

MINUTES
Alaska Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Alaska State Office ~ Anchorage, AK
October 13-14, 2005

Council members present:

Tom Crafford, Chair
Greg Beischer
Charlie Boddy
Barbara Fullmer
Scott Hala
Sandra Key
Suzanne McCarthy
Susan Olsen
June McAtee
Jim Posey
Keith Tryck
Teresa Imm

Others present:

Larry Taylor
June Taylor
Mary Patania
Cam Toohey, Dept. of Interior
Melissa Blair, Alaska Coalition
Rachel James, Alaska Coalition
Gloria Stickwan, Ahtna Inc.
Wilson Justin, Mount Sanford Tribal Consortium
Yereth Rosen, Reuters

BLM representatives present:

Henri Bisson, State Director, Alaska State Office
Garth Olson, Glennallen Field Office
Gary Reimer, Anchorage Field Office
Bob Schneider, Fairbanks District Office
Dave Howell, ASO
Jody Weil, ASO
Ramona Chinn, ASO
Brad England, ASO
Ramone McCoy, ASO
Chris Noyles, ASO
Kevin McIver, AFS
Mary Lynch, AFS
Shellye Poster, ASO
Curt Wilson, ASO
Bill Overbaugh, ASO
Dave Mushovic, ASO
Danielle Allen, RAC coordinator
Wendy Longtin, RAC recorder

** handouts may be obtained by contacting RAC coordinator Danielle Allen at 907-271-3335 or Danielle_Allen@ak.blm.gov*

Thursday, October 13, 2005

Council members absent: Phil Driver, David van den Berg

Chair Tom Crafford called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

New members Barbara Fullmer and Scott Hala, council members and key staff introduced themselves.

The council approved minutes of the August RAC meeting as written.

The council discussed their August field trip and meeting to Cordova and the Bering Glacier field camp. The sentiment among council members who attended was that the trip gave them a greater understanding of the scope of research at the glacier and necessary logistical support.

LANDSCAPES, LIFESTYLES & LEISURE:
CONNECTING URBAN AMERICANS TO THE NATURAL WORLD
Emilyn Sheffield, Department of Recreation & Parks Management,
California State University, Chico

***Printout of PowerPoint presentation**

Sheffield regularly makes this presentation about lifestyle trends that affect the future of public lands at Pathways, a BLM employee orientation at the National Training Center in Phoenix. As populations increase, Sheffield asks how will an urban, landless people understand natural places? Landscape issues? Why will they care? She said that the United States has created a land-based system for conservation and now, land management agencies and advisory groups such as this council and nonprofits have an opportunity to foster a citizen-based system for conservation. Some highlights from her presentation included:

- Used to be that outdoor recreationists were searching for “man vs. mountain” opportunities, now outdoor recreation involves family, pets, choices and technology to make sense of natural places
- Snowmobiling will see a 100%+ increase in participants in the Pacific Coast region. Alaska could provide some real leadership in making decisions to manage the dramatic increase of public land use.
- At a local level, we need to provide more high-volume recreation: picnicking, sightseeing, and walking. Urban, landless people will determine our fate so we need to provide for them so they advocate funding. Specifically for BLM Alaska, the Campbell Creek Science Center is the most important acreage the agency has because it’s making a connection with urban kids who will decide our fate.
- Return to the notion of connecting public lands to urban people – share the story, hospitality matters, gear matters, media matters, recreation matters, volunteerism is recreation! Need to provide places for people to connect with their loved ones and that land that sustains. Link better lives to better lands – clean air, clean water, open spaces, wildlife habitat, habitat restoration
- Check out Chicago Wilderness’s website (www.chicagowilderness.org/)

10:50 a.m. break

11 a.m. reconvene

Discussion:

Sandra Key commented that it seems public schools are backing away from physical education and if we’re dealing with recreation, the public has to have some ability to walk those trails.

Sheffield suggested combating the decrease of physical education by providing curriculum for after school clubs and organizations and local parks, and make it so kids can use their technology (for example, get BLM information on the geocaching.com website)

Suzanne McCarthy asked about working with people in communities who already have a sense of public land ownership who don't want to attract a bunch of urban people to the area. Sheffield said that the only successful work she's done in rural areas is working with communities and informing them that certain things *are* going to happen, all of this data is credible, and emphasize economic opportunities and sustainability. Teresa Imm said that the National Park Service and the community at Anaktuvuk Pass have been doing a good job with increased tourism because of visitors to the Gates of the Arctic.

