

NORTHWEST RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Colorado Northwestern Community College
Johnston Bldg., 500 Kennedy Drive
Rangely, Colorado

Thursday, May 8, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Geoff Blakeslee, Chairman.

Attendees:

Resource Advisory Council Members: Ken Currey, T. Wright Dickinson, Jon Hill, Charlie Yates, Ed Baker, Geoff Blakeslee, Don Peach, Jeff Comstock, John Martin, John Ellenberger, Forrest Nelson, and Kathy Hall were present. (There were not enough members present for a quorum)

BLM: John Husband (Little Snake Field Office Manager and RAC Designated Federal Officer), Catherine Robertson (Grand Junction Field Office Manager), Jim Cagney (White River Field Office Associate Manager), Jamie Connell (Glenwood Springs Field Office Manager), Dave Harr (Acting Kremmling Field Office Manager), Larry Porter (Western Slope Center RAC Coordinator), Tim Novotny (Little Snake Field Office Wildlife Biologist), Mike Fray (White River Field Office Natural Resource Specialist).

<u>Visitors:</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Town/City</u>
Derek Wagner	Senator Allard's Office	Grand Junction, CO
Jennifer Seidenberg	Colo. Wilderness Network/CEC	Steamboat Springs, CO
Mickey Allen	Uintah Mtn. Club	Rangely, CO
Robertsons (Dave, Scott, Cheryl, Owen)	Twin Butte Ranch	Rangely, CO

Introductory Remarks - Geoff Blakeslee & John Husband:

Geoff Blakeslee:

- Thanked Jon Hill, the Robertson family, and Don Peach for their assistance with the field trip and dinner the day before.
- Welcomed visitors and RAC members
- Presented results of Washington, D.C. national meeting of RAC Chairs with the Director.
 - Weeds were a big item. The administration has made a strong commitment to control weeds. BLM wants to see local participation with State and Local Governments/Agencies.
 - The RAC members/BLM Managers discussed weeds eradication in Colorado and possibilities for coordination within the State.
 - Kathleen Clarke was hurt and couldn't participate in the WO RAC Chairs meeting.
 - Secretary Norton reiterated the 4 Cs, multiple-use, and local citizen involvement.
 - With respect to the newly proposed grazing initiative, RAC Chairs at the meeting were unanimously concerned that the WO BLM had given assignments to RACs with no up front involvement of the RACs in such an important issue. The WO dropped the ball, was very apologetic, and promised to back up and decide how the RACs can be involved.

John Husband:

- Announced that Mark Stiles was selected as Manager of the San Juan Public Lands Center in Durango.
- Troy Rarick's seat on the RAC is now vacated. There are presently 6 seats open to be filled during the present nomination/selection process.
- Ron Wenker is taking the RAC's comments regarding DFOs into consideration. The approach to be taken needs to be figured out before the Charter is revised.
- T. Wright Dickinson proposed the RAC form a Charter Committee. Geoff Blakeslee said he was in favor of forming one. The Secretary needs RAC input. The Committee will consist of Geoff Blakeslee (Chair) and T. Wright Dickinson, Jeff Comstock, Kathy Hall, John Martin, and Don Peach. Jim Cagney will provide support for the Committee.
- State Director was invited to this meeting, but due to other commitments, he couldn't make it.
- John passed out the WO memorandum on the Sustained Watershed Landscape initiative (the revision of grazing rules Geoff Blakeslee referred to in his presentation). John said there were problems with deadlines for the RACs and what the RACs needed to do.

Public Comments: 9:30 a.m.

Eric Renkel, representing the Sierra Club in the Grand Junction Area - Encourages BLM to maximize public involvement. If BLM is truly after local input, maximize comment periods on various actions and documents. Issues in Grand Junction regarding the Grand Mesa Slopes should involve expanding the steering committee a little. He would like to see more representation on the Committee from environmental interests.

