

# **Bureau of Land Management**

Northern California District Resource Advisory Council  
Virtual Meeting, Aug. 27, 2021

## **Summary Minutes\***

### **Opening Business**

Chairman Leonard Moty called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. The BLM Zoom facilitator went over instructions. The agenda was approved as distributed.

**Attending:** Jeff Blewett, Thibault Hoppe-Glosser, Vint Stevenson, Justin Robbins, Dan Efseaff, Josh Cook, Leonard Moty. **Absent:** Carl Parks, Oliver Rogers.

**BLM Staff attending:** District Manager Dereck Wilson, Acting Arcata Field Manager Tom Bickaukas, Applegate Field Manager Craig Drake, Eagle Lake Field Manager Emily Ryan, Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata, District Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana, California State Office Ethics Advisor Keifer Wells.

### **RAC Ethics**

Keifer Wells presented information on the BLM's conflict of interest requirements for those serving on advisory councils. He noted the rules are spelled out in regulation and in the advisory charter. Essentially, no member may participate in a matter advising the BLM in which he or she has a direct or indirect (those involving spouses and children) financial interest. They must recuse from these discussions. Members must disclose to the BLM their interests in leases, licenses and contracts with the BLM. Members must recuse themselves from RAC discussions involving these topics or issues.

He stressed that the RAC's deliberations must be free from conflicts of interest.

### **Northwest California Resource Management Plan**

District Manager Dereck Wilson presented information and PowerPoint program on the BLM's development of the Northwest California Integrated Resource Management Plan and the opportunities for the RAC's involvement.

He noted that the RAC members represent various constituencies and points of view important to the BLM land use planning process, and said it is up to the council to determine how they will participate in the planning process.

In the presentation, Dereck noted that the plan will cover BLM-managed public lands overseen by the Arcata and Redding field offices in Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Trinity, Siskiyou, Shasta, Tehama and Butte counties. The plan will replace the outdated Arcata and Redding resource management plans, both of which are more than 25 years old.

Key points in Dereck's presentation:

- The planning process now underway is a continuation of work started in 2016, but temporarily halted in 2018 while the field offices focused on recovery from the Carr and Camp wildfires, both of which had major impacts on public lands.
- Information collected in earlier meetings with stakeholders, state, local and federal agencies and Native American Tribes will be carried over into the current planning process, with new information added in the ongoing scoping process.
- The RAC can consider providing comments on the issues the plan should address in the public scoping process that will begin later this year. The RAC will also have an important role to play in commenting on the draft range of plan alternatives.
- He said the RAC can determine the best way to participate; they could develop a subcommittee to provide recommendations to the full RAC for forwarding to the BLM or work on the matter in full council meetings.

Dereck presented information on the planning timeline, noting that deadlines will be established when the BLM published in the Federal Register a Notice of Intent to begin developing the plan and an Environmental Impact Statement that will analyze the potential impacts of various plan alternatives. The target date for the Federal Register publication is Nov. 21, 2021.

In response to a question about potential funding increases, Dereck noted that the plan will help the BLM prioritize management, thus guiding use of funding allocations the agency receives.

## **Wild Horses and Burros**

### **Program**

Jeff Fontana provided an overview of the BLM wild horse and burro program, the 1971 Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act, and the BLM's responsibility to manage and protect these animals in areas where they existed when the law was passed.

He noted that the Act requires the BLM to set population levels for each herd so that they are part of a "thriving, natural ecological balance" on the range. Animals declared excess must be removed from the range.

Jeff discussed private placement of animals removed from the range through the BLM's adoption and sales programs and use of leased Midwest pastures to hold unadoptable horses.

### **Surprise Complex Wild Horse Gather**

Applegate Field Manager Craig Drake presented a PowerPoint program on the upcoming gather of the Massacre Lakes, Bitner, High Rock, Wall Canyon, Nut Mountain and Fox Hog herd management areas. These herd management areas are overpopulated; the intent of the upcoming gather is to reduce all to their appropriate management levels.

## **Fire Program**

Dereck presented information on the district fire program and the differences between the east and west sides of the district. In the Applegate and Eagle Lake field offices in the east, the BLM has direct protection responsibilities and staffs fire engines, a helicopter and hotshot crew (the latter two are national resources). For public lands managed by the Redding and Arcata field offices in the west part of the district, direct protection of BLM-managed land is the responsibility of CAL FIRE, and the field offices coordinate closely in fire situations. Dereck also announced that the Arcata and Redding field offices and their partner organizations have received about \$10 million in CAL FIRE forest improvement grant funds for fuels reduction work in a number of areas including the King Range National Conservation Area.

## **Ongoing Fires**

Jennifer Mata reported on the impacts to BLM lands of the ongoing Monument and McFarland fires. Emily Ryan said that fire recovery work is underway on the Beckwourth Complex Fire that burned homes in the community of Doyle, which is part of the Eagle Lake Field Office direct protection area. Plans are being prepared for seeding grasses and bitterbush, important components of the mule deer habitat on public lands in the area.

## **State Director's Report**

The council received a written report from California State Director Karen Mouritsen covering the status of BLM programs across the state. There were no questions or comments.

## **Public Comment**

- Ryan Henson, California Wilderness Coalition: Ryan expressed concern with the impacts that illegal marijuana growing is having on public lands. He said his organization is working with Congress to increase funding to deal with the issue.

## **Closing Business**

Dereck asked RAC members to be ready to discuss their role in the land use planning process when they next meet on Oct. 8. He also noted that there may be a meeting in December at which the RAC will have the opportunity to develop a scoping comment for the NCIP process.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

*Summary minutes prepared by  
Jeff Fontana, Northern California District Public Affairs Officer*

\*These minutes are a summary of the RAC proceedings. They are not a verbatim account of the meeting.