

AGENDA
Las Cruces District Resource Advisory Council Meeting
NM Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, NM
January 23, 2013

- 9:00 a.m.** **Meet and Greet**
- 9:30 a.m.** **Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions** (Tony Popp)
- 9:35 a.m.** **Review of Agenda and Approve Minutes** (Tony Popp)
- 9:45 a.m.** **Opening Statements and Updates** (Bill Childress and staff)
- Updates on Resource Management Plans (RMPs)
 - Updates on Major Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)
 - Administrative Details (Charter)
 - Other items
- 10:15 a.m.** **Q & A Session on National Monuments and National Conservation Areas** (Bill Childress)
- 11:30 a.m.** **Restore New Mexico 2 Million Acre Celebration** (Relocate to larger room for presentations; lunch provided)
- 2:15 pm.** **Break and Relocate to RAC Room**
- 2:30 pm** **Public Comment Period** (Tony Popp)
- 3:30 pm** **Update on Other Issues** (Tony Popp)
- 4:00 pm** **Future Meeting Topics** (Tony Popp)
- Off Highway Vehicle use
 - Budget
 - Tri-County RMP
 - Fuel Treatments and Wildland Fire Program
- 4:15 pm** **Next Meeting(s):** (Rena Gutierrez)
- Date: _____
- Start time: _____
- End time: _____
- 4:30 pm** **Adjourn**

RAC Members Present:

Tony Popp
Jim Hyatt
Howard Bartoo
Rod Hille
Greg Magee
Michael Quintana
Paul Turner
Norman Walsh
Ray Trejo

Absent:

Ed Boykin
Billy Garrett
Tim Eastep

Designated Federal Official:

Bill Childress

BLM Staff:

Jesse Juen
Aden Seidlitz
Allison Sandoval
Jim McCormick
Rena Gutierrez
Corina Pacheco

Public:

Les Owen, NM Department of Agriculture
Ryan Ward, NM Department of Agriculture
Tiffany Rivera, NM Department of Agriculture
Seth Hyatt, Rancher
Jerry Schickendanz, Lineberg Foundation
Lucas Herndon, Friends of the Organ Mountains Desert Peaks
Tom Mobley, Rancher
Jim Bates, Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen
Bob Tafanelli, NM Wilderness Alliance
John Tunbery, Natural Resource Conservation Service
Mary Sanchez, Natural Resource Conservation Service

MEETING MINUTES

REVIEW OF AGENDA AND APPROVE MINUTES

Tony Popp, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. The Agenda was reviewed and accepted. Minutes from the September 19, 2012 meeting were not approved because there was no quorum.

OPENING STATEMENTS AND UPDATES – Bill Childress

Bill asked if there were any administrative updates. Rena stated that three RAC appointments are expiring and nomination applications must be resubmitted if interested. Nominations are open for 30 days but the selection process could take up to 3 or 4 months.

TRICOUNTY RMP

- Document out in late February
- 90-day comment period
- Comment analysis before the Final Plan
- Public meetings will be held in Las Cruces, Alamogordo, and T or C

OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS:

Prehistoric Trackways

- Final will be out in June 2013
- 30 comments received will be analyzed before the Final Plan

Alamo Well Field

- Record of Decision went out
- Commission/City will finalize steps for an offer for a ROW to drill wells

New Mexico Copper

- Two ROWs were issued to the Company
- One is a pump test
- Monitoring wells in place
- Draft EIS has not been issued, still working with the company

SunZia

- Still perfecting Decision
- Negotiating with parties
- Comment Analysis

Southline

- Mid-stages of the Draft, still working on it.
- Afton to north of Tucson
- Company doing survey work
- Draft EIS will be sent to public and RAC for review

El Paso Electric

- Replacing poles on access road, approximately 50-60 miles from Deming to Socorro
- EIS level document

Question from Tony Popp – Was there a road?

Bill responded that EPE did not get a ROW, more substantial road.