STATE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Henri Bisson, BLM Alaska State Director

***Handout: BLM Alaska Major Issues October 2005**

Bisson highlighted current BLM issues including: National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Northeast plan, legacy well cleanups, North Slope Science Initiative nominations for the Science Technical Group due Oct. 27 (www.northslope.org), the Recordable Disclaimer of Interest program and land use planning. The Major Issues paper provides a briefing of current BLM Alaska programs and projects.

Discussion:

Key asked for an update on BLM's take regarding Sen. Seekins' bill SB85 which proposes removing the state statute prohibiting off-road vehicles along the Dalton Highway corridor north of the Yukon River. Bisson said the BLM has taken no position on the legislation. If the legislation passes, the BLM's concern was that the agency would have enough time to consult with people and come up with a plan, and Bisson said the BLM has that. Fairbanks District manager Bob Schneider added that subsistence specialist Taylor Brelsford has recommended that the BLM hold community meetings before we would fully implement any decision.

Susan Olsen asked about discussions regarding East Alaska RMP's Alternative B and the corridor. Bisson said that that state would like to take ownership of the corridor and he believes there are two primary points to deal with – future, safe operation of the pipeline and subsistence. Bisson said that there's going to be a land pattern set, but there's been no decision yet.

Hala said that from the OHV-users' perspective, it's a matter of educating users whose land their on and it's difficult to keep track of that. Hala feels that as the number of OHV-users has increased, so has the number of people getting involved in clubs and groups who are thirsty for land ownership education. But, he said, the general public also needs education on land ownership. Hala said that enforcement is always a big question, but if people are educated they become more responsible and enforcement becomes less of a problem, then agencies don't feel stressed to come up with enforcement funding and decide to close lands because they can't

provide enforcement. Bisson said that he'd be more than willing to talk to OHV groups and develop a partnership between the BLM and those clubs.

FIELD MANAGER UPDATES

Gary Reimer, manager, Anchorage Field Office

*** Handouts: AFO briefing, Ring of Fire briefing, The Bay brochure and map**

- Reimer introduced Jeff Brune, Campbell Creek Science Center (CCSC) manager, who received a National Take Pride in America Federal Land Manager's Award at ceremonies in Washington, D.C., in late September. The award recognizes managers who find innovative and creative approaches to using volunteers. Reimer noted that the use of Campbell Tract/CCSC is growing at a rate of 12 percent and said that the center is doing many of the things Sheffield addressed in her presentation earlier in the day.
- AFO denied a Special Recreation Permit application to conduct commercial big game outfitting and guiding on BLM lands in the Koyuk River area in western Alaska. See the Major Issues handout for more information.
- Ring of Fire (ROF) Draft EIS is available, public comments period ends Dec. 29. Reimer reviewed the preferred Alternative D which includes Neacola Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), Knik River SRMA and Haines SRMA. The map key is blue for state selected land; yellow for unselected BLM land; dark yellow for Native selected land.

Discussion:

Olsen asked how BLM's ROF plan jives with the proposed State bill referring to conveyed land for a motorized area on Knik River. Bisson said that the BLM will have its own challenges and we'll need to work with adjacent land managers. Olsen said that the bill proposes that nothing be prohibited in the Knik River area and that's going overboard. Hala said that if the House Bill 307 and Senate Bill 197 sponsored by Sens. Huggins and Stoltze passes, the DNR would still have to plan for and manage those areas. The Haines block presents helicopter tourism as a big issue. Regarding the ACEC designation for Neacola, AFO would like to get the RAC's opinion. Reimer said that staff has learned a lot during the Ring of Fire planning process that will make the Bay plan go more smoothly.

Bob Schneider, manager, Fairbanks District Office

*** Handout: FDO briefing**

Schneider highlighted issues from FDO including three new field office managers, North Slope shorebird study, legacy well cleanups, and three planning efforts – South National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, Kobuk-Seward Peninsula, and White Mountains amendment.

