Assistant Field Manager, Butte); Laurie Haas (Butte Field Office, Notes); Roberta Moltzen (Associate State Director, Billings)

Additional Attendees: Shirley Galovic (Ruby Valley Conservation District, Sheridan); Marni Thompson (NRCS); Doug and Sharon Lasich (Garden Creek Grazing Association Permittees); Ruth Angeletti (guest); Andy Petersen (Range Rider, Garden Creek Grazing Association); Renata Gisles (guest)

Field Trip Attendees assembled at 12:00 Noon in Sheridan, MT. Members and attendees introduced themselves. Mark Goeden passed out maps/handouts of the Garden Creek Allotment, and gave a brief overview of the planned field trip.

Scott Powers explained that RAC helped to develop the Range Standards and Guidelines for rangeland health. The reason for this trip was to conduct a follow up "on the ground". The Garden Creek allotment was selected to see where Standards and Guides were not being met, and where it has been difficult to make changes to meet the standards.

Dave Pacioretty added that we appreciate the Range Standards and Guides Subgroup's comments on the S&G information spreadsheet. We will seriously consider their thoughts and input regarding this.

Tour Stops

1st Stop - Garden Creek Flats. From this point there was a view of much of the allotment.

Discussion Points

- Management is hindered by:

Topography

Heavy timber in lower elevations

Wilderness Study Area

Land ownership pattern - (lots of participants)

- Prescribed burning done to enhance elk/cow forage in the late 1980's.

- Most of the water is below - difficult to get cattle out of creek area due to topography and timber

- Historic Use has been heavy - Sheep and Horses

- Elk were re-introduced in the early 1900's (not native here).

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- Major elk influences are in riparian zone: damage to creeks from elk browsing on Willows.

- Flood Event in 1995 - Streams just starting to recover

- (Doug Lasich) - Have cut AUM's from 2100 to 1300 (40%); in 1997 the Association agreed to reduce livestock numbers, move them between drainages, less time grazing.

- (Andy Petersen) - Can be difficult to keep cattle dispersed. Any water improvements would help.

- Meeting Uplands Standards here. Species composition and diversity is satisfactory (ocular examination of checklist). Sagebrush trend is stable.

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- Water quality monitoring was done. All water quality parameters were being met- fecal coliform was fairly high, but did not violate standards.

- Air quality OK

- Riparian area - main reason for not meeting standards and guidelines. Biodiversity is not being met due to riparian.

- The restrictions to grazing management in Wilderness Study Areas were discussed at this stop also. Grazing can continue in WSA's, but any projects must meet the requirements for the interim management for lands under Wilderness Review. These guidelines restrict developments that may may impair Wilderness character unless they can be shown to enhance wilderness values overall.

2nd Stop - Lunch Meadow

Discussion Points

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- 1995 Flood damaged this area. Not a one-time event.

- - Want to allow stream recovery - vegetative protection. Starting to stabilize in some stretches.

- - Long term trend monitoring - Woody Canopy Study Plot above meadow

- - Greenline (waterline) monitoring is being proposed to evaluate long term changes in plant communities along the stream.

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- A target was set for bluegrass meadows for a 2" stubble height during the last two

Years but it has not been very attainable because the plants were dormant by the time livestock was turned out and most of the bluegrass was broken off early in use. A target of 4" - 5" of sedge stubble was set for the streamside areas. This target has been more attainable.

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- (Dan Lucas) - in Eastern states, ecological processes end in Climax Landscape. This process doesn't apply in the west. Disturbance is normal.

- - Overall objective here is to increase streambank vegetation/sedges. Would like to see stream narrow down, develop grass root-mass along the edge.

- - Introduced (exotic) grasses have less roots, don't hold streams in as well.

- - Coverboard Photo Points - These studies are designed to tell us if woody species canopy cover is increasing or decreasing. We discussed the procedures for establishing and reading these studies.

- - (Bruce Farling) Seeing lost stream quality here, narrowed down too much. Should see erosion and deposition, erosion and deposition.

- - (Rob McCulloch) This is how the stream type is.

- - (Bruce Farling) - Flood Plain materials have washed away.

- - (Dan Lucas) - Recommend that Jeff Mosley teach a field class for RAC - "Monitoring for Success".

- - (Rob McCulloch) This is a dynamic situation. Want to keep stream within normal

dynamics.

3rd Stop - Cottonwood Creek Exclosure

Discussion Points

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- Old beaver ponds in Cottonwood Creek . Stream is downcutting through the sediment.

- - Exclosure built in 1981. There are some differences in the exclosure.

- - Good riparian Sedges along stream in enclosure.

- - Q. Do we want willow in a sedge regeneration area - maybe soils are not conducive to Willow. Can see lines of Willows along the beaver dams.

- - Beavers are part of the cycle. Their presence can cause erosion, but add meanders to streams, provide water storage.

