

**Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council
Gateway, Colo
Dec. 4, 2008**

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

	T Wright Dickinson, Category 1
Jeff Comstock, Category 3	Charles Kerr, Category 2
Dave Cesark, Category 1	Dean Riggs, Cat 3
Pat Kennedy, Category 2	
Clare Bastable, Cat 2	Steve Gunderson, Cat 1
Mike Perry, Cat 2	
Jon Hill Cat 1	
Dona Shue, Category 2	

Not present: Larry, Lanny, Gary, Glenn

BLM Staff

Steve Bennett	David Boyd
Barb Blackstun	Katie Stevens
John Husband	Matt Anderson
Catherine Robertson	
Dave Hunsaker	
Dave Stout	

Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Kate Graham	CEC	Grand Junction
Jason Wedemeyer	CEC	Grand Junction
Donna Gray	Williams	Parachute
Zoe	EMPI	Boulder
Gail Gnirk	Rep Salazar	Grand Junction
David Batts	EMPI	Boulder
Bob Silbernagl	McInnis Canyons Adv Brd	Grand Junction
Tamara Minnick	McInnis Canyons Adv Brd	Grand Junction
Dan Bean	Colo Dept of Ag	Palisade

Called meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Quorum is not present (only 2 Category 3 people).

Opening remarks

Dave Cesark welcomes new member Dean Riggs.

Lanny is absent due to prostate surgery.

John Husband explained challenges with new travel system. Bugs are being worked out now.

Dave Hunsaker Associate State Director. Gave personal background. Most of career with specially designated lands – for instance, Red Rock Canyon, Grand Staircase. Optimistic for NLCS in BLM. Worked with Sally in Utah, wanted to work for her again.

Transition taking place – hiring freeze? We'll have to see.

Statewide RAC meeting coming – agenda should be ready soon.

RAC involvement in RMPs has been vital – using NWRAC model statewide.

Three tier system coming back. Will have district offices – three districts in Colorado. Only committed to three new positions so far – the three district managers. Should be hired by Jan 1.

Doesn't see a big change in working with the RAC. Field managers will stay involved – don't see a change there.

Apologize for length of time it takes for appointments to get through DC.

T Wright: Ludicrous for RAC travel to be run through the FBMS/gov trip. Has chilling effect on public involvement. There has to be a better way to do this – needs to be a line item and then handled locally.

Dave H: Will ask the question again framed differently.

Dave C: Do three new districts align with RAC boundaries? A: Yes

Dave C: Update on new COGCC regs? Apply to fed lands?

Dave H: discussing with solicitors – our position is they don't apply to fed lands. We are working on a cooperative agreement with state rather than fighting over it. Don't know if we will reach agreement or not, but trying to do it this way first.

RACs and their involvement are critical to how BLM does it work.

Mike Perry: First met Dave in Oregon. He ran one of the finest facilities (Oregon Trail Center) in the nation.

Charlie: tell us more about CDPs.

Dave H: Still trying to figure out how we are going to do these – they are under state regs so figuring out how BLM will integrate.

Dave C: Similar to MDPs, GAPs

Jeff C: Suggested that each field manager rotate through, still be involved. Highlight National Landscape Conservation System

Dave H: Administrative system set up by Babbitt. For specially designated areas (wilderness, WSA, WSR, trials, NCAs, NMs) WO level for planning. Have stand alone management plans. Congressional caucus with 80+ members looking at funding, other issues NLCS Foundation is a private, non-profit group.

Jeff C: Would prefer to have discussions at RAC before BLM gets money. Worth RAC advising BLM on priorities. Maybe next RAC meeting can explore this

Dave H: would welcome that. Money would come directly to NLCS from Congress. Would have more flexibility from other funds. Would welcome help with strategizing.

GJFO RAC subcommittee

Steve G: passed out list of perspective members.

Clare: No sportsmen represented. Can we add someone in that category?

Dean, Charlie agree. Group agrees.

Dean: need to think about it. Some folks out there.

Mike: Through e-mails approved. Only dissention was Clare's point.

Catherine: will check e-mails to see if forum.

Group agrees to go forward with these names with the addition of a sportsmen representative.

Catherine: Looking at meeting next week in the evening. Have an orientation. Thursday Nov. 11.

RMP revision update, Matt Anderson

Having RMP scoping meetings this week. Should have scoping report by next RAC meeting. Will do travel management in RMP.

Starting Feb 10 will host six public meetings on travel management – will be a parallel process.

T Wright: Don't think most public understands their role in scoping. Bureau is at fault – scoping should be public's vehicle to say what should be considered. Newsletter needs to be more clear about what the public's role is in scoping. Public is conditioned that they want to respond to a document, want to react to proposed. Grazing is not on the list – no issues there? People need to know they could add this.