Discussion:

Olsen asked if there would be a second level of planning if Sen. Seekins' Senate Bill 85, which proposes removing the state statute prohibiting off-road vehicles along the Dalton Highway corridor north of the Yukon River, which affects state and federal lands. Schneider said that if the bill passes, there would be OHV designations in the interim to allow for winter travel. For the Resource Management Plan, the BLM would consult with other agencies involved with land management in the area and develop an activity level plan for OHV use.

Garth Olson, acting manager, Glennallen Field Office

*** Handout: GFO briefing**

- East Alaska Final RMP/EIS is expected to be released in late November 2005 and the ROD is expected in late December 2005 (correction to the final sentence of the East Alaska item on the handout).
- Ramona Chinn, Conveyance's deputy state director, is working to get a group from the Native community together to discuss enforcement on 17(b) easements. Bisson explained that there's no BLM funding to address this issue because it's private land and therefore, the troopers need to be called.
- Subsistence hunters in Game Management Unit 13 have until Oct. 25, 2005, to turn in 2005 Moose Hunt Reports as stated in a letter that GFO recently mailed. Failure to report could result in fines and could also result in the hunter being ineligible to receive a subsistence permit for the following year.
- Denali Highway trailhead and wayside improvement projects have been completed.

FIRE SEASON UPDATE

Mary Lynch, planning and environmental coordinator, Alaska Fire Service

*** Handout: Fireline newsletter, briefings on AFS, hurricane support, smoke effects mitigation and public health proposal, and Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group**

Lynch introduced public affairs officer Kevin McIver who presented a short film about the 2005 season. Lynch then highlighted some of the information included in the AFS briefing packet:

- AWFCG handout shows how agencies are responding to recommendations, such as providing opportunities for community participation.
- Still working on DNR's cabin protection policy.
- Implemented changes on management options, land around Fairbanks is now in full suppression.
- National request for extended length of Alaskan fire assignment from 14 to 21 days. Extension will be considered on case-by-case basis
- The 2005 season started at the end of April on the Kenai. Fires were in more remote areas than in 2004. In 2005, 4.6 million acres burned (6.5 million burned in 2004). There were no Type I fires in state; seven Type 2 fires including three down on Kenai. Big fires were caused

by lightning. Human caused fire numbers were low (average is around 350 per year). The Tongass recorded 51 fires this year which is extremely unusual. The season ended in late August, then the hurricane season hit. Alaska's Type I team of about 35 people spent a month setting up mobile home distribution centers and building new infrastructure for an expected fall fire season in Alabama. Some BLM Alaska staff are still deployed and will be deployed to help with the hurricane relief.

Discussion:

Crafford asked about the disproportionate 2004 operations cost on the 2821 expenditures chart. Lynch explained that ops costs for 2004 were high because in 2004 the fire activity was more complex and fires burned closer to communities. A larger number of personnel, crews and equipment staffed 2004 fires. Aircraft costs were higher. For example, charter aircraft were used to fly Lower 48 Type 1 crews to Alaska.

Crafford asked if placer miners provided comments about the fire season this year. Lynch asked outgoing RAC member Larry Taylor who lives in Eagle to answer. Taylor said that there were fewer complaints this year compared to last year's fire season. Lynch added that there was more outreach and information flow was better this year. Crafford, who works in DNR's mining section, said that he'd like to talk with Lynch about how the State uses All Topo to map the locations of placer miners.

CONVEYANCE UPDATE

Ramona Chinn, deputy state director, Conveyance Management

*** Handout: BLM Overview of Native Allotment Program, map of ownership priorities**

- Less than 1,900 Native allotment (individual claims of 160 acres or less) cases pending.
- As land is conveyed, also need to reject overselections. Reduction of overselection will help clarify competing state and corporation selections.
- State has about 4 million acres in dual selection and filed its priorities last week.
- In FY2005: 2 million acres were conveyed to the State, 1.4 million acres to Native corporations, 566 Native allotments.
- Priority now is reducing overselection and strategizing a communications plan.

Discussion:

Because of the diversity of Native villages, Greg Beischer asked if the BLM is having any difficulty in working with the villages. Chinn said that the BLM set up a resolution branch a couple of years ago that meets with corporations to discuss priorities and that has been successful. Bisson added that the BLM has also gone out and hired people from the Native communities and that has helped communicate the agency's mission to some of the elders.

