

# Western Montana Resource Advisory Council Minutes

March 16, 2017

## Butte Field Office

**BLM Western Zone Staff Present:** David Abrams, Cornie Hudson, Joe Ashor, Scott Haight, Jodi Wetzstein.

**RAC Members Present:** Jean Belangie-Nye, Dan Happel, Jim Hart, Larry Hoffman, Koy Holland, David Krueger, Bob Martinka, Doug Midgett, Paul Putz, Whitney Tilt, Ron Tussing, Bob Walker, Chair.

**RAC Members Absent:** Nichole Brown, Margaret Gorski, Mark Sweeney.

RAC Coordinator David Abrams welcomed the RAC member to the Butte Field Office and mentioned the new security system now in place at all BLM offices. He also pointed out the safety exits and tripping hazards in the meeting room. Rick Hotaling, District Manager, is currently serving as Associate State Director in Portland and in his absence, Joe Ashor is the designated federal official.

David also reported that new RAC members are not named because the Washington Office hasn't confirmed them. A new meeting date will not be set today because several current members are going off the council.

Joe announced that State Director Jamie Connell has relocated to the Oregon/Washington State Office and that set in motion a series of acting positions throughout the state. Joe recognized outgoing members for their service and sacrifice. BLM appreciates the advice and relationships developed with RAC members throughout their term. Joe recognized Dan Happel, Bob Martinka, Mark Sweeney, and Bob Walker. David Abrams told the outgoing RAC members if they wanted to apply again in a year or two to contact him.

### Election of Officers

Chairperson: It was moved and seconded that Koy Holland serve as Chair of the RAC. Motion was passed unanimously.

Vice-Chairperson: It was moved and seconded that Jean Belangie-Nye serve as Vice-Chair of the RAC. Motion was passed unanimously.

David A. stated that Mark and Dan served on two subcommittees (Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and the Missoula RMP) and would need to be replaced. The RAC decided to postpone filling the positions until the new RAC members were appointed.

### MT DNRC Public Access Specialist – Ryan Weiss

Ryan was hired by DNRC in 2016 and has a background in hydrology. Previously he worked in New Mexico. Access to state land issues have emerged over the last several years and DNRC hired him to work specifically on those issues. He is currently working on on-going projects and wants to work cooperatively with agencies, landowners, and the public. His job is to field complaints from the public when access is challenged, expand public access where possible through easements and infrastructure, and complete an inventory and analysis of access issues.

His role at DNRC is to protect and enhance public access to public lands. He does not look to gain access to private lands. Historically, state lands haven't been access friendly. State lands are mandated by law to generate money for public education. He used an example near Whitefish of working with other agencies. The State has flexibility to manage resources in a timely manner.

Ryan said it is unrealistic to provide access to every section of State Land; they try to look at the big picture and where MT can partner with interests and groups such as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to use the resources we have.

Access issues in MT – Several studies have been completed on public access to public land and the same issues are prevalent today. More people are moving to MT specifically for public land access. The National Shooting Sports Foundation published an article on the sportsmen's perspective of access and noted the following:

- Availability – are the lands available for use? What is the amount of acreage?
- Accessibility – can you reach them legally?
- Accommodations – would a map, parking, kiosk with information make it easier to use? Some access requires more accommodations than others.
- Awareness – is there a positive perspective of public lands?
- Assumptions – what are people's assumptions on opportunity to access public lands?

Current Projects – Swiftwater River Investments (SRI) or the old Hamilton Ranch by Twin Bridges is a controversial exchange with two components. DNRC exchanged an 80 ac. parcel on the Jefferson River with no legal access for 111 ac. on the Big Hole River, about three miles upstream. Both parcels are accessible through the stream access laws but there was no management capability on the 80 ac. Jefferson River parcel.

There was a 640 ac. section adjacent to the old Hamilton Ranch with no access that DNRC exchanged for 750 ac. that connects other agency public lands with road access. It provided road access to a block of 10K acres.

