

NW RAC
Aug. 18, 2011
Holiday Inn, Craig

Minutes

Category 1

Dave Grisso, Steve Gunderson, Tom Latham, Wes McStay

Category 2

Clare Bastable, Steve Smith, Dan Davidson, Pat Kennedy, Dona Shue

Category 3

Gary Bumgarner, Kai Turner, Jeff Comstock, Dean Riggs, Barbara Vasquez

Absent

Glenn Vawter, Category 1

BLM

Jim Cagney, Steve Bennett, Dave Stout, Catherine Robertson, Ester McCulloch, Wendy Reynolds, David Boyd, Kent Lyles, Jack Placchi, Matt Anderson, Tim Wilson, Jerry Strahan

Public

Jay Fletcher, Senator Udall's office
Todd Hagenbuch, Senator Bennet's office
Callie Hendrickson, Conservation Districts
Soren Jespersen, The Wilderness Society
Ray Beck, Craig City Council
Audrey Danner, Moffat County Commissioner
Carolyn Tucker, Shell
Jan Gerber, Museum of Moffat County
Sasha Nelson, Colorado Environmental Coalition

Pat Kennedy called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. A quorum is present.

Pat thanked Dan and his staff for the evening at the Museum, and Wendy, her staff, and the Trapper Mine folks for the field trip the day before.

Jim Cagney recognized members with expiring terms and thanked them for their dedication: Glenn Vawter, Steve Gunderson, Clare Bastable, Dean Riggs, Gary Bumgarner

Jim updated the NW RAC on the 30-mile rule camping rule, which states that you must move at least 30 miles after camping 14 days. The rule is in effect. BLM will use common sense to enforce. But drafts of how to implement are still circulating.

Jim – BLM is conducting visual resource inventories in Craig and Meeker. Received money from the two large powerlines proposed through NW Colorado to ensure we had good visual inventories to help us make decisions. BLM added some money to include the rest of the areas in the field offices not affected by the proposal. BLM is not redoing RMPs, not big change in how we are managing lands in the NW.

Recreation Enhancement Act Training

Jack Placchi gave a Powerpoint on REA

Jack will clarify what is process for USFWS to review fees. This RAC will only hear BLM proposals

Dave will e-mail how to get to NW RAC website and this Powerpoint (fix so that it says NW RAC)

Jim wants to ensure the RAC gets to review proposals initially before the public comment period – just float the initial proposal to see what the NW RAC thinks

If RAC recommends a fee be approved, they need to send memo to state director

Dave will send language on how decisions are made in RAC (bylaws)

Question about whether we can combine the 180 day notice with the meeting notice in the FRN.

Comm plan – business plan posted 45 days ahead of meeting, meeting notice 45 days, detail what public outreach has been done, initial review by RAC at step 1a.

Catherine – BLM needs to know how soon the NW RAC wants to have the business plans in advance to review. Does NWRAC want the business plans posted on line for the public to review?

Jack – under USFS, RAC got business plans 45 days in advance.

In addition to North Fruita, also Upper Colorado River and Ruby Horsethief should be on agenda

Barbara moves that NWRAC sends a letter to state director suggests starting 180 day notice with initial FRN notice announcing meeting. Gunderson seconds. Unanimous.

Dave will draft letter. (Barbara will be back on Sept 7)

Public Comment -- none

Federal oil and gas units

Jerry Strahan gives Powerpoint.

Jerry will get total acres of units in Colorado

Cave management

Power point given by Steve Bennett

Initial draft alternatives:

Targeted closure, targeted opening

Looking for feedback on criteria for closing caves, as well as the range of alternatives.

Steve Gunderson – You need to say more about risk of disease, if it can be treated; maps of alternatives.

Pat K – How big of an impact would result – how many people does this effect?

Steve B explained rigorous decontamination process

Dean – Concerned about doing something different from USFS. Confuses the public if you are not consistent. Bat experts say should err on the side of caution and be more like the Forest Service.

Jim Cagney – Our ability to enforce a complete closure is limited. We don't know much. We need to work with the cavers who have more information on caves and bats than anybody.

Steve Smith – I agree that consistent policy among the two agencies is important, whatever that policy is.

Steve B – One challenge is we don't know where all our caves are

Jeff – Where's the alternative to use education and mitigation, not closures? Are you worried that they won't be enough?

Steve B – The guidance from our State Office and scoping from public led us to consider targeted closures

Wes – I hate to see public barred from public lands. Full closures won't be effective, just drive it underground. As you said, you don't even know where all your caves are.

Steve Smith – Not all about humans, need to pay attention to bats too. Don't want to tip scales against the bats.

Jim Cagney – What will we do if WNS shows up in Colorado, close everything? Is that addressed in EA?

Steve B – It would be alternative 2

Steve B – Again, we are asking the NW RAC about the criteria. Is range of alternatives adequate?

Steve Smith – Criteria seem to be a good foundation. Should include provision for emergency closure in analysis

Tom – Is the no action alternative an alternative?

Jim – We would need to include new decontamination rules

Jeff C – So do you have an alternative emphasizing decontamination and education with no closures? If you are looking at a full range of alternatives, you need that one.

Jim – Clarifying that decontamination would not be voluntary

Barbara – What is recommendation from USFWS?

Steve B – They emphasized decontamination procedures, didn't take position on closures

Wendy – Don't forget a lot of caves are on private land, and we have no say on those. A lot of contamination could come from them.

Steve S moves that criteria are sufficient, and range of alternatives include emergency closures in no action and alt 1, also a decontamination/education alternative.

Jeff seconds. Unanimously carries.

