

**Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council  
Steamboat Springs, COLO  
May 22, 2008**

**ATTENDEES**

Resource Advisory Council Members

Kathy Hall, Category 3	T Wright Dickinson, Category 1
Jeff Comstock, Category 3	Charles Kerr, Category 2
Dave Cesark, Category 1	Forrest Nelson, Cat 3
Pat Kennedy, Category 2	Larry McCown, Category 3
Lanny Weddle, Cat 3	
Clare Bastable, Category 2	
Jon Hill Cat 1	
Dona Shue, Category 2	

Not present: Duane Daily, Cat 3; Steve Gunderson, Cat 1; Mike Perry, Cat. 2

**BLM Staff**

Jamie Connell	David Boyd
Maryanne Kurtinitais	Joe Stout
John Husband	Gina Robison
Catherine Robertson	
Barb Blackstun	
Dave Stout	

Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Sasha Nelson	CEC	Craig
Liza Jackson	O&G Landman	Steamboat

Called meeting to order at 8:18 a.m. Quorum present.

Jamie updated group on status of new nominations: in State Office

### **Grand Junction Field Office, Catherine Robertson**

**Grand Junction Resource Management Plan:** Work continues to progress internally on our upcoming RMP revision. Requests have been sent to potential Cooperating Agencies and we will be formalizing the positive responders shortly with the MOUs (Mesa County, City of Grand Junction, DNR, City of Fruita, DeBeque, Palisade). We will conduct a Community Assessment as part of the pre-work for the RMP as well as a Benefits Based Management Study for those areas that haven't been surveyed as a part of past efforts. We are working with our National Operations Center on the contract for the RMP, once the contract is out for bid and a contractor selected (mid-July) we will begin formal public scoping. The RAC should anticipate a request at the next RAC meeting for a RAC subgroup/committee and identification of RAC members to provide a liaison between the public group and the GJFO.

**Dominguez-Escalante NCA:** Senators Salazar and Allard are expected to introduce legislation on the proposed Dominguez-Escalante NCA this month. The Grand Junction and Uncompahgre Field Offices, which share management of the proposed acreage, have been acting as a resource for information and maps for the subject public lands.

**CAM/Red Cliff Coal Mine:** We met with cooperating agencies on April 29 and with the Grand Junction NEPA team on April 30 to discuss comments on the preliminary draft EIS. Our environmental consultant (URS) is the revising the EIS based on comments received in these meetings.

**Whirlwind Uranium Mine:** The GJFO released the preliminary EA for public review on May 15. Energy Fuels Resources seeks to reopen two reclaimed underground mines, the Urantah Decline and Packrat Mine, combining the mines into one operation called the Whirlwind Mine. BLM's role in the process, as administrator of public lands, is to evaluate the mine's Plan of Operations and impacts related to surface use. Permits are also required from other agencies. The public comment period ends June 20, 2008. Materials can be viewed at [www.blm.gov/co](http://www.blm.gov/co) (select Grand Junction from interactive map).

**Oil and Gas:** We are currently working with environmental consultants writing EAs for Master Development Plans for seven projects. The companies include Aspen (Whitewater), Black Hills (South Shale Ridge area, Horseshoe Canyon, and Winter Flats), Encana (east of DeBeque), and OXY (Conn Creek). All are in eastern Mesa County, with the exception of the latter two, which are in western Garfield County. Proposals range from three wells and pads to 175 wells and 25 pads. The scoping period on the Black Hills projects ended on April 30, and we anticipate decisions on these projects in June.

**Sulfur Gulch Reservoir:** We met with representatives from Denver Water and the US Fish and Wildlife Service on March 28 to discuss T&E and sensitive plant issues. The proposed reservoir would provide additional water for T&E fish, but it could adversely impact several hundred Uinta Basin Hookless Cacti – a Threatened species.

Subsequently, Denver Water decided not to proceed with additional plant surveys at this time. Since they decided not to survey for the plants this year, it appears that Denver Water may not go forward with the Sulfur Gulch reservoir proposal.

**Abandoned Animals:** The GJFO is experiencing an occasional abandonment of domestic horses on the 36,000-acre Little Book Cliffs (LBC) Wild Horse Range. BLM volunteers witnessed one horse being left on the range by a lone rider in late April; no identifying information could be obtained to pass on to law enforcement. Abandonment of any animal—large or small—is illegal and punishable by state and federal law. The abandoned horse was captured and a new owner found by the volunteers. Nationally, abandonment on public lands is on the rise. Concerns lie mainly with introducing disease to the wild horse herds.