Permit Renewals

- Target for year is 102 allotments
- Forest Service/BLM Specialists
- Health assessments; working with ranchers

Restore New Mexico

- 16 stand-alone allotments throughout Otero, Sierra, and Hidalgo Counties
- Funded through the EQIP Program
- Infrastructure and treatment on-the-ground
- 17 allotments in Hidalgo, Sierra, and Otero Counties will receive treatment on-the-ground

Freeport McMoRan

- 2 MPO Amendments
- Chino and Tyrone Mines
- EA level

Access Issues

- February 20, 2013 - target date for meeting with constituents on issues of public access on public land.
- State Director and major partners (State Land Department, Game and Fish Department) get them involved in the meeting.
- No format for the meeting or accommodations yet; might schedule evening meeting

Tony Popp – We're gaining information – need to talk about things as they come in; other things to be more involved.

Bill Childress – We need to think about other things to be involved in.

Howard Bartoo -- asked if we are allowed to carry guns. Bill Childress responded that fire arms are prohibited in Federal buildings, except for law enforcement. He will get additional guidance and share it with the public.

Tony Popp -- asked if there are established and designated roads and trails in the Transportation Plan and if they're closed in environmentally sensitive areas in the Plan.

Bill Childress -- responded that there are in Doña Ana County but not in Sierra and Otero Counties. There are 2.8 million acres of designated roads and trails with no significant resource damage. This is tiered off the RMPs; stand-alone travel Management Plan (Tri-County)

Q & A SESSION ON NATIONAL MONUMENTS AND NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREAS (Bill Childress)

Packet on the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument was handed out by Paul Turner.

Bill Childress – Overview

- DOI BLM does not have a position on the Citizens’ proposal for the National Monument. The Agency supports Bills HR 4334 and SB 1024. DOI BLM will formulate a position after the Proposal goes through the process.
- Bills are now void, will need to be resubmitted
- Budget is \$65 million annually
- Bureau-wide \$205 million annually
- The BLM is one of two agencies that makes more money than we spend; we use a quarter of the fund to operate
- 258 million acres are managed by the BLM
- 17 National Monuments - 4.8 million acres
- 16 National Conservation Areas - 3.7 million acres
- New Mexico has 2 National Monuments & 2 National Conservation Areas (290,000 acres)—one of the National Monuments is the Prehistoric Trackways
- off-road vehicles are prohibited on the National Monuments
- livestock grazing is closed on National Monuments

Bill Childress stressed that the BLM has no position on the Citizens’ Proposal but will take questions and will not try to answer if he doesn’t know.

Tony Popp -- Is the Citizens’ Proposal larger in acres than HR 4334 and the SB 1024? What are the differences?

Bill Childress -- HR 4334 is much smaller. SB 1024 is larger; it includes National Conservation Areas with wilderness acres in the Organs, Doña Anas, Broad Canyon, Uvas and West Potrillos, approximately 50,000 acres.

Jim Hyatt asked if grazing is allowed in national monuments, what are the pre-designation and post-designation numbers for existing AUMs.

Response from Bill was that he didn’t have an answer yet but that he would get one and let the RAC know. We use the same regulation and authorization processes for management of on-going livestock grazing that we use inside National monuments, he will find out number of AUMs.

Rod Hille asked if the Proposal is public information.

Bill responded this is not a BLM proposal that the info is on Senator Udall’s website.

A question was asked if there are restrictions in Senate Bill 1024 for motorized travel, pipelines, hunting, and maintenance. Bill responded that motorized access will be allowed for facility maintenance but there will be restrictions of motorized vehicles in wilderness and wilderness study areas. The Citizens Proposal is not addressing WSAs.

If there is no access and improvements or maintenance needs to be done (example: a washed out road), is approval from the agency needed. Bill responded that the BLM will work with the permittee to determine the need for access for range improvements and analyze the need and eventually approve. This can include mechanical equipment in wilderness but not in National monuments.

What is the comparison between a WSA and National Monument, do we anticipate any difference? The BLM is required to do a stand-alone Plan, and then address route designations and other issues. Most Plans protect, conserve and enhance resources.

