

Meeting Minutes
Eastern Washington Resource Advisory Council Meeting
February 8, 2017

The EWRAC was convened for its meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 8, 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)
Dan Hoke (Recreation)
David Hubbard (Grazing)
Stephen Kiss (Commercial Timber)
Sandy Mackie, Chair (Public-at-large)
Mary Morgan (Elected Official)
Bradley Parrish (Developed Outdoor Recreation)
Maurice Williamson (Commercial Timber)

On the Phone

Michael Ritter (State Natural Resources)
Paul Mellick (Dispersed Recreation)

BLM staff

Linda Clark (District Manager)
Suzanne Endsley (Acting Assistant District Manager)
Lindsey Babcock (Border Field Manager)
Eric Holborn (Assistant Border Field Manager)
Katherine Farrell (Planner)
Jeff Clark (Public Affairs)

Public present for all or a portion of the meeting

N/A

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 joint nature of the Spokane and Coeur d'Alene districts as well as some new changes in District leadership.

RAC Business

Sandy Mackie was elected Chair and David Hubbard was elected Vice Chair. Sandy took over the meeting and asked what projects the BLM has that the RAC can help advise on. Juniper Dunes access and the RMP came up along with potentially advising the Forest Service in the future as well.

Update on Resource Management Plan

District Planner, Katherine Farrell gave an overview and update on the eastern Washington Resource Management Plan (RMP). Jeff Clark will send RAC members the old RMP, the AMS and scoping materials for the current RMP in progress. Right now the BLM is doing impact analysis and the preliminary draft is

being reviewed by the State Office and Cooperating Agencies. Katherine went over what alternatives could look like in a general way. 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 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. We looked at maps to see where the lands we manage are that will be under the new RMP. The BLM tries to make our plan as consistent as possible with other existing plans on lands that border ours. RAC members mentioned using data and GIS that have been updated by counties to help inform our analysis.

Katherine also mentioned that the District has a Programmatic Weeds Environmental Assessment (EA) that is currently ongoing. A question was asked about whether weed treatment is addressed in the RMP and the answer is only from a large perspective such as aerial spraying being allowed or not. The Programmatic Weeds EA covers that and the draft of the EA will hopefully come out in March and will be sent to the RAC for review and comments. Another question was if wildfire is addressed in the RMP. It is, but again is more general and high level to allow more flexibility to incorporate local wildfire protection plans at specific sites and with specific projects. It was also mentioned road and travel management will be addressed separately from the RMP other than possible OHV area designations.

It was suggested that many counties would be interested to learn what water rights we hold and where they are. Washington State has changed water rules so now counties are responsible to know where there water comes from. A question was asked if the new Planning 2.0 rule and the possibility of it being revoked will affect the RMP process we're involved in. Because we are so far along in the process, the new rule does not affect this process if it is in effect or done away with.

Break

10:45-11:00 a.m.

Katherine continued discussing the RMP process, specifically the public comment period and communication plan. There will be a series of public meetings and the BLM will solicit the RAC's help in making people aware of the meetings, the comment period timelines and what constitutes a substantive comment.

Climate change is addressed in the RMP but the District doesn't have activities other than fire that can reach any of the established thresholds.

If all goes well, the District hopes to release the Draft by the end of October which will start the public comment period.

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. Franklin County has been appraising all the private land that needs to be purchased for the road to be constructed (hopefully starting in the Fall of this year or next Spring.)

The District is really interested in getting feedback on possible management options for Juniper Dunes. 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. No sign in sheets are at the box at the Wilderness access gate.

Another comment was made to wonder if the area designations could be changed or altered so the conflicts of use could be lessened. The thought is that Juniper Dunes could be a benchmark for how multiple competing uses can co-exist. Chair Sandy Mackey proposed creating a subcommittee for the development of Juniper Dunes.

Lunch and Public Comment Period

There were no members of the public who commented. Lunch went from noon until 1 p.m.

The RAC reconvened at 1 p.m. and a subcommittee was formed to work with the District on facilities, access and use issues regarding Juniper Dunes. If there is a site visit all RAC members will be invited. The subcommittee is made up of Paul Mellick, Dan Hoke, Brad Parrish and Michael Ritter at this time. There is a suggestion that we have a grad student perform a study to determine the effectiveness of our planning and process for developing Juniper Dunes in a way that mitigates conflicts.

Unfinished Business Review

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

Steve Kiss wondered if the BLM is still considering land exchanges with small parcels in the northern part of the state.

Dave Hubbard is curious to the affect the RMP will have on grazing and agriculture (especially regarding Lincoln County.)

Mary Morgan is invested in this council and advising because she understands the importance of public lands and the impact they have socioeconomically to the state.

Paul Mellick has a strong interest in keeping backcountry horse use available on public lands and conservation of those lands. Also looking for guidance regarding the subcommittee he joined.

Michael Ritter is also interested in conservation and the RMP alternatives.

Maurice Williamson is primarily interested in forest health through active management.

Brad Parrish is an avid OHV user and wants lands to be used respectfully and fairly by all users.

Dan Hoke is happy to help and mostly interested in learning and understanding the process which is frustrating.

Brent Billingsley is also frustrated with not being able to make changes or improvements to allotments in a timely manner.

Ken Carmichael is also interested in backcountry horse riding, conservation and really fixing issues. He finds disposal of federal lands to be very troubling because of the loss of access and revenue.

Sandy Mackie is extremely interested in energy development, transmission and generation as well as water rights. In addition to an interest in NEPA review and timing, he wants the RAC to be a sounding board before issues are made public to help the BLM consider the different views/interests of our diverse RAC members.

The next RAC meeting was scheduled for 17 May starting at 9:30 a.m. in the Spokane District office. Agenda items are due to Jeff Clark by 1 May.

Adjourn

1:50 p.m.