

DRAFT

**Bureau of Land Management
Albuquerque District Resource Advisory Council
Albuquerque BLM Office
September 17, 2015**

RAC Members Present

Keith Banks
James Clary
Mary Helen Clary
Michael Coleman
Ethan Giedraitis
Robert Moquino
Bob Nordstrum
Kristin Salisbury
Juan Vigil

RAC Member Absent

Don Tripp

Federal Representative

Danita Burns, BLM Albuquerque District Office

BLM Staff Present

Matthew Atencio, New Mexico State Office
Carlos Coontz, Socorro Field Office
Jackie Leyba, Rio Puerco Field Office
Angel Martinez, Rio Puerco Field Office
Mark Matthews, Socorro Field Office
Jennifer Merino, Socorro Field Office
Calvin Parson, Rio Puerco Field Office

Welcome & Introductions

Danita Burns called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m., and welcomed those present. She said the RAC provides advice to BLM management on issues of concern to the public. And the RAC helps BLM listen carefully. She announced that there was a quorum. RAC Chair Ethan Giedraitis took over the meeting. He said he appreciated everyone present and looked forward to hearing from public representatives.

Review/Discussion of April 17, 2015 Minutes

Mike Coleman commented that a good job was done with the minutes; and noted that changes had been made for clarification. In the discussion on page 6, last paragraph—New Mexico Bureau of Reclamation should be the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation’s Albuquerque office. And he planned, later in the meeting, to consider the statement on page 9 under the heading Sustainable Resource Effects, first paragraph, final sentence, “As the third most successful at bringing in funds, how can BLM continue to do that sustainably?” If BLM was so successful at fund raising, based on resources, he had a point to make. Mike asked for further comments or clarification. None were raised.

Motion

Bob Nordstrum moved and James Clary seconded to approve the April 17, 2015 minutes as amended. Motion unanimously approved.

Term Length/Membership and Designation

Danita said 10 members were currently on the RAC, with term limits of three years. She listed the dates each RAC member’s term expired. The terms of Ethan Giedraitis, James Clary and

Mary Helen Clary would expire September 28, 2015.

Several candidates were currently awaiting approval in BLM's Washington DC office. Once vetted, they would be informed. Juan added that members could be reappointed, but still must go through the full process. Danita warned that in two weeks—with those three members off the RAC, there would not be a quorum. So the RAC would not meet again until new members were completely vetted and onboard.

Resource Update

Rio Puerco

RMP Update

It was announced that John Brenna was on leave. He was represented by Calvin Parson, who introduced Angel Martinez. Angel explained that they were now in the last stages of the Resource Management Plan (RMP). He said comments from review by the Washington office totaled 700, mostly editorial for clarification, but some requiring reanalysis. Recreation aspects took a while because they were required to break down large recreation sites, for example, 74,000 acres, into smaller sites. And each zone had its own special recreation area, so staff had to write new manuals for those. This approach is brand new and Rio Puerco was the second to do it in the country, so they were guinea pigs, he said. A new manual was needed for Wild and Scenic Rivers. NMBLM recommended Blue Water Creek as a Wild and Scenic River, and four additional criteria were added. The solicitor's office had emailed Angel that morning asking for his PowerPoint presentation for review, which he sent that day to brief the Washington office directors. With Washington office approval, he would then be able to release the RMP. He said he had a contractor ready to edit it, with a 30-day deadline. Therefore there was no specific date for its release. But NMBLM is done, he said. The RMP grew quite a bit, from 1,200 to about 2,200 pages, much of which are appendices—like smaller RMPs within the RMP.

Kristin Salisbury asked how access and protection had changed as a result of breaking areas into smaller areas. Angel said access and protection were considered together, for example, with the Badlands, they designated access based on what they wanted to protect. With connected areas, they looked at combining routes for access. What they want to allow and what they want to protect coincides with access planning. In the Badlands, 74,000 acres have 2,700 miles of roads and trails. Kristin said she was interested in how people could get into those areas, on foot and otherwise. Angel said there are some areas with trails only. And others allow non-mechanized vehicles. For areas with past use by off-road vehicles, BLM worked with organizations and tribes to help determine access, and will continue to work with those groups.

Calvin said Angel had been the guiding light for this RMP.

