

Planning 2.0 Public Listening Sessions

Summary Meeting Notes

Denver, Colorado – Oct 1, 2014
Sacramento, California – Oct 7, 2014

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is embarking on revisions to its current Resource Management Planning (RMP) process. The focus of the Bureau’s work is to develop a more dynamic, efficient and collaborative planning process that will address resource management issues at multiple scales. In order to obtain early stakeholder input into this initiative, BLM held two public “listening sessions,” in Denver, Colorado (October 1, 2014) and in Sacramento, California (October 7, 2014). Both meetings were led by a third-party facilitator and were available to remote participants through livestream. The goals of these meetings were to share information about the Planning 2.0 initiative with interested members of the public, to provide a forum for dialogue about the initiative, and to receive input from the public on how best to achieve the goals of the initiative.

In **Denver**, approximately **71 participants** attended the Listening Session in person. Midway through the meeting, 45 of the participants continued discussions in five facilitated groups. In addition, **192 unique viewers** (individuals or groups watching through a single internet connection) watched the session via livestream, and 19 people participated in an on-line group discussion via WebEx.

In **Sacramento**, approximately **35 participants** attended the Listening Session in person, 31 of which participated in discussions in four facilitated groups. In addition, **183 unique viewers** watched the session via livestream and 4 individuals participated in an on-line group discussion via WebEx.

Meeting Overview

In the first portion of these sessions, the BLM presented the purpose and scope of the Planning 2.0 initiative, as well as several ideas for consideration. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session. The presentation and question and answer session are available for viewing on the Planning 2.0 website (www.blm.gov/plan2).

During the second portion of the sessions, participants were invited to join a small group for in-depth discussion. Each small group discussion was led by a third-party facilitator. Participants were advised to select their own group, but asked to join a group with other participants they did not already know. Remote participants were provided a phone number and Webex link to participate in a “remote breakout group”.

Small group discussions were organized around the three Planning 2.0 goals:

1. To create a more dynamic and efficient planning process;
2. To enhance opportunities for collaborative planning;
3. To plan across landscapes and at multiple scales.

The groups shared ideas, concerns, and successful examples or models from past efforts regarding each goal. A summary of these discussions is provided in this report.

In the final portion of the listening session, participants returned to the full group for a report-out on the small group discussions. The meeting concluded with a discussion on next steps and a brief evaluation.

Brief Summary of Small Group Discussions

In general, proposals for pre-planning outreach and more robust opportunities for collaborative planning were supported by most meeting participants. The Bureau was encouraged to make information available to stakeholders early in each stage of the process; ensure that all interested stakeholders were invited to participate in pre-planning; provide materials tailored specifically to the audiences who would be most affected; and “go where the people are” rather than expect stakeholders to come to them. Although technology and social media were seen as enhancements to collaborative planning, participants expressed concern about technology barriers for some demographics (based on age, rural location, and economic status) and suggested that alternative methods of participation should be developed to reach all demographics. Some participants also expressed concern that there would be an increased burden on the public associated with new opportunities for public involvement. In general, participants supported the use of adaptive management; however, concerns were raised that adaptive management needs to be balanced by predictable, clear standards and certainty in final RMPs.

Most participants generally supported the goal of comprehensive landscape level planning. Participants identified a need to establish a clear and consistent definition of the term “landscape” and questioned how existing RMPs would incorporate the landscape approach without initiating a full plan revision. There was concern that stakeholder identification and involvement might be more difficult if plans are larger in geographic size and concern that BLM might not have sufficient resources for development and implementation of “landscape plans”.

Detailed Summary of Small Group Discussions

1. To achieve the goal of creating a more dynamic and efficient planning process:

Ideas

- Define triggers for adaptive management in RMPs and include a range of activities for response or action. Establish options for addressing issues where data are not available.
- Establish an up-front baseline based on early data collection and inventory analyses.
- Ask public participants and user groups for help with data-collection, mapping, and inventory processes; seek out and use data from external user groups; invite subject matter experts from interested stakeholder groups linked to specific issues; encourage independent science and consult with those who may have useful data and other resources.
- Incorporate existing data being collected by BLM into decisions and monitoring; establish guidance and frameworks on use of data.
- Do not reanalyze or reapprove accepted science or practice; add appropriate and sufficient indicators that incorporate habitat value and function; add core terrestrial indicators.
- Review existing processes and regulations, and identify ways of speeding up planning and decision-making; where possible, revise guidelines that require long timeframes for completion.
- Build change management into the process in order to be more nimble and effective when conditions change; consider looking beyond NEPA to broaden potential issues, to “pre-assess”

them and speed up the process; explore ways to build on existing NEPA analyses conducted previously on the same landscape.

