

Bureau of Land Management
Northern California District
Resource Advisory Council

Field Tour and Business Meeting
Thursday and Friday, November 5-6, 2015
Eureka, California

Summary Minutes

Thursday, Nov. 5

Members of the council convened for a field trip focused on the California Coastal National Monument and coastal management issues affecting the Arcata Field Office. Stops included the Trinidad Lighthouse, Lighthouse Ranch at the South Spit of Humboldt Bay, and the Lost Coast Headlands.

Friday, Nov. 6

Chairman Leonard Moty called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. in the conference center of the Red Lion Hotel.

Attendance

Category one:

Absent: Todd Swickard, Skip Willmore, Russ Hawkins, Alan Abbs, Roger Kirkpatrick.

Category two:

Carol Montgomery, Frank Bayham, Jennifer Powell, Bill Phillips. Absent: John Bernstein.

Category three:

Jessie Diermier, Leonard Moty, Pat Frost, Mary Nordstrom, Martin Balding.

There is no majority present in category one, and no quorum of the advisory council.

Staff attending:

Eagle Lake Field Manager Ken Collum (acting designated federal official), Associate Applegate Field Manager Nate Packer, Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata, Arcata Field Manager Molly Brown, Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana, Arcata Planning and Environmental Coordinator Dave Fuller, Eagle Lake Field Office Ecologist Valda Lockie.

Guests: Kathryn Johnson, McKinleyville. By teleconference, Carla Bowers, Volcano.

Opening business

The agenda was approved as mailed. The minutes from the August meeting were approved with no changes.

BLM Leadership Reports

State Director's Report:

Ken Collum summarized a report from Acting State Director Joe Stout. Highlights:

- New state director Jerome “Jerry” Perez starts January 11. He replaces Jim Kenna who retired October 2. Jerry looks forward to getting around to all the field offices and meeting with partners and stakeholders.
- Joe Stout, CA associate state director, is acting state director until the new state director arrives.

Budget

- BLM is operating under a continuing resolution through December 11.
- Congress and the President are working on a 2-year budget agreement.
- In the last fiscal year, the BLM generated over \$5 billion in receipts from public lands, benefiting state governments and the U.S. Treasury.

Statewide priorities:

- Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
 - Joint federal/state planning effort for 22 million acres in the California desert
 - Draft EIS/EIR was release in September 2014. Final EIS expected next week.
- Sage Grouse
 - Great Basin Region Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy is being implemented
 - The Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region encompasses the Eagle Lake and Applegate field offices in NorCal District. The Record of Decision was released in September 2015.
 - There is a strong management focus on protection of greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat, including firefighting efforts to protect unburned “islands” of sagebrush that provide food and cover for Greater Sage grouse
 - Emphasis on partnering with local farmers and ranchers
- National Conservation Lands 15th Anniversary

- This year marks an important milestone for National Conservation Lands. America's newest conservation system is 15 years old. Today, these National Conservation Lands include 874 federally recognized areas and more than 30 million acres of national monuments, national conservation areas, wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, national scenic and historic trails, and conservation lands of the California desert.
- Northern California hosted national events in June at Headwaters, King Range and, Trinidad.
- Desert district will host anniversary event Nov. 6 at the Santa Rosa San Jacinto Mountains National Monument.

District Manager's Report:

Ken summarized the Northern California District's priorities for the upcoming year:

Sage Grouse:

- Native plant program -- contracts for seed/plants.
- Wild horse and burro management
- Weeds
- Water rights.
- AIM/monitoring
- Grazing permit renewals
- Habitat restoration (weeds, native plants.)
- East side fire management plan update
- Modify workload targets for Eagle Lake and Applegate to reflect sage grouse implementation work.

Arcata-Redding RMP

- Finish the management summary
- Start envisioning (pre scoping)
- Modify workload targets to reflect RMP workload.

Other mandates

- Iron Mountain shooting area lead cleanup (Redding)
- Trinidad Lighthouse management plan (Arcata)
- Headwaters plan amendments (Arcata)
- Glass Mountain geothermal due diligence, compliance and public safety issues (hydrogen sulfide issue). (Applegate)
- Dodge, Coleman, Lodge, and Bald fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation plans. (Applegate, Eagle Lake, Arcata)

- Trinity Public Utility District land exchange (legislated). (Redding)
- Trinity River Restoration Project EAs. (Redding).
- National Readiness Review (fire).

Northern California Integrated Resource Management Plan

David Fuller, planning and environmental coordinator with the Arcata Field Office, presented information on the BLM's progress developing a resource management plan that will cover public lands managed by the Arcata and Redding field offices. This single plan will replace two outdated RMPs, which are the land use plans that guide management decisions.

Dave said that both plans are outdated, and that the BLM has determined to move forward with a landscape-level planning approach. He outlined the process leading to development of the new resource management plan.

Council members Frank Bayham and Leonard Moty expressed concerns about the scope of the plan, citing the vastness of the area and differences in natural and cultural resource conservation issues.

As a first step in the RAC's involvement in the planning process, members developed a list of issues that the BLM should consider as the plan moves forward:

- Consider development of equestrian trails. Availability of riding areas could help increase the adoption rate for wild horses.
- Address climate change.
- Evaluate the impacts of rising sea levels on archaeological resources.
- Consider water availability (drought)
- Adaptive management
- Forest health and wildfire
- Best ways to manage dispersed recreation
- Consider fiscal implications of planning decisions.
- Consider ways to provide public land access for people with limited physical ability. Provide same levels of recreational opportunities.
- Use new technology, such as virtual tours to address accessibility issues.
- Consider uses of new technology to provide information on how people can visit and experience the public lands.

