

**Northwest Resource Advisory Council  
MEETING MINUTES  
Friday, Jan. 21, 2005**

Bill Heddles Recreation Center, 530 Gunnison River Drive  
Delta, Colorado

**ATTENDEES**

**Resource Advisory Council Members**

David Bailey, Category 2	Kathy Hall, Category 3
Dave Cesark, Category 1	Jon Hill, Category 1
Jeff Comstock, Category 3	Pat Kennedy, Category 2
Ken Currey, Category 1	John Martin, Category 3
T. Wright Dickinson, Category 1	Larry McCown, Category 3
Wade Haerle, Category 2	Charlie Yates, Category 1

Not present: Geoff Blakeslee, Category 2; Charles Kerr, Category 2; Forrest Nelson, Category 3

**BLM Staff**

Jamie Connell	John Ruhs	
Raj Giri	Theresa Sauer	
Steven Hall	Robin Sells	
John Husband	Barb Sharrow	
Jim Edwards	Ron Wenker	
Catherine Robertson	Kent Walter	
<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Town/City</b>
Derek Wagner	Sen. Wayne Allard	Grand Junction
Steve Smith	Wilderness Society	Denver
Lee-Ann Hill	Colorado Environmental Coalition	Grand Junction
Eric Rechel	Sierra Club	Grand Junction
David Warren	Public-at-large	Paonia

**Opening Remarks/Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time**

Chairman Jeff Comstock called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum. Comstock thanked BLM and Delta's Colorado State University Extension Office for yesterday's training opportunity. Little Snake Field Office Manager John Husband was presented with a river paddle for his service as the lead Designated Federal Officer, "for guiding the boat and keeping us afloat."

**BLM Field Managers Update**

**Little Snake Field Office:** The Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision is underway with scoping meetings held in Steamboat Springs, Maybell and Craig. The LSFO is also working with the Northwest Colorado Stewardship Project.

The Emerald Mountain Land Exchange is awaiting official notice on the planning process pending the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. BLM Colorado's Sandwash Wild Horse Herd Management Area has scheduled its annual gather, which is part of managing for acceptable herd levels. The area continues to see horses drifting south from Wyoming's Adobe

Town herd area. BLM Wyoming has also scheduled a horse gather, which will include those horses in Colorado but outside of the Sandwash area.

**Kremmling Field Office:** The KFO will sign and release the Wolford Mountain Travel Management Plan next week. Implementation is planned for the next work season. Staff is also in the pre-plan phase for the RMP revision scheduled to begin next year. There are three ongoing land exchanges: Smith Creek Mesa, Windy Gap and Blue Valley.

**White River Field Office:** The West Douglas Herd Area Environmental Assessment/RMP amendment has been withdrawn. Field Manager Kent Walter said he hoped to have a revised EA and plan amendment issued by October 2005. The withdrawal is based on comments received from the public, as well as an internal review. The revision should strengthen the document and provide a more defensible decision.

T. Wright Dickinson asked for clarification on why the decision was withdrawn and what the new alternatives would include. Comstock asked for clarification on whether the new decision document will reflect the RAC's input. Walter said the RAC's input was included where possible and will be considered in future decisions. John Martin asked about the number of horses in the area, as well as how many decisions have been made and then withdrawn without removing horses from West Douglas. Walter reported 120 horses in the area. Martin said there is a history of making decisions that aren't implemented. He feels that this decision needs to be implemented, unlike previous BLM decisions in the area. Jon Hill said they had entered the planning process in good faith, and the agency ought to be addressing the removal of the horses immediately since the horses are there "illegally." Dickinson said the major input from the RAC is that the Animal Unit Month (AUM) decision not be coupled with oil and gas development, or wild horses. That input had not been incorporated in the last planning effort. Walter said that issues have to be analyzed in an integrated manner.

**Glenwood Springs Field Office:** The I-70 corridor highway improvement project will impact BLM GSFO lands through not only road improvements but also through increased visitation to public lands. Work continues with the towns of Eagle and Gypsum on the Hardscrabble Travel Management Plan. The Anvil Points clean up is proceeding with the plan being reviewed by both the EPA and Colo. Dept. of Health. An update on the Roan Plateau is scheduled for later in the day. The Colorado Environmental Coalition has requested that some members of the RAC recuse themselves from Roan Plateau discussions. The BLM is seeking counsel from the solicitor's office. Also, the RAC charter is up for renewal in August.

**Grand Junction Field Office:** Paul Peck reported as the new McInnis Canyons NCA manager. The name change was official January 1. Peck will be working toward establishing a friends group. The South Shale Ridge EA, addressing oil and gas leasing, will be released in January or February 2005. The GJFO is also updating its fire management plan and an EA is being developed for the Bangs Canyon implementation plan.

### **Upcoming RAC Meetings**

#### **February 9 meeting regarding Roan Plateau**

The RAC discussed the purpose of the meeting and the best way to facilitate public input. A subgroup was formed with members Comstock, Martin, Larry McCown and GSFO Manager Jamie Connell. A meeting agenda was developed; start time is 2 p.m. with introductions and a

presentation by the GSFO. At 3 p.m. organizations will speak to the RAC and, from 4-6 p.m., individuals will each be allotted 3 minutes to speak. The RAC would like to keep the meeting on schedule to end at 6 p.m.; however, the facility closes at 9 p.m. just in case.