Pat K: They emphasized this at the meeting.

T Wright: Get it in writing for me as well.

Catherine: RAC subgroup helps with this.

Matt: mesa state doing recreation assessment, community assessment. Will be working on this for the next calendar. Draft out in March. EMPI are the contractors.

David Batts: worked on BLM on planning efforts. Plans with extensive public involvement and RACs involvement succeed. Has worked well in GSFO and KFO. Helped ensure good range of alternatives.

Jeff C: What about TNC you mentioned last time?

Matt; Didn't hire, had expertise in house.

T Wright: What do you do to ensure no procurement issues will impede this process?

Catherine: Based on feedback from this group we received we worked to ensure that wouldn't happen

Matt: Bigger problem when we get requests for additional large air quality models, etc. Otherwise should be flexible.

David Batts: Flexibility is the key.

Catherine: Can be a problem when things come up at the last minute

Dave S: Flexibility has never been a problem with the contractor this contractor on this plan.

Clare: not trying to get subcommittee meetings done by end of scoping?

Catherine: just want members to know they are members before Jan 9 scoping meeting.

Planning for priority species matt Anderson

The Nature Conservancy developed this workbook, BLM modified it. To id how species will be managed.

We will do this internally. Just starting to populate workbook for the GJFO RMP revision. Optional for BLM plans right now. But helps with consistency – trying to take out some of the subjectivity for impact analysis.

T Wright: word “priority” gives me heartburn. Is there legal component of that word?

Matt: No. looking at species and veg and helps us rank our priorities.

T Wright: concerned about elevating a species over another use – eg prairie dogs over grazing. Opposed to putting species on a pedicel.

Matt: Not meant to rise one use over another – helps us analyze impacts.

Steve G: data management – who will see it?

Matt: Cooperators, BLM., DOW. Not sure how it will be published. Impact analysis tool, not usually run through cooperators and others.

T Wright: want to see RAC involved in this part too. Need to be transparent.

Catherine: Will share information, need to have experts do the analysis.

Matt: Have wildlife biologist arguing with city planner over science of impacts, not appropriate.

Jeff C: Why is it not appropriate? Should be a valuable discussion.

Glenwood Springs Field Office, Steve Bennett

Long-time BLM Glenwood employee wins wilderness award: BLM Colorado State Director Sally Wisely presented Glenwood Springs Outdoor Recreation Planner Kay Hopkins with the first annual Eric Finstick Wilderness Stewardship Award last month. The award recognizes the contribution of BLM or Service First employees in managing BLM’s special places, through remembrance of long time BLM Colorado Wilderness Coordinator Eric Finstick. Hopkins has been an outdoor recreation planner for the Glenwood Springs Field Office for the past 12 years. She is currently playing a key role in the revision of the BLM Glenwood Springs Resource Management Plan, including evaluating proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. She worked on the Roan Plateau Plan, including important ACEC designations to protect scenic values, riparian areas and wildlife habitat.

Approved APDs fewer in FY 2008: The Glenwood Springs Energy Office approved 313 Applications for Permits to Drill in FY 2008 – down from the 397 approved in FY 2007. This trend is contrary to the overall trend in Garfield County, which is on a record pace for number of APDs approved by the State of Colorado. Currently, about 10 percent of all the APDs issued in Garfield and Mesa counties are for federal wells. APD numbers

for the Energy Office in FY 2009 are expected to be similar to 2008. The Energy Office also completed 1,187 environmental and technical inspections in FY 08.

GSFO/KFO RMP Revision Update: The GSFO/KFO RMP revision alternatives have gone through a final staff and management review and the impact analysis is underway. Some of the counties and municipalities (Pitkin County, City of Glenwood Springs, City of Rifle, Town of Carbondale and Town of New Castle) have formally requested that BLM conduct a Health Impact Assessment of health effects from our decisions regarding energy development, including contaminants and air pollutants, as well as alcoholism and substance abuse, deterioration of mental health and more. We are aware that Garfield County has been conducting a comprehensive study of health and environmental risks to residents for the past three years. The study was recently completed and is titled “Community Health Risk Analysis of Oil and Gas Industry Impacts in Garfield County”.

We continue to be concerned about what we need to assess beyond what Garfield County has analyzed in their 2008 health impact assessment. We plan to discuss it further with the Cooperating Agencies and RAC Subgroup in the meetings we plan to have this winter.

T Wright: If you go down this road, you have to look at all uses/ industries, not just from oil and gas.

Steve G: A lot of issues, opening a pandora’s box. Very appropriate to look at a variety of other uses.

Clare: have you asked communities what they want?

Steve B: yes, haven’t answered. Will talk in person at meetings in Jan.

T Wright: Could we have presentation at the next meeting perhaps?

Clare: If county did assessment, then obviously County is concerned about health impacts.

