

Northwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, Feb. 22, 2007
Doubletree Hotel
Grand Junction

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

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

Not present:

BLM Staff

Peter McFadden		David Boyd
Jamie Connell		Jaime Gardner
John Husband		Jim Sample
Catherine Robertson		
Kent Walter		
Dennis Gale		
Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Bobby Magill		
Ron velarde		
Randy Hampton		
Al Pfister		
Jerry otera	Ken Salazar	
Dan Larson		
Kurt Roystead(?)	Conoco Phillips	
Kim Kaale		
John Lovell		
Luke		

Called meeting to order at 9 a.m.

Jeff Comstock welcomed new member Dona Shue, who represents category 2, wild horse and burro groups.

Introductions

Elections – McCown nominated Cesaek, Hill seconded.
Hall nominated T Wright, McCown seconded

Passed unanimously.

Grand Junction Field Office, Catherine Robertson

Community Development Plan for Palisade & Grand Junction Watersheds:

Coordination work continues on the CDP for the municipal watersheds with Genesis Gas & Oil, the Town of Palisade, the City of Grand Junction, the owner of Saddle Mountain Ranch, Mesa County and BLM participating. The working group hosted public meetings in December and again in January to hear from the public on concerns that should be addressed within the CDP. A final draft CDP is expected to be ready by late March, and a public workshop is scheduled for April 17.

CAM/Red Cliff Coal Mine: Public scoping and comment analysis is complete, and the cooperators met in December to begin alternative development for the proposed Red Cliff Coal Mine and railroad ROW. Issues to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement being developed include access, safety concerns on railroad crossings, visual impacts of new power lines, habitat impacts to wildlife, social impacts, and air and water quality.

Update on Alternative Mitigation Project with Laramie Energy: In late October, the GJFO finalized an alternative mitigation agreement with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Laramie Energy. Under that agreement, BLM granted a season-long, one-year exception to the standard winter timing limitation that restricted drilling activities on big game winter range. Drilling activities are ongoing in the northern portion of the East Plateau field, and fencing was installed to set aside roughly 660 private acres of private land for deer and elk winter range. BLM is pleased to be participating in providing low-elevation big game winter range that is higher quality than the BLM winter range that would have otherwise been available.

Dominguez-Escalante Initiative: The Dominguez Canyon Wilderness Study Area was recommended suitable for wilderness designation by the BLM in 1992. Increasing focus on the legislative options for the WSA by key wilderness constituents and the County Commissioners of Delta and Mesa Counties has led to community discussions regarding potential National Conservation Area legislation. Senator Salazar has voiced interest in assisting the County Commissioners in developing a community consensus. A Delta County non-profit recently hosted a public forum on Dominguez-Escalante Area and it is anticipated that a similar forum will be held in Mesa County this spring. BLM has been provided resource information and inventory data as a part of the public process.

Ute Ethnobotany Project: The BLM collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service, Museum of Western Colorado, the Colorado National Monument, and the Northern Ute Tribe on the Ute Ethnobotany Project, which took place in the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. The project was recently selected to be highlighted at an upcoming National Landscape Conservation System conference. A Herbarium Workshop was held in June 2006 and attended by a teacher of Ute Language and Culture, students from the Uintah River High School, staff from the Ute Indian Tribe, as well as tribal elders. The herbarium will be used by students working with elders to identify plants and learn how they were used by their ancestors. An additional workshop is planned for 2007. The Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Tribes have been invited to attend and the project is expected to expand.

David Bailey: Ethnobotany is the study of how cultures use or used plants.

Gateway Area Projects: The GJFO is expecting to receive funds to complete a recreation study in the Gateway area beginning in April. This study will be completed under an agreement with Arizona State University and is intended to yield recreation preference information needed to guide the Gateway Area Recreation Management Plan. The GJFO is currently drafting an EA for the construction of several miles of non-motorized trail near Lumsden and Gateway Canyons to help meet the immediate demand for recreation opportunities in the area. A decision is expected in the spring, and construction would begin in June. The GJFO is also working with partners in the Gateway area to clean-up hazardous waste and non-historic debris from the historic Palisade Mine and its access route. This will restore the historic integrity of the site and make it a safer place to visit.