- - (Dan Lucas) In exclosure, where duff is built up, grass growth is less because it's hindered.

Treasure Mine - Due to time restraints the tour did not stop here. While driving thru the mine site, Mark Goeden pointed out some features of the mining area.

Western Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC Meeting, Field Trip - 06/01/2001 - Dillon, Montana

Members Present: Doug Abelin, Sue Marxer, Rob McCulloch, Bruce Farling, Doug Rand, Ted Coffman, Hank Goetz, Mel Montgomery, Bob Zimmerman

Members Absent: Katie Deuel, Roger Peters, Cedron Jones, Dan Lucas

BLM: Jean Nelson-Dean (Facilitator); Scott Powers, Designated Federal Official (Dillon Field Manager); Nancy Anderson (Missoula Field Manager); Mark Goeden (Assistant Field Manager, Dillon); Dave Pacioretty (Assistant Field Manager, Butte); Laurie Haas (Butte Field Office, Notes); Roberta Moltzen (Associate State Director, Billings); Renee Johnson (RMP Team Leader, Dillon)

Additional Attendees: John Munding, (Montana Consensus Council)

Scott Powers - Need to select a RAC chairperson to replace Hank Goetz. Holdover members are Bob, Mel, Ted, Bruce, Sue, Rob and Doug. Members suggested Sue Marxer be the Chairperson. Sue agreed to be the Chairperson. All RAC members pledged their support to Sue in the Chairperson position.

(Mel Montgomery) - Should there be a Vice-Chairperson? (Hank Goetz) - Suggested they elect a Vice-Chairperson in September when the new RAC members are present.

Scott Powers introduced Renee Johnson, Dillon RMP Team Leader.

Renee Johnson

Dillon is now operating under a Management Framework Plan which was developed in 1979. Have tried to start RMP process for 10 years, however unsuccessful due to a lack of funding. Dillon has now been selected for funding.

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- During her first few months she worked to develop a RMP prep Plan and proposed schedule which was submitted in April. She passed out a handout -Appendix C from BLM Manual H-1601 - Land Use Planning Handbook (published November, 2000).

Dillon has no coal or Wild Horse/Burro issues to address, but they will address everything else in this manual. (Scott Powers - this is the most clear and concise direction he has seen for planning).

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- 2nd Handout - tentative schedule. NEPA is included in the planning schedule. Will be a 4-year process from beginning to end, if the project doesn't get derailed.

- - Working with the Montana Concesensus Council (MCC), through a grant provided by the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution. Will have MCC find out how the public wants to be involved, and get recommendations from the public on strategies for the BLM to involve the public meaningfully. MCC has interviewed several different groups. They will give us a report/recommendation late in June. MCC plans to let people know what their recommendations are, after making suggestions to the BLM.

- - At present, efforts are underway to collect the data that is needed (for instance, vegetation and OHV data).

Scott Powers - RAC group would be significantly involved if they want to participate.

(Bruce Farling) 4 years seems long. (Scott Powers) Estimate 18 months to complete much of the processes. This schedule could be impacted by MCC recommendations.

(Renee Johnson) - Draft EIS will have several alternatives. Quality of the Draft may determine total length of time.

Scott Powers introduced John Mundinger, Project Coordinator from the Montana Consensus Council (MCC).

John Mundinger

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- Background - the MCC is a small unit attached to the Governor's Office. Used for Administrative purposes only. Not involved in any policies from the Governor's Office.

- Purpose - to help BLM more effectively involve the public in RMP process. The BLM has never tried using an outside agency to assist in developing a process for the public to participate in an RMP (that we know of).

- Approach - Send out brief survey to identify what primary priorities are, and what interest they have in participating in the process.

- Have visited with small groups (mining, county commissioners, stock growers, OHV advocates and wilderness advocates.

- Intent is to draft a report with recommendations to the BLM by the end of June. Will schedule meetings with groups to see if the report is accurate. Hopefully, this will coincide with the BLM publishing its "Notice of Intent".

- RAC has been suggested to the MCC to be an important group to be involved in the plan.

- After final report, the BLM may request additional funding from the Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution to have the MCC assist further with public involvement in the RMP.

- People are concerned about length of time dragging on, but still have interest in participating. There is concern about 2 separate processes (BLM and Forest Service) and would like them to coordinate.

(Doug Rand) Gallatin County underwent an extensive planning project involving the public. A few ranchers (who did not participate in planning) came out in opposition to the project at the very end. How do you deal with this situation? (John Mundinger) Advocate collaborative approach, participation has to be voluntary. Challenge is to determine if people are participating in good faith.

(Sue Marxer) Often people are too busy to get involved until they see a danger to themselves. (John Munding) In any management process you have to deal with representatives. People need to be confident that their interests are being represented. If it were easy, it wouldn't be any fun.