SECTION 207 D-1 WITHDRAWALS REPORT TO CONGRESS

Dave Mushovic, realty specialist, Branch of Lands and Realty

*** Handouts: report briefing, copies of written comments**

- The 90-day public comment period ended Sept. 15. Ten written comments were submitted including on summation of environmental groups. Comments were split: five supported lifting all d-1 withdrawals; five supported maintaining all d-1 withdrawals.
- The common thread in all comments was they felt the proper avenue for reviewing withdrawals was BLM's public land use planning process.
- Some comments from environmental groups concern current RMP efforts which are already going to be incorporated into the report.
- Some comments from environmental groups challenge the legality of the report process and the need for additional review of the draft report. These are outside the scope of this report.

Discussion:

Federal agencies recommended lifting d-1 withdrawals except for those overlapping 14h (1) selections inside Conservation System Units, and some specific areas within the forest, for example, Portage Glacier. Mushovic noted that the d-1 withdrawals generally do not have any affect on the validity of these 14h selections one way or the other.

4:30 p.m. adjourn until Friday

Friday, October 14, 2005

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT IN ALASKA

Taylor Brelsford, subsistence coordinator, Branch of Resources and Planning

*** Handout: printout of PowerPoint presentation and handout on Subsistence Management in Alaska Under Title VIII of ANILCA. If anyone would like a copy of the federal subsistence booklets (wildlife has green cover, fish and shellfish has purple cover), either contact Brelsford or RAC coordinator Danielle Allen.**

- Federal subsistence vs. state subsistence – federal subsistence program, rural residents qualify for subsistence use on federal lands. State subsistence program, all Alaskans are subsistence users, no priority given, which means that all Alaskans qualify for subsistence use on state lands.

Brelsford highlighted some of Alaska's subsistence history, provided an overview of ANILCA, reviewed the Federal Subsistence Management map, Federal Subsistence organizational charts, management functions and achievements:

Discussion:

Council members asked if there were regulations defining some of the language in ANILCA Sec. 810 such as “significantly restrict,” “necessary,” “minimum” and “reasonable.” Brelsford said “minimum amount of land” has not been tested, but the definition of “significant restrictions” has been tested, but there’s been no litigation. Brelsford said that the BLM was the first federal agency to be sued because of this language, but prepared policy and procedural steps and more specific guidance which operates at the agency level. Conveyance of lands is not subject to the 810 review, yet when in doubt on whether to do review or not, do an 810 analysis on all plans because agencies have lost lawsuits.

Olsen asked if there was, independent of an 810 review, a trust responsibility of the federal government that includes subsistence of Native groups. Brelsford said that that is a matter of dispute. Technically, Congress does have a broad responsibility under the Constitution. Federal responsibility has been defined under Sec. 810 of ANILCA giving subsistence priority to rural Alaskans; however, ANILCA is not Indian legislation.

Brelsford said that resource monitoring would not normally be a BLM function, although because of the federal subsistence issue it’s necessary to monitor moose, bear, caribou, muskox, salmon, sheep, etc. Bisson said that funding for this is minimal and BLM Alaska is constantly defending this work in Washington.

Beischer asked if BLM rangers police subsistence hunting activities. Brelsford said that rangers are in the field monitoring subsistence hunting.

Beischer asked about the d-1 withdrawals in regards to subsistence priority. Brelsford said that the real fork in the road is selected vs. unencumbered, or non-selected, lands.

BLM’S WEED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Ruth Gronquist, state weed coordinator

*** Handout: printout of PowerPoint presentation, Invasive and Problem Weeds for Alaska roadside field guide (UAF College of Rural Alaska Cooperative Extension Service), Selected Invasive Plants of Alaska booklet (USDA and Forest Service, Alaska Region)**

- Gronquist said that Alaska’s in a good position to be proactive about invasive weeds especially since the frost-free seasons are getting longer.
- In the past, work focused on defining terms and emphasizing prevention. Now, the BLM is emphasizing inventory. In Alaska, that means implementing the BAER (Burned Area Emergency Response) plan of doing countryside inventory. Hoping to move into weed control soon with the publication of a national plan.
- In 1999, the RAC drafted Land Management Standards and Guidelines which permits only certified feed (hay cubes, hay pellets, hay) on BLM lands (IM AK 2004-023 of March 2004 announces approval of the S&G). Gronquist said that this needs to be expanded to include straw.

