

NW RAC
June 9, 2011
Allington Inn, Kremmling

Minutes

Category 1

Glenn Vawter, Steve Gunderson, Tom Latham, Wes McStay

Category 2

Clare Bastable, Steve Smith, Dan Davidson, Pat Kennedy, Dona Shue

Category 3

Gary Bumgarner, Kai Turner, Jeff Comstock, Dean Riggs, Barbara Vasquez

Absent

Dave Grisso, Category 1

BLM

Jim Cagney, Steve Bennett, Dave Stout, Catherine Robertson, Kent Walter, Wendy Reynolds, David Boyd, Kent Lyles, John Bierk, Darren Entrican

Public

Linda Hannick, Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition
Jim Dustin, Jackson County Star
Soren Jaspersen, The Wilderness Society
Jay Fletcher, Senator Udall's office
Todd Hagenbuch, Senator Bennet's office
Callie Hendrickson, Conservation Districts
Pam Nicolas
Tom Nicolas

Pat Kennedy called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

NW RAC Charter modification for fee approvals

Jim Cagney asked for a summary of the REC RAC and how it relates to the NW RAC. Catherine Robertson explained the REC RAC was established under an act of Congress to review fee proposals. In Colorado they have been reviewing BLM and Forest Service fee proposals. Since they haven't met in several years, in February the three BLM RACs voted to take on the responsibility for BLM fees because the REC RAC hasn't been meeting and fee proposals not moving one way or the other. Since that time the Forest Service has appointed new members to the REC RAC and is planning to meet in July. Nothing scheduled yet, however. Washington wants to use the REC RAC if it gets back on track. Meanwhile, the NW RAC meeting charter amendment process that would allow this RAC to formally review fees under this law continues.

Catherine will look at the training needs if this RAC were to take on this responsibility, and also how the decision making process may be different from what the NW RAC currently does.

Steve Smith – I understand it that we are still welcome to provide our recommendations on fee proposals in the meantime.

Make motion to forward resolution on fee proposal on Upper Colorado River.

Upper Colorado River Fee Adjustment Proposal

Hannah gave Powerpoint

Unanimous vote to write resolution supporting this fee proposal. **Steve Smith will draft resolution for group to approve electronically**

Wild Horse, NW RAC involvement

Cagney – need to have factual information, all sides need to agree on the factual info so that we can get. Want clear idea of what we agree are facts, and what facts are in dispute.

Shows map that details the wild horse areas in the White River FO (Herd Management Area, Herd Areas)

WHB says to manage horses where they were currently found, and for a natural ecological balance. Can gather to reduce overpopulation.

Want to roll-out basic facts, one-at-a-time to public, so that the fundamental, building-block facts are not in dispute. What is the best way to do this? Would like to use the RAC to kick off presentation at December meeting to begin extensive public involvement to agree on what the basic facts are. About half a day.

Kai – huge issue in Rio Blanco County. Support this idea. Need resolution

Jeff – These issues are in court. What could the RAC do? Is this appropriate for the RAC to hear? The public won't want to hear a long presentation, will want you to cut to the chase.

Wes – Can we bring groups that sue once you reach a decision in before they sue?

Jim – that's what we are after.

Kent – give public opportunity to come in and hear and provide their views.

Clare – is a traditional rac meeting the correct venue for this? Limited public comment usually. Maybe a separate meeting special to this issue. Evening or weekend in more of a format for exchange and discussion.

Jim – this would just be the initial rollout of this issue.

Barb – maybe have a working session the night before our meeting. Hold it in a time slot better for public to attend

Dean – good extension of what Secretary is doing. Meeting in Denver related to Sec effort was very polarized. Problem isn't facts. It's that it's an emotional issue. Have to get people to understand the need in order to get them to understand herd management. Friends of the Mustangs in Grand Junction is a good example of a successful effort.

Kai – I do feel that the RAC is the appropriate place for this to try to head off some of these lawsuits. Would be well worth it to have special meeting. This diversified group is best place to do this.

Kent – this would be kick-off effort of a multiple meeting series. What about the formation of a subcommittee under this RAC? Would get broad representation that is needed. Come into Dec meeting with this RAC subcommittee in place.

Glenn – why do you have to wait until December? Maybe a smaller group could help.

Jim – looking for advice on how to structure this presentation and how to get the best public input

Public Comment

Linda Hannick – One of these Wild Horse people you are talking about. We are everyone – ranchers, horse owners. Want to work toward solutions. Like what Jim said. But we met with USGS biologists that came up with 20 percent growth number. Learned a lot. Suggest this group does this. They have come up with 15 percent reproduction figure completed in 2009. Don't know what mortality rate is. We do know more in Colorado about Little Book Cliffs, Spring Creek, Sand Wash, where we can document births and deaths. Would like to do that for Piceance horses. Would like to help BLM do this, would like to help BLM with humane practices. Piceance gather last year had 73 horses gathered, and 6 die in the first week. Was not pretty. I go to Estes Park farmer's market every week. Most people do not know we have wild horses in Colorado, and that you can go see them. Most people are aware of wild horse issues, though.

Pam Nichols– Need better info about Piceance. Work together with local rancher. Have great conversations. Need to have your public meeting on weekends so we don't have to take off work to attend.

Callie Hendrickson – Appreciate the need for documentation. Need to have everyone agree on basic facts first. This RAC is the first place to start. Need to have meetings in areas where herds are located, and need to have meetings scheduled on multiple dates.

14-day camping rule letter

Dean – drafted letter

Kai – thought it better for any specific recommendations

Wes- The rule over reaches. Bans people from a lot of land after just two weeks. Don't agree with selective enforcement – should apply to everyone equally

Darren Entrican – hunting was what this regulation was about. But, there are only a handful of desirable camping spots throughout the field office. People try to claim these spots a week or more out,

some may keep elaborate camp up through multiple seasons. Other public are complaining about not being able to camp. Pretty hard to prove someone is squatting. There is a clause in the rule that says “unless otherwise authorized.” We can authorize extended stay. Need to make any exception language clear that camp would need to be occupied so you don’t just get early camp claiming.

Kai – can force illegal outfitters farther. This is a good mechanism to do this.

Barb – need as clear a guideline as possible. Is there enough teeth in the USFS 3-mile rule.

John Bierk – most western BLM states use 30 mile

Dean – talked to sportsmen who originally brought this up, looking for guidance for BLM rangers

Jim – if we have someone doing a really good job like Darren, it is good. But what about long haul. Let’s get some guidelines for the rangers to be consistent. John Bierk and Cagney will develop guidelines. Will be on agenda for next law enforcement meeting.

