

**NORTHWEST RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Lodore Hall (Brown's Park)**  
**Moffat County, Colorado**

**May 6, 2004**

Geoff Blakeslee called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He extended a welcome to all those present, thanked all those involved for the tour on Wednesday, and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

**Attendees:**

Resource Advisory Council Members: Category 1 – David Cesark, T. Wright Dickinson, Jon Hill, and Charlie Yates; Category 2 – David Bailey, Geoff Blakeslee, Wade Haerle, Patrick Kennedy, and Charles Kerr; Category 3 – Jeff Comstock, Kathy Hall, John Martin, Larry McCown, and Forrest Nelson.

Ken Currey was absent.

BLM: Kent Walter (Manager, White River Field Office and RAC Designated Federal Officer); David Blackstun, Associate Field Manager, Little Snake Field Office; Jeremy Casterson, Planning and Environmental Coordinator, Little Snake Field Office; Duane Johnson, Environmental Protection Specialist, Little Snake Field Office; Catherine Robertson, Field Manager, Grand Junction Field Office; Jamie Connell, Field Manager, Glenwood Springs Field Office; John Ruhs, Field Manager, Kremmling Field Office; Steven Hall, Public Affairs Specialist, Western Slope Center; Carol Dawson, Weed Coordinator, Colorado State Office.

<u>Visitors</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Town/City</u>
Chris Moos	NPS	Dinosaur, CO
Eric Lane	CO Department of AG	Lakewood, CO
Steve Bonowski	Colorado Mountain Club	Golden, CO
Don Gillespie	Public	Glenwood Springs, CO

**Introductory Remarks** – Kent Walter went over a few housekeeping/administrative items. The camp rate for the two days is \$23/day + mileage.

T. Wright Dickinson gave a brief, colorful history about the Lodore Hall community center. It was originally a school house located elsewhere and was moved to the location it is now. At one time dances were held here once a month. Now there is a spring and a fall dance to raise money for maintenance projects at the Hall and to support community activities. The Fish & Wildlife Service also helps with the upkeep. The Lodore Hall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 24, 1975.

Geoff informed the RAC that he would be attending the National RAC Chair meeting in Phoenix, AZ next week. Told the members if they had any pressing issues for him to present at the meeting, to get them to him so he can take them with him. One issued raised was weeds (funding for). The Field Manager from Canyon City will also be attending.

Kent stated we have a quorum today with only one member (Ken Currey) absent. Said the members are to be commended for their participation.

**Public Comment** – Steve Bonowski with Colorado Mountain Club distributed a copy of the Daily Press article on the grazing issue in Brown's Park National Wildlife Refuge. The position of the Club is that the purpose of the Refuge is as a Wildlife Refuge. They do not believe that includes grazing. They will be working with the Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP) to try and come up with a win/win situation. They do not want to see domestic livestock on the refuge.

Geoff had received three (3) letters from the public regarding the trails (designation of) in the Bangs Canyon area. A letter from Neville Woodruff, Grand Junction, CO, regarding Bangs Canyon motorized roadways, one from William E. Gant, Grand Junction, CO, regarding Bangs Canyon OHV/4-wheel concerns, and one from TNC, Hayden, CO, regarding western Colorado wilderness concerns of off-road vehicle damage to the areas. Letters were passed around for member to read.

Charlie Yates has copies of a letter to Charlie Kerr from Mesa County Wilderness Coalition, signed by Pete Kolbenschlag, CEC, that he will present later in the meeting.

Adjourn for lunch. Will take 30 minutes for lunch and then resume.

### **Field Manager's Updates**

**Jamie Connell**, Glenwood Springs Field Office, stated that the Glenwood Springs RMP revision scheduled for 2005 has been delayed until 2006. The Glenwood Springs RMP is one of the first completed in the US, has several amendments, and needs to be updated. Would the RAC be interested in setting up a subcommittee to work with Glenwood on this update.

July 6<sup>th</sup> is the 10 year anniversary of Storm King. Glenwood office and the Glenwood Springs Storm King 14 committee, who helped with construction of the memorial trail, are planning several functions as a remembrance. RAC members are invited to attend and should contact Jamie if they need more information. There will be activities all day in Glenwood including a hike in the morning, smoke jumpers from McCall, ID plan a fly over to drop purple streamers, a barbeque at the community center (by invitation only . . . if you're interested, let Jamie know), an open remembrance in the park at 7:00 p.m. Trying to keep it as localized as possible. Should only be 30-45 minutes.