### **May 12 meeting at White River Field Office**

Suggested May 11 field tour of Greasewood Fire (fire-use fire) and gas activity

Agenda items include:

Cost recovery on recreational permits (Martin)

Recommendation to Bureau to obtain funding for hosting public/managers/operators for joint educational event/training (Dickinson)

Presentation from cooperators on the Roan Plateau (Haerle)

### **Subgroup Discussions and Reports**

Some members expressed an interest in forming a Recreation Subgroup.

**Cultural Resources:** David Bailey said that, in part through the Peach resolution and the BLM and non-profits working together, an agreement was formed between the BLM and the Museum of Western Colorado. The Alferd Packer site dig will air March 13 on the History channel. Bailey thanked the BLM for attaching staff to the project, which helped make it successful. Bailey said the resolution and this success is the result former RAC chair Don Peach would have wanted.

**Wild Horses:** The West Douglas Wild Horse subgroup will remain intact and members include Dickinson, Geoff Blakeslee, Forrest Nelson and Charlie Yates.

### **Oil Shale Leasing**

Jim Edwards, COSO solid minerals lead, presented an overview of the Oil Shale Leasing proposed rule published in the Federal Register. The proposal will provide small-scale research and development opportunities for industry to develop oil shale technology on public lands.

The Southwest RAC joined the Northwest RAC for the remainder of the day.

### **BLM Colorado Happenings**

Wenker thanked the Northwest and Southwest RACs for the valuable service they provide the BLM. Oil and gas development is important to the West, and leasing has remained consistent. The “by nomination” leasing process occurs on a quarterly basis. The next lease sale is February 10. APDs have increased to over 500 this year. The public can currently participate in several planning efforts throughout the state, including the Roan Plateau RMP and Northern San Juan Basin EIS. The Advisory Council for Canyon of the Ancients has helped BLM with that area’s RMP. Fuels management is increasing, using stewardship contracting and following guidance from the Healthy Forests Initiative. Recreation remains a prominent activity in the state as well. The BLM is conducting internal audits to improve processes. A general management evaluation will be conducted this spring, and RAC members may be contacted by the lead team as part of this process. Wenker addressed questions regarding the fee program, land management demands and budget.

### **RAC Community Stewardship Plan**

Grand Junction Field Manager Catherine Robertson and Uncompahgre Field Manager Barb Sharrow presented an update on the proposed Dominguez-Escalante Community Stewardship Plan (CSP), which would provide management guidance for an area that includes the Dominguez WSA, the Old Spanish Trail and Escalante Canyon. Once approved funds are received, the BLM will begin work on a pre-plan. Southwest RAC's Drew MacCleod and Andy Gulliford, and John Martin and Charlie Kerr of the Northwest RAC, volunteered for the RAC's new Community Stewardship subgroup. BLM would like to see both Mesa and Delta Counties work with this subgroup, and the Forest Service will be included in discussions.

### **Western Slope Center Status Report**

Western Slope Center Manager Juan Palma thanked RAC members for submitting their comments on the WSC's reorganization. A concise chain-of-command is needed for Western Slope interagency fire organizations, which the SLT has agreed to continue supporting. Two organizational alternatives have been proposed for the WSC, and a final decision is anticipated later this year. Several RAC concerns and comments were addressed.

### **BLM National Sage Grouse Strategy Conservation Program**

Wenker introduced Robin Sells, COSO lead conservation biologist, who assisted him with today's presentation. The Gunnison Sage Grouse is a candidate 2 priority species, but the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service did not list the Greater Sage Grouse. A sage grouse population objective was developed for each area in the state, and there is a coordinated effort among agencies and private interests for implementing the plan. Key program highlights and tasks were covered for each species. This program will remain a high priority for managers. Wenker addressed several questions from the group, including monitoring, migration and conservation assurances.

### **Public Comment Period**

Public comment opened at 1:45 p.m. Lee-Ann Hill, with the Colorado Environmental Coalition in Grand Junction, thanked BLM and the RACs for embarking upon the CSP and encouraged the BLM to work closely with the Forest Service. Eric Rechel, Sierra Club-Grand Junction, also encouraged the Bureau to look at the overall landscape of Dominguez-Escalante and cooperate with the Forest Service. Another visitor, representing the public-at-large, emphasized the importance of the Dominguez-Escalante watersheds and expressed concerns with not including the Roubideau area in the CSP. David Warren, representing the public-at-large, supports the CSP and would like to see the Camelback WSA included in the CSP.

T. Wright Dickinson proposed that the Bureau establish a statewide forum for presenting consistent, current scientific data and include the public, agency specialists, managers and other public land users. Art Goodtimes volunteered to work with Dickinson on this. Gulliford recommended Dickinson establish a 501(c)3 organization.

Glenwood Springs Field Manager Jamie Connell reminded the Northwest RAC about the February 9 meeting on the Roan Plateau Draft RMP, scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. Organized groups will have the opportunity to provide comments to the RAC, with general public comment following.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.