Bangs Canyon Implementation: In Area 1, best known as the Lunch Loop, a bicycle skills area and a free-ride trail are to be constructed. Much of this work is funded by a grant from REI. The Tabeguache Trail closure to motorized vehicles between Monument and Little Park Roads will be implemented with the installation of gates and signs this spring. Across Little Park Road at the Little Park Trailhead, motorized access will be limited and new signs will be installed. Hiker and biker access to the Gunny Loop Trail will continue through the trailhead until the new section of the Gunny Loop is built in 2008. Further up Little Park Road, parking has already been redirected from Third Flats to the Bangs Canyon Trailhead using signs and barriers. A series of shared use trails for motorized and non-motorized visitors will be constructed in Area 4 in the Billings Canyon area. A section of road from Second Flats will be decommissioned, and a short section of road leading south from the Billings Canyon Jeep Trail will be closed. Signing and visitor maps will be updated to reflect these changes. Design and layout of the shared use trail system in Area 6 will be completed under an Assistance Agreement with the COHVCO Foundation and Bicycle Colorado.

Palisade Trail Proposal: The Town of Palisade has proposed the construction of several miles of non-motorized trail in the Grand Mesa Slopes Management Area. The proposal was written to help meet recreation demands identified in a community survey recently completed to support the Town's comprehensive master plan. The GJFO has been

working closely with the Town on their proposal, which is currently under revision. The Town must also address public access issues. If the proposal is accepted, the Town would fund an environmental assessment and a cultural resource survey, via a third party MOU with the GJFO, and help facilitate construction.

North Fruita Desert Implementation: The GJFO will lay out a short but challenging section of the Lippan Trail, the waterfall bypass. Construction will be completed with volunteer crews, as opportunities arise. Use information will also be collected in the new campground to assess the need for and feasibility of a fee program for overnight use of this facility.

South Shale Ridge: In 1999, in accordance with prevailing policy, the BLM announced it would defer oil and gas leasing in South Shale Ridge until an amendment to the Grand Junction Resource Area Resource Management Plan could be completed. In 2004 the change in BLM policy that accompanied the Utah v. Norton settlement clarified the BLM position on actions in areas identified as having wilderness character, but were not included in the original areas recommended for wilderness protection in 1980. BLM policy following the Utah v. Norton settlement is to manage lands as intended by existing land use planning documents, in this case the 1987 GJFO RMP. Based on this, South Shale Ridge leases were offered in November 2005. In February 2006 Earthjustice, on behalf of The Wilderness Society, Center for Native Ecosystems, Sierra Club, Colorado Mountain Club and Colorado Environmental Coalition, filed a complaint against the BLM and the US Fish and Wildlife Service challenging the NEPA adequacy of the 2005 Environmental Assessment completed for Oil and Gas Leasing in South Shale Ridge. All evidence has been submitted by all parties in the case as of February 9, 2007 and the BLM is awaiting further information from the Department of Justice.

Charlie: What percentage of APDs will come under POD?

Catherine: Hard to say. Probably not all of workload because some just have a few. But when an operator has a number, we do POD. The majority, though.

Third-Party Contracting Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU): The GJFO is currently finalizing five MOUs with energy companies to execute Environmental Assessments through third party contracting for five Plans of Development (POD) in the GJFO. The MOU outlines the conditions and procedures each party must follow in preparing the environmental document. Under the MOU, the proponent's primary responsibility is to pay for the contractor's services; the contractor's primary responsibility is to assist the BLM in preparing the environmental document as the BLM directs; and the BLM's primary responsibility is to supervise and direct the contractor's work. The MOU provides that the proponent will not influence the contractor's work, and that the contractor will cooperate fully with the BLM. The MOU clarifies that the BLM, not the proponent, is in control of the preparation of the environmental analysis, even though the proponent is paying the contractor's bills. Current third party contracts in the GJFO include Oil and Gas Development Plans of Development with Laramie

Energy, Occidental Oil and Gas, Delta Petroleum, Black Hills Exploration and Production, Encana and Slate River Resources.

Kremmling Field Office, Peter McFadden

Blue Valley Exchange: The Environmental Assessment for this exchange has undergone staff review and was returned to the proponent's contractor for required edits on February 7. Upon resubmittal and acceptable completion, the EA will be released and a public meeting will be held in Kremmling to discuss the EA and solicit another round of comments.

Jeff: RAC wanted copy of EA before it goes to the public. Requested last meeting. Wants corrected version out to RAC.