No other comments. Geoff Blakeslee noted that there would be another comment period at 3:00 p.m.

Geoff Blakeslee continued earlier comments regarding issues raised by RAC Chairs at the WO meeting. Additional items mentioned were:

- The RAC member appointment process is too slow and needs to be streamlined. There was a lot of discussion at the WO meeting on this item.
- Wilderness issues should be dealt with through the BLM land use process.
- RS 2477 MOU with Utah is something that will probably be needed on a national basis.
- It was good to get together with other RACs and share experiences.

RAC and BLM Managers discussed the topics raised by Geoff Blakeslee's presentation of what went on the WO meeting.

Geoff Blakeslee said that a national website for RACs will be helpful to get information out. He also said that Twinkle Thompson has been appointed National RAC Coordinator at the BLM Washington Office.

John Martin asked if an e-mail group could be set up for the RAC's internal communications. Jamie Connell said she could do it. John Husband said he would follow up on it.

Field Office Managers' Briefings:

Jim Cagney, White River Field Office:

Said Kent Walter couldn't attend the meeting due to his wife's medical situation.

David Harr, Kremmling Field Office:

Passed out a summary of the land exchange process. Dave offered to plan a raft trip down the Colorado sometime in the future for the RAC.

Jamie Connell, Glenwood Springs Field Office:

Working to get an understanding of the wilderness issue, given recent events. Working on cumulative analysis with Utah on air quality analysis for their Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan.

T. Wright Dickinson would like a full presentation on the air quality issue and modeling involved. The RAC discussed this as a possible topic for a future meeting.

Jamie said they have given a preliminary draft of the plan out to cooperators with some comments received. The draft will probably be released later this summer.

They are doing a cleanup outside of Eagle. The town, county and others will be doing a trail.

Catherine Robertson, Grand Junction Field Office:

An appeal was received on the Billings Canyon Jeep Trail decision.

The North Fruita Desert Plan will be on hold pending a Federal Register Notice of Intent (NOI) submitted to the Washington Office for review prior to publication. The NOI will begin the public scoping for the plan, then the draft plan will be done and eventually a final plan. Catherine may want additional assistance on the planning effort from the RAC at a future date.

The city of Grand Junction is concerned over oil and gas leasing and development on the Grand Mesa Slopes. Catherine handed out an issue document and discussed the city's concerns. She also discussed the current steering committee for the GMS and possible additions to it. She discussed issues other than oil and gas, which the city has expressed.

Charlie Yates offered to take up the vacated position on the North Fruita Desert Plan committee. All RAC members approved and Geoff Blakeslee appointed Charlie to the NFDP committee.

Northwest Colorado Stewardship briefing - John Husband and Jeff Comstock:

John and Jeff showed the RAC a slide presentation. They explained that the initiative involves:

- Being consistent with laws and regulations

- □ Is an open process which includes those people interested
- □ Is considered on a scope/scale that can be successful

John doesn't have a time frame for dealing with the initiative at this point.

Wildlife Program Presentation - Tim Novotny:

Tim gave a presentation of what the BLM wildlife program is and what wildlife biologists do to carry out the program.

Lunch Break - 12:00 Noon

12:15 p.m. - Meeting continued during lunch.

RAC Committees:

Wildlife Committee - John Ellenberger :

The committee will make a decision on how to proceed after holding a conference call. Twenty-five wildlife issues have been identified. Seventeen guidelines were identified to be used in dealing with wildlife issues and derive from RACs and State Game Conservation Plans.

Charlie Yates expressed appreciation to the Field Offices for responding the way they did to Wildlife Committee requests.

Wild Horse Plan Committee - Don Peach :

Don discussed the Wild Horse area tour yesterday and Jim Cagney's presentation. Don thanked Jim for his presentation. RAC members commented on the tour and possible future considerations for wild horse management. They also discussed, with Jim Cagney, the approach the Wild Horse Planning analysis could take.

