

**Bureau of Land Management
Albuquerque District Resource Advisory Council
July 2, 2014**

RAC Members Present

Keith Banks
Michael Coleman
Ethan Giedraitis
Robert Moquino
Bob Nordstrum
Don Tripp
Juan Vigil

RAC Members Absent

Jim Clary
Mary Helen Clary

Federal Representative

Danita Burns, BLM Albuquerque District Office

BLM Staff Present

John Brenna, Jr., Rio Puerco Field Office
Theresa Herrera, State Office
Chris Hill, Socorro Field Office
Chip Kimball, Rio Puerco Field Office
Angel Martinez, Rio Puerco Field Office
Mark Matthews, Socorro Field Office
Calvin Parson, Rio Puerco Field Office
Jonathan Smith, Socorro Field Office

Welcome & Introductions

Danita Burns, BLM Albuquerque Acting District Manager, called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. She welcomed all attending, and asked staff and RAC members to introduce themselves. Stephanie Kean, Office of Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham, and Bill Woldman, Office of Senator Tom Udall, were present. Chip Kimball confirmed that a RAC quorum would be present when Michael Coleman arrived.

Review of December 2013 Meeting Minutes

The December 2013 minutes were reviewed, and no changes were made.

Motion

Juan Vigil moved and Ethan Giedraitis seconded to approve the December 2013 minutes. Motion unanimously approved.

Discussion of Pending RAC Nominations

March 14 was the closing date for nominations to the Albuquerque District RAC. Paperwork for one applicant for each vacancy had been forwarded to the Washington, D.C. office for vetting.

Resource Management Plan Process

Danita invited Angel Martinez to speak about the Rio Puerco Resource Management Plan (RMP). He said the document was complete and waiting for comments the legal department had issues with. The field office had received 30,000 comments. Most difficult was that they had funding for a contractor to go through 1,200 comments, and Angel had to go through the rest.

He expected the RMP to be completed the following week and out to the BLM state office by mid-July, where it would be reviewed by staff and directors. Then it would be sent to Washington for review, and after that there would be a 30-day protest period. But protests would only be accepted from persons who had been involved in the process. The Washington office would respond to those protests, with involvement of the state office.

Don asked how many of the comments were form letters. Angel said about 55% of comments were form letters. However, each form letter had lines for additional comments, so those had to be extracted. About 930 comments were substantial. The bulk of them—33%, were related to recreation. Minerals and transportation drew the second most comments, followed by horses. Letters came from the entire nation. “This is federal land and belongs to the people,” Angel added. “People have interest no matter where they live.”

Keith asked what comments on recreation entailed. Angel said there’s a huge interest in the urban area to allocate more recreation sites. BLM has had to determine how to incorporate recreation uses with more traditional uses like grazing, mining and minerals, and wood, nut and herb gathering. He said 260,000 acres are being set aside for recreation uses, including hunting. Albuquerque District Office is managing for about two million people.

Juan asked whether RAC comments had been helpful. Angel said some RAC recommendations highlighted preferred options. Danita said she appreciated the RAC input, which grounds the BLM staff. The plan currently in place dates from the 1990s.

Resource Update

Placitas/Buffalo Tract

The RMP offers different choices for this 3,100-acre parcel between San Felipe and Santa Ana Pueblos. Nothing can be done until the RMP is approved. Placitas community members are extremely interested in this tract. BLM is hearing from congressional representatives as well as local supporters. The RAC looked at a map of the tract. One alternative in the RMP is that this will be disposed of, she said. Another is that BLM will keep all of it. The area is very high in minerals.

Upcoming Fire Season

Jonathan Smith said we were at the height of fire season. But the land was driest a couple of weeks before. Humidity was up, and fire likelihood depended on the monsoon. There had been a considerable amount of lightning. Agencies were on an elevated level of preparedness, level 4 on a scale of 1-6.

The Diego Fire in the Santa Fe National Forest had 587 people working on it, and with humidity and dew point up Jonathan thought they would make quick progress. It was at that time zero percent contained. California is very dry, and in its worst shape in history, he said. The Northern Rockies had no fires, because of a lot of snowpack. And technically the height of their season is August. Nationally it has been slower than the last 20 years, at level 1. BLMNM had expected a more intense fire season, but most fires on BLM and United States Forest Service (USFS) land

had remained small. Albuquerque district held back enough people to manage small fires while most were fighting the Arizona or Diego fires.