Piceance-East Douglas Wild Horse Gather

Jim Cagney – This is not the broader discussion I want to have on wild horse management in the White River Field Office. We're still working on that. This is our specific proposed gather for the Piceance HMA.

James Roberts -- Draft EA. Heard from 65 commentors. Modified EA some based on comments. Expect decision tomorrow. Gather 382 out of HMA, and all wild horses believed to be outside the HMA (78).

Reviewed the alternatives in the EA.

Wes – Like to see horses too, don't want to see them go away. But AUMs for sheep and livestock feed people. Want to make sure that is clear.

Field Manager Update

Grand Junction Field Office, Catherine Robertson

Resource Management Planning

We are starting work again on the Grand Junction Field Office RMP. The air quality impacts modeling effort is underway. We plan to make a preliminary draft RMP and Draft EIS available for review by the cooperating agencies concurrent with the review by the field office staff in January 2012. We plan to meet with the cooperating agencies (including the county) prior to the draft review so that we can refresh group memories given our hiatus. Preliminary date option is Nov. 3, 2011.

The Field Office will contact all the NW RAC subgroup members to gauge their interest and willingness to serve in an extended capacity now that the group's initial obligation to ensure the range of alternatives was adequate has been met. Under the NW RAC's guidance from May 2009, if the RMP subgroups decide to continue meeting after ensuring the range was adequate, the NW RAC asked the them to report back on where they have reached consensus related to the range of alternatives, fatal flaws in the impact analysis, the preferred alternative, and the proposed plan, as well as the areas in which they could not reach consensus. If the group decides to continue meeting, the next meeting will be Nov. 3.

Catherine – asking RAC if they want the RMP Subcommittee to continue now that they have met their initial obligation. Would be a 2-year commitment, likely intensive.

Clare – groups often think it's a vote on alternatives. Very hard to find consensus on most things in Kremmling, eg.

Catherine – have more specifics now, could have them review and ensure still adequate range of alternatives. Probably more helpful.

Clare: Agree with that.

Steve S: what about having sub rac review public comments.

Steve G; how do you help subrac do job?

Jeff: This was formal way for community group to weigh in on alternatives. If they want to weigh in on fatal flaws, impact analyses, let them.

Catherine will work with Dean and Steve G on asking group if they want to continue, and about what specifically they want them to address

Steve B: will also ask CRVFO subgroup if they want to continue.

Dolores River Restoration Project

The Grand Junction Field Office will be hosting a tour of the Russian Knap Weed Control Demonstration Project Aug. 23. The event will include a tour of tamarisk and knapweed removal occurring in the Grand Junction Field Office lands near Gateway along with a tour and explanation of a knapweed control demonstration test plot by Dr. Scott Nissen of CSU. It will feature several sites treated south of Gateway as part of the Dolores River Restoration Partnership's effort. Mechanical and hand cut stump tamarisk removal, both using foliar spray herbicide treatment, were both used and the tamarisk leaf beetle is active in the area. Knapweed treatments have occurred throughout these treatment sites and in surrounding areas.

The GJFO also recently released the Gall Midge, a Russian Knapweed bio-control agent, in the Gateway area as well as in Horsethief Canyon within the McInnis Canyons NCA.

Recreation:

North Fruita Desert Special Recreation Management Area –We have received letters (again) from the Mesa County Commissioners and COPMOBA for the campground fee proposal and will be working through the Northwest Resource Advisory Council at your meeting on December 2nd (Gateway) to present the campground fee proposal for 18 Road Campground. Fee collections for that site will be used to improve, maintain and increase capacity of that campground.

Potential Grand Valley Trails Alliance--Exploratory discussions are being held with numerous recreation advocates on the viability of developing a Grand Valley Trails Alliance, which would serve as a focal point for development and maintenance of trails. There is an excellent model in Moab, The Grand County Trail Mix, which began a few years ago and has developed to the point of having a Trails Coordinator and a Project Leader that are funded by the Mix. Initial discussions with both COHVCO and COPMOBA have indicated a willingness to initiate and potentially seek grant funding.

National Public Lands Day Events—We have three National Public Lands Day events scheduled for September 24: a desert clean-up at 34 & C Road, North Fruita Desert trails event, and a Rough Canyon/Mica Mine Trail event.

Calamity Camp Celebration—In partnership with the Museum of Western Colorado and Gateway Canyons Resort, we are hosting a Calamity Camp Celebration on October 22, in recognition of the National Register of Historic Places listing in early June. Preliminary planning includes a Calamity Camp Reunion in the morning, an afternoon hike down the Pickett Trail, afternoon panel/speaker presentations at GCR, and a dance/food event in the evening.

Lands and Minerals:

Airport Transfer EA -- The Grand Junction Regional Airport and their contractor have experienced some delays on the development of the EA for this project. We are not sure

whether we can anticipate making a decision on the proposed land transfer/RMP amendment in early 2012.

Colorado Mesa University Recreation & Public Purposes Act Conveyance --

Decision Record was signed to convey the property in June 2011. The draft Federal Register Notice is currently in the review process in DC and hopefully will be approved for publication in the next few weeks. Publication of the notice will initiate a 45-day public comment/protest period. Upon resolution of any protests, a patent can be issued 60 days after the Federal Register publication.

Mountain Island Land Exchange -- Appraisals have been completed and approved. The value of the private lands exceeds the value of the federal lands. The GJFO and Mountain Island Ranch (MIR) have worked out an agreement to equalize the values involving dropping some of the private lands, a cash equalization payment by BLM, and a donation of a portion of the difference by MIR. The draft agreement is currently being reviewed in the CSO. The next steps are to finalize the EA, send the draft decision package to the National Land Exchange Team and Washington Office for review and approval, and issue a Notice of Decision.