Norman Walsh asked if a state grazing lease within an area would be affected. Individuals are concerned with the Federal Government throwing away their money, not to their advantage. Economic impacts are significant.

Bill responded that it won't be affected, the permit will be honored.

Tony Popp stated that we have areas with special designation and uses, this draws people to the area and that's where economic impacts come in.

Norman Walsh asked what is considered significant increase. What's the timeframe to implement a Plan?

Bill responded that we say 3 years but realistically it takes 5 years. Economic impact information—look up info on the links found on the handouts for the proposals.

Rod Hille— Locatable minerals – will they be invalid?

Bill Childress – Valid existing rights will continue; honor salable until expired, leasable also

Michael Quintana – Significant number of State land acres; would lands that are State-owned be exchanged prior? Will access be honored?

Bill Childress – After the fact, willing participants go through the normal process. If prior, would look at proposal.

Bill introduced visiting BLM staff:

Jesse Juen, State Director

Aden Seidlitz, Associate State Director

Allison Sandoval, Public Affairs Specialist

Jim McCormick, Assistant District Manager, Renewable Resources

Jesse Juen, State Director addressed the RAC

- gave background on his career
- talked about departures of Secretary of the Interior leaving at the end of March and Mike Poole leaving at the end of February
- talked about the diversity of BLM NM as it relates to resources/resource uses
- Legislation being introduced to change Federal lands to state lands –value of public lands; economy to state
- Drought – working closely with ranchers; willing to take reductions
- On the Horizon – water issue (Texas suing); gathering data – to intervene on behalf of New Mexico

Tony Popp asked what happened to planning for transportation roads; realized it was before State Director Juen's time. Jesse said it would be worthwhile to pull up the records and get them to the District. He commented that public lands are blocked or closed for various reasons; he has asked the District Managers to look at areas where we want to reopen areas for public access. He wants to assure citizens that the BLM will reopen public access on lands that are closed.

Aden Seidlitz, Associate State Director gave background on his career.

- PET Engineer
- 8 years in Alaska
- Worked in Richfield, Utah and at the Fire Center in Boise, Idaho

He commented that it is refreshing working with partners, getting things done on the land and having that ability.

Tony Popp asked for any comments or questions. Michael Quintana thanked Bill and crew for their responsiveness.

RESTORE NEW MEXICO 2 MILLION ACRE CELEBRATION (RELOCATE TO LARGER ROOM FOR PRESENTATIONS; LUNCH PROVIDED BY NMACD)

Jim McCormick – Welcome Remarks

A special thanks to NMACD for lunch. He recognized the team – Range, Wildlife, Watershed, Tech Services providers, they were a solid workforce. Ray and Leticia Lister really embraced programs; they used a tracking system to track 100 – 600 plus projects. Lane Hauser had a positive can do attitude. He thanked the Ag providers and Congressional delegation – Steve Pearce, Senator Tom Udall, and Senator Martin Henrich.

Jake Rolland from Senator Martin Henrich's staff read a statement from Senator Henrich, who could not attend. (Add to mailing list)

Melanie Goodman from Senator Tom Udall's staff read a letter from Senator Udall recognizing the BLM staff for their efforts in the Restore New Mexico.

Lane Hauser – Las Cruces District Restore NM Program

Welcomed everyone to the 2 Million Acre Celebration of Restore New Mexico. He gave a PowerPoint presentation and a handout. He asked everyone to introduce themselves to someone they had not met; we need to continue our partnerships. He also thanked all the Restore New Mexico Partners, which included:

NMDGF

Sportsmen Group – NM Quail Inc.

NMACD Contractors

Locals Soil and Water Conservation District – Doña Ana and Sierra Counties

RCWA – Serra Co.

