

San Rafael Swell Recreation Area Advisory Council

Zoom Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2021

Meeting attendees

San Rafael Swell Recreation Area Advisory Council (RAAC) members: Wade Allinson, Kent Wilson, Leslie (Les) K. Wilberg, Rodney (Rod) Player, Sue Bellagamba, and Elven (Leon) McElprang.

BLM employees: Greg Sheehan, Lola Bird, Rachel Wootton, Lance Porter, Chris Conrad, Amber Koski, Stephanie Howard, Daniel Kauffman, Dana Truman, Jaydon Mead, Myron Jeffs, Molly Hocanson, and Lisa Wilkolak.

Members of the public: Jim Jennings, Ben Grimes, Braden Sheppard, Carolyn Phippen, Jennifer Jones, Kim McFarlane, Mark Boshell, Neal Clark, Ray Bloxham, Ray Petersen, and Larry Ellertson.

Technical help introduction

Rachel Wootton

- Rachel discussed the Zoom platform and provided her contact info in case anyone had any technical difficulties.

Welcome and Introductions

- Lance Porter, Green River District Manager introduced himself and welcomed members of the Recreation Area Advisory Council (RAAC) and public. Time was turned over to the Utah BLM State Director, Greg Sheehan.
- Greg Sheehan, State Director introduced himself and gave some background on his experience. He discussed the importance of the RAAC as being representative of the broader public. He also explained the RAAC Charter and the major role of the RAAC in contributing to the creation of a long living management plan for the recreation area.
- Lance Porter then gave some background on himself and turned the time over to RAAC members to do the same.
- Wade Allinson, Leon McElprang, Rod Player, Les Wilberg, Kent Wilson and Sue Bellagamba introduced themselves to the BLM and to the public.
- Lance finished this portion with discussing logistics for the meeting.

Overview of Charter Roles and Responsibilities

Presenter: Amber Koski

- Amber introduced herself to the group and gave some background into her BLM experience.

- Establishment of the San Rafael Swell RAAC as part of the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019.
- Overview map showing the recreation area designated by the Act.
- The role of the RAAC is to advise the agency in future land planning decisions. The advice will be provided through the Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Lance Porter.
- Members, what they represent and their term limits.
- Objective of an Advisory Council.
- The Charter for the SRS RAAC.
- RAAC Council members roles and responsibilities include: attend meetings and field trips, participate in public discussion of issues, maintain up-to-date knowledge of issues affecting the committee's area, provide opinions and advice, and advise DFO of potential conflicts.
- No questions or comments.

San Rafael Swell Recreation Area Overview

Presenters: Chris Conrad and Stephanie Howard

- Chris gave some background on his experience with the BLM
- Overview map and explanation of designations made in the Dingell Act. These included: Jurassic National Monument, Wilderness Areas, Released Wilderness Study Areas, San Rafael Swell Recreation Area and Emery County Land Conveyance.
- Dingell Act requirements include: Protection and enhancement of recreational, natural, and educational resources; no new permanent or temporary roads constructed; motorized vehicles allowed only on designated roads; grazing livestock if established before, can continue.
 - The inventory requirements for grazing in the newly designated Wilderness areas are on-going. BLM has been meeting with permittees to identify and include routes and facilities that are already established.
 - Watering holes and ponds and access to those need to be addressed.
 - Administrative access for ranchers was explained to the group.
 - Certain rights-of-way were withdrawn from public land laws in the Dingell Act
 - All forms of entry, appropriation, and disposal under public land laws, the meaning of this needs to be clarified
 - Recreation Area and Wilderness Areas were also withdrawn from mining and leasing laws except for valid existing rights.
 - There are still 1,000s of active mining claims within the recreation area.
 - The Act requires a non-motorized trail study. A draft of this report should be ready for review by the next RAAC meeting.
 - Goodwater Rim Trail is the only trail in this study not on an existing road.
 - Goblin Valley State Park provides access to the front side of the reef, this conveyance to Goblin Valley should be completed within a couple of years.

