

**Northwest Resource Advisory Council**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, May 12, 2005**  
 BLM White River Field Office, 73544 Hwy. 64  
 Meeker, Colorado

**ATTENDEES**

Resource Advisory Council Members

David Bailey, Category 2	Jon Hill, Category 1
Geoff Blakeslee, Category 2	Pat Kennedy, Category 2
Dave Cesark, Category 1	Charles Kerr, Category 2
Jeff Comstock, Category 3	John Martin, Category 3
Ken Currey, Category 1	Larry McCown, Category 3
Wade Haerle, Category 2	Forrest Nelson, Category 3
Kathy Hall, Category 3	

Not present: T. Wright Dickinson, Category 1, and Charlie Yates, Category 1

**BLM Staff**

John Arkins	Mel Lloyd
Jeremy Casterson	Traute Parrie
Jamie Connell	Catherine Robertson
John Husband	Joe Stout
Britta Laub	Kent Walter

<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Town/City</b>
Clare Bastable	Colorado Mountain Club	Carbondale, CO
Reed Kelley	Self/WCC, CCA, CWF, HPP	Meeker, CO
Luke Schafer	CO Wilderness Network	Craig, CO

**Opening Remarks**

Chairman Jeff Comstock called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum. T. Wright Dickinson is not in attendance, so his presentation on forum funding will be postponed.

**Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time**

Comstock explained that the RAC meetings now hold one public comment period, rather than two, and are scheduled later in the day to provide the RAC an opportunity to discuss issues prior to the public comment period. Comstock's desire, as chair, is to keep public comment restricted to agenda items. The RAC disagreed and asked that a morning and afternoon comment period be scheduled for each meeting, and any action items should allow public comment prior to the RAC taking action.

Lead DFO and Glenwood Springs Field Office Manager Jamie Connell stated that no word has been received on the RAC's suggestions for revising the Charter. Mel Lloyd mentioned that the Charter expires in August 2005 and word should be expected around that time.

### **Field Manager Updates**

Little Snake: John Husband reported that the Little Snake Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision is ongoing with alternatives currently being developed. The FO's goal is to have unprecedented community involvement, and the Northwest Colorado Stewardship (NWCOS) is playing a key role in the process, including assisting with input for the socio-economic analysis. The Emerald Mountain land exchange planning process has completed public scoping and comments are currently being analyzed.

Grand Junction: Catherine Robertson distributed copies of the Dominguez-Escalante Preparation Plan to RAC members. RAC members should gather public comment and send their input to the BLM by May 31. The Mesa Mood Ranch land exchange was approved, and the protest period for the exchange ends June 9. The FO does expect some protests. The final draft of the South Shale Ridge EA was recently released. A request for an extension on the comment period was denied since the FO was aware of the issues the Internet service interruption would cause, and distributed hard copies to key publics.

Glenwood Springs: Connell reported that a travel management scheme, rather than plan, is being developed for the Hardscrabble Area. The towns of Eagle and Gypsum, as well as Garfield County, have requested that BLM review its open designation policy for that area in an effort to improve travel management. Maps will be developed and signing installed to educate and inform the public prior to the GSFO RMP update, which is not scheduled for the near future.

White River: Kent Walter stated that the analysis has been completed on the revised EA for the West Douglas Herd Area. The document has been simplified and two alternatives have been developed: 1) manage a small herd of horses (29 to 60), or 2) remove all horses. The FO has chosen its preferred alternative, which is to maintain a small herd. AUMs would come from existing livestock AUMs for the area. The RAC expressed its concern that the current preferred alternative conflicts with their previous advice to remove all horses. Walter stressed that this revised EA contains information that is entirely different than the document that the RAC previously reviewed. The RAC agreed that its working group should reform and review this new EA. Walter also reported on new BLM policy on rights-of-way, which involves some additional fees for monitoring and also includes positive improvements for industry as well.

Kremmling: Joe Stout, attending on behalf of John Ruhs, updated the RAC. A planning concepts course is occurring next week that involves the local community, and a preparation plan for the upcoming KFO RMP update is being initiated. The Wolford Mountain Travel Management Plan has been completed and implementation has started. An EA is being prepared for a new jeep trail in the designated open area of Wolford Mountain. The North Sand Hills will also see a new travel management plan, and most of the KFO will be covered in the new RMP. The Blue Valley land exchange proposal is in Washington for review.