- Encourage business opportunities associated with the public lands.
- Security. Ensure that users are safe and the resource is protected. For example ensure there is cell signal availability for popularly used areas.
- Consider using webinars as ways to engage the public in the planning process.
- Consider user surveys.

Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata explained that the BLM's new planning regulations and processes will feature a process called "envisioning," an opportunity for developing a vision and identifying values associated with public lands and resources. She asked the RAC to help develop a process to involve the public in that process. Suggestions:

- In developing the envisioning strategy the BLM needs to find ways to engage broad publics, not just the people who are most involved and most often comment.
- RAC members can engage their organizations and constituent groups, relaying their concerns, issues and statements to the BLM.
- Use social media and local news outlets as outreach tools.
- Use traditional news media outlets as contact points. Take advantage of news media connections that the BLM has already developed.
- Facebook events are a good way to reach constituents.
- Live meetings are the best venue in rural communities and where internet access is limited.
- Use existing meeting opportunities.

RAC members discussed the values that should be considered in development of the new RMP:

- Access to the land in a way that protects the resources for the future.
- Varied experiences, a wide spectrum from developed and interpreted to remote and primitive.
- Partnerships
- Healthy and intact ecosystems
- Economic values and benefits

- Education leading to conservation and ownership
- Addressing damage from unauthorized uses
- Appreciation for demographic trends and consideration for the needs and potential contributions of aging populations.
- Consider shifting public land uses (shift from dirt bikes to all-terrain vehicles, for example).

Jeff will provide a copy of the PowerPoint presentation to the RAC members.

Public comment

Chairman Leonard Moty opened the public comment period. He said speakers will be limited to five minutes.

Katheryn Johnson: Saw this meeting notices in the local newspaper and that encouraged her to attend. Suggested there should be improved vegetation management to improve the views on Trinidad Head.

Carla Bowers (by teleconference): Said she was speaking for a national advocacy on wild horses and burros. Carla said commented on the sale authority amendment to the Wild Horse and Burro Act, commonly referred to as the Burns Amendment. She cited public polling showing strong public opposition to horse slaughter and said that consuming horses is not part of American culture. Carla said she would provide updated population information to RAC members. She requested additional speaking time because there were no other participants on the phone or in the room, and said it was unfair that she should be limited to five minutes under these circumstances.

Sage Grouse

Eagle Lake Field Manager Ken Collum summarized the work ahead of the district's east-side field offices now that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined not to list the species on the federal Threatened and Endangered Species list. The BLM has amended its land use plans to include conservation measures for sage grouse and that will impact all projects in sage grouse habitat.

Ken outlined the sage grouse management areas and the status of management plans. He displayed a map showing priority areas and general habitat management areas and discussed management situation, including the importance of riparian areas.

Eagle Lake Field Office Ecologist Valda Lockie presented information on native plant restoration and the potential for using non-native grass plants as “placeholders,” plants that can keep invasive plants such as cheatgrass at bay while native plants are re-established during habitat restoration projects. She noted that California BLM has a policy to prefer native plants in these projects and noted availability of native seed has been an issue.

In a PowerPoint presentation focused on restoration work on areas burned in the 2012 Rush Fire, she made several key points:

- There are concerns with areas converting to cheat grass after fire. The species has little wildlife or forage benefit and fuels wildfires.
- Work done to benefit sage grouse also benefits other species including mule deer.
- Native grasses can compete with invasives such as cheat grass, but in varying degrees. Success rates in replanting projects have been low, as reduced snowpacks and a shift to summer rains impact how well seeds respond.
- Telemetry data shows sage grouse location patterns in the areas affected by the fire. This helps specialists and managers plan seeding projects in locations that will best benefit the species.
- There is potential to use non-native grasses such as forage kochia and crested wheatgrass planted strategically to protect sagebrush islands from wildfire, but because of California-BLM’s native plant policy it can be difficult to get project funding when non-native plants are proposed.

In response to questions, Valda pointed out that opposition to using plants such as forage kochia stems from a time when the plants were used to increase livestock grazing forage and not for the placeholder approach now being discussed in the district’s east side field offices.

Frank suggested that the topic seems ripe for research.

Field Office Reports

Ken noted that the Eagle Lake Field Office is transferring two landfills to Lassen County and is working on a legislative transfer of public lands north of Susanville to the Susanville Indian Rancheria.

There was no discussion on the remaining field office reports.

Closing Business

Topics from RAC for future discussion:

- Wild horse management and the herds in the Eagle Lake and Applegate field offices, with a field tour into a wild horse and burro herd management area.
- An update on the number and acreage of wilderness study areas in the district and report on management issues.

Comments from RAC members:

- Carol Montgomery suggested that during public comment speakers should be given more time if there are not sufficient speakers to fill the allotted time period. She said Carla should have been provided more speaking time.
- Pat Frost noted that public speaking time limits should be noted in the meeting agenda.

Next Meeting:

Members agreed that late March or early April would be preferred. An east side field office will host. Jeff will poll members electronically to determine a meeting date.

The meeting was adjourned

*Summary minutes compiled by
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BLM Northern California District*