The Wild and Scenic River Stakeholder Group: The group completed the Upper Colorado River Implementation Outline for a Wild and Scenic Management Plan Alternative and submitted it to BLM in mid-November. The outline has yet to be approved by the group’s participating entities and much work remains to be done to reach full consensus. In particular, not all of the stakeholders endorse the provisional flow guide ranges contained in this draft outline or believe that the ranges they represent are necessary to support the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) that make the stretches of water eligible for wild and scenic designation. Other stakeholders believe that flow and other resource guides are critical for the protection of the ORVs. There is also not consensus among the stakeholders about how or if this plan would apply to any reasonably foreseeable projects currently undergoing federal permitting. However, the outline contains the detail and information BLM needs to include it in one of the plan alternatives for analysis.

RMP Schedule

- **June 2008 – October 2008:** Colorado State Office Review of Alternatives & Staff Finalize Alternatives
- **November 2008:** Field Offices will begin Impact Analysis
- **February/March 2009:** Internal review Draft RMP/Draft EIS for SO & Solicitor
- **September 2009:** Complete DRMP/DEIS – 90-day Public Comment Period Begins
- **July 2010:** Complete PRMP/FEIS – 60-day Protest Period Begins
- **January 2011:** Complete RODs

Garfield Creek State Wildlife Area in the news: Development of private minerals within the State-owned Garfield Creek State Wildlife Area, as well as federal leasing in and adjacent to the SWA, has been generating local headlines. While there is on-going development of private minerals within the SWA, there are no active wells or development of the federal leases within the SWA.

Of the 13,234 acres in the State Wildlife Area:

- 10,544 acres have federal minerals
- Approximately 7,150 of those federal subsurface acres are currently leased
- Further leasing within the SWA has been deferred until the Glenwood Springs RMP Revision is complete
- Under the GSFO's 1991 and 1999 RMP Amendments, all 10,544 acres within the SWA carry a no surface occupancy stipulation (but that did not apply to pre-1991 leases)
- An exception to this NSO stipulation may be granted if a wildlife habitat plan is developed in consultation with the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
- 1,170 acres were leased prior to the 1991 Amendment, so the NSO stipulation does not apply to those three leases. Those leases are held by production occurring outside of the SWA. If those leases expire, new leases of the same parcels would carry the NSO stipulation.
- BLM recently discovered that one lease issued within the SWA in 2001 did not carry the full NSO stipulation as detailed in the 1991 and 1999 amendments. BLM is currently working with the leaseholder about this inconsistency.

T Wright: What is the cost of deferring those leases in bonus bids, etc. what are impacts, what authority are they deferred?

Steve: We can defer leasing under certain circumstances.

T Wright: Past two plans have it open, but with all NSO? How more strict can you get?

Steve: We will consider a no-lease alternative. Look at exception criteria. Financial impacts would be looked at in EIS.

New Office Update: The new building for the Glenwood Springs Field Office is now under construction in Silt. It is scheduled to be complete in June 2009. In our search for a new location, we received two proposals in the final round of solicitation and both were

in Silt. We have outgrown our current facility, especially due to the energy pilot and additional staffing resources that brought to our field office. We currently have two separate offices leased in Glenwood Springs and have our energy staff and non energy staff in separate facilities. The new office will bring all our staff together into one facility, including our interagency staff.

Three-year report to Congress on Pilot Energy Offices nearly complete: BLM is completing the Year 3 Report to Congress regarding the Pilot Energy Offices as required under the Energy Policy Act of 2005. This final report comes after the third year of establishing a pilot program at seven BLM field offices (including Glenwood Springs) with funding to test new management strategies designed to further streamline the processing of APDs and improve environmental stewardship. To determine the success of the Pilot Offices, four performance categories were developed from the Pilot Projects goals and objectives:

- Increase Interagency Collaboration
- Improve Business Process
- Improve Stakeholder Responsiveness
- Improve Financial Accountability

The Year 3 Report is currently in draft format and is expected to be submitted during the first quarter of 2009.

Jon: will your success with pilot help other offices like Meeker get more personal?

Steve: It could. That's up to Congress. One of the recommendations to expand. It has been viewed as a success.

T Wright: If RAC agrees with that recommendation, should we formally weigh in.

Steve: Too early at this point. Draft should be out in January. **Potential agenda item.**

Public comments

Kate, CEC: Priority species discussion – cooperating agencies would help determine science. Public could help find community solution. Not clear on role. Data collection should be role of cooperating agencies, how that data is used should be part of the public discussion.

Catherine: Need to look at where appropriate point for public involvement in this – not secret.