Action: **Kremmling will send corrected draft to the RAC.**

Dailey: when would we see public meeting? A: Summer

Glenwood/Kremmling RMP Revision: The contract for this planning effort will likely be awarded by February 23. The Notice of Intent (NOI) to begin the revision will be published in the Federal Register on March 2. Kickoff meetings with the selected contractor and cooperating agency meetings will start within 2-3 weeks following contract award. A public scoping period and public scoping meetings will follow. This joint planning effort will result in two separate RMP revisions.

Jamie: Counties , CDNR, a lot of towns, Will be large group. Asked cooperators to ID liaison to help us coordinate

North Sand Hills Working Group: A draft management strategy document was received from the working group on February 12 and is undergoing resource staff review. The North Sand Hills in Jackson County are the only dune complex in Colorado open to off-highway vehicles. The area receives about 20,000 visitors annually. The area and working group encompass a variety of jurisdictions, including Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Parks, State Land Board, and private land. The North Sand Hills Working Group is working to collaboratively manage this unique area.

Mountain Pine Beetle Efforts: Salvage operations are underway to remove infested trees on 230 acres in 2007. Additional acres are undergoing evaluation for future salvage sales. KFO is nearing final approval of a stewardship agreement with Jackson County to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk while helping the depressed economy in Jackson County. This 10-year agreement will include timber sales and fuels reduction projects consistent with the Healthy Forest Initiative and Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

Greater Sage-Grouse: Work in 2007 will include implementation of working group plans in North Park and Middle Park. This includes 400 acres of habitat improvements in upland sagebrush to enhance nesting and brooding rearing areas, and development of small, shallow ponds to provide increased food supply for young sage grouse.

Monitoring of Greater sage-grouse will continue in the Wolford Travel Management Planning area.

Owl Mountain Partnership: The partnership is currently facilitating development of a comprehensive Coordinated Resource Management Plan for the Red Mountain area in Larimer County which will include several thousand acres of private, state, and federal lands. Partners include BLM (Kremmling and Rawlins), Partners for Wildlife (WY/CO), Wyoming Game and Fish and CDOW, NRCS (WY), Laramie River Conservation District, and North Larimer County HPP Committee. The Owl Mountain Partnership is also involved in the sage grouse projects noted above.

Peter: Acting will be up, Dennis is next acting Field Manager for Kremmling.

T Wright: Appreciate stewardship contact with Jackson County. Would like this on next field trip in Kremmling. Wants stewardship contracting on future agenda

Clare: Did freeze help beetle problem?

Duane: Doesn't seem to have helped. I do have map showing that all trees have been hit.

White River Field Office, Kent Walter

Oil Shale work progresses – Leases have been issued for the five RD&D projects. The Field Office so far has received a plan of development for one site (from Shell). Monitoring wells and other initial work on the ground should begin this spring. The Programmatic EIS covering commercial oil shale leasing is anticipated to be released for a 90-public comment period this summer. Public meetings on the draft will held during this comment period.

White River Oil and Gas EIS – Work continues on this RMP Amendment addressing the increased level of oil and gas activity expected in the Field Office. The Field Office staff met with potential Cooperating Agencies in early February, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (Air Pollution Control Division), Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Moffat County, Rio Blanco County, Garfield County, Town of Meeker, Town of Rangely, Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Geological Survey. Although all the agencies expressed interest in becoming cooperators, no formal MOUs have been signed at this point. The Draft EIS is currently expected to be released for a 90-day public comment period in early 2008.

Upwards of 15,000 wells. RFD should be done by spring. Air quality working group w/gsf to look regionally. While be technical air quality stakeholders group. Socioeconomic working group, particularly from the county.

Charlie: Commends WRFO for this air quality and socioeconomic. Very important.

Kent: modifying contract to include this latest effort.

Washington Office continues work on West Douglas protests: The Washington Office is currently working on the responses to protests received on the EA authorizing the removal of the wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area. Protest resolution is currently anticipated to be complete this spring. A lawsuit filed by the Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition is currently pending on the West Douglas decision as well as last fall's gathers from the West Douglas and the East Douglas/Piceance herds.

Comstock: This has been the biggest effort of the RAC other than the Roan. The RAC unanimously passed resolution to remove the horses at an earlier meeting. I Want DOJ and other decision-makers to understand the hard work of the RAC.

Kent: decision would be to remove West, manage in East.

T Wright: How is RAC resolution being communicated, interjected in to this process.

Kent: Formal part of record for decision. Can't speak to lawsuit (under legal advice).

T Wright: Hopes its part of entire record.

