

Northwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, February 9, 2006
 BLM Grand Junction Field Office
 2815 H Rd.
 Grand Junction, Colorado

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| David Bailey, Category 2 | |
| Clare Bastable, Category 2 | Kathy Hall, Category 3 |
| Dave Cesark, Category 1 | Jon Hill, Category 1 |
| Jeff Comstock, Category 3 | Pat Kennedy, Category 2 |
| Duane Dailey, Category 3 | Charles Kerr, Category 2 |
| T. Wright Dickinson, Category 1 | John Martin, Category 3 |
| Steven Gunderson, Category 1 | Larry McCown, Category 3 |
| | Forrest Nelson, Category 3 |

Not present: Wade Haerle, Category 2

BLM Staff

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| David Boyd | Jack Placchi |
| Jamie Connell | Catherine Robertson |
| Jerry Straham for John Husband | John Ruhs |
| Mel Lloyd | Kent Walter |
| Raul Morales | Sally Wisely |
| | |

| Visitors | Representing | Town/City |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Matthew McCombs | Sen. Ken Salazar | Grand Junction |
| Steve Bonowski | Colo Mountain Club | Lakewood |
| Ron Cousineau | Colo Forest Service | |
| Cindy Peterson | Rep Salazar | |
| Derek Wagner | Sen. Allard | |
| Jim Baca | Rep Salazar | |
| Tom Fry | Wilderness Society | |
| Lee-Ann Hill | Colorado Environmental C | Grand Junction |
| Gary Harmon | Daily Sentinel | Grand Junction |
| Dean Humphrey | Daily Sentinel | Grand Junction |

Opening Remarks and State Director, Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time

Chairman Jeff Comstock called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum.

Welcome and Introductions: New RAC Members

RAC members introduced themselves. New RAC members were welcomed. Members thanked Dave Cesark for the dinner reception the night before.

New Colorado State Director Sally Wisely thanked RAC members. RACs are extremely important to BLM. She said it speaks a lot to each member that you are willing to spend your own time and commitment. Let her know how she can support the RAC. Sally is happy to talk about any and all issues BLM has.

Jamie Connell called attention to expiring terms of RAC members and the call for nominations for new members.

Jeff Comstock was unanimously re-elected as Chair and Dave Cesark as Vice Chair. Jamie Connell will continue to be DFO.

Jamie opened discussion about public attendance at meetings and field trips. Field examinations are public (originally rangeland assessments) Nothing stated differently about other types of field trips. Issue comes in when space is limited on trips. When we set up tour, need to discuss attendance issue when we set up trip.

Claire accepted responsibility for the mix-up on the field trip scheduled. She said she didn't understand protocol.

After discussion about intent of the regulations and the RACs desire to maintain open decision making while still allowing for educational field trips, Jeff appointed Claire, John Martin, and T Wright to craft a statement regarding NW RAC field trips. Jamie and Dave will support the group with informational needs, etc.

Field Manager Updates

Glenwood Springs: Larry McCown outlined the Garfield County Socioeconomic Impact Study. Jamie Connell stated the Roan Plan was moving forward with an anticipated spring roll-out. She will keep RAC posted. The Rock Creek EIS addressing treatment for pine beetles in conjunction with USFS was released. Jamie will send e-mail link to RAC when it's available. Glenwood and Kremmling will begin a RMP revision soon and will be looking for RAC involvement. Community assessment tool perhaps role for RAC. The Pilot office is moving ahead and should be open in late March. The Field Office has 26 grazing permits left that need NEPA review, and will complete 21 this year.

Kremmling: John Ruhs passed out a handout summary. Question on Blue Valley land exchange. John said all parcels still on the table. Contractor writing EA. Question re: RMP joint revision focus? John said they have started wild and scenic portion, community assessment, visitor assessment this year. Next year more funding for public scoping. What about travel management on Wolford? Trying to get implementation underway signing. Local environmental group (Friends of Wolford Mountain) appealed decision re: open trails. Duane Daily added community and county very happy with decision. Appeal was not local group. Question: Annual user days on Wolford, North Sand Hill? Yes on sand hills, large number of user days: 20,000 total on big weekends. County helping heavily with management of area.

White River: Kent Walter updated West Area Herd Amendment: Protest responses almost finished. Decision still to remove herd consistent with RMP. Should be done by end of the

month. The Field Office has 14 grazing permit renewals covering 150,000 acres using EAs. Renewing others under appropriation bill. They are currently working on 8 rangeland improvement projects, including treating some cheatgrass – control trying several treatments to control this spring. Working with permittees and industry on the ground. Working with industry and doing pre-review and post monitoring to ensure they are follow up on their responsibilities. The first wild born Black-footed Ferrets in the reintroduction project were found last fall – a very exciting development. There will be another release this year. Working with Rio Blanco Co, Colo State Forest Service, White River FS on a community wildland fire protection plan. Last three year treated 13,000 acres through fire use.