**Kodels Canyon:** Nearly 60 volunteers spent a March weekend cleaning and restoring public lands located in Kodels Canyon of the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA) and the Colorado National Monument. Vandals struck last fall, spray painting a series of graffiti along the picturesque canyon's rugged rock ledges. BLM investigators were able to piece together several leads to quickly find those responsible for the vandalism. In April, the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Colorado, finalized a civil settlement agreement with the three parties responsible for the vandalism. As part of the penalty, the parties participated in the clean-up effort and were required to reimburse the U.S. Government for restoration costs totaling \$8,200.

**Emergency Closure of Public Lands in McInnis Canyons NCA:** Until permanent supplemental regulations are approved, the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area has given notice of a temporary night closure for three areas within the NCA. The Mack Ridge and Devil's Canyon Recreation Zones, and the Rattlesnake Arches access road and area, all designated for day use only, will be temporarily closed beginning at 9 a.m., Thursday, May 22, 2008. The emergency closure is needed to provide law enforcement the regulations they need to conduct emergency enforcement procedures for protection of resources in the event unpermitted groups organize nighttime events. Such an event occurred in 2007, and law enforcement was unable to cite participants. Access for administrative and law enforcement uses is allowed during this emergency closure.

T Wright: RMP. State office procurement process inhibits sub committee being involved early in the process. Want that fixed. Don't want subcommittee for GJFO RMP to be hung up – e.g. not enough budget or time.

Catherine: Share concern about contracting. Not aware of how that affects subgroup. Will talk about at 11:30.

T Wright: how bad is problem of abandoned animals? Only in GJFO?

Jamie: Very big problem in Idaho. No places for people to take horses with changes in laws.

Jon: I saw a newly released horse in West Douglas herd the other day. If a horse shows up that's clearly not a wild horse, what do you do?

Catherine: Brand inspector has responsibility, but he doesn't always come out. Friend of Mustang group helped to find new homes?

T Wright: Were animals branded? No. Brand law not enforceable. Need a statement from public standpoint that it's not a proper use of resource, genetic problems with wild horses. RAC could write letter to Secretary of the Interior about concern that could be publicized – ie this letter would be from the public.

Charlie: understand that DOW and owner protested garden ranch parcels. What is status?

Catherine: under review.

Jaime: Only asked for a 30-day timing limitation – that can be done without stip.

Catherine: Surface agreement – its split estate surface owner has room to negotiate.

Charlie: Uranium mine. Designated as a mine?

Catherine: Yes. We are last agency to issue permit for this mine (County, state permits)

Jeff: Oil and gas. Are you expecting EPA to ask more for air quality analysis? Have been asking for things right at the end. Don't want to get thrown curve right at the end. Need to work with EPA right from the beginning.

Catherine: Not at this point for this level of planning.

Jamie: National office has new policy for air quality analysis. Just came out. Trying to come into compliance with what EPA wants from the start.

T Wright: EPA needs to state its concerns as part of the public process so public can comment.

Charlie: Ozone problem statewide. Can we require methane controls as BMP?

Dave C: new state requirement. Need to have 90 percent VOC recovery. Came into effect May 1.

Catherine: if environmental analysis shows impact, you can handle in COAs.

Larry: If day-use area only, why have emergency closure at night?

Catherine: Courts require specific regulations that have been published in Federal Register. Can't just put up signs.

John: if something is not in CFR, need this supplemental rule. Some things are covered, some are not.

**Glenwood Springs Field Office, Jamie Connell**

**Roan Plateau update:** BLM issued the second Record of Decision for the Roan in March, which upheld the strict protections for the 21,034 acres of ACECs as originally described in the Proposed Roan Management Plan issued in September 2006. More than half of the Roan Plateau Planning Area contains No Surface Occupancy stipulations. BLM is currently working towards offering the Roan leases in a summer lease sale, which would be announced at least 60 days in advance of the sale. BLM is currently following specific direction from Congress to lease these parcels. Should any proposed legislation pass to change the Congressional direction for these lands, BLM will follow the new direction. GSFO will also continue implementing other decision in the Roan RODs, which include travel management and fish and wildlife habitat improvement projects.

Jamie: BLM would lease at once and develop over time. New proposal in Congress would lease over time. Would make the federal unit requirement for one operator very difficult (the new approach). Surface disturbing activities on top almost identical.

Clare: How would leasing go on roan below all at once?

Jamie: possibly. On top needs to go at once.

T Wright: Concerned about closing shooting areas. Hope BLM isn't go through same road as USFS of closing it all. Make sure you have defined areas where that activity can continue. If state needs to be involved, invite them to this table.

Jamie: Subgroup of RAC for RMP very involved in shooting issue, where to go.

Catherine: Shooting in north fruita plan was huge issue. Nobody wanted to shut anything down. They are a mess. Too much for our agency to manage. Will be huge issue in RMP.

