

## **Northwest Resource Advisory Council Meeting, Dec. 4, 2014**

### **District Manager Update**

#### **Northwest District, Joe Meyer**

**Northwest Colorado Greater Sage Grouse EIS Update:** The Northwest District Sage Grouse Interdisciplinary Team has finished drafting responses to public comments on the Draft EIS. The team is also working on developing the impact analysis for the Final EIS and is completing the remainder of the Proposed Plan. The NW District is coordinating with the State and Washington offices and expects to release the Proposed Plan/Final EIS in the Spring of 2015. The BLM received about 7,500 public comments during the public comment period on the Draft EIS.

Gunnison Sage Grouse EIS (See Attachment)

**Oil and Gas Consolidation** began on October 1, 2014. The Colorado River Valley Field Office now handles oil and gas actions for Colorado River Valley and Grand Junction Field Offices. The White River Field Office is now handling Little Snake, Kremmling, and White River Field Offices oil and gas actions. The Little Snake Field Office now handles all Coal actions for the Northwest District.

### **Field Manager Updates**

#### **Little Snake Field Office, Wendy Reynolds**

**Route Inventory work continues for Travel Management Planning** – The Rocky Mountain Youth Corps provided the LSFO with three interns this summer to assist with route inventories for travel management planning. The three interns rotated two week shifts in the field with GIS work in the office. Two of the interns utilized ATV's to perform inventory work while the third downloaded data gathered the previous day for input into GIS. Since mid-May, the crew has inventoried over 1,500 miles. They have concluded their efforts for the season but will continue next year. This ongoing travel management inventory is being performed as part of the implementation of the LSFO Resource Management Plan signed in October 2011 which requires a Travel Management Plan to be completed.

**America's Great Outdoors Sarvis Creek/ Hubbard Summer Camp Acquisition** – The BLM, in partnership with the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest, is nearing completion of the acquisition of a 45-acre parcel of river-front property along the Upper Yampa River below Stagecoach Reservoir. This private inholding lies between BLM, U.S. Forest Service, and State lands, adjacent to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area. The land and historic cabin were once used by the Hubbard Family, who ranched in the valley for many years, as a summer retreat for several weeks each year. The original main Hubbard Ranch now lies beneath Stagecoach

Reservoir. Funding for BLM's portion of the purchase has been secured from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These funds are generated by royalties from offshore oil and gas leasing. The LSFO has currently drafted a business plan for the property, more specifically the cabin, in anticipation of closing on the purchase by the end of this calendar year. We hope to conclude the sale on December 10, 2014.

**Wild Horses** – The PZP darting program has continued through the summer months with the help from our advocates, and while we are having some success, there is still much work to do. I have responded to the letter from grazing permittee, Steve Raftopolous, requesting the immediate gather of 200 horses from Sand Wash Basin. A copy of my response is attached.

**2014 Hunting Season** - This season saw good weather, making the hunting success a little more difficult with animals staying high until much later in the seasons. Overall success rate was good, with many hunters taking home game. Two significant incidences occurred at Duffy Mountain, one ATV accident resulting in significant injuries, and one carbon-monoxide poisoning, resulting in the death of a hunter and two other hunters compromised. Our BLM Ranger was instrumental in both events, likely saving the lives of the remaining two of the hunters with carbon-monoxide poisoning.

**Oil and Gas Consolidation and Coal Program** – We have begun implementing the consolidation of our field office oil and gas program into the White River Field Office in Meeker, Colorado. Little Snake Field Office will no longer process O&G applications and all related activities will be handled by the White River Field Office. However, the Little Snake will manage the coal program for the entire Northwest District BLM.

**Response letter** – See attached

### **Colorado River Valley Field Office, Steve Bennett**

**Sutey Ranch Land Exchange update:** The BLM has dismissed the three protests it received during the 45-day protest period that follow the notice of decision approving the exchange. BLM expects to issue a final decision sometime after the 30-day appeal period closes. Once BLM acquires the property on the public's behalf, it will develop a site-specific management plan.

**EIS on Previously Issued Leases in the White River National Forest:** The Colorado River Valley Field Office held its second cooperating agency meeting on this EIS on Oct. 29, 2014. CRVFO is in the initial stages of developing alternatives and asked the cooperators for any specific data they have regarding affected resources, especially related to stipulations. Cooperators agencies on this EIS are the Colorado Department of Natural Resources/Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Garfield County, Mesa County, Pitkin County, Rio Blanco County, Town of Carbondale, Town of Silt, City of Rifle, City of Glenwood Springs, Town of Newcastle, U.S. Forest Service, and EPA. Agencies expected to sign-on include the Town of Parachute and the Town of Meeker. A scoping report summarizing comments received during scoping should be available in January. A Draft of the EIS is due in fall 2015.

