

Summary Minutes
Farmington District Resource Advisory Council Meeting
October 17 & 18, 2012
Farmington, New Mexico

October 17 Attendees:

RAC Members Present:

Keith Ashmore (Category 3)
Anthony Benson (Category 3)
Kellie Campbell (Category 1)
Betty Haagenstad (Category 2)
Barbara Kiipper (Category 2)
Myke Lane (Category 1)
Kathy McKim (Category 3)
Evert Oldham (Category 2)
Mario Ulibarri (Category 1)

BLM Staff Present:

Dave Evans, FD
Maureen Joe, FFO
Bill Papich, FFO
Gary Torres, FFO
Janelle Alleman, FFO

Invited Guests

Jim Cooper (Cliff Hangers)
Phillip Collard (for Ricky
Jenkins)
Darryl Dunlap

Visitors Present:

Ann Watson
Allen Elmore
Harvey Haagenstad
Allen Christy
George Chandler
Aron Countryman
Grant Glover
Debbie Coburn (p.m. only)
Laura Hooper (p.m. only)

Tammy Faust
Kristin Langenfeld, Scribe

October 17 Morning Session (8:00-11:25 a.m.)

RAC Chair Kathy McKim called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

There being no substantive changes, RAC member Barbara Kiipper motioned to accept the minutes of the previous meeting; second by RAC member Evert Oldham. Motion passed unanimously.

Evert Oldham recommended two amendments to the published agenda: 1) retain the spot allotted for Thursday update on fire prevention (10:25-11:25 a.m.) as “open” to provide flexibility for the RAC; 2) defer the Thursday 1:50-2:20 presentation on fracking to another meeting. Motion to amend the agenda as recommended made by Barbara Kiipper; second by Keith Ashmore. Motion passed unanimously.

RAC, BLM, and support personnel introduced themselves to the invited guests and the public.

Dave Evans, Farmington District Manager, welcomed the attendees, noting that this meeting is different in that the RAC has engaged the public and interest groups who will present information, rather than the BLM presenting information to the RAC. This input, he said, will help the BLM understand issues.

Bill Papich provided some housekeeping issues.

Dave Evans discussed safety.

Betty Haagenstad pointed out that breaking the RAC into districts allows the group to focus on issues; now four RACs for state rather than one as in the past.

Update on proposed amendment to FFO Resource Management Plan to revise BLM management of the Glade Run Recreation Area— Janelle Alleman

- The amendment is in the development phase
- Four alternatives are being considered
- The internal consistency review of the draft EA assessment is set for November
- Minimum 30-day review
- May be ready for public as early as December depending on internal comments
- The amendment is on schedule given the 18-24-month time frame determined during scoping
- The EA will address route selections, closures, long-term management (fees, etc.), and monitoring (trails, reclamation)
- Scoping report is available on the BLM website

Discussion

Myke Lane: Have any studies been initiated to evaluate affected resources? Industry, for example, has to do cultural and environmental studies for projects as small as well pads. Janelle answered that there is no baseline data from this area. Torres noted that a land use plan does not include investigations at that level.

Betty Haagenstad: What percentage impact to cultural sites is expected? There was no answer to this question but it led the group to a discussion of cultural resources.

Gary Torres answered in the affirmative to the question of whether there was a National Environmental Act (NEPA) analysis and watershed analysis for the amendment.

Evert Oldham noted that some of the questions being asked could only be answered by the BLM from memory on the spot. He stated that to ensure that RAC members are as informed as possible the group needed to see the EA as soon as possible.

Motion Concerning the Glade Run Recreation Plan

Motion made by Evert Oldham to formally request of the BLM the opportunity for the RAC to be briefed on the Glade Run Recreation Plan amendment EA immediately following internal review, and opportunity for input in consultation or whatever form is legally permissible. Second by Myke Lane. Discussion concerning the motion followed and included process, general practices, difficulty picking out the differences between the 1995 plan and the current amendment, whether or not a preferred alternative would be included in the EA, and why the RAC should request to see the EA before it goes public. Following discussion, a vote was taken. Motion carried, 6 yea and 2 nay.

Following a short break and before moving on to the next agenda item, Dave Evans noted that the Glade Run plan revision as contained in the amendment allows consideration of the City of Farmington's RMPP, and the desire of the NM Game and Fish Department to expand the Jackson Lake Management area, both of which postdate the 1995 plan.

Concerns about Future BLM Management of the Glade Run Recreation Area

Invited off-highway vehicle (OHV) interest groups, including dirt bikers, jeepers/rock crawlers, ATVers, and the New Mexico OHV Association, provided comments, concerns, and recommendations to the RAC.

Phillip Collard (on behalf of Ricky Jenkins) stated that as a life-long resident and a member of the original committee that made recommendations for the use and management of the Glade, he wants the Glade to remain available for use by children and seeks comprehensive management guidelines. He noted that the committee has gone over and over the same questions through the years.