Ruby-Horsethief Management Plan

Matt McGrath. During busy times difficult to find camping spot. Began public outreach in 2009, proposed plan is out for public review.

Pat – Matt was very flexible, a lot of work. Keep incorporating new ideas

Steve Smith – protecting place and experience is wonderful. Exciting this is coming to the finish line. Are you going to have more patrols to enforce – yes. Motorized boating is not addressed. Don’t wait until there is a problem. No monitoring specifically written in for motorized use.

Catherine – tried to get state park to limit access for jet skis, may be new opportunities for coordination.

Permits would be required May 2012

Steve Smith – river not in NCA due to water rights issue. Can address river management here through RMP.

Group agrees to write resolution in support of these fees.

Smith moves that we endorse this package and draft resolution and cover letter. Gunderson seconds. Unanimously

Summary of Proposed Ruby-Horsethief Recreation Area Management Plan – 6/9/11

Current management (including 2011 season)

- 28 signed campsites
- Voluntary campsite registration system
- Dispersed camping permitted anywhere within the river corridor (other than 1 mile eagle closure)
- Firepans and portable human waste containment systems required

- 9,511 visitors registered at the Loma boat launch in 2010; over 20,000 nights of camping were recorded (both all time highs)

Summary of public involvement

- Three public meetings/open houses (first meeting in July 2009)
- Seven public meetings with the McInnis Canyons NCA NWRAC subgroup
- Four briefings to the Mesa County Commission
- Three presentations to commercial guides and outfitter organizations
- Proposed plan and Environmental Assessment released Monday 6/6/11

Proposed action

- Establish an overnight capacity for RHRA based on the number of available campsites
 - 35 sites in 2012, up from 28 in 2011
- Limit camping to designated sites
- Camping permits issued through the Grand Junction Field Office for Friday and Saturday overnight use
 - Private-commercial allocation of 83%-17% (29 camps for private, 6 camps for comm.)
- Camping permits self-issued at the Loma boat launch for Sunday through Thursday overnight use
- Establish a camping fee for overnight use from May 1st to September 30th
 - Small group (1-5 people) = \$20
 - Medium group (6-14 people) = \$50
 - Large group (15-25 people) = \$100
- Group size limit of 25 for private groups, 25 plus guides for commercial groups
- Limit camping at Black Rocks to one night per group on Friday and Saturday nights
- Day use – not limited, no fee; self-issued permit at the Loma boat launch
- Motorized boating – not limited; self-issued permit at the Loma boat launch
- Fire pans and portable human waste containment systems required
- Dogs limited to two per camp group and count towards the overall group size

Changes from draft to proposed plan

- Camping fees – changed from \$7 per person, per night to fee based on group size (suggestion from NWRAC McInnis Canyons NCA subgroup); average fee would be ~\$4.55 per person, per night
 - By 2015 charge the fee based on the size of each campsite. For example, Rattlesnake Canyon (a medium campsite) would be \$50 for anywhere from 1-14 people. Black Rocks 9 (a large campsite) would be \$100 for anywhere from 1 to 25 people.
- Group size limits – commercial limit changed to 25 plus guides
- Private-commercial allocations (Fri and Sat nights) – changed from 80%/20% to 83%/17% to better reflect historic use based on number of groups

Friday and Saturday nights – office-issued permits		Sunday through Thursday nights – self-issued permits
Private groups	Commercial groups	Private and commercial groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 83% of overnight permits (29) would be allocated to private groups Permits would be issued on a first call, first served basis beginning the Monday six weeks before the weekend of use Friday and Saturday night camping permits would be available Monday through Friday from 8a to 12p by phone or in person at the Grand Junction Field Office (develop online reservation system in the next few years) Fee would be due at the time the permit was issued Permits would be issued to a trip leader and an alternate trip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17% of overnight camping permits (6) would be allocated to commercial groups Permits would be allocated based on the historic percentage of overnight use by each commercial permittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outfitter A had 21% of commercial groups over the past five years and will be allocated 21% of the commercial Friday and Saturday camping permits Permits would be issued for the 2012 season in September-October 2011 264 Friday and Saturday commercial camping permits would be allocated by a lottery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outfitter A would get 21% of the 264 permits Lottery to determine who gets the first selection, second, all the way to 264th Outfitters would submit a requested schedule; after running lottery to determine selection order, BLM would begin to fill in the schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 groups would be permitted to camp within RHRA on Sunday through Thursday nights Overnight camping permits would be available on a first come, first serve basis at the Loma boat launch; groups cannot sign up before the day of their trip Overnight camping permits would be self-issued and a campsite would be selected at the Loma boat launch Fee due when the permit is self-issued There would be no private/commercial allocation on Sunday through Thursday nights Monitoring standards are established in the draft plan to identify if/when Sunday through Thursday nights need to be added to the office-issued permit system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-issued system fails more than once a month due to heavy use No more than five weeknights a season with more than 28 permitted groups camping No more than five

<p>leader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits would be non-refundable but could be transferred to another trip leader • A permit availability calendar would be posted to the GJFO website each afternoon, Monday through Friday 		<p>weeknights a season with Black Rocks campsite occupancy of 90% or greater</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No more than three vandalism attempts of the boat launch permit/fee infrastructure
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Field Manager Updates

Colorado River Valley Field Office, Steve Bennett

Resource Management Plan update: The Colorado River Valley Field Office Resource Management Plan revision schedule has been revised and the draft is expected to be ready for public release this summer for a 90-day public comment period. The Cooperating Agencies and RAC Subgroup provided review and comment of the preliminary draft and have been able to review and comment on Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 as well as supporting documents last year. We have also shared the travel management implementation components of the alternatives and collaborated with them over the selection of the Preferred Alternative at the meetings. The Cooperating Agencies and RAC subgroup are being given until the public comment period closes on the draft RMP/EIS to comment on the detailed travel management implementation actions being considered in the four alternatives.

A stakeholder group has proposed an alternative river management plan to protect Wild and Scenic River values on the upper Colorado River between Kremmling and Glenwood Springs. The stakeholder group is comprised of ten water supply providers and districts (including Denver Water and Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District), three counties (Grand, Eagle, and Summit), four nonprofit recreation and environmental groups, two owners of large tracts of private lands, and two state agencies (Colorado Water Conservation Board and Colorado Division of Wildlife). The plan is designed to support Wild and Scenic River values through multiple methods. The plan includes: establishment of "outstandingly remarkable values"(ORVs) indicators and tracking indicators via a monitoring plan; flow management goals to support the ORVs; cooperative operation of water diversion and storage facilities to provide

flow rates to support ORVs; and an endowment to fund projects in the river corridor that would maintain and enhance the ORVs.