**Roan Plateau SEIS:** The BLM, State of Colorado, Bill Barrett and environmental groups announced the Roan Plateau settlement Nov. 21. The BLM agreed to cancel 17 of the 19 leases

issued on top of the plateau and refund approximately \$47.6 million in bonus bids and annual rental payments to Bill Barrett Corporation. The remaining two leases on top of the plateau and 12 leases located at the base of the plateau will remain in place, subject to the terms and conditions of the settlement and an ongoing planning effort. The on-going Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement will analyze the settlement as one alternative. Cooperators on the Roan SEIS have met twice since the last meeting of the NW RAC, focusing primarily on gathering information for the socio-economic analysis. Cooperators are the Colorado Department of Natural Resources/Colorado Parks and Wildlife, City of Rifle, Town of Parachute, Rio Blanco County, Garfield County, Mesa County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and EPA.

**Prescribed Fire on Roan Plateau helps aspen regeneration:** Crews burned about 200 acres of aspen understory in October. The burn, which was conducted in Grassy Gulch in the East Fork Parachute Creek drainage, is one of several planned on the Roan to help remove thick understory such as snowberry and create conditions ideal for aspen regeneration. In a number of areas on the Roan the brushy understory is so thick it prevents new aspen from sprouting. Two years ago fire crews burned a perimeter around this unit, and the resulting aspen regeneration is already three to four feet tall.

**Colorado River Valley Resource Management Plan:** The BLM currently anticipates a record of Decision for the Colorado River Valley RMP Revision in early 2015

### **Kremmling Field Office, Stephanie Odell**

**Whitewater park:** The Kremmling Field Office recently attended the ground breaking ceremony for the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park at the Pumphouse Recreation Site on the upper Colorado River. Grand County was recently awarded historic water rights for constructing this waterpark. The County submitted a right-of-way application to build the feature across the full width of the river upstream of the Pumphouse boat launch 2. The feature consists of engineered designed boulders and block-like concrete objects placed across the stream channel that are not visible at normal flows and allow for fish passage at all flow rates. Construction is expected to be completed in April 2014 just in time for the river recreation season.

**Bark beetle mitigation work continues in KFO:** The Kremmling Field Office continues to actively address bark beetle mitigation. The Independence Mountain Sanitation Sale in Jackson County, was awarded for the removal of about 3 million board feet, and the Owl Mountain Sale advertised at 405 acres and 3.4 million board feet to salvage dead lodgepole pine and remove roadside hazard trees. The Grand County Hazardous Tree Removal Environmental Assessment was signed and is being implemented. The project area includes approximately 9,150 acres of forested lands in Grand County administered by the BLM. Under the proposal, all dead, disease-infested and other hazard trees within 125 feet of BLM roads, trails and other infrastructure would be removed. The EA also identifies potential areas available for large-scale mechanical salvage and fuel reduction, and potential areas where fire could be used to treat slash piles resulting from mechanical treatment. There are more than 289 miles of roads within the Kremmling Field Office directly affected by beetle-killed trees. Currently, KFO is administering 14 timber and biomass contracts. With the market for lumber and wood pellets rebounding from

the recession, the demand for access to beetle-killed trees is also rebounding, helping ensure these projects will continue to have interested bidders. New products using material from beetle-killed trees are also creating more opportunity, such as for bioremediation and absorption in the oil and gas industry.

**Kremmling RMP update:** The Kremmling Office Final Record of Decision has been approved for printing and we expect a Record of Decision in early 2015.

### **White River Field Office, Kent Walter**

**Travel & Transportation Management:** The White River Field Office Travel Route Inventory project continues with a presentation on the process.

**Oil and Gas Consolidation:** The White River Field Office has been designated one of two oil and gas offices in the NW District. WRFO will handle oil and gas for the Little Snake Field Office, and Kremmling Field office as well as White River. In addition Little Snake Field Office will be handling coal for White River Field Office.

**Oil and Gas RMP Amendment:** The Field Office continues to work with the State and Washington offices on the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS, which is currently anticipated to be released in early 2015.

### **Grand Junction Field Office, Wayne Werkmeister**

**Grand Junction Proposed RMP/Final EIS** – The BLM Colorado State Office staff review of the Grand Junction Field Office PRMP/FEIS have been completed. The Washington Office staff and WO Solicitor reviews are also near completion. The PRMP/FEIS is scheduled to be released in early 2015.

**Campground expansion** – Fees collected at the North Fruita Desert Campground allowed the BLM to expand the campsite by approximately 20 new campsites with more planned in the near future. The most recent work was made possible through joint assistance from the town of Fruita and Mesa County. The North Fruita Desert Campground also known as 18 Road, is popular among campers, mountain bikers, and motorcyclists. Approximately 20,000 visitors generated approximately \$35,000 in FY 2014.

**Horse release** – The genetic diversity of the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range got a significant bump with the introduction of three new horses. The wild horse herd in the Book Cliffs is approximately 150 or so horses. This population isn't large enough to sustain genetic diversity over a sustained period. Therefore, it is written in our herd management plan that we will introduce new horses often when recommended through genetic sampling. Genetic sampling occurred during the 2013 gather and introduction of mares was recommended. Three horses gathered in the Wyoming Checkerboard gather were introduced November 19.

**Book Cliff Coal Lease By Application EIS** – The proponent, CAM has asked BLM to temporarily place a hold on processing the lease by application EIS.