

Northwest RAC minutes

Dec. 2, 2010 Grand Junction

RAC members present

Category 1	Present	Category 2	Present	Category 3	Present
Dave Grisso	Y	Clare Bastable	Y	Jeff Comstock	Y
Glenn Vawter	Y	Pat Kennedy	Y	Dean Riggs	Y
Steve Gunderson	Y	Dona Shue	Y	Gary Bumgarner	Y
Wes McStay	Y	Steve Smith	Y	Kai Turner	Y
Tom Latham	N	Dan Davidson	Y	Barbara Vasquez	N

BLM staff: Karl Mendonca, Dave Stout, Kent Walter, Kent Lyles, Dave Blackstun, Steve Bennett, Catherine Robertson, Dave Boyd, Tom Alvarez, Kathy McKinstry.

Meeting called into order 8 a.m.

Pat welcomed new members, group provided detailed introductions

There is a quorum present.

Jeff Comstock suggested the group select a vice chair, given that the most recent vice chair was T Wright, who is no longer on the RAC.

Jeff nominates Steve G. Dean seconds. Will wait until after lunch to vote.

Group schedules meeting for 2011. Feb 23-25 is statewide RAC. June 8-9, Kremmling. Aug 17-18, Craig, including Musuem of NW Colorado. Nov. 30, Dec. 1, Gateway. First day is afternoon field trip. Second day is formal meeting.

Protocols

Steve Smith proposes establishing formal protocols beyond what's in charter. Suggests more time be given when possible, time to reflect and talk to constituents, public comment.

Pat suggests the RAC review steve's proposal, take a vote at Feb. meeting.

Dean – do other RACs have something similar.

DAVE BOYD will check with other RACs in Colorado to see if they have written, formal protocols for introducing, voting on resolutions.

Jeff. Opposes it as written. Sec. has put us on RAC because of our expertise, should be able to vote without going back to constituents. Only meet four times a year, have to move quickly. Should almost be reversed in priority – should be able to move quickly.

Steve S – concept is to be as deliberative as possible.

Pat suggests **Steve S and Jeff work on draft together for next meeting**. They agree.

Catherine – draft resolutions on website then, to give public opportunity to review in advance?

Clare – we don't always know all we need to be confident, even though we are appointed as experts.

Pat – my experience is often things need to be done quickly. But it was really good to have draft resolutions before then meeting, for instance.

Gary – need trust in folks you work with.

Dona – lots of times as a group that we've decided we want more time. Not sure we need real strict guidelines to ensure we have adequate time to vote.

Sand Wash Horse Fertility Treatments, Kathy McKinstry, Rangeland Mgt Specialist

Powerpoint presentation given

Sand Wash is the largest wild horse HMA in Colorado. An effective fertility control program would reduce program costs and number of horses in captivity.

Been trying fertility control since 1970s, PZP since 1990s. Early 2000s timed-released pelletized form developed. Since 2004 2,700 mares treated in 179 HMAs, no significant pop control apparent.

Kai – have they tried gelding? Seems like they should.

Kathy – don't act the same as non-gelded, not as preferred. Very invasive, possible infections, etc.

Kent W – Given Secretary's new strategy, a lot of things are being considered or reconsidered. A lot of discussion.

Kathy – very high foal survival rate in this area.

Kathy – one criticism of pzp is that the mares still come into heat, since they don't become pregnant.

Dave BL,. HSUS is studying behavioral pattern of treated horses and bands with treated horses.

Dona – extreme activists won't be happy until BLM is not doing any management. At some point BLM just has to manage the horses.

Steve S -- is what is happening at Sand Wash what we want to see based on past resolutions? Should we give this effort an extra boost of support?

Catherine – Also done at Little Books Cliffs beginning in 2002. First years 33, 40 foals. Last year we had 11 foals. The PZP works. Don't need to gather to administer it with these horses because they are so approachable.

Wes – how much is HSUS putting into this?

Kathy – their foundation grant was for \$100,000.

Dave G. – doing anything about long-term holding?

Kent – Big part of national strategy, trying to reduce need

Dean – BLM needs to take advantage of Little Books Cliffs model – working so closely with Friends of the Mustangs

White-nosed syndrome, Karl Mendonca

Powerpoint.

Still learning a lot about this disease, how it is spread.

Had open house in Silt in August with public, cavers.

Steve G: Coordinating with commercial caves?

Karl: Yes. Talking with Glenwood caverns, keeping dialogue open.

Kai: Forest service has closed caves in white river.

Karl: BLM Colorado has done more measured response, trying to get support and cooperation from caving community. We have little info about caves and bat use on BLM. These groups can help us; and share in responsibility.

Steve S: Measured response – explain more. Closing caves? Are you going to wait until you see white-nose before you close?

Karl: Trying to understand more about how caves and bats work, and determine the need for seasonal closures. Trying to determine, but need more information.

Steve S: Can you engage with people with knowledge and have some kind of general closure? Eg let folks gathering info in, but otherwise general closure.

Dan: Do we know where bats in valleys out here hibernate?