DNRC is starting to consider public access in their land exchanges where it hadn't been strongly considered historically.

A second project SW of Wisdom consists of a timber sale on a State section. The county had paid for a ROW through the State portion and it connects to FS and BLM lands. Ryan said the county has agreed to blade the road and RMEF donated funds for the cattle guards. This is an enhanced access example.

There is public scoping this week for a project on the Stillwater State Forest at Olney near Whitefish. Plum Creek was the previous owner and now it is Weyerhaeuser. DNRC is working with the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) and Weyerhaeuser to exchange easements and to insure no loss of public access. It is a popular snowmobile route and dog sled area.

Another cooperative project with RMEF is in the Blacktail Wildlife Management Area. The East fork of Blacktail Creek Road crosses two bridges that need repair/replacement before it accesses FS land. Technically it is not a public road because there are sections with no recorded easements. The goal is to maintain access people have used for decades.

Ryan attended a meeting in Augusta following the 2016 hunting season. There were a few sections of state land where hunters were incredibly successful but they are adjacent to private ranch buildings and it was very disruptive to their lives. Helena landowners also complained about trespass. In these cases DNRC made inexpensive signs and posted the designated access sites to reduce conflict.

Awareness/Perception – Studies show that 66% of Montanans recreate on public lands. A U of M study shows significant monetary contributions from the outdoor recreation economy. Talks are on-going among public land managers and outdoor equipment businesses and service providers. The challenge is to provide opportunities for the public while still keeping the mandate that State Trust Lands earn money.

The Interagency Access Council is not functioning anymore but Ryan can see the value of an interagency access group since access issues are generally multi-agency. He would like feedback from the federal agencies and groups with an interest in access.

Challenges/Opportunities – DNRC would like to increase the availability to public land through developed roads, accommodations, signs and trail networks. Ryan fields complaints from the public related to access but he's not a lawyer and that isn't part of his job. His job is to work collaboratively with landowners, agencies and the public.

Koy asked about weed treatments and including weed information on the DNRC and kiosks. Ryan said weed information is included. Whitney said he felt trespass is a social issue rather than a legal issue. Jean commented that trespass gets back to education and how to act responsibly (close gates, etc.). A group she is active with includes weed treatment in the MOU's.

Bob W. mentioned the Governor's conference on invasive species abatement. It is a sizeable interagency group that works to stop the spread of all types of invasive species.

David K. asked what percentage of State Lands does not have public access. Ryan wasn't sure of the exact percentage but in 2015 there were approximately 1.5 million acres of public lands without an easement or ROW for DNRC or the public. David wondered why access wasn't included as a stipulation up front. Paul P. said two sections in each township were set aside for the State Trust but our forefathers didn't address the access issue at the time.

David A. announced that the treats were courtesy of himself and Scott H. David encouraged RAC members to take the BLM RAC recruitment tool back to the groups they represent to help spread the word. Three out of the four photos in the brochure are from the Western MT RAC. Ron asked when the next round of nominees would be recruited. David said it could happen in the next few months.

### **Legislative Update**

David serves as the Legislative Liaison for the MT BLM. David includes the RAC in his distribution of the legislative reports. Bob W. has also been active this legislative session covering the Parks and Recreation issues. Bob reminded the RAC that bills needed to be passed by either the House or Senate by March 1 in order to stay active.

Bob mentioned HB 225, the MT Footpath and Bicycle Trail Act which would provide an "opt-in" on your vehicle license for \$5. There's not a good source of funding for bike or footpaths. Jean B-N said MDT is looking at a number of ways to raise money for trail repair/construction.

Bob reviewed a number of bills related to bicycle safety. He also mentioned that the focus of FWP has been hunting and fishing rather than parks and recreation. Bob is supporting HB324 because he feels parks have not been a priority. Bob M. disagrees because it complicates the administrative structure. Paul said the MT Historical Society was administratively attached to the Dept. of Education but operated independently.

