

Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council

Aug. 19, 2010

Walden, CO

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Glenn Vawter, Cat 1	T Wright Dickinson, Category 1
Steve Gunderson, Cat 1	Steve Smith, Category 2
Dave Grisso, Category 1	Kai Turner, Category 3
Pat Kennedy, Category 2	Dean Riggs, Category 3
Duane Daily, Cat 3	Mike Perry, Cat 1
Clare Bastable, Category 2	Dona Shue, Cat 2
Tom Latham, Cat 1	Jeff Comstock, Cat 3

Not present: Lanny Weddle, Cat 3

BLM Staff

Jamie Connell	David Boyd	
Helen Hankins	Kent Walter	
Allen Crockett	Jeremy Casterson	
Catherine Robertson	Jeff Kitchens	
Dave Blackstun	Kent Lyles	
Dave Stout		
Visitors	Representing	Town/City

Allen, Soren, Mike B

Chairman Pat Kennedy called meeting to order at 8:15. A quorum is present.

Pat thanked KFO staff who put on field trip.

Jamie Connell recognized the five members whose terms are expiring.

Helen Hankins, State Director

I have been with BLM since 1977. I became State Director in February and am excited about this position. I am really impressed with RACs in Colorado, especially the commitment and dedication of its members. They are very helpful to BLM. We at BLM can learn a lot from you. Many of you use BLM land for livelihood, many for recreation. This is a complex district in NW Colorado.

We are seeing a lot of accomplishments in the American Reinvestment Act and National Conservation Areas. But we can become a little more strategic in Colorado – make funding decisions based on that. Continue emphasis on NLCS. Need to look at Vegetation management – weeds, range, forestry, sage grouse habitat, fuels treatment – need to take a 30,000-foot look at it. May need to divide budget differently than we are now based on statewide priorities, may need people from one office to help with a project in another from time to time. One of the state priorities we've come up with is economic stability of communities. Eg realty program – rrp, rights of way, oil and gas and minerals. Another one that is important is recreation – not just motorized and mechanized – but also special places like Dominguez Escalante. They contribute to economies as well. Sec Salazar has emphasized treasured landscapes and energy independence.

T Wright: Glad to hear BLM say they are part of local communities' economies. Whole-heartedly appreciate that. BLM plays a vital role. Planning shop and economic sadly lacking, we can help get there.

Steve S: Appreciate you listing a spectrum of things that can help local communities. NLSC, quiet recreation. Important, special places people like to visit.

Glenn: What are challenges with air quality on a regional scale?

Helen: Within next month MOU for air quality with EPA. BLM has insisted we continue to be decision-maker. EPA wants us to undertake air quality modeling. In Colorado, on at least two plans we have had to do more than one air quality analysis for them. We need to agree on the front end what the model will be and stick with that agreement. New EPA director Jim Martin agrees. This fall EPA will set different standard for ozone, some activities on public lands will likely exceed acceptable levels of ozone.

KAI: Does BLM have any influence on where EPA puts the standard? A least a third of counties would be exceeding new standard if it goes to 70 ppm. Seems like it will be pretty limiting to everybody.

Helen: We have had opportunities to discuss potential challenges with changing threshold. Largely in EPA's hands now to come up with final threshold.

Gary: Will it affect private property? County roads?

Helen: Don't think it's changing relationship with counties.

Jamie: NEPA analysis for road projects in some cases. The change in the ozone standard will affect those kinds of things.

David Boyd asked for input about a possible Statewide RAC meeting. Feedback: Have it on western slope. More rac members out here.

North Sand Hills:

Powerpoint, John Monkouoski

North Sand Hills is only area that allows motorized rec on open dunes in Colorado. Important to local economy in Walden, Jackson county.

Fee money could be used for a second BLM ranger, other improvements at NSHs.

Steve G: put that money into camping resources. Big issue out there

John: ARRA money putting in small campground. Dispersed camping big part of what visitors look for.

Clare: OHV interests are definitely interested in keeping area open. Subgroup agreed with range of alternatives.

Mike B: Jackson County commission. 4 years since we made recommendations. ISA changed everything. County wants to see it remain open, no limits, oppose fees. Get a handle on the law enforcement. The County will oppose any fees. Don't want to see the 1-2 percent that don't care drive the management of this area. It's really only about 10 days each year that is so bad with high visitation.

Dave S: Two issues. Acquisition of state trust land in NSH, and fee issue.

T Wright: Reconcile with working group recommendations. What is set of issues RAC needs to focus on. Is range of alternatives correct?

Steve S: Three alternatives rely on elimination of ISA.

John M: BLM still has the obligation to manage under IMP policy for wilderness. Exception for OHV on open sand area. Working group met last year, hasn't met since.

