



**Minutes of the D-E NCA Advisory Council  
July 17, 2013, 3:00--6:00 p.m.  
The John McConnell Math & Science Center of Western Colorado  
Grand Junction, CO**

**Council members attending:** Katie Steele, Joe Neuhof, Oscar Massey, Bill Harris, Tamera Minnick, Steven Boyle, Doug Atchley, and Terry Kimber (via Skype).

**Council members absent:** Steve Acquafresca, and Neil "Mike" Wilson.

**BLM staff attending:** Katie Stevens, Andy Windsor, Collin Ewing, and Marie Lawrence.

**Members of the public attending:** Hank Lohmeyer, Joyce Olson, Gwen Russell, Justin Russell, Kaye Simonson, Lee Boren, Glenda Boren, Brandon Siegfried, Janice Shepherd, Emily Hornback, Kate Graham, Karen Kulp, Robbie LeValley, Jan Potterveld, Ryan Swygman, and others.

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**Call to order and introductory remarks**

3:05 p.m.: Chair Katie Steele called the meeting to order and made introductions.

**Role of the Council, agenda review, and meeting objectives**

Collin Ewing: Role of the council is to advise BLM in planning process. Omnibus Act created the NCA. Draft RMP is on street for public review. Advisory Council is spending much time reviewing. Next series of Council meetings is to talk about resources and resource uses, and the difference between the Council's recommendations and the Preferred Alternative (Alternative E).

Steele: (Went over this meeting's agenda and mentioned next meeting's agenda.) Meeting schedule and agendas are on D-E NCA RMP website. (Gave brief summary of the five alternatives.) All topics will be discussed and public comment must be submitted by August 22.

**Council discussion: cultural resources**

Bill Harris: Council agreed that off-site interpretation is better with Old Spanish Trail and other such resources, and agreed that interpretation is needed for Native American sites and

historical sites. Council recognizes that self-discovery is important, so suggested to limit on-site services. Delta County is concerned about impact of on-site services on private lands. Matrix on page 86-9, and map in Figure 2-9 cover heritage areas talked about in Preferred Alternative. Other sections can be found in Affected Environment. Evaluation of different alternatives is in Environmental Consequences.

There are a number of laws to protect cultural resources. BLM is in charge of monitoring and enforcing laws, so much is prescribed by federal laws. Key is to think about what we want to offer as a place for people to visit for personal contact, on-site interpretation, development, parking area, trails, and interpretive signs. Some places in BLM lend themselves to that. Any places in Dominguez being considered for the National Register of Historic Places?

Ewing: When we find a site, we figure out if it's eligible. We don't often have sites listed on Register. Calamity camp [in the GJFO] was recently registered. It's a long process to register.

Harris: Council is interested in citizen science participation for historic and prehistoric resources. Isn't there a possibility of a land swap for sites in Escalante Canyon that are presently state owned?

Ewing: The BLM is interested and has begun talks with the State of Colorado to swap for lands outside of the NCA.

Harris: Didn't see a lot of difference between the Preferred Alternative and the Council's recommendations. Delta County is concerned about traffic in Escalante Canyon.

Steele: Regarding reducing imminent threats, as listed on p 94, what are the triggers?

Ewing: The triggers are yet to be determined. Legally, what's on p 94 is required.

Harris: Detrimental effects include photography of rock art and natural erosion.

Joe Neuhof: Which hundred acres will be surveyed?

Ewing: Those areas most likely to contain the most valuable archaeological resources. The NCA was designated to protect these. We need to spend time studying them.

Tamera Minnick: In Alternative D, what does 'holistic management of cultural resources' mean?

Harris: The difference between D and B is the holistic management language.

Ewing: Under the federal laws, we look narrowly at archeological sites, but to the tribes, the site is not the only important thing. Tribes are much more concerned about the entire landscape and the setting surrounding the sites. When we talk about holistic management, we are talking about managing those landscapes and settings.

3:27 p.m.: Katie Stevens arrived.

### **Council discussion: national trails**

Harris: Sections of Old Spanish Trail and Old Salt Lake Wagon Road are still intact. Sometimes ruts from wagon road are more obvious than Old Spanish Trail. Corridor needs to be managed in a way that protects it. We are dealing with a part of the old trail that's very fragile. Council wants Old Spanish Trail protected and prefers off-site interpretation versus on-the-ground. On-site will obliterate trail. Old Spanish Trail has a lot of interest; in excess of 100 people show up to events about the Trail, but Council thinks off-site interpretation is best to preserve it; i.e. Preferred Alternative.

Oscar Massey: What evidence is there of Old Spanish Trail?

Harris: Old construction cuts in side of hill or old wagon ruts in adobe. Several places where can see trace, but not a lot of it. If there were 100 miles very discernible then on-site would be okay.

Neuhof: Could you talk about trail management corridor?

Andy Windsor: Part of management of national trails is setting of trail, how wide the management corridor is.

Neuhof: Does corridor extend outside of NCA?