Karl: Not good info.

Kai: Rio Blanco County has gotten lots of calls from people upset about USFS closures.

Jeff C: Has an acceptable lose rate been established? Can populations withstand this?

Karl: Some natural immunity, but how fast can population recover?

Dean: Still learning. European bats have some immunity, have adapted to it.

North Sand Hills Management

Dave Stout gives brief Powerpoint overview of sand hills and its issues. Challenges with multiple jurisdictions, limited law enforcement capabilities.

Jeff C: Do you have local support for charging fees?

Dave S: Not from Jackson County

Jeff C: Have you sat down with Jackson County and tried to work out issues?

Dave S: Philosophical difference.

Ron Velarde: Had same issues with Jackson County regarding fees. Philosophical difference.

Steve S: State OHV grants, local OHV groups work closely with BLM out there.

Pat: Mike Blanton, Jackson County Commissioner, attended last meeting and was adamantly opposed to any fees. Lanny Weddle, Jackson County Commissioner and former RAC member, was not at the meeting but also is opposed to fees.

Jeff C: Lanny called me today urging us not to support fee resolution or land swap resolution. Saying more work needs to be done. Need to work more closely with community. Don't need top down approach from this RAC.

Gary: Volunteer to be liaison for this. Grand County very supportive of fees on Colorado River. Told BLM they were not charging enough.

Pat: Would like to hear from new RAC member regarding fees up there. That's where she lives. (Barbara Vasquez). Table fee resolution for now?

Steve Smith: As Jeff, Dona have suggested. Urge BLM to have deliberate discussion with locals.

Clare: e-mail from Barbara Vasquez supporting fee resolution.

Jeff C: Recommend going out on site, have someone other than BLM talk about it. Gary's suggestion.

Gary: Very much a learning process.

Dona introduces ISA resolution.

Steve S: Did some research on ISA part. Found that areas within ISA or WSA may be designated for motorized use on open dunes or snow. Seems to preempt this resolution.

Dave S: Issues that surround the sand. Non-impairment standard off sand, bigger issues than just the open sand dunes. Can't impair wilderness values, or Congress ability to designate.

Steve S: More I looked at this one – size, proximity to other wilderness – not great potential for wilderness. Maybe need to focus on other areas that need wilderness. Measures are being taken to protect dune morphology, vegetation, rare plants. Are you doing this because it is an ISA, or would you still protect these resources if it were no longer an ISA?

Dave S: We would still try to protect those values without ISA designation.

Steve S: What is left as backstop to protect resources if ISA and RNA designations go away? Sensitive areas here still need to be protected.

Dave BL: ISA is statutory, RNA is administrative.

Catherine: If RAC passed resolution supporting release of ISA with environmental rep support, gives environmental groups credibility that they are working to protect areas as wilderness that make sense, but not everywhere. This one doesn't make as much sense to protect as wilderness.

Steve G: OHV community supports continued management of area to protect resources with ISA being released.

Group decides to review ISA resolution with modifications in a week on e-mail.

Acquiring Land from State Land Board resolution introduced.

Dave S: Since State has not authorized this use, it is actually a trespass issue. State Land Board wants to exchange this piece. State Parks is not interested in acquiring this piece.

Dave G: If you can work out compromise with County about supporting this exchange, it makes sense for it to be under BLM.

Dean: State Forest already has fee.

Jeff C: feel same way as I do other resolution. Very reluctant as a RAC to tell Jackson County what is best for them. Make an extra attempt to work something out with county. Not ripe to come to RAC yet.

Kai: Need to get message out that everybody's trying to do the right thing for the economy with this.

Gary: Moves to table this one with the fee proposal.

Kai: seconds

Dave Grisso: Talk to county first before you come back to RAC?

Yes.

Election of Vice Chair

Jeff motions to nominate Steve G as vice chair. Kai seconds.

Steve S: Should recognize those who have been serving for a long time. What about co-vice-chairs could spread that honor around.

Pat, Kai: Having more than one makes it more cumbersome.

Jeff C: Motions for a vote for one vice-chair.

Kai: Seconds.

Jeff C: remotions Steve G.

Kai: Seconds.

Carries unanimously.

McInnis Canyons Subcommittee, Pete juflis

Introduces management plan for Ruby Horsethief developed by subcommittee with BLM staff's help.

July 2009. Public meeting, open house on fee proposal. Under plan, permits required for day use and rafting. Rafting permits free. Camping permits would be required for weekends May 1 – Sept 30.

Pat: This has been worked extensively to be fair to commercial and recreational boaters.

Steve S: Is there a limit to the number of nights you can stay in the canyon.

Pat: Just need permit for weekend.

Clare: Go by size of site rather than size of group.

Jeff C: Very good, locally developed approach.

Catherine: Final plan will go out for public review in March. May want to get sense of public comments before a resolution.

Pete: What do we need to do from here?

Catherine: After public comment process, the subgroup will be making recommendation to the NW RAC. Could do a vote electronically.