The hearing for SB161 was cancelled in Feb. Bob is hoping that bill will go away. SB314 is being heard in the House Natural Resources Committee. The Trail Vehicle Riders Association (TVRA) testified in favor of the bill but Bob is opposed. The bill would allow youth (undefined) to operate an ATV on unpaved public highways and roads under supervision of an adult. They would not be required to have any OHV training. This is a potential conflict on FS roads. This bill would supersede State law that requires youth ages 12-18 to ride with a responsible adult and show proof of an OHV education course. Paul asked about industry input. Bob W. said the industry is opposed to more than one person on an ATV. Ron said

if the bill doesn't pass, ranch kids will still be in violation when they ride on gravel roads to open gates, etc.

### **Log Gulch Recreation Area**

Scott H. said the issue centers around homeowners across Holter Lake using BLM's boat ramp, dumpsters and potable water, and contractors parking large vehicles in the parking area. BLM doesn't have a permit process to cover their use. Currently there is a \$5/day-use fee or a \$40 seasonal fee that is meant for occasional use. Scott introduced Kelly Scarborough, the new Outdoor Recreation Planner. She came to MT from Phoenix. Scott had asked the RAC subgroup to hold off action until Kelly was on board to be involved in the decision.

There are potentially a hundred cabin owners plus guests and contractors that use the facilities. Lewis and Clark County was supposed to create a parking area and boat ramp when the subdivision was approved but that didn't materialize and now the County says they have other higher priorities. There is a spectrum of potential solutions that can be looked at. Kelly will set up a field trip for the RAC Recreation subcommittee members. Paul suggested that L&C County planning be invited to participate.

Joe shared a handout from the DOI that spells out focus areas:

- Energy independence;
- Making America great through shared conservation stewardship;
- Making America safe
- Restoring our sovereignty;
- Getting America back to work, and
- Serving American families.

Ryan Zinke is the new Secretary of the Interior. On his first day he talked to DC employees about his priorities which included:

- Restore trust by working with rather than against local communities and states; (Joe felt we had an excellent track record in MT)
- Interested in reducing the \$12.5 billion backlog of maintenance in the National Parks. Joe has no idea if any of that will trickle down to BLM's backlog.
- Insure DOI employees working directly with the public are empowered to give a voice to those with whom they are working.

Joe said Planning 2.0 was finalized in December by making the process more accessible and responsive to changing conditions. The House and Senate have rescinded Planning 2.0. BLM will revert back to the old planning rule passed in 1983. It doesn't mandate as much public involvement. Joe said they are still committed to working with the public, tribal governments, and other agencies and stakeholders as BLM moves forward in the planning process.

Jodi Wetzstein introduced herself as a forester with experience working for the BLM in Utah, Colorado and the FS in Arizona and is now acting FM in Missoula. MFO is currently revising their Resource Management Plan. The Notice of Intent to Plan was published in December so they don't have to rework due to the rescission of Planning 2.0. Completed public envisioning last spring followed by the management situation analysis last summer (2016).

More recently, MFO completed the formal scoping process with four open houses scattered throughout the FO. BLM received almost 200 comments which included 126 form letters (not considered unique comments). In total, 70 unique comments were received and they will be the basis for the scoping report and help develop the range of alternatives by this fall. Long term goals are for a draft plan and

EIS out late 2018 or early 2019 followed by a 30 day protest period. The Record of Decision is expected by the end of 2019.

Scoping comments ran the gamut of public input including: increased recreation, mining and timber harvest. There were no big surprises in the comments. The form letters were from the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) and they are interested in creating BCAs (Backcountry Conservation Areas).

Ron asked about the amount of acreage covered in the plan. The plan covers 100% of the FO area which consists of 156K of surface acreage and 122K of subsurface. The planning area is bigger because BLM needs to consider adjacent land uses but the decision pertains only to BLM managed lands.