Kasha-Katuwe/Tent Rocks National Monument Update

Jackie Leyba, Tent Rocks manager, reported. He said staff is working with Cochiti Pueblo to update the business plan provided in 2013. They are proposing a \$5 per person entrance charge. Numerous groups get in for free, for example, children under 16 and military veterans. Seniors enter free with their \$10 lifetime passes. Free days are also available, including Easter Sunday and Public Lands Day. The new business plan is in its first draft. The next draft will go through

management and then be available for public comment. Components of the earlier plan were incorporated. The monument is hosting around 80,000 visitors annually, so they are working on protection, including dispersing recreation. They have compiled visitor satisfaction data, showing a need for visitor services, including interpretive programs, and facilities.

Kristin asked about percentage of resources used for educational opportunities. Jackie said they have had 73 school groups on free educational tours; and are developing further education initiatives and intern programs. Education is huge for us, he said. They have worked with a teacher to plan their educational tours.

Kristin asked what it would take to hire new staff. He listed ways, and concluded that it is a money issue. He's pushing for grants, but the monument does not yet have enough to fully develop the education program.

Robert Moquino asked about road access. The road past the parking area to the overlook is unpaved. Robert referred to the 2011 Las Conchas fire and resulting erosion and flooding. BLM and Cochiti Pueblo are working closely with property owners to maintain the road to ensure access and safety, and they have a 5-year memorandum with owners for free access. They maintain several partnerships, including with Sandoval County for road maintenance, and Bureau of Indian Affairs for an easement. Flooding in the past almost took out the road, so they gained funds from FEMA to repair the road.

Keith Banks said fees were proposed on page 25 of the business plan, and he asked if they would charge for individuals. Jackie said it's been very complicated trying to figure out how to charge groups, so they are establishing a \$5 per person entrance fee. The pueblo is applying for a special recreation permit. Then they could include the \$5 entrance fee in charges no matter who brings in groups.

Jackie said they are working to collect fees electronically, and putting up a kiosk. All of this will make the process smoother. That revenue will help cover costs. They spent \$962,000 last year maintaining all structures and building further amenities. Only \$118,000 was brought in. There is a huge budget shortfall, and these entrance fees will help cover the cost. So many visitors get in free that their income will not be \$5 for each person coming in. Donations are acceptable.

Kristin asked about getting more kids outdoors. She thinks it is important to earmark funds for that. Ideally, children could have more organized opportunities to discover and learn without harming natural resources. Jackie said initial seed funding was received for an amphitheater where visitors could be educated then guided, and they could teach children to be respectful. They received science grants for pine beetle research, and could hire interns. But they are short-staffed. Kristin reiterated that she wanted funds earmarked for getting kids outdoors and educated.

Danita affirmed that the business plan they were considering was a draft. James asked Jackie to consider free entry for 100% disabled veterans. Jackie said there was free access for life for all individuals with disabilities. Jackie will be updating the RAC on veteran initiatives at their next meeting.

Ethan asked about Jackie's work with the pueblo. Jackie said BLM had recommended that the pueblo consider charging more for tours—to match the fees other organizations charge. He's working to inform them about pricing. Ethan asked what his next step would be. Jackie said to work on a Government Performance and Results Act survey, get the business plan reviewed and get it out for public comment.

Calvin said Jackie was doing a fantastic job. His title is lead park ranger but he's managing all this.

Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)

Jennifer Merino, Student Career Experience Program Outdoor Recreation Planner, gave a PowerPoint presentation with maps of the Rio Puerco Field Office territory WSAs. BLM is concerned over public inholding issues in lands designated as WSAs. Most of their WSAs are in Sandoval and Cibola counties. Jennifer went through the 11 WSAs individually.

