



## Twin Falls District Resource Advisory Council



MEETING MINUTES  
La Quinta Inn, Twin Falls  
9/18/2014

### **Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members present:**

#### ***Category One – Commodity Interest***

- Gerald Orthel
- Mike Henslee
- Daniel Butler
- Jeffrey Williams
- James Wills

#### ***Category Two – Non-Commodity Interest***

- Dayna Gross
- Shauna Robinson
- Denise Alexander
- Peggy Stanley
- LaMar Orton

#### ***Category Three – Public Interest***

- Tom Courtney
- Todd Wadsworth
- Charles Howell
- Katie Shewmaker
- Hunter Osborne (*Arrived 9:50*)

***Quorum Present:***  Yes  No

### **Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:**

Michael Courtney - Acting District Manager  
Heather Tiel-Nelson- Public Affairs Specialist  
Brian Davis, Jarbidge Field Manager  
Holly Crawford, Acting Shoshone Field Office Manager  
Jim Tharp, Acting Burley Field Office Manager  
Christine Vance, Contact Representative TFD  
Rich Lloyd, Ranger (Field Training Officer)  
Lisa Cresswell, Archeologist, Shoshone  
Chris Simonson, Twin Falls District Fire Management Officer

### **Public Attendees:**

No Public Attendees

*Note to readers: A copy of each handout listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Twin Falls District. Persons desiring to view handouts should contact Christine Vance at (208) 736-2350, or by email at [cvance@blm.gov](mailto:cvance@blm.gov).*

*Copies of certified minutes are posted on the Idaho BLM website at:  
[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/res/resource\\_advisory/twin\\_falls\\_district/meeting\\_minutes.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/res/resource_advisory/twin_falls_district/meeting_minutes.html)*

*Meeting called to order at 9:10.*

### **Item I: Welcome and Introductions**

*Public comment period opened at 9:11. No members of the public present. Public comment period closed at 10:03 without comment.*

Mike Courtney was introduced as the acting District Manager for the Twin Falls District. He will be acting until a new District Manager is hired.

### **Item II: Roles and Responsibilities of BLM Law Enforcement (See Handout 1)**

Rich Lloyd, the Twin Falls District Ranger and Field Training Officer, is currently the only Ranger working the entire 4,000,000 acres of the Twin Falls District BLM. Currently, management is working to hire a second Ranger.

Rich gave a brief history of BLM Law Enforcement Rangers, and the focus of their program which is to provide for public safety and resource protection.

The BLM employs approximately 235 Rangers and 66 Special Field Agents when at full capacity. That leaves each ranger to patrol roughly 1,000,000 acres of public land. Due to vacancies and work force reductions, there are fewer than that currently employed. That is why it is so important for rangers to have a good working relationship with area city, county, state, and federal law enforcement entities. Many times they are called on to support and coordinate with BLM ranger investigations and activities.

Before patrolling and protecting public lands, rangers are required to complete 19-21 weeks of training at one of the Law Enforcement Training Centers located across the country. This training includes fire arms certification, self-defense, land law, and much more. This course is the same one offered to any law enforcement officer.

After graduation, a ranger will have 12 weeks of field training with a qualified Field Training Officer.

Rangers deal with a wide variety of issues on public land, including the following: theft and destruction of natural and cultural resources, alcohol and drug related crimes, off-highway vehicle enforcement, cultivation, importation and manufacturing of illegal drugs, illegal

dumping, hazardous materials dumping, illegal use and possession of firearms, grazing, fire investigations, and investigating wild horse and burros adoption violations.

Because they are dealing with ever changing terrain and remote areas, rangers have to rely on transportation outside of the pick-up truck or Jeep. Rangers utilize motorcycles, dune buggies, snow mobiles, aircrafts, and off highway vehicles. These different tools allow them to better serve the people and land that is entrusted to them.

The BLM does have an active canine program. These highly trained animals are sometimes the only back-up a ranger will have in the field. Most of the dogs are trained in not only drug detection but handler protection as well.

An additional form of personal protection that is beginning to be worn by BLM Rangers is a video camera. These devices allow Rangers to collect video and audio evidence when on scene – capturing the true story from both sides of an interaction.

### **Item III: 2014 Fire Season Overview:**

Chris Simonson, Twin Falls District Fire Management Officer gave an overview of the 2014 fire season.

The Twin Falls District had an unusually slow fire year.

There were 78 total fires; 50 were human caused the other 28 lightning caused. In 2013, there were 157 fires, 73 human caused and 84 lightning driven.