Jim Cooper, representing Cliff Hangers, stated that the issues in the Glade are the same as any urban interface in the West. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. He provided his perspective on the 15-year history of issues in the Glade and how BLM management has handled them. He pointed out that consensus is getting a decision that all special interests can live with; no one will get all that they want. Trail sharing is one solution (e.g., Moab, Boise). An accurate and current inventory of all routes is necessary. Rather than piecemeal, a full plan should be put on the ground all at one time. Asking the public to put the plan together (that is, asking them to restrict their own activities) is not a good idea.

Darryl Dunlap, NMOHVA, stated that a lot of people in the U.S. are involved with OHV—nationwide, 18.6 percent; New Mexico 25.6 percent (maybe higher in San Juan County). There are some 3,800 acres of open area and designated trails. Promote shared use (over 33 percent of OHVs also mountain bike). Educate the public: signage and kiosks are necessary before you can police; many people don't know which trails they are allowed on. Inventory and recognize the trails, then sign them every 300 feet. The cure for the 5 percent is to catch and prosecute. His recommendation is to allow the OHV open area to expand. Promote and protect the resource.

Allen Christy, San Juan Trail Riders (single-track motorized users), indicated that he just might be the best resource for historical information on the Glade. After asking how many RAC members have boots-on-the-ground experience in the Glade, he provided a synopsis of uses of the area from the early 1960s to present: sheepherding, hunting (some on horseback), motorcycles, oil and gas, dune buggies, shooting, OHV, bicycling, rock crawling, trash dumping, and illegal woodcutting. His overall assessment as a single-track user is that the landscape has changed much over the years, uses are much the same; biggest impact has possibly been oil and gas. The area has been multiuse for the last 50 years; it is the focus of interest that changes. He noted that prescriptive antidotes, such as signage, routing, and maps, have all been in past resource management plans (RMPs).

Allen Elmore representing Cliff Hangers, a 4-wheel drive club that has been in existence since 1976 and which helps manage trails, noted that etiquette, education, and respect for the land are important concepts. Listening to earlier comments, he felt that kiosks are a good idea, as is signage—trail use is often not apparent now. This is especially important for folks who come from other areas to use the Glade. Trash is also a big concern. Overall, he likes the current setup and is not in favor of restrictions.

A few comments were made regarding safety, the status of GPS data on identified trails, the need for mapping, and the lack of significant documented user conflict. Chairman McKim ended the presentation portion of the agenda topic by noting that the ORV community was not currently represented on the RAC and the meeting moved into a discussion period.

Discussion

Betty Haagenstad first noted that many land users don't recognize cultural sites. She then addressed a three-part question to Darryl Dunlap: 1. In a totally open OHV area and with increasing use, how is unregulated use sustainable, especially if that area is enlarged? 2. What are the possibilities for an OHV group that monitors and reports? 3. What about noise pollution? Dunlap answered that noise pollution is addressed in the 2003 plan. Noise is already there, and while OHV adds to noise, it is held to decibel limits determined by the BLM. Concerning sustainability, specifically erosion, it is not a big problem. OHVs stick to ridgelines, washes, and valleys. Erosion will happen in the open area. The open area can keep the OHVs from using other areas. Foster land stewardship. Educate the people who use the land.

Mario Ulibarri asked both Darryl Dunlap and Allen Christy for their opinion regarding what the Glade needs. Both answered that signage was critical.

Myke Lane: Perhaps there are more conflicts than noted because the reports don't make it to the BLM? He then asked if there can be solutions to sustainability without use permits. Should permits be required? A response noted that permitting would have to be of a different type because recreational use is "permanent" use and there is no need to restore an area to previous condition. What mechanisms could be put in place so that visitors would know a permit was required? Allen Christy noted that permits might be a good idea if the funds generated were used to support trails.

Kellie Campbell affirmed that she approved of permits. Pay to play is ok.

Barbara Kiipper recommended that ORVers band together as user groups to promote trail sharing, educate users and support the BLM through volunteerism (clean up, signing).

Keith Ashmore asked what the ORVers thought about restricted entrances for recreation around the Glade. Darryl Dunlap, Allen Christy, and Allen Elmore were in consensus that it might be ok, but they would need more information on how it would be carried out. How do you put a lock on public land?

Kathy McKim: Has one of the groups put together GPS information for all of the trails? She was told that Cliff Hangers was doing that. The open area is about 10 percent complete. All trails in the limited use area have been GPS'd to an accuracy of 3 m. She asked Gary Torres if this information would be used to make public maps. He said yes, the BLM is happy to take data from everyone who has it.

Evert Oldham said that he was here to see that motorized vehicle destruction is stopped. He believes that the erosion caused by motorized vehicles will dwarf anything seen as a result of overgrazing. He stated that the only solutions will come from the community so it is necessary to determine community values; define economic opportunity; educate local policymakers. What is recommended to capture the knowledge and put it in an accessible location? The BLM needs to be ready to use funds that OHV offers through user fees. A point of contention can be avoided if a use fee is charged to everyone, not just certain groups; however, it must be acknowledged that not all uses are equal.