White River Field Office, Barb Blackstun

White River Oil and Gas RMP amendment update: A meeting with cooperating agencies and NWRAC Subgroup is being planned for spring 2009 to discuss final draft of Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5. Impact analysis protocol development has begun and once impact

analysis is complete Chapter 4 will be developed. The Draft RMPA/EIS is scheduled for a 90-day public review period beginning in fall 2009. A meeting will be scheduled with the NWRAC Subgroup prior to the Draft release.

Oil and Gas update: The White River Field office approved 238 applications for permit to drill (APDs) during FY 2008. That's up from 198 APDs in FY 2007. For FY 2009, we plan on processing more than 200 APDs. About 50 percent of the total drilling permits issued within the White River Field Office this calendar year have been for federal wells, the remaining permits are under the jurisdiction of the State of Colorado.

Oil Shale RD&D update: Oil Shale RD&D update: WRFO has approved three addendums to Oil Shale Research Demonstration and Development Plans of Operations (POOs), one for IDT Corporation and two for Shell Frontier and reviewing a third POO addendum for Shell Frontier. Chevron is in the process of drilling water geo-hydrology wells on their 160 acre RD&D lease tract. Detailed Plans of Development must be approved by BLM and the State of Colorado before any work recovering oil shale could begin. Currently there are no Plans of Development submitted to either BLM or the State.

National Oil Shale update: BLM issued final regulations for commercial oil shale leasing Nov. 17. Assistant Department of the Interior Secretary Stephen Allred also signed the Record of Decision amending land-use plans in Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming to make approximately 1.9 million acres of public lands available for potential commercial oil shale development. In Colorado, the plan amendments make 360,000 acres available for leasing within the White River, Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction field offices. Before any oil shale leases are issued, additional site-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis would be completed on the proposed development. Once a lease is issued, the lessee will also have to obtain all required permits from state and local authorities, under their respective permitting processes, before any operations can begin. Another round of NEPA analysis would be conducted before any site-specific plans of development are approved. Congress specifically directed in the 2005 Energy Policy Act that both the regulations and Record of Decision be completed.

Range Program: The range program will complete 28 grazing permit renewals during FY 2009.

Seismic Projects: The Field Office recently approved one seismic survey and in the process of performing environmental analysis and documentation on two others.

Pipelines and Infrastructure Projects: We are currently completing environmental analysis and documentation for numerous pipelines, power lines, roads and a gas processing plant.

Barb: Also dealing with high turnover rate for employees.

Dave H: White River has one of the highest in Colorado

T Wright: This turnover warrants some attention – not acceptable.

Clare: I am assuming that intent of next meeting with subgroup is to confirm that there is a reasonable range of alternatives. Is that the clear intent of that next meeting?

Dona: only meeting subgroup has had in July. Were supposed to meet in October. No word until a week or ago that the meetings were post-poned until March. This group is nothing like the others.

Jeff C: Every field office has been great with public involvement except White River. What's going on with this field office?

Barb: There hasn't been much progress on the plan since the summer. We have been in negotiations with the contractor. But there isn't much new to discuss with the subgroup.

Dona: To date the group has not sat down to discuss the alternatives. Why could that not happen before the spring?

Clare: Need a second rac representative?

Jon is willing to be the second RAC liaison with the white river RMP subcommittee.

Clare: Kathy still on, so you have two energy reps among the five members.

Dave C: But it is an oil and gas amendment so that is appropriate.

Send out another list of subcommittee to group.

T Wright: call your own meeting. Don't have to wait for the gov't to call the meeting.

Dave C: This is our subcommittee, not BLM's. I agree with T Wright, should move ahead. Disappointing process, it has gotten bogged down.

McInnis Canyons NCA citizen's advisory board

Bob Silbernagel, chairman. Tamara joining him. First council in 2002 to work on development of management plan. Many working groups, more than 100 individuals, met monthly. Plan is complete, very successful. Now only meet twice a year. Several issues:

Council members appointed for four years. All will have to be reappointed by 2010, so process needs to begin early next year. Charter needs to be renewed, that takes many months. Most advertise meetings well in advance in Fed reg.

Members want some group to continue, but perhaps form a subcommittee under the NWRAC. Council not unanimous on this. We wanted to ask the RAC if this is something you would consider. We would like current members to continue. Any other ideas.

Tamara – one of newer members. Additional objectives for advisory council, having charter renew would help us. I would like to see the council continue to stand alone. Want to give new nca manager a chance to help us ID priorities. Functioning well right now.

Pat K: long process. Mcinnis canyons has friends group that is very active. Different groups but work together.

Bob: mostly fundraising, help with community ownership, trailbuilding

Pat K: I think responsibility of advisory group has been met. A subcommittee from the RAC would have more flexibility.

Tamara: having zero public protests shows that what we have works well and we should continue.

T Wright: If you want to be sanctioned by the RAC, the way the group functions will not change. It is up to you guys what you want to do. Don't see any reason why we wouldn't want you part of the RAC.