Upper Colorado Fee Proposal, Susan Cassell, Assistant Field Manager, Kremmling

Pumphouse and Radium sites. Proposed fee adjustments, outreach to outfitters, the public, Grand County Commissioners. Would need to go to Recreation RAC if NW RAC votes to support.

Gary: Grand County filing for water rights above Pumphouse for recreational water.

Steve G: What is the new number of \$ generated from this proposal?

Susan: \$15,000-\$20,000.

Kai: seems like you should go for enough to cover what you need.

Dave S: will provide additional info for a possible resolution at the next Feb RAC meeting.

Field Manager Updates:

David Blackstun, Little Snake Field Office

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: The Little Snake Field Office received some funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA (economic stimulus bill) to support a six proposed projects in the LSFO management area. These funds are being managed out of the Colorado State Office for projects 1 and 2 and out of the LSFO for projects 3-5. The proposed projects include:

1. Gravel re-surface of 3 miles of the East Cross Mountain Road; _ COMPLETE
2. Energy Efficiency improvements to the HVAC system for the LSFO building; _ONGOING
3. Vegetation enhancement and fuels projects to include brush beating, juniper removal, or other vegetation treatments to support habitat enhancement and fuels reduction; Summer 2010 _COMPLETE
4. Additional cultural resource surveys in support of the Sand Wash travel Management plan development. – Ongoing Summer 2009 through summer 2010 _COMPLETE
5. Conversion of 3 windmills to solar powered water systems.–Summer 2010 _COMPLETE

Oil and Gas: Applications for drilling permits continue to be submitted at a relatively slow rate in FY 2010. Wexpro has commenced drilling for 2010. We expect drilling activity to be on par with last year, but activity will be more for development wells than for exploratory wells.

The Rock Springs and Little Snake Field Offices continue to work with Questar and other 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 January 2011.

Questar Management Inc., BLM-LSFO, and SHPO, in consultation with Moffat County Commissioners, Eastern Shoshone, Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Northern Ute, has completed an agreement on how to handle archaeological discoveries during oil and gas development in Hiawatha and Powder Wash basin. During 2009 development, discoveries of archaeological sites became increasingly common, necessitating a way to protect those resources with less time delay. This agreement has been signed in April 2010 and is working smoothly.

Coal: Peabody's Sage Creek Holdings Sage Creek Mine has been permitted by the State (adjacent to current Foidel Creek Mine) in Routt County. Currently, there is some federal coal leased to Sage Creek Holdings, LLC, and they have submitted a Lease by Application for 400 acres of federal coal for this new mine. Trapper is mining federal coal from the lease that was the site of the 2006 landslide. Colowyo continues producing coal from the West pit and from the newer (2008) South Taylor pit.

Sand Wash Herd Management Area – As of November 8, 2010, HSUS had successfully administered the PZP booster vaccine via remote delivery to 48 of the 62 originally treated mares. One HSUS employee was going to remain in the Sand Wash area until mid or late November to attempt to dart more mares. Results are very preliminary, but at last count there were 44 2010 foals with at least 23 being associated with treated mares. We are not interpreting this data or drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of PZP until we get a final analysis from HSUS.

All of the “soft” traps have been dismantled and the equipment used for their construction is being stored at the Sand Wash corrals until such time as HSUS can dispose of it.

Public interest in the herd remains very high. A local Craig woman has started a blog and a Facebook page for the herd. Both websites have many followers. The LSFO has one outfitter who is permitted to take tours into the HMA, both on horseback and by vehicle.

Horses within the HMA continue to show a high degree of health. The herd shows huge color variations with many paints, palominos, gruellas and roans. The water sources held up well over the summer, although many areas, especially those that have been brush beat, were showing signs of heavy use by horses.

RMP Update: The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Little Snake Proposed RMP/Final EIS was published in the Federal Register August 13th. The 30-day protest period ended September 13th. Eight protest letters were received from the following interests: Moffat County, Yampa River Interest Coalition, National Wildlife Federation, Center for Native Ecosystems, Colorado River District, Western Watersheds Project, Western Energy Alliance, and QEP Resources, Inc. The 60-day governor's consistency review ended October 12th. BLM received a letter from Governor Ritter stating "the Little Snake Proposed RMP and associated EIS are consistent with State of Colorado plans, policies and programs." The Director's Office, with assistance from the Field Office and State Office, have begun resolving the protests. The Protest Report is scheduled to be completed in January 2011. Any resulting changes will be made to the plan and a Record of Decision will be issued in spring 2011.

Fire Management – The 2010 fire season for NW Colorado ended slightly above average for both number of fires and acres burned. As of late November, we've had a total of 286 fires (average is about 240) that have burned 13,024 acres (average is about 11,000). Of these fires, 56 were human-caused and 230 resulted from lightning. 178 fires were on BLM lands, 63 fires were on County jurisdictions, 19 fires were on Dinosaur National Monument, 11 fires were Colorado State Forest Service, and 15 fires were on the Routt National Forest. Our normal fire season usually ends about the middle of September but with this year's dry fall conditions, we had some fire activity through mid-October. We had several prescribed burns planned for this fall, but with the dry conditions we only worked on one of them and got about 70 acres treated. In the higher country (Routt National Forest and the Kremmling Field Office) affected by the bark beetle situation, burning of slash piles is anticipated to be on-going throughout the winter and into next spring.