(Hank Goetz) If there is mostly consensus, you have to tell the extremists to 'back off'.

(John Munding) Best you can do is be open, listen, make the best balanced decision. Explain, so people understand how the balance came about. Hope it's defensible.

Bottom line is people want something done on the ground. When there's shared interests and values, you can build on this and proceed.

(Mel Montgomery) Challenge is for the public to feel they are really being heard.

(Bruce Farling) How to deal with people who choose not to participate, but who have a legitimate voice? After the process is over they say 'NO'. This is worse than battling through NEPA Lawsuits. What is the role of agencies in collaborative processes? Sometimes the agencies try to manipulate the outcome. (John Munding) Create public expectation. People expecting a process where they are heard. If there is a clear understanding of decision, they'll go along, even if it's not their preferred choice. Agencies roles - agencies have different roles: decision maker, resource and technical experts to develop information, and interest group to themselves (need space to participate as interest group).

Public Comment - None.

Additional RMP Discussion

Scott Powers - Can't delegate decision-making authority to any group, or the Consensus Council. RAC subgroup could be involved. RAC could submit formal recommendation. Purpose of Consensus Council - to let public feel they're involved. Currently there is mistrust here.

(Bruce Farling) Do people feel the Consensus Council is a neutral party? (John Munding) There is some suspicion about their relationship to the Governor's office. Some suspicion because it's new, out of comfort zone. There are a lot of trust issues, as Scott mentioned.

People wonder if BLM is serious about wanting to do something different. Challenge is to find committed people who will stay the duration of the RMP process. Can't delegate decision authority, but can demonstrate responsiveness to input.

Doug Abelin - In Pipestone Travel Management process, had everyone 'lay their card on the table' up front. No bombshells dropped later. This helped the process tremendously.

John Mundinger - Any other suggestions? (Hank Goetz) Don't bog down group with small stuff. Maybe identify issues that are cut and dry, and give the consensus group meaningful issues to deal with. Attitude of BLM to RAC is why it's successful. BLM laid out sideboards - RAC clear about what they can do. (Doug Abelin) In Big Belt group, areas bogged down were postponed until later. After resolving other issues, sometimes the 'bogged down' issues were resolved. (Scott Powers) Good to recommend key areas for Consensus group to address. (Bob Zimmerman) Involve groups who might feel threatened - keep this in mind.

Doug Abelin - Is there a process to remove non-compliant members? (John Mundinger) When we facilitate, we advocate that groups self-select participants. One ground rule we encourage - everyone has veto power, but must offer a constructive alternative or reason for the veto. (Bruce Farling) If the overall process is good, generally, disruptive people will leave after time. (Doug Rand) - Location and Time of meeting can be crucial.

John Mundinger - Have tentative sideboards from BLM (Handout). (Bruce Farling) How do you show that the budget will be adequate to continue and implement the project? (Scott Powers) Good plans are successful in receiving funding. (Mel Montgomery) Wants to see weed management listed - feels it's important. (Scott Powers) This issue is universally agreed on and should be carried through.

John Mundinger - noted this as a sideboard and an OHV sideboard. Additional comments can be mailed or e-mailed.

Montana Consensus Council Interview Questions

John Mundinger - What do you see as important objectives (questionnaire, #3)?

(Doug Abelin) Clarify what 'conflict' is. (Hank Goetz) #3 and #5 are tied together.

(Mel Montgomery) Get public involved early. Meetings need to be planned to be easy to attend (consider ranch chores, times, dates, etc).

Questionnaire, #1 (Sue Marxer) People often notice important stuff in the paper.

(John Munding) Yes, see #7

Question #4 - Any particulars, comments, steps that the public needs to be involved in?

(Sue Marxer) Identify issues and concerns. (Mel Montgomery) Like to see RAC group help develop the alternatives and be directly involved, after issues and concerns have been identified. (Hank Goetz) Would like to see RAC help select preferred plan.

Question #5 - Certain information people need to effectively participate - what specific information is needed so they can represent their interests? (Sue Marxer) Legal mandates and agency constraints - parameters on advice groups give. (Hank Goetz) Resource conditions and status. (Sue Marxer) Be clear, mission of BLM (multi-use) as compared to the Forest Service. (Bruce Farling) #1 is most important. Everyone involved in the process needs to agree on this information and on the trends.

John Munding - What if there is no agreement on the baseline info? (Sue Marxer) Different purposes for different agency lands. (Bruce Farling) Spend time up front explaining trends, explain what the resource/environment is.

John Munding - Handful of people in area who have knowledge of resource info. Some is anecdotal - how to bring this into the process? (Bruce Farling) Often this can be bad information, like having quantifying data to back-up. (Rob McCulloch) Get resource information early. (Sue Marxer) Not time to go through all information.