Threatened and endangered (T&E) species are also a concern with the public which is reflected in the comments. Joe said they are fortunate to work with groups such as the Blackfoot Challenge that have been dealing successfully with the same issues for 20 years.

It will be a challenge to deal with climate change, drought, and its affect on a lengthened fire season. Bob W. asked about historical and archeological resources. Jodi said they do coordinate with tribal entities. MFO will have to identify the historic trail corridor along the Blackfoot River and determine management objectives to maintain the values.

A question was asked about comments on extractive industries. Jodi said extractive interests asked that their uses not be decreased from the current level. Joe thanked Dan and Jean for serving on the MFO subcommittee.

Koy said it was time for the public comment period. With no public commenting, Koy invited Bob W. to share his feedback to BLM since he had to leave early. Bob reported on the semi-annual RAC Chair meeting hosted by Jamie Connell, BLM State Director, at their Billings meeting on January 26 & 27. They received updates on the American Prairie Reserve, Backcountry Conservation Areas and the Greater Sage Grouse.

Bob's report to the RAC chairs included the Log Gulch issue, the programmatic fee proposal from the FS, climate change, Ryan Weiss' access position with DNRC, the OHV travel issue in Sage Creek, the two mountain bike trail proposals, the recreation trails program grants, and OHV bills before the legislature.

Cornie said BLM's travel management plan approved several years ago called for designating routes but there are many routes undesignated but still open. The travel plans are updated continually.

Doug Midgett discussed Planning 2.0 as it relates to the climate change discussion. He thinks it would be interesting to hear from experts/program leaders and learn what they anticipate for future needs. The Oroville Dam in CA was discussed.

Paul said the range of climate change depended on which climate models are used. Scott said specialists try to build flexibility into the plans so it can be adapted for future needs. Bob M. said most planners try to anticipate a worst case scenario. Cornie said BLM strives to have their plans adaptable to changing conditions and needs. Jean B-N said the other issue to be considered is population growth and its impact on resources and recreation.

Koy called for a lunch break and asked the group to reconvene at 1 p.m.

### **Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Presentation by Scott Laird**

The TRCP is a national non-profit organization with an interest in federal public land policy. It consists of a coalition of partners that works on federal law and policy related to conservation issues, habitat, and access and consider themselves non-political. They have opened an office in Missoula to focus on forest

planning, sage grouse issues, migration corridors, etc. They support the establishment of Backcountry Conservation Areas (BCA) – an administratively designated area that is undeveloped, provides fish and wildlife habitat, and provides dispersed outdoor recreation opportunities. How it works – a BCA may be designated in a long established recreation management area that contains 1) socially important wildlife species and 2) wildlife dependent recreation opportunities such as hunting, fishing and trapping. Under a BCA, the agency would develop wildlife focused objectives that would restore and enhance habitat. BLM received an Instruction Memorandum (IM) saying they could officially consider BCAs in land use planning processes. Commercial uses would continue as well (mining, logging, and grazing).

In MT there is a BCA proposal in the Missoula and Lewistown Field Offices. The presenter made it clear this proposal is not a wilderness designation. BCAs can be proposed by either the public or BLM staff. In the MFO, the BCA proposal was submitted by the TRCP, Trout unlimited, Missoula area sportsmen's groups, and the MT Wildlife Federation. Lands proposed include Chamberlain Creek area, Markham Mountain and part of the Hoodoos amounting to about 50K acres. The current land use designation does not offer any protection.

A question was asked about access and the response was that appropriate access would be allowed but a proliferation of roads would not because it fragments wildlife habitat. Joe compared the designation to a Special Recreation Management Use Area that has outstanding recreation values. The BCA would have outstanding wildlife values. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) can also have geological and/or historical values.