The group continued the discussion of fees until the lunch break.

October 17 Afternoon Session (12:45-4:30 p.m.)

Glade Run Recreation Area Discussion (continued from morning session)

Dave Evans informed the group that with regard to the open area, Jim Copeland, FFO Archaeologist, told him that cultural resource surveys have been done of rock crawling areas and some of the routes. More comprehensive surveys or sample surveys will be done. While one vehicle might not hurt an archaeological site, multiple vehicles can bisect sites. It could cost between \$250,000 and \$400,000 to survey the Glade.

Myke Lane made the following observations based on his examination of the scoping packet: the term “sustainable” is not mentioned once in the purpose section; the term “balance” (as in “must balance all uses”) is not mentioned in the purpose section either; it would be helpful for the RAC to have access to the land use documents that are referenced as guidance; he had some concerns about the emphasis of the 2003 RMPP on OHV as recreational use relative to other types of recreation. Dave Evans noted that the RMPP reflects the major uses at the time it was produced. There followed some additional discussion of change in recreational use over time.

Keith Ashmore asked if the EA will address the half-mile proximity to residence. He said he would like statements on established routes discussed. In response to his question about an OHV area at Farmington Lake, the BLM answered that the land status at the lake is NM Game and Fish and there has been no formal request to BLM.

Picking up on Myke Lane’s morning session comments on whether or not the BLM is hearing about conflicts in use, Keith asked if the RAC could get reports on the citations given in the Glade? BLM noted that often a complaint results in a “contact” and the results of the contact are reported; not all contacts result in citations.

Motion to Request Report on Citations

Keith Ashmore made a motion to formally request that the BLM provide the RAC with reports of citations given and contacts. Myke Lane seconded. There followed a discussion of what the group wants to do with this information, including determining whether there are trends and, if so, what those trends look like. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on BLM Planning for Proposed Wild Horse Roundup—Jeff Tafoya

Jeff presented a PowerPoint that provided an overview of the Jicarilla Wild Horse Management Environmental Assessment that covered the geographic location of the management area, estimated herd size, and EA process, with an emphasis on purpose and need, action alternatives, scoping, alternatives, issues and concerns. The PowerPoint was part of a handout packet that included a number of the comments received during scoping. The information contained in the PowerPoint and handout is not reproduced here.

Jeff noted that the EA will be posted next week.

In answer to a question, the group was told that 95 horses likely have homes, leaving 188 that would need fertility control, which can be given in doses effective for 12 or 22 months. When given control, there are births in the second and third year, often at the wrong time of year.

Prior to additional discussion, the group viewed a short video on the Challis, Idaho wild horse gather. Following the video, Jeff noted that there are seven potential capture sites being

considered by the BLM, none north of Hwy 64. He stated that for the past six years the forest service has used bait gathering only and they are not keeping up with the birth rate.

Discussion

Myke Lane felt that the analysis of the situation is incomplete until the full life cycle is considered. Does the analysis include the impact of drought conditions on the adoption rate of wild horses? The government spends \$40 million annually on sanctuaries for gathered, unadopted horses. Is this dollar amount considered in the analysis?

Barbara Kiipper: Where does castration of stallions come into fertility control? If balance is where the herd manages itself, would castration help reach balance? Stallions are estimated to represent 60 percent of the herd now and the issue is maintaining genetic diversity and healthy reproduction while reducing herd size.

Barbara Kiipper: Can ranchers and other groups come together for a gather that is more humane and less expensive than helicopter gathering? What other alternatives have been looked at? BLM noted that the risks to human safety are too great in some of the alternative methods, in no small part because of the terrain.

The question was raised as to the risks to horses when going through well pads and across pipelines. This led to a short discussion of the stress to animals being gathered when helicopters are used. Jeff noted that it comes down to the skill of the pilot, and the contractor requirements are high.

Is there the opportunity for the community to come together and work on a long-term plan for herd management? The BLM responded that interested persons can create a focus group to comment on the EA.

Given that financial and helicopter resources may be usurped if BLM determines there is a greater need elsewhere, Mario Ulibarri asked at what point does the herd population become critical? This point was discussed for a short time.

Evert Oldham stated that there is a big problem in the West with wild horses; specifically there is an immediate crisis for habitat, and focus groups need to develop a long-term management plan. The interest groups need to come together, take responsibility, and work to implement programs.

Kathy McKim asked if the BLM and Forest Service were working separately with regard to herd management. The answer is yes and no. For example, BLM does not know if there are gather sites on the forest, and BLM will act when ready even if the Forest Service is not, and vice versa.

Motion to Amend Agenda

Following the 3 p.m. break, a motion was made and seconded to amend the agenda, to use the “open period” scheduled for 4:00-4:15 as a time open to visitors to make comments. The group discussed the motion, and was advised that the RAC meeting was not an open forum. There is a protocol and agenda that must be followed. The motion was withdrawn, but the RAC members noted that they would like to see more opportunities for public comment in future meetings. A sign-in sheet with comments limited to 5 minutes was suggested.