Discussion:

Hala asked about noxious weeds, native or nonnative, spreading within the state vs. weeds coming into the state from outside – which is a bigger issue? Gronquist said that generally, within North America, the bigger problem is invasive plants from outside the continent. She said that the BLM does ask special recreation permit users coming from outside to clean their gear.

The most prevalent ways weeds spread is by nurseries and roadside seeding.

Schneider asked if chemical treatment was a possibility. Gronquist said that staff is waiting for the national vegetation EIS, now at the printer, which will allow chemicals treatments on BLM land.

Key asked the council how the RAC would like to be involved when the state legislation is drafted. Bisson said the council needs to research the RAC endorsing state legislation. Hala said the council should be kept informed. Bisson added that this issue is very significant and added that the OHV community especially needs to be concerned and engaged in some manner. He said that weed spread is a big concern especially after last year's fire season when a lot of landscape was opened. Also, the gas pipeline construction could spread noxious weeds along the corridor because there will be a lot of ground exposed.

10:05 a.m. break

10:20 a.m. reconvene

HOW THE ENERGY BILL AFFECTS THE BLM

Colleen McCarthy, deputy state director, Energy and Minerals

*** Handout: Energy Policy Act of 2005 (list of sections of interest to the BLM only)**

McCarthy reviewed sections of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, signed Aug. 8, some of which apply to BLM nationally and some more specifically to BLM Alaska. She said the goal of all of these measures is to increase the domestic energy supply and added that some of the mandates come with funding and some do not.

- **Section 365 Pilot Project to Improve Federal Permit Coordination** mandates establishment of seven “pilot offices” for the purpose of improving permit coordination. The pilot offices are in Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. The idea is to allow these offices to use one-half the income received from oil and gas lease rentals for coordinating and processing oil and gas use authorizations; some of the money is to be distributed by BLM to the other state and federal permitting agencies involved in the process. Earmarking half the money directly back into the permit coordination process should benefit industry and the agencies tasked with managing the oil and gas program. This provision does not, at present, include Alaska. However, after 3 years, the Secretary of the Interior is required to submit a report to Congress which summarizes the results and make a recommendation as to whether this concept should be implemented nationwide.

- **Section 347 Oil and Gas Leasing in NPR-A** allows the BLM to extend leases in NPR-A which contain a well certified as capable of producing and renew leases for an additional 10 years at a cost of \$100/acre if lessees can demonstrate due diligence. The difficulty with the 10-year leases in NPR-A is that a 10-year lease gives a lessee “roughly three years to explore” because it takes so long to get a prospect there into production. This section also amends unitization requirements. The final language represents a compromise reached between the BLM, State of Alaska, ASRC and industry. The BLM is currently writing regulations to incorporate this legislation.
 - Olsen asked about the average cost to build in NPR-A and McCarthy gave an estimate in the single-digit million dollars, but added that the cost really varies. It’s so expensive because of the lack of infrastructure.

- **Section 348 North Slope Science Initiative** authorizes creation of the North Slope Science Initiative aimed at developing a unified and coordinated approach across the North Slope to inform the decision and permitting processes for oil and gas exploration and development activities. It is not about developing a science strategy to stop or slow things down, it’s about getting necessary information to make and defend our decisions. The Act instructed the Secretary to create a Science Technical Advisory Committee to assist in this process. The charter for this group has been approved by the Secretary and the call for nominations of scientists from multiple disciplines closes Oct. 27, 2005. This group is not limited in scope to the biological sciences, which is the scope of the RMT. It has been designed to incorporate the full spectrum of science involved in development issues, from civil engineering and biology to socio-economics. Selected scientists will come from government, industry, universities and the public-at-large.

- **Section 353 Gas Hydrate Production Incentive** allows the Secretary of the Interior to grant royalty relief for natural gas produced from gas hydrate resources under an eligible lease. Gas hydrates are molecules of gas which are encapsulated in ice. They are primarily an offshore resource and found onshore only in areas of permafrost. Currently, this resource is not commercially viable; the idea is to provide some incentive to companies to spend the necessary research and development dollars. The potential for Alaska is great – compare known reserves of conventional natural gas of 35 trillion cubic feet to an estimated resource of 590 tcf of gas hydrates onshore, and even more offshore. The BLM, along with MMS, USGS and DOE, are writing regulations to implement this section of the legislation.