The Fire Academy was held in Glenwood Springs this year. Used Storm King as a learning tool.

Oil & Gas activity is continuing to increase. Companies will have to hire a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to conduct the NEPA analysis since the staff is booked up. BLM would provide oversight.

Struggling more with travel management. Would hope to have a plan in place in two (2) years.

**Catherine Robertson**, Grand Junction Field Office, informed the RAC that the NCA RMP/EIS is falling behind schedule but she hopes it won't slip beyond the end of the fiscal year. There are several alternatives but none that actually capture what they want to accomplish. They have a new Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner and would like to give her some time to become acquainted with the area.

They hosted the National Travel Management Planning team for a week. Looked at recreation issues in the area. May be looking at a landscape level plan. Seems to be a hotspot for travel management. Would like the Grand Junction RAC members to help define boundaries for this plan and determine if it is as important as BLM thinks it is. Would like to use them as an initial sounding board because of their familiarity with the area. Would also include members of the County, DOW, and environmental communities. Not ready for public process yet. Don't need to do anything right now; BLM is not ready. Just wanted to know if the RAC would be interested in participating since there is such a good cross section from Junction.

John Martin asked why we need to wait. There are lots of questions now on what's going to be happening to the landscape in this area, use on the river, and management. Thinks it's time to move forward. Likes to get ahead of the curve. Increased use is so huge. Need to plan so conflicts don't occur. Said the growth (not explosion) is sometimes part of the problem. If there are RAC representatives, need to be a part of the larger group.

**John Ruhs**, Kremmling Field Office, Preplan for the RMP which has also been bumped. Their RMP is 20 years old. They have no plan for Special Recreation Use on the stretch of the river near Pump House. Trying to get eligibility studies done. They also have travel management issues that will need to be addressed separate from the RMP.

Planning a public meeting on June 21. Hope to have all alternatives for the Wolford Mountain Travel Management Plan.

With the data call they received yesterday on the Sage Grouse, will have to move priorities.

The next RAC meeting will be in Kremmling on August 11 & 12.

At the workshop in Glenwood last week the River District seemed to be unaware of the Travel Management for Wolford. Was wondering if it was simply a matter of miscommunications. John thought it was.

**David Blackstun**, Little Snake Field Office, said that with the selection of a facilitator, the Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS) has reached a milestone. Will be having a place based planning session this weekend in Craig at the Holiday Inn.

Grazing season has started and there are some users affected by the dry conditions. Some have taken non-use.

The data call for the Sage Grouse will be quite a burden for all involved with a May 26 deadline. Are looking for information from State, federal, and local governments. Will then compile those comments and determine if the Sage Grouse should be listed or not and if so under which category. We will only be making recommendations. Fish & Wildlife Service will make the decision.

Jeff – How will all the data be compiled (how will it all tie together/mesh).

The Oil & Gas portion of the plan will, most likely, get the most attention. May 26 is not the end all. If additional information comes available, it will be sent forward. Will work with all parties involved so we're all aware of plan/strategy going forward. Will continue to accept updated information over the course of the next year. Once the strategy is signed and in place, it will be forwarded.

There was a recommendation that the information also be sent to the RAC. Kent Walter will follow up on this.

A motion was made that the RAC supports BLM offices in working/sharing information with the working groups to the extent practicable. Carried.

Oil & Gas activity is also increasing in Little Snake.

There has been a rumor regarding the Emerald Mountain Land Exchange. An Agreement to initiate may or may not have been signed. Dave had no information, either way, to date.

About 120-150 wild horses in from the Wyoming Adobe/Salt Wells HMAs are spending significant amount of time in Colorado. Grazing permittees have taken almost total non-use because of the horses. Wyoming is at the top of the AMLs and hope to address this in the fall.

Little Snake has hired a Law Enforcement Officer, Gail Mullen, who is scheduled to report on May 17.

Big news for the Little Snake Field Office is that we are scheduled to move into our new building on June 7. Things will be hectic for awhile.

Jamie had one more item to mention – the Colorado cutthroat negative.

**Kent Walter**, White River Field Office – Brought up his concern regarding the West Douglas Herd Area Plan Amendment and the fact that Don Peach had been the RAC Chair for the committee. Since Don is no longer on the RAC, there has been a breakdown in communications. He did receive some comments from Jon Hill. The comment period ended yesterday and they have received 250 comments. Going with the proposal to remove horses and are continuing with the process. However, if the subcommittee still wants to comment, he'll wait but can't wait too long. Once all comments are in, they will be categorized, analysed, and, at that time, bring the subcommittee members in give them an update on status. Subcommittee needs to get with Kent and pick a couple of dates for the meeting.