- Reach out to partners before acting to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Look at litigation to garner lessons from unsuccessful models.
- Ensure that all BLM offices (headquarters, regions, field offices) are working together with a common understanding; ensure field offices are consistent in their application of standards; ensure staff is approachable, open, flexible, and transparent in working with stakeholders.
- Include meaningful regular review of existing RMP's (perhaps using 5-year check points); use new landscape data to identify ongoing or emerging topics (such as technological and environmental changes); include relevant interest groups in those reviews; conduct deeper analyses across broader geographical scales on some issues (such as water, wildlife) to provide consistency.
- Clearly define the goals and objectives in an RMP. Clarify the context for goals and objectives as they pertain to the geographic area, type of use, timeframe for implementation, and approach to implementation.

Concerns

- Bureaucracy and drawn out regulatory processes can result in new ideas taking too long to implement, losing opportunities if actions cannot be expedited.
- “Dynamic” (adaptive) and “efficient” can be competing interests.
- It is important to establish a clear line between “adaptive” management and flexible, discretion-based project-by-project management.
- There is a need for certainty, predictability and clear standards in final RMP's, not the encouragement of “wobble room” (such as from the use of adaptive management principles).
- Decisions frequently seem to be open to political shifts – BLM offices are always subject to pressure, raising concerns that politics could dictate the planning timeline.

2. To enhance opportunities for collaborative planning:

Ideas

- Pre-planning outreach may foster an environment for more productive and collaborative stakeholder engagement. More broad, early and frequent forums might provide a less contentious opportunity to identify key issues, goals, and data needs while reducing data validity/quality conflicts.
- During pre-planning, define and communicate: (1) the purpose of the RMP; (2) a realistic timeline; (3) goals, scope and geography of outreach plans; (4) expectations for public input and participation, including how BLM expects decisions to be made, and the processes that could be used (e.g. facilitation, negotiation, mediation, public meetings); (5) opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the planning process; (6) landscape specific challenges and planning needs; (7) the agencies involved or affected by the RMP and their respective jurisdictions and legal authorities in the process
- Ensure broad stakeholder participation in planning by identifying upfront the stakeholders who need to be involved and conducting early, proactive and strategic outreach to key stakeholders including other federal agencies, tribes, state and local agencies, local communities, user groups, NGOs, and other interested public.
- Use proactive methods to identify stakeholders such as analyzing demographics of a region to ensure accurate representation; using a geo-spatial database to identify people who have

commented or been involved in similar issues; creating geographic maps to show where planning comments are coming from; and using landscape analysis to highlight key issues and identify stakeholder interests.

- Identify the incentives for specific user groups to participate in the planning process (e.g. specify what this experience may mean to them and their experience on public lands) to encourage participation.
- Hold meetings in locations that are convenient to the participants.
- Bring together different interests with a goal of increasing both understanding and creative problem solving and building strong relationships for the lifecycle of the RMP (including pre-planning, RMP development, and implementation and monitoring).
- Analyze the issues critical to stakeholders' interests; work on issues with a range of partners; and remember to work with existing bodies such as Resource Advisory Councils (RACs), Desert Advisory Councils, cooperating agencies, etc. If interests are divergent, tensions are high or material is confusing, use neutral facilitators and consider providing a neutral mediator. Use technology to identify form letters; balance input from form letters and local interests, especially in rural areas.
- Use BLM Public Affairs staff to provide understandable materials to the public. This includes defining technical terms and limiting the use of jargon and acronyms; create citizen translation manuals such as a "BLM Planning for Dummies" booklet; use visuals, such as flow charts; and communicate in terms understandable to the communities, user groups and stakeholders involved.
- Materials need to be transparent, accessible and easy to use. Materials should be available at local libraries, on the web, and sent out through list serves.
- Utilize technology for low-cost, efficient communication about on-going planning and updates. Electronic newsletters could be used to describe ongoing progress, key concerns, next steps, deadlines, etc. Interactive maps could be used to share geospatial information.
- Provide technical assistance where stakeholders may have difficulty with technology (e.g. rural people without computers or high speed internet, elderly stakeholders).
- Vary the public involvement formats used in a planning process to reach a broader audience. Possible formats include open houses, hearings, town halls, world cafes (knowledge cafes) or round table dialogues.
- Use local to regional conduits so stakeholders can communicate with the local field office and know their concerns will be delivered to upper management.
- BLM staff should process data then present the results to the public and incorporate public feedback; planning documents should be circulated for frequent public review and feedback. Alternatives outreach should be completed before the DEIS, in order to incorporate public feedback early in the process.
- BLM staff should receive training to support collaborative planning and conflict management. BLM should evaluate the overall planning process by how creative, collaborative and meaningful it was.

Concerns

- Stakeholder involvement is inconsistent across the BLM and some stakeholders are not brought to the table; public involvement is not always representative of demographics.
- The BLM's process of defining and managing competing priorities can present problems when attempting to work collaboratively with a variety of interest groups.
- Technological barriers, such as age and rural location, exist for some demographics.
- Mapping and other software may not be readily accessible to all of the public.