The alternative plan will be analyzed as part of draft RMPs for BLM's Kremmling Field Office and Colorado River Valley Field Office. The draft RMP for the Colorado River Valley Field Office will also include a suitability analysis for U.S. Forest Service lands in Glenwood Canyon. If the USFS and BLM decide to adopt the proposed plan, the stakeholder group has requested that USFS and BLM defer a suitability decision on eligible stream reaches between Kremmling and Glenwood Springs.

National Speleological Society requests Special Recreation Permit: National Speleological Society (NSS) applied for a Special Recreation Permit for recreational cave and geology trips on BLM public lands during the NSS convention July 16-24, 2011, in Glenwood Springs. The application is for three caves located in the Deep Creek drainage, Roaring Fork Valley, and the Roan Plateau area. A total of group 12 trips per cave is requested, with one trip per cave the weekend before the convention, one trip per cave the weekend after the convention, and two trips per cave per day during the convention. Each trip will be led by approved leaders and group sizes will be limited to no more than 5 people. In addition the NSS is requesting permission to stop at two additional locations on BLM lands to look at geology and to view one of the caves along existing public roads via a bus.

Through the public scoping process, comments have been received from USFS, USFWS, Center for Biological Diversity, and CDOW. The Field Office has developed an EA that addresses scoping comments, available data, and the recommendations of groups actively working on White Nose Syndrome (WNS) prevention. Because it examines WNS risk, the analysis and decision regarding this Permit application will potentially have implications for the broader Field Office WNS Management Actions EA.

White-Nose Syndrome management actions being considered: The Colorado River Valley Field Office is completing an environmental assessment to consider implementation of management actions, including targeted seasonal closures at cave and abandoned mine sites that contain hibernating bats to reduce the risk of spread of white-nose syndrome in bats. The scoping notice and comment period ended June 3 and provided an opportunity for public participation on proposed management actions prior to a decision being made by the Field Manager. Following policy direction from BLM's Colorado State Office, as outlined in BLM Instruction Memorandum No. CO-2011-006, the proposed action is to identify and establish targeted, seasonal closures at sites located on BLM lands in the CRVFO with significant populations of hibernating bats that remain physically accessible to the public during the bats' hibernation period. An appropriate range of alternatives will be considered based on scoping comments and internal review. Initial internal review of the action and available information has indicated that the range of alternatives may include closing caves and abandoned mines with documented bat use until the risk of WNS contamination can be fully determined. A decision on the WNS management actions is planned to be made prior to the National Speleological Society convention, July 16, 2011.

Hundreds of volunteers help with spring clean-ups: A number of groups partnered with the Colorado River Valley Field Office on its annual spring clean-ups, removing literally thousands of pounds of trash, scrap metal, tires, and abandoned vehicles from BLM land. The clean-ups included Hubbard Mesa and Oates Mesa near Rifle, Trail Gulch Road near Gypsum, Prince Creek and The Crown near Carbondale, Deep Creek near Dotsero, and Silt Mesa near Silt. Groups that sponsored or participated in one or more of the clean-ups included High Country 4Wheelers, Code 4X4, White River Trail Runners ATV Club, Colorado Mountain College Rifle Campus, Garfield County, Eagle County, Prince Creek Landowners, Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association, Renaissance Adventure Guides, Colorado Academy. Several hundred volunteers donated their Saturdays to the clean-ups. Keeping public lands adjacent to communities clean is a huge challenge for BLM. These volunteers performed a valuable service that helps all public land users.

BLM lands in Colorado Congressman Polis' wilderness bill: The Congressman's legislation proposes four changes that would affect land management in the Colorado River Valley Field Office:

- Bull Gulch Wilderness Study Area (WSA) would be designated as Wilderness;
- Castle Peak Wilderness Study Area would be designated as Wilderness;
- Castle Peak Addition "Special Management Area" would be a new designation;
- Pisgah Mountain "Special Management Area" would be a new designation.

The legislation proposes one change that would affect land management in the Kremmling Field Office: the proposed Williams Fork Wilderness is adjacent to BLM and includes wilderness boundary adjustments to preserve right-of-way to BLM land. Of these 5 areas, Bull Gulch and Castle Peak include the most significant BLM acreage. BLM's current management for all 5 areas is compatible with proposed designations under H.R.1701. Designation of the Special Management Areas would allow for all but one of the designated travel routes and allows for current military training use.

Proposed Sutey Ranch Land Exchange: The Colorado River Valley Field Office received a proposal from Western Land Group on Feb. 11, 2011 for a land exchange within the Colorado River Valley Field Office involving lands in Eagle, Garfield, and Pitkin counties. Their proposal is similar to what they sought to achieve legislatively last year. The proponents decided to not pursue the exchange legislatively after a long and highly publicized effort to gain support for the exchange from Pitkin County was unsuccessful. Under the current proposal, BLM would acquire a 557-acre parcel (the Sutey Ranch) adjacent to the popular Red Hill Special Recreation Area, which has high wildlife habitat value and high recreation potential. It includes the historic water rights from the ranch. BLM would also receive 117 acres in Pitkin County along Prince Creek Road. This private parcel is a highly popular area with mountain bikers and is used to access BLM roads and trails. This parcel was not in the legislative proposal last year. The BLM would exchange a 1,268-acre parcel in Pitkin County south of Carbondale that is mostly surrounded by private land and is difficult for the public to access. Leslie Wexner, owner of the Limited Bands clothing stores (which include Victoria Secrets and Bath and Body Works), is the livestock permittee on the BLM parcel in Pitkin County. He owns land on both sides of this BLM parcel (Two Shoes Ranch) and is seeking to connect his two holdings through this exchange. He purchased the Sutey Ranch in Garfield County with this exchange in mind. He would acquire the

BLM parcel and agree to a conservation easement. In Eagle County, BLM would exchange a 195-acre parcel on Horse Mountain southwest of Eagle which has been identified for disposal.