Joe asked Scott to explain where the concept of this partnership came from. Initial support came from retired land management officials and conservation groups who feel wildlife habitat is being fragmented. In short, the BCA was proposed as a "tool for the time". The partnership started in 2011 and was just recently formalized. Is there a similar designation proposal in the FS? Not that he's aware of.

If lands have a high mineral potential or oil/gas potential, they don't meet the criteria for a BCA designation. The biggest obstacle they have faced so far is that people are unfamiliar with the term and it is confused with wilderness designation. The TRCP does not raise money for on the ground projects. A RAC member asked him to give an example of a habitat restoration project. He said the Chamberlain area is an example with prescribed burning. For timber sales, roads could be built to remove timber then closed when the sale is complete.

Joe asked how BLM would manage an area differently because of the designation. Scott said it may/may not be managed differently depending on the land use plan but it would have a level of protection that is not there now. A discussion followed on the pros/cons/questions/challenges on the designation process and how to increase awareness and understanding. Jodi said T&E species management may be challenging to mesh in designated areas. Whitney said the TRCP became active when they felt people in Washington and in many states didn't support the North American model of conservation which includes hunting, fishing and trapping pursuits.

### **Field Office Reports:**

#### **Butte Field Office – Scott Haight**

- On October 13, 2016, the Park/Gallatin/Broadwater travel management plan decision was signed that designated 107 miles of routes that are either open, limited or closed. It also designated the Copper City non-motorized trail area which is 17 miles of new construction for mountain biking north of Three Forks. Currently mountain bike groups are fund-raising to pay for the trail.

- Scott attended a meeting in Helena with non-motorized groups interested in trails in the Scratchgravel Hills. The group is putting together a proposal.
- BLM is conducting a 572 acre prescribed burn in the Soap Gulch area east of Melrose to improve sage brush habitat with the help of FS personnel.
- Marysville is close to having a draft EA completed which includes 4100 ac. of treatment through timber harvest, thinning, and WUI projects. The EA should be sent out in April followed by a public meeting. The area is a lynx foraging habitat area so treatments are scheduled to avoid conflicts.
- Weeds – new assistance agreements are in place with Broadwater, Silver Bow, and Lewis & Clark Counties. 20 spray days are planned in 2017. Weed spraying crew will be based in Helena and will focus on areas near the Scratchgravel, north L&C County, the Elkhorns, and Marysville.
- Timber Sales – The CMor Sale is completed and consisted of 9K tons in the Big Hole area. La Marche sale is on-going and is 4.7K tons in the first unit with two more units to be offered. Foresters are looking at potential areas in the west Big Hole for future sales.
- Clancy – Treatment continues with WUI fuel reductions and post/pole sales. Marysville will be the next focus area for timber harvest and vegetation treatments.
- BFO received a proposal from Northwest Energy to upgrade a 100KW powerline that runs north to south over the Sleeping Giant. They may be able to use fewer poles than the current line.
- RAC members Larry and Paul are working on the Johnson Stamp Mill. The money for rehab was allocated in FY 2017.

#### **Missoula Field Office – Jodi Wetzstein**

- Timber – The Chamberlain sale of 2.7 million BF is 50% complete; the sale near Philipsburg consisting of 2 million BF is 25% complete. They are shut down because of wet spring conditions. MFO staff are preparing two smaller timber sales with less than .5 million BF each.
- Later this year MFO plans to issue a stewardship contract in the lower Blackfoot corridor pending an EA decision that covers 11.5K ac of proposed treatment including precommercial thinning, burning and maintenance type work.
- No spring burning is planned but several are planned for fall.
- Rangeland Management – MFO will be issuing an EA decision on the Arrastra Creek lease renewal in the Markham area.
- Weeds – Two county assistance agreements are being renewed for Missoula and Powell Counties. Staffing includes two seasonals and one permanent employee.
- Mining – The Silver King Mine west of Philipsburg – a final draft of the engineering evaluation and cost was completed in November. The cleanup includes five adits, six waste rock dumps, a backfilled open slope, several structures, utility line trash cleanup and repair of a diverted sluice gulch stream.
- Kennecott Exploration has proposed activity on the Copper Cliff mine near Garnet. The proposal consists of three drill pads (two private, 1 BLM), a new exploratory road, a temporary stream crossing and two spring water developments.
- Recreation – may/may not have a Garnet Day this year. Last year 700 visitors overwhelmed the site and led to unsafe driving and parking. Paul asked about buses and Jodi said shuttles can be expensive but UofM may have vans available. Overflow parking may be available at Lubrecht.