McClane Canyon Mine--There have been two site visits to the proposed mine site and load out facility with cooperating agencies and adjacent land owners. CAM has been working to address issues raised by these other parties. The primary issues that they are working to address are impacts to T&E fish in Reed Wash (USFWS Consultation) at the load out facility, potential impacts adjacent to the spoil pile to an existing pre-FLPMA irrigation ditch, and impacts to the grazing permittee. We are working with OSM and DRMS on revisions to the Biological Assessment that was previously submitted to USFWS and returned with requests for additional information. We are also still waiting for cultural resource reports associated with a data recovery site and a potential historic dam. Once these reports are received we will determine if any alternatives/mitigation needs to be considered and complete SHPO consultation.

Red Cliff—BLM rejected CAM's ROW applications in April, 2011. CAM had previously withdrawn their mine plan and do not currently have enough coal reserves in existing leases to support the development of the proposed ROWs. CAM has appealed the rejection of the ROWs and requested a Stay of implementation of the decision. IBLA ruled against the request for a Stay on the ROW application denial, but no decision has been made on the appeal. The date for the decision on the appeal is unknown. CAM has until the end of August to file their Statement of Reason for the appeal. BLM Solicitors have an additional 60 days to respond. IBLA will not make a ruling until this information is received. There is no timeframe for an IBLA decision once all information has been received by the Board.

Fire Program - Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit

The Cosgrove Fire continues to have active fire within our management prescription in the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse/Wilderness Study Area. On August 11, approximately 400 acres had burned within the management perimeter.

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA)

We received 105 comment letters (all via email) on the draft proposals for the proposed fee and permit system for the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River. We are currently working on a contract to assist us in finishing the analysis phase of this project, due to the departure of the project lead (Outdoor Recreation Planner) who was heading up this project. The Northwest Resource Advisory Council is drafting a resolution related to the permit component of this project, and will most likely consider the fee component of this project at their December meeting.

We have several upcoming events, including a series of geology hikes and educational events conducted in partnership with the Colorado Canyons Association. The Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado and Centennial Canoe will also be participating in a National Public Lands Day event in early September—around 50 volunteers will spend 3 days removing tamarisk around existing campsites in the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River.

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (NCA)

The BLM planning team, working closely with the Cooperating Agencies and the Advisory Council for the planning effort, is currently working on a series of Resource Management Plan (RMP) alternatives (i.e., the broadly defined desired outcomes, allowable uses, and management actions that will guide management of the NCA for the next 20 years). In late August, the team will also begin examining the network of existing routes, and determining those routes that would be left open, those that would be closed, and those that may need seasonal or other restrictions, under each RMP Alternative. The Cooperating Agency and Advisory Council will have opportunities to review these draft decisions over the next six months; they will then be reviewed by our State and Washington Offices before being released for public review (as part of the Draft RMP/EIS) in fall of 2012.

We are also preparing for two economic workshops that will be held in October (on or around October 5), and hope to see broad attendance to help us to understand the economic costs and benefits associated with the NCA and potential public lands management under each of the RMP alternatives. This analysis will be a critical component of the overall RMP, and may have secondary value to the business community, organizations such as the Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau and Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce that “market” Grand Junction and Mesa County, and individuals interested in the effect of these types of federal special designations. The NCA Advisory Council will continue to meet twice per month through September, and will then transition to meeting once per month.

We are also continuing to work closely with Union Pacific and Mesa County on access issues at Bridgeport. With the environmental analysis largely complete, we are now discussing roles, responsibilities, and funding. The BLM and Mesa County have taken a primary role in project components such as the environmental analysis and engineering feasibility studies, and will be continuing discussions to ensure that all partners have a

full understanding of the total cost of the project to assist in determining the costs and expertise each partner will contribute.

Kremmling Field Office, Dave Stout

Kremmling RMP Revision: Since December 2010, when the CRVFO and KFO Draft RMPs were separated, the Kremmling staff has been working diligently on completing the Draft RMP. The contract with Tetra Tech for preparation of the two plans is no longer effective for Kremmling. Much of the work originally done by Tetra Tech has been re-done by the Kremmling staff, leading to a delay in meeting milestones previously reported to the RAC. We expect to complete a briefing for the BLM Director by August 26 and receive permission to print. The Kremmling RMP should go to the printer by mid-September.

Fuels Treatments: The Colorado Youth Corps Association and The Nature Conservancy Wildland Fire Module have completed work on hazard tree removal projects on Independence Mountain. The work was contracted through the North Park Stewardship Agreement with Jackson County.

Forestry: Bill Webster of Tumbleweed Express continues to make good cutting progress on the 110-acre Parsons Draw Timber Sale on Independence Mountain. The Hogback Too sale, in the Granby area, has been modified to allow about 15 MBF of hazard trees to be removal on 45 acres, in addition to the timber previously sold. The Grouse Mountain sale was offered, but received no bids. The Reed Creek sale is in its advertising period. Sale preparation work (cruising, etc.) continues on Owl Mountain, southeast of Walden and on Black Mountain, northeast of Kremmling.

Minerals: We previously reported that the Kremmling Field Office would have once parcel offered for leasing in the August 2011 oil and gas lease sale. The parcel is in Grand County, northeast of Kremmling. Following further consideration, we decided to defer that parcel as well, given substantial public interest in the nominated parcels and concerns with leasing under the 1984 RMP. Thirteen other parcels (six in Jackson County and seven in Grand County) were deferred due to possible conflicts with sage grouse core areas, and to allow time to respond to public comments regarding the sale. More than 900 pages of comments on the leasing environmental assessment were received from the public, strongly supporting no leasing. There are no nominated parcels for the next sale.