(Bruce Farling) More complicated information, less odds of success. Agrees with Sue.

(Hank Goetz) Condense process, get stuff on street early and let people comment and develop issues from here. Put this initial information on a 'fast track', publish it and then see where people want to get involved (and where the problem issues are). (Bruce Farling) Find common ground, and then identify issues. (Hank Goetz) These issues/complaints need to be brought to RAC or a subgroup. The three categories need to be represented in the subgroup.

John Munding - What about having different consensus groups address 'Hot Button' issues? How would RAC be involved? (Mel Montgomery) Have Renee update RAC at each meeting.

John Munding - Communication - regular newspaper publication, newsletter, what else? (Doug Abelin) Develop a website. (John Munding) This is part of the plan. (Dillon Website and State Website). (Bruce Farling) Internet E-Mails and letters.

(Sue Marxer) Everyone reads the newspapers (headlines). (Hank Goetz) Maybe work a deal with newspapers for regular column/updates. (Jean Nelson-Dean) Need to pursue this with each newspaper - it is their choice. (Doug Abelin) 1-800 number for updates, or comments.

John Munding made a final request for suggestions on the public process. Will be accepting ideas for another week or two.

Scott Powers - In conclusion, this is Dillon Field Office's primary workload for the next 3 years. Feel that RAC involvement is critical.

Additional Topics

Jean Nelson-Dean - Nominations are in for new members. Plan Sept. meeting now?

What important issues do you see?

-Mel Montgomery - Ideas on what RMP will look like - want to see flexibility for management on the ground.

-Sue Marxer - WSA's - Clear understanding of interim management constraints. They are a cop-out. Want group to make a decision.

-Nancy Anderson - Carhart Wilderness Study Center in Missoula. Might want to hold next meeting in Missoula.

-Bob Zimmerman - History on WSA's, BLM and FS Wilderness Study areas that have been set aside.

Scott Powers - Will provide that information. Orientation for new RAC members. Maybe have field manager and RAC member meet with individuals separately before the next meeting.

Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 4 in Missoula.

Scott Powers- instead of looking at grazing allotment meeting standards and guides, decided to look at Beaverhead Acquisition property - update about the site. Discussion about the public meeting Wed. night. (handouts, copies of Wednesday meeting agenda and maps.

Roberta Moltzen - Forest Service does not have a RAC. BLM finds them most useful and important. Appreciate RAC time commitment.

Doug Rand - 6-Year Plaque

Hank Goetz - "A real spark plug, helped group focus, energetic leader", Plaque

Also, Patagonia Gift Certificate from the three Field Managers.

Scott Powers - We will miss Jean (Nelson-Dean). She had a difficult job to juggle with three offices. She has done a good job.

Doug Abelin - She also did a good job for the agency in Helena.

Field Tour

Beaverhead River Site

Acquired this site almost 2 years ago. Funded 2/3 from Northland Water Conservation Act and 1/3 from Ducks Unlimited (DU). Conditions for DU - must enhance wetland habitat.

Mouth of Gallagher Creek is a Lewis and Clark Campsite. Railroad re-routed the stream. Looking at restoring stream channel and enhancing fisheries.

A public committee has been formed, facilitated by Lorie Higgins, to identify management goals and issues concerning this site. Mark Goeden passed out handout and map.

National Public Land Project (October 2000) - Youth challenge kids and community members volunteered to make repairs to the homestead building. Another project to repair the roof is planned for this month.

Historic Background - Mark Sant

This site is a good example of Beaverhead County homesteading. Old homestead built with hand-hewn logs and square nails. Later the big cabin was built. Homesteaded by William Henneberry, 1885. After William's death, the homestead was owned by John Ney, who later sold it to the Riebich family. BLM acquired this site from Riebich's.

A wealth of historic background information about the Henneberry family is available through a great-grandson who still lives in the area. This information is being recorded for the Beaverhead County Historical Society, the Butte Historical Society, and the BLM.

Ducks Unlimited (DU) proposal for 2300 acre pond. Lots of public concern about this. Many think this idea wouldn't work. BLM has requested a 2 year extension from DU. There is funding to hire a consultant - want to define areas for wetland enhancement. North end of property has a deteriorating oxbow bend, which could wash out into highway. Want to do an assessment of entire area, including Gallagher Creek, before making decision to develop a pond. All on-the-ground management actions are intended to enhance wetland habitat. Other issues being addressed with the property are weed management, travel management and grazing.

2nd Stop - Gallagher Creek

At the Gallagher Creek site Mark Goeden reviewed the Standards for Rangeland Health assessment for the Gallagher Creek area. Uplands are meeting standards over most of the area except for small weed infestations. Gallagher creek rated as non-functional due to past disturbance by mechanized equipment and past grazing practices. Riparian area has a lot of knapweed and hounds tongue growing along stream. Juniper trees shading out preferred riparian species. Stream flows only seasonal/intermittent. This area is not meeting riparian and biodiversity standards.