In 2014, 46,400 acres burned both BLM and Forest Service land (12,100 acres burned from human causes, 34,300 from lightning) – well below the ten year average of 261,000.

In comparison, 268,200 acres burned in 2013. Human starts accounted for 14,600 acres and 253,600 from lightning.

In 2014, the Twin Falls Airbase used 140,000 gallons of retardant. In 2013 906,000 gallons were used.

BLM's Boise based smoke jumpers were on District for 41 days and only jumped one fire.

#### **Fuels:**

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 (October 1-September 31), the Twin Falls District fuels crews conducted 43 fuels reduction projects. They treated 58,250 acres. Reduction projects consisted of noxious weed removal, green strips, fuels reduction projects, as well as sagebrush seeding and planting. Cheatgrass can be treated through prescribed burning, followed by chemical control, or sometimes just chemically treated. Measuring treatment success may take a few years. There are 49 projects proposed to treat about 65,000 acres in FY2015 (begins Oct 1). This is 74% of the target for the BLM Idaho and a fairly staggering 26% of the target for all of BLM nationally

#### Fire Prevention and Mitigation:

A National Fire Prevention team based out of Georgia visited the Twin Falls District for two weeks and provided ideas and suggestions on how to increase awareness to prevent human caused fires.

Two new fire wise communities were added this year. The question was asked about how fire-wise communities are selected. The subdivisions can be large or small – there are national guidelines that have to be met, and the local Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) works with the communities to meet those guidelines. It does require a time commitment and can be costly, but make the communities more defensible in the event of a fire and really help fire suppression efforts. Once the community has been accepted they are added to a national registry and recognized as a fire-wise community.

BLM has partnered with the Resource and Conservation Development Council (RC&D) and the College of Southern Idaho to develop a fire wise demonstration garden that will be planted this fall. It will be located in Twin Falls on the Breckenridge Endowment Farm, near the community gardens, and maintained primarily through the Horticulture Club. Additionally, Hagerman and Shoshone High Schools are maintaining fire wise nurseries. Students enrolled in the agriculture/greenhouse programs will grow fire wise plants and then distribute these plants during community events to promote fire wise efforts.

A question was raised regarding fire budget during slow fire years. Simonson explained that congress allocates money every year to the Suppression Fund. If there is any money left over at the end of the fiscal year that money is returned to the treasury and hopefully made available for the next year. He also talked briefly about the FLAME Act proposal before congress – legislation that will fund the highest cost fires similar to how responses to natural disasters are funded. This would reduce or eliminate the amount of “borrowing” from other sources of funding to cover the suppression budget.

#### **Item IV: Burley Field Office Update (See Handout 2)**

Jim Tharp, Acting Burley Field Office Manager, gave the following update for the Burley Field Office:

The Cedar Fields Environmental Impact Statement is still a work in progress. A draft is expected to be ready by late fall, early winter 2014.

The Southern Idaho Mountain Biking Association has asked if there is any reclamation work that they can do for trails that were damaged in the South Hills area due to the heavy rains received in August. The Burley Field office is determining what type of work is needed and in what locations.

Burley is still waiting on a decision from the judge on the Battle Creek Litigation in regards to permit renewals. The BLM is hoping to receive that decision in October.

Permission has been given to Agua Caliente, a geothermal company, to conduct an additional seismic survey and drill one slim hole. This work is expected to take place in the fall.

Burley processed an Exploration Notice that gives permission to Radius Gold to drill an exploration hole in the Blue Creek area near Oakley, ID. Currently Radius Gold is also conducting exploration on adjacent private land.

The Burley Field Office received a national collaboration/stewardship award from the Public Lands Council for the Burley Landscape Sage-Grouse Habitat Restoration Project.

### **Item V: Jarbidge Field Office Update (See Handout 3)**

Brian Davis, Jarbidge Field Manager, gave the following update for the Jarbidge Field Office:

Jarbidge Field Office staff is writing the draft Rangeland Health Assessments (RHA) for group one allotments. The deadline is to have all of those written by October 1<sup>st</sup>. Once those are written, permittees will begin meeting with range staff to discuss any changes to their grazing schedules and possible improvements that can be made in the allotments. These meetings will take place in the office and out in the field

Riparian monitoring has begun in the group two allotments and will continue throughout September.

The formal protest period for the final Resource Management Plan (RMP) ends September 22, 2014.

On September 16, 2014 the Twin Falls and Boise District BLM offices hosted a “Wilderness Act 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration” at the Bruneau Overlook. Guest speakers included tribal leaders, Owyhee County, and BLM State Director Tim Murphy.