- **Section 349 Orphaned, Abandoned or Idled Wells on Federal Land** provides the Secretary the ability to reimburse companies, either through royalty relief or direct reimbursement, for remediation work done on old wells which were left in unacceptable condition. This applies to the BLM’s situation in the NPR-A with regard to legacy wells drilled from the mid-’40s to the early ’80s. Many of these wells were left in less than perfect condition and the BLM has inherited the task of monitoring and/or cleaning up these sites. The BLM has struggled with its responsibility because remediation work in the Arctic is extremely expensive, primarily because the lack of infrastructure. Mobilization costs for winter remediation are extremely costly. The BLM is hopeful that it can now persuade explorers in the general area of some of these old wells to help with remediation efforts and the agency will now be able to offer some financial incentives to do so.

- Crafford asked how many wells needed remediation. McCarthy said there were 100 wells drilled all together and the BLM has a list of 30-40 that need some form of remediation. The BLM anticipates plugging and abandoning several wells in the Umiat area and several at Cape Simpson this winter.

Discussion:

Key asked about extended leases and which land use plan would apply. McCarthy said the rules of engagement at time the lease is issued apply, but that agreement can be revised between the lessee and lessor. Bisson said that upon renewal is the time when the BLM would make changes to conform to any land use plans and offer a renewal under those conditions, but those regulations addressing those issues are coming out.

Key asked about Section 390 National Environmental Policy Act Review which she has heard as “streamlined NEPA,” and what that means for Alaska. McCarthy said that Section 390 establishes five categorical exclusions under NEPA that apply to oil and gas exploration and development on Federal oil and gas leases. Because of increasing pressure on staff time and funds, the measure aims to expedite review of Application for Permit to Drill, Surface Use Plan of Operations or pipeline application involving a proposed activity that fits into one of the five categories. Bisson said that according to his reading of the section, he doesn’t see anything that affects what BLM Alaska is doing now.

Olsen asked about Section 387 Federal Coalbed Methane Regulations in relation to state coalbed methane regulations. McCarthy said that for BLM Alaska, there’s no commercial CBM development to deal with, just mostly alternative energy.

WORKGROUP REPORTS (leads listed first)

East Alaska RMP

(Susan Olsen/Suzanne McCarthy/Sandra Key)

Nothing to report.

Ring of Fire RMP

(Charlie Boddy/Jim Posey/ Scott Hala)

Boddy reported that the workgroup met with Rachel James and Melissa Blair of the Alaska Coalition in September to discuss their views on the plan. Boddy said that plan leader Bob Lloyd of the Anchorage Field Office and others have been very giving of their time and information. New council member Hala joined this workgroup. Olsen said that it’s the intent of the workgroup to review these plans and that the OHV workgroup is also looking at each of these plans.

South National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska IAP/RMP

(Teresa Imm/David van den Berg/Phil Driver/Sandra Key/Tom Crafford/Susan Olsen)

The extended comment period for scoping slowed activity for this workgroup. Olsen attended the public hearing at the Anchorage library and said that from the comments she heard, even though the area isn’t open to mining and coal development, there’s clearly interest. She said the BLM

has got to figure out how to address the interest and the logistical concerns in this plan, not just indicate where the resources are.

Kobuk/Seward Peninsula RMP

(Teresa Imm/Tom Crafford/Phil Driver/Barbara Fullmer)

New member Fullmer joined this workgroup. Nothing else to report.

White Mountains National Recreation Area RMP Amendment

(David van den Berg/Susan Olsen/Charlie Boddy)

Olsen requested the workgroup get copies of the scoping report. Boddy said that Fairbanks District Office manager and staff have been very active in outreach to the community.

The Bay (June McAtee/Greg Beischer/Sandra Key)

McAtee said that she and Beischer met with lead planner Pat McClenahan for a briefing. Beischer advised the council of the potential for conflict of interest because of his job and said that he would recuse himself from any council resolutions regarding this plan.

OHV Usage Policy

(Susan Olsen/Suzanne McCarthy/Phil Driver/Keith Tryck/Scott Hala)

New member Hala joined the OHV workgroup. Nothing else to report.

Outdated Federal Land Segregations and Sec. 207 Report

(Greg Beischer/Tom Crafford/Susan Olsen/Keith Tryck/Sandra Key/June McAtee)

Nothing to report.