Staffing – Field Manager- List of eligibles is being reviewed. Expect new Field Manager to be introduced at next RAC meeting.

Associate Field Manager to be advertised in mid December.

Assistant Field Manager – Re-Advertised. Announcement closed November 16.

FMO – Announcement open until Dec 3rd.

White River Field Office Program Updates, Kent E. Walter

White River Oil and Gas RMP Amendment

The BLM White River Field Office (WRFO) is developing an Oil and Gas Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS). Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 are in completed final Draft. The four Alternatives look at a range of development from 550 multi-well pads up to 2550 multi-well pads, with an average of 8 wells per pad. The WRFO launched the quantitative analysis for the development of Chapter 4, the Impact Analysis chapter, in June 2009 with anticipated completion in early March 2011. The Air Quality Technical Support Document (AQTSD) has been completed. The Phase I draft of the Resource Management & Monitoring Protocol (RMMP) has been completed. The RMMP is designed to serve as a cost-effective and publicly accepted approach for landscape-change monitoring and assessment. The NWRAC subcommittee provided recommendations to the NWRAC on the Reclamation Strategy and the NWRAC provided recommendations that are being incorporated into the document. A revised schedule is being developed and a Notice of Availability for the Draft Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS to be published in the Federal Register in winter 2011. 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.

ARRA Projects

The White River Field Office Travel Management Plan was initiated on June 21, 2010.

The other is the Missouri Creek Road Repair project which falls under the Roads and Bridges Maintenance and Construction category was completed on August 19, 2010.

Cultural and Paleontology

The cultural program is currently working on providing clearances for grazing-permit renewals (including planning fieldwork for 15 different allotments), and forthcoming prescribed burns. The WRFO will also be working on a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation case during the FY2011 field season. WRFO has completed the initial contact of the tribes but no site has been determined. Over the past year, paleontologists working in the WRFO have recovered several significant new specimens of prehistoric animals and plants, most notably Eocene mammals such as Colodonts (relatives of modern tapirs), and the iconic Uintathere, a saber-toothed ungulate from an extinct branch separated from modern even-toed or odd-toed ungulates.

Energy Program

Oil Shale RD&D

WRFO approved American Shale Oil, LLC's (AMSO) Plan of Development (POD) on September 3, 2009. AMSO is currently engaged in detailed design and construction contracts for surface facilities and the heater-producer well. Construction of facilities is expected to commence spring 2010. Shell Frontier's exploration plan for COC 69166 (East Lease) was approved by the WRFO on October 15, 2009. 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. Chevron is analyzing information gathered during their geo-hydrologic drilling /testing and continues to work on a POD.

Oil and Gas

During FY10, the WRFO approved 228 applications for permit to drill (APDs), performed 517 inspections and processed over 4270 sundries. Two staff members completed their certification training for Petroleum Engineering Technicians.

Fire and Fuels Program

Three prescribed fires are planned for FY 2011 (Freeze Wall, Segar MT. and Badger Flats). The staff is working on implementing the approved Emergency Stabilization and Burn Rehab plans for the Spring Creek, Duck Creek, Mellen, and Scenery Gulch wildland fires.

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

WRFO is working on the 2011 grazing permit renewals; plans are to finish all necessary field work and issue permits by September of 2011. WRFO is working on 15 permit renewals at this time, however, only 3 expire in FY 2011. Field work will be starting for our 2011 and 2012 grazing permit renewals in the next couple of months. BLM has set the 2010 grazing fees at \$4.67/AUM grazing fees have not been set for 2011 at this time.

Recreation Program

The Recreation Program has a multitude of activities underway and planned for 2011. New maps and informational materials are being added to 14 kiosks around the field office. We are continuing with road signing, as well as planning to add new signs along the boundaries of our Wilderness Study Areas. Recreation staff continues to work with the Rangely Rock Crawlers off-road club to develop trails and operational plans for the group's spring and fall events. Plans are underway for multiple National Public Lands Day events (trail maintenance and clean-up) and for the first *Hands-on-the-Lands* event – a program to bring outdoor education to local middle-school students. We are also moving forward with initial steps toward a travel management plan for the WRFO with road and trail inventories expected during the 2010 field season. BLM is currently reviewing an application for a Wilderness Therapy

Program, which has been operating in the area mainly on private lands. The Recreation program is currently 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.

Soil, Water, and Air Program

In January of 2010, an air-quality monitoring station was established near Meeker (just south, on the mesa) and a second monitoring station was installed established near Rangely in August of 2010. Currently, the WRFO maintains four stream-flow measurement sites in the Piceance Creek watershed and there are plans to add an additional two sites this summer. The WRFO also helps supports seven USGS stream-flow measurement sites to measure surface water quality in areas experiencing natural gas development. A groundwater monitoring program with the USGS will establish 5 dedicated groundwater-quality monitoring wells in the Piceance Basin this year. This summer the WRFO will also: continue collecting information on, and document the location of, natural springs used as water sources for livestock and wildlife in the resource area; and will continue monitoring ten precipitation-recording sites are maintained throughout the WRFO.

