

**LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
INFORMATIONAL MEETING
LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO
8 DECEMBER 2015**

8:30 AM: Tony Popp – Calls meeting to order. He welcomed and introduced the council members.

9:35 AM: Tony Popp – Reviewed meeting agenda. Minutes from previous meeting not approved due to lack of a quorum.

9:40 AM: Bill Childress - He provided opening remarks and updates on the following:

1. Southland Transmission Line Project – The decision has been published and is out to the public.
2. The Baylor Canyon/Dripping Springs Road Project is approved. Dona Ana County will pave the remaining 2 miles of Dripping Springs Road and improve gravel on Baylor Canyon portion of the road.
3. Tri-County Plan – Contractor to perform analysis on the Tri-County Plan and scoping for lands with wilderness characteristics.
4. Wyoming Reservoir Team – Updated on foreseeable use scenarios and study resources to develop alternatives to flood mineral leasing.
5. Staffing – Provided update on the Organ Mountain Monument and the Prehistoric Trackways.

Q. Howard Bartoo – He asked about the safety and security of the BLM Las Cruces District Office for public meetings.

A. Bill Childress – He responded that when the office renovation is complete, the front entrance will be secured with a barrier wall with key card access. New security cameras have been installed and there will be more installed. Security has also been beefed up at all the BLM sites and facilities. Law enforcement rangers have increased patrol in these areas. He also said law enforcement rangers are assigned to this office, and he can have one sit in at future meetings, if it makes the council feel safer.

0850 – Bill Childress gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Copper Flat Copper Mine Project. He stated that on December 4, 2015 a 45-day comment period began. The EIS was published and released to public this same date. The 45-day comment period will end on January 19, 2016.

0910 – Bill Childress completed the presentation and opened the floor for questions.

Q. H. Bartoo – He asked about the timeline for project approval.

A. B. Childress – He answered that he anticipates it could be a year for the final EIS. He said that if anyone had further questions to contact Leighandra Keeven, the Las Cruces District Office Geologist.

0915 – Jennifer Montoya gave a PowerPoint presentation on the final Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Prehistoric Trackways National Monument.

Q. Tony Popp – Concerning target shooting in the area of the Prehistoric Trackways, he asked if it was difficult to get target shooting banned.

A. B. Childress – Replied that the BLM did receive some protests. A protest analysis was performed and the decision was made to close the area to target shooting. He stated that an appeal of the decision may be possible.

Q. T. Popp – What steps is the BLM taking to provide other areas for target shooting?

A. He stated that the BLM is willing to work with local counties to provide areas for target shooters, adding that there is already a target shooting range, the Butterfield Range, in Las Cruces.

Q. Randy Gray – Was the shooting area a regulated site?

A. B. Childress – He answered, no. It was a traditional open site, used for decades.

0935 – BREAK

0945 – Evelyn Treiman gave a PowerPoint presentation on lands with wilderness characteristics and provided information on the process of determination.

Q. T. Popp – Regarding establishing a wilderness area, he asked if a non-wilderness inventory road could be closed off?

A. B. Childress – He responded, stating that it would not be managed as a wilderness area. Any road that is currently used and maintained, and claimed must be obtained through a FLPMA right-of-way.

C. Michael Quintana – Commented that as a rancher, we try to minimize travel on roads, to minimize impact and help maintain them. Some roads are rock and lava, which are good for moving heavy equipment without much maintenance. We try to use lighter trucks and ATVs. They are well used, but invasive work is minimized.

Q. M. Quintana – He asked if FLPMA is going to be the basis for how you look at the roads?

A. B. Childress – He answered that our manuals and regulations give us the guideline on how we assess and inventory roads.

C. B. Childress – He commented that if a road or an area has been determined to have wilderness characteristics, there are a variety of actions that can be taken to manage the area and its uses. We are responsible for maintaining our inventory, and roads are part of it.