- Non-motorized Recreation Trail Opportunities required: the opportunities for canyoneering, gravel grinding exceed those in the Moab Field Office
 - An economic impact analysis was also completed for the non-motorized recreation trail opportunities study.
- The public should be educated about Cold War and historic uranium mine sites in the recreation area.
 - These areas include MK Tunnels, Copper Globe, Hidden Splendor, Lucky Strike, Old Railroad Grade camps. There will need to be interpretive signs to educate the public.
 - Shared links to videos about these areas for later viewing.
- Prepare a [management] plan
 - Resource management planning (sets the rules)
 - Implementation/Activity Plans (conforms to the rules)
- Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment Process: Documents and Steps
 - This is a key process and RAAC involvement in this is crucial. It will determine what will be allowed in the future.
 - The Notice of Intent could possibly be published this Spring for the Plan Amendments. This will initiate Public Scoping.
- RMP Amendment options:
 - Released Wilderness Study Areas – In the Resource Management Plan these were designated as Wilderness Study Areas, and with Dingell Act these areas were released from that designation. Could discuss how to manage these areas now.
 - BLM Natural Areas – In the Resource Management Plan these were designated to manage for their wilderness characteristics, and with Dingell Act these areas most of these areas became Wilderness Areas but pieces were not. Could discuss how to manage these areas now.
 - Areas of Critical Concern (ACEC) – Examples: the I-70 corridor viewshed, and rock art ACEC. Boundaries may need to change given Recreation Area designation which may change visitor use patterns. ACECs shouldn't overlap Wilderness Areas by BLM policy.
 - Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Boundaries. The boundaries of these areas don't match the designations (ROS roaded natural in designated Wilderness Area, or ROS roadless natural in Recreation Area). The boundaries could be cleaned up to reflect the designations.
 - Off Highway Vehicle Designations
 - The open vs. closed OHV area designations were explained and there were questions on identifying areas on the map.
 - An OHV is not just an ATV, the definition includes motorcycles, cars, vans, pickup trucks, also aircraft and helicopters but not boats. It is vehicle traveling off-highway period.

- The closed areas are not closed for official use. Official use is search and rescue, BLM, and administrative access for permittees.
- Visual Resource Management (VRM)
 - Class I – Natural Character mostly overlaps previously designated Wilderness Study Areas. Should match all Wilderness Areas.
 - Class II – Retains existing character of landscape, previously overlapped BLM natural areas, which are mostly Wilderness Areas and some Recreation Area.
 - Class III – Partially retain existing, should not dominate the view. Currently about half of the current Recreation Area.
 - Class IV – Major modifications, may dominate the view. Currently about half of the current Recreation Area.
 - Things to think about – Are these classifications still appropriate based on the designation?
- Adjust Dispersed Camping
 - Dispersed camping is allowed throughout the Recreation Area.
 - Things to think about - What is the best way to manage this to minimize impacts?
- Timing: BLM is handling a giant workload. This plan amendment is not the only project. There are six Dingell Act RMP amendments, there are two Travel Management Plans which are court ordered to be completed in a certain time frame, Dingell Act land exchanges will begin picking up, there are Dingell Act conveyances, the Great American Outdoors Act funded several Price Field Office projects, and there are many implementation plans that are ongoing.
- Implementation Projects Process includes: Design the project, Conduct surveys, Prepare NEPA, Consultation, Issue decision, and Implement.