Motion to Request Draft EAs

A motion was made and seconded to request that the RAC request BLM provide them with draft EAs as soon as they are available. After discussion concerning the EA process and requirements, the motion was withdrawn.

Discussion of Wild Horse Roundup (continued)

Mario Ulibarri asked how long it is following a roundup before another action is needed? Jeff answered that without birth control it would be 4 to 5 years before the herd exceeded AML. The goal is not to bring the helicopter back for a long time, but to have a sustainable population that can be adopted out while habitat recovers. There followed a discussion of various costs, summarized as follows:

- Helicopter roundup of 1-20 horses = \$1,300/horse
- Helicopter roundup of >20 horses = \$1,000/horse
- \$11/day food and maintenance/horse
- Bait trapping of 1-20 horses = \$925/horse
- Bait trapping of >20 horses = \$720/horse

The costs of 1-year and 22-month birth control were discussed and it was noted that a 36-month dose is in development. Dart delivery of birth control is an alternative to capture prior to delivery. Some data on the long-term effects of the drug are available from the USGS.

It was noted that the number of horses on the Jicarilla Reservation is uncertain. Concern is that this unknown could mean the herd in question is actually larger than currently thought.

When the discussion with Jeff Tafoya ended, the question was raised of what the BLM wants from the RAC with regard to the wild horse issue. Dave Evans said he would prefer a written response to the EA that could then be entered into the record. While there will not be a meeting of the RAC prior to the end of the response period, the group can work toward a consensus letter through their website.

General Comments

Referring to the Glade, Myke Lane said that he hopes that the EA will have a thorough analysis of storm water. If 3,800 acres can be disturbed, the EA should address how storm water will be monitored/managed.

With regard to erosion and mitigation: how can trails be moved once they have been signed and are on maps? Even if erosion is monitored, how are you going to do anything about it? These questions generated some discussion of “context and intensity,” what constitutes significant impact, can past use be a predictor of future use, and what will happen as population increases and tourism expands?

Betty Haagenstad asked about a back-up plan in the event that damage to the open area, for example, is greater than anticipated? Perhaps another EA to mitigate damage would be required.

Kellie Campbell asked if there are any marked trails in washes in the Glade. The answer is that the current plan allows travel in all wash bottoms, so they are not marked. A follow-up question was what does the Corps of Engineers have to do with the project since technically you are in a waterway? BLM responded that the Corps originally allowed use of the wash bottoms and they didn't have a problem with this use. Their comments will be solicited for this EA.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Evert Oldham and seconded by Mario Ulibarri. The session ended at 4:30 p.m.

October 18 Attendees:

RAC Members Present:

Keith Ashmore (Category 3)
Kellie Campbell (Category 1)
Betty Haagenstad (Category 2)
Barbara Kiipper (Category 2)
Myke Lane (Category 1)
Kathy McKim (Category 3)
Evert Oldham (Category 2)
Mario Ulibarri (Category 1)

BLM Staff Present:

Bill Papich, FFO
John Bailey, TFO
Valerie Williams, TFO
Gary Torres, FFO
Merrill Dicks, TFO (a.m. only)
Jeff Tafoya, FFO (p.m. only)
Stan Dykes, FFO (p.m. only)
Maureen Joe, FFO (p.m. only)

Visitors Present:

Martha Brown
Harvey Haagenstad
Ana Watson
George Chandler
Clay Robinson
Grant Glover
Debbie Coburn (p.m. only)
Laura Hooper (p.m. only)
Emma Deyo (p.m. only)
Kristin Langenfeld, Scribe

October 18 Morning Session (8:00-11:30 a.m.)

RAC Chair Kathy McKim called the meeting to order 8:09 a.m.

Tao Transportation Plan Update—John Bailey

- TFO received a grant to augment a contract to GPS roads and trails.
- The inventory of Palacio and Sombrillo roads and trails is complete (86,000 ac).
- Data from contractor is expected by Thanksgiving.
- Most of the fieldwork was done on ATVs.
- A survey of cultural sites and documentation of traditional cultural properties is being done to address Ohkay Owingeh concerns about some Palacio OHVA land.
- TFO is getting ready for public scoping on the Palacio and Sombrillo Transportation plan and members of the RAC who want to be involved are asked to contact John.
- When the raw data is in, it will be used to: 1) create planning maps; 2) provide a basis for interaction with focus groups composed of motorized users, ranchers, etc.; 3) compare BLM maps with existing user-created maps. TFO will continue to meet with the Chimayo Conservation Core leaders.
- Transportation plan will also look at paleontological sites in the Sombrillo area and to educate riders to be aware and report sites if they find them.
- Four to six miles of hiking trails in the Santa Cruz Lake area have been rebuilt and it is hope that this becomes the hub for a network of nonmotorized trails.
- Within the next month the RAC should receive the schedule of public meetings for the plan to be held in Dixon, Chimayo, and possibly Truchas.