Michael Coleman arrived. The motion on approving the minutes was completed.

The Signal Fire in the Gila was not as large as fires in that area in the past, and stopped when the wind stopped. In New Mexico, fire numbers were up but acreage burned was down. Jonathan said the push this year is aggressive firefighting, which is key.

Keith asked for a bird's eye view of how fires affect resource trends. Jonathan said wooded resources are being converted to brush and grass by a number of factors. We're losing trees via fire, drought, insects, etc., he said. We don't really know what that means. Lands that burned last year, for example, like the Silver Fire, will be replaced by brush, not forest.

Office Move

BLM Albuquerque District Office has been housed in the current building for 30 years, and they hoped to upgrade substandard elements, for example, to meet the new green rules. So staff will be moving out of this building. Alternatives under consideration included co-location with the USFS. BLM put out a bid for a new building, but the only respondent was for the building they're in, so they're redoing that bid. Danita will update the RAC.

Mobile Workforce

Danita reported that BLM administration thinks staff's workplace is in the field, so why do they need a huge office space? BLMNM is being challenged to revamp the way it's doing business. The Albuquerque District Office is leading the charge. Danita will ask for RAC help. They are field-based employees, but need to talk to one another and with constituents. They've set up an incident command system, and are looking at issues like safety and accountability. Danita will finish that process with a white paper that she would like the RAC to review and comment on.

Robert Moquino said the U.S. Geological Survey went through the mobilization process in 2008-2009 when he was working there, and discovered that a mobile workforce was not workable. Bob said he was working with the USFS and volunteers when another USFS truck came by and had no idea what they were doing. To him it looks like working together would be more efficient. Danita said there were 64 employees in the Albuquerque District Office. They want to be close to other agencies, especially the USFS. But it is clear that each office's needs are different.

Tent Rocks

John Brenna spoke about Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument, held in partnership on Cochiti Pueblo/BLM land. The monument is underfunded, so they are working to bring funding in. BLM proposes to increase the entrance fee from \$5 to \$10 per vehicle in order to upgrade the area. They have to publish 30 days notice for a meeting for the RAC to discuss the proposed change and decide whether to approve it. BLM staff is in touch with Cochiti Pueblo's tribal administration and council. It is an active partnership. Visitation is 70,000/year. There are serious issues simply making sure everyone who wants to can get into that 5,000-acre area.

Cochiti Pueblo tribal members are the monument's employees. BLM partners with law enforcement when needed.

Robert Moquino asked whether the roads were in order. John said there had been flooding since the large fire in that area, and BLM is working with Cochiti Pueblo to address issues. The raised fee would still not fully fund monument needs. All funds are shared 50/50 with the pueblo, but must be spent on the monument. John will have a breakdown of how funds are spent when the proposal for a raise in fees is brought before the RAC.

SunZia

Mark Matthews said the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project has been in the news lately. The Defense Department (DoD) and BLM reached an agreement to bury segments of the line for national security where White Sands Missile Range has restricted airspace. A bill concerning transmission through that area is before the U.S. Senate now, proposing that the land crossed by transmission lines be taken out of public ownership and placed under the U.S. Army. BLM would then have to go through the U.S. Army to respond to any public requests. And the area has special designations for a stallion study, Mockingbird Gap archaeological sites, wild horses and antelope. A portion of the bill addresses wildlife grazing. One proposal to mitigate potential impacts to military operations was to bury three short segments totaling approximately five miles of the transmission line along BLM's preferred alternative route. They will go through the BLM process to analyze that. Discussion.

Keith said a big piece of the people's land was going to an agency and we don't know whether they're going to serve the people or not. It could be used for recreation. Shouldn't that be spelled out? And what's going to happen to grazing for those of us living in that area? These issues need to be addressed, he said. He had just learned about this the day before. Landowners out there have a vested interest in this and have been partners with BLM, Keith continued. Their partnerships with the U.S. Army have varied, but historically the ranching community is skeptical of the DoD.

Mark said this is what White Sands Missile Range refers to as an extension area. They say they use it and have agreements with the ranching community, and when they are doing a firing, ranchers have to leave and the public cannot come in. Because it's SunZia, the Army is worried that another line going east and west will interfere.

Don asked whether all the line would go underground. Mark said only parts, approximately five miles worth. The five miles being buried were all within the restricted air space. Danita said BLM is still in the throes of finding out what's going on. She and Mark had also just found out about this. She has two WSAs, wild horses, byways, and hunting areas to consider. BLM will work with the Army to figure out how this works, but it will go through the U.S. Legislature. We're at the very beginnings of it, Danita said.