NPR-A Research and Monitoring Subcommittee/North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI)

(Sandra Key/Teresa Imm/Phil Driver)

Key explained to new members that the RAC took the NPR-A Research and Monitoring Subcommittee (also known as the Research and Monitoring Team or RMT) under the council's umbrella while the NSSI is being developed. The next RMT is meeting on Monday, Oct. 17. The RMT's work will be folded into the NSSI's North Slope Science Technical Group, which is soliciting nominations for members. Nomination forms, due Oct. 27, are available at the NSSI website: www.northslope.org

Wildland Fire Management (Keith Tryck, Charlie Boddy, Suzanne McCarthy)

See comments in next section under RESOLUTIONS 06-02 Wildland Fires.

11:30 a.m. break

12:30 p.m. reconvene

RESOLUTIONS

06-01 Bering Glacier Field Camp Support

Members present unanimously approved the Bering Glacier Field Camp Support Resolution 06-01. Absent members (Imm, Drive, Tryck, van den Berg) will be solicited via email for their

votes. A unanimous vote among members enables the resolution to be forwarded directly to the Secretary.

06-02 Wildland Fires

Tryck authored this resolution and could not be present for this portion of the meeting, so the council agreed to table discussion until the RAC’s next meeting.

Boddy added that the Wildland Fire Management workgroup will be meeting with Scott Billing, Alaska Fire Service manager, and Mary Lynch, AFS’s planning and environmental coordinator, so the resolution’s language may change.

Voting Procedures

The council discussed resolution voting procedure and agreed that resolutions should be emailed to members in advance so members can review and be ready to vote at the meeting. The council also decided that resolutions should be voted on at meetings instead of via email. Absentee votes could still be solicited via phone or email.

05-03 Additional East Alaska Resource Management Plan closure (8 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 abstaining)

05-04 Utility Corridor-Subsistence (10 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstaining)

These resolutions have passed and Crafford will develop the cover letters to forward to the State Director.

2006 WORK PROGRAM REVIEW & MEETING SCHEDULE

By the February meeting, Crafford will update some of the language in the work program and get back to the group for review. The council made changes to some of the action and information items and new members signed up for work groups.

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Tentative Agenda Items</u>
February 7-8* (Fairbanks)	Pipeline Briefing 17b Easements Fire Resolution Work Program Regulations for Energy Plan State/National Legislation Update Presentation on Archaeological Find Election of Officers
May 10-11* (Juneau)	Workgroup Reports

(More topics to be determined)

Aug 2-4 Field Trip

(South National

Petroleum Reserve-Alaska)

Workgroup Reports

(More topics to be determined)

October 26-27*

(Anchorage)

Workgroup Reports

RAC Appointments

(More topics to be determined)

* Includes public comment opportunity

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD 1:30 p.m.

Nancy Berland, Lynn Canal Conservation (Haines, Alaska)

Berland provided public comment via telephone regarding protecting mountain goat and other wildlife from the rapidly expanding recreational use of helicopters. At the council's request, Berland emailed her comments to be included in the minutes as follows:

- How rapid? In Juneau, for example, since the inception of heli-tours in 1984, there has been a yearly average 12 % increase in heli-passengers. That means use doubled in 1992 and doubled again in 2000. (USDA, 2002 EIS)
- According to BLM biologist Jeff Denton, the vast majority (he used the figure 80%) of naturally occurring goat populations on BLM lands nationwide occurs in the Haines/Skagway vicinity.
- Goat experts have valid concerns about both short and long term impacts from expanding helicopter use in goat habitat. (Northern Wild Sheep and Goat Council). Each time a new area is requested for heli landings, federal agencies do an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In 1995 these documents said that "little is currently known about impacts to wildlife from helicopters" and they go on to list a wide range of potential impacts ranging from habitat abandonment to local population extinctions. In 2005 the language is almost identical "little is currently known about impacts to wildlife from helicopters."
- It's past time for a change and the Ring of Fire planning effort is the perfect opportunity to address this issue. In other words, in ten years we don't want to be saying "little is currently known. . ." As long as federal land managers continue to hand out new permits in new areas for helicopter landings we need to work on getting some answers to how severe the impacts are. It would be very beneficial to define an area of study that has an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation to protect BLM goat resources until impacts are better understood and resource managers can use science-based mitigation to protect wildlife.