Steve S: Need some group to discuss continuity of historic use. Need to address 1978 levels, history of withdrawl request, groups needs to understand dune morphology. How do we release ISA without setting wrong precedence?

Little Snake RMP

Powerpoint

T Wright: NSO in Vermillion Basin affect livestock operations? New stock pond, e.g.?

Jeremy: Can do what we need to do to help grazing operations. Wouldn't want a large imprint from human activities.

Catherine: Proper management of livestock helps maintain wilderness character

Steve S: Compatibility of agriculture and wilderness, not mutually exclusive

T Wright: Lets get on ground and look at WSA issues.

Jeff C: Unprecedented public comment on LSFO RMP. BLM didn't follow that with its Vermillion decision. Only one entity didn't reach consensus on Vermillion. What is absolutely critical in this:

State of Colorado backed out of proposal, BLM took a second look, still maintained 1% plan for Vermillion. No new information, suddenly BLM made top down decision to close Vermillion. The 1 percent stood for four years. What changed? Answer I got a month ago was a weak answer about protecting Vermillion, that you can't do it without closing it to oil and gas leasing. (He provides a draft letter for the RAC to consider). We would write this letter to Jamie.

Clare: How do we deal with resolutions or letters controversial? Are we supposed to vote today?

Jeff C: if it's on agenda, we can take action

Steve S: Would this be a protest?

Jeff C: No, advice to BLM.

Steve S: So do we need to act before end of protest period?

T Wright: Everything was out in the open on this plan. Right way to do it. Purpose of RAC is to create a process for people to have a voice and not be overrun. We won't solve issues in the West with Washington making the decisions, politics as usual. We need to reject what BLM has done here, that's not how we should do business in the West. Next time around, it may happen to the other side of the table. This is wrong from a public policy point of view. If this is allowed to stand, why should any of us participate?

Clare: two points: First time I am seeing this letter. It is a big assertion, don't know everything and would like opportunity to talk to folks who were engaged in the effort. Big enough deal that just going ahead with a vote is problematic. Dispute of facts in this letter from what I've heard

Dean: abstaining due to being part of DNR. Cannot be part of this decision.

Steve S: Points of fact in letter. One percent reference – not 1 percent only, it's 1 percent at any given time. Needs to be precise. 99 percent is not forever protected, it's 1 percent at any one time. Procedural question: If you can bring community together on a decision, very powerful. But in this instance there isn't the community of agreement that we are seeing characterized here. We didn't really get there. Good attempt to do so, but didn't get there. When will this group be more effective? Now, or see the results of the protest period and Governor's consistency review. When does BLM need to hear from us?

Jamie: Take input whenever we get it. Right now, waiting for protest period to be over. Once we get protests, depends on what we get for how long it takes. So there is time before ROD. But if you are commenting on procedural, we have a lot of other planning efforts going on. Protest resolution takes place in Washington DC.

Kai: RAC is supposed to work on collaborative model. Local level planning is a key point. This was changed after 4 years. It was unprecedented public involvement, I do support what Jeff wrote.

Tom: Maybe need to go forward with letter as a general point.

Helen: heard two things. 1 particular issue with decision made pretty late in the process due to input from State of Colorado. Important to remember working relationship with State DNR BLM must maintain. Important to differentiate between one concern and a plan that covers many many

aspects. In most areas we went direction recommended. If you choose to write letter, focus on either integrity of process, or the specific issue. That's my recommendation.

Steve G: Integrity of process is what this letter is getting at. Support letter with clarification of the one percent. Process is critical. Need to vote sooner rather than later.

Dona: Way to cover both. Use Vermillion as example.

Glenn: Something for specifics. Seems like Vermillion was a good balanced decision, good process.

Mike Perry: After hearing all this. Disturbed about timing of all this. Support letter.

Dave Grisso: Need to vote today or miss opportunity. Send message that process used is alright if we don't vote today.

Gary: We didn't have this letter ahead of time. What about phone conference a week later? This decision seems like a blatant disregard of public process.

Jamie: Understand frustration. Important to understand we scope for public comments, then write a draft. Then public comment on draft, review draft comments and got to a plan. We write far better plans with more involvement. We have more involvement now, and people see the process. A lot of good things came out of this process.

Clare: Good comments. Don't disagree with comments about process. But I don't know the process that occurred. I want to have time to make informed judgement on this issue. This is a plea. This group has worked really worked well over the five years I've been here. Not obstructionists on this RAC. I need time to understand what happened. Maybe a phone call, or e-mail.