### **Item VI: Shoshone Field Office Update (See Handout 4)**

Holly Crawford, Acting Shoshone Field office manager, gave the following update for the Shoshone Field Office:

The Environmental Assessment for the Ketchum Recreation and Public Purposes Act Application has been on hold over the summer as per the city’s request. This process will resume in the near future.

The BLM has been working with Trout Unlimited to contract a geomorphic assessment of a reach of the Big Wood River that includes the Ketchum Recreation and Public Purposes Act area.

The billing for the Dry Creek trespass and Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) violation has been sent to the treasury.

There are no set dates for the proposed Snake River Canyon jump. There is an application with the Shoshone Field Office that was processed in July and put on hold.

There has been great compliance by the public for areas that were closed due to the 2014 Beaver Creek fire. There have been a few livestock trespasses which are currently being resolved by the Shoshone staff.

### **Item VII: Craters of the Moon National Monument Plan Amendment Update (See Handouts 5 & 6)**

Lisa Cresswell, Shoshone Field office Archeologist and Craters of the Moon National Monument Plan project lead, gave the following update for the Craters of the Moon National Monument Plan Amendment:

The plan area covers 275,100 BLM acres and 753,200 total acres. It lies in 5 counties: Butte, Blaine, Minidoka, Lincoln, and Power. The area spans three BLM offices in two separate districts. The main focus for the plan amendment is to consider a no livestock grazing alternative and greater sage-grouse habitat protection.

Handout 5 is a summary of the four proposed alternatives.

Alternative A is no action on the existing management.

Alternative B is reduced grazing with the no action of 40,046 total AUM (Animal Unit Months) permitted, reduced to 9,432 total AUM's permitted. That is a 20% reduction from current actual use.

It will also close five areas to grazing that are kipukas or areas named as having ecological values worthy of protection. Under alternative B there will also be stringent measures added to conserve sage-grouse habitat (prohibiting spring/early summer grazing near leks and in known breeding habitat), striving for reference state in riparian areas, and restricting range improvements.

Alternative C is the preferred alternative, it manages livestock grazing at current permitted AUM's to maintain or enhance intact vegetation communities and biological integrity, and reduce impacts to sage-grouse habitat and life-cycle needs.

Alternative D is no livestock grazing.

There were other alternatives that were considered but not analyzed.

This process and planning requires a lot of cooperation and collaboration from Federal, State, local, and tribal groups in order to present a strong and acceptable plan.

### **Item VIII: Farewell Presentation for retiring RAC Members**

We wanted to thank Denise Alexander, Gerald Orthel and Todd Wadsworth for their service while serving on the Resource Advisory Council and wish them luck in their future endeavors.

Denise served for nine years, Gerald for six years, and Todd served three years.

### **Item IX: Poster Presentation**

LaMar Orton

Upcoming Poster Presentations:

Tom Courtney

Dayna Gross

### **Item V: Other Business/Future meeting Dates/Agenda items**

Katie Shewmaker addressed the blue-green algae bloom that took place this year in several local bodies of water. The algae blooms for 3-4 days and releases a neurotoxin into the water that can cause sickness, skin irritation, and can be fatal to domestic animals. While the algae are in bloom it tints the water with an aqua blue color that will dissipate after a week. In popular recreation areas on Salmon Falls Creek there were notices posted to warn people of the possible danger associated with contact and consumption of the algae.

The next meeting will be held on January 29, 2015. The location will be announced, and as this is the first meeting of the year, it will include a new member orientation, officer elections, and sub-committee update.

Suggested agenda items include a presentation on BLM managers duties and/or an update on the Idaho and Southwestern Montana Sub-Regional Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement.

### **Handouts Provided:**

**1-Greenwire—All in a day's work for BLM cops (4 pp)**

**2-Burley Field Office Update (2 pp)**

**3-Jarbridge Field Office Update (2 pp)**

**4-Shoshone Field Office and Craters of the Moon National Monument Update (3 pp)**

**5-Craters of the moon National Monument and Preserve Plan Amendment, Summary of Alternatives (1 pp)**

**6-Draft Document Management plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement PowerPoint (8 pp)**

\Minutes certified by:

Mike Henslee chairman  
Mike Henslee, TFD RAC Chairman

2/26/15  
Date

Michael C Courtney  
Michael C. Courtney, District Manager

3/4/2015  
Date

Minutes recorded by:  
Christine Vance, TFD Records Assistant