- Cabezon WSA has no private inholdings, so no access issues.
- Canyons WSA has a road that is eroding, which complicates things because determination of the WSA depends on the road site. BLM will probably move the road upslope and create berms.
- Chain of Craters WSA has no private inholdings.
- Chamisa WSA has no private inholdings.
- El Malpais WSA has no private inholdings but there is a private chunk set between two WSAs.
- Empedrado WSA has inholdings but does not have access issues. The roads have been created by the public or by landholders, and are not official. Reasonable access of 1-2 miles is allowed. If it comes to wilderness designation they would need to determine what access least degrades the area, and make it official. Ethan asked for clarification on legal access. Could the term 'way' be used? Jennifer thought reasonable access was a better description. She said they weren't sure when the roads were established. That would be addressed when the transportation plan was underway—once the RMP is approved and established. Bob clarified where this WSA was. Keith asked why access might change. Jennifer said if private land were sold, it would have to have a legal access route. The owners would come to BLM to establish that. Keith said the bottom line is you can't keep people from getting to their property. He asked if anyone was trying to take any of these areas out of WSA status. None in this district. Danita said only Congress could decide whether WSAs become wilderness. And BLM has done everything it can to make it possible for Congress to make a decision. James asked the rationale for establishing a WSA. He knows of one in southern New Mexico that makes it difficult to get to public access land. Danita said they're looking at untrammeled, undeveloped, natural land with solitude, of at least 5,000 acres. They're here, she said. We just want a decision. She has heard nothing about movement in Congress to release WSAs.
- Ignacio Chavez WSA has no private inholdings.
- La Lena WSA has no private inholdings.
- Manzano WSA has no private inholdings.
- Ojito WSA has adjacent wilderness, so BLM hopes to have this WSA also designated as wilderness.

- Petaca Pinta WSA has a small private volcanic badlands inholding with no route.

Juan asked for copies of the maps showing the WSAs. Danita agreed to provide copies of the PowerPoint presentation to RAC members. She said wilderness.net also has maps of wilderness and wilderness study areas.

Socorro

Datil Well Update

Mark Matthews presented. He said the Socorro Field Office appreciated the RAC approval for a rate raise for the Datil Well recreation area. The plan had been underway for many years, and staff continued to perfect it.

Five-Year RMP Evaluation

Carlos Coontz spoke about a five-year RMP review that was officially completed last August. He said it was an internal process with input from the state office. The evaluation is like a picture or snapshot of all current issues and how they're influencing their RMP, he said. This will provide a reference or starting point for any future plan revisions or amendments.

El Paso Electric Arizona Interconnection Project

BLM is reviewing rights of way for El Paso Electric, working with the United States Forest Service and a number of entities—and taking their time to work in-depth. Mark said El Paso Electric built this line and agreed not to provide access to all towers. BLM works with them on a case-by-case basis, but access to towers is becoming more of an issue. El Paso Electric now wants a 14' right of way to every pole. BLM is doing an Environmental Assessment. It was scoped in January 2014. Keith asked whether they're proposing a corridor. Mark said they have an existing power line but don't have legal access to the poles. One of the road accesses they want would intersect the Continental Divide Trail.

Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs)

Mark handed out a list of WSAs in Socorro Field Office territory.

- There are 13 WSAs comprising nearly 300,000 BLM acres. They are Antelope, Continental Divide, Devil's Backbone, Devil's Reach, Eagle Peak, Horse Mountain, Jornada del Muerto, Mesita Blanca, Presilla, Sierra de las Canas, Sierra Ladrones, Stallion and Veranito.
- Mike asked if land exchanges were possible. Mark said there had been some exchanges. BLM works with fair market value for exchanges, and has been successful.
- How about permittees? The issue is that BLM must use non-mechanical techniques and not impair wilderness characteristics, so they're limited in what they can do. Often they can't go to the extent that permittees would like.
- What is reasonable access? Not a 14' road to a tower. But BLM is willing to do what can be done to resolve issues.
- Ethan said he was still working on the Roy Farr property access issue brought up at the last RAC meeting, since decisions about WSA's might never be made. Discussion.
- Mark's PowerPoint showed maps of WSAs in Socorro Field Office, and their inholdings. He discussed specific aspects of each one. Bringing equipment in to manage roads interferes with BLM's wilderness values, he explained. They send out crews to do hand work, but often that's a stopgap.

- Mark said all plans have sections about public access and rights of way, and there is public input, but individual situations don't always fall under the broader rule. Danita and Mark agreed that you couldn't apply a broad statement in all specific applications.

Public Comment Period

Ethan opened the public comment period at 11 a.m.

Richard Ulmer of Placitas spoke. He said he had applied for RAC membership and was very interested in the RMP. He wanted to share Placitas residents' concerns with the RAC. They would like to make sure that what they're talking about is best and reasonable use of a wonderful resource that the state and nation have.