Wildlife: A sagebrush treatment project will commence this fall on public lands in the Antelope Pass area north of Kremmling. About 200 acres will be treated with a Dixie harrow, in cooperation with livestock grazing permittees. The treatment will remove dense stands of sagebrush, to allow grasses, forbs and younger sagebrush to flourish, benefitting both wildlife and livestock.

The request for proposals for the project at the Junction Butte Wetland Management Area has been posted and will close on September 24. The project should begin in October.

A ditch that carries water from the Colorado River to the wetland area is not functioning and repair efforts have not been successful. The project will install poly tubing within a porous section of irrigation ditch. Approximately 1,800 to 2,100 ft. of the ditch would be improved, likely over several years, depending on cost. The completed project should resolve all the issues with maintenance of the ditch and delivery of water to the wetlands.

Recreation: Activity at the North Sand Hills over the July 4 holiday was somewhat subdued due to cool weather. The July holiday is one of the three big weekends at the North Sand Hills. Representatives from the State Land Board, State Parks (now the Division of Parks and Wildlife), and COHVCO are meeting on August 31 with the Jackson County Commissioners to discuss the transfer of the State land at the North Sand Hills to another agency, likely the BLM. Jackson County opposes an exchange, at least with the BLM.

Flooding on the Colorado River early in the rafting season reduced boating and fishing activities in the Upper Colorado River SRMA. Water levels as high as 9,700 cfs (the highest since 1984) kept away many recreationists. Visitation to date has been about 10,000, compared with 15,000 during the same period in 2010. Commercial use has increased substantially as the high water has been receding.

Concert events continue at the new State Bridge venue. About 250 people attend each weekend concert. Many of the visitors camp on adjacent public lands under a permit issued to the State Bridge owner. A developer acquired the State Bridge site several years after the lodge burned, and created a venue for music events. An amphitheater and other improvements have been installed. Adjacent public lands are used under a Special Recreation Permit for parking and camping associated with the events. Events will continue nearly every weekend during the summer.

Eagle County has a contract with the owner of property at State Bridge (across the Colorado River from the event site) for the \$1.6 million purchase of the private land as part of Eagle County open space. The purchase is scheduled to close in November or December, following a new survey of the parcel. An agreement with Eagle County may be possible, which would allow the site to be managed by the BLM as a take-out and launch site for boaters on the river, as part of the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area.

Wilderness: The Grand County Manager and the Jackson County Administrator inquired, on behalf of their respective County Commissions, about Secretary Ken Salazar's wilderness "crown jewel" proposal. Neither county had crown jewels proposals, and both were concerned that the BLM was proposing areas as crown jewels, which is not the case. There are three WSAs in the Kremmling Field Office, two of which are not recommended for designation. The third, a 33-acre addition to a Forest Service unit, is proposed for designation.

Lands and Realty: We met July 13 with representative of Tribes, Union Telephone Company and the Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss final details on proceeding with processing Union's application for a cell tower on Owl Ridge, southeast of Walden.

Tribal representatives will complete their rituals before and during construction of the cell tower site, which should occur in September.

Kremmling staff met on June 26 with representatives of the Blue Valley Ranch to tour parcels involved in the land exchange between the Ranch and the BLM. Blue Valley Ranch has agreed to contract for preparation of an EIS on the exchange, due to the public controversy associated with the proposal. The purpose of the tour was to determine if additional field work was needed to supplement existing information prior to beginning work on the EIS.

The Cadastral survey on the shooting range east of Walden has been completed and approved. Final work on issuing the Recreation and Public Purposes patent to Jackson County will be completed in the next few weeks, at which time the parcel will transfer from the BLM to the County.

Little Snake Field Office, Wendy Reynolds

RMP: On August 6, Little Snake Field Office gave a briefing to BLM Director Bob Abbey and his staff regarding the Final Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision. At the conclusion of the briefing, the Director gave Little Snake FO permission to print the RMP and ROD. The Biological Opinion on the RMP is expected to be received on August 22 from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and we anticipate that State Director Helen Hankins will sign the Record of Decision in September, 2011. We anticipate that the Final RMP and Record of Decision will be available to the public in early October. Thereafter, an implementation plan will be developed and we will prepare for the start of our travel management planning effort.

Personnel changes: The Little Snake Field Office leadership team is now fully assembled with the addition of our new Assistant Field Manager, Tim Wilson, who joined us on August 1. Tim replaces Jerry Strahan and will be leading the oil and gas leasing/coal mining and minerals wing of the LSFO. Tim comes to us from the State of Kansas where he brings a wealth of experience in minerals, oil & gas and coal mining. Additionally, law enforcement officer Ed Hendricks has completed his training program and is now on board full-time in the Little Snake FO.

Little Snake and White River field offices conducting visual resource inventory: A visual resource inventory and a series of community workshops are being conducted in both the Little Snake and White River field offices to assess the sensitivity levels of viewpoints within the areas. Two large powerline proposals, Transwest and Gateway South, crossing through both the White River and the Little Snake FOs triggered the need to conduct these inventories and both proponents are contributing funding to accomplish this task. The communities are being asked to identify and weigh in on areas they consider to be important viewsheds so that future public land use proposals can be considered with those in mind. Moffat County Land Use Board has expressed strong concern that this inventory will be used as a tool to amend the new RMP's visual resource classifications.