- LCC proposed such a strategy during Ring of Fire scoping. We proposed an ACEC to be managed as a Research Natural Area for Haines Borough goat populations precisely because the vast majority of BLM managed goats are here. Also because the explosion of heli-tours is in Skagway and Juneau, and not **yet** here. According to Federal Land and Policy Management Act (FLPMA) and BLM planning documents, BLM was required to evaluate our ACEC nomination for relevance and importance, and consider our nomination in an Alternative in the EIS. For some reason, there is no evidence in the Draft EIS that our nomination was ever submitted, let alone considered. Our nomination was supported by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Center for the Environment, Alaska Coalition, Alaska Wildlife Alliance, Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club Alaska Chapter, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, and the Wilderness Society.
- What RAC could do:
 - Pass a resolution for BLM to prioritize creating science-based management guidelines for protecting goats and other wildlife from impacts of increasing recreational use of helicopters.
 - Support BLM prioritizing (as they are required to do by statute) designating ACECs in land use planning in order to resurrect our ACEC nomination so that it can be given the public scrutiny it deserves

Discussion:

Bisson said he would check with Gary Reimer, Anchorage Field Office manager, to find out about LCC’s ACEC nomination and report back to the council. He added that part of the uncertainty in the area is whether or not the lands are selected by the state. He encouraged Berland to comment on the draft. (The public comment period for the Ring of Fire Draft EIS ends Dec. 29, 2005.)

Olsen asked if Berland was aware of whether the Forest Service had done research on mountain goat populations in areas where heliskiing was permitted, for instance, in the Chugach Mountains. Berland said not much research is available. Olsen then asked if any federal agencies have done substantive research on goats and helicopters. Berland said that in talking to BLM biologist Jeff Denton, funding for this research is not forthcoming but that he is working hard to find money.

Crafford mentioned that there is a goat study on the east side of Lynn Canal as part of the Kensington gold mine and proposed road.

Berland said that for the Ring of Fire plan, the group is really concerned about impacts from longer term use, such as helicopters operating summer tours and then running winter heliskiing tours in the same area. She added that in the Lower 48, goat populations are almost wiped out on BLM lands.

Gloria Stickwan, Ahtna Inc. (Glennallen, Alaska)

Stickwan thanked the council for offering its support of keeping the utility corridor in federal management because if it became state land it would impact Ahtna members’ subsistence

lifestyle. Stickwan said that Ahtna members wouldn't have priority under state subsistence regulations and added that 80% of their wildlife is taken from that area.

Ahtna submitted comments on the East Alaska Resource Management Plan at the Southcentral Regional Subsistence Council and Stickwan thanked Bisson for attending that meeting. She added that she's glad to see RAC member McCarthy who is from the area on the council and hoped that she would remain on the council as a representative of the area.

Jack Reakoff (Wiseman, Alaska)

Reakoff submitted the following comments via FAX and asked that they be included in the minutes:

Jack Reakoff
Wiseman, Alaska
907-678-2007 (Phone and fax)

BLM Resource Advisory Council
Regarding: SB85 Repeal OHV restriction Dalton Highway

Dear Council,

One only need take a look at this bill to see that there is no direction given to planning or is funding provided. There is neither funding provided for enforcement or penalties for violation of restricted areas.

The simplicity of SB85 simply has no protections of the heretofore wilderness areas near the Dalton Highway. Without funding for planning by the State or enforcement by all agencies, the best voiced intentions are meaningless.

It is incumbent on the BLM RAC to protect these lands from loss and degradation by keeping them closed to OHV use. Funding requests of excess of three million dollars will have to be made for adequate planning and enforcement. Game surveys, terrain mitigations, meetings, ANILCA 810 Title VIII and additional enforcement officers ... all very expensive.

Thank you,
Jack Reakoff

END OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

1:50 p.m. break
2 p.m. reconvene

NON-AGENDA ITEMS

The council extended its thanks and gratitude to former member Larry Taylor, who had been a member since 1999.

Adjourn 2:30 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

This document is a fair and accurate summation of the BLM Alaska Resource Advisory Council meeting of Oct. 13 & 14, 2005.

Chair, BLM Alaska RAC

Date