ExxonMobil proposes Piceance Development Project – A decision on the Piceance Development Project Environmental Assessment is currently anticipated for early spring. The White River Field Office last fall held a public comment period on an EA covering ExxonMobil's proposal to expand their natural gas drilling activities and related infrastructure in the 28,800-acre Piceance Development Project Area. The existing gas fields in this area have been in continuous operation since the 1950s. The EA analyzes the potential impacts of up to 120 new multi-well pads – each with as many as nine wells per pad – as well as a new gas plant, new pipelines and other associated infrastructure over 20 years. The Piceance Development Project falls within the scope of the original 1997 White River RMP, which addresses the impacts of a possible 1,100 single-well pads and 11,000 acres of associated surface disturbance throughout the Field Office.

WRFO teams to bring Pow-Wow to Meeker – The White River Field Office is partnering with the US Forest Service, Meeker Chamber of Commerce, and the Meeker Historical Society to bring the 1st Annual Northern Ute Pow-Wow to Meeker July 27-28. The free cultural event will be held adjacent to BLM land in Meeker's Ute Park and feature dancing and drumming contests, local and Ute arts, crafts, and food vendors.

David Bailey: Musuem has huge collection of beads. Like to go to Powwow.

Cooperative Oak Ridge burn planned for wildlife – The White River Field Office, Colorado Division of Wildlife and White River National Forest are planning a prescribed burn on the Oak Ridge State Wildlife Area in the fall of 2007. The wildlife area provides severe winter range and is a winter concentration area for both elk and mule deer. It's managed under the Oak Ridge/Lost Park Coordinated Resource Management Plan, a joint

effort among BLM, Division of Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service and Wakara Ranches. Burning is planned within the western portion of the wildlife area called the Seely Unit on approximately 766 acres of Gambel oak/mixed mountain shrub. The objectives of the burn include reducing fuel loads and increasing wildlife forage to relieve pressure on adjacent private land. The Yampa/White River Habitat Partnership Program is contributing \$15,000, and requests for additional funding have been submitted to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Mule Deer Foundation. This is among the total 2,300 acres planned to be burned in the spring and fall in the WRFO, including a 900-acre burn in cooperation with Dinosaur National Monument.

Red Wash Restoration Project underway: This restoration project will examine cost-effective options for restoring degraded rangelands infested with a monoculture of cheatgrass. Two hundred acres were treated with herbicide in April and again in October of 2006. A native seed mix was rangeland drill seeded into 130 acres, and a locally adapted non-native mix was seeded into the remaining 70 acres, which were also disk-plowed. Monitoring plots will be placed into the treatments in 2007 to compare seeding effectiveness. Good fall soil moisture and winter snow cover should help the project have a successful start in the early spring growing season. Four 50x50 elk “proof” exclosures will be erected in early March 2007 to look at the impact the wintering elk population may have on seedling development and to desirable forage plants in the surrounding area.

White River Field Office move nears – The WRFO is planning to move into its new location with the White River National Forest March 12. Phones and computers will be down a few days after this move. A public open house is planned later this spring.

Proactive weed management in the White River FO: A number of weeds are of concern in the White River Field Office, including leafy spurge; spotted, diffuse and Russian knapweed; bull, musk and Canada thistle; houndstongue, burdock, black henbane, perennial pepperweed, hoary cress, tamarisk, Russian olive and toadflax. In FY 2006 the WRFO treated more than 5,000 acres for weeds and introduced biological control agents in the Hays Gulch Area. **Nine Mile Leafy Spurge Project:** One example is the Nine Mile Leafy Spurge Project, a cooperative effort to inventory and control leafy spurge in the Nine Mile area using a helicopter. The project is a partnership under the Rio Blanco Weed Association and contains landowners, BLM, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Habitat Partnership Program, and the Rio Blanco County Weed Department. During the first year 373 acres were sprayed for five property owners; this year 938 acres were sprayed for nine property owners including 280 BLM acres. WRFO hopes to expand the project to the North and South forks of the White River, where leafy spurge is expanding in range dramatically. Another example is the **Piceance Weed Association**, a cooperative association of landowners, BLM, Division of Wildlife, and the oil and gas industry. The association has focused on treating weeds directly and through education and compliance. For 2007 this group has secured funding from the Habitat Partnership Program and several oil and gas operators in the area. EnCana has provided \$60,000 last year and this year.