#### **Dillon Field Office – Cornie Hudson**

- Lima/Tendoy exploration well – Cornie pointed out a map with the proposed locations. The DFO has reviewed the EA, provided a number of comments and sent the document back to the

contractor. BLM and FS are planning a page-turning review with the contractor. When the EA is final, Cornie would like the RAC to review.

The 2 alternatives are quite different; both exploratory wells are to look for oil. The BLM proposal includes 5 miles of new roads in “general” sage grouse habitat; the FS route is mainly on existing road, Little Sheep Creek Rd which requires a bit of reconstruction. If wells were successful, on the FS proposal the company could put all the wells on existing well pad. On the BLM proposal, they would have to develop 2 or 3 more pads to reach the oil. On the FS alternative they can drill straight down; for BLM they can drill down for .5 mile but then have to horizontal drill for almost 1 mile.

The contractor is calling BLM the “proposed alternative” but BLM doesn’t necessarily consider that accurate. There is more impact on the ground than just with road building. The page-turning review is scheduled for April 27 with release to the public May 1. Cornie thinks that may be optimistic. Scheduling public meetings with the contractor once the EA is released.

- Weeds – the budget is not looking too bad this year and DFO has filled their weeds positions. 40 spray days are planned between Madison and Beaverhead Counties. BLM doesn’t have funding for the County Cooperative Grants and they need to wait and see what happens with funding and the continuing resolution.
- Belmont Allotment EA in the middle Ruby watershed – this was an assessment that was pulled out for a separate decision. Two appeals have been received and BLM will be going through the litigation process.
- DFO recently became a member of a newly developed group organized by Jim McGee of the USFWS. It is entitled the SW MT Sagebrush Ecosystem Coordination Group and is composed of Federal, State and County entities with a goal of coordinating sagebrush habitat issues.
- Range – DFO will be working on the Red Rock/Lima watershed assessment this summer. The South Tobacco Roots and Blacktail watershed assessments EAs should be out by the end of May. In the South Tobacco Roots the max alternative calls for 10 miles of riparian restoration treatment, 9K acres of prescribed burning and 1K acres of proposed timber sales along with revising 11 allotment management plans. For Blacktail, the max alternative proposes 8K acres of burning, 5-6 miles of riparian restoration and 500 ac of timber sales with revision of 3 allotment management plans.
- Fuels – BLM is conducting prescribed burns in the Medicine Lodge area in coordination with private landowners.
- The Yank Swamp timber sale is complete for a total volume of 5 million BF. There is just a bit of road and cleanup work to do. The contractor was Sun Mountain.
- Sage Creek Off-road Travel Management –BLM has installed current maps, kiosks, and updated phone apps to continue with the education effort and feel it is successful.
- Revenue Flats – BLM will develop a recreation plan for the entire area. A group of mountain bikers wanted to develop a trail system that was controversial with local residents. There are many diverse uses in the area so Cornie made the decision to hold off on the trail until the recreation plan is completed.
- Hiring Freeze – when the freeze is lifted, Cornie will hire a new recreation planner and a geologist or mine engineer. She will also advertise and hire a range tech to collect habitat information and monitor plots – not just for range, it will be for all resources.

