



**DENCA Advisory Council Minutes
April 4, 2012
Mesa County Courthouse, 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
- Doug Atchley of Delta, representing Delta County
- Tamara Minnick of Grand Junction
- Terry Kimber of Delta
- Steve Acquafresca of Grand Junction

Absent:

- Vice-chair Bill Harris of Montrose
- Steve Boyle, of Montrose, representing wildlife interests

BLM staff attending: Katie Stevens, Andy Windsor, and Brodie Farquhar.

Public attending: Bill and Pat Thompson, Eric Esau, Bob and Doris Janowski, Erich Rechel, Jan Burch, Sherrie Schank, Kaye Simmonson, Tracey Rohde, Barbara Hill, Dave Upchurch, Mark Ackerman, Del Martin, Nancy Martin, Mary and Conrad Tucker, Jeff Printster, Tom Derryberry, Joyce Olson, Lee Gelatt

Katie Steele noted the presence of a quorum and reminded Council members of their responsibility to submit guidance to BLM on how they’d like to see things managed in the D-E NCA. **Katie Stevens:** the Council provides BLM with preferred alternative recommendations, which help prepare a draft resource management plan for public review, which will occur later this year. The BLM interdisciplinary team will get together in late April and provide input from individual resource perspectives. **Katie Stevens:** Important for me to understand the intent of Council’s recommendations.

Public comment

Bob Janowski: Hunting Ground Community Access Group leader developed a multiple-use map of trails and jeep roads on the Hunting Grounds. Compiled by **Janowski** and **Del Martin**, the map’s trails would be for all users, offering large loops and views of the Gunnison River canyon. Noted that the Old Spanish

Trail is almost entirely obliterated by highways, roads and buildings, so no restrictions should be imposed in the name of a heritage experience.

Review of Alternatives

Tamera Minnick presented the comments from **Steve Boyle**. Regarding natural resources, striving for vegetative health to be good or very good is good in theory, but will be hard to implement in practice. Council discussion reached consensus that reaching “very good” condition for 100 percent of each vegetative community is an impossible goal, so it may be better to strive for improvements in trends. Council agreed BLM should have all the tools and flexibility it needs to improve habitat, rather than rely solely on natural processes. As Council members reviewed copies of Chapter 2 (four management alternatives), most found that they didn’t stay with one alternative, but their recommendations mixed and matched approaches from multiple alternatives.

Bill Harris: prefers Alternative C for protecting raptor nests and critical areas.

Council concerned about relying on hard dates for closures, noting that changing weather and climate can negate those dates. The consensus was to time closures to qualities, not dates.

Council debated prairie dog conservation. Doing fine, others they’re in trouble and need conservation before they get listed under the Endangered Species Act. Similarly, sagebrush habitat needs conservation so as to aid sage grouse. Avoiding sagebrush park fragmentation is one issue where conservation should be prioritized over recreation.

Council also agreed BLM should look at options if seeps/springs are closed off from cattle, a man-made water source needs to be developed in compensation.

Regarding desert bighorn sheep, **Steve Boyle** supports Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) management recommendations, but also urged BLM to carefully evaluate how to avoid undue burdens on grazers. Council members asked BLM to weigh the economic impact of alternatives. An allotment swap could be a tool to get further away from bighorn sheep. Giv BLM tools and flexibility to manage the situation, balancing needs of bighorn sheep and sheep growers. **Katie Steele** suggested any numbers be set on a permitting basis, rather than in the RMP.

WAFWA recommendations about bighorn sheep, economic impact, stress from humans and pet dogs and what does the word “prohibitive” mean to the Council? Sheep growers meeting again in May.

Council consensus was to use, but localize the WAFWA recommendations.

On wilderness, Joe Neuhof reported a sub-group consensus on the following points:

- Avoid fixed bolts for rock climbing in the wilderness.
- Use different management approaches in the three wilderness zones.
- Provide motorized road/trail access to the edge of wilderness, so people can then hike/ride in.
- Importance of wilderness as an educational resource.

Bill Harris’ written input suggested including avoid camping near rock art and no overnight camping in the day use area around the Rambo property. Discussion addressed size and numbers of educational groups coming to the wilderness. Consensus was that different zones required different size and number of groups.

Cultural Resources

Bill Harris wrote that he endorsed Alternative C for cultural resources, with an emphasis on public education, stabilizing cabins and use offsite interpretation to protect Old Spanish Trail. Council consensus was same approach for preservation of paleontological resources. BLM urged to develop a plan when cultural and paleo sites inevitably become “popular.”

Regarding heritage tourism in Escalante Canyon, concerns raised about additional people and traffic; how to protect private property and road safety.

Public comment

Tom Derryberry: desert bighorn range widely, up and down the canyons. Urged BLM to keep working on issue. Advertising cultural sites, will attract visitors. **Conrad Tucker** expressed admiration for the Hunting Grounds map and multiple-use approach. **Kaye Simonson** cited other approaches to managing ranches like the Rambo site, and urged a strong maintenance component for historic structures.

ACECs

Council suggested that rather than use Wild and Scenic River protections, BLM could use Area of Critical Environmental Concern designations instead. Briefly discussed designating Cottonwood Creek canyon as an ACEC.

Next meeting is May 2 at the Delta County Courthouse, at 3 p.m.

Katie Stevens announced that this will be the last meeting for writer/editor **Brodie Farquhar**, who is returning to Wyoming to be with his family. Council members thanked him for his efforts.