Conveyance of public lands to City of Glenwood Springs: The Colorado River Valley Field Office is proposing to transfer approximately 62.5 acres of BLM land to the City of Glenwood Springs under the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act (R&PP). The City proposes to use the land to expand its existing South Canyon Landfill. The proposed expansion would extend the life of South Canyon Landfill by 20 to 25 years in a cost effective manner. The parcel is immediately adjacent to the landfill and is largely comprised of a steep slope that receives little to no public use. The Field Office is accepting public comments on the proposed conveyance until July 18, 2011.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Project Proposal: The Colorado River Valley Field Office has submitted a proposal to acquire land under the Land and Water Conservation Fund to enhance the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area. Partners include the Conservation Fund and Eagle County Open Space. The Coyote River Ranch (126 acres), Neumayer (11.6 acres), and Nottingham (229.5 acres) parcels are the top priority because they are currently under contract with our partners. Some of the benefits of these parcels include the establishment of a gateway to the main entry of the Colorado River Corridor, replacing critical river access that the Colorado DOT will be removing from public use, maintaining the visual resources and eligible Wild and Scenic River Outstanding Remarkable Values. Another important value is maintaining a wildlife migration corridor and keeping intact riparian resources. The public would have day-use river opportunities, including shore and wade fishing. The State Bridge Woodruff parcel (16.8 ac.) is the next priority. This parcel would transfer a popular private river access point to the BLM. The parcel contains an undeveloped boat access point, parking, and day use. This parcel would be managed by the Kremmling Field Office and would provide the only river access within an 18-mile stretch between Rancho Del Rio (KFO) and Catamount (CRVFO).

Little Snake Field Office, Wendy Reynolds

Little Snake Resource Management Plan: The Little Snake Resource Management Plan Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Record of Decision (ROD) is being prepared by the Little Snake Field Office and RMP contractor. The ROD is anticipated to be signed by the end of this Fiscal Year. After signature of the ROD, the LSFO will be working on an implementation plan and travel management plan. The LSFO will convene the Cooperating Agencies once more to discuss decisions to be made in the RMP and ROD.

America's Great Outdoors: Secretary Salazar and Governor Hickenlooper have designated the Yampa River as one of the three pilot projects in Colorado for the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

Transwest and Gateway South Transmission Lines: Two major transmission lines are being proposed to cross Moffat County to deliver 3000 megawatts of electric power to Nevada, Arizona, and California. BLM is preparing an EIS that analyzes several routes through the LSFO. Initial scoping on the project just concluded, and project proponents have been meeting

with Moffat County and the local sage grouse working group. Draft EISs are anticipated to be released in at the end of 2011 or early 2012.

Hiawatha Oil and Gas Development EIS: The Rock Springs WY Field Office is the lead on this EIS. The majority of the project area and proposed wells to be drilled are in Wyoming, but approximately 50k acres and 1500 proposed wells are in the LSFO. The BLM is working on the Final EIS, which is held up for Air Quality modeling and is expected to be released in 2012.

Grand Junction Field Office, Catherine Robertson

Resource Management Planning: We are continuing to experience schedule delays for the Grand Junction Field Office RMP. The major factor delaying our process is the air quality impacts modeling effort. We are expecting additional direction on greater uniform consistency in the leasing stipulations due to a recent national/state review of stipulations. We do not expect this direction to result in substantive changes to the management in our RMP alternatives, but will need to ensure that our alternatives are framed in a way that is in compliance with the new BLM direction. When these items are resolved (but before we have the air quality analysis), we plan to make a preliminary draft RMP and Draft EIS available for review by the cooperating agencies concurrent with the review by the field office staff. This will hopefully be next winter.

Catherine Robertson passed out the updated sheet for the GJ RMP subcommittee. She asked the group if they supported Janie Van Winkle as the grazing representative, which they unanimously did.

Recreation

Volunteer Outdoors Colorado (VOC) Hosted Position -- Through a partnership with Volunteer Outdoors Colorado, BLM is hosting Fran Parker, a VOC employee that will greatly expand upon our efforts for building volunteer capacity, providing leadership and coordination of volunteer projects in GJFO and other public lands within Mesa County. This position is a direct result of the recognition of the success of the position funded by Mesa County through the Partners organization in past years.

27 ¼ Road Maintenance -- 27 ¼ Road which is the access road to a developed pair of shooting ranges that provides opportunities for local enthusiasts as well as state, county and federal law enforcement agencies to practice and train. The road often becomes degraded and a constant maintenance issue for BLM and County road crews. BLM is working with Mesa County to develop a long term solution to the continuous maintenance issue.

Mesa County Department of Corrections -- Mesa County Department of Corrections contributes hundreds of hours of volunteer service through the Workender Program and DOC inmate crews. Originally, these contributions were largely through litter clean-up along highways and high use areas. With strong leadership this well developed partnership has started to capitalize on the specialized skills and abilities of these crews. A recent project that is specifically notable was completed in late April on City of Grand Junction property at the Tabaguache Trailhead. Crews with BLM oversight spent multiple days moving dirt, pouring

concrete, welding metal fencing, painting, etc. This project required a major cooperative effort between Mesa County, City of Grand Junction, BLM, COPMOBA and several local businesses. A very impressive project in scope and complexity.

Youth Initiative -- WCCC--BLM has entered into an agreement with the Western Colorado Conservation Corps (WCCC) to provide youth opportunities in the local area in a variety of program areas including recreation and invasive species control.

North Fruita Desert Trail Effort -- COPMOBA, BLM and City of Fruita worked cooperatively to complete a new mountain bike trail in the North Fruita Desert SRMA recently. This project is one of multiple trails being proposed in that area. In all, the partners hope to approve and construct 4-5 additional trails in next 12-16 months. BLM is currently revisiting the campground fee proposal (supported by Mesa County) and will be working through our Northwest Advisory Council in late summer to recommend the approval of a campground fee for 18 Road Campground. Fee collections for that site will be used to improve, maintain and increase capacity of that campground.

Ute Learning Garden -- Through BLM's partnership with Colorado State University Extension Service preparations continue on the Ute Learning Garden's June 11th Mini-Powwow. This year a traditional Ute sweat lodge has been added and will contribute to the public's education of long-established Ute practices. Saturday, June 11, 2011 the general public is invited to join tribal elders in ceremonial practices and dances. New to this year's event, vendors will be on-site with demonstrations of native crafts.

Gateway VOC Project -- May 20 – 22, Volunteers of Outdoor Colorado (VOC) hosted a trail project in Gateway in cooperation with Gateway Canyons Resort and BLM. Over the course of the 2.5 day project, 3 miles of new trail was built. Approximately 80 volunteers came from all over Colorado to participate. Gateway Canyons provided food, entertainment and t-shirts for volunteers. The project adds to the 8 miles of BLM designed and approved single-track trail system that is open to non-motorized public uses in close proximity to the resort.