Bob: Just wanted to know we had support of RAC should the group decide to go there.

Catherine: RAC could give the group some options about how the RAC would be involved.

Clare: we have three subcommittees that are working fabulously, just not the White River one.

Bob: Process would be that subgroup would bring recommendations to RAC, then RAC would discuss and recommend to BLM.

T Wright: yes. Not likely for RAC to go against rec of a subgroup – you are the local experts.

Jeff C: What is advantage of RAC subgroup over a stand alone?

Pat K: We don't have that much to do. Could take it down a notch. This rac would approve names, not DOI, so not waiting months and months.

Dave C: need to tell them what the subcommittee would look like

Catherine: Interested in Tamara's idea to relook at the charter. Could give some options with charter, subcommittee, for the advisory council.

Tamara: would benefit if we had information about how the subcommittee would work.

Jeff C: Could put in the subcommittee formation that the RAC is generally going to approve what the subcommittee recommends

Charlie: your choice about what makes you most effective. We all want to see effective local public involvement

Kremmling Field Office, Dave Stout

Glenwood/Kremmling RMP revisions: The Kremmling RMP interdisciplinary team met by telephone with their counter parts in Glenwood Springs and TetraTec specialists to begin work on Chapter 4 or the RMP (impact analysis). Assumptions for impact analysis have been reviewed and comments have been submitted to the contractor. BLM ID Team members also are finishing their reviews of Chapter 2 (alternatives). We expect to have a preliminary version of Chapter 4 available for internal review late in January 2009.

Junction Butte Wetlands: We have been developing a management plan for the Junction Butte Wetlands, near Kremmling. Background information has been prepared and initial management objectives have been identified. We met with adjacent landowners and the CDOW on November 20, 2008, to discuss our preliminary ideas for managing the wetlands, and to get input for further development of a management plan. We started a prescribed burn of the site on November 19th, to remove decadent vegetation. Poor smoke dispersal caused the burning to be stopped at mid-day, after burning about 20 acres of the 125-acre tract. Additional burning likely will be delayed until next spring. We attempted to get a fence contract issued in September for about 7,700 feet of fence along the north boundary of the wetland tract, to keep livestock from moving onto the wetlands from adjacent private lands. The bid came in substantially higher than our available funding. The project will be re-bid in the spring.

T Wright: Community this told would stay in agriculture. If not going to do that, you need to tell the public that.

Prescribed Fire: A prescribed burn was completed October 10th on Yarmony Mountain. The burn treated 650 acres to improve habitat and forage for wildlife and livestock. The burn created a mosaic in sagebrush and removed invading piñon and juniper trees. The Yarmony Mountain burn is the first of a number of prescribed fire and mechanical treatments planned for the next several years along the Colorado River upstream from State Bridge. In addition to the Junction Butte burn (described above), slash-pile burning continues in the Gore Lakes Subdivision west of Kremmling and in the Ouray Subdivision between Granby and Grand Lake.

North Park Stewardship: A contract was issued by Jackson County to RAOR Logging, LLC, for logging a 30-acre fuel break on Independence Mountain, northwest of Walden. Work under the contract is ongoing.

Energy Activities: Three APDs were approved in FY08. So far in FY09, three APDs have been approved for the Wellstar Corporation. EOG Resources, Inc. is expected to have five new wells approved by the second week of December, three permitted as APDs and two as ROWs.

We are projecting that 10 to 15 APDs will be approved in FY09, including the three already approved. Phase II of the 44-square mile geophysical project south of Pole Mountain in Jackson County was completed on October 15, 2008. Whether or not additional seismic survey will occur is not definitive at this time.

The KFO has received notice from Caprock Corporation, Inc. that they will be submitting a Notice of Intent to Conduct Prospecting at Independence Mountain in Jackson County. Caprock Corporation, Inc. (Caprock) owns a number of mining claims on Independence Mountain and has prospected the area in the past. In 1987, Caprock conducted core drilling and electromagnetic surveys as part of an exploration program on their claims. Core drillings from the exploration indicated an inferred mineral value of precious/base metal minerals (combined value of copper, lead, zinc, silver and gold) that exceeded \$110,000,000. However, shortfalls in working capital and the value of precious/base metal minerals, at that time, were not sufficient to support further exploration or mining operations. Caprock officials indicate that they would like to renew exploration activities in the summer of 2009. The KFO has yet to receive the Notice of Intent.

The Windy Gap Land Exchange: The Windy Gap Land Exchange, west of Granby, technically closed on November 17, 2008. Administrative closure (review of the title documents by the Solicitor's Office) is pending. As explained at previous RAC meetings, the exchange is between the BLM, the Forest Service and the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. The District will gain lands around their infrastructure north of Granby. The BLM will gain 235 acres of land along the Colorado River adjacent to the Pumphouse Recreation Site; the Forest Service will gain 107 acres of land in Arapaho National Recreation Area.