RAC discussed potential for re-routing Gallagher creek back to its historic channel and other possible management changes that would help in the recovery of this site. Rest from grazing, juniper removal through post sales or cutting and leaving dead trees in place, and some techniques for restoring flows through physical modification of the channel were discussed.

Scott explained that the BLM was planning on having a feasibility study done to look at wetland enhancement possibilities on the entire acquisition, including Gallagher Creek. BLM would welcome participation by RAC in this entire planning process. Rob McCulloch said he would like to discuss techniques for restoration of surface flows in Gallagher Creek with BLM staff. He felt that some minor channel modification could enhance flows.

Also discussed other concerns that would be addressed in the planning project for the Beaverhead tract - travel management, rehabilitation of a recent fire, and others.

March 27, 2001 – Meeting – Butte, Montana

Members Present: Doug Abelin, Sue Marxer, Rob McCulloch, Roger Peters, BruceFarling, Cedron Jones, Doug Rand, Ted Coffman, Hank Goetz, Dan Lucas, MelMontgomery

Members Absent: Bob Zimmerman, Katie Deuel

Resigned Members: Greg Schildwatcher, Charles Swysgood,

BLM: Jean Nelson-Dean (Facilitator); Rick Hotaling, Designated Federal Official (ButteField Office); Nancy Anderson (Missoula Field Manager); Scott Powers (Dillon FieldManager); Mark Goeden (Assistant Field Manager, Dillon) Laurie Haas (Notes); DavePacioretty and Steve Hartman (Butte Field Office) attended portions of the meeting

Hank Goetz presided over the meeting, which was facilitated by Jean Nelson-Dean. Members and attendees introduced themselves.

Sage Grouse Presentation: Presenters were introduced by Scott Powers.

Joel Peterson – FWP, Bozeman, Regional Game Manager

Jim Hagenbarth, Rancher from Idaho who has been involved with Sage Grouse issues

Roxanne Falise – BLM Wildlife Biologist, Montana State Office

Joel Peterson talked about a coalition of agencies putting together a "Sage GrouseConservation Plan". In addition, there is a Montana Sage Grouse working group (whichmeets monthly) , working to:

Develop Conservation Plan

Develop Management Guidelines for Montana

Strengthen data, develop data protocol, recruit volunteers

Explore Research Options

Develop incentive programs for private landowners

Involve communities

Looking at MOU's between agencies – are they effective?

Roxanne Falise passed out handouts. She said that past management has focused on leks. BLM is trying to take a broader look at sage grouse needs and sage brush communities. BLM and FS working (Interagency Sagebrush Steering Committee) to coordinate habitat evaluations and mapping, conservation and restoration planning, and guidelines to implement in Land Management Plans.

Jim Hagenbarth explained that since passage of the Taylor Grazing Act, ranchers are required to take care of the land. Those ranchers who have been good land stewards and have maintained Sage Brush habitats, are dealing with the brunt of the Threatened and Endangered Species (TES) rules and regulations. He explained how the ranchers, environmentalists and others have been meeting; through the process they have learned to respect and accept each other's opinions. When this happens, they can make progress as a group. It is critical that ranchers be involved in the Sage Grouse issues.

(Questions and a general discussion followed•)

Q. Is there consensus on what has caused Sage Grouse decline? Can you reach agreements on what will work?

Causes – loss of habitat to agriculture, cheatgrass, loss of wintering grounds in

Idaho, more crested wheatgrass, predators and survival of chicks

Solutions – Maintain what we have

Have the ground, just need to manage it correctly

Keep private land manager on the ground

Local needs of sage grouse, not overall guides

Q. How would we change BLM policy to improve Sage Grouse Habitat?

May not need to change anything.

It may be fine.

Importance – 1. Breeding 2. Nesting

(forb control needed)

Current guidelines will not work because it doesn't move sagebrush thru seral

Stages

15% canopy cover and brush (herbaceous needs)

What is the Fish and Game going to do about hunting sage grouse? Why did the bag limit get raised?

Commissioner in SW Montana felt that the bag limit was appropriate for the area.

How are the ranchers who cared going to be crucified by the Endangered Species Act?

Those who have managed for Sage Grouse have the habitat – and with the Endangered Species Act they will be restricted to a point where they may not be

able to manage.

People who have a significant amount of public land in their management will

bear the brunt as opposed to those who don't – isn't that the case?

-Endangered Species Act tells you how to manage your ground. Your incentive is to go out and destroy all of the habitat that is there so you don't have the regulatory hand coming in. Works against itself.

- Most people are removed from the dynamics of ecosystems – they are not static

States.

Q. What do we know about the populations in Montana? On BLM Ground?

That is what we are trying to do – get the data.