Tabeguache Trail Access (Highway 141 at McCurter Property) -- The Tabeguache Trail, a 140 mile primitive road from Grand Junction to Montrose primarily on public lands is a popular route for recreationists. A portion of the historic route at Highway 141 is privately owned, access is restricted at that point. This section has long been sought after for access through public easement. Recently, with the land coming under new ownership and funding provided by the Land & Water Conservation Fund, this easement became more of a reality. BLM is working to negotiate with the landowner for an acceptable easement.

Lands and Minerals

Bangs Canyon/Gunnison River Acquisitions -- We have completed the acquisition of 4 parcels totaling 213 acres on the Gunnison River adjacent to the Bangs Canyon SRMA boundary. Staff work continues on acquisition of an access easement that would provide public access to the SRMA and the Tabeguache Trail from Highway 141 near Whitewater. The acquisitions were completed with Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Emergency/Inholding money.

Dominguez-Escalante NCA Acquisitions -- Western Rivers Conservancy acquired approximately 400 acres along the Gunnison River in mid May. The GJFO is working on securing 2012 LWCF funding to acquire that property.

Airport Transfer EA -- The Grand Junction Regional Airport has requested a transfer of 720 acres of BLM land for airport improvements including relocation of the main runway. A 3rd party EA is being prepared by Barnard Dunkelberg & Company, which will analyze the impacts of an amendment to the Grand Junction RMP to identify the lands for disposal and the proposed land transfer, as well as the proposed improvements on current airport property. The Airport and BLM held an agency scoping meeting and public open house on April 5, 2011. We received 7 comment letters during the comment period, which ended on May 20, 2011. Letters were received from CDOW, FWS, NPS, Mesa County, City of Grand Junction, and two members of the public. We anticipate a decision on the proposed land transfer/RMP in early 2012.

Mesa State College Recreation & Public Purposes Act Conveyance -- Staff work continues on the proposed conveyance of 80 acres near Whitewater to Mesa State College for a Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Academy. Mesa State hosted a public open house on March 30, 2011. We received one comment letter from a member of the Orchard Mesa Gun Club (OMGC). On April 19, 2011, representatives of Mesa State and BLM attended a meeting of the Board of Directors of the OMGC to answer questions and address their concerns. The draft EA was posted on the BLM Grand Junction web site on May 23, 2011, and will be available for public review until June 6, 2011. Once a decision record is signed, if the decision is to approve the application, a notice will be published in the Federal Register and local newspaper with a 45-day public protest/appeal period. Upon resolution of any protests or appeals, a patent can be issued 60 days after the Federal Register publication.

Mountain Island Land Exchange -- The proposal involves the exchange of 788 acres of federal lands for 576 acres of private lands in Glade Park to consolidate public land ownership and provide public access to Timber Ridge. The public lands that are proposed for exchange have limited or no legal public access. Appraisals have been completed and we are currently reviewing our options to equalize the values of the federal and non-federal lands. Once an agreement on value equalization has been reached and the EA finalized, the draft decision package will be sent to the National Land Exchange Team and Washington Office for review and approval before a Notice of Decision is issued.

Black Hills MDP -- Black Hills will be revising their Master Development Plan which will be scaled down significantly and will reflect a change to horizontal drilling strategy.

Fram (Whitewater Unit) -- Fram is also preparing a revised and much scaled down Master Development Plan due to a change in drilling strategy. Their plans include investigating an oil play in the Whitewater unit. The current plan does not extend outside of Mesa County. Due to the major changes in development plans, we plan to give the public another opportunity to comment on the project.

McClane Canyon Mine -- CAM is making final revisions to their proposed lease modification for the McClane Canyon Mine and responding to our questions about the proposal. Once we receive this information, work will proceed on our Environmental Analysis of the proposal.

Red Cliff RDEIS -- CAM withdrew their DRMS permit application for the Red Cliff Mine in 2010. Our office recently denied their ROW applications that were tied to the previously proposed Red Cliff Mine and the Lease by Application (LBA). CAM has requested a stay and appealed our ROW decision with the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). We are waiting for a determination from IBLA on our decision to deny the ROW applications. We are only analyzing the proposed Lease by Application along with BLM proposed lease areas in the RDEIS, unless IBLA overturns our decision on the ROWs.

Our office is working on a Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed LBA. The RDEIS will include analysis of conceptual ROWs that would be necessary to support the development of the coal if the coal is leased. Conceptual ROWs may include railroad locations, portals, vent holes, access roads, and other necessary facilities. We have requested additional information from CAM to more fully analyze and address comments raised by the public regarding potential coal leasing and development.

If the coal is leased then the successful bidder would submit a mine plan and applications for ROWs that would support the development of a coal mine. Site specific NEPA analysis would take place at this time and the NEPA analysis would likely be able to tier to the EIS for the LBA.

Law Enforcement

New and outgoing members -- The Law Enforcement team has a new member, Elliott Hinckley. Elliott's efforts will be concentrated within the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area. Elliott's experience includes obtaining a Master's Degree in Recreation Management and worked as an outdoor recreation planner for the BLM's Canon City Office. Elliott also completed a tour in Afghanistan with the Colorado National Guard as a maintenance technician.

Eric Boik, the GJFO's law enforcement supervisor, accepted a position as the BLM UT's State Chief Ranger. Eric will be leaving the GJFO in July.

Interagency Efforts -- The Law Enforcement staff continues to enhance their partnerships with local, state, and federal partners. Recently, the LE staff has coordinated their efforts with the Grand Junction Police Department's Homeless outreach team. BLM lands continue to see homeless issues on public lands and bringing the two departments together will bring positive results and solutions.

The BLM LE team also has participated in LE training sessions with the Mesa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). These joint training exercises are critical as our missions intersect in the urban and rural settings in Mesa County. Monthly LE roundtable meetings, administered by the BLM law enforcement team, continue to be productive disseminating law enforcement issues to all Grand Valley first responders.

Fire Program - Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit

Fire Season Forecast -- We have experienced cooler temperatures and above normal moisture this spring. These conditions have led to above normal fine fuels loading (Cheat Grass) and has pushed fire season back three weeks. Western Colorado Fire Weather Forecasters are calling for below to normal fire season, however if it does dry out and we get lightning our heavy fine fuel loads would increase large fire potential.

Preparedness -- We will be three engines fully staffed and again hosting the Boise Smokejumper crew.