- Economic status can influence participation.
- Logistical challenges often prevent face-to-face meetings.
- Confusion exists regarding the meaning of collaboration, agency expectations and participants' roles in planning processes.
- Planning 2.0 is too abstract, hypothetical, and complex—even allies can be scared away.
- Planning 2.0 could result in a more confusing, challenging process for the public to become involved in and to track. This might lead to less stakeholder involvement.
- Increasing uses of collaborative planning could trigger FACA and become more time consuming.
- As it attempts to be more efficient, BLM may work with “the usual suspects” rather than more varied stakeholder groups and may not coordinate with other agencies as regularly.

3. To plan across landscapes and at multiple scales:

Ideas

- Be visionary with Planning 2.0; use this opportunity to create new and more imaginative planning boundaries. Plan at the ecological scale, not administrative; landscape plans should cut across jurisdictions and interests (BLM, USFS, NPS, States).
- Clearly define the landscape at the beginning of each planning process.
- Use values mapping to help identify where various uses occur and where they do not or should not occur. Create a handbook or checklist to help small communities define areas of value.
- Include goals and objectives for priority vegetation and species as the foundation that drives land use allocations and as the foundation underlying and driving multiple uses.
- Consider the appropriate scale when establishing management direction. Calibrate project planning to a landscape scale appropriate to the issue; consider affected/involved stakeholders and a solution basket; allow different management approaches for varied landscapes.
- Develop clear overarching management goals and objectives rather than managing for particular activities.
- Look at broader issues across each program; this will make RMPs easier to amend.
- Recognize cumulative impacts in landscapes to solve multiple problems and increase consistency.
- Avoid landscape-level goals that are too broad to be meaningful; goals should respond to local needs.
- Make landscape-level goals and objectives scalable so local and regional stakeholders know how to manage them, and robust enough to be interpreted and implemented correctly. Provide links between site specific and landscape level planning to help people understand the process.
- Commit to “step down” planning in the RMP.
- Ensure early, comprehensive landscape level planning with other agencies, landowners and the public to avoid duplicative and repetitive efforts. Reach out to other jurisdictions/agencies which share responsibilities for, or impacts associated with, the landscape.
- Encourage private/public partnerships and use of volunteers. Develop private land relationship strategies.
- Learn from past experiences with Service First agreements (between USFS and BLM); garner lessons learned from NRCS on WHIP and EQIP for planning across ownership boundaries.
- Incorporate landscape planning into existing plans to identify key ongoing or emerging issues; encourage re-evaluations of land allocations.

- Integrate trail planning, trail use, transportation and the concept of connectivity into landscape planning.
- Determine early and quickly what resources are needed for the planning effort.
- Build off other landscape assessments such as the rapid eco-regional assessments, the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) or watershed assessments.
- Use of public meetings in various communities for a wider landscape have been successful as well as interest group specific meetings to draw participation and ensure as the planning area widens, participation stays high.

Concerns

- Identifying stakeholders is difficult given different scales and larger scale of landscape initiatives.
- Defining “dynamic and efficient” is challenging with larger landscape-level scales.
- “Landscape level” is difficult to clarify; it can become so broad that people may no longer be excited about it.
- The characterization of landscape planning seems to imply overlapping efforts and lack of consistency; clear, precise, consistent definitions are needed.
- Using landscape level planning could lead to unrealistic expectations about how multiple-use is applied.
- Some larger scale projects are under-resourced and staff is already spread thin, which can lead to inadequate planning and implementation.
- Planning outside BLM boundaries could be a concern; example: private property owners have their own requirements and do not want BLM to add another layer.
- BLM could become responsible for mitigation on additional lands.
- Increasingly tiered or layered processes could lead to more lawsuits.
- Landscape-level planning could lead to more upfront time/cost commitments (e.g. processing more information, more pre-planning issues and, at times, more competing science).
- Standards are needed to analyze competing science on larger projects.
- Will important components of the planning process be eliminated, such as Travel Management Plans?
- Will landscape planning apply only to new plans, and if not, how will it be incorporated into existing plans?

Participant Evaluation

At the end of each meeting, participants were asked to provide their overall evaluations of the meetings.

How could the meetings be improved?

- Provide materials in advance of the meetings, such as an agenda, workshop questions, and handouts so that participants can arrive prepared.
- Conduct the meeting in a larger room to provide adequate space for breakout sessions.
- Instead of focusing the breakout sessions on broad objectives of Planning 2.0, focus on good examples of projects that are embodying some of these objectives.
- Provide more examples of what Planning 2.0 means.
- Provide more sessions in different locations (in addition to Denver and Sacramento).

- Ensure that a BLM staff member is in each group to answer questions and capture notes. (This was a suggestion from the Denver meeting, which was implemented in Sacramento.)

What worked well in the meetings?

- Use of third-party facilitators.
- Small breakout sessions made participants feel comfortable and safe talking.
- Small groups enabled people to discuss issues even if they had differing viewpoints; people could challenge each other and develop ideas without feeling hostility.
- It was helpful to have had BLM representatives at each small group table (in Sacramento) for definitions, explanations, and capturing notes.