Discussion

Betty Haagenstad noted that there is an active land grant group in Ojo Caliente. John acknowledged that it could be a focus group. Other land grant groups are involved in the process. Sometimes there is anger due to a perceived failure to engage land grant groups and TFO is sensitive to this.

Betty Haagenstad asked if there was a plan to fence/post cultural sites in the Santa Cruz Lake area, specifically La Caja Pueblo, a melted adobe site. At one time there were plans to develop

the pueblo rather than the lake, but at the request of former TFO archaeologist Paul Williams, that focus was changed. Right now there is nothing in the budget to interpret the site.

Keith Ashmore asked about climbing opportunities in TFO. John noted that rock climbing is not a big recreational sport in TFO; Diablo Canyon and Rio Grande Gorge are climbing areas.

Myke Lane asked what criteria will be used to reconcile differences in accuracy between the contractor-produced and user-produced trail maps? John responded that some ground truthing. In a related question, Myke asked what criteria were given to the contractor to differentiate between “new” and commonly used tracks? John said that there was no inventory of single-pass tracks, although the contractor was asked to note them; however, criteria for motorcycle tracks differed from that for ATVs.

Kellie Campbell requested that once set, the RAC be given the dates of public meetings.

Evert Oldham expressed concern over OHV trails that are a violation of good environmental practice. John responded that riders do want hill climb opportunities, so it is likely that some will be designated. TFO has been conveying to users that they are moving from a user-created to a planned network. The plan is to reroute as necessary so that routes lie more gracefully on the land. One idea is to use a passive-control technique from Idaho that avoids signage when attempting to move users through riparian areas as quickly as possible.

Tao Plateau Propose Management Plan Update—John Bailey

- Taos Plateau is the first area in which TFO tried transportation planning and worked mainly with land owners.
- The planned goal was for one-half mile of road for each square mile of county; it ended up as 1 or 2 miles per square mile of county, in large part because of fractured land ownership.
- Open routes marked with arrows did not work, so the area was resigned with entry signs. TFO wants to create a user map as well. Elk and cattle scratching the sign poles also played into design.
- The road for Hwy 285 into the Taos Plateau (ca. 15 miles) is being rebuilt and TFO is looking to the county to redo one of their roads. These are the only points of entry into the plateau, which is now designated an ACEC.
- Is snowmobile use regulated? John answered that they need to stay on existing roads, and that use in some areas is prohibited in winter. Kathy McKim followed up, asking if there were designated skiddo (snowmobile) routes because sometimes roads disappear under snow. John answered that the damage mostly occurs where wildlife interfaces with snowmobiles. Acquiring more land is a long-term goal to defragment wildlife habitat.
- In 2012 a 675-acre total mosaic burned as a result of “let-burn” fires. The results were good and the hope is for another let-burn. The goal is 3,000 acres of prescribed burn and thinning on additional acreage. In response to a question from Anthony Benson, John noted that there is a plan for small-scale brush management.
- Three or four guzzlers will be put in this year.
- Myke Lane noted that while there appears to be a good effort to educate local users, how are nonlocals (hunters, etc.) educated? John answered that the limited access to Taos Plateau allows one-on-one contact at the key entry points. TFO hopes to also use a website. It was suggested that a mobile link be added to the back of printed maps, and also to work with Game and Fish.

- Anthony Benson asked if the proposed national conservation area will have an impact on the Taos Plateau. John answered that they did not expect a lot of additional on-the-ground action, but rather more viewing, photography, and hiking.
- Concerning habitat fragmentation, Myke Lane asked if the issue was road density or traffic density. John answered that it is definitely the number and type of vehicles. TFO needs a better way to monitor the types of use and target traffic.
- Gary Torres noted that a major advantage of controlled access, such as on Taos Plateau, is that it presents an excellent opportunity to educate users. FFO is doing a new map with optical character recognition that can be scanned by smart phone to provide information and education. A problem with this on Taos Plateau is the cell phone coverage is poor.

Old Spanish Trail

Merrill Dicks, TFO archaeologist, was called away on an emergency so Dave Evans presented in his place. A handout on the trail accompanied the presentation.

- The trail traverses a large area in New Mexico, with sections in both the TFO and FFO. Planning is complicated by the fact that the trail crosses a variety of land statuses.
- The 2012 TFO resource management plan addresses the Old Spanish Trail.
- The National Park Service is lead agency, and BLM is cooperating in a management plan for the trail system.
- A 1-mile corridor encompassing the trail and comprising 21,280 ac of leasable, locatable, and salable mineral lands has been closed or withdrawn in the TFO. Moreover, neither wind nor solar development will occur, thus eliminating potential visual impacts from those sources.
- The trail is currently segmented because of land status. Efforts to develop MOUs regarding the trail with private landowners may be best led by groups like the Old Spanish Trail Association, as these groups often have better luck than the government with gaining access.
- A portion of the Old Spanish Trail in FFO goes through the north end of the Glade. It was a one-time event and has no physical impression on the ground in that area (on Forest Service land on Caracas Mesa there are physical remnants of the trail).
- Segmentation of the trail does not have to be a serious problem. Many historic trails in the U.S. are segmented, and many are used this way because only pieces can be accessed. For example, guidebooks allow you to follow a paved road and then get off for a segment to get the opportunity to experience the trail. One opportunity for the FFO Glade segment would be to recreate 1850's vegetation.
- The Glade MP will be the first time the Old Spanish Trail is dealt with in FFO.
- The topic of the Old Spanish Trail will be revisited at the next RAC meeting in Taos.