The West Zone has also hired three additional employees through various youth initiative programs, 2 from the Western Colorado Conservation Corps and one from the Job Corps.

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA)

The BLM is in the final stage of public review for the Ruby-Horsethief fee and permit system. The Environmental Assessment is out for a 30-day public review, after which the BLM will review comments and make a decision regarding the permit system. The BLM will also publish a Federal Register notice and obtain approval from either the Northwest Resource Advisory Council or the Recreation Resource Advisory Council prior to approving the fee portion of the proposal.

Dominguez-Escalante NCA

Bridgeport Access -- On April 29, the BLM completed an Environmental Assessment for a new crossing, trailhead, and trail at Bridgeport. This was a required step in the process of establishing new, safe access for hikers and horseback riders in Bridgeport. Next steps include working with the County and Union Pacific to establish agreement on project management, funding, and future ownership/ maintenance of any new structures installed. Additional cultural mitigation work and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer will also be required.

Advisory Council and other working groups -- The Dominguez-Escalante Advisory Council has held seven meetings to date (starting in January 2011). The group has provided the BLM with initial feedback for two geographic areas, the Hunting Grounds (e.g., the area between Highway 50 and the Gunnison River) and the Gunnison River. The primary focus for the group is, at least initially, on ensuring that the BLM develops an adequate range of alternatives, especially for livestock grazing and recreation. As the planning process progresses, the Council will hear more from technical experts including Wildlife Biologists and Cultural Resource Specialists. The level of public attendance at these meetings has been notable, compared to general public attendance at other BLM Advisory Council meetings.

Other working groups:

- The Gunnison River Wild and Scenic River stakeholders group completed their work in early May and provided suitability comments to the BLM. A coalition of wilderness groups also worked together to provide suitability comments to the BLM.

- A Quiet Users group (coalition of hikers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, etc) continues to meet to provide the BLM with additional travel management comments.

Kremmling Field Office, Dave Stout

Kremmling RMP Revision: The Draft RMP/EISs for the Kremmling and Colorado River Valley Field Offices', originally a combined document, were split in December 2010. The two RMPs will be prepared separately. The Kremmling Draft RMP/EISs is no longer being prepared by Tetra Tech; Kremmling Field Office staff are now the authors of the plan and associated EIS. We are working toward the target of having the Draft RMP/EIS to the printer by the end of July.

Fuels Treatments: Fuels treatments continue to be a priority, as resources and weather conditions allow. The Colorado Youth Corps Association and The Nature Conservancy Fire Module will work on hazard tree removal projects on Independence Mountain this summer. The work is being contracted through the North Park Stewardship Agreement with Jackson County.

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. The 110-acre Parsons Draw Timber Sale, previously offered to Jackson County, has been sold to Bill Webster of Tumbleweed Express. Cultural clearance will be accomplished this summer on about 800 acres on Owl Mountain, southeast of Walden, in preparation for a 200- to 450-acre pre-commercial thinning and salvage sale.

Minerals: Kremmling Field Office will have once parcel offered for leasing in the August 2011 oil and gas lease sale. The parcel is in Grand County, northeast of Kremmling. Thirteen other parcels (six in Jackson County and seven in Grand County) have been deferred due to possible conflicts with sage grouse core areas, and to allow time to respond to public comments regarding the sale. More than 900 pages of comments on the leasing environmental assessment were received from the public, strongly supporting no leasing.

Wildlife: A fertilizing project in the Coyote Creek area north of Granby was completed at the end of May. An airplane was used to spread granular fertilizer over an area of 330 acres to stimulate growth in shrubs, in an attempt to improve winter habitat for big game. The project is a partnership between the BLM, the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Middle Park Habitat Partnership Program.

A project at the Junction Butte Wetland Management Area begins this summer to improve water flows there. A ditch that carries water from the Colorado River to the wetland area is not functioning and repair efforts have not been successful. The project will install poly tubing within a porous section of irrigation ditch. Approximately 1,800 to 2,100 ft. of the ditch would be improved, likely over several years, depending on cost. The completed project should resolve all the issues with maintenance of the ditch and delivery of water to the wetlands.

Recreation: The first big event of the summer at the North Sand Hills was completed successfully. The Memorial Day weekend, usually the biggest event there, was constrained somewhat by the weather, including snow on Saturday. Visitation was about one-third of the usual crowd. Fourteen citations and 30 or more warnings were issued. There were no emergency medical service call-outs.

Memorial Day weekend also was the beginning of the summer event season at State Bridge. A developer acquired the State Bridge site several years after the lodge burned, and created a venue for music events. An amphitheater and other improvements have been installed. Adjacent public lands are used under a Special Recreation Permit for parking and camping associated with the events. Events will continue nearly every weekend during the summer.

Eagle County is in discussion with the owner of property at State Bridge (across the Colorado River from the event site) for the purchase of the private land as part of Eagle County open space. If the purchase is completed, an agreement with Eagle County may be possible, which would allow the site to be managed by the BLM as a take-out and launch site for boaters on the river, as part of the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area.

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. After consulting with the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, we now have an agreement signed by Union, the SHPO, and the BLM describing how the process will proceed. Tribal representatives will be meeting with Union and the SHPO at the cell tower location on July 13th, after which we will continue processing Union's authorization for the cell tower. The project likely will be completed by the end of the summer.

Work continues transferring ownership of the shooting range east of Walden from the BLM to Jackson County. The County will acquire the shooting range by a Recreation and Public Purposes patent. The survey of the property is awaiting approval, after which the final processing of the patent can be completed.

Blue Valley Land Exchange appraisal is in, we will be preparing an eis because of the complexity and controversy of this issue.

Kremmling Field Office Personnel Changes: Rangeland Management Specialist Cynthia Landing has transferred from the Grand Staircase/Escalante National Monument, replacing Richard Johnson, who retired at the end of 2010. Recruitment continues to replace Justin Kincaid, Fuels Management Specialist.

Jeff Comstock : Where are you with fees and North Sand Hills, given Jackson County opposition.

Dave S: I believe will still need to implement fees out there. Have met with Jackson County Commissioners. Need to keep talking with them. Disagree whether fee would discourage future use. We will have alternatives in the Draft.