RAAC Member Discussion:

- Land exchange and SITLA- All the SITLA parcels in the recreation area are proposed by Congress to come to BLM. Land exchange procedure includes: receive a proposal, feasibility evaluation, Federal Register Notice, Appraisal, mineral potential analysis, historic properties analysis and other surveys, and Environmental Assessment. If approved, final title is conveyed. Map of all parcels to possibly exchange will be shared.
- How will State parcels be managed if not exchanged? There would need to be a Memorandum of Understanding (cooperative agreement) based on purpose and need. For instance: The State may not want to exchange the cell tower off of I-70, parts of Labyrinth were not exchanged due to helium assets.
- Concerning Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Boundaries –
 - What is the determining factor, and what changes boundary lines? They will be adjusted to congressional boundaries. Once the boundaries are determined what they become is dictated by what they contain.

- Example – Cane Wash contains a fence and a trough, would this be handled by granting administrative access to this into the wilderness area? These things need to be brought to BLM's attention. The Range team in Price has been meeting with permittees to get an inventory of the range facilities, so they can be documented as valid pre-existing rights. BLM provided Price Field Office contacts to the group to address any issues they know about.

- Question/Discussion - Is the BLM required to do a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum evaluation in Winter & Summer? No, the recreational opportunities usually are the same in all seasons on BLM land. The RAAC could bring up new opportunities if known.

- Is it possible to amend criteria based on monitoring of use levels and identification of issues? Yes, the BLM calls that adaptive management. Certain criteria can trigger a management change.
- Comments - There are many that are camping in cattle ponds, or using cattle corrals. This needs to be managed.
- Question/Discussion - Is there a specific distance from off the road that designates how far off the road you can camp? Currently undefined but best practice is to only camp where someone else has camped. May be defined by the San Rafael Swell Travel Management Plan.
- Comment - Most people just do things because of a lack of knowledge. This causes a lot on contention. Education helps.
- Interpretation is a valuable tool. One of the jobs of the RAAC is to help form decisions on things like that. There are more people finding the Swell every day. Visitation numbers keep climbing. Comment - There should be kiosks in grazing areas to help avoid conflicts by educating the public. Signage is key to educating people about cattle, rock art, etc, This is part of the robust conversations that we need to be having. You are here to cooperate in the planning effort. All opinions and suggestions need to be considered.

Review of Duties of Chairperson, Vice Chair and Designated Federal Officer

Presenter: Amber Koski

- Council Chairperson administers the meeting and certifies the accuracy of the meeting minutes.
- Vice Chairperson serves as backup to the Chairperson.
- The Designated Federal Officer approves or calls all council and subcommittee meetings, prepares and approves meeting agendas, attends all meeting, adjourns the meeting when they determine it is in the public's interest, chairs the meeting when directed to do so by the Secretary.
- To constitute a quorum, the number is half (rounded up) plus 1 = 5 members needed for a quorum. Regarding making recommendations consensus is ideal, if not possible an 80% vote is required, 5 out of 6 members have to concur.

RAAC Member Discussion / Vice & Chair Decisions:

- Nominations for Chairperson and Vice Chair were suggested by Wade Allinson. Leslie Wilberg for Chairperson, and Rodney Player for Vice Chair. This was seconded.

- A vote was held, all were in favor. The RAAC appoints Leslie K. Wilberg as Chairperson, and Rodney Player as Vice-Chairperson.
- Question - We do not have a tribal representative. Do we have to have the other member to constitute a quorum? The 5 members needed to concur includes the vacant the tribal representative seat.
- Question - Who sets the agenda? The Designated Federal Officer will work with the Chairperson to set the agenda. The Advisory Council sets the rules based on their comfort level there is no requirement to follow Robert's Rules of Order. However, normally you call for nomination, then there will be a vote. Regulations do not dictate how the process should run.
- Question - Is this a yearly appointment? It was decided that the Chair and Vice-Chairperson would serve until their term expires.

Chairperson dismissed until 1 pm, this motion was seconded.