John Martin proposed that BLM look at some creative ways to deal with wild horses, since the Bureau hasn't succeeded to date in dealing adequately with wild horse problems and issues. John suggested looking at empowering someone else to administer wild horse herds, such as concessionaires working under BLM guidelines. Others on the RAC liked the idea of looking for these type of creative ways to deal with wild horses.

There was considerable discussion on wild horse management issues.

T. Wright Dickinson's observation was that BLM needed to get people around the same table and consider proposals like John Martin's since the agency was not getting the job done. Rather than just adopt the same old solutions that haven't worked, Geoff Blakeslee would support John Martin's "adoption of a herd" approach and work with him on it.

Weeds Committee - Geoff Blakeslee :

The weed committee hasn't met since the last RAC meeting. The Committee will get together soon and coordinate with the two other RACs in Colorado, synthesize questionnaires, get with the State and keep moving forward.

Don Peach pointed out that there are common problems with all Committee reports. They are:

- □ Lack of funding
- □ Lack of control - fragmentation. Don supports working with other RACs to pursue a statewide program with BLM and Colorado State

T. Wright Dickinson feels nothing will be done unless resources are put into it. Re-focus energy to get adequate funding.

Geoff Blakeslee said that all presenters at the BLM/WO meeting said they would get funding to programs someday.

Funding strategies were discussed.

Drought/Fire Season Outlook - Mike Frary:

Passed out written material and discussed possibilities and problems for the next coming fire season. Many aircraft are grounded and only 4 of the 20 tankers are inspected and approved for this year's use.

Pinion/Juniper is quite dry for this time of year.

Sustaining Working Landscapes (SWL) - Catherine Robertson

Catherine gave some background on the initiative and had some observations about who should pay attention to it.

T. Wright Dickinson thanked BLM for asking livestock operators for comments on SWL. He also discussed what can work for the livestock industry.

Jon Hill suggested that the RAC may want a SWL committee looking at policy matters.

The RAC discussed having been left out at the beginning of the process and ways the RAC could get involved with SWL initiative at this stage.

Geoff Blakeslee said he would place a call to the Director and see if she will meet with the RAC or the RAC's representatives on the SWL initiative to hear the RAC's concerns.

The RAC set a date, July 2, 2003, for a special meeting to address the SWL initiative. The meeting will be held in Meeker at the BLM office. It will deal with RAC Charter revisions and the SWL initiative.

The two committees, SWL and Charter, need to get together and work up materials to mail out to members before a meeting with the Director.

The SWL Committee was assigned and is comprised of Geoff Blakeslee, T. Wright Dickinson, Jeff Comstock, Don Peach, and John Martin.

Public Comments: 3:00 p.m.

Dave Robertson, representing Twin Butte Ranch: They want to continue to run cows on the wild horse range and appreciate the opportunity to voice opinions and provide comments and specific data to the RAC from his ranch. He thanked all for openness in considering the issues involved with the wild horse plan.

Geoff Blakeslee said getting information would be good. Please give the information to Jim Cagney so he can distribute it to the RAC.

Dave Robertson said he was reluctant to solicit comments because he was afraid he would be charged with being a hostile witness. He challenged those at the meeting and in Meeker to think if they want more horses.

Scott Robertson, representing Twin Butte Ranch:

Thanked Jim Cagney and John Husband for having the tour with the RAC and for having the ranchers involved in the tour.

No more comments.

We will wait for Geoff Blakeslee to call the Director before sending in a Federal Register Notice for the July 2, 2003 special meeting. We will wait until after the July 2, 2003 meeting to see if the RAC needs another meeting in September.

Meeting locations and dates were established for the SWL, Wild Horse, Charter, Weeds, and Wildlife Committees.

Larry Porter is to get the Charter Committee the latest RAC regulations.

Jamie Connell is setting up an internal RAC e-mail communication system.

John Husband thanked all for their participation.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.