The sooner we can get to the fundamental baseline data, the better off we will be. (Populations, What is good habitat, how much do we need??)

People don't agree on how to manage a landscape to get good habitat.

How can we better involve people?

Ask people who are there

As you formulate drafts/notes, get them to FO Managers and they can update RAC groups

Concentrate – define smaller areas where you could work with down with local folks to solve the problem (manageable chunks)

Build from the bottom up

Find a way to reward private land managers who are doing a good job (rather than the 'club' of the Endangered Species Act .)

Statewide Conservation Strategy will let us know the recommendation for BLM lands in this area. Make sure it doesn't get put on the shelf.

Scrap the MOU with BLM – BLM too cumbersome.

Field Manager's Updates

Rick Hotaling – Butte Field Office

Ward Ranch Exchange – hope to have EA or Record of Decision by 6/1. Public Comments begin in April. A couple of tracts in exchange possibly controversial.

Whitetail-Pipestone – presentation this afternoon

Standards and Guides – presentation this afternoon

Fire Salvage – Hope to have EA and Record of Decision end of May. Restoration to follow salvage. Spokane Hills Area.

Fuel Reduction – Elkhorns (several burns planned). Public outreach needed – several of the units are visible from Helena.

Urban Interface – Clancy/Unionville, Vegetative and Fuel Treatment plan approved.

Land and Water Conservation Fund – Crimson Bluffs (Missouri River, Lewis and Clark site near Townsend) – small tracts available for sale. Trying to purchase these tracts to maintain 'open space' values described by Lewis and Clark. No plans to manage these tracts (except for maybe the weeds). No trails or camping sites planned.

Scott Powers – Dillon Field Office

Dyce Creek – Early May Decision. Proposing a variety of experimental treatments.

Mussigbrod Fire Salvage – Decision out in 1.5 months. One half to one million boardfeet.

Centennial Travel Plan Done. No Appeals.

Lower Madison Recreation facilities. Emergency closure to confine camping use. Draft plan to revamp the area out soon.

April 7th – Pipe Organ Field Trip. Decision later in year.

RMP – Pre-plan (required by Congress) outlines how plan will be done. Hope to have pre-plan signed in a couple weeks. Renee will brief next RAC meeting. Montana Consensus Council will develop Public

Participation Plan for the RMP process.

Nancy Anderson – Missoula Field Office

Issued decision on Lower Blackfoot. 12,000 acres acquired. 700 acres joint decision with FS. Will meet with Missoula Snow-Goers next week.

RMP amendments to incorporate Lynx and Bull Trout strategies into RMP.

State Office will evaluate Missoula's RMP.

Few small salvage sales.

Superfund Sites along Clark Fork – work with State Office , testing to see what needs done.

In anticipation of fire season – Resource Advisor training will be held in Butte next week.

RAC Membership Openings

Jean Nelson-Dean reminded the group that there will be 7 RAC committee openings. Application forms are available here today. Completed packets need to be returned to BLM by April 23rd.

BLM reviews applications and forwards their selections to the Governor's office. Governor's office reviews candidates, recommending changes if necessary. State office forwards these recommendations to the Secretary of Interior who makes the final selection.

Lunch Break 12:00 – 1:00

Standards and Guidelines (S & G's Subcommittee)

Bruce and Dan – have sent message to Rick indicating what information they would like.

Range Allotment S & G information sheets for each field office were handed out.

Each office presented their information in a different manner. Subcommittee agreed to review these handouts and make final recommendation on how they want the information presented (one month).

Questions and discussion followed. Most allotments that do not meet standards are due to the Riparian Standard.

Whitetail-Pipestone Subcommittee Report (Hank Goetz)

Whitetail/Pipestone Travel Plan - RAC Subgroup EIS Alternative (Handout was distributed to everyone present)

Hank explained that the process this subcommittee worked with was very effective. Committee consisted of 2 persons representing the motorized vehicle advocates, 2 persons representing wildland/environmental community, and 2 persons representing govt. agencies (plus 1 alternate for each group). Meetings were facilitated by Montana Consensus council.

1st meeting – What each expected from process, ground rules.

2nd meeting – General Issues: 1. Enforcement 2. "Loop" Concept

Started proposing loops routes on map.

3rd meeting – Whitetail – Pipestone area divided into 4 sub-units. Looked at range of

Recreational opportunities. Looked at making recommendations as if

There were no property boundaries (BLM, FS, State, Pvt.).

4th meeting – Addressed special needs for motorized recreation. Identified a hill climb area (good soil, consensus reached regarding this site), and kids play/warm- up area. Looked at each trail in each sub-unit.

5th meeting – Listed priority areas for trail improvement/mitigation.

6th meeting – Made proposal to the Forest Service; they suggested a few modifications.