Mr. Ulmer moved to Placitas in 2008, and found it to be one of the state's and the county's magnet assets to attract retirees. Retirees have become big business across the United States, he said. With baby boomers reaching retirement age there's an area of study referred to as 'pensionomics' that has to do with attracting retirees who bring in pensions and money—in many cases providing more economic benefit than companies with jobs. Mr. Ulmer said there's a multiplier effect—retirees hire people to help them—becoming job creation engines. In 2004-2007 Placitas' population grew to about 40% retirees. The real dollars they have pumped back into Sandoval County and the state are significant. Those retirees have already created close to 1,000 jobs. The bad news is that starting in 2008 not only was there an economic dip, but mining in the area increased. Within a four-mile radius there were five aggregate mining operations, four of which are among the 13 largest mines in the state. About 150 acres of disturbed area has increased to 450 acres. As a result, with New Mexico winds, people are questioning whether Placitas is where they want to be. An *Albuquerque Journal* article reported recently a 27% loss in property value in Placitas.

And Placitas real estate values are not bouncing back. Mr. Ulmer' concern with the BLM proposal is that a further 800+ acres of the Buffalo Tract will be available to lease for mining. That's even closer than several of the current mines. The county has a Placitas Area Plan for 1,200 additional residential developments. He thinks 30-40% of those residences could attract retirees and consequently create 1,000 jobs, but the mines are affecting sales. So the new homes will be bought by young families, consumers—bucket users not bucket fillers, he said. Placitas residents are concerned that New Mexico will lose a gemstone if BLM goes in the mining direction there.

In discussions with the New Mexico Environment Department they find that air quality work is done on a mine-by-mine basis, not on the cumulative effect of the currently active and potential mines. He brought in an air dispersion expert who concluded that these issues are not being addressed adequately. If BLM can add another mine and show there's no impact, that's one thing. But residents fear living there with another 800 acres of threat.

Mr. Ulmer said as a backdrop to all of this, water is being consumed by mining operations at a rate three times residential use. One mine has sucked 94 million gallons of water out. And 1,500 homes could be put in. He said it feels like we're standing in front of a railroad train coming

down the track at us. That's why BLM is getting a large number of letters from Placitas residents. "We're about to screw up one of the best parts of the state," he concluded.

James asked where they found the information that retirees came up with 1,000 jobs. He's a retiree, but he thinks pushing the economic vs. the environmental leaves them open for people to go after them. If people decide Placitas isn't good, they'll find another New Mexico place to live, he said. So concentrate on the environment and multi-use instead of producing jobs.

Mr. Ulmer said the New Mexico Economic Development Department came up with that argument. Placitas residents needed the governor on their side so used this ammunition. And clearly health concerns are important.

Concentrate on health and water use James said.

Mr. Ulmer asked, "Has BLM done any monitoring with regard to the existing level of particulates in that area?" New Mexico Department of Health has said particulates are killing twice the number of New Mexicans as the national average.

Angel said BLM doesn't monitor air quality. He said onsite decisions are made for specific projects to determine how best to manage that resource. There are about 18,000 acres open now in the Placitas area and BLM is taking all issues into consideration. The RMP draft proposed a 95% reduction of what they currently have. That is a huge step for BLM to take because, in accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act Section 102, they have to assure the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals as part of their planning effort. They have a federal mandate to use the land in the best national interest. They require numerous analyses before making decisions, so all those issues were taken into consideration in the RMP draft. They are not proposing any projects. They are simply leaving a certain number of acres open.

Mr. Ulmer said he understood but was concerned that mining in the area is detrimental. And if the 800 acres were opened to mining there would be real problems. Keith asked what they would consider a reasonable distance between a residence and a gravel outlet. Mr. Ulmer said he'd like to see mines at least five miles away. Mines in the area under discussion were getting closer to housing, Mr. Ulmer said. Keith asked whether he asked the air quality expert how far was recommended between homes and the mines. Mr. Ulmer said he didn't ask, but he said his home is about 50' away, and some houses are as far as 2-3 miles.

Angel said air quality was not based on distance but on impacts to the human environment. As urban interface creeps into what were rural areas, the state hasn't done enough to update rules on particulate matters. If BLM gets permits in that area, he said, they could look at the effect on human environment more extensively than the state would.