Piceance Sage-Grouse Habitat Inventory: This summer will be the second of three field seasons mapping and categorizing sage-grouse habitat in the Piceance Basin. The primary goal of the inventory is to create a landscape-scale map of the different vegetation types found within potential sage-grouse habitat in order to determine the suitability of specific areas as sage-grouse habitat, prioritize areas in need of habitat restoration, and evaluate land uses that may impact either suitable habitat or restoration efforts. A majority of the potential habitat is on private land, and WRFO has been working with private landowners to include their property in the inventory. In 2006 approximately 9,900 acres were mapped.

Cricket Sagebrush Treatment: In August 2006 WRFO conducted a habitat improvement project for sage-grouse on Blue Mountain using a brushbeater to mow approximately 156 acres of tall, dense sagebrush stands to a height of 8-10 inches. To mimic natural fire patterns, the treatments were applied in patches rather than strips. Over time, this treatment will improve sage-grouse nesting habitat by restoring the sagebrush stand and associated herbaceous understory to conditions more favorable to nesting hens. Since the brushbeater does not disturb the soil or kill sagebrush seedlings, WRFO expects the recovery interval to be shorter than if this area was treated with a prescribed burn.

WRFO receives sustainable operations grant: The WRFO was recently awarded a \$1,500 grant to explore the possibility of implementing a micro-hydro power generator to offset electrical consumption with clean renewable hydro-power in the newly built WRFO/USFS building. In November 2006 three members of the WRFO staff attended the Sustainable Operations Summit in Laramie Wyoming. The summit looked at operations within the land management agencies to see what could be changed or improved to help reduce the agencies' footprint and to reduce waste and green house gas emissions. The WRFO developed a project proposal which could result in overall cost savings to the government while also reducing green house gas emissions. The grant will be spent on a feasibility study to determine what technology may be used and how best to proceed with implementation of micro-hydro power generation.

BLM/USGS Regional Surface/Groundwater Monitoring Network: WRFO and the U.S. Geological Survey are developing a regional approach for monitoring water resources within the Piceance Basin related to energy and mineral exploration and development. Before full-scale energy development occurs, existing water-resource data-collection networks and investigations need to be evaluated and expanded to ensure that information needed by BLM, state and local entities, and industry is available. The ultimate goal of this multi-year effort will be to develop an integrated data collection and assessment strategy that will be used to inform and guide land management decisions. In January BLM and USGS presented a proposed water resource monitoring plan to industry, which was overwhelmingly in support of the idea. Additional meetings to discuss funding and identify/acquire existing data sets from industry will be scheduled next. WRFO will host a similar meeting this spring with local, state, and other federal government agencies, water conservancy groups, environmental groups and others to outline the proposed plan and solicit comments. Energy companies represented so far

include Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, Natural Soda, Shell, XTO, EGL Resources and Williams.

McCown: Constituent brought concern to me. Rejuvenation of land strip to shuttle employees to and from work area to reduce traffic. Is this being looked at in any planning efforts. CA tract landing strip.

Kent: Not raised during scoping, but people are talking to us about these kind of ideas.

McCown: So it will be included in discussion

Kent: Yes. This specific strip has been reclaimed.

Little Snake Field Office, John Husband

Emerald Mountain Land Exchange to close: The long-awaited closing on the Emerald Mountain Land Exchange is expected this month. BLM will acquire the 4,139-acre Emerald Mountain parcel just west of Steamboat Springs from the Colorado State Land Board in exchange for 123 isolated BLM parcels in Routt County totaling 15,416 acres, most of which have little or no public access. Until a detailed recreation plan can be developed in conjunction with the Emerald Mountain Partnership, City of Steamboat Springs and other partners, public access will be day-use, foot travel only. Emerald Mountain will be managed as a Special Recreation Management Area with two zones targeting different non-motorized recreation opportunities and benefits. One zone will emphasize strenuous outdoor activities including mountain biking and cross-country skiing. The other zone will emphasize wildlife viewing, hiking, horseback riding, and hunting.

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 66% of the new wells would be in Wyoming. Questar will be submitting changes to their proposed action, and alternative development will resume after they submit their new information. 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.

Charlie: Protest update on leasing of wildlife areas?

John: Defer parcels to allow time to look at situation.

Charlie: Stips in place?

John: Worked closely with DOW. They want assurances of tight control of development. Split estate – before any development have to get surface use agreement. Would have to get this with DOW.

Charlie: Brown's Park shouldn't be drilled. Special habitat for birds, other wildlife.

John: Not talking about the National Wildlife Refuge, you understand.

Charlie: Strong public concern that these areas shouldn't be drilled. Widespread public concern about this.