Recreation and Visitor Services

Presenters: Myron Jeffs and Jaydon Mead

- Organization of BLM office structure – Who's Who
- Map showing areas covered beyond the San Rafael Swell Recreation Area
- Hot spots and activities overview
- Recreation Area visitation and data
 - Hard to specify data for the Recreation Area because data measurement points were set before the boundaries were established
 - 2020 adjusted some measurement points to collect more specific data for the Recreation Area
 - Field Office wide 2020 had 434,764 visitor days
 - 8 Traffic counters were installed in the Recreation Area 3 years ago
 - 14 Traffic counters recently installed in the Recreation Area. Plans with Emery County to install more.
 - Site specific: Good Water Rim Trail gets roughly 3,000 bikers a year, 5 year average visitation to the Swinging Bridge Campground is roughly 3,500 individuals, Little Wild Horse Canyon receives roughly 30,000 hikers per year.
- There are two developed fee campgrounds and 14 toilets, along with other amenities such as parking areas, trailheads, kiosks, and other types of facilities.
- Visitor Fees and Camping
 - A business plan was approved by the Utah Regional Advisory Council (RAC) to increase fees from \$6/night to \$15/night. The RAC also approved implementation of fees in: 5 locations distant from the Recreation Area, 4 locations in the Recreation Area (Temple Mountain Townsite, Buckhorn Wash, The Wickiup, and The Wedge), and three locations along the border of the Recreation Area (South Temple Wash, Little Wild Horse, and San Rafael Reef).
 - Implementation is in progress for three areas: Buckhorn Draw, South Temple Wash, and Temple Mountain Townsite.
- Partnerships and Volunteers

- 1,068 hours of volunteer work in FY 2020
- Partners obtain grants of their own in support of projects
- Partners and volunteers included: Emery County Trails Committee and Road Department, Emery Telcom, Utah State Parks, also Eagle Scout Projects, Wasatch Mountain Club, Backcountry Horseman, USU Eastern, Sage Riders, Dedicated Hunters, and Castle Country OHV Club contributed many hours.
- A look ahead
 - Campground developments and fee collections at the 7 locations within or adjacent to the Recreation Area
 - The Wedge is home to camping and more. It is a hub of activity containing a stunning overlook and the very popular Goodwater Rim Trail.
 - Fullers Bottom is owned by the DWR, and is a BLM Easement. There is continuing work on access improvements.
 - Justesen Flat is a hub of activity, easily accessible, and provides access to several locations and activities.
 - Non-motorized trail study is required by Dingell Act. BLM is in the process of putting together an inventory of trails and opportunities for non-motorized trails.

RAAC Member Discussion:

- Do fees go into the General Fund or stay at the Field Office level? All fees stay locally for enhancements and developments in the campground they come from. This includes general maintenance, toilets, toilet paper, fire rings, etc.
- What about Special Recreation fees? Funds go to the Field Office level.
- Are any of the areas going to get ADA accessible parking and access for wheelchairs, like the Wedge Overlook? There are many things that need to be done and this is a good recommendation.
- There needs to be counters in the high use areas to make sure that these networks are identified and able to handle all the people.
- What happens in areas that are bordering on National Parks? For instance, the San Rafael Swell Travel Management Plan has signed a cooperative agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, with National Parks bordering the Travel Management Area. They will be involved in all plans.
- Signage seems to be advantageous to all and can possibly be coordinated with the State Parks. There is a need for better directional signs. Last year the Price Field Office hired a Park Ranger that serves as an interpretive specialist. This will lead to upgrades in plans.
- Emery County's perspective on signage is that there are important stories to be told by the 2nd and 3rd generation that still use the Swell. Emery County does have some funding to help with signage needs.
- Signs for education on proper etiquette around rock art, dinosaur tracks, etc. are needed.
- Discussion regarding recreation use and visit with respect.