North Sand Hills: We are preparing a management strategy for the North Sand Hills Special Recreation Management Area, to direct our work there for the next several years. OHV use at the area continues to increase, especially on three holiday weekends. Since part of the area includes an Instant Study Area (essentially a wilderness study area), we are concentrating on managing the area to meet the Interim Management Policy for Lands Under Wilderness Review. Part of the strategy relies on rejuvenating partnerships and relationships with agencies and interest groups, greater attention to protecting vegetation in the dunes, increasing public education and awareness, and increasing our presence, on site.

Clare: Rocky Mountain News article predicts energy boom in KFO areas. Need to ensure your oil and gas RFD is adequate. Other field offices have underestimated vastly their development.

Dean: Have opportunity to get out in front of development in Kremmling – haven't had the opportunity in Glenwood.

Little Snake Field Office, John Husband

RMP Update: LSFO completed the Additional Air Quality Assessment to Support to the Little Snake Draft RMP/EIS. As reported at the last RAC meeting, EPA Region 8 reviewed the DEIS and found the air quality analysis to be inadequate. The primary

concern is proximity to Class 1 air quality areas and the amount of new oil and gas activity projected to occur within the planning area over the next 20 years. After numerous discussions with EPA to determine the best way to proceed, we decided to conduct an additional air quality analysis, which entails an additional public notification and comment opportunity. We worked with EPA to develop a protocol, and an air quality consultant has been conducting the modeling and analysis. The supplemental analysis was released for public comment on October 10. The comment period will run until around the first of the new year. We have met with cooperating agencies to discuss changes for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. LSFO and the RMP contractor are currently working on responding to public comments and putting together the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The Final is scheduled to be released May 2009.

Hiawatha work continues: The Rock Springs and Little Snake field offices continue to work with Questar and the Cooperating Agencies on a proposed energy development project that could include up to 4,200 new wells. About 33% of the new wells would be in Colorado. BLM is currently working through issues related to sage-grouse habitat and air quality. The Draft EIS is now scheduled to be complete in April 2009, and the Record of Decision is anticipated in early 2010. Cooperating Agencies on this project are the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming State Geologic Survey, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Wyoming Business Council, Colorado Department of Natural Resources (Colorado State Land Board and Colorado Division of Wildlife), Sweetwater County Commission, Sweetwater County Conservation District, Moffat County Commission, Northern Arapaho Tribe and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Emerald Mountain: We finalized the Emerald Mountain Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) Plan after numerous public participation workshops. BLM has been working closely with the City of Steamboat Springs to integrate the public's interest in some of the more detailed aspects of resource and recreation management on Emerald Mountain. The SRMA plan includes priorities for trails and facility construction, signing, seasonal closures to protect wildlife values, monitoring, outreach and education, and partnership opportunities. The SRMA plan can be viewed on the Emerald Mountain web page at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/lsfo.html>. The Rocky Mountain Youth Corps completed 3 weeks of trail work this year, and we've gotten positive feedback from users of the trail. Additional work next year is planned to put the finishing touches on the Ridge Trail.

Wild Horses: The Little Snake Field Office conducted a wild horse gather in the Sand Wash Herd Management area in October. A total of 380 horses were gathered. 254 horses were shipped to the BLM horse facility in Canon City, Colorado. 118 horses were returned to the HMA. Of the horses returned, 62 mares were treated with the fertility control drug PZP. This was done in cooperation with the Humane Society of the United States who will continue to study the effect of the drug on the Sand Wash herd. With the return of 118 horses to the HMA, there are approximately 160 horses remaining in Sand Wash (this includes horses that eluded capture).

An adoption was held in Craig, Colorado the day after the gather ended. Eleven wild horses from the Sand Wash herd found homes in or near Craig.

The gather went very well and the management objectives for the HMA were attained. The majority of the horses were in very good condition and the contract pilot and the contract gather crew did a very good job of bringing horses to the trap with minimal stress. Less than 1% of the horses were injured during the week long gather operation.

There was a very large public and media presence for the first few days of the gather. Stories aired on Denver television news channels 4 and 7, and there were also articles in local and statewide newspapers.

Black Footed Ferrets: In 2008, we preconditioned 21 black-footed ferrets at the Browns Park pens. The ferrets were kept in the pens for approximately 5 weeks to prepare them for release into the wild. Thirteen of the ferrets were released in Wolf Creek, CO and eight were released in Snake John, UT. The Snake John site also received 10 wildborn kits from Conata Basin, SD. This fall, we completed the second set of new preconditioning pens. The facility will now have 12 pens for preconditioning in future years.