Wild Horses

The WRFO completed a gather of wild horses which were located outside of the Piceance East-Douglas Herd Management Area (PEDHMA). In October wild horse advocates filed a law suit to stop the scheduled West Douglas Herd Area (WDHA) wild horse gather. BLM did not pursue the gather at that time providing the Judge adequate time to review the merits of the case. The earliest the WDHA gather could proceed is in July 2011. WRFO will be updating the monitoring for the PEDHMA in FY 2011 in order to provide the necessary information and the current condition of the environment in the PEDHMA area.

Weed Management

WRFO's weed budget took 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 250 to 300 additional acres of various other weeds within the county.

Dave Stout, Kremmling Field Office

Kremmling RMP Revision: The Kremmling Field Office's preliminary Draft RMP/EIS is being sent this week to the Headquarters Office in Washington for Washington Office and Solicitor review. We expect to incorporate comments from those reviews in January, after which the Draft RMP/EIS will be prepared for distribution to the public.

Fuels Treatments: Fuels treatments continue to be a priority, as resources and weather conditions allow. Mechanical and prescribed fire treatments were completed on 1,304 acres in FY2010. This amounts to about 28 percent of the fuels treatment accomplishments for the Northwest District. The Colorado Youth Corps and The Nature Conservancy Fire Module were used to accomplish some of this work. Pile burning on Independence Mountain has been continuing this fall. The Gore Lakes pile burning will continue this fall and winter, following an updating of the burn plan.

Forestry: Cooperative efforts continue with Jackson County on the North Park Stewardship Agreement, although the County has been unable to purchase any timber sales due to the low monetary value of timber, and competition from the Forest Service, which is using stimulus funding to cut large amounts of dead lodgepole pine on the Routt National Forest. Post and pole sales on Independence Mountain to a contractor from Laramie will remove dead lodgepole pine. In Middle Park, the 60-acre Hogback Too harvest was sold; logging will begin this winter. Also in Middle Park, the Willow Creek (47 acres) and Little Buffalo (17 acres) projects sold. Willow Creek will be logged in winter; the Little Buffalo harvest began in late summer. Upcoming work includes Reed Creek (11 acres), Spruce Creek (48 acres), 10 acres at Shadow Mountain in conjunction with private logging, 165 acres at the Grouse Mountain radio repeater site, and 100 acres of salvage at Walden Hollow north of Granby.

Recreation: Public review and comment has been invited on 19 Special Recreation Permit renewal applications, and on proposed fee adjustments at the Pumphouse and Radium recreation areas on the Upper Colorado River. Most of the permit renewal applications are for commercial rafting and fishing operations on the Upper Colorado River and big game hunting and outfitting in Grand County. The fee adjustment proposal would slightly raise vehicle, day use, and season pass fees to offset inflation and rising costs of maintenance and operations. The current fees have been in effect since 1998.

Lands and Realty: Union Telephone Company applied for a cell tower location on Owl Ridge, southeast of Walden, in December 2005. Owl Ridge is an area of many cultural resource sites and areas of spiritual or traditional interest to Native Americans. A meeting with representatives of Tribes having an interest in the area produced concurrence with the location and mitigations. The Colorado SHPO raised concerns with the location due to Native American concerns and cultural sites, and Union Telephone was asked to look at alternative locations for cell towers. Union reported back on their further analysis, and we have completed another round of consultation with the affected tribes and the SHPO, to consider alternatives to the location originally proposed by Union. Although the Tribes have again provided their acceptance of the project, the SHPO has not. Our request for involvement of the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation resulted in a conference with the SHPO and the Council. The Council provided us with a list of information to provide to the Council and the SHPO, prior to meeting again to determine our next steps in processing Union's application.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Projects: Two of the three Kremmling Field Office's ARRA projects are complete. The North Sand Hills Special Recreation Management Area Resource Protection project (\$145,000) constructed formal camping areas and roads to protect cultural sites. The North Park Stewardship Agreement Biomass project was a timber resource inventory on about 9,000 acres in the Independence Mountain area to support future timber management in the area. The

contract was awarded for \$26,000. The Kremmling bunkhouse replacement project replaces a very unsafe employee bunkhouse, and provides additional housing capacity over the old bunkhouse, so that we can move summer seasonal employees out of travel trailers. The \$649,000 project began August 16th, with the demolition of the existing building. Interior work (tiling, painting, installing appliances, etc.) is underway. The bunkhouse should be ready for occupancy within the next few weeks.