Twright: Appreciate comments about surface use agreement. But precedent set on surface use. Concerned about DOW concerns, other split estate holders have same concern. Not appropriate to treat people differently ie DOW should be treated as private landowner. Split estate is split estate no matter who owns it. Deserve same treatment.

John: Understand, valid feedback. DOW asked specifically to be involved, state director committed to work with them.

T Wright: As it should be. But should do this with all split estate holders.

John M: I Represent Public at large. T Wright is no the only one who has that concern. DOW was able to take lead because of involvement with BLM. Not all landowners get to do that.

Glenwood Springs, Jamie Connell

Protest resolution on Roan continues: BLM continues to work through the 42 protest submissions it received during the 30-day protest period on the Proposed Plan. Many of the protests are long and complex. A Record of Decision, or final decision, will be issued Following resolution of protests.

Gives Powerpoint on **Managing for Excellence** , reorganization of state structure in BLM– leadership team looking at options, push on consolidating RMPs

T wright: What is the role of the RAC in all this? Will we be involved?

Jamie: There will be a place for us to get feedback from the RAC

T wright: relationship of this RAC to the process is what I am most concerned about.

Clare: What will change on the ground?

Jamie: reorganization, field managers would report to district manager would be main thing you'll see on the ground.

Clare: State director said adamantly plan would be out 30 to 45 days.

Jamie: That's a misunderstanding. She would not have said that.

Jon: 42 protests, are they unique?

Jamie: some overlap. Responses will be from DC.

Public Comment:

Luke: Commend John and LSFO for amount of work on eis involving public. A little different from other FO.

Problems with plan: unbalanced toward energy development. 93 percent open to development.

Only 7 percent of office off-limits to OHV. Want more balance

Vermillion Basin – I want to reiterate that it's too special of a place to develop, even under the one percent threshold under the preferred alternative. According to The Wilderness Society, the area holds 10 days of natural gas, 7 minutes of oil for nation. 77,000 acre of wilderness character that would be irreparably harmed.

T Wright: Appreciate Luke's involvement in LSFO RMP effort..

Ron Tipping: Owns mountain property on pinyon mesa. Problem direction BLM is going with trails. Bangs canyon pristine wilderness all my life. Now 120-130 miles of motorcycle trails. It's a winter area for wildlife, key area. Elk, sheep, lions, bears. If you put all that motorcycle traffic in there it will hurt wildlife. High desert country in those pinions, soil has crust that if you damage becomes a dust bowl. Wish it could be reviewed a little more and looked at, scaled back in some way. Pristine wilderness. Degette thinks it should be protected. Leave motorcycles out by airport. Given all loss of habitat from energy, it seems like a bad idea to build new trails.

Wildlife Resolution – Ron Velarde Colorado Division of Wildlife

This is a Wildlife Commission resolution, approved by Director of DOW. Developed by northwest resolution.

It's not about anti-energy development. We understand it will occur and that it is an economic boon. Gives direction at commission level to force us to do things consistently statewide. Will help everyone know where we are coming from.

Our mission is to protect wildlife and habitat. Minimize impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat. Work with entities at whatever level we can to minimize impacts. That's the essence of this resolution.

I am talking to county commissions, fed agencies, rac to try to get folks to understand where we are coming from on this.

Cooperation to minimize impacts.

HB 1298 – not endorsed by DOW or dnr. I've been asked to tell the NW RAC about it.

Would require consultation with DOW to minimize impacts. Changed considerable from what it was two days ago. Passed out of committee two days ago. A number of things taken out.

Jeff Comstock: curious about need for this legislation. Dow can participate in apds already.

Ron: didn't develop this language. Within federal agencies we have input, on private land we do not. Varies county by county. Keep in mind who sponsored this: mule deer association, Colorado wildlife federation

T Wright: Question about #13 in resolution. "petitions federal agencies" was it not getting cooperation from BLM?

Ron: this says we want to work closely with BLM. In NW region we have had good cooperation. Don't always agree, but they ask.

John M: will DOW have fingerprint on this legislation

Ron: we have not yet but might

John: A lot less warm and fuzzy in legislation.

Clare: I do have fingerprint. We did consult with DOW but they did not take a position. Sets up more of a formal relationship with COCCG. No opposition to this bill, worked with COGA to make sure it was reasonable to industry. Also farm bureau. A lot of Industry already doing a lot of this.