Spotlighting inventory and monitoring of previously released ferrets in the Wolf Creek Basin occurred the week of August 12-19. A minimum of 12 ferrets were found during this time. Two other 'possible' ferrets were sighted, but not confirmed. One litter of at least three kits was also found.

Vegetation Treatments for Sage Grouse habitat: Since the last meeting, approximately 600 additional acres were treated on Cold Springs Mountain to open up closed stands of sagebrush to improve sage grouse habitat. Over the last two years we've completed about 1200 acres, of a 3,000 acre treatment area. The area was treated with 2-4-D, aerially applied in short bursts of spray across the 3,000 acre area. This is the second year of this cooperative project with CDOW, NRCS, BLM, and Vermillion Ranches.

A similar treatment was completed in September on Middle Mountain. Approximately 1,000 acres of closed canopy sagebrush was treated using Spike in an effort kill approximately 40% of the sagebrush to improve habitat for sage grouse.

Grazing Permit Renewals: The end of the ten-year permit renewal effort that the BLM has been working on is September 30, 2009. The LSFO remains on track at this time to complete this effort.

Landscape Health Assessments: LSFO completed the Axial Basin landscape health assessment this past year. This completes our first cycle of LHAs for LSFO, applying standards for public land health on a landscape basis. The Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management in Colorado were developed with considerable RAC involvement and were approved in 1997.

Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit: For the season, we were a little below average until the week of August 24th, and that week things picked up a lot in terms of acres burned. During that week roughly 33,000 acres burned from four large lightning-caused fires. The Mayberry Fire consumed over 25,000 acres, Prong Fire was nearly 5,400 acres, the Lone Fire was about 1,000 acres, and the Jordan Fire was a little over 1,000 acres. During the week we had numerous other small fires that were suppressed at one acre or less. On Wednesday afternoon, August 27, a single-engine air tanker (SEAT) crashed while working on the Flat Bush Fire approximately 35 miles west of Meeker, CO. The pilot and 6 firefighters on the ground were not seriously injured although there was some damage the two Type 6 engines assigned to the fire. The aircraft was destroyed but did not catch fire during or after the crash.

The Unit accomplished almost 4,000 acres of prescribed burning this fall. We got a lot of assistance from outside the Unit, most notably from the Upper Colorado Fire Management Unit. We accomplished burns on the three BLM Field Office lands, Dinosaur National Monument, Arapaho and Browns Park National Wildlife Refuges, and Division of Wildlife lands on the Oak Ridge State Wildlife area east of Meeker. It was a very good fall burning season and the Interagency efforts and cooperation were exemplary.

As was mentioned in the last meeting, the NW Colorado Unit was one of the BLM's pilot areas for some changes in the Wildland Fire Management Policy. We have managed several Wildland Fire Use (WFU) events on the Unit. Agency guidance, decision tools and documentation requirements continue to evolve regarding Appropriate Management Response (AMR). The WFUs don't represent much of a policy change from the past in terms of our processes and planning.

T Wright: want description about areas that are not meeting land health standards. Where are they not, and why? What do they look like? Then can look at issue of white-tailed prairie dogs.

Catherine: Field managers need to see what information they have, get together and discuss how best to present to the RAC. Look at for next meeting.

Jeff C: Concerned about deferring leasing until RMP is complete. Is there a way to have operator voluntarily agree to new conditions and still lease it instead of deferring?

John H: Would forgo opportunity to apply new stips to a lease because it would be leased before RMP complete.

Catherine: Stipulations are developed as part of mitigation resulting from NEPA analysis. So stipulations would be developed in this case before NEPA.

Jeff: no. IF you already know all your alternatives have a specific stipulations, you could get operator to voluntarily comply before issuing the lease.

John H: You wouldn't know who will get lease – competitively offered. Not out there for public review.

Dave H: Can we do that based on something that may or may not happen. What affect would that have on market value? We need to pose that question to our planning and leasing folks.

T Wright: But you are not following your current plan if you defer.

Charlie: Should be ways to slow development if the development is exceeding the impacts that were anticipated in the current plan.

Perhaps can discuss this at a future RAC meeting.

Catherine: Could be discussed at statewide RAC meeting.

Grand Junction Field Office, Catherine Robertson

RMP Revision: Scoping has begun and will close on Jan. 9, 2009. Public meetings were held in Grand Junction Dec 2 and Moab Dec 3. There will be another meeting Dec. 4 in Collbran. The NWRAC is appointing members for subcommittee representation. A stakeholders group will be formed to engage on the eligibility report for WSR and will be under the leadership of the Colorado River District. The Wild and Scenic River eligibility report will be complete in December.