State Office: Sally. T Wright where are we sitting on funding for RMP funding for Kremmling? We are making requests, a lot of planning needs, have planning schedule. T Wright a lot of RMPs in state need to be renewed. Growth and impacts increasing. Bureau recognizes involving comm. In meaningful way. RAC members can lobby for long-term \$\$\$. Wants planning schedule and priorities from SO.

Sally: Essential public engage with us on RMPs. These documents really lay out management for next 10-20 years. That is time to engage. T Wright planning process irreparably broken. Might be worthwhile to use all three RACs together to figure out a better way to do business. RAC needs to assist BLM in engaging public in meaningful way. Future meeting agenda item.

Little Snake: Jerry Straham said work was continuing on the Little Snake Plan Revision. Emerald Mountain Land Exchange update: Appraisals are in on BLM property. Appraisals on state land are still out. FO continues working with contractor on EA. Vast majority of parcels are not available for public access. Working with Wyoming on an EA for oil and gas development which crosses the state line.

Grand Junction: Catherine Robertson gave members a handout summarizing the update. She said the Field Office had done a lot of coordinating with Palisade and Grand Junction on leasing issue, including providing info in Sept and Oct, several in-depth meetings with mayor and staff. The GJFO added stipulations at their request. Split estate info provided on county website. Working on two development plans (GAPs). Bangs Canyon EA ROD should be signed in March. Proposed action changed based on public comment. Working with city of GJ for Monument Road Trailhead. N Fruita desert campground: A business plan for campground is being developed.

Charlie Kerr voiced concerns regarding the 1987 GJFO Plan and whether or not it contains sufficient analysis to allow leasing of the Palisade watershed. **Action Item:** Catherine will follow up by providing information regarding the oil and gas spacing that was considered in the 1987 GS RMP.

Public Comment Period

Steve Bonowski Colo Mountain Club. The club has been around since 1912, been involved with issues since 1930s, and had a chapter in Grand Junction since 1950. Steve said he was concerned

about the “increasing senility of land use plans in NW Colo.” The club will be actively involved in the planning efforts. Steve asked the RAC to please consider a resolution recommending the Grand Junction Plan by updated.

LeAnn Hill, Colo Environ Coalition: Please continue to support landscape oriented planning. Keep moving ahead with positive on-the-ground projects. Welcome more discussions with RAC.

Update Working Group Memberships (Action Item)

Jamie: Important distinction between working groups and subcommittees: Charter states RAC can nominate subcommittees, but there are strict rules, and the meetings must be announced and published. Subcommittees can have more than just RAC members included. Working groups consist of only RAC members. They are generally balanced with RAC members. They are not decisional, and their meetings do not have to be published.

Working groups for the West Douglas Wild Horse Herd, Sustaining Working Landscapes and Roan Plateau RMP are no longer needed and were disbanded.

New working groups:

- Tours/field trips -- Jeff appointed Claire Bastable, John Martin, and T Wright Dickinson to this working group to craft a statement regarding NW RAC field trips.
- Recreation – Pat Kennedy, Steve Gunderson, Claire Bastable, Duane Dailey, Wade Haerle, Kathy Hall, John Martin
- BLM Planning Process review – T Wright Dickinson, David Bailey, Wade Haerle, Steve Gunderson, Claire Bastable (Long-term planning – help Sally revise BLM planning process. Jeff expressed concern about the need for the group and emphasized if it is formed, it needs to meet.)

Existing working groups:

- Invasive species – Jeff Comstock (3) , Jon Hill (1)
- Wildlife – T Wright Dickinson chair (1), Jeff Comstock (3), Forrest Nelson (3), Dave Cesark (1), Claire Bastable (2), Charlie Kerr (2)
- Cultural Resources – David Bailey chair (2), T Wright Dickinson (1), Pat Kennedy, Duane Dailey (3)
- Energy and Minerals – Larry McCown chair (3), Jeff Comstock (3), Dave Cesark (1), Charlie Kerr (2), John Martin (3), Kathy Hall (1), Jon Hill (1)
- Northwestern Colorado Stewardship – Kathy Hall (3), T Wright Dickinson (1), Forrest Nelson (3), Jeff Comstock (3), Jon Hill (1)

Statewide Special Recreation Permit Application Fee

Jack Placchi from the State Office presented information on a proposed statewide application fee for Special Recreation Permits. He pointed out that since this isn't an access fee, RAC involvement is not required, but nevertheless desired.

SRPs are required on BLM land for organized groups. Organized group def: Non-commercial, non-comp group event that takes place on public land.

T Wright recommended that presentations such as this need to allow enough time for RAC to think about and discuss the issues. He recommended creating a Recreation working group and have them address this issue.

John Martin wanted the RAC to address the penalty provisions associated with this.

Action Item: Jack will provide this information to the RAC

Colorado BLM Travel Management Program Update

Jack Placchi gave an update on the Colorado BLM Travel Management Program

Claire: What is the timeline for BLM moving toward designated routes? Jack: As soon as we can.

Jeff: Is RS 2477 addressed? Jack: Yes, each planner has to ID which roads and routes county is/may assert jurisdiction in plan.

Sally: No changes in R.S. 2477 policy yet. Recent developments, a lot of discussions at DOI level. BLM can make some determinations, court has held they are only ones who can say def yes or no.