Wilderness and County Land Use Board: In discussions with the Moffat County Land Use Board regarding Secretary Ken Salazar's wilderness "crown jewel" proposal, the Land Use Board has recommended to the Moffat County Commissioners that they not support the designation of any wilderness in Moffat County. Presently, there are 7 wilderness study areas in Moffat County within the Little Snake Field Office that could be considered.

Steve S: Clarifies that letter from Salazar on wilderness did not limit it to WSAs.

Wendy: That's accurate. Did not specify WSAs. Said "Crown Jewels with community support."

Fire season: Fire season has been slow but picking up with the recent Cedar Mountain fire, just outside Craig which hosts a number of communication sites and is an important urban interface recreation area for local residents. Previous WUI treatments near the cell towers prevented the fire from destroying them which was greatly appreciated by the cell tower owners.

Colorado River Valley Field Office, Steve Bennett

Resource Management Plan update: The Colorado River Valley Field Office plans to publish the Notice of Availability September 16, 2011 for the draft Resource Management Plan Revision and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). This will commence the 90-day public comment period. Meetings with the Cooperating Agencies and the RAC Subgroup will be convened to provide information on the documents and discuss next steps for their involvement in comment analysis and development of the final proposed plan. Public meetings will also be scheduled in Eagle and Garfield counties to discuss the draft plan. The draft contains detailed route by route travel management implementation components of the alternatives.

An Upper Colorado River Stakeholder Group has proposed an alternative river management plan to protect Wild and Scenic River values on the upper Colorado River between Kremmling and Glenwood Springs. The alternative plan is analyzed as part of draft RMPs for BLM's Kremmling Field Office and Colorado River Valley Field Office. The draft RMP for the Colorado River Valley Field Office will also include a suitability analysis for U.S. Forest Service lands in Glenwood Canyon. If the USFS and BLM decide to adopt the proposed plan, the stakeholder group has requested that USFS and BLM defer a suitability decision on eligible stream reaches between Kremmling and Glenwood Springs.

National Speleological Society Special Recreation Permit Challenged: The National Speleological Society (NSS) applied for a Special Recreation Permit for recreational cave and geology trips on BLM public lands during the NSS convention July 16-24, 2011, in Glenwood Springs. The application was for limited visits to three caves located in the Deep Creek drainage, Roaring Fork Valley, and the Roan Plateau area. The Center for

Biological Diversity (CBD) filed a Complaint and Motion for Summary Judgment in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia requesting the court vacate the BLM decision to issue a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) for the cave trips. The basis for CBD's lawsuit was that the SRP would allow attendees of the convention to make trips to caves that are known habitat for two species of bats. CBD felt the permit would put those bats and other populations at risk of being wiped out due to White-Nose Syndrome despite BLM's strict decontamination requirements.

Despite CBD's attempt to block the permits, the Federal District Judge allowed the BLM permit to be issued. The judge was very complimentary of the quality and diligence of the BLM in preparation of the EA and its compliance with NEPA. BLM did not violate the Administrative Procedures Act and was not arbitrary and capricious in its decision. He also highlighted BLM's thoroughness in its consultation with other agencies and interests as well as its planned oversight and monitoring of the decontamination procedures and other stipulations.

White-Nose Syndrome management actions being considered: The Colorado River Valley Field Office is continuing work on an environmental assessment to consider implementation of management actions including targeted seasonal closures at cave and abandoned mine sites that contain hibernating bats to reduce the risk of spread of white-nose syndrome in bats. The scoping notice and comment period ended June 3 and provided an opportunity for public participation on proposed management actions prior to a decision being made by the Field Manager. We would like input from the NWRAC also and plan to present the criteria being considered to identify important bat caves that may be considered for closures to recreational caving as well as the alternatives that will be analyzed in the environmental assessment.

Following policy direction from BLM's Colorado State Office, as outlined in BLM Instruction Memorandum No. CO-2011-006, the proposed action is to identify and establish targeted, seasonal closures at sites located on BLM lands in the CRVFO with significant populations of hibernating bats that remain physically accessible to the public during the bats' hibernation period. An appropriate range of alternatives will be considered based on scoping comments and internal review. Initial internal review of the action and available information has indicated that the range of alternatives may include closing caves and abandoned mines with documented bat use until the risk of WNS contamination can be fully determined.

Fall Prescribed Burns Planned for the Roan: This fall CRVFO hopes to burn up to 1,200 acres on top of the Roan Plateau to improve aspen regeneration in the East Fork Parachute drainage. It's part of a three-year cooperative project among the BLM, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, and Williams Production to improve forest health on the Roan. The acreage is split between two areas. The first area expected to be burned is about 600 acres in the Grassy Gulch and Camp Gulch areas. If time and conditions allow, another 600 acres would be burned near First Anvil Creek. By clearing the thick understory and old, decadent aspens, the burn should create ideal conditions for new aspens to regenerate, creating a new, healthier aspen forest.

Carbondale fuels work continues: Work has resumed this summer on a project designed to help protect communities north of Carbondale from wildfire and to improve safety for firefighters and the public. It's part of a cooperative effort between the Bureau of Land Management and the Carbondale & Rural Fire Protection District to reduce vegetative hazardous fuels on about 27 acres of BLM land west of the intersections of Garfield County Roads 103 and 112, near the Red Hill Special Recreation Management Area. A primary goal is to reduce the risk of a wildfire burning from public lands onto private land and threatening property in the area. The project began last summer. Crews are reducing "ladder fuels," which can carry a fire into the canopy, by thinning smaller trees and limbing larger trees to 3-4 feet from the ground.