7th meeting – SW Lands alliance representative upset with the Forest Service, partly because they didn't participate in planning process. One SW Lands Alliance member did sign the group's proposal, as an individual rather than a group rep. Hank and Steve Hartman will discuss the matter with the other SW Lands Alliance rep; if he agrees to sign, then there would be total consensus from the group, supporting the Travel Management Plan.

Whitetail-Pipestone Discussion

"How to get the 300 pound gorilla to move in the same direction as the Chimpanzee??"

Letter to Forest Supervisor asking if they could commit to having a person work on renewal of the travel plan. Forest Service needs to have a "formal" travel plan. They could possibly initiate this travel plan "informally" (i.e. put up a few signs•).

Rick – If the BLM starts to implement this plan, the exposure may help "nudge" the FS along.

Dan – If the FS stalls, go to Congressional Delegates.

Hank – Will this anger the local FS – will it affect future activities?

RAC Recommend to the FS that the completion of a Travel Plan be highest priority.

Cedron – Doesn't agree with the 300 foot zone - people take vehicles 300 feet off roads, feels it is damaging. Why is this being allowed?

Steve – this can be addressed further into EIS process.

Cedron – moved that the RAC support the Travel Plan and forward the subgroup's recommendation *if* all the subgroup members sign the agreement.

This motion approved by RAC.

Scott – RAC should look for this type of sub-group activities.

Rick – The whole process was good – worked well. Should be helpful to •boost' us in the future. Recognized the committee's efforts in this project, and also the support from

BLM staff .

Additional Topics

Rick Hotaling announced that Jean Nelson-Dean has accepted a new job in Prineville, Oregon. She will likely attend the RAC field trip on May 31st/June 1st. This is the last RAC meeting she will Facilitate. Thanks to Jean for all of her work and involvement with Western Montana RAC.

Public Comment None.

Next Meeting

May 31 and June 1 – Dillon. Field Trip to Garden Creek Thursday afternoon. Friday fieldtrip to follow up on Standards & Guidelines (location to be determined). Renee Johnson will give a briefing on Dillon's RMP before the field trip.

January 9, 2001 – Meeting – Butte, Montana

Members Present: Doug Abelin, Sue Marxer, Rob McCulloch, Roger Peters, KatieDuel, Bruce Farling, Cedron Jones, Bob Zimmerman, Ted Coffman, Hank Goetz, Dan Lucas, Mel Montgomery

Members Absent: Greg Schildwatcher, Charles Swysgood

BLM: Rick Hotaling, Designated Federal Official (Butte Field Office); Nancy Anderson (Missoula Field Manager); Scott Powers (Dillon Field Manager); Laurie Haas (Notes); Dave Pacioretty and Steve Hartman (Butte Field Office) attended portions of the meeting. Jean Nelson-Dean was unable to attend due to Legislative Activities in Helena (she is the BLM Liaison for Upper Missouri River).

Hank Goetz presided over the meeting, which was facilitated by Rick Hotaling. Members and attendees introduced themselves.

Opening remarks by Rick Hotaling included comments regarding the incoming Department of Interior administration. . There have been questions asking how the new administration will affect Resource Advisory Councils. The answer is not known. RAC Councils will proceed as usual. The new Secretary of the Interior will inform us of any changes that are wanted.

S & G's Subcommittee Report (Dan Lucas)

Subcommittee members reviewed Dillon Standards and Guidelines Assessments. By their interpretation of this information sheet, 55% of allotments are not meeting S & G's and 49% of the acres are not meeting S & G's. Committee members want assurance that management is attempting to rectify these situations. They would like additional, detailed information regarding allotments, identifying the specific standards which are not being met, and identifying what efforts are being made to address/correct unsatisfactory situations.

The Committee will determine how they would like the additional information presented to them (i.e. adding additional columns with specific headings to the spreadsheet). They will relay this information to Scott Powers. Each Field Office will provide S & G Information in this format.

The Committee recommends that updated Standards and Guidelines Assessment Information be presented to RAC Members prior to the January Meeting each year. They would like current (revised) information for each field office presented to members prior to the upcoming March 27, 2001 RAC Meeting.

In addition to this Annual Report, committee members recommend taking a field trip each year. Focus should be on both problem areas and successful allotments.

Standards and Guidelines Discussion

Roger Peters had concerns about comments expressed at the last RAC meeting regarding S & G's. He felt that RAC members indicated that punitive efforts needed to take place where S & G's were not being met. He feels that permittees have been at the brunt of 'punitive' efforts by administering agencies. He feels that this is a misuse of Standards and Guidelines, and that the RAC is not a police organization. This was referred to as the "Club" Approach. There may be factors other than grazing that would cause environmental damage to range lands (i.e. Elk use).