T Wright: This cannot stand. We know the process that went on. The one that we should be nervous about is that this went forward to Washington from Denver without change, and Washington sent it back changed. That's why I got involved years ago, tired of being run over. It's pure politics. Ask for vote here and now. It's about what happened between Denver and Washington.

Steve S: Four topics, with respect. I'm disappointed that members have stated position before everyone has spoken. Jeff's letter, 1 percent was a proposal, not the solution. This notion that there was a consensus is not correct. Groups involved did not reach consensus. Basic facts: Vermillion Basin 5 percent of gas, 1 percent of oil in LSFO. Virtually all of the LSFO is open to leasing, and most of the field office is leased. 85% of leases are not developed, waiting in line to be produced. We can hold off on this one area, Vermillion, for the life of the plan. Talking about drilling one percent at a time, not only one percent ever. Maybe a variation of this letter we can all get behind. Be open, strive for consensus. I think we can get unanimous support of the letter. We want BLM to be sure they properly are using community involvement.

Pat asks for clarification from T Wright and Steve S.

Steve S: No consensus on this.

T Wright: Agree. But the one percent that left Denver was changed by Washington. That's why this is important. You can't deorderize this fish.

Jeff C: Take home message of this letter is the top down nature of decision. Don't want that to happen again. Ask that letter be passed today. Also, 100 percent of Vermillion would not be developed under any approach because there is not gas across 100 percent of it.

Helen: Piece of information that isn't on table yet. More than a year since Sally Wisely left. Not sure what she sent forward. BLM was continuing to work with draft during this time. It was still a draft plan. We were still working to create the final. But a huge amount of weight on the input of public, communities, NWCOS. We have great respect for opinions of Governor and other officials in the state. We have to give serious consideration of what the chief executive of the state says. Appreciate strong feelings local people have, but they are public lands and we have to take input from Washington as well. Have to remember there are other inputs we have to consider. Public protest period continues, then we will resolve protests, which should take several months.

Clare reiterates she wants time to clarify what happened, doesn't want to vote today.

Steve G: Teaching moment. Quick response needed, more effective. Timing is critical. Delaying takes impact away from our response.

T Wright: 1989 RMP said 100 percent open, now it's 100 percent closed. Asks for vote.

Pat: First question, delay this vote one week. Clare moves to delay. Gary seconds for discussion.

Gary: How would vote take place?

Pat: E-mail vote.

Vote: all but Clare, Dean, Steve vote yes.

T Wright: Moves for first letter. Second Gary.

Dave G: Need to clean up letter.

Vote: Original letter, minor amendments. Cat 1, 5 yes: Cat 2, 3 (not Clare or Steve Smith), Cat 3, 3 (Dean abstains). Motion carries

Public Comment:

Andrew Concern about moratorium on outfitter permits. Doesn't want to see people shut out. Some people are not using their permits, some are using a lot. Need to manage for use, not just number of permits and be fair.

Wild Horse and Burro

Letter for wild horse strategy unanimously passed. Will be submitted.

Oil and Gas Leasing Reforms

Powerpoint

Public Comment: Randy Miller, on KFO Subcommittee. Motorized recreation, oil and gas. Process has been good.

Luke Shaffer, Colorado Environmental Coalition. Disappointed that letter wasn't circulated before this meeting. Would have allowed better understanding of process. Process today didn't follow that spirit.

Steve Smith: procedural. If we are going to bring proposal to RAC meeting, should get it out in advance. Agenda discussion item.

Pat: DFO will investigate by-laws.

Sub group updates

CRVFO, Steve S, meet and reviewed alternatives

KFO, Clare – met this summer. Are the subgroups going for consensus? Took a vote at the last meeting.

Jamie: Subgroup reports to RAC, RAC reports to BLM. OK if you can't reach consensus, RAC wants to know where you can and can't.

T Wright: Do subgroups have enough time and resources?

GJFO: Steve G. Group has met. Alternatives are being developed. Agreed that there is an adequate range of alternatives. High level of participation.

Jamie: need vote from this RAC

Steve G: Group voted and agreed there is adequate range of alternatives.

RAC votes to support work of sub group, their vote. Passes unanimously.

WRFO: Kai: Consensus recommendation from the subgroup.

Kent: a lot of clarification. Group reached consensus.

Dave G: Wants to see before voting.

Kent will send recommendations to NW RAC. Luke will sign letter, mail

McInnis Canyons, Pat: issue with fees since NCA established. Heavy use on river, outfitters moving away because they can't find campsites. Need better input from stakeholders after river season.

REC RAC- Clare drafted letter, reviewed by REC committee.

Vote: all approve letter.

Future agenda items

NSH—land trade, releasing

Rac sponsored expo

Natural gas use in vehicles – Dave G

Statewide agenda items

RAC sponsored expo