When Mr. Ulmer was finished, Ethan read a letter to the RAC from Timothy and Janet Byrd. The subject line read: Unresolved Comments to the Rio Puerco Management Plan. The letter stated that the RMP does not adequately consider impacts of gravel mining near residential areas.

Ethan closed the public comment period at 11:42 a.m.

RAC Goals

Field Trip Priorities

Juan began a discussion about field trip priorities—which had been raised at a previous meeting. He proposed Lorenzo Canyon, the unique petroglyph area north of Cuba, and other places that had come up during RAC meetings. If there were opportunities when BLM staff would be in those places, some RAC members would like to accompany them, if their presence would not interfere with work. He said he would like to put his feet on the ground and get a real acquaintance with what is happening. For example, the RAC visited the Buffalo Tract, and he would not have been so familiar with what's going on and with public concerns had he not been there.

Keith agreed, and suggested they take a tour in an area of concern, for example, going to a mine with Michael or on an educational visit with Kristin. They could address tribal interaction with BLM, or grazing or recreation. He would like to focus visits on an area. Danita responded that if the RAC as individuals or a group let her know what they'd like to see she could email them information about opportunities. RAC members agreed.

Ethan volunteered to give a tour of transmission station and lines through the Buffalo Tract. Danita said they would be in Socorro for the next RAC meeting so could do a trip there. She reviewed the list and asked for additions. They came up with mining, tribes, grazing, education, recreation, erosion, and archaeological sites. Kristin said she would be glad to have the RAC visit one of her programs and engage with the kids. Danita agreed to find opportunities for individuals and the RAC as a group. She will send notices of opportunities to all members. Bob said he would particularly like opportunities to be of help. Michael would be interested in the petrified forest and how they might help protect it.

James wanted staff to know RAC members were coming to be educated, not to try to supervise or judge. Staff was doing RAC members a favor by including them. We want to better understand how to do our jobs, he said.

James said he thought BLM public relations people could do a better job getting word to the public about positive things done for the people by the BLM. We just don't hear about that, he said—for example, Jennifer's presentation on the WSAs. He's lived in New Mexico for 35 years and never knew about this. Mark said they had to be careful about what they promote. As a result of an article in the *Albuquerque Tribune*, a rock outcrop in remote Catron County was mobbed for a while. Once an area is made public it's hard to protect it.

Danita said Tent Rocks, at less than 5,000 acres, has been the crown jewel of NMBLM. They are trying to disperse recreation. They are understaffed, and the communications team is so wrapped up in controversies that they don't always get to the crown jewels. They're planning to use social media more. That too is a double-edged sword. They need the staff to manage public interests.

Keith gave the example that White Sands National Monument opens twice a year to allow visitors to see the Trinity Site. Last spring there were cars stacked up for miles. James said he's aware of the good things BLM does but what you see in the media is negative. He reiterated that he'd like to see the public realize how effective and dedicated BLM managers are of the

resources they're assigned to protect. BLM doesn't get the positive recognition it's entitled to, he said.

Bob said when you think of doubling the population of Albuquerque or the county, what other sites are available? BLM might advertise some new areas where people can walk. Danita said once the RMP is out, they will be looking at 250,000 acres of dispersed areas and figuring out how to manage them. They will highlight areas and have staff, including law enforcement, there. Bob suggested a volunteer corps like campground guides.

Kristin said she backpacks a lot and thought partners could adopt areas, she would be happy to adopt Blue Water Creek. For supplementary help she thought organizations, even commercial outfitters, would certainly adopt certain areas.

Calvin will have his staff contact Kristin about her adoption proposal. Kristin said if BLM reaches out she guarantees they'll have results. Danita wanted to make sure they coordinated. The travel management plan would help with that. Stewardship of future land managers is vital, she thought. And it would be valuable to introduce them to BLM staff. Discussion. Kristin particularly recommended contacting Santa Fe Mountain Center. She thought it would be good for BLM staff to sit in on New Mexico Outdoor Coalition meetings. She said the coalition is a group of outdoor professionals, not formal enough to have a website. Juan asked whether someone would come from the coalition to address the RAC, and to meet BLM staff at their next meeting. Kristin thought they would.

Training Opportunities

Juan said he hoped RAC members would have further opportunities to join trainings as he had—where there is a larger issue about getting people in and out of public lands. He asked to be notified of possibilities. Danita asked what types of training RAC members might like. Juan said anything that helps him do his job better. Danita said she would make the RAC aware of opportunities, including some of the specialty training that her BLM staff takes.