### **RAC Feedback to BLM**

Doug said he presumes everyone who serves on the RAC is comfortable with and in favor of preservation of public lands. He read a memo from former MT State Director Jamie Connell explaining the Planning 2.0 process and the direction for enhanced public involvement. He then read a quote from Wyoming's Representative Liz Cheney who introduced the measure to repeal Planning 2.0 saying that it would return the rights and authority to communities, citizens and industry. Doug felt there was no way to reconcile the two statements related to public involvement.

In Planning 2.0, landscape based planning criteria were used by BLM as opposed to unit area based planning used prior to that. Doug said 2.0 had been in the works for a couple of years and it concerns him that the change is more significant than it seems. Joe said that Congress could write a law to do something similar; BLM or the RAC as a group cannot lobby congress.

Jean stated that if we feel strongly as citizens we need to let Secretary Zinke know that they need to keep public input mechanisms in place. Joe said MFO is committed to the public involvement process they spelled out at the beginning of the process.

Bob M. said he felt it would be under the purview of the RAC to recommend to BLM that the newer planning process meets the needs of the public and should be used. Larry commented that BLM wouldn't be going back to 1983, that it would be going back to December, 2016. He feels BLM managers are the experts and asked what the RAC could do in support. Cornie said BLM managers realize how valuable public involvement is; it expands your perspective on issues. Larry said BLM is lagging behind in their use of social media. Cornie said BLM uses Facebook and Twitter but it isn't the primary means of communication.

Doug used the example of the Grand Staircase/Escalante National Monument designation as background for establishment of RACs in the west. The mechanism for public involvement via the RACs to advise BLM seemed to work. Bob M. said there are entities that don't want public input into the decision making process.

Koy said the RAC can make a recommendation to BLM to keep the intent of Planning 2.0. Jim asked what the biggest opposition was. Joe said Planning 2.0 said counties could be considered as public input but it didn't change their status – counties can be cooperating agencies or not involved at all. The decision is up to the counties. Another complaint was that some people felt that the "landscape level" of planning (looking outside jurisdictional boundaries) gave people outside the area more of a voice.

Koy asked if the RAC is interested in putting together a recommendation to send to the BLM State Director, Director of the BLM, and Secretary Zinke. Paul suggested the following wording as a start "In the spirit of making America great through shared conservation stewardship, embrace the expanded participation of the public, communities and local governments in the BLM planning processes."

Bob M. said it's important for the RAC to go on record to recommend support for BLM's efforts to increase public involvement in the decision making process. Cornie added "implementing the lessons learned in public involvement over the last 40 years".

Dan thanked everyone for being able to serve on the RAC. He hopes they will continue to get a diversity of opinions on the council. He disagreed with Doug that viewpoints are not reconcilable – more diverse perspectives lead to better discussions and cooperative working relationships.

Larry said the strength of the RACs is that we're all local people. He wondered if there may be some advantage of having a get together with other RACs and finding common issues (like Planning 2.0) that we could make a recommendation on. Koy said the RAC chairs meet occasionally in Billings. David A. said former State Director Jamie Connell tried to meet with the RAC chairs and vice-chairs twice a year to hear updates and share issues of importance. David also mentioned the importance of diversity on

the RAC and said they are looking for a tribal member and a state employee to represent those interests.

Koy asked if the RAC wanted to write a letter based on the discussion of the group. He asked Doug if he would be willing to draft a letter and share with the RAC via email. Then at the next meeting the RAC could take a final look, sign it and send up the BLM chain of command. Jim moved for Doug to craft a letter, Jean seconded and it passed unanimously.

**Agenda Items:**

- Cornie offered a presentation on conifer encroachment to the RAC from her staff. Need to allow 30-45 min at least.
- Climate change presentation and discussion. Koy recommends having a soil scientist as the first presenter since soils “tell a lot of history” and would be a good kick-off for the discussion.
- A field trip was discussed and may be scheduled for September or October. David A. said it is hard to make specific plans until the new members are appointed.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Dillon with the date to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Koy Holland, Chairperson