CAM/Red Cliff Coal Mine: BLM is still working with the contractor and proponent on the Draft EIS. An issue related to methane gas venting is being thoroughly viewed in lieu of a lawsuit filed against the West Elk Coal Mine near Paonia in early October. BLM is working to identify the best methods to capture or release the gas without creating a safety hazard to mine employees. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is tentatively scheduled for release in late December 2008.

Uranium: The Environmental Assessment and decision for the Whirlwind Mine Plan has been issued. We are also monitoring 12 Notices of Intent for exploration in the Gateway area. A recent drop in Uranium prices from \$140/lb last January to \$48/lb today has resulted in temporary shutdown by some companies in completing exploration or mine development until next spring.

Oil and Gas: We are currently working with environmental consultants writing EAs for Master Development Plans (MDP) for three projects. The companies include Aspen (Whitewater), OXY (Conn Creek) and Retamco (North of De Beque). The Black Hills' Horseshoe Canyon MDP was approved in November. We are also processing 3 gas pipeline proposals in the Douglas Pass, De Beque, and Collbran areas, and EnCana's proposed water injection well disposal facility north of De Beque. Augustus Energy has proposed a significant geophysical project in western Mesa County north of Mack.

Gateway Special Recreation Management Area Planning: The GJFO continues work towards completion of the Gateway SRMA plan. Draft alternatives have been developed and are being further refined internally with the assistance of resource specialists. Following this internal review and prior to full public release, the alternatives will be shared with key service provider partners to assure that implementation actions, which

cannot be provided solely by the BLM, are feasible for the service providers to supply. This Benefits Based Management plan is one of the first of its kind for the BLM where key service providers are identified in the Plan and recognized as integral in the delivery of beneficial outcomes for recreationists on public lands.

Catherine: This update is not correct. We have had some internal issues, the Gateway plan will be folded into the RMP. Current work at Gateway has already been approved through an EA.

Recreation Fee Proposals: The GJFO has proposed a new fee for the use of the North Fruita Desert Campground (\$10) and a fee increase at the Mud Springs Campground (\$10). Both proposals are supported by the RAC, the Mesa County Board of Commissioners, and the City of Fruita. The Colorado Recreation RAC will meet March 5, 2009 to consider the request. If approved, the new fees will be implemented in 2009.

Recreation Staff: With the departure of both field office recreation planners over the past six months, we have recently welcomed Michelle Bailey as the new Recreation Planner and Chris Ham as the new Recreation Program Manager. Michelle's most recent BLM assignment was as the Recreation Planner for the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument in Arizona and Chris comes to us after six years as the Recreation Planner for the White River FO in Meeker.

Grazing Permit Renewals: The GJFO will meet our end ten-year permit renewal effort this fiscal year and will process 20 permit renewals.

Healthy Lands Initiative: Because of the Continuing Resolution, the GJFO is targeted to complete 2 HLI projects, one treating 175 acres of Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat in the MCNCA (Glade Park) and the other will involve follow-up treatment on 175-250 acres of Colorado River riparian habitat for weed control in tamarisk sites being denuded by the tamarisk leaf beetle. Other HLI projects may come on line depending on when Congress/President passes a final budget for the Dept of Interior.

McInnis Canyons NCA: The NCA has developed a River Corridor Monitoring Plan. The plan outlines goals/desired conditions for the Colorado River corridor which lead to indicators of the social and environmental conditions. Indicators are conditions/measurements used to monitor the conditions in an area. These indicators are then monitored for compliance with standards (or limit to the amount of acceptable change) and if the standards are exceeded management actions are initiated to mitigate the problem.

T Wright: Have we solved contracting issues related to community involvement?

Catherine: Community assessment work, and we are working with Mesa State. Have flexibility. The proof will be in the pudding, however. We have learned from past efforts.

T Wright: We need to help the White River Field Office move along

Clare: Will rmp subcommittee look at all aspects of the RMP?

Catherine: Yes.

Resolutions

Revegetation of areas where tamarisk have been

Public comment: Donna Gray, Williams Energy: Valued perspective that Dave Cesark was able to bring to us when he was on the RAC. Would be happy to provide support for any subcommittees, etc. We had a banner year this year, don't anticipate equaling that next year. Probably about 500 wells next year. Right now we have 25 rigs working, probably will have 20 rigs in 2009 average. Economy, looking to operate in the black next year, no debt. Rulemaking process part of it as well. We figure this will double the time it takes to get our permits – will it affect our business, probably.

Steve G: Presentation available about improvements over the years, decrease in problems?

Donna: Clustered development presentation.

E-mail Steve G link to BMP

E-mail subcommittee/group list

Next meeting agenda items

Elections

Subcommittees – rac groups and who is on them

White-tailed prairie dog

Lease deferral issue

Next year's meeting locations

Grand Junction Feb 26

Brown's Park May 27-28

Trapper's Lodge in August

Glenwood/Silt First week in Dec