San Rafael Swell Travel Management Plan

Presenter: Daniel Kauffman

- Dan introduced himself and gave some background into his BLM experience.
- Overview and Background
 - Purpose and need of this travel planning project
 - Clearly and comprehensively designate inventoried and evaluated routes within the Travel Management Area (TMA) as open, limited, or closed to Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use
 - To adopt a Travel Management Implementation Plan
 - The need for the project is driven by the BLM's obligation to comply with the 2017 Settlement Agreement and the objectives reflected in the 2008 Resource Management Plans (RMPs)
 - Project Overview & Background
 - BLM is reviewing approximately 2,000 miles of existing routes.
 - The Travel Management Area encompasses portions within the Price and Richfield Field Offices.
 - BLM intends to designate each route as OHV open, limited, or closed
 - OHV Open = Recommended open for all modes of travel and uses.
 - OHV Limited = Recommended for limited use by travel mode, user, or season of use.
 - OHV Closed = Recommended for permanent closure to OHV use, though authorized use may continue. Route may be reclaimed, barriers may be installed, and signs may be placed.
 - The term "public OHV" includes passenger vehicles in addition to traditional OHV's such as 4WD, side by side, and motorcycles.
 - Each route has been reviewed by an interdisciplinary and inter-agency team of specialists.
 - This plan will not result in constructing new roads.
 - Travel planning effort and resulting TMP are not intended to provide evidence, bearing on or address the validity of any Revised Statute 2477 (RS 2477) assertions.
 - Maps of Field Office Boundaries and TMA Boundaries were presented.
- Public Feedback Opportunities & Highlights
 - How can you help us? What can we do better?
 - Public feedback opportunities include:
 - Ongoing information gathering
 - Public Scoping, Alternative Development, and Public Comment Period
 - Ways to comment during scoping
 - Preferred method is through the ePlanning website, once there you will be able to comment, or comment via the interactive web map.
 - Can email comments to the Price office: blm_ut_pr_comments@blm.gov

- You can also mail comments postmarked by March 4th to the Price Field Office.
- Points of helpful consideration, how to comment
 - Resources affected by route, purpose of route that needs to be considered, strong opinions on route, actively used and any missing routes.
- Public Outreach Highlights
 - Public News Release, social media posts, cooperative agreements, tribal consultation, emails to special interest groups, cooperators, intervenors, or private citizens, an online scoping.
 - An overview of ePlanning system, interactive map and how to comment was reviewed.

RAAC Member Discussion:

- Comments are not going through on the ePlanning system and cannot comment in the interactive map. The system is supposed to be getting better. There have been trouble tickets submitted to address issues. If anyone has problems, please let us know so we can send them to the ePlanning system.
- Is there anywhere on the map that will tell you what the routes are? The interactive map was pulled up and the group discussed the lack of information of the map to know exactly which route you are commenting on. It was demonstrated that layers can be turned off and on, there are changes that can be made to the base map to help get your bearings.
- There was a search performed for a specific route with help of BLM personnel.

San Rafael Swell RAAC – Advisory Council Web Page Tutorial

Presenter: Amber Koski

- [San Rafael Swell Recreation Area Advisory Council](#)
- The group visited the website and learned how to navigate to important information

Break –

Discuss public comment period process

Presenter: Rachel Wootton

Public commentors will be provided 4 minutes to address the RAAC.

Public Comment Period

- Neal Clark had no comment.
- Ray Petersen: There were two vacant seats, but I see now that Sue Bellagamba is the representative for conservation organizations. Is the empty seat on the RAAC, representative of Tribal Government going to be filled?
- Larry Ellertson: In regards to the WSA Released Lands, it should be considered that management should be for the broadest public use & benefit.
- Larry Ellertson: The Lone Peak 4 WD Jeep Club could also help with signage.