Kremmling Field Office Personnel Changes: Hannah Schechter has been hired to replace Andy Windsor, Outdoor Recreation Planner, who transferred to a similar position at the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. Peter Torma, Rangeland Management Specialist and manager of the Owl Mountain Partnership, transferred to the Owyhee Field Office in Marsing, Idaho. Neilie Tibbs has been hired to replace Torma. Richard Johnson, Rangeland Management Specialist, and Frank Rupp, Archeologist, have announced their intentions to retire at the end of December. Recruitment is underway to replace Johnson. Justin Kincaid, Fuels Management Specialist, transferred to a similar position at the San Juan Public Lands Center. Recruitment for the Kincaid position is pending completion of a fuels workforce plan for the Northwest District.

Gary: We've sent a letter back to KFO concerns about concerns about leasing in Grand County.

Dave S: Would be for August lease sale. Need to do EA. Similar concerns from DOW.

Catherine Robertson, Grand Junction Field Office

Resource Management Plan (RMP) Revision

The 1.2 million acre GJFO in western Colorado is currently revising the RMP which was approved in 1987.

Schedule

The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and draft RMP is expected to be available to cooperating agencies and RAC subgroup for review from March 21 to April 15, 2011, followed by public review in fall 2011. BLM will host a cooperating agency meeting and reconvene the RAC subgroup shortly before the review period. The final RMP is expected in mid 2013.

The RMP will be based on the selected alternative in the Record of Decision. BLM has not selected a preferred alternative yet.

Summary of Alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS

- Alternative A (no action) – the continuation of present management based on management decisions in the 1987. GJFO RMP amendments would emphasize maintaining the current land management strategy for physical, biological, cultural, and historic resource values along with recreational, social, and economic land uses. The BLM would not establish additional criteria or change present criteria to guide the identification of site-specific use levels for implementation activities.

- Alternative B – seeks to balance human interests, multiple land uses, and the conservation of natural and cultural resource values, while sustaining the ecological integrity of certain key habitats for plant, wildlife, and fish species. It incorporates a balanced level of protection, restoration, enhancement, and use of resources and services to meet ongoing programs and land uses. Objectives focus on environmental, economic, and social outcomes achieved by strategically addressing demands across the landscape.
- Alternative C – emphasizes non-consumptive use and management of resources through protection, restoration, and enhancement, while providing for multiple uses, including livestock grazing and mineral development. This alternative would establish the most special designation areas (e.g., areas of critical environmental concern and suitable wild and scenic river segments) and provide the most protection for lands with wilderness character. Objectives focus on environmental and social outcomes achieved by sustaining relatively unmodified physical landscapes, natural and cultural resource values for current and future generations.
- Alternative D – highlights management for natural resources, commodity production, and public use opportunities. Resource uses such as recreation, livestock grazing, mineral leasing and development would be emphasized. Management would recognize and give precedence to existing uses and accommodate new uses to the greatest extent possible while maintaining resource conditions. Objectives emphasize social and economic outcomes while protecting land health.

Highlights

Travel management alternatives include a range of open, closed, and limited area designations for motorized, mechanized, equestrian and foot travel. The Draft EIS will also include a travel management appendix, with a range of representative route by route travel system alternatives, corresponding to the area designations by alternative. Shortly after release of the final RMP, BLM will issue a separate decision to implement the travel system corresponding with the area designations in the final RMP.

Wild and scenic river suitability has been incorporated from public comments thru scoping and recommendations made by the Lower Colorado River Wild and Scenic Collaborative Process into the alternatives. This stakeholder group identified specific uses, values and concerns in addition to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) identified through the internal eligibility phase and corresponding management prescriptions. The preferred alternative will reflect management direction and potential allocations that will address these resource, public and stakeholder concerns.

Recreation

Overall use in GJFO was up more than previous years with approximately **900,000** visitors and proved to be another very busy year throughout the GJFO, especially in areas that prominently feature mountain biking such as Bang's Canyon and North Fruita Desert Special Recreation Management Areas. Motorized activities in popular venues such as Bang's Canyon were down compared to years past. Use was also slightly down in the Gateway area at John Brown Canyon and 4.2 Road.

- North Fruita Desert – Use exceeded **100,000** visitors last year for the first time on record and mainly attributed to mountain bikers.
- Bang’s Canyon – Use also exceeded 100,000 total visitors within the recreation area.
- Tabeguache Trailhead (Monument Road) in the Bang’s Canyon Special Recreation Management Area– Increased by 15,000 users from last year for a total of **75,000** in 2010.
- The North Desert Off-Highway Vehicle area hosted slightly more than **300,000** visitors last year.
- Tabeguache Trailhead, managed cooperatively with the City of Grand Junction and the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association (COPMOBA), GJFO assisted in the development of the new Lunch Loops Bike Skills Park which provides an opportunity for a variety of users to enjoy off trail bicycle riding.

2010 Volunteer Recognition Event

The BLM, GJFO, celebrated the dedication and accomplishments of its volunteers at a reception on Tuesday, Nov. 30 in Grand Junction. BLM staff offered an orientation presentation, with an overview of new volunteer opportunities and how to become a BLM volunteer. The evening provided a chance for BLM staff, volunteers and those interested in becoming volunteers to meet and learn more about volunteer projects and partnerships.