White River Field Office Program Updates, Kent E. Walter

White River Oil and Gas RMP Amendment

The BLM White River Field Office (WRFO) continues work to develop an Oil and Gas Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS). 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 is finalizing the Draft RMPA/EIS and is hoping to have it to the cooperating agencies later this summer for review, the actual date will be firmed up soon. The Phase I the Resource Management & Monitoring Protocol (RMMP) has been completed and is being published as a BLM Technical Note. The RMMP is designed to serve as a cost-effective and publicly accepted approach for landscape-change monitoring and assessment. The Reclamation Strategy has been finalized and adopted by the WRFO as their Surface Reclamation Protocol. 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 obtained funding for the completion of two projects under the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

BLM initiated data collection for the White River Field Office Travel Management Plan on June 21, 2010. This initial data collection is anticipated to provide existing roads and trails within White River Resource Area.

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 for the summer of 2011), and forthcoming prescribed burns. During 2010, the cultural program was able to complete approximately 600 acres of inventory in the Canyon Pintado National Historic District area furthering the knowledge of the historical resources in this region. WRFO archaeologists are also in the planning stages of making some rock art sites along the Dragon Trail, south of Rangely, interpreted for the public like the recreation sites in Canyon Pintado. Currently interpretive plans are being made on three separate rock art sites, and tribal consultation was just completed on this project.

WRFO is currently working on a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation case. The WRFO has completed the tribal consultation, and within the month, weather permitting, the remains will be repatriated to the Ute Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, and reburied in an ACEC within the WRFO.

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 Colodons (relatives of modern tapirs), and the iconic Uintatherium, 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. Construction of the facilities at the site location began in spring 2010 and is nearly complete. The process monitoring wells are constructed and the production well casing is cemented. Construction of the heater well commences upon the completion of the production well and rig move. Initiation of the shale oil recovery process is expected to commence late July early August. WRFO received Shell Frontier's POD for COC 69166 (East Lease) on January 3, 2011. The POD is currently under review. 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 and additional appraisal well was drilled April 2011. Chevron is analyzing information gathered during their geo-hydrologic drilling /testing and are scheduling additional formation/aquifer testing in summer 2011.

WRFO BLM has recently received nominations for two additional RD&D tracts: ExxonMobil Exploration Corp. and Natural Soda Holdings Inc. An environmental assessment (EA) to determine the projects impacts is required prior to determination of issuance of the research tracts. Public open houses were held in Rifle and Meeker, Colorado on April 27 and 28, 2011 respectively. Comment period ended May 17, 2011. A third party contractor to write the EA for the combined projects has been selected. The EA process is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2011.

Oil Shale PEIS

In 2008, the BLM published a Final Oil Shale and Tar Sands PEIS that amended the White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan (WRFO RMP) lands available for oil shale leasing from approximately 295,000 acres to approximately 341,000 acres.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Possible Land Use Plan Amendments for Allocation of Oil Shale and Tar Sands Resources on Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming was published on April 14, 2011. The Scoping Period for this NOI ran from April 14, 2011 through May 16, 2011. Scoping Meetings were held the last week of April and the first week May. Two meetings were held in each location. Issues raised at the Scoping Meetings include

water quality and quantity, air quality, recreation resources, socio-economic concerns, ecological concerns, and cultural/historical concerns. Many people expressed that the oil shale and tar sands program should not move forward until the results of the Research, Demonstration and Development (RD&D) leases are known and the technology(s) have been proven. Many others expressed concern that extensive resources were spent previously to develop the 2008 Oil Shale and Tar Sands PEIS, and that there are not additional facts or issues (other than the settlement agreement) that substantially change the playing field such that BLM should be expending time and money on this effort. Industry expressed their desire that additional lands, primarily those in the new USGS assessment, be opened for potential commercial oil shale leasing.

Alternatives will be developed based on the terms of the settlement agreement and the issues and concerns identified during the scoping meetings. Once alternatives have been developed, and additional data collected (i.e., wilderness characteristics, ACECs, Adobe Town boundaries, etc.), Argonne will begin writing the document. A draft PEIS is scheduled to be released for internal BLM and cooperating agency review in mid-October through early November.

Kent will provide the NW RAC with info about when the commercial oil shale regulation process will begin.

Coal

Blue Mountain Energy's (BME) Deserado underground coal mine produces approximately 2 million tons of coal annually. Deserado is a captive mine where all coal production is shipped, via electric train, and utilized by the Bonanza Power Plant in Bonanza Utah. BME has seven federal coal leases that are contained in a logical mining unit (LMU). In Early 2011 BME applied for an exploration license and a federal coal lease.

Oil and Gas

As of May 13, 2011, the WRFO has approved 71 applications for permit to drill (APDs), performed 137 inspections, and processed 1845 sundries. FY11 has not seen a substantial change in workload. WRFO has received 87 spud notices and 108 subsequent reports of well abandonment. One staff member is engaged in acquiring his certification as a Petroleum Engineering Technician.

Non-Energy Minerals Program (sodium)

Natural Soda Inc. produced more than 120,000 tons of sodium bicarbonate from their existing in-situ solution mining operations. Upgrades to the facility including a higher capacity, more efficient boiler and an increase in production capabilities have been approved. American Soda well field is expected to remain idle in 2011. No production from the well field has occurred since 2004.

Fire and Fuels Program

Three prescribed fires are planned for FY 2011 (Freeze Wall, Segar MT. and Badger Flats). In 2010 the WRFO implemented Emergency Stabilization and Burn Rehab plans for the Spring Creek, Duck Creek, Mellen, and Scenery Gulch wildland fires. BLM will be initiating the Emergency Stabilization and Burn Rehab plan for the Rough fire which will be aerial seeding early this spring.

BLM, Rio Blanco County and local landowners south of Rangely are nearing completion of a Memorandum of Understanding to allow BLM to efficiently manage natural ignition fires for ecological benefits where this option exists.

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

Field work has begun and will continue throughout the field season for six grazing permit renewals; plans are to finish all necessary field work and issue permits by January of 2012. Field work is also being done on Yellow Creek and several other allotments in preparation for upcoming permit renewals. BLM has set the 2011 grazing fees at \$1.35/AUM and the surcharge at \$4.78/AUM.

The BLM and CSU have worked out a means by which permittees can participate in monitoring of the range that they utilize. The CSU Extension Office currently has the information and is setting up several sessions to provide the necessary training for grazing permittees to monitor the range land conditions. By following this process and methodology the BLM can accept the monitoring and use it during the processing of future grazing permit renewals.

Riparian Program

Thirty-eight miles of riparian PFC assessments have been scheduled in association with the 2011 grazing permit renewals. Weed treatment evaluation, initial treatment, and inventory will continue in riparian areas with specific treatment targets established at the Olive Garden and Divide Creek Reservoir sites. Several existing riparian projects will be maintained throughout the field season as well.