RAAC Wrap-up Discussion

- RAAC members discussed signage and made the following comments:
 - The Buckhorn Visitor center may have wall space for interpretive signs. There are empty kiosks that do not have signs. Signs need to be accurate. They could address rules and regulations. Could inform the public where their money is going.
 - Signage needs to be aesthetically pleasing (no sign pollution) and communicate the right message. In paved heavily used areas, more signs may be appropriate, but not so much in less traveled areas.
 - It might be useful to bring others from Emery County into the sign discussion.
 - Wilderness portal signs have been installed. BLM will start putting out signs on kiosks starting next week. These really convey recreation opportunities and how to properly recreate. There will be options for virtual signage. The State Office is creating something to be used in an Explorer application and downloaded for use offline.
 - Volunteer groups could be implemented to change out signs, remove outdated signs, and place new signs.
- RAAC would like to review other management plans and revisit the presentation about land designations at the next meeting.
- How does BLM views e-Bikes? An e-Bike can be on both motorized and non-motorized trails. They are not viewed as anything but an e-Bike, can be both.
 - If trails are built with non-motorized funds there may be an issue allowing eBikes. There are no non-motorized funding or trails in the Price Field Office. These e-Bike issues can be fleshed out in the Resource Plan Amendment Process.
- The question from the public about the Tribal representative vacancy on the RAAC was answered. The seat is open and hopefully will be filled
- Discussion on how the public can provide inventory information on ponds, trails, etc. BLM has been reaching out to permittees but this information could be conveyed at the Emery or Carbon County Trails meetings. The Act requires a complete inventory of all range facilities plus access in the Wilderness Areas and the Recreation Area. If something was missed the BLM needs to know.
- Discussion of non-motorized inventory being conducted. The report draft should be complete for the next meeting which includes canyoneering, and horseback trails. Areas may need protection or limitations.
- Can we give support or comment on the Travel Management Plan? Yes, you can give your recommendations. Hours could be spent on the interactive map. There are roads that are well used that need to stay open that we could concentrate on. The TMP will not create new roads so we need to fight to maintain to keep the roads open that ought to be.
- The group needs to think about camping designations. Right now everything is open to dispersed camping. It is an important topic because people will begin camping everywhere. There are ways to monitor high use camping areas. Aerial photographs during Easter and other busy times would be a useful tool and help show reasoning behind possible management changes.
- There needs to be a discussion on cultural protection. There are many rock-art panels, etc. that are being damaged by cattle rubbing against them. The council can discuss protection measures such as a 4 to 5 foot strip around the area and fencing.

San Rafael Swell Advisory Council Recommendations:

- Signage: BLM add to next agenda. Review details and options for how to improve signage and education. (Talk to Emery County and look at other areas for ideas)
- Understand land designations better at the next meeting.
- Keep all currently used routes in the San Rafael Swell Recreation Area open. Maintain roads, trails, within the San Rafael Swell Recreation Area.
- Resource Inventories should consider SITLA parcels since they may be exchanged in future.
- Consider adding rock art protections, ie: fences etc.
- Be more pro-active for camping (think about where it is appropriate, consider camping only in designated sites, review where dispersed camping is allowed.)

The Chairperson approved the recommendations that were presented. He also asked if anyone had more recommendations for the next meeting.

Kent Wilson motioned for approval of the discussed April agenda items. This was seconded by Leon McElprang. No one was opposed. The April Agenda will be shared when it is complete.

- Discussion on in-person meeting at Emery County Courthouse in April:
 - The next RAAC meeting will be held April 7th from 12:30 pm to 5:00 pm, and April 8th from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm.
 - Is it possible for the Council and BLM to meet in person, and for the public to meet virtually? BLM will have to check on this.
 - Since the pandemic, most meetings have been exclusively on Zoom platform.
 - Possibly offering both may increase the amount of input the RAAC receives. The public may not want to travel.
 - It was proposed that two day RAAC meetings might be difficult for those who work. The members have no issue with the schedule as it is.
 - The Federal Register Notice posted the February 17th meeting all day and the two day meeting in April. The next meeting cannot be changed without notification in the federal register.

Chairperson adjourned meeting at 4:50 pm

Approved:

X

3/4/2021

Leslie K. Wilberg
Chairperson