Dejour Energy files Master Development Plan for wells in Garfield State Wildlife Area: The Colorado River Valley Field Office is seeking public comments on a natural gas well development proposal three miles south of Newcastle, Colo, involving the State Wildlife Area. Division of Parks and Wildlife owns the surface but the subsurface minerals are owned by the Federal government and other private parties. Dejour Energy (USA) Corporation proposes to directionally drill up to 68 new wells from four new well pads on federal leases over the next five years, beginning in the fall of 2011. This would include construction of up to one mile of new access roads and 1.25 miles of natural gas and water pipelines. Three of the proposed pads are on state-owned land, one is on BLM land. Dejour has been working with the state to acquire and surface use agreement for the pads on state lands. BLM requires operators to submit these multi-year Master Development Plans in order to facilitate an orderly development of the federal leases. Master Development Plans help BLM better identify environmental impacts and appropriate measures to mitigate these impacts. BLM will prepare an Environmental Assessment on this master plan. Before it completes the assessment, BLM wants to hear any specific issues, concerns and comments the public has about this proposal.

White River Field Office Program Updates, Kent E. Walter

White River Oil and Gas RMP Amendment

The BLM White River Field Office continues work to develop an Oil and Gas Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement. The four Alternatives look at a range of development from 550 multi-well pads up to 2,550 multi-well pads, with an average of 8 wells per pad. The WRFO is finalizing the Draft RMPA/EIS and is hoping to have it to the Cooperating Agencies later this fall for review: the actual date will be firmed up soon. Phase I of the Resource Management & Monitoring Protocol (RMMP) has been completed and has been published as a BLM Technical Note #439. The RMMP is designed to serve as a cost-effective and publicly accepted approach for landscape-change monitoring and assessment. The Surface Reclamation Protocol has been finalized and will be evaluated with the RMP Amendment. The WRFO is recommending use of the Surface Reclamation Protocol by operators to help guide successful reclamation. A revised schedule is being developed and a Notice of Availability for the Draft Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS is to be published in the Federal Register in spring 2012. This notice initiates a required 90-day public and

agency review/comment period for the Draft RMPA/EIS, as well as dates, times, and locations of public meetings/hearings that will be held during the same time period.

Cultural Resources

The cultural program is currently working on providing clearances for grazing-permit renewals, entailing completing fieldwork for 15 different allotments, small range improvements, and forthcoming prescribed burns. During 2010, the cultural program was able to complete approximately 600 acres of inventory in the Canyon Pintado National Historic District area furthering the knowledge of the historical resources in this region, and 100 more are slated to be completed by fall. WRFO archaeologists are also in the planning stages of making some rock art sites along the Dragon Trail, south of Rangely, interpreted for the public similar to our recreation sites in Canyon Pintado. Currently tribal consultation has been completed on this project, the EA is out for public scoping, and interpretive panels are being completed.

Energy Program

Oil Shale RD&D

WRFO approved American Shale Oil, LLC's (AMSO) Plan of Development (POD) on September 3, 2009. Construction of the facilities at the site location began in spring 2010 and is nearly complete. The process monitoring wells are constructed and the production well casing is cemented. Construction of the heater well commences upon the completion of the production well and rig move. Initiation of the shale oil recovery process is expected to commence late July early August. WRFO received Shell Frontier's POD for COC 69166 (East Lease) on January 3, 2011. The POD is currently under review. Construction of an access road, two pads (one hydrology pad and one core-hole pad) and drilling of five hydrologic monitoring wells and one core hole occurred late 2009 early 2010 on Shell's East Lease and additional appraisal well was drilled April 2011. Chevron is analyzing information gathered during their geo-hydrologic drilling /testing and are scheduling additional formation/aquifer testing in summer 2011.

WRFO BLM has recently received nominations for two additional RD&D tracts; ExxonMobil Exploration Corp. and Natural Soda Holdings Inc. An environmental assessment (EA) to determine the projects impacts is required prior to determination of issuance of the research tracts. Public open houses were held in Rifle and Meeker, Colorado on April 27 and 28, 2011, respectively. Comment period ended May 17, 2011. A third party contractor to write the EA for the combined projects is selected. Estimated schedule of the EA being available for public comment is November 2011.

Oil Shale PEIS

In 2008, the BLM published a Final Oil Shale and Tar Sands PEIS that amended the White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan lands available for oil shale leasing from approximately 295,000 acres to approximately 341,000 acres.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Possible Land Use Plan Amendments for Allocation of Oil Shale and Tar Sands Resources on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming was published on April 14, 2011. The Scoping Period for this NOI ran from April 14, 2011 through May 16, 2011. Scoping Meetings were held the last week of April and the first week May. Two meetings were held in each location.

Issues raised at the Scoping Meetings include water quality and quantity, air quality, recreation resources, socio-economic concerns, ecological concerns, and cultural/historical concerns. Many people expressed that the oil shale and tar sands program should not move forward until the results of the Research, Demonstration and Development (RD&D) leases are known and the technology(s) have been proven. Many others expressed concern that extensive resources were spent previously to develop the 2008 Oil Shale and Tar Sands PEIS, and that there are not additional facts or issues (other than the settlement agreement) that substantially change the playing field such that BLM should be expending time and money on this effort. Industry expressed their desire that additional lands, primarily those in the new USGS assessment, be opened for potential commercial oil shale leasing.

Alternatives will be developed based on the terms of the settlement agreement and the issues and concerns identified during the scoping meetings. Once alternatives have been developed, and additional data collected (i.e., wilderness characteristics, ACECs, Adobe Town boundaries, etc.), Argonne will begin writing the document. A draft PEIS is scheduled to be released for internal BLM and cooperating agency review in mid-October through early November.