Wildlife Program

The WRFO Raptor Inventory and Monitoring Project was approved for funding in April, 2011. Currently, BLM staff and one technician are monitoring known territories and conducting nest inventories in suitable nesting habitat as part of on-going oil and gas activities in the project area. The 2010 WRFO Raptor Nesting Productivity and Nest Monitoring Report for Piceance Basin, Colorado was completed in February, 2011, and is available on the WRFO website (<http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/wrfo/wildlife0.html>).

In 2010, 184 known nesting territories were visited, and 88% were classified as occupied. We also noted that nest re-occupancy during the 2010 breeding season was high, with 88% ($n = 30$) of nests that were occupied in 2009 also confirmed as being re-occupied in 2010.

In addition to monitoring and inventory work that is currently being conducted, other projects include refining the raptor nest monitoring spatial database, updating the WRFO raptor survey protocol, and modifying the weighted overlay nesting habitat suitability model using information that was collected during the 2010 breeding season. Most of the project deliverables that were identified in 2008 have been produced and finalized. Moving forward, behavioral information acquired using video monitoring equipment, and nest stand characterization information will be collected in 2011 to allow for analysis of these data using logistic regression.

Recreation Program

The Recreation Program has a multitude of activities underway and planned for 2011. As things dry out we are continuing to update all 14 kiosks around the field office with new maps, emergency information and informational materials. We are continuing with road signing, as well as planning to add new signs along the boundaries of our Wilderness Study Areas. We are also working with the Rangely Rock Crawlers to install carsonites to delineate the boundaries of the rock park.

The WRFO attended the May 14 Rangely Rock Crawlers Annual Women's Competition to monitor the event and provide a BLM presence. We also continue to attend their monthly club meetings. The Rangely Rock Crawlers, via their MOU and an EA, also graveled a parking area and WRFO is working with them on getting additional informational signage installed.

Plans are underway for multiple National Public Lands Day events (clean-ups) with the Rangely Boy Scouts (white River Clean up) and local Meeker citizens (Windy Gulch cleanup).

WRFO is providing guidance to the Eastern Rio Blanco Metropolitan Recreation and Park District (ERBM) as they develop a trails plan for Dorcas Jensen Park, adjacent to BLM lands.

We continue to move forward with initial planning steps towards completing a travel management inventory and plan for the WRFO. We are coordinating with the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) and other potential partners to accomplish this goal. The WRFO Outdoor Recreation Planner, Chad Schneckenburger, is leading a panel session on OHV use at the Nation Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP) conference in Breckenridge during the last week of May.

The WRFO is coordinating with the COSO in assembling a SWAT team to conduct an inventory for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (LWCs) in association with the national programmatic EIS on oil shale development.

In coordination with the COSO and the LSFO, WRFO is working on conducting a Visual Resource Inventory for the entire Field Office. This effort is expected to kick off in early June and run through the summer.

The WRFO continues to actively manage the Special Recreation Permit program. This includes 49 guide and outfitting permittees, 1 wilderness therapy permittee, 1 higher education permittee, and the Rangely Rock Crawlers. An organizational meeting for SRP permittees was held on April 28. All big game hunting SRP applications and renewals for the 2011 hunting season were due in the WRFO on May 15.

The WRFO is also 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. WRFO applied for, and was awarded, a one week work session by the USFS Colorado Statewide OHV Trail Crew for assistance with construction of this project in August of 2011.

Soil, Water, and Air Program

Spring maintenance is being done on the precipitation and streamflow monitoring sites; this includes taking off the winter kits on precipitation tipping bucket gauges and cleaning stilling wells and taking off winter protection on instrumentation. Streamflow was very high this year and runoff is expected to be higher than normal on most of the streams in our area due to higher than normal snow packs and a wet spring. Conductivity probes are being put out on at least 5 of the sites and this year and two additional streamflow sites are planned. Monitoring efforts are being enhanced on Yellow Creek in preparation of a proposed surface discharge of treated produced water.

Work with USGS on groundwater and surface water monitoring continues with sampling of the five dedicated wells and we are working on plans including geophysical logging 8 wells this summer to expand the network to 15 wells for next year. The Piceance Basin Data Repository group continues to move forward with plans to coordinate with the Colorado Data Sharing Network for future data storage.

Air quality data collection at the Rangely and Meeker Federal Reference monitoring sites supported by the BLM continues. There was a recent article in the Rio Blanco Herald detailing the information collected at these sites and its meaning for the public. Winter inversions in Rangely resulted in exceedance of the average 8-hour standard of 75 ppb, no violations of national ambient air quality standards have occurred, but this trend will continue to be evaluated.

The NEPA workload continues to build and the current focus is back to the RMP Amendment for oil and gas development.

Wild Horses

In 2010, the WRFO completed Gather EA's for both the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area as well as the West Douglas Herd Area.

In February 2011, the Bureau withdrew its West Douglas Herd Area Gather Environmental Assessment which called for the removal of all excess wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area.

In October 2010, the WRFO completed a gather of 73 wild horses which were located outside of the Piceance East-Douglas Herd Management Area.

BLM is currently planning to develop an additional gather plan for the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area. The WRFO has initiated this project through external scoping in early February and held a public scoping meeting on March 1, 2011. In late 2010, the WRFO began an intensive effort to collect updated monitoring for the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area and has initiated an additional gather plan in an effort to gather excess wild horses from the 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.

Gather EA should be out for public review in July 2011. Funded for a gather of the Piceance-East Douglas HMA from Sept 20-30.

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 an additional 300 acres of weeds within the resource area. We are also looking at working to develop a collaborative process with oil and gas companies to improve the treatment of weeds on disturbed areas where multiple companies currently operate.

Lands and Realty

WRFO's lands group is working on the TransWest Express interstate electric transmission line project which will transport renewable energy based power from central Wyoming to Nevada and the Energy Gateway South transmission project which will transport electricity from central Wyoming to Utah. We are completing the process of issuing permits for the first Rio Blanco County Road 5 improvement projects and the sale of a parcel of public land to the Rangely Hospital District is proceeding.

Enterprise is preparing to begin construction on the Meeker Plant to Greasewood 36-inch pipeline and the expansion of the Meeker 1 Gas processing facility is nearing final NEPA analysis. Proposals for construction of oil and gas infrastructure have been approved or are pending to multiple companies for construction this summer.

Next meeting agenda

North fruita desert

Evening at the museum