Mountain Pine Beetle Epidemic

John Ruhs introduced Ron Cousineau, assistant district forester at Colorado State Forest, who gave a presentation on the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic in northern Colorado. Condition of forest inviting factor. Drought, warm winters favor the bugs. Forest is always changing, but we've taken much of the change out of the forest last 60 years or so. Clearcutting works better than thinning for lodgepole pine regeneration. Thinning works better in ponderosa.

Fiscal and Environmental Reality of Power Generation from Biomass

Charlie Kerr introduced Tom Fry, with The Wilderness Society.

What types of markets can we develop for small diameter woody biomass? No traditional market. Burn, scatter or pull-off are your options for biomass you need to remove.

You need to ask whether risk reduction or forest restoration is the main goal. Not all forest types are the same.

Markets: need something inexpensive that uses a lot of biomass. Leads to power generation from biomass in matrix. Bioheating is most promising. Heating municipal building will use this biomass

The Front Range allows more opportunities because transportation costs are less

BLM Workload Priorities

Jon Hill expressed concern about oil and gas cumulative impacts on AUMs. Range improvements will help with mitigation from oil and gas development. Concerned that his request for range improvements was denied.

Kent Walter intro: First priority Energy Policy Act implementation

Second: Pilot office and Glenwood APDs.

Third: White River energy work APDs. 12-20% increase in APDs. Four years ago about 50 per year, this year about 180 APDs.

Fourth: Other field offices.

Kent: Energy Policy Act included several oil shale components. RD&D leases, eight applications from six companies were selected. Other component: No regulations in place for commercial leasing of oil shale, and Energy Act requires BLM to develop some. Third priority: PEIS to amend relevant RMPs to allow for commercial leasing of oil shale and tar sands. (Tar sands not in Colo). 14 meetings held in CO, WY, UT for PEIS. Should be completed early 2008. Jamie: RAC will be involved in PEIS. Not being written locally but can still ask us questions and we'll find the answer.

Six applications chosen for CO. Each is a 160 acre parcels. Explain technology, all will be in situ in CO. The companies are Shell Frontier, Exxon, Mobile, EGL. Will see four separate EAs, one for each company. Six different technologies. Should have open house meetings sometime in March. Meeker, Rifle, maybe Grand Junction and Rangely. 1.2 trillion barrels of oil estimated . Incredible potential if becomes viable.

Deadlines on all these congressional mandated

Kent: **Oil and Gas EIS for White River:** activity predicted to occur in next 4 years exceeds current RMP RFD. The EIS will analyze the effects of a new RFD. Will include Glenwood in this EIS. What is reasonable RFD in this area, then look at impacts at EIS level. PAST RFD 1,100 wells. Probably 10-15,000 wells. Looking at jointly funding EIS with industry. Should kick off in April with public scoping

Plus day to day increase in APDs and associated facility. We are not ignoring other programs, just can't be as responsive as we were in the past. Asking for additional \$, people, resources

Claire: Typical for industry to fund EIS? Kent: not unprecedented, but proactive and responsible. (also done for ski industry)

Priorities

Glenwood Springs: Jamie Connell:

1. Pilot office and associated workload,
2. Workload measures (previously submitted),
3. Complete Roan Plan

4. Initiation of RMP plan revision. Working with Kremmling.

White River: Kent: Energy items listed above highest priority. If no increase in funding, the Field Office won't meet all AWP targets, including permit renewals, weed management, and partnerships such as the black-footed ferret

Kremmling: John Ruhs priorities include plan revision, forest and fuels management – especially WUI and stewardship contracting. Rec management issues also high (Wolford Mountain travel, North Sand Hills, Colo River)

Little Snake: Jerry: RMP highest priority, followed by permit renewals and landscape health assessments, the Emerald Mountain land exchange. Little Snake has less oil and gas activity/APDs than other offices, but it is still seeing a doubling of related workload. EIS starting this year looking at oil and gas development in the Field Office.

Grand Junction: Raul: energy, recreation, land health and permit renewals

Public Comment Period

None

Next Meeting Topics, Closing Remarks

David asked for cultural section in RAC notebook.

Larry: agenda presenters did not have adequate time, not enough time for questions. Need to meet on afternoon before tour if we need more time.

Charlie: FO updates need at least 30 minutes each

John: Spilt time over two days to allow travel time. Need time to socialize. Don't take out socialization part of meetings. That's what makes this group so good.

T Wright: don't need tour just to have tour. Socialization part is critical.

John: Suggests Field manager updates 4-6 p.m. on Wednesday in public forum. Could have tour before, dinner after. Just have to make that informational

Larry: We could also give committee reports on the first day

Jamie: If we add meeting time to the first day, we will have to put out new federal register notice and possibly allow for public comment. **Action Item:** Jamie and Dave will check into this.

Topics for May meetings

Present position of recreation working group on SRP application fee

T Wright will talk about summit RAC will sponsor about issues

Oil shale update/industry in situ process presentation

Need training for new RAC members. Range management.

James Thurman presentation on oil shale, perhaps over dinner

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.