Larry: Concerned about legislation. Landowner with mineral under my land I would be very concerned. A second state agency telling landowner how to manage their land. I think this is far overreaching. Gross infringement as it currently is on individual rights

Steve: If industry is doing a good job, what is the purpose?

John M: No penalty or enforcement provisions. More of a resolution. Not enforceable right now

Catherine: does this apply to private lands?

Clare: a lot of meetings with potentially affected landowners. Language in VIII states landowner would have ultimate say on what happens on private. Farm Bureau said they could support with that language. Version that was passed out at this meeting does not include amendment VIII, that was added by Farm Bureau.

Charlie: Are you seeking our endorsement of this resolution?

Ron: Yes, would send message that we can all work together.

Charlie: Make a motion to endorse commission resolution.

Jeff: Normally, resolution would be studied by sub group who would then bring it to whole group. Does this group want to accept or send to subgroup?

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)

Catehrine: Consistent with alternative mitigation that field managers are working with DOW. Working group would need that information.

Kathy: need to state that energy companies have already been occurring

T Wright: The issue is that there is a state sovereignty with wildlife

Action item: send out list of group members to everyone. Will consider at next meeting

Working group update: Rec group. Want to see one year less for emergency/temporary closures. Need to revisit after one year. We will bring to group after writing up.

Little Snake Update

John gives powerpoint overview.

Dave C: Concerned about 4-mile buffer for sage grouse

Jeff: this is area that operator can opt into program, not a restriction

Larry: managing for sage grouse can hurt other species

John: voluntary program

T wright: adaptable approach.

T wright: Daily Sentinel contacted me before I had seen plan. Deserve credit for public involvement. A lot of frustration in Wyoming with no communicating with stakeholders. Colorado managers have done good job bringing in stakeholders.

Healthy Landscape Initiative presentation by Jaime Gardner

Part of President's budget proposal for 2008 – may or may not survive the budget process. Derived from program invented in Wyoming.

Gunnison Sage Grouse habitat area is main focus, but applies to all wildlife and plants in the same area.

(Covered by handout)

Jeff Comstock concerned that it only applies to SW Colo. John Husband pointed out that with success, it can be applied elsewhere.

T Wright Dickinson – concerned that in Wyoming the landscape initiative is headed for a colossal train wreck. Says that in Wyo. They've kept private landowners out of the decision and planning process for healthy landscapes. Wants Colorado to do differently, better.

Proposes setting up working groups through RAC to get all affected groups involved.

JG says we're just getting started, and definitely agrees that all should be included.

Catherine Roberts points out that many aspects of the overall plan are already being addressed through earlier programs in which BLM participates.

T. Wright says again that he is concerned about overall involvement in planning of the program. Cautions against handing down mandates to the various groups. Cautions about redirecting other budget dollars for it.

Wild and Scenic River Planning – Roy Smith, state office

(handout and power point provided)

Background: W&SR Act passed in 1968, got into the manuals as a requirement much later. Have to re-analyze every time a plan is updated or changed.

CR asked: do pumps disqualify a river segment as free-flowing?

RS—no, that by itself will not disqualify.

No minimum stream flow, so long as it does flow year-round.

Will analyze through first 3 stream orders.

Unusual features have to be related to the presence of the river.

Need to be able to use existing research and data to make evaluation.

Only need ONE outstandingly remarkable value to qualify a segment as W&SR.

Can be below a dam, just cannot include the dam in the segment.

Jeff Comstock – 13 step process apply? (Yes, 13 factors, addressed later on.)

John Husband explained that recreational designation helps work around some aspects of development presence and still be designated.

Also pointed out that stream flows don't matter.

Clare Bastable—this all seems so subjective!!

Roy – yes, but eligibility has to be extremely well documented. Can track thought processes through the paper and data trail.

Have to be at least a minimum analysis, but preference is to go through a suitability analysis.

Includes land $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on each side. Usually measured from center line of the river, but can be measured differently if Congress wants to specify. CAN include private land, but usually difficult if the private owners don't concur.

Agencies and partners have to have the ability to deal with increased usage because of designation.

Suitability of designation is not forever. Can re-address.

BLM can only make a recommendation. Can be designated only by Congress or directly by Sec. of Interior at the request of a state governor. But only Congress can undo the designation.

Have to have a range of alternatives in the draft plan.

Jeff Comstock – when you do have the one opportunity for concrete stuff, need to realize that the decision may still be made on very subjective basis.

If something is designated as suitable, is protected but can make changes or improvements so long as it does not change the status of the river segment.