C. T. Popp – Just because it has wilderness characteristics, doesn't mean it will be designated as wilderness.

C. R. Gray – This does not limit access to state land with vehicles.

C. M. Quintana – It is vital for the rancher to have access to state land.

Q. K. Keeton – Asked if we are looking at recreational use, as well as in areas with wilderness characteristics.

A. E. Treiman – Answered yes, we are looking at dispersed recreation. This is not a travel management issue.

C. B. Childress – Commented that the inventory is the baseline BLM uses for planning and decision making.

Q. Nathan Small – Do you make a record of people you encounter in the field?

A. E. Treiman – Replied no, I don't record if and when I see persons in the area. However, I do take notice. I look more at use of the roads. That tells me more about how many people are there or have been there.

Q. Marcia Whitney – Asked is it a road, if it is a two-track?

A. E. Treiman – Responded, it has to be contracted, maintained, and used. Otherwise, it is considered a primitive route.

Q. M. Quintana – Asked how many acres within the 250,000 acres of the updated inventory is state land?

A. E. Treiman – Answered that is not counted in the acreage. We do not know. There could be state land within the areas.

10:25 - End of Evelyn Treiman's presentation.

10:30 – Lane Hauser gave a PowerPoint presentation on Restore New Mexico.

Q. T. Popp – Asked that within 700,000 acres of a potential restoration area, does it cover all of the area you want to treat?

A. L. Hauser – He answered no, the number of acres is balanced with money and resources.

Q. R. Gray – Asked what is the vision in 50 years and how will you prevent the continued encroachment of creosote.

A. L. Hauser – He replied that the initial vision was to use more fire, but with the drier climate, we don't have the terrain continuity to carry fire across areas.

C. B. Childress – Stated that we are following up with fire to enhance an area we have already treated.

C. M. Quintana – The Restore New Mexico initiative has been great. I can't say enough about how good it has been for New Mexico.

Q. M. Quintana – Asked how much of Restore New Mexico treated land has been state land.

A. B. Childress – Answered that he estimates that one-quarter of the treated land has been state land.

Q. N. Small – Concerning the West Potrillos, he asked is it the only treated area that contains a wilderness study area?

A. L. Hauser – Answered yes, in the West Potrillos and the Aden Lava Flow.

C. R. Gray – He complimented Lane Hauser on the success of the Restore New Mexico project. He noted there should be a book on it to be shared with the rest of the nation.

C. L. Hauser – He stated that other states have tried to model it with much success. A big issue was money and preparation.

10:55 – End of Presentation.

11:00 – Juan Gamon gave a PowerPoint update on Grazing Renewals.

Q. T. Popp – He asked if NEPA was required before 1999.

A. J. Gamon – He responded there was a process before 1999, where NEPA was then required.

C. B. Childress – He commented that the courts reinforced the need to have a NEPA assessment on each allotment.

Q. R. Gray – Asked if when a permit for 10 years is issued -- is there any monitoring for compliance?

A. J. Gamon – He replied that if there are terms and conditions in place, there is a compliance that has to be met.

C. B. Childress – He stated that the BLM performs range supervision and some monitoring in relation to EQUIP and Restore New Mexico. We are looking at other ways to get monitoring done, i.e., with assistance from New Mexico State University and other agencies.

C. Gregg Bettmann – He commented that we (BLM) conduct range health assessments also.

11:15 – End of Presentation.

11:20 – Tony Popp raised the discussion of the following future topics:

1. Organ Mountain Desert Peaks
2. A field trip for the Organ Mountain Desert Peaks
3. Email any question, issues, or topics that were raised at today's meeting to Bill Childress.
4. Provide public with the difference between a wilderness study area and lands with wilderness characteristics.
5. Solar projects – Solar enterprise zones and the cost of wind versus solar.

11:30 – Bill Childress introduced the new BLM Las Cruces District Public Affairs Officer, Deborah Stevens, to the RAC.

NEXT MEETING – A possibly meeting and tour will be conducted at the end of January, 2016, with a tentative start time of 0900. Deborah will send out a Doodle Calendar invite to check the RAC member's availability.

11:35 – Tony Popp opened the meeting for public comment. No members of the public addressed the RAC.

12:00 – Tony Popp adjourned the meeting.