Coal

Blue Mountain Energy's (BME) Deserado underground coal mine produces approximately 2 million tons of coal annually. Deserado is a captive mine where all coal production is shipped, via electric train, and utilized by the Bonanza Power Plant in Bonanza Utah. BME has seven federal coal leases that are contained in a logical mining unit (LMU). In early 2011 BME applied for an exploration license and a federal coal lease.

Oil and Gas

As of August 1, 2011, the WRFO has approved 117 applications for permit to drill (APDs), performed 323 inspections, and processed 3134 sundries. FY11 has not seen a substantial change in workload. WRFO has received 190 spud notices and 60 subsequent reports of well abandonment. One staff member is recently acquired his certification as a Petroleum Engineering Technician; the remaining uncertified PET will commence his training in October 2011.

Non-Energy Minerals Program (sodium)

Natural Soda Inc. produced more than 120,000 tons of sodium bicarbonate from their existing in-situ solution mining operations. Upgrades to the facility including a higher capacity, more efficient boiler and an increase in production capabilities have been approved. American Soda well field is expected to remain idle in 2011. No production from the well field has occurred since 2004.

Fire and Fuels Program

Three prescribed fires are planned for FY 2011 (Freeze Wall, Segar MT. and Badger Flats). In 2010 the WRFO implemented Emergency Stabilization and Burn Rehab plans for the Spring Creek, Duck Creek, Mellen, and Scenery Gulch wildland fires. The BLM

also completed the Emergency Stabilization and Burn Rehab plan for the Rough fire, aerially seeded earlier this spring.

The BLM, Rio Blanco County Sheriff's Department and local landowners south of Rangely are nearing completion of a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the BLM to efficiently manage natural ignition fires for ecological benefits where this option exists.

Geographic Information Systems Program

Priorities for the GIS Program include developing data and processes to support the RMMP, the travel management plan, and Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive (TES) plant management. Specific data layers include (1) well pads, right-of-ways, and other surface disturbances, (2) updated road centerlines (to match 2009 aerial photography); and, (3) TES plants including the addition of all 2009 field surveys. In addition to data development, through the RMMP and working with the USGS, plans are being developed to create a web-based GIS/Disturbance Tracking tool that will allow BLM staff, Oil & Gas Operators, and the Public to access near real-time updates of surface disturbance and reclamation activities in the WRFO.

Range Program

Field work has begun and will continue throughout the field season for six grazing permit renewals; plans are to finish all necessary field work and issue permits by January of 2012. Field work is also being done on Yellow Creek and several other allotments in preparation for upcoming permit renewals. BLM has set the 2011 grazing fees at \$1.35/AUM and the surcharge at \$4.78/AUM.

The BLM and CSU have worked out a means by which permittees can participate in monitoring of the range that they utilize. The CSU Extension Office currently has the information and is setting up several sessions to provide the necessary training for grazing permittees to monitor the range land conditions. By following this process and methodology the BLM can accept the monitoring and use it during the processing of future grazing permit renewals.

Riparian Program

Thirty-eight miles of riparian PFC assessments have been scheduled in association with the 2011 grazing permit renewals. Weed treatment evaluation, initial treatment, and inventory will continue in riparian areas with specific treatment targets established at the Olive Garden and Divide Creek Reservoir sites. Several existing riparian projects will be maintained throughout the field season as well.

Wildlife Program

The WRFO Raptor Inventory and Monitoring Project was approved for funding in April, 2011. Currently, BLM staff and one technician are monitoring known territories and conducting nest inventories in suitable nesting habitat as part of on-going oil and gas activities in the project area. The 2010 WRFO Raptor Nesting Productivity and Nest

Monitoring Report for Piceance Basin, Colorado was completed in February, 2011, and is available on the WRFO website (<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/wrfo/wildlife0.html>).

In 2010, 184 known nesting territories were visited, and 88% were classified as occupied. We also noted that nest re-occupancy during the 2010 breeding season was high, with 88% ($n = 30$) of nests that were occupied in 2009 also confirmed as being re-occupied in 2010.

In addition to monitoring and inventory work that is currently being conducted, other projects include refining the raptor nest monitoring spatial database, updating the WRFO raptor survey protocol, and modifying the weighted overlay nesting habitat suitability model using information that was collected during the 2010 breeding season. Most of the project deliverables that were identified in 2008 have been produced and finalized. Moving forward, behavioral information acquired using video monitoring equipment, and nest stand characterization information will be collected in 2011 to allow for analysis of these data using logistic regression.

Recreation Program

The Recreation Program has a multitude of activities underway and planned for 2011. As things dry out we are continuing to update all 14 kiosks around the field office with new maps, emergency information and informational materials. We are continuing with road signing, as well as planning to add new signs along the boundaries of our Wilderness Study Areas. We are also working with the Rangely Rock Crawlers to install carsonites to delineate the boundaries of the rock park.

The WRFO attended the May 14 Rangely Rock Crawlers Annual Women's Competition to monitor the event and provide a BLM presence. We also continue to attend their monthly club meetings. The Rangely Rock Crawlers, via their MOU and an EA, also graveled a parking area and WRFO is working with them on getting additional informational signage installed.

Plans are underway for multiple National Public Lands Day events (clean-ups) with the Rangely Boy Scouts (white River Clean up) and local Meeker citizens (Windy Gulch cleanup).

WRFO is providing guidance to the Eastern Rio Blanco Metropolitan Recreation and Park District (ERBM) as they develop a trails plan for Dorcas Jensen Park, adjacent to BLM lands.