Military Fort Bliss

NMSU – ARS – NMDA

Private Land Owners

NM/ACD

NRCS

BLM

Tommy Marshall, NRCS

- Area Conservationist for 38 years
- 63 CCPI contracts with BLM
- \$6 million the last 4 years; half the funds paid out
- \$600,000 in Bootheel (NM/AZ)
- Thanks to NMACD for their help and to the BLM for putting up with NRCS

Ken Lighting – NMACD

Congratulations from Ken Salazar. Statewide, people have made this effort possible. How did this happen:

- People – leadership of BLM/NRCS (7 years);
- finding a pool of funds;
- NRCS challenged by Secretary of Agriculture. “Working outside the box” challenge folks to implement (by leadership) – strong leadership
- Field people who have taken on the challenge – can’t say enough about the Rangeland Management Specialists and their support staff.
- NRCS in a collaboration effort with the BLM to meet the challenge
- Contractors using their skill and background (some are retired folks)

- Ranchers – over 130 that have participated. It took courage to come in and trust the agencies to put practices on the land.

Dr. Brendon Bestelmeyer, USDA Jornada Experimental Range

Presented PowerPoint on Restore New Mexico Collaboration Assessment and Monitoring Program. The study will quantify the effects of shrub control projects from the Restore NM program to determine the effectiveness of treatments.

Jesse Juen – BLM State Director, New Mexico

Two million acres of managed land is a tremendous accomplishment, it have never been done in any western state before. Risks taken by the BLM:

- Risk – Manager of 13.5 million acres of your public land in a balanced respectful, honest way.
- Risk – Treat across all land. Size matters – change habitat. NEPA planning. Join NRCS in our commitment and our ability to leverage money, tools, and people. Be willing to match NRCS as a 100 percent partner dollar for dollar.
- Risk – How does the BLM convince ranchers to take a risk with us and defer for 2 years when the ranchers are concerned about drought. You do it by starting with one rancher. Now there are 130 ranchers involved.
- Risk – First Agreement with NMACD. One answer is chemical treatments. Fitting fire into the equation, people and partners. Fire will be huge role for us. We need to Get-R-Done. Do not sit back and wait, take a risk and take a step forward because if you do not it won't happen.

RAC MEETING RECONVENED

Tony Popp asked for any comments on Restore New Mexico.

Jim Hyatt commented that it is a valuable tool and a team effort.

Tony Popp asked if any invasive species have come back after a treatment.

Jim Hyatt – Experimental - you can see where brush didn't come back – more and more cooperators – where it works it works well. Better kill of invasive plants on consecutive rains, don't rely on one storm for it to work.

Bill stated that the BLM is treating mesquite once every 3 years with a liquid treatment. We have a 2-month window for liquid applications before the winter rainfall. The BLM is treating salt cedar as well both mechanically and manually.

Howard Bartoo stated that the Soil and Water Conservation District is treating salt cedar too.

Greg Magee asked if the BLM has identified potential areas to treat.

Bill Childress responded that Otero has close to 670,000 acres within the Las Cruces District with a potential to treat. The BLM has identified 3 landscape areas for restoration and there are others that need to be identified.

Tony Popp stated that they are all supportive of the program and would like to see every ranch involved. There is not much update on other issues. Send email or talk to Bill if you have any comments, issues or ideas.

UPDATE ON OTHER ISSUES

Access issue – participate in meeting; RAC will receive an email about the meeting.

FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:

1. OHV Use (Guidelines)
2. TriCounty RMP
3. Field trip to a treatment area (areas considering fire). Tie into TriCounty/OHV
4. Prescribed fire and wildland fire

Howard Bartoo asked for guidelines on off-road vehicle use in Sierra County. Tony Popp stated that the criteria are set in the TriCounty RMP.

Howard Bartoo asked what the short list on the illegal dumping issue is. Is Sierra County closing the dump site?

Bill Childress said the BLM met with Sierra County and they're looking into a new transfer station in the future. BLM law enforcement is citing people for illegal dumping. OHV use on TriCounty RMP short list. If anyone is interested in a field trip to treated areas let him know. USGS has an App for free GPS illegal dump site.

NEXT MEETING

April 3 or April 10

- Send out email with options on date for next meeting
- Provide suggestions on Tri-County
- Send email to Billy Garrett and Ed Boykin for approval of minutes.