Keith said there were no details. Danita said BLM needs for people to ask, "How is this going to work?"

Talk to your representatives, said Bob. We all have an interest in this. Keith asked Don whether this would influence PILT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) funds the county receives. Don thought funds would continue to come to the county, although he was not sure how. The military makes a similar payment, he said. Discussion.

Public Comment Period

Bob opened the Public Comment Period at 11 a.m.

Timothy Menchego of Santa Ana Pueblo spoke first in his native tongue. Then in English he said, since the beginning of our time land has been important to Native Americans, and always will be sacred. It was here before us and will be here long after we are gone.

Concerning the Buffalo Tract, he said the people of Santa Ana Pueblo were in a good position to be stewards and good owners of that land. He knows there's congressional influence, and is looking for support for the pueblo to acquire that tract. From the Sandia Range to Santa Fe and the Jemez Mountains there is a wildlife corridor. Santa Ana Pueblo has a wildlife program, business diversity, and investments to achieve sustainability instead of relying on government. Pueblo officials have spoken time and time again to Congress But they don't want to listen, he said. So the pueblo looks for support, as members of the human race, to acquire this land.

Bob asked whether San Felipe Pueblo and Santa Ana were willing to divide this tract.

We are working together, Timothy said. It is sometimes hard work partnering with other tribes. Santa Ana continues to try to be progressive and proactive. For example, tribal members went in front of the New Mexico Game Board to acquire more pronghorn antelope. They have a full-blown Department of Natural Resources to protect that wildlife corridor.

Ethan asked whether it would be a consideration for the public to use the land if it was transferred to Santa Ana. Timothy said they would be willing to negotiate; and they look to work in collaboration with others and to build relationships.

Ethan said infrastructure going through that land supports a number of persons; and it was important to continue to have a good relationship. His company already supports agreements for infrastructure running through the pueblo. We know these are important lines for people living in the area, he said.

Robert Moquino responded to Timothy in his language. He suggested that Timothy speak of this to the Indian Pueblo Council of Governors.

No other members of the public asked to speak. The Public Comment Period was closed.

Resource Update (continued)Kinder Morgan

Mark said Kinder Morgan has a carbon dioxide (CO₂) field on the New Mexico/Arizona border and wants to transport CO₂ to sites where it can enhance oil recovery. Scoping meetings were held. There has not been a lot of communication between Kinder Morgan and private landowners. The line goes very close to Mountainair. Mark showed the area on a map. BLM is gathering alternatives, and will present a draft in the fall. They have had 100–200,000 comments, the majority concerning private property. Acoma Pueblo, Mountainair, Catron County, the Arizona and New Mexico Game Departments, and others, are on board with BLM. And they have spoken to Senators Heinrich and Udall, mostly concerning safety impacts.

Don Tripp asked what the requirements were for land remediation. Mark said it was up to private landowners, who have different issues from BLM. BLM, for example, has specific requirements for seeding disturbed areas. Don asked whether private landowners understand what they're taking on. Mark thought some had little experience and some had good experience. John Brenna said BLM thought landowners might have a better opportunity as a group, so had encouraged that. Danita thought there was a Mountainair cooperative agency. Don was concerned about residents of Catron County. We can't technically negotiate until we know where the pipeline is going, Mark said.

Robert Moquino said Kinder Morgan sat down with Acoma Pueblo, and they spoke about right of way and sacred sites. Mark said they are required to look at sacred sites and traditional cultural properties. The BLM lead archaeologist is conferring with Acoma on sacred sites. And they are all trying to determine what to do.

Danita said Kinder Morgan was very accommodating, and they are working on an agreement. She said this is Kinder Morgan's project and they need to sell it. Mark said it was BLM's mission to provide public uses of government land, so they could not turn down an application, and must go through the process. Discussion.

Keith asked what the BLM policy was for keeping resources sustainable through drought. Danita said each office comes up with plans because drought affects different lands differently. He wanted to know whether anything was written down. Mark asked him to define drought, because drought definition depends. Last year's drought was severe but this year we've had some rain, Mark said. However, no water is being put in the river to use for irrigation. With a good winter and dry summer, ranchers' crops might not grow, but other things go on. Keith said they could put numbers on grasses, trees, etc. and how our practices are sustainable. He wanted definitions and guidelines. He had been in a two-day meeting in Socorro talking about roads, but hadn't seen a drought policy. We need a policy, he emphasized. Mark said there was a drought policy for grazing. The trouble was that it might be wet on your place and dry in Quemado. Discussion.