Staff will be working on three (3) major pipelines going in and he has requested additional staff (TERM positions).

Reminded everyone that fire season is approaching. Went from prescription to green-up and are now starting to dry out.

With the Service First initiative, BLM and USFS in Meeker are planning to co-locate at some point.

Has a few positions on his staff that are vacant. The announcement for the Associate Field Manager position is closed.

### **Committee Reports**

**Cultural** – David Bailey said the committee had passed a resolution to work more closely with the BLM and other government agencies. The Museum of Western Colorado has been working with the Anasazi Heritage Center and brought one of their traveling exhibit (Seeds of Change) to Grand Junction. Enhanced it with some Native American and Spanish items. Will have the exhibit through October. Are planning to build more exhibits.

Catherine asked if they had any financial assistance to help with shipping of the exhibits. Thought would be a good CCS project. She will follow-up with Dan Haas on CCS.

**Wildlife** – T. Wright Dickinson said they have been discussing development of guidelines for wildlife management with DOW. RAC has worked on guidelines for several disciplines. Should focus on areas with competition issues. Still in the information gathering stage.

Charlie said DOW is hesitant about getting involved in helping to develop standards. All the animals in the realm of their responsibility are living on someone else's land (BLM, private). Fear is that they might not be able to implement. Seems the only way to resolve issues is to sit down and talk about them.

Hunting has been and is DOWs wildlife management tool and their recommendations are based on animals. Need to tie these back to the rangeland standards. There are some specific standards relating to wildlife. DOW could use this as a tool. Would be beneficial over the long term.

Was asked if there would be a benefit to BLM Biologists looking at developing these standards. Answer was yes, either SO or FO biologists.

DOW is still working on the logistics of how they will interact with a RAC committee.

Was suggested that maybe the RAC could develop some standards and BLM biologists could review them and provide feedback.

**Invasive Species (Weeds)** – Will have a presentation by Eric Lane, State Weed Coordinator, Colorado Department of Agriculture later in the day.

**Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS)** – Jeremy Casterson gave a PowerPoint presentation and some background information on the Stewardship to date. The first project the Stewardship was involved with was a Fire Management project. The second project will be a revision to the Little Snake RMP.

Looking at possible roles of the Stewardship. Would like to see community involvement and a community vision when developing goals and outcomes. Might also be some multi-party monitoring to help out in the field.

Will be developing roles and responsibilities for BLM, Community (Communities of Interest), Moffat County, and the RAC.

May approach the RAC to become a chartered sub-committee in order to meet FACA requirements.

Charlie was curious to know how many interest groups are/will be involved.

In addition to Northwest Colorado, there is interest from the front range and other parts of Colorado. Is a very diverse/fluid group.

The RAC already has a subcommittee in place (Jon Hill, Kathy Hall, Forrest Nelson, T. Wright Dickinson, Geoff Blakeslee, and Jeff Comstock (all categories represented)) to work as liaison with the NWCOS.

Was a question as to the structure of the group. The structure will be open. The point was made that the main key is: If the structure of the group is wide open, FACA would not be such an issue; however, if you withhold participation, FACA would then be an issue.

Is it premature to ask for a decision on a sanctioned group? Jeremy will have more information after Monday's conference call. Is this something that can wait until the meeting in August.

RAC membership drafted language regarding the group: Should a sanctioned working group be necessary to work with the NWCOS on the Resource Plan revision, the NWRAC charters this group with the following NWRAC members as members of that group: Kathy Hall, T. Wright Dickinson, Forrest Nelson, Geoff Blakeslee, Jeff Comstock, and Jon Hill.

### **Status**

Jamie - The Draft RMP/EIS for Roan Plateau had four (4) alternatives originally. Couldn't find an alternative that would get them close to where they want to be in the end. Will have further discussion, develop better alternatives, and hopefully find one that will be closer to where they want to be in the end. Hope to have the first draft out in August at the earliest. Will be a much better document and more apparent that we work in a cooperative manner. Thinks public comments will be beneficial in helping to develop the alternatives.