Discussion

RAC members spent some time discussing why private landowners might not want to allow access and how to overcome the problem; there were also some questions concerning the route of the trail.

Keith Ashmore noted that kiosks would provide an interpretive opportunity.

Betty Haagenstad noted that one of the uses of Old Spanish Trail was for slave trade.

In response to a question by Kathy McKim concerning how “protrail” the local municipalities and San Juan County are, Dale Wirth answered that they are just becoming aware of its existence. Kathy suggested that if these entities can be brought on board during the planning process they may represent an asset.

Evert Oldham asked about non-European trails, given that it is important to be comprehensive in interpretation.

It was noted that some signage of the Old Spanish Trail has begun in TFO, such as where it passes through ACECs and special management areas (SMAs).

TFO Noxious and Invasive Weeds Management Plan—Valerie Williams

- Valerie presented a PowerPoint on the TFO program to develop a native vegetative community resistant to weeds while providing multiple uses. The presentation covered implementation (salt cedar, Russian olive, and Siberian elm removal and treatment), monitoring, data, and the planning documents relevant to the project in the Orilla Verde Recreation Area (OVRA). The information contained in the PowerPoint is not reproduced here.
- Talks regarding the ORVA began in 2003; 2006 was the first implementation, which consisted of cut stump treatment and removal of biomass.
- The work in ORVA provided TFO the opportunity to educate the public about weeds and their impact on the watershed.
- Monitoring following treatment is key to a successful program.
- Beavers do a lot of work, whether or not treatment has been performed in an area.
- Anthony Benson asked about the salt cedar leaf beetle. Valerie answered it is not in TFO. It is killing salt cedar in FFO.
- Evert Oldham asked if monitoring and treatment would end at some point. Valerie answered not likely, it is an ongoing process, and help from the public is important.
- Because TFO does not have massive weed patches, the 2011 Treatment Plan allows response to relatively small areas of 25 acres or less.
- Work has taken place along the Rio Grande and Santa Fe Rivers and is planned for the Canadian River and Rio Chama (NEPA taking place now).
- Anthony Benson noted that the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) does a lot of work and is ready to work with the BLM. Does TFO monitoring include water quality and quantity measurements? Valerie answered that yes, quality is monitored. The area in question is small (ca. 80 acres); water quantity won't show in monitoring.
- A University of Arizona study shows that unless native species are planted following eradication, losses due to erosion can offset gains.
- In answer to a question concerning what determines a “weed,” Valerie referenced the state noxious weed list and guidance in the planning documents.
- The RAC discussed the question of “what do you want to restore to?” Also discussed was the Restore New Mexico Program and a mulching program near Ojo Caliente.

TFO Rangeland Restoration and Erosion Control—Valerie Williams

Valerie presented a PowerPoint on the TFO program using landscape restoration as a method to reduce erosion. The presentation covered methodologies, the percentage/acreage of treatment by county and by target (pinyon-juniper, sagebrush) and by type (shaving, herbicide application,

prescribed fire, and discing), monitoring, erosion control structures (dirt tanks, diversion dams, drainage reconfiguration, and road modification). The information contained in the PowerPoint is not reproduced here.

Valerie noted that sagebrush and pinyon-juniper are both valued communities, but when there is a lack of fire they can become monocultures that limit wildlife habitat.

Treatments are to improve habitat and are applied in a mosaic—there are no straight edges in a treated area.

Anthony Benson noted that while mowing works well, it is not among the methodologies that BLM shows. Mowing takes time but is not very expensive.

Often more than one treatment type is used per acre.

Range readiness monitoring is important to determine when grazing can commence in a treated area.

Water ponds in dirt tanks, sediments drop out when drainage is reconfigured at recreations sites and when diversion dams and other structures slow water traversing downhill.

Myke Lane asked if there was funding for “desedimentation” projects? Dave answered yes, and that some of those projects don’t require maintenance; they maintain sinuosity on their own.

Anthony Benson said that there is a trend toward slowing water down rather than damming it up.

RA Website—Evert Oldham

Evert led an informational discussion on the status of the RAC website (www.blmrac.com). He noted that it will be accessible to the public once tweaks have been completed. He ran through the tabs and requested input from members. Once complete, there will be secure pages where the RAC can work individually and as a group. He noted that if there are to be forums for each topic for interaction with the public, then each forum will need a moderator. He asked the group how they would like the public to participate. The group discussed how to respond to questions/comments from the public. Should response come from the entire group? Should there be a disclaimer that these conversations are not formal on-record? Several other items concerning the website were also discussed.

October 18 Afternoon Session (12:40-4:25 p.m.)