Windsor: It's within NCA in this RMP process. Have to look at Grand Junction RMP to see if any of it is outside [of the NCA].

Ewing: Think we'll see it in Grand Junction RMP, and the Uncompahgre Field Office plans a corridor as well.

Windsor: National Trails Act mandates BLM to create corridor to give access to interpretive material, etc.

Harris: Very little of the Old Spanish Trail is on list of existing routes. Those sections aren't currently being used. On north end by Bean Ranch Road, maybe have Trail there, but it's obliterated by road being used.

Massey: How about Indian trails: should they be protected? We have some according to archaeological signs on rock.

Harris: Some are protected by current laws.

Ewing: Old Spanish Trail was congressionally designated; Ute trails are protected by Historic Preservation Act.

Massey: If Ute trail becomes a motorcycle trail, is this a problem?

Harris: (What Ewing said)

Stevens: BLM has been working with the tribes to determine where those trails are, etc. Some are already well-used roads.

### **Council discussion: land tenure and land use authorizations**

Steele: Two approaches to rights of way: permissive and high-bar. Council voted 8-2 in favor of high-bar approach. No disconnect between Council and Preferred Alternative. Concerning future underground installations for utilities, the draft Plan proposes adding one cell tower; what about that?

Ewing: BLM would make no distinction between underground and above ground, just potential impacts--would consider these for future rights of way. Thinking of increased cell use among future generations.

Steele: 75-ft buffer along routes?

Ewing: For example, 75-ft buffer along Highways 50 and 141 would be where we would consider most suitable.

Steve Boyle: There are already existing rights of way; regional projects most likely to be sited along those.

Harris: Any policies regarding rights of way?

Stevens: We have a new policy handbook to guide big projects that may go through federal land.

Massey: Out on Bean Ranch Road, I found a fiber optic cable.

Ewing: There are many existing rights of way, and those will stay.

Windsor: Map 3-34 shows that right of way.

Massey: Do you want to go through the Tribal issue at all? What the Utes had, we ought to consider some of their interests. They come in to decorate graves.

Harris: There are heritage areas being considered in the alternatives. Tribes are consulted about them.

Stevens: We consulted with the tribes; BLM will leave Ute travel routes for access to sacred sites and for tribal uses. The Utes like us to look at landscapes that are important to them.

3:50 p.m.: Steele opened floor to public.

### **Public comments**

Jan Potterveld: About national trails and the Old Spanish Trail: Look at map in Figure 2-17; see designated trail painted with a white brush, then see trail management corridor that is a very wide brush that covers whole of Hunting Ground; but go in and look at that, there is no trail that goes entirely through Hunting Ground. Connecting trail did not show up in alternatives. This is the time to paint something in there that says this is the proposed trail, a pathway to run north to south with ATVs. We are 75% there, e.g. Bridgeport road, Well Gulch, Tunnel Point. If we're going with recommendation for Old Spanish Trail corridor, let's do something about that.

Stevens: Are you looking at travel management plan?

Potterveld: Trying to find proposed trail but couldn't find on travel management plan for Preferred Alternative. Should put proposed trail there.

Kate Graham: To add to what Jan said, Hunting Ground ERMA did indicate a route to be defined in the future. Regarding holistic management in Alternative D: What is the thinking on applying that in Preferred?

Brandon Siegfried [Clarified in his follow-up email 7/31/13]: The Advisory Council acknowledges RS2477 regarding the Old Spanish Trail. The D-E NCA draft plan proposes closing 272 miles (53%) of motorized routes.

Janice Shepherd: About land tenure, notice several places for sale adjacent to NCA along Highway 50 corridor. These could give access to Hunting Ground from Highway 50. Also, notice that some people who own property near national forest have made a fence that goes way past their property, from Highway 141 to Divide Road heading into the national forest. Fence goes to rim of cliff with great view.

Massey: Think this is range management land fence.

Shepherd: (Read letter to editor). Recently out hiking with two different groups. We can't drive on county road to Ninemile Hill or into Cactus Park, because the county hasn't maintained public access for low clearance vehicles. We can go on 50. When planning for hikers, keep in mind that many have low clearance vehicles.

4:05–4:20 p.m.: Break

4:20 p.m.: Steele called the meeting to order.

### **Council discussion: scenic resources**

Harris: Advisory Council values Gunnison Slopes area without road. Hunting Ground wagon track, scenery important to entire NCA. Need access to Gunnison Slopes, but scenery trumps access.

Minnick: Regarding map 2-12. In 2-12a, area just between 141 and 50, part of it designated as Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class 3 and part is Class 2. Some have changed from one class to another; why not change north part of Hunting Ground that is class 2 to Class 1 to protect river view?

Neuhof: In Preferred Alternative, it's designated as a Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

Ewing: BLM not proposing to manage Gunnison B as LWC because of possible future grazing and other activities that would preclude LWC designation.

