

Southwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Friday, May 16, 2014
Gunnison, Colorado

Southwest Resource Advisory Council Members

Zane Odell, Ernie Williams, Eric Sanford, John Reams, Paul Joyce, Mary Monroe Brown, Renzo DelPiccolo, Kathy Welt, Phil Chamberland, Tif Rodriguez, Deb Gangloff, Dale Irby

Staff

Lori Armstrong, Shannon Borders, Connie Clementson, Marietta Eaton, Brian St. George, Matt Azhocar, Gina Jones

Visitors

Alli Melton, Brenda Felmlee (Congressman Tipton staffer)

The meeting was called to order by chairperson Kathy Welt at 9:10 a.m. A quorum for the meeting was determined. Everyone introduced themselves. Minutes from the February and August meetings were approved with a motion by Deb Gangloff with the removal of trail information as indicated by Mary Monroe Brown and seconded by John Reams. The motion was approved unanimously.

Oil and Gas Sub-group Update

The Oil and Gas Sub-group met on Jan. 28, 2014, in Dolores with Eric Sanford, Wally White and Ernie Williams present. They discussed community outreach options. Eric Sanford said that he taught a class at Western States with 25 students followed by a fieldtrip. He plans to have a class at Colorado Mesa University in the future. Eric also suggested having the sub-group reconvenes, because it was a great kickoff conversation. Ernie indicated there are some negative views in the community and believes anyway the RAC can reach out would be beneficial. He said they need to find ways to outreach beyond the local community as well. Connie Clementson said the intent of the group was to do public education and to further identify roles in the future. The subject was tabled until later in the day to enable Eric Sanford to return from a conference call.

NEPA 101 & Planning 2.0

Gina Jones, Southwest District NEPA Coordinator, presented a training session on the National Environmental Policy Act and Planning 2.0. The PowerPoint presentation is available online.

Public Comments

Alli Melton expressed her appreciation for learning about NEPA, and said NEPA ensures responsible decision making. There are many interests on public lands as well as economic factors. As more pressure is added, resources incur additional stress. She commends our efforts and encourages us to keep in mind the multi-purpose mandate.

Oil & Gas Sub-group continued

Ernie mentioned the importance of the impact from the industry on the economy. Eric said many counties don't realize how much of their tax base comes from the oil and gas industry. Phil said Federal Mineral Lease (FML) and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) needs to be maintained to ensure counties receive funding. Legislation tends to get hung up due to the lack of understanding by the public. Renzo mentioned the state agencies receive funding based on PILT as well. Eric asked if the group wants broader representation if only he and Ernie are available but not Wally. Kathy said that she thought they could provide the information without being biased.

Eric suggests that the sub-group meets again before the next RAC meeting to determine a way forward or to disband the group. Barbara Sharrow asked whether the RAC wants involvement in the Bull Mountain Environmental Impact Statement. Kathy said it is reasonable to look at the draft. Barbara said this EIS is going to be hard for the public to understand due to the private land/federal mineral connection. She would like the RAC to understand the project to help the public better understand. Connie suggested reconvening the group and tackling the education issues regarding the leasing. Marietta suggested including the concepts of Master Development Plans. The subject was tabled until the August meeting.

NEPA Registers

The NEPA Registers to learn about the ongoing projects in each field office can be accessed by going to:

UFO- http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/ufo.html

GFO- http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/gfo.html

TRFO- http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Information/nepa/TRFO_NEPA.html

Land Tenure

Marietta Eaton gave an overview of the land acquisitions on the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. The Tres Rios Field Office has a disposal list within the Resource Management Plan and Connie is working with each of the counties to identify the parcels to determine a priority list. Montezuma County has submitted a list, but the budget isn't available to move forward. Dolores County is waiting to learn more about critical Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat. In LaPlata County, they are looking at parcels within the urban interfaces to help identify who is best to manage those areas. San Juan County has some disposal and acquisition parcels. Connie is seeking further RAC input to determine priorities to move forward.

The Gunnison Field Office has about 1,700 acres identified from willing land owners looking for land exchanges. Hinsdale County has a special recreation management area, so they could pursue funding for this exchange. The Gunnison staff is working to identify high priority areas based on resource values. Gunnison County hasn't been a player because they don't have an NLCS unit, but funding is becoming available outside of NLCS units.

The Uncompahgre Field Office has 1 ½ National Conservation Areas, so they have more potential for funding. In Dominguez-Escalante there are some state wildlife areas that are hard for Colorado Parks and Wildlife to manage, so they have approached the BLM to transfer those parcels with some BLM lands going to CPW. Additionally, there are 10 trespass cases, so a land exchange could help resolve some of those issues. The UFO also has about 10-15 requests for land exchanges with small parcels. Therefore, we are looking to the RAC to help identify district priorities.

Deborah Gangloff suggested the priorities should be contiguous parcels for example in Canyons of the Ancients National Monument has been approached by willing sellers. John Reams suggested that part of the fragmentation is due to laws over the years and some areas were not wanted. He suggested prioritizing the riparian areas, because those are the ones that need protection. Renzo DelPiccolo said he thinks it's important for the counties input to be considered. Ernie Williams said each county needs to prioritize first, and then the RAC can help prioritize the lists. Phil Chamberland suggested the parcels that could be sold should be the priority, because that money could be used for other land tenure projects if FLTFA is reauthorized. Renzo suggested two ways. First, there are the kinds of things the RAC prefers. The other is to look at actual projects. Brian St. George explained that docs online allow the RAC to determine the priorities. Phil Chamberland suggested a drivers list then RAC could prioritize. The staff will evaluate these suggestions and land tenure was tabled until the next meeting.

Question & Answer

None

Upcoming Meetings and Field Trips

- Aug. 14-15: Dolores (Tres Rios Field Office)

Adjournment

John Reams moved to adjourn the meeting. Phil Chamberland seconded the motion. The motion carried.