Last year volunteers gave 24,000 hours of their time working alongside BLM staff, and with in-kind donations from partner organizations, contributed a dollar value of nearly \$500,000 to BLM GJFO. The extent of BLM success in many projects would be impossible without their help. The recent collaborative work on the Lunch Loop Bike Trail System is an example of how the dedication of volunteers and partner organizations helped create a recreational centerpiece for the community.

Bridgeport Trailhead and Access

Collaboration continues with Mesa County and Union Pacific Railroad on options to provide a safe, legal, public crossing in the Bridgeport Bridge area. An EA is currently being reviewed by GJFO resource specialists. Consultations also continue with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding endangered plant issues and with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office on cultural and historic properties that may be impacted by the proposed actions and those consultations should be completed in spring of 2011. These are requirements BLM must complete prior to rendering a decision.

Cultural

The Learning Garden, hosted at the Mesa County Fairgrounds, in cooperation with Colorado State University (CSU) Extension, the Northern Ute Tribe, BLM GJFO and the Dominguez Archeological Research Group (DARG) hosted over 600 home-schooled and District 51 students this year. The program has become a model for other locations throughout Colorado and will be a stop on the 2011 State of Colorado Botanical Field tour. This program brings students from the Northern Ute reservation and Grand Valley together to learn about native plants and understand their past and future use.

Lands and Mineral

Proposed Master Development Plan (MDP) for Whitewater Area

Fram Americas LLC is refining their official plan for development which was informally proposed to the BLM's interdisciplinary staff last summer and currently waiting for the final plan of development.

Black Hills MDP

This MDP is for development in the Debeque area. The EA is currently being reviewed by BLM Interdisciplinary team and will be out for public comment in 2011.

Encana is planning activity within the Orchard Unit

Most new applications for permits to drill are for horizontal wells targeting shale gas formations. Operators are considering the potential of shale gas in this area.

Bangs Canyon/Gunnison River Acquisitions

The BLM is proposing the purchase of four parcels, totaling 212 acres, on the Gunnison River adjacent to the Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) boundary. The acquisition would include a donated access easement that would provide public access to the SRMA from Highway 141 in Whitewater. There are two landowners willing to sell. Land & Water Conservation Fund Emergency/Inholding funds have been approved for the first phase of this acquisition, 3 parcels totaling 152 acres. Appraisals are underway and should be completed within the next few weeks, with closing anticipated by January.

Mountain Island Exchange

Appraisals and EA are expected to be completed after the beginning of the calendar year. The decision package will be sent to the National Land Exchange Team and Washington D.C. office for review and approval before a Notice of Decision is issued.

McClane Canyon Mine

GJFO received a copy of the permit application submitted to the Colorado Division of Reclamation Mining and Safety (CDRMS) for their proposed new surface facilities on Nov. 22, 2010. The application contains detailed information required by the EA. An adjusted schedule was received from the third party contractor writing the EA, with an estimated decision date of June 30, 2011.

Law Enforcement (LE)

Elliott Hinckley, the new MCNCA Law Enforcement Ranger, graduated from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center on Nov. 23. Elliott was recognized by his classmates and received the Directors Award given to students that display the outstanding personal attributes of a successful law

enforcement officer. Elliott now begins three months of field training to sharpen his law enforcement skills and is expected to be on independent patrol in March 2012.

LE has remained busy throughout the big game hunting seasons. Glade Park, Douglas Pass, and Divide Road areas have seen substantial use. LE Rangers continue to investigate several resource crimes including the apprehension of a suspect by Officer Eric Boik recently caught excavating an archaeological site in the Dominguez-Escalante NCA. A court date is expected in early 2012.

Officer Bryce Stewart apprehended a convicted felon, the focus of a current Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) investigation. In addition to a rifle in plain view, the individual was in possession of a hidden AK-47, a loaded 12-gauge shotgun, a .22 caliber semi-automatic rifle, 2 improvised "zip" guns, a machete with a 22" blade, a bayonet with Nazi symbols, spiked metal knuckles, pieces of aluminum tubing believed to be an improvised silencer, mercury switches, and approximately 512 rounds of ammunition. The case has been transferred to the ATF with ongoing assistance from BLM GJFO.

MCINNIS CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA (NCA)

For the past two years, the McInnis NCA staff has conducted informal public contact with Colorado River recreational users to develop a permit and fee system in order to manage visitor use on the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River. The internal phases of the EA will be completed by March 2011, followed by a final public review and submission of comments before a decision is made. The proposal needs to go to the Recreation RAC for a recommendation prior to a decision on fees. One option under consideration was developed with input from the Northwest RAC subgroup for the NCA. The fee component of the proposal will be considered by the statewide Recreation Resource Advisory Council (RecRAC), a required step for new fee proposals, as soon as a meeting of that group is scheduled in 2011.

Law Enforcement Officer, Elliot Hinckley will join the McInnis NCA staff in March 2011. Hinckley graduated from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center on Nov. 23. Elliot will complete on-the-job training and be fully delegated in March 2011. He is filling a position vacated in September.

We held a successful celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the NCA's designation on November 6. Thanks to Commissioner Acquafresca for participating.

DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

The majority of continued work for the Dominguez-Escalante NCA is related to RMP development. Brodie Farquhar, Writer-Editor, arrived on Nov. 29 to further support the planning process. Other new positions supporting the RMP process include a Planning Team Lead and an Outdoor Recreation Planner. McInnis Canyons NCA Manager Katie Stevens continues to serve as manager along with staff support from the GJFO and Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) for other needs such as wildlife, range management and cultural resources. The public comment process for the Dominguez-Escalante RMP was completed on Oct. 1 and the travel management planning and public input process started. It will end on May 1, 2011. The RMP website at http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/nca/denca/denca_rmp.html is available for more information.

Advisory Council

The charter for the Dominguez-Escalante NCA Advisory Council was approved along with the selection of the 10-member advisory council by U.S. Dept. of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, allowing meetings to begin.

Geographic balance was considered in the selection of council members from Mesa, Delta, and Montrose Counties. Each county will have one representative and one seat will represent grazing issues. The remaining 6 seats are divided among community members representing NCA issues or stakeholders potentially affected by the NCA. (see attachment).

A stakeholder group began meetings in Delta since September to consider wild and scenic river suitability. This group will provide BLM with comments related to suitability of river segments included in both the NCA and Montrose District (UFO) RMP processes.

Dominguez-Escalante Advisory Council			
Seat	Name (Professional Affiliation, if relevant to the value being represented)	Representing	County of Residence
1	Co. Comm. Steve Acquafresca (Mesa County Commissioner)	Mesa County	Mesa
2	Co. Comm. Jan McCracken (Delta County Commissioner)	Delta County	Delta
3	Bill Harris	Montrose County, cultural/historic values	Montrose
4	Oscar Massey (Rancher, Owner/Manager of Massey livestock/agriculture operation)	Grazing Permittees	Mesa
5	Katie Steele	Dispersed Recreation, Natural Values (riparian, wildlife, etc), Cultural and area history	Mesa
6	Neil "Mike Wilson	Motorized recreation	Delta
7	Terry Kimber	Dispersed recreation (hunting/jeeping), involved during consideration of wilderness	Delta
8	Dr. Tamera Minnick (Mesa State College)	Academia, educational and scientific values	Mesa

9	Joe Neuhof (Colorado Environmental Coalition)	Environmental advocacy, wilderness, natural values	Mesa
10	Jason Beason (Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory)	Wildlife	Delta

COLORADO RIVER VALLEY FIELD OFFICE, Karl Mendonca

Resource Management Plan Revision update

The Colorado River Valley Field Office and the Kremmling Field Offices continue to move forward with preparation of the draft Resource Management Plan Revision and Environmental Impact Statement. The Colorado BLM State Office has completed its review of the draft RMP and EIS this September. The review did not result in any substantive changes to the Alternatives or analysis.

The Field Offices are now preparing for the Washington Office and Solicitor review; scheduled to begin December 8th. This review is expected to be concluded in January. Following the review, the Field Offices will be completing a content analysis and response to comments from the BLM's internal reviews. The BLM will then proceed with preparing the final revision of the Draft Resource Management Plan for public availability and comment.

The analysis and preparation of the Air Quality and Social Economics sections took longer than expected to complete and lead to delays in preparing the draft RMP for internal reviews.

The RMP revision schedule has been revised and the draft is expected to be ready for public release in Spring 2011.

Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan

Litigation of the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan continues in the U.S. District Court. The Judge has declared that after multiple rounds of settlement negotiations and diligent efforts by all parties, settlement negotiations are at an impasse and court-assisted settlement discussion are now complete. The issues in the case are fully briefed and the Judge is prepared to rule on the case in due course and in consideration of the District Judge's overall docket. An anticipated ruling in the case is expected within a year.

White River Subgroup Update: RAC approved reclamation standards from subgroup. That has been incorporated into the draft.

NLCS Las Vegas event

Steve G: NLCS celebrated 10th anniversary. Areas where conservation is overriding goal. Had a panel celebrating first 10 years of NLCS. Talked about next 10 years. Mostly BLM people, some special interest groups.

Next meeting items: (Friday afternoon if necessary of Statewide meeting).

UCR fee proposal resolution

NSH resolutions

Protocols

(Statewide RAC agenda ideas – rapid ecological assessment, climate change issues, Rec RAC, basic rules of FACA, BLM organization chart)

Action Items

DAVE BOYD will check with other RACs in Colorado to see if they have written, formal protocols for introducing, voting on resolutions.

STEVE SMITH and JEFF COMSTOCK will draft formal protocols for the NW RAC for introducing and voting on resolutions

GARY BUMGARNER will liaison with Jackson County Commissioners regarding fees

NW RAC will review ISA resolution with modifications in a week via e-mail.

DAVE STOUT will continue to work with Jackson County regarding North Sand Hills -- fees and BLM acquiring the State Trust Land.

DAVE STOUT will provide additional info for a possible resolution on the Upper Colorado River fee adjustment proposal at the next Feb RAC meeting.