Further discussion by RAC members followed. Much effort went into the development of defineable goals for the S & G's. They are intended to look at the 'big picture' and to provide consistent guidance in overall range management, not individual areas. They were not intended to be used as a "CLUB" approach to range management. Specific changes that need to be made on the ground are addressed under 'Terms and Conditions' of each individual permit. The Terms and Conditions vary by each allotment due to environmental factors and existing conditions. Changes need to be made to move towards a desired condition.

The RAC agreed that their function was not to 'police' range conditions but rather to monitor BLM's implementation of S & G's. This monitoring is necessary so that RAC members could report to their respective groups on the progress of S & G implementation and the goal of achieving healthy rangelands.

Individual interpretation of allotment conditions can vary from one person to another.

S & G's are usually assessed by a team rather than by one individual. There is an Appeals Process if the BLM and Permittee disagree.

Tailpipe Subcommittee Report (Hank Goetz)

The committee has met twice, next meeting to be 1/22. Committee consists of 3 OHV proponents, 3 Wilderness Advocates and 3 others. Purpose of this group is to try to get the groups to agree on a Travel Management Plan. Committee has decided to look at the entire Pipestone area, including Forest Service lands, but they are spending more time looking at BLM ground. The main focus of the OHV group is providing more loop trails. The group has come up with some preliminary loop trail proposals – these were represented on a map.

Committee does not have information regarding areas to be closed by the Forest Service.

They will be working on specifics over the next few months, and will have a more complete presentation to RAC at the March meeting

Steve Hartman has been attending subgroup meetings to advise and provide technical support if needed.

Tailpipe Discussion

The committee is a sub-group of RAC, and reports to RAC. The RAC makes recommendations to the BLM. Some agencies tend to disregard task group recommendations. Hope that the BLM will 'embrace' the RAC advice.

Rick Hotaling – The BLM will give very serious consideration to all recommendations from the RAC.

Public Comment

None.

Field Office – Priority Projects

Each Field Manager presented a list of their priority projects for the upcoming year.

Butte

Tailpipe

Clancy-Unionville (travel management plan, vegetative treatment)

Fuels Reduction (Clancy-Unionville, Scratch Gravel Hills)

S & G Assessment and Implementation

Fire Salvage/Reforestation

Ward Ranch Exchange

Missoula

Elk Creek Assessment (vegetation management)

Lower Blackfoot Corridor (land exchange, restoration issues)

Murray-Douglas Area

S & G Assessments

RMP Amendment (Lynx)

Garnet Mining Co. Land Exchange

Dillon

Beaverhead River Acquisition

Centennial Travel Plan

East Fork Grasshopper Creek

S & G's

Develop RMP – (Includes Travel Management Planning, Sage Grouse Habitat Issues, Forest Health Issues, Special Use Permits, Land Tenure Adjustment)

Following a lunch break, RAC members presented their ideas for priority projects.

Weed Management

Fire Money – Spending

FWP – Partnerships, Cooperation with BLM and FS

Wildlife vs. Grazing

Minerals as a Resource

Specific Resource Conflicts for RAC to Address/Resolve

Forest Health Issues

Vision for BLM

Overuse – (more people)

Discussion with Field Managers and RAC Members followed. RAC members expressed a desire to have 'hard' issues to address and make decisions on. Major topics of interest to the group were summarized as follows:

Vision for BLM

Dillon RMP

Vegetative Management – Fuels – Forest Health

Travel Management

Sage Grouse – (want more information)

Generally agreed that the RAC would like to be involved in two types of issues:

Specific Resource Conflicts ("something they can put their arms around")

Vision Issues (developing guidelines and recommendations for the BLM to use)

The Field Managers should use these guides when bringing issues to the RAC.

Follow-Up Items

Scott Powers – Will mail planning guides to RAC members.

S & G's Subcommittee will determine what additional information is needed for them to address Standards and Guidelines Assessments. They will advise Scott Powers of their findings. Scott will relay this information to Butte and Missoula Field Offices. Each Field Office will compile Standards and Guidelines Assessments – these will be mailed to RAC members prior to the March Meeting.

Need Resignation Letters from Greg Schildwacher and Charles Swysgood. Hank Goetz will contact Greg and Doug Abelin offered to contact Charles regarding these matters. RAC is currently seeking candidates to fill vacant slots in Category 1 (timber-mining-grazing-recreation) and Category 3 (elected official – state employee – general public). Nancy Anderson and Scott Powers will contact Regional Supervisors with FWP in Missoula and Bozeman to see if there is an interest in serving on RAC.

Mel Montgomery and Scott Powers will contact potential presenters, and will coordinate Sage Grouse presentation.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be in Butte on Tuesday, March 27, 2001, 9:00 a.m. Topics will include:

Tailpipe – Recommendation on Travel Management by Subcommittee

Summary of Range S & G's by Subcommittee

Field Managers Update

Sage Grouse presentation (2:00 p.m.)