

**BLM LAS CRUCES DISTRICT
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
INFORMATIONAL MEETING
LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO
28 JANUARY 2016**

9:00 AM: Tony Popp – Calls meeting to order. He welcomed and introduced the council members.

9:05 AM: Tony Popp – Reviewed meeting agenda. Introduced council members:

Howard Bartoo
Lynn Ellins
Randy Gray
Kim Keeton-Pettit
Maxine Levy
Bill Childress

9:10 AM: Bill Childress - He provided opening remarks and updates on the following:

1. Tri-County Plan – Work is continuing on draft for Supplemental EIS and comment analysis on draft and scoping comments are being performed.
2. Prehistoric Trackways – Record of Decision has been released to the public. The BLM did not receive any appeals. The Record of Decision is in full effect.
3. Projects –
 - a. Maintenance/Infrastructure improvement with Border Patrol.
 - b. Establish roads (50 miles) Right-of –Way, along international border.
4. Hildalgo City – No work progress on the four (4) sites in Hildalgo City
5. Planning Process – The BLM is working with the military to avoid encroachment issues around installations.
6. Federal Land Application Permit –
 - a. Construction underway to pave Dripping Springs 2 mile segment. It is scheduled to be completed by April 1, 2016.
 - b. The Baylor Canyon 2-mile segment will be improved with a gravel surface. It is scheduled to be completed by late summer.

7. The proposed Federal Highways Project- Soledad Canyon Road will repave the road and improve the drainage. It will be paved up to the gate into BLM land. The project not expected to begin until 2017.

8. South Road/Upton – This is the road leading to the Spaceport. EA is being performed to grade the road with gravel and possibly pave the road in the future.

9. Restore New Mexico – Review underway for potential applications to conduct restoration efforts.

10. Permit Renewals – Completing up to 80 permits by the end of FY 2016.

11. New Mexico Copper – Released draft EIS. There were a variety of opinions and perspectives. There was a lot of support and some concerns. We are still receiving comments. The comment period has been extended 45 days, ending on April 4, 2016.

12. Freeport-McMoRan, Chino, and Cobre Mines – Mining plans have been offered. Bonds must be posted. At that time, a mining plan of operation will be then be in place.

13. Sun Zia Transmission Project – It is currently in a holding pattern. The BLM NM has signed the Record of Decision. BLM Arizona is looking at a variety of options.

14. Southland Project – The final EIS has been published. A decision will be made in April or May 2016.

15. AIP – El Paso Electric has submitted an application to reemploy existing roads to replace poles.

Q. R. Gray – Where are the Army Corps of Engineers removing old bombs?

A. J. Montoya – Near Copper Flats outside of Hillsboro.

A. B. Childress – He stated that it was an old bombing range. There are several WWII ranges in the BLM Las Cruces District. We have asked them to leave the rings and the exploded ordinance, for historical purposes, in place for the public to view. The project will take 3 to 5 years to complete.

Q. J. Cornell – Asked if there were any bombing sites within the monument?

A. B. Childress – He answered that yes, there were. They will be taken care of as the plan is management plans are developed.

Q. J. Cornell – Asked why they chose the Copper Flat area first?

A. B. Childress – He replied that it was scoped first and it is easier to access.

Q. T. Popp – Asked why there were no appeals on the Record of Decision on the Prehistoric Trackways Monument?

A. B. Childress – He answered that he didn't expect any.

0930 – B. Childress completed the update.

Q. K. Keeton-Pettitt – Asked if there is no appeal, what is the process for improving the Prehistoric Trackways?

A. B. Childress - He answered that we need to get funding to put everything in place. Our budget has not been posted, so we don't know what our 2016 funding will be for the Prehistoric Trackways at this point. It will take some time to implement these projects.

Q. K. Keeton-Pettitt – Asked how partnerships, with user groups and clubs, can help with developed with these projects?

A. B. Childress – We encourage and invite local user groups to help. We are very open to that.

Q. H. Bartoo – Have you had any protests on the Spaceport road?

A. B. Childress – We are in the comment period. We don't think a public meeting is required. We have not issued a decision at this time. After a decision is issued, there will be an appeal period.

Q. H. Bartoo – He stated that the City of Truth or Consequences and Elephant Butte voted to support the copper mine. He asked how this vote affected the BLM's decision?

A. B. Childress - He answered that their vote has an influence, but the vote is weighed along with the same other comments offered by the public.

Q. J. Cornell – Asked how much of the Spaceport is in Dona Ana County?

A. B. Childress – He replied the majority of the Spaceport is in Sierra County.

Q. J. Cornell – Asked who is funding the Spaceport?

A. B. Childress – Sierra County and Dona Ana County is funding it.

C. L. Ellins – Commented that if there is a meeting on the Spaceport, most residents of the counties would not support it.

C. B. Childress – He asked Deborah Stevens to provide an update on the RAC board membership.

C. D. Stevens – She stated that for new members, their 3-year term had begun. Outgoing members can reapply. She suggested that if anyone knows someone who could be a good candidate for the board, invite them to participate. She also stated that

Lynn Ellins' term ends December 31st 2016. It will be necessary to hold elections for the Chair and the Vice-chair in April, 2016. She stated that she will send news releases to RAC members as they come out.

C. T. Popp – Stated that the RAC may want to have an orientation for new members.

C. B. Childress – He commented that he agreed that it would be a good idea. The orientation could be conducted before or after the next meeting in April.

Q. T. Popp – He asked, if there were any other procedural items to address? There were none.

0945 – BREAK

1000 – MEETING RECONVENED

PRESENTATION – Bill Childress gave a presentation on the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, the Prehistoric Trackways Monument, and the makeup of the BLM Las Cruces District land area.