Tony Popp called for other business or comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Jerry Schickendanz, Chairman Western Heritage Alliance, Linebery Foundation

- We need to find ways to establish national monument; legislative process in favor of. We need good public input and debate.
- Economic studies have shown that protected areas will enhance the economy; ex: Catron Co. 1924; need more studies.
- No Congressional/public forum – Citizen’s proposal
- Changes – “multi-use and sustain yield,” when change to National Monuments or NCAs, management changes to protect, reserve and enhance.
- ex: White Sands National Monument – protect gypsum that’s the extreme – can get extreme
- Organizations are watching the BLM – “Multiple use” or “protect”
- WSAs are managed something like wilderness; 70 miles of roads, ways being used in West Potrillos – continue; if they become wilderness they will be closed.
- Do you want public input? Put everything in one basket and let President decide.
- Management Plan need to set parameters

Lucas Herndon – Friends of Organ Mountains Desert Peaks

- Get out on the land and see how public land is managed by the BLM – educated the public and let us know how we can interact.
- Protect public lands now. Why wait for imminent threat – handout green brochure.
- Protecting human history
- Management Plan – legislature or executive – Citizen’s proposal through vetting, lots of input.
- National monuments are the best way to have open public land.
- At the Expo, proposal supported by Sportsmen’s group – protecting access.
- Cares about what happens today
- Public land open now as when my daughter grows up

Michael Quintana asked if a good enough job was not being done to protect these lands and how will a national monument increase public access.

Lucas Herndon responded that the BLM is doing a good job, but that the local management of public land is not indicative of sales and leasing. Will public access help the national monuments? More ability to manage under smaller plans; have the ability to regulate access. Publicize accessible areas – continuously provide access.

Tony Popp stated that the land would not be taken out of management of the agency . . . increase uses because of designation.

Rod Hille asked if there would be more wilderness.

Lucas Herndon stated that currently the proposal borders around lands – wilderness would not change – referred to brochure.

Norman Walsh wanted it to be left where it is – BLM taking care of it.

Jim Bates, Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen

- What do we need to do to maintain the concerns of all?
- What's the best way to go about doing this?
- Ensure interests are protected--protect ranching interest; make sure management is fluid
- Hunters concerns – may be changes in areas now being used for hunting
- Try to get to point where we're all happy and the land is protected
- Calling it a national monument will have a definite positive economic benefit to the community, we don't lose anything by designating land as national monuments

Norman Walsh commented that we need statistics showing that national monuments are beneficial to the community. Jim Bates gave Carlsbad Caverns as an example.

Michael Quintana mentioned an economic study in Taos where it was concluded that gross receipts were doubled but the poverty rate went up.

Jim Hyatt had some concerns that if we have an influx of people on the land due to national monument designations, how is the BLM going to protect the land unless they increase law enforcement patrols. He feels the BLM is doing quite well right now at protecting the land but there will be an increase in security workload and we'll have more trash on the land. He feels this is not a good trade-off of what we have right now. We need to minimize impacts.

Jim Bates stated that things are changing and we need to address the issues. What do we want to achieve and how are we going to do it? We need to minimize impacts to what we are trying to preserve.

Howard Bartoo asked if the language in the Plan guarantees Lucas and Jim Hyatt what they want from the land.

Bill Childress reiterated the uses and that grazing is allowed. BLM economic studies on national monuments, Bill will get this to the RAC.

Jim Hyatt stated that resources are being reported by ranchers, they are concerned about the number of people coming onto the land.

Howard Bartoo asked – How many ranches involved?

Bill Childress stated that there are 20 plus ranches within Citizen's proposal (38 allotments).

Rod Hille asked if there is access to locatable minerals.

Bill Childress responded that access to locatable minerals is allowed through the Mining Plan.

Jim Bates asked if the RAC has authority to do something about this.

Tony Popp responded that the RAC does not have that authority, the RAC requested to have this discussion and get public input. There is no legislation and the BLM does not have a position on this. Everyone should be thinking about the future – have a vision.

Tony concluded the comment period and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Paul Turner – Motion

Jim Hyatt– Seconded

Meeting adjourned 3:49 p.m.