We continue to move forward with initial planning steps towards completing a travel management inventory and plan for the WRFO. We are coordinating with the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) and other potential partners to accomplish this goal. The WRFO Outdoor Recreation Planner, Chad Schneckenburger, is leading a panel session on OHV use at the Nation Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP) conference in Breckenridge during the last week of May.

The WRFO is coordinating with the COSO in assembling a SWAT team to conduct an inventory for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs) in association with the national programmatic EIS on oil shale development.

In coordination with the COSO and the LSFO, WRFO is working on conducting a Visual Resource Inventory for the entire Field Office. This effort is expected to kick off in early June and run through the summer.

The WRFO continues to actively manage the Special Recreation Permit program. This includes 49 guide and outfitting permittees, 1 wilderness therapy permittee, 1 higher education permittee, and the Rangely Rock Crawlers. An organizational meeting for SRP permittees was held on April 28. All big game hunting SRP applications and renewals for the 2011 hunting season were due in the WRFO on May 15.

The WRFO is also working on the development of the Willow Creek OHV trail that will provide additional access to approximately 21,000 acres of BLM lands which are currently limited due to private land issues. WRFO applied for, and was awarded, a one week work session by the USFS Colorado Statewide OHV Trail Crew for assistance with construction of this project in August of 2011.

Soil, Water, and Air Program

Stream flow was very high this year and runoff is expected to be higher than normal on most of the streams in our area due to higher than normal snow packs, a wet spring and regular afternoon thunderstorms.

Work with USGS on groundwater and surface water monitoring continues with sampling of the five dedicated wells and we did geophysical logging on 8 wells this summer to expand the network to 15 wells. The first sampling of the full fifteen well network will be in August. The Piceance Basin Data Repository group continues to move forward with plans to coordinate with the Colorado Data Sharing Network for future data storage.

The spring inventory has continued this year to support water rights and monitoring efforts. Last year's work on the database and mapping is paying off and Hydrotech, Keith Sauter is doing a great job adding new springs to the inventory while finding ones that were inventoried in the past.

Air quality data collection at the Rangely and Meeker Federal Reference monitoring sites supported by the BLM continues. We have a new climate station that began collecting data this spring and continue to add to the precipitation network.

The NEPA workload continues to build and the current focus is back to the RMP Amendment for oil and gas development.

Wild Horses

In February 2011, the Bureau withdrew its West Douglas Herd Area Gather Environmental Assessment which called for the removal of all excess wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area.

On June 24, 2011, Judge Collier denied BLM's request to dismiss in whole the West Douglas Herd Area Wild Horse Gather of 2010 – Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition, Inc. et al vs. Salazar et al. Case #1:10-CV-01645-RMC.

BLM released its preliminary 2011 Piceance-East Douglas gather EA for a 30 day public comment period on July 8, 2011 for the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area (HMA) and areas outside including the North Piceance Herd Area but excluded the West Douglas Herd Area. The WRFO has initiated this project through external scoping that was done in February and held a public scoping meeting on March 1, 2011. The comment period for this EA will ended on August 8, 2011.

Weed Management

WRFO's weed budget was reduced in the FY 2011 Preliminary Target Allocations. Based on the reduction the weed program will be looking at different methods to ensure that high priority weed spraying projects are completed. WRFO completed several weed spraying projects in 2010, including the completion of approximately 300 acres of leafy spurge aerial spraying. In addition, weed crews have treated an additional 300 acres of weeds within the resource area. We are also looking at working to develop a collaborative process with oil and gas companies to improve the treatment of weeds on disturbed areas where multiple companies currently operate.

Lands and Realty

WRFO's lands group is working on the TransWest Express interstate electric transmission line project which will transport renewable energy based power from central Wyoming to Nevada and the Energy Gateway South transmission project which will transport electricity from central Wyoming to Utah. The permits have been issued for the first phase of the Rio Blanco County Road 5 improvement projects and the sale of a parcel of public land to the Rangely Hospital District is proceeding.

Enterprise has begun construction on the Meeker Plant to Greasewood 36-inch pipeline and the expansion of the Meeker 1 Gas processing facility is nearing final NEPA analysis. Proposals for construction of oil and gas infrastructure have been approved or are pending to multiple companies for construction this summer.

Steve S: None of the reports address master leasing plans, can we get update on them ? Maybe next meeting?

Ester will send reclamation protocol to other field managers

Jeff: Where is WRFO with MLP?

Ester: Held meeting, most parcels have been deferred because of being in MLP area. Three parcels were identified for an on-site with public in September.

Ester will get more information about COHVCO inventory

Public comment

Callie Hendrickson, Conservation District. Thanks to WRFO for hard work on horse gather EA. Hope that the offices above WRFO will back them when the lawsuit comes. We need to get horses down to lower end of AML.

Sasha Nelson, Colorado Environmental Coalition. Get a lot of questions from public about BLM. First question – unitization and leasing. Once a lease or unit is developed, what are restrictions to public use and access?

Cagney – access only altered by safety issues. No issues except on well pad.

Catherine – sometimes a road may only be open to authorized use – all in travel management.

Sasha – How much leasing is going on in HMA's – how is that impacting AUMs for horses or cattle?

Cagney – Required by NEPA to disclosure impacts like that. It's in gather EA, for instance.

Sasha – Appreciate and value agency and community representatives participating.

Agenda items next time:

Leasing reform including: Master Leasing Plans, site visits, someone from state office how this is being implemented. Roll-out plan. One hour

Wild horses and Jim Cagney 90 minutes

Gateway update? 30 minutes

Fee proposals

Dave will check into what the fee for a tour of the car museum after the field trip.

Catherine and Jim Field trip: Dolores River Partnership.