W&SR Act written in such a way that Act has to be amended to add a new river.

Agency designation does not include a water right. Only Congress can provide that.

If given a water right, is a junior right.

Pat Kennedy: any agency can study and make suitability recommendation? Yes, any agency can do it.

Jaime Connell: concerned about going through evaluation and not getting further.

Roy – watch out for evaluations of certain western segments that supply Front Range water.

T. Wright – concerned about staying on top of how river designations are being conducted. When you build a set of expectations among the constituency by recommending for suitability, you may create cannon fodder for both sides.

Jaime Connell – we were sued for not completing the eligibility and suitability studies.

John Husband – have followed through where ever possible.

NO PUBLIC COMMENT

BLM Colorado Public Lands Recreation and Visitor Services Strategy Draft

By Barb Sharrow

4 handouts

Asking for comments on mission statement.

Wants to make sure that recreation values of all user groups are addressed, don't have one group define values for all.

T. Wright—He has concurred for the first time with Front Range recommendations on guidelines.

Wants to make sure that there is no question that recommendations apply to recreation users as well as all other groups.

What has changed requiring a strategy?

Fastest growing counties in the west.(see strategy document – Barb summarizing from doc from here on)

T. Wright – pg 5 , circumventing travel management plans?

Barb – says from now on it will be one RPM process. Instead of 80% of BLM lands open to travel, 80% will be on designated routes.

Steve -- Have given power to group to trump another group.

Kent. –not intent to favor one group over another.

Catherine R. – expect to be held accountable and will ask the users what they want.

Survey process also asks people what their communities want from economic development, overall community needs, from the resources.

Jeff C. – doesn't think where recreation stands with other users is defined well enough.

Catherine – when you look at all comments coming from user community, this allows us to make the tradeoffs and have the discussions early, avoiding the piece-meal train wreck that the planning process is known for.

Jeff – consistent by saying you will be consistent with local and state land use plans?

Objectives:

Clare on objective #1—should you change opportunities to experience in 3 bullet.

Objective 2—T. Wright—Cannot have a business that trashes public lands because it serves the initial mission. Wants to emphasize the responsibility of the businesses.

John Martin – Thinks need incentives to individuals and businesses to invest in caring for the land. Thinks BLM needs to ask businesses what they can do.

T.—with local control comes local responsibility.

John M.—rethink the wording to bullet 3 under #2.

Objective 3 –

Pat Kennedy – volunteers who create something should not then be charged to use it.

Barb – strategy doesn't go that far down, but not talking about basic access, just things that take maintenance, such as campgrounds and toilets.

Clare B. We need to understand better what your vision for charging fees is.

Catherine – partnerships that collect fees can get a portion, but decide how fees will be split.

Jaime C. – cannot resolve all fees in this meeting.

T. Wright – need to address that if you volunteer, you will get credit somehow, and it should be addressed in this plan, otherwise no incentive. Should be planned and done at local travel management level, not decided at the state level.

Objective 5

Just about law enforcement?

Barb – no, about managing all facilities and visitor practices.

Discussion about requiring human waste to be packed out, but should be left to field managers to require and implement.

14ers a big problem already.

Objective 6

Clare—CMC has big education program, but with fees for use we are finding it more and more difficult to do enough education .

Barb – Anasazi center way ahead of other blm areas in .

T. Wright – have to do more about fostering respect for the land and areas.

Charlie – should be more language about protecting wildlife habitat and land.

Objective 7

Will do more volunteer work and partnerships.

Clare and Catherine – will be working more on partnerships soon. Clare says she can bring CMC into state-wide effort rather than just GSFO effort.

T. Wright, would like recreation committee to endorse the RAC's comments and recommendations on the strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS and ACTION

Catherine – concerned about infractions on trail use or deviation.

John Martin: Use temporary closures to manage misuse?

Catherine – no.

RAC t will write a letter to the designated federal officer to recognize the protocol on trail closures. Clare will draft the letter and David will refine and send.

T. Wright. Wants resolved that if someone does things of benefit on BLM land, they get

Want to promote offering of Air Quality 101 class. Someone from BLM. Need to have someone do. This is really a 500-level class. How air quality is determined.

Possible agenda items for next time

Air quality agenda item.

Kent – o&g plan amendment and update

Catherine – OHV plan amendment

Committee sub group – Jeff will chair – recommendations on Little Snake Resource Management Plan

Kent – socio economic impacts – show all how to do study for local area. Perhaps have Garfield County and Meeker as examples