



**DENCA Advisory Council Minutes
January 25, 2012
Mesa County Courthouse Annex, Grand Junction, CO**

Those attending:

- Chair Katie Steele of Grand Junction
- Joe Neuhof of Grand Junction
- Oscar Massey of Whitewater
- Neil "Mike" Wilson of Eckert
- Vice-chair Bill Harris of Montrose
- Tamara Minnick of Grand Junction and
- Terry Kimber of Delta
- Steve Acquafresca of Grand Junction
- ***Steve Boyle**, of Montrose, representing wildlife interests
- ***Doug Atchley** of Delta, representing Delta County

*Newly appointed to Advisory Council by Interior Secretary Salazar.

BLM staff attending: Katie Stevens, Andy Windsor, Ben Blom, Lynae Rogers, Catherine Robertson and Brodie Farquhar.

Public attending: Austin Massey, Steve Chapel, Dave Upchurch, Terry Gray, Bob and Doris Janowski, James Solomon, Richard Gore, Lee Gelatt, Richard Miller, Joe Sperry, Bob and Lydia Herron, Del Martin, Jan Burch, Sherry Schenk, Eric Rechel, Jan Potterveld, Kent Davis, Dick Miller, Tracy Rohde, Jan Shepherd, Joyce Olson, Ben Edwards, Rhonda and Van Edwards, Rick and Marilyn Cummelin, Kay Simonson, Mark Ackerman.

Chairwoman Katie Steele noted presence of a quorum. Steve Boyle and Doug Atchley welcomed as the newest council members.

Steven Boyle, of Montrose, is the Principal at BIO-Logic, Inc., a natural resources consulting business. He is a wildlife and conservation biologist, formerly with the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He serves on the Gunnison Sage-grouse San Miguel Basin Working Group, and is active in the Black Canyon Regional Land Trust and other programs that promote conservation easements to protect working farms and ranches from development. He was selected to represent wildlife and ecological interests. He replaces **Jason Beason** of Paonia.

Doug Atchley, of Delta, is a Delta County Commissioner. He retired from banking in 2007, managing a group of Wells Fargo banks which included branches in Delta, Montrose, Telluride and two in Gunnison.

He was a founding member of Delta Area Development Inc., and has served as chamber president . He operates a cattle ranch in Delta County. He was selected to represent Delta County. He replaces **Jan McCracken** of Delta.

Katie Steele reminded the council and audience that the council is merely reviewing management alternatives, that it is not yet time to work on a preferred management alternative. She asked the council members to ask themselves whether the proposed alternatives cover a full range; are realistic and whether the council can form a general consensus on alternative elements. She said the council will focus on travel management in February.

Katie Stevens reviewed the role of the Advisory Council for the benefit of new faces in the audience. The D-E NCA Advisory Council was chartered by the legislation that created the NCA. The task of the Advisory Council is to give advice to the BLM as it crafts a Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the NCA. Currently, the council is looking at whether the draft alternative management plans cover a full range. The draft RMP/EIS should be on the street by fall, for full public review and comment over 90 days. BLM has provided the council with information about the four alternatives and the council is providing feedback to the BLM. Urged the public to continue to attend meetings and talk to Advisory Council members.

Katie Steele said that with so much work to be done, the council will take public comments, but not back and forth over questions and answers.

Public Comment:

Bob and Doris Janowski (with a home on the north edge of Hunting Grounds) presented a petition to the council with 290 signatures. Two-thirds of the petitioners are local residents. The petition supports multiple-use access to the Hunting Grounds. **Janice Shepherd**: spoke of the need to regulate the activity of geocaching, keeping it out of wilderness, and not allowing new sites. Suggested that a list of rules could be posted on the Internet. **Jan Potterveld**: suggested that Alternative A is not clear that it reflects current management practices. Suggested need for minimally-developed campgrounds (picnic tables and a toilet) for the Hunting Grounds and Cactus Park. It should be a good camping opportunity for local families. **Eric Rechel**: suggested that each alternative avoid high trail density per square mile, which he defined as three miles of trail/road per square mile. High densities cause habitat fragmentation for wildlife.

Recreation Alternatives:

Bill Harris worked with **Mike Wilson, Joe Neuhof** and **Terry Kimber** in reviewing the management alternatives for recreation in the NCA.

Bill Harris raised issue of target shooting in the NCA – the fact that none of the management alternatives allow for designated shooting areas. **Terry Kimber** suggested that a full range of alternatives would have at least one alternative calling for a designated shooting area. Not necessarily a formal shooting range, but safe spots could be designated for target shooting.

General consensus that there should be no glass objects used for target practice. Suggestions that schools or community service groups could assume responsibility for cleaning up target shooting sites.

Council members suggested that language in alternatives be more explicit in what is *also* allowed in an area, after noting the primary or foremost activity for an area. Clear up potential misunderstandings and misperceptions. Don't want to assume that something isn't allowed just because it isn't mentioned.

Terry Kimber: based on camping stay limits, a full range of alternatives should include zero overnight camping in Gunnison River canyon. **Bill Harris** likes the use of growth triggering a permit system for rafters who camp in the canyon. **Mike Wilson** cautioned that some areas might be too ecologically fragile to allow large, commercial groups. **Joe Neuhof** sees a public consensus for continued OHV use in the hunting grounds, as well as other recreational uses.

Grazing Alternatives:

Tamera Minnick noted the range of alternatives allows for grazing on 90 to 98 percent of D-E NCA – is that a sufficiently wide range? **Steve Acquafresca** noted those percentages are misleading, as only 75 percent of the NCA can be grazed. **Doug Atchley** said allocatable acres are available only on paper. Ranchers also concerned over definition of “trailing” – that it not mean driving cattle up entire canyon in one day. Range of alternatives – even those disliked – lends itself to fuller analysis and greater credibility of process.

BREAK

4:30-4:45 P.M.

Further Discussion

Discussion raised the point that in the current range of alternatives, recreation appears to be equal to or has primacy over grazing. A full range should have an alternative that manages recreation to help meet grazing objectives – as well as an alternative that manages grazing to help meet recreation objectives. Topic of grass banking came up --allowing non-local ranchers to use a NCA grass bank.

Oscar Massey wants to discuss grazing further with other permittees. Grass banks should be used to benefit NCA resources first. **Bill Harris** noted that defining a grazing system at the RMP level would “lock it in” and lose all the flexibility at the implementation level.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Dick Miller: lack of input by local ranchers until the draft RMP comes out, is less than desirable and reduces flexibility to change. He called for balance between recreation and livestock. More restrictions make it harder economically. No grazing in Escalante is a red flag for him, even as an alternative.

Katie Steele: trying to see every possible scenario, have better credibility with range of alternatives. If omit an alternative, leave ourselves vulnerable. **Katie Stevens:** BLM considers input from council, but is responsible for preferred alternative.

Joe Sperry (sheep grower): said RMP should be more open. Wants opportunity to look at alternatives before they go to the printer. **Janice Shepherd:** might be desirable to have guard dogs on leash when herds come trailing through camp sites. Would be nice to have quite use trails run up to the rim above East Creek. **Lee Gelatt:** Quite Use Group simply asking for a few trails, not for everything.

Council discussion about ACECs (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern) will be at next meeting.

Upcoming

Next meeting will be February 1, in Delta, at Delta Performing Arts.

The following meeting will be in Grand Junction, Feb. 15, at the Mesa County Courthouse Annex, downstairs. All meetings are 3-6 p.m.