If it's written down, give it to me Keith said. That is your industry's job, Mark replied. Keith said southern New Mexico ranchers don't trust the government. He wants our resources to be sustainable. John Brenna said we could discuss the roads because they're there. But how do we deal with the many aspects of drought

Keith said the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has programs to promote ranching, if ranchers do certain things. With incentives, you get action, he said. We could experiment with that.

Chip said if the RAC wanted to make a recommendation, they could. What are other constituents going to think if we give incentives to certain ranchers? How about the RV group? Under multiple-use, all users have equal standing. So we need to look at all aspects.

Lunch

Roundtable

What Should the RAC Be?

Danita reconvened the meeting and asked for feedback on what the RAC should be and do.

- Ethan's concern was that meetings were mostly informational. The time to make recommendations was minimized. He suggested gaining information between meetings.
- Bob agreed. Use technology, he said. Send us information so we're ready for discussion and can prepare questions. RAC members might go to meetings like the one recently where Mark was on TV.
- Juan agreed. Let us know and we'll come to meetings, he said. With proper notice he could add a voice and be helpful. Discussion of issues and how they might affect RAC members' constituents is important. He volunteered for the RAC because he has expertise that will help. Just call him if he can be of assistance.
- Danita said she wanted to make sure they stayed in touch both within and outside the RAC. She didn't want protocols to interfere. This is your RAC, she said, and right now BLM is here to provide information—which can be done ahead of time. The agenda for meetings should be set by the RAC.
- Bob said he sent an April 29 email to Chip when he saw cattle in a riparian area where he thought they should not have been. He also called Robert Moquino to find out whether those were pueblo cattle. Bob said he could take volunteers out, for example, to fix fences. We know you're short-staffed, he told Danita, so let us know what we can do.
- Ethan said it might be helpful to be on a listserv where BLM lets the RAC know what the issues are. He said setting the agenda required that RAC members be up to speed on issues BLM is facing. A monthly status report would help the RAC know BLMNM's direction. It's best to keep us more present on where you are on a particular issue and what you're thinking about it, he said. We don't know what information can be disseminated.
- Chip recommended using MicroSoft SharePoint. Chip will confirm that BLM staff could take part.
- Robert Moquino said that would work for him. He or a designee could then take information to his tribal council so they would all know about issues. Acoma Pueblo would be glad to help out however it can, he said. The pueblo has a natural resources office.
- Bob could find volunteers to undertake projects, and Robert Moquino agreed that he could too.

- Don said information was important. He gets questions from constituents. If there's a public meeting somewhere, for example—on where cable is being buried, he or his staff could attend.
- Juan said this would help RAC members pass information on to interested citizens.
- Recommendations for agendas should be sent to either Bob or Chip.
- Juan agreed that Bob could put together topics the RAC was interested in, and BLM staff could update them. Bob looks at issues other people have, for example, Elk Springs near Cuba. People want to know what's going on with public lands, he said.
- Keith added that the ranching community east of Socorro that he's part of likes to have information. BLM is their partner, and grazing permits are integral parts of their operations, so knowing their attitudes and approaches is essential.
- Bob asked about areas he had seen with lush grass, and Mark said those were Wilderness Study Areas.
- Chip said they are trying to get data mobile as well as people. She agreed that this is very similar to the situation in the 1950s. Chip said they have databases with drought information. Keith said that documentation would be very helpful. Ranchers want to know about potential for recovery.
- Ethan asked whether BLM has a list of tasks and issues underway, so the RAC could pick what interested them and the people they represent.
- Danita said there was no actual list, but she could meet with employees and supervisory staff to make a list of high priority items. Danita didn't want to inundate the RAC with information. She can provide the highest priorities, but wants the RAC to contact BLM when there are issues they're concerned about.
- Mark said some RAC members were very cognizant of their boundaries and some were not. The Field Offices (FOs) also have very different issues. Ethan thought current events for the FOs would be useful.
- Chip said the only time they hear from constituents is when they're really mad. So the RAC could help with issues people are interested in before they're angry. And Danita would find it helpful to know about those issues without waiting for a RAC meeting.
- Danita suggested going to <http://nmfireinfo.com> for fire information. She said there is information to be shared and not to be shared. They will discuss how to get information disseminated. She asked whether the RAC would like to meet outside Albuquerque, for example, in Socorro.
- Bob asked that they consider field trips to areas where there were issues. Mark suggested sites for RAC members to visit on the day before the next meeting.
- Juan also thought upcoming training information would be helpful.
- Keith said they were all welcome at his ranch. The RAC could have a meeting nearby that included public comment, and then go to someone's home.
- Bob is interested in getting people involved without incentives. His concerns are what permittees bring up. How can we get out there and talk with people about sustainable yields? Bob knows of family ranches across the state in great condition because they're being taken care of.
- Chip said there were also family ranches in really bad shape. We could use your recommendations.