Dave Evans addressed the group regarding their desire to see EAs prior to release to the public (see discussion in October 17 afternoon notes). The solicitor’s opinion was that it would be prejudicial to the general public because the RAC is not a special status group under NEPA.

Dave said as a result of that opinion, the RAC will receive EAs at the same time as the general public. Myke Lane asked if the 30-day comment period applies to the RAC. Dave answered yes, it does.

FFO Range Restoration and Erosion Control—Jeff Tafoya

Jeff presented a PowerPoint on FFO range improvements and the Restore New Mexico initiative. The presentation covered the goal of the initiative, the partners (public, private, and nonprofit groups), specific projects (Ojo Encino spike treatment, Largo Canyon Russian olive treatment/removal, Valdez wetlands construction), mechanical treatment types (thinning, seeding, mowing, plowing, mulching), the FFO fire program, projects to reduce habitat fragmentation (e.g., reclamation of unnecessary roads), and summarized Restore New Mexico

accomplishments in acres treated over the past 8 years. The information contained in the PowerPoint is not reproduced here.

- Jeff noted that lands in multiple use are best at mid-succession stage, rather than late succession.
- Treatments should result in 85 percent kill of target species.
- Work is done with contractors
- Sediment fences not only keep sediment out of waterways but also rebuild banks.
- Jeff discussed the salt cedar leaf beetle, which is present in FFO and killing trees.
- Mowing represents a mechanical treatment that reduces brush competition with grasses.
- Cheatgrass has been a problem in that it is fire loving, coming in when an area is burned. There are new chemical treatment options.

FFO Noxious and Invasive Weed Program—Stan Dykes

- FFO has just started work on halogeton, a nonnative plant poisonous to cattle and sheep.
- Musk is a problem biennial that like riparian environments.
- Scotch thistle is another biennial that thrives in riparian areas but also does well in uplands.
- Canada thistle is a perennial found in riparian environments and elsewhere. Herbicide is almost the only way to deal with it.
- Perennial knapweed has extensive roots like Canada thistle and spreads by rhizomes. It is best treated in late fall.
- Spotted knapweed is becoming a more serious problem in FFO.
- In dealing with these noxious and invasive weeds, spraying at the appropriate time and treating the whole problem are critical.
- FFO is working with the San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District (SJSWCD) and oil and gas industry. SJSWCD runs the program because that entity has more flexibility than the BLM.
- A successful program is based on inventory (find the problems) and posttreatment monitoring via GPS data and track logs. From this data maps can be constructed and problems can be shown.
- To date, ConocoPhillips, Devon, and XTO have opted in to the program, which focuses on noxious weed control. It does not apply to bare ground weed control, because bare ground is not a natural resource concern, only a safety concern. Nuisance weeds are not treated.

Discussion

The group discussed how oil and gas producers can get information on contractors who work for the program; how responsibility for performance is transferred to the contractor, and how cost-sharing for weed control on roads used by several companies can be implemented.

Anthony Benson asked how FFO deals with health concern effects voiced by persons opposed to chemical use. Stan answered that is not an issue in San Juan County.

Illegal Dumping Initiative—Bill Papich

- Illegal dumping on public lands in San Juan County has been a long-term problem that has had any number of attempted solutions over the years. In the 1990s there was a “trash

force;” CUPID cleanup; and starting about 2000, industry picked up large items for four years.

- This is a new initiative. At the most recent meeting the BLM, San Juan County, New Mexico Environmental Department, New Mexico Land Office, and the cities of Aztec, Bloomfield, and Farmington came together.
- To date some NEPA work has been done—there is an EA that allows work but it is imperative to watch out for hazardous materials and other things that law enforcement wants to see. Infrastructure is being put into place (GPS locations of dumps, etc.).
- BLM has contributed \$50,000 to the initiative that will go through the New Mexico Association of Counties and back to San Juan County.
- BLM will act as the clearinghouse for location and categorization of waste.

Discussion

With regard to the involvement of law enforcement, Kellie Campbell noted that the Rural Crimes Initiative has this phone number (505-632-EYES) to use for reporting.

Kellie also stated that hazardous material does exist in the illegal dumps and that there are maps from CUPID that could be compared to the maps being created now.

Dave Evans noted that San Juan County does want to prosecute illegal dumping.

Keith Ashmore said that Velo de Animas worked with CUPID in the past but has not done so for sometime; perhaps that is because there doesn’t seem to be any light at the end of the tunnel.

With regard to illegal dumping in the Glade, Keith suggested that if access was restricted to certain points, then potential dumpers would know that the area is being watched. Perhaps volunteers will also come back to clean up.

Betty Haagenstad said that when you rely on volunteers and there is the danger of hazardous waste, a liability issue may come up.

BLM will reach out to industry eventually because the problem is so large. Once a site has been cleared by law enforcement and haz mat, then the public can be assigned to monitor as appropriate.

Public Comment Period—3:00-3:30 p.m.