Bob said it would be interesting to discover what is required for the Section 106 process and why it seems to take so long. Mark said he had a PowerPoint explaining the 106 process. Danita offered to have Cynthia Herhahn come to the next RAC meeting to explain the process. They could show issues they're having trouble with, what's going to be problematic and what's not. That would be best for a separate training that some individual RAC members might like to undertake.

Keith said in past discussions about cougar and deer, they considered juniper encroachment—which meant habitat decreases in the deer population. He has the machine to take out trees but they needed to talk about disturbing archaeological sites. Discussion.

Calvin said BLM archaeologists are very good at moving projects along while making those involved happy, and meeting requirements. Danita said BLM archaeologists have been used differently in recent times, so they can practically apply their knowledge on the ground. Calvin spoke about a certain area south of Cuba that Bob said had been donated by the Elk Foundation. Bob said there had been problems between hunters and ranchers so the Elk Foundation bought that land and retired the whole allotment.

Roundtable

Ethan wanted the RAC to review a draft letter to the Secretary of the Interior regarding Roy Farr's trouble with access to his land surrounded by the Continental Divide WSA, and get comments so it could be finalized and mailed. He distributed copies. He thanked Stephen Saletta and Judy Suiter for the letterhead design.

The letter resulted from phone call meetings and email. Ethan asked RAC members to read it again. He said they had learned more about WSAs that day and he wanted to make sure they were not contradicting WSA procedures. Ethan referred to one paragraph stating that the Pueblo of Acoma had concerns about tribal inholdings in lands where there was wilderness interest, because that might impact tribes' access to sacred sites.

Bob asked whether any of the New Mexico senators were interested in moving on the WSAs. Ethan thought there was talk that the Socorro RMP wording might hinder action on WSAs. Mark said he would follow up on that.

Kristin was in support of having a letter that stated their desire was to have action taken. She knows Senator Heinrich would be in favor of having more wilderness. But the point, she said, is to have Congress vote yea or nay so BLM can better manage those areas. Mark said there's no guarantee that NMBLM would have a role in the process. Danita said it's stuck in Congress because no one wants to make a decision on this controversial issue. Discussion.

Mark said it's political suicide. For example, if wilderness were declared along the Continental Divide Trail, hunters would have to hike 8-10 miles in and out of hunting areas. Kristin reiterated that whether wilderness is declared is not the issue. She doesn't think the RAC is well enough trained to state whether access should or should not be allowed.

Danita asked whether the rancher whose land it discussed had vetted this letter. Ethan said they spoke at the previous RAC meeting in Socorro. Danita said she would contact the rancher and find out if he agreed. Keith said part of the issue was that this man owns private land that he can only reach down this road, which is a different issue from 'all roads in WSAs.'

Keith asked about the three photos in the letter. One showed the issue, which Mark said had been a problem for many years. It rains in September and hunters use the roads, sometimes widening or rerouting them to avoid mud holes, he said. BLM has done a lot of work there. Keith thought they should clarify that these photos were examples from the area, not the same place referred to in the letter. They discussed how to describe the photos.

Bob asked whether they could haul in rock. Mark said they have done that. They had a recommended boundary when the WSA was established, but 30 years later they still don't have a wilderness bill and water is making changes. Mark said he'd water bar the road, and cut off access to unauthorized vehicles. Danita said BLM had to protect private landowners as well as potential wilderness.

Ethan made suggested changes to the letter and read it to the RAC. He said it would be sent out with all their names on it. Mr. Farr would be on the cc list.