Most of the controversy is the drilling above the rim. There has been no direction from Washington regarding the alternatives, we're just not comfortable with any of them. Feel we need to go back and come up with a better and/or better alternative(s).

Catherine – In January a request was sent out to the interest groups involved with the planning process in Bangs Canyon to help identify trails in the area. Have a public meeting scheduled for May 25 from 6-8 PM to talk about implementation actions taken to date. Also need to look at recommendations for trails in the area. Talking about enhancing some of the trailheads. Also looking at management prescriptions in the plan and implementing them. Have done some rehabilitation and closures, re-routing, reconstruction. 80% of the trails have changed.

Charlie Kerr had pictures of the area and also a letter from Mesa County Wilderness Coalition (CEC) whose major concern is the 20-plus miles of new motorized single track in Area 4. Would motorized use be appropriate. If so, to what degree. What impacts would there be. If opened, there would be a lot more traffic and use. Would be in favor of not opening additional access to 141.

Question was asked can BLM close spurs of roads. Yes. However, feeling was that closures seem to be signs for more use. Seems to be a Law Enforcement issue more than

anything. Is a critical need for volunteer work. Maybe a mountain bike patrol. Need all users to help.

Kent felt closures were not the answer. Rather responsible users, responsible use.

John Martin felt that a carsonite stick was not the answer to closing the “invitation” to the motorized communities. Need a better way to close the roads.

Catherine Robertson, John Martin, Charles Kerr, and Pat Kennedy will get together and go out and look at the area.

Was suggested that, aside from BLM Law Enforcement Officers, we look at contracting with local law enforcement.

**Weeds** - Eric Lane, State Weed Coordinator, Colorado Department of Agriculture, gave a presentation on Colorado’s Strategic Plan to Stop the Spread of Noxious Weeds (distributed a handout). Also gave some background and an overview of the Colorado Strategic Plan designed to help guide a statewide, coordinated effort to manage weeds (through eradication, containment, and/or suppression) successfully now and into the future so that negative impacts can be avoided or mitigated.

The **vision** articulated by the strategic plan is: **Productive agriculture and a healthy environment, unimpaired by noxious weeds, that continue to provide Coloradoans with an exceptional quality of life.**

The **mission** statement is: **To stop the spread of noxious weed species in Colorado and restore degraded lands of exceptional agricultural and environmental value during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

In order to carry out this mission successfully, Colorado’s strategic noxious weed management plan identifies four goals, or conditions, that must be met:

- 1. Curb the introduction of new noxious weed species into Colorado;**
- 2. Prevent the establishment of newly introduced noxious weed species in Colorado;**
- 3. Stop the spread of noxious weed species that are already well-established within Colorado that statewide eradication is no longer possible; and**
- 4. Restore lands of exceptional agricultural and environmental value.**

The information is also on the web at [www.ag.state.co.us/dpi/weeds/weed.html](http://www.ag.state.co.us/dpi/weeds/weed.html)

The Front Range RAC is already on-board in getting BLM to implement the strategic plan. Still has to get together with the other two RACs. Geoff will contact Eric to set a date.



Has a List A and List B of weeds to start working on. Will work on List A this year (2004) and List B next year (2005).

Eric said it would be helpful for Federal agencies to make it clear how/to what degree we will participate in the implementation of this plan.

Carol Dawson said she was counting on BLM to deal with both list A & B and get together to develop a tactical plan/MOU. Would like to see our weed coordinators out and working with the counties.

The RAC can help with long term budgets by identifying areas that are priorities.

Catherine said there are accomplishments that can be used as models.

Geoff feels there is a need to take responsibility. Develop a resolution, document, put pressure on and make things happen.

Catherine said if there are no reportable “widgets”, there is no money.

Eric said they are getting a lot of voice support but need to start charting some progress.

Catherine feels this is an incredible opportunity for partnerships/cooperatives.

**Public Comment** – Only other comment was that the grazing issue in Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge continues to develop. Suggests we periodically check the daily press web site.

**Next Meeting** – August 11 & 12 – Kremmling Field Office.

**Possible Agenda Items** – (Have one of the presentations during the evening trip)

- ✓ Law Enforcement (BLM/County work together – jurisdictional boundaries) – See if John Silence can attend
- ✓ A brief introduction to VRM
- ✓ SRPs (interpretation/consistencies in the SRP Regulations) Seems to be a huge push on cost recovery as far as permitted activities
- ✓ Travel Management Plan – Wolford Mt. Resource Conservation Area

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.