Windsor: Both VRM 1 and 2 are very protective of visual resources. Under class 2, changes to the landscape are allowed but can't be obvious to casual observer; Class 1 would tie BLM's hands in future actions, whereas Class 2 allows us to act, with a lot of mitigation.

Neuhof: No LWC management in Alternative D. Why?

Windsor: It's managed as an SRMA for quiet use-type experiences, very similarly.

### **Council discussion: air resources**

Minnick: On page 107, Steele had question about how far...about overall goal to protect air and natural landscape outside NCA: What does that mean?

Stevens: It's a general statement, but it's worth asking State Office about that.

Ewing: When I read it, to me it means within NCA, when do prescribed burns, protect air outside NCA; maybe it can be worded better.

Minnick: Best management practices to protect air and sound in one alternative, but not in others; why?

Stevens: That's a good question.

### **Council discussion: social and economic conditions**

Doug Atchley: Steve Acquafresca was here earlier, but had to leave. Kay is here; may have to rely on her too. Not giving Mesa County perspective, and only a little of Delta's. Commissioners very supportive of designation; sent letter to Salazar re: grazing and water concerns. Grazing was put in legislation. Delta County all along in favor of multiple use, but qualify that grazing is pre-eminent. As far as grazing, ranching and cultural resources are concerned, economic data is not forthcoming as much as it should be. Delta 2011 CSU agricultural fact sheet states that direct livestock sales are 46 million in Mesa; almost 42 million in Delta. Eighteen percent come out of ranching in NCA. With multiplier, could be more. Economic impact is more than shown in RMP.

Have more than 11,000 head of sheep and 17,000 head of cattle that rely on winter range in NCA. This activity contributes to economic wellbeing of Delta County as said in letter to Salazar. Analysis needs to include the value of the landscape to the livestock all year. Delta County adamantly opposed to scaling back livestock operations. Not just speaking for Delta; Mesa County may have similar feelings, including about water resources.

We have multiple uses in the NCA, and Delta County is not discounting their value, but doesn't see dollar amount put on the economic value of those activities to the County, not excluding Montrose. See some dollar amount on grazing, but would like to see more in RMP and how that is related to economies in Mesa, Delta, and Montrose. Would like to see grazing analyzed more thoroughly in RMP, as recreational uses are. Also, need to address increased cost to taxpayer to manage these facilities for motorized uses, recreational uses. Will see more use of NCA in future. Delta County wants to see a full spectrum of uses. Tourism and recreation are priorities, but ought to be a balanced approach as far as economic analysis goes.

Harris: Information about economic impact of recreation is out there, is available.

Stevens: BLM should partner with some of the other interested entities to make those analyses. When analyzing the impacts of RMP alternatives, economists don't get into some of the issues important locally. The way we do economic analysis at RMP level doesn't necessarily get at that. Talked with a number of local government representatives and nonprofits about this. We need to get all of that information compiled and look at it.

Atchley: Fifty-five percent of land in Delta is federal; in Mesa it's approximately 75% and even higher in Montrose.

Stevens: Federal economic analysis misses the context of regional picture.

Harris: On trail, I'm more likely to run into local people than tourists.

Steele: In the national parks, I find people more and more familiar with Dominguez.

Minnick: I have a question from previous meeting to get on record. On page 99 of Plan, Wilderness, about overall objective with supplemental values: Alternative B proposes protecting; Alternative C proposes protecting and restoring. Preferred Alternative proposes protecting and restoring Zone 1, but just protecting Zones 1 and 2. In my experience, best place to restore is in Zones 2 and 3, because there are less people. Protect and restore works for all zones.

5:00 p.m. Public comment.

### **Public comments**

Lee Boren: Regarding recreation, even worldwide, if doesn't pay for itself and maintain whatever is required, will go out window. Have to put some kind of time limit on it also.

Shepherd: May not be able to attend all meetings. Can put Council recommendations online? Sheep production area overlaps SRMA; why? Restrictions in Zones 1 and 2 may come back to bite us due to increased popularity of Wilderness; e.g., regulations say to stay on trail, but some key trails to close, which will close out a big swath of Zone 2 to hikers. BLM is also proposing closing out access to Zone 1 rock art. As to economics, have been studying geocaches in NCA; BLM is eliminating geocaches. People from other countries come here to see geocaches. Represents economic value. Also, making areas more friendly to hiking will be economically fruitful. If you build it they will come.

### **Plan for next meeting and final remarks**

Steele: Thanks to all who came. Agenda for next meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> July at Delta County Courthouse Room 234 is biological systems and grazing. Parking lot is on Dodge street. Meeting is on 2nd floor. (Gave some information about other future meetings). Travel management meeting will be large. Folks should put route-by-route comments in writing.

Question from member of the public: Why meet in day when people have to work?

Steele/Stevens: (Explained role of Council and Council schedule.)

Stevens: Collin is Acting (soon to be Interim) NCA Manager.

### **Meeting adjournment**

5:15 p.m.: Steele adjourned meeting.