### **RAC Working Groups Discussion**

Connell explained that Federal Advisory Council Act (FACA) rules are very clear when it pertains to RAC subcommittees, which includes RAC members but can also include members of the public. Subcommittee meetings are covered by FACA just as the RAC general meetings. The RAC should decide when it will use formal subcommittees or informal working groups.

Comstock noted that the NWCOS group working with BLM serves a similar purpose. There was extensive discussion on how the RAC can use these groups. Comstock reminded the group of John Husband's past advice—when using working groups refer to them as such and not subcommittees. Charlie Kerr proposed that the RAC formally dissolve what it perceived to be its two subcommittees pertaining to North Fruita Desert and Bangs Canyon and reform them as working groups. The RAC supported this.

### **Cost Recovery on Recreational Permits**

John Arkins provided a presentation on special recreation permits and the fee program authorized through the new Federal Lands and Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). Arkins fielded several questions from RAC members, some of whom expressed concerns that all FOs aren't interpreting the permitting process consistently. Arkins explained that a statewide BLM Colorado special recreation team was formed to review policy and practices in an effort to strengthen the program and better serve the public. The RAC may be called upon to advise BLM on managing the fee program. A RAC working group (John Martin, Ken Currey, Pat Kennedy, Wade Haerle) was formed to gather information on this topic to bring back to the RAC, and Martin will take the lead. Jack Placchi, COSO transportation program lead, should be the contact for this working group. BLM will check on the status of whether special recreation RACs will be formed or if existing RACs will be used.

### **Billings Canyon Jeep Trail Briefing**

Britta Laub provided a one-year review of trail operations. The trail was authorized by the Bangs Canyon Management Plan, which also specified that BLM obtain input from the Northwest RAC at one year. This rough-terrain trail provides 4x4 enthusiasts with a recreation opportunity. Continual monitoring is important in managing the area, and BLM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Grand Mesa Jeep Club, which plays a critical role in stewardship for the trail, which includes user education, visitor contact and maintenance. Laub reported that the motorized community has done an exemplary job in following trail etiquette in the area. GJFO staff recommended several mitigation actions to the field manager and would like the RAC's recommendations on future management of the Billings Canyon jeep trail. RAC members will postpone their decision on recommendations to the BLM until after the scheduled public comment period.

### **Roan Plateau Draft RMP Update/RAC Discussions**

Connell reported that the comment period ended on April 11, and the Internet shutdown did not impact the process. There are around 75,000 comment letters. Nearly 65,000 are identical letters originating from one web server. Unique comment letters numbered about 1,600. A summarized comment analysis may be available by late May, contingent upon completing the review of comments. Connell reported that the majority of comments were very broad and general. Only a few contained detailed comment correlating to details in the RMP. A meeting will be scheduled with the cooperators to discuss next steps, probably sometime in June. A copy of the comment analysis will be provided to the RAC, and a special meeting may be needed prior to, or in conjunction with, the next regularly scheduled meeting on August 11. The RAC asked to see the technical comments received from cooperators. There was extensive discussion on methods used for submitting comments. Connell will email the Transfer Act to RAC members.

### **Adaptive Management—What It Means, The Pros and Cons**

Jeremy Casterson reported that public scoping has closed and the analysis of the management situation is completed for the Little Snake FO RMP revision. The Record of Decision is anticipated for 2007. Adaptive management is defined as a system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes, or as outcomes management. Supporting changes without needing to amend the RMP is an important principle. Performance-based decisions are defined with measurable performance standards, and indicators include trigger points that guide BLM on when it's time to consider a change in management policy and/or applying stipulations. This type of management enhances BLM's ability to achieve plan outcomes. It also provides for plan flexibility in implementation and ensures mitigation. Adaptive management faces many challenges and cannot be used for some issues, such as threatened and endangered species. Husband emphasized that it's important to remain focused on management goals and objectives for specific areas.

### **Public Comment Period**

None

### **Next Meeting and Closing Remarks**

The RAC addressed its recommendations on the Billings Canyon Jeep Trail. All supported the mitigation recommendations presented by BLM. The RAC specified that it wants action items clearly identified on future agendas. Kerr proposed a topic on the oil and gas leasing notification process for private landowners affected by split-estate minerals. Most felt that the responsibility lies with the landowner to know what they own and did not feel that it was an appropriate agenda topic.

#### Agenda items for Walden:

Emerald Mountain Land Exchange (action may be required)

Roan Plateau

Working group reports

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.