Q. T. Popp – He wanted confirmation that the cooperating agencies were not private organizations.

A. B. Childress – He replied that is correct. However, he stated, that the BLM will communicate with non-cooperating agencies.

Q. T. Popp – Asked if there are questions during the protest period, how are they resolved?

A. B. Childress – He responded that issues can be addressed and if necessary, do additional analysis. However, you can't wait until the end of the process. The issues have to be addressed in the draft phase.

C. J. Montoya – She commented that the protest period is the time where outside groups can address issues or errors in the decision. Protest issues go to the BLM Director.

Q. L. Ellins – Asked who is the appellate body? Who would the appeal go to adjudicate?

A. T. Phillips – Answered that appeals go to the DOI's – Interior Board of Land Appeals.

A. B. Childress – Said that if necessary, it could go to District Court, the 10th District Court of Appeals, and possibly, to the Supreme Court. He further stated that we need to develop good descriptions of our resources and objects and values for the National Monument. We have a good idea what they are, and they will be part of the resource management plan.

Q. T. Popp – Asked if he could be given an example?

A. B. Childress – He stated that old adobe buildings, archaic resources, petroglyphs, or social trails that are prehistoric in nature.

Q. T. Popp – Asked what an object is and what is the difference between a resource and an object?

A. J. Montoya – Replied that they are all considered the same, paleo, geological, ecological, prehistoric, and historic.

Q. L. Ellins – Asked what is the value?

A. B. Childress – Answered that it depends on the area and habitat. It is very broad in nature and scope.

Q. R. Gray – Stated that with the Tri-County, the Monument was designated. He asked that when the BLM produces an RMP, do you consider the Resource Objects and Values (ROVs)?

A. B. Childress – Replied that we don't use those terms. All of the decisions we will make address how those activities will affect the ROVs.

Q. R. Gray – Asked if we are looking at a long period before the Monument is fully actualized?

Q. K. Keeton-Pettitt – Asked when a plan is created, will all four sites be managed the same?

A. B. Childress – (Answering both questions): The plan is in place and is being implemented. The plan will address actions for all four sites according to one standard.

Q. K. Keeton-Pettitt – Any change to the Wilderness Study Area (WSA) has to come through Congress?

A. B. Childress – Yes, that is correct.

Q. T. Popp – Asked if it would be easier on the District, if we managed the sites the same as a WSA. Would it make the planning more difficult?

A. B. Childress – Replied, No. It would not be more difficult.

Q. L. Ellins – Has or will these remote areas be eyeballed or inventoried?

A. B. Childress – He answered yes. In time, the entire monument area will be inventoried. We will enlist the NMSU to engage and assist us. We also have 2 student conservation associates to go out and learn about our resources and to do some of our ROV inventory work as well. It is a huge task.

1030 – PRESENTATION COMPLETED

1035 – PRESENTATION

Doug Haywood and Treaver Ashby gave a presentation on the Afton Solar Energy Zone Plan and Project.

C. J. Montoya – Commented on the desire to develop the Afton area. She stated that all the solar energy zones are going through the process of mitigating impact on the environment.

Q. R. Gray – Asked if this area is specifically for solar. Are there any wind projects?

A. B. Childress – He responded it is specifically solar. This area does not accept applications for wind. A permit will not be issued for wind in a solar energy zone.

Q. T. Popp – Asked if there will be a minimal bid for solar projects?

A. J. Montoya – Yes, it is a competitive bidding process.

Q. H. Bartoo – Asked if regarding Las Cruces, as the city grows, is the growth and land availability a consideration?

A. B. Childress – He answered, yes.

Q. L. Ellins – Asked what is the market value of the land?

A. T. Ashby – He responded saying fair market value is based on an appraisal for the interested use of the land. Once they look at potential impacts, they look at a prorated value to set the compensation and mitigation amounts.

C/Q. T. Popp – Stated that he assumed this is all leased land used by ranchers. There will be no cattle? What happens to the cattle?

A. D. Haywood – Replied that there are six (6) allotments and the ranchers will have to be compensated or an alternative plan will be implemented.

A. B. Childress – Stated that the land would not be available for development.

1110 – PRESENTATION COMPLETED

1115 – FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

C. T. Popp – Opened the floor for future meeting topics.

C. R. Gray- Said that this would be a good area for a future field trip to see how this area was chosen. Also, it would be good to get an update on the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument at each meeting.

C. H. Bartoo – Suggested a visit to Doña Ana Mountains (field trip).

Q. L. Ellins – Asked what the political ramifications for BLM on the issue of grazing rights and fees? Especially in light of what happened in Nevada and what is happening in Oregon.

A. B. Childress – Responded that the issues occurring in Oregon does not affect us here. It does not mean that it may not in the future.

Q. R. Gray – Asked what the government is doing to help the public understand the purpose of public lands?

A. B. Childress – Replied that each time we speak to the public we educate and explain what public lands are and how they can be used. We also work with local users to build awareness for public lands.

Q. M. Levy – Asked where in the Peña Blanca area do you involve the local indigenous people?

A. B. Childress – Answered that the BLM does that through the planning process and we consult with each tribe and the culture representative for the State of New Mexico.

NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED – 5 April, 2016 (Tentative)

11:30 – Tony Popp moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was accepted and the meeting was adjourned.

1130 AM – MEETING ADJOURNED

AUDIENCE/PUBLIC:

Ben Gabriel – Friends of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument

Kenton Martin – El Paso Electric Company

Mike and Lisa Herring – Land Owners

Wayne Zatkalik – Retired Citizen

Nathan Small – Las Cruces Citizen

Leticia Lister – BLM Las Cruces

Lane Hauser – BLM Las Cruces

Don McClure – BLM Las Cruces

Tom Phillips – BLM Las Cruces

Jennifer Montoya – BLM Las Cruces