RAC Organizational Preferences for Future Meetings

- Ethan said he hoped to rejoin the RAC in the future, and wanted feedback on general guidelines for how often to meet, and how to be notified. He thought meeting quarterly should be the minimum to get things done.
- Bob agreed that they should meet at least quarterly.
- Danita asked whether training and being in the field would suffice as further meetings. She will ask her managers whether upcoming training or trips planned would be appropriate for RAC members to join. Mark responded that it would be hard to coordinate day-to-day events with RAC members, but field trips were a good idea because they make issues real.
- Bob said he'd like to see an area with wild horses. He asked what it would take to get rid of the wild horse issue. Mark said it would never happen. Among other challenges, there are issues with determining whether horses are stray or wild. It's also very emotional. Calvin said for the Rio Puerco, taking RAC members out whenever they go out isn't feasible, but they can plan something. How does Bob answer when people ask him about horses in Placitas? There's controversy between New Mexico law and the federal Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. Danita will maintain BLM's work with the New Mexico Livestock Board. The issue is the emotional draw to this problem. Danita said Socorro has done a great job keeping wild horses away from people.
- As issues come up, Danita could mail information so RAC members don't learn solely from newspaper articles.
- Danita affirmed that they would attempt to hold RAC meetings quarterly and offer special events in Socorro and Rio Puerco.
- RAC members agreed that email was a good way to reach them.
- Danita said it is harder to provide paper reports, and much better to have staff available for reporting. Ethan invited BLM staff and RAC members to let others know about events and issues. He would like to have briefing papers. Danita said they needed to be careful about what is shared with the public. Ethan said conversations about issues could be added to the next RAC meeting agenda and discussed more formally with the public present.

Open Discussion

- Michael said the whole Colorado Gold King Mine toxic wastewater episode had all agencies coming up with lists of potential future disasters. Was this a fluke or will this be a continuing emergency? The problem forced them to look at places where abandoned mines might affect water. Michael said the biggest New Mexico one is the Questa molybdenum mine. They'll drill holes down into the adit to keep water below the level of the nearby Red River. It's being pumped to a water treatment plant in Questa that returns drinking level water into the river. They have a plan to balance the mineral level of water to be added to the river so it doesn't imbalance the river water. Chevron is paying for it. Further discussion. What happened with the Gold King will not happen there, Michael concluded.
- Michael referred to his comment that morning when he introduced the last meeting's minutes. He has been a career geologist and is in liaison with the New Mexico Mining Association. The Gold King spill brought forward public complaints that the mining companies don't pay the community for the problems they cause. Oil and gas and mining are the resources for BLM's income as one of the top three in the country, so he is gathering further information on that. There is not a direct royalty for mineral mines. Metal mines are the most expensive to develop. They can take 15 to 20 years to bring into production. Danita

said there is documentation she can provide for him. She thinks nothing beats solid scientific data. She will get information for him and any other RAC members interested.

- Bob said *High Country News* reported that the Four Corners area is the hottest spot for methane coming out of oil and gas and coal production.
- Robert asked about fracking. Michael said the process for fracking often involves going from vertical to horizontal wells, and he thinks the methodology makes it unlikely they will affect aquifers. There is an open pipe into the zone they're mining, but the void around the pipe is filled with cement, or clay/foam. They survey the holes, and cement should fill the void. It's been going on for about 50 years. Danita asked about scientific data. Michael said they surveyed with down-hole cameras. Metal does rust and corrode but cement doesn't. They'd know if there was water leakage.
- Mary Helen asked about areas of leakage where gas is burning. Michael said he didn't know about that. Calvin said some of those things have been taking place for several years, and the companies have gone in and sealed them.
- Michael said miners have been looking at mining garnets by fracking because when the pressure is removed voids are created.
- Danita said we have to figure out what is causing changes. Tectonic changes are occurring and we don't know why. Keith said there's a theory that fracking can be blamed for more earthquakes in Oklahoma. Michael said he could believe some of that. Robert thought the Albuquerque fault would bring about a rift up or down but not an opening. Michael said he was surprised there weren't more earthquakes here. Calvin thought releasing energy was better in small quakes than building to a large one
- Michael asked about the proposed merger between Arizona and New Mexico BLM regions. Danita said they were looking at ways to have a stronger team but that plan wasn't working. Both states need to hire people. Congress would be the final decision maker, and there was no support for a merger. NMBLM already includes Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.
- Socorro has four staff vacancies. Danita said they hoped to employ more support people. They are the lowest paid but have the most to do, so she wants to reorganize and discover how to make those positions more satisfying.
- Carlos said the state RAC lead would like to approve minutes faster. Danita said it's hard to approve minutes without a forum. And they have to be approved before being posted online. Approval by phone or email has not been sanctioned.

Adjournment

Motion

James Clary moved and Kristin Salisbury seconded to adjourn the meeting at 3:34 p.m.
Motion unanimously approved.