- Bob asked how the RAC could work with BLM to get people to change the way they're operating. Can BLM shut them down?
- Mark said he's been in Socorro for 25 years and the range peoples' jobs change. The environmental assessment (EA) process was simple; but the EA workload that used to be three pages is now 20 pages. We're becoming bureaucrats, he said. The staff doesn't have time to build relationships and that's a problem. They don't have time to work things out.
- Bob asked what the RAC could do to help.
- Calvin said the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) means every single factor in the world has to be taken into consideration. Talk to congressmen and senators and let them know that once we go to scoping we're tied up. The silliest comment he ever got was whether BLM took into account how silica dust from gravel mining influenced the dentin of wild animals. No gravel mining is currently underway, he said, but by law they have to deal with those comments.
- Mark reiterated that staffing is an issue. He has range people working his front desk in Socorro. To be successful you've got to build trust on the ground, and lack of staff limits that ability.
- Bob said he is looking for a way for federal agencies, like BLM and USFS, to share plans and resources.
- John said the USFS has a different mission, and even its NEPA process is different. They help each other routinely but informally. Discussion.
- Chip said we are creating a new way of working to meet all these challenges.
- Danita said they're streamlining the NEPA process. She said a mobile work force is her current priority, and the RAC can support and be part of their new programs as a mobile work force. We're at maximum capacity now, she said. There's no fat left to trim. BLM has more land and less staff than ever, and puts \$83 billion per year into the economy.
- Keith said livestock adds a billion dollars to New Mexico, and a good portion of that is on BLM land.
- Bob said we're all here for a reason. We have a stake.
- Chris said we got into BLM because we love minerals or range or wildlife.
- Danita reiterated that when they move out of the building they're in now, they'll be establishing their work from the ground up. They can do better by listening to the RAC and whom they represent. Rio Puerco has urban interface and Socorro centers on range. We know what we need to do and will take steps on the wild horses. The RAC will hear about it.
- Danita will post their action plans on the move. RAC comments will be very helpful.
- Chris said for the Albuquerque FO to go mobile, everyone needs vehicles and mobile technology. Yet they've been given only \$70,000. They plan to respond that it can be done for X amount of dollars.

Agenda Items for Next RAC Meeting

- Updates:
 - On Cebolla Canyon
 - On transfer process
- Keith will come up with a proposal for how to deal with grazing sustainability in drought.
- Ethan is interested in protection of current infrastructure within the Buffalo Tract. Calvin said they couldn't give a definitive answer now; but this was currently under discussion within

BLM, and would be handed on when ready for public release. Discussion. Until the RMP is final, with signature, Danita said she couldn't do anything with it.

- Robert Moquino said a lot of reservations have checkerboard areas and he needs to sit down with BLM and maybe the USFS to talk about exchanges. It's hard to manage those small lots, he said, and some could be exchanged for lands with sacred sites.
- Chip mentioned that people think they're on BLM land and end up on pueblo land without meaning to.
- The proposed transfer with White Sands Missile Range is on the agenda.

Don wondered whether historic records show what the Socorro area looked like. He's seen some images that look like White Sands Missile Range. Mark spoke about areas north of Quemado that were nothing but blowout country. There are peaks and valleys that make it difficult for the agency. It's hard to catch the trends accurately. He would be glad to prepare a visual presentation.

Keith thought the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (<http://www.noaa.gov>) provided good data—going back to the 1930s by month for rain and temperature. NOAA's data show clearly that at a site 25 miles from Keith's ranch the trend line is actually increasing precipitation.

Adjourn

Motion

Michael Coleman moved and Bob Nordstrum seconded to adjourn at 3:05 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.