

Meeting Minutes
Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council Meeting
October 26, 2017

The EWRAC was convened for its meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Oct. 26, 2017 at the Spokane District Office at 1103 N. Fancher Rd. Spokane Valley, WA 99212. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public.

In Attendance

Resource Advisory Council members

Brent Billingsley (Grazing)
Ken Carmichael (Wild Horse and Burro)
Sandy Mackie, Chair (Public-at-large)
Mary Morgan (Elected Official)
Bradley Parrish (Developed Outdoor Recreation)
Maurice Williamson (Commercial Timber)
Michael Ritter (State Natural Resources)
Paul Mellick (Dispersed Recreation)
Paul Lindholt (Academia)

BLM staff

Linda Clark (District Manager)
Michelle Brown (Assistant District Manager)
Lindsey Babcock (Border Field Manager)
Katherine Farrell (Planner)
Jeff Clark (Public Affairs)

Public present for all or a portion of the meeting

John Thompson (President of Midnight Mudders, OHV group)
David Linton (Treasurer of Midnight Mudders, OHV group)

Welcome of New Members and Introductions

All RAC and staff members introduced themselves to get to know new members a little bit and understand each other's background. Linda Clark gave an update on the budget and how priorities have shifted.

RAC Business

Sandy (Chair) took over the meeting and asked what questions the RAC had about BLM business. Katherine discussed the cancellation of Planning 2.0 after the question came from Mary and Ken. Linda talked about some of the priorities of the District to include both RMPs. There was concern about weed control having less funding in the President's budget. There was a motion to and second of a formal recommendation to the DFO that the weed budget not be reduced and that the focus on weed removal and control on eastern Washington not be lost. This official recommendation has been voted on and passed unanimously.

There was also concern over the possibility of public lands being transferred to state or private control. Maurice brought up the Good Neighbor Authority to be used as a happy medium to giving responsibility to other entities but not the authority. Linda mentioned she's meeting with DNR soon to discuss Good

Neighbor. She offered to add it to the agenda for an upcoming meeting so the RAC could advise BLM about where this may be a useful authority to exercise.

Update on Resource Management Plan

District Planner, Katherine Farrell gave an overview and update on the eastern Washington Resource Management Plan (RMP). Right now the BLM is doing sage grouse analysis on the preliminary draft which has been sent to the Washington Office but was returned until access issues and sage grouse consistency with other state plans. Katherine went over how we are ensuring that consistency with Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife. The BLM is under a plan from 1987 right now and many things have changed including land acquisition and species being listed on the Endangered Species Act. We still have four draft alternatives with A being a no action alternative, B is more of a conservation focused alternative, C is focused on more use and D is more of a balanced alternative between B and C. Katherine mentioned that Lindsey just approved a fuels break project in conjunction with the state and local counties to help protect some sage grouse priority areas. It will probably be sometime in spring before we publish the draft EIS and hold public meetings. The RAC will go over our outreach communications plan during our next meeting and help with generating public participation in the comment period. Her handouts and maps can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/ybfgoyeu>.

Paul Lindholdt asked how fire has been considered in the RMP and Katherine went over restoration with native grasses and also fuel break projects. Roads and access issues are being considered to ensure suppression and restoration activities can occur. Paul's follow up question was focused on prevention but in the RMP there is mostly a suppression and restoration focus since the Fire Program focuses more on those.

Break

10:45-11:00 a.m.

Update of Juniper Dunes Access

Lindsey Babcock, the Border Field Manager, talked about the unique aspects of the Juniper Dunes complex as it has an OHV area, a Wilderness Area, and an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The other unique thing is we have no legal public access. She also thanked the Midnight Mudders OHV group for their help in cleaning up the Juniper Dunes OHV area. Two members of Midnight Mudders were present for this portion of the meeting. Franklin County is still negotiating the purchase of the land from the last landowner needed to start the project (hopefully starting next spring.)

There is road, trail, fencing and parking construction as part of the project. It was mentioned that some of the fence separating the OHV area and Wilderness are broken and other pieces are buried under sand and OHVs are illegally accessing the Wilderness as well. The ACEC also has issues with unauthorized OHV use. Some repairs have been made but it is still hard to fix due to access and drifting sand.

Another piece of this is a fuel pipeline that needs to be inspected and wrapped and that work is being done now. The thought is that Juniper Dunes could be a benchmark for how multiple competing uses can co-exist. Jeff talked about how sub-committees are different from RAC meetings and proposed the subcommittee visit Juniper Dunes in late winter or early spring to start advising on development.

Public Comment Period

John Thompson mentioned work the Midnight Mudders has done to repair fences and also asked about a fence in the OHV area. The BLM will investigate and get back with him. There were no other members of the public who commented. Maurice asked the Midnight Mudders members who were present, what they thought about fees. They understand that with development of the area, fees would be necessary. The RAC requested cost estimates from the BLM of basic improvements (vault toilets, RV dump, trash service, etc.) Moses Creek Sand Dunes is a good model for how to manage Juniper Dunes. Mike Ritter had good suggestions about management and making it more primitive like their fishing areas for the state. The feel and character isn't impacted and people respect it more.

Round Robin

Each member got a chance to mention what they'd like to see come out of this Council.

Mary Morgan thought it was a productive meeting and appreciated the insight from the Midnight Mudders. Looking at the issues with Poulouse Falls and management she sees real access issues being a problem so she appreciates being proactive with Juniper Dunes.

Paul Mellick concerned more for the wilderness area in Juniper Dunes and also wants less development.

Maurice Williamson had no issues.

Brad Parrish thinks parking at Juniper Dunes if developed should have separate areas for equestrian and OHV users.

Michael Ritter thanked the Midnight Mudders for their work and coming to the meeting. He's excited and scared about the opportunity Juniper Dunes presents.

Brent Billingsley had no issues.

Ken Carmichael is also interested in Juniper Dunes and really happy with the focus and dedication to this area. He also mentioned he's missing a work party today at Escure Ranch and the BLM has a lot of great areas that need attention.

Paul Lindoldt is happy to be able to attend a meeting finally and getting involved with the RAC.

Sandy Mackie is happy to see the RAC being productive and working on real projects.

The next RAC meeting will be in Pasco next year. Jeff Clark will send out a doodle poll this week.

Adjourn

12:15 p.m.