Laura Harper spoke regarding wild horses in the Jicarilla Joint Management Area. She stated that the herd has grown because there is only one contractor gathering by bait and trap. As an alternative action she recommended training an additional four or five contractors to use bait and trap, as this is a balanced approach.

Debbie Coburn of Four Corners Equine Rescue said that she was in attendance yesterday for the discussion of the wild horse gather. She is opposed to using Alternative A, helicopter gather, because of the history of injuries to and deaths of horses. She prefers Alternative B: bait, trap and sterilization. She said that Four Corners Equine Rescue would help in any way possible. She is here for the welfare of the horses and doesn’t want them to become scapegoats. She asked for a balanced approach.

Keith Ashmore asked about Alternative B, the bait, trap, and sterilize. Laura Harper answered it is important to organize in advance. She has observed bait and trap. She suggested that when infrared and laser technology are employed (and used by four or five contractors) they can work over a longer period of time and deal with fewer horses at a time.

Gary Torres asked Laura to explain the bait and trap process as she had seen it. She responded that the horses are gentled into a trailer, taken in groups of ten, and evaluated to determine the most adoptable.

Keith Ashmore asked how long does this process take? Jeff Tafoya answered that there have been seven years of bait and trap contracting, with approximately 60 horses taken per year. It can be done either by taking the trap to the bait or the bait to the trap. The trapper watches with infrared and uses sensors on the trail. The trap is remotely closed when the desired number of horses are inside.

With five contractors working, each taking 60 horses a season, you could gather 300 horses a year.

Betty Haagenstad asked for the price comparison between helicopter gather and bait and trap. Jeff answered that there are only estimates. Bait and trap is cheaper per horse, but takes longer.

Evert Oldham reminded those making comments that the EA has not been released yet. It is important that you register your comments for official impact. You need to have standing per NEPA.

Betty Haagenstad noted that her perception of the presentation yesterday was that things were good with helicopter contractors. The information from today's public comment suggests otherwise. Jeff Tafoya responded that the GAO website has a daily update when gathers are in progress.

Mario Ulibarri pointed out that bait and trap works once. Myke Lane followed up by asking if there was data on capturing horses more than once.

Betty Haagenstad asked why the BLM was leaning toward helicopter gather. Jeff said that the estimate of approximately \$775 per horse was just for the bait and trap. There are additional costs for time that, in his opinion, is money.

Debbie Coburn: Once the horse is captured, aren't the costs the same, regardless of the technique?

Fracking—Myke Lane

Myke began his presentation by showing a short YouTube video entitled “Hydraulic Fracturing” and which was posted in February 2012 and can be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YemKzEPugpk#!

The video was followed by a pdf slide presentation entitled “Fact Versus Fiction of the Technical Aspects of Hydraulic Fracturing.” Presentation topics included general information on hydraulic fracturing (how the process works, what a typical equipment layout looks like, historical and general information); why we do it (maximize recovery, bypass near-wellbore permeability loss); conventional vs. unconventional reservoirs (easy vs. hard to develop); materials used (slickwater systems, fracturing fluid components, water uses/sources, proppant types); vertical vs. horizontal completions; wellbore construction and integrity (surface hole, surface casing cement, steel surface casing, production casing cement, steel production casing, production tubing); monitoring (seismic equipment for frackmapping).

- Hydraulic fracturing is a process that has been used for more than 60 years for the extraction of oil and natural gas from underground shale formations.

- Traditionally, fresh water was used for fracking; now, produced water from Fruitland coal is often used. This water is stored. Some chemicals, however, don't perform well with saline water.
- Reverse osmosis could be used on the water, but would the cost be prohibitive?
- Water, sand, and specific chemicals (0.5 percent) work to crack rock by putting more pressure down the hole than is holding the rock together.
- Produced water is injected into permitted disposal wells.
- Sand and artificial or ceramic proppant hold the cracks in the rock open.

Discussion

Keith Ashmore asked about pushing produced water back down hole as a method of disposal. Myke replied that some injection wells were production wells, but this is rare. Most disposal wells are new wells.

Keith Ashmore asked if the leftover water was ever potable. Myke answered that one of the biggest challenges for making water reusable is that you get into the area of water rights. Therefore, it is treated as waste.

With regard to wellbore casing: good cement casing is necessary to ensure good bonding, which protects the aquifer. This is critical. Myke suggested it is more important to regulate this aspect than what is in the frac fluid.

Myke noted that due to time constraints he had hurried through the presentation but that the topic can be put on the RAC website with additional information. The group can also have a discussion about risk.

Discussion of Next RAC Meeting

The group chose to have the next meeting in Farmington because winter weather will likely be worse in Taos.

In response to the question of whether the RAC would like a field trip with the next meeting, Evert responded that it should be one germane to business.

By January the Wild Horse Gather and Glade EAs will have had public comments.

The group decided to set the next meeting date via email.

Myke noted to Dave and Gary that the sooner the RAC knows what needs to be discussed at the next meeting, the better.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Mario Ulibarri and seconded by Kellie Campbell. The session ended at 4:25 p.m.