T Wright: Do we need to invite DOW (Velarde) to discuss this issue?

Larry: Every town needs their own area. Will be too much for DOW to manage as well.

John H: Doesn't BLM have national restrictions on setting up shooting ranges due to haz mat? Even with RP&P.

Jamie: Very complicated. Grass roots partnership, where users manage. Eg Red Hill with Mountain bikers.

Catherine: What about inviting NRA rep? They are pushing BLM to keep shooting areas open.

Lanny: Have range on BLM outside of Walden. People come from Fort Collins and front range to shoot. Need to ensure that this activity continues. Need to police this activity. Groups are good at self-policing.

Dave C: sure see that kind of self-policing with off-road groups.

Jamie: May see more people involved when they see RMP has alternative of closing.

Larry: occasional users. Hard to find them to organize.

**Resource and fire crews team for tamarisk removal:** About 20 GSFO resource staff and fire fighters, along with Garfield County, worked together to cut and treat an isolated stand of tamarisk northeast of Silt. The goal was to catch this 1-acre infestation before it could spread further in the drainage. Crews cut and piled the tamarisk, and herbicide was applied to the stumps. Fire crews plan to burn the piles this fall.

**Fuels program burning this spring:** The GSFO fuels program is currently gearing up for a 195 acre burn near the Prince Creek subdivision south of Carbondale. Last fall contractors cleared openings in the thick oak brush. Fire crews hope to burn those areas in the next week or so. A contractor will be similarly clearing brush near the Oak Meadows subdivision this spring/summer. Fire crews successfully burned several hundred acres on Coulter Mesa north of Rifle, primarily to improve big game habitat and improve ecosystem health.

**Volunteer efforts aid GSFO lands:** More than 100 volunteers have recently helped GSFO with clean-ups and trail maintenance projects, and more efforts are planned. A recent clean-up on Silt Mesa with the High Country 4-Wheelers removed about 4 tons of appliances, garbage, scrap metal, tires, and other refuse. The annual clean-up at Prince Creek with area landowners was also successful. A trail maintenance project was recently completed at Red Hill near Carbondale with the Red Hill Council. Additional volunteer trail maintenance projects are planned this spring for East Eagle and Lookout Mountain.

Jamie: Some Silt residents may contact RAC members regarding a shooting area near homes. Want emergency closure. Will be part of RMP process. Don't know where at this point where shooters would then go.

**Energy Office:** Glenwood Springs Associate Field Manager Steve Bennett, who oversees the Energy Office, was asked to make several different presentations at a national fluid mineral conference held this week in Albuquerque about the Best Management Practices being conducted in GSFO. Energy Office staff continue on-site inspection and enforcement along with multiple Master Plans of Development for areas south of the Colorado River and west of New Castle.

**2008 Land Health Assessment:** Annually, a team from the Glenwood Springs Field Office conducts a Land Health Assessment on a different landscape within the field office. During the spring and summer of 2008, the team will be assessing approximately 38,000 acres of public land north and south of Dotsero. The assessment will include eleven grazing allotments. The purpose of the Land Health Assessment is to determine if the Standards for Public Lands Health in Colorado are being met with current management. We will be assessing soils, riparian systems, upland vegetation, wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Upon completion of the field work, the team will analyze the data and determine whether the standards are being

achieved. If a standard is not being achieved, a determination will be made as to the cause for failing to achieve the standard.

Jamie C: Dave C when with Williams came up with paint guides to blend tanks etc to blend in. Uses computer technology. Got thank you note from state offices in Wyoming and Colorado.

### **White River Field Office, Barb Blackstun**

**West Douglas gather EA released:** The White River Field Office is working on a removal plan for the approximately 120 horses in the West Douglas Herd. The Environmental Assessment on the removal plan has been released for public comment and closes May 25, 2008. The first gather is expected in the fall, and more than one gather will likely be needed to remove all the horses from the area. The majority of the horses removed will be available for adoption through BLM's wild horse and burro program. The remaining horses will be placed in long-term holding facilities. The 1997 Resource Management Plan for the BLM White River Field Office recommended the removal of the West Douglas Herd, while expanding the larger Piceance-East Douglas Horse Management Area in better habitat to the east. In September 2005, BLM completed an Environmental Assessment that also concluded the herd should be removed because the 123,000-acre West Douglas Herd Area could only support up to 60 horses, too small a herd to maintain genetic viability naturally.

**White River Oil and Gas RMP amendment update:** The White River Field Office has developed alternatives for its Draft Resource Management Plan Oil and Gas Amendment. Final drafts for Chapters 1, 2 and 3 should be delivered to the BLM for internal review in July, with impact analysis beginning late summer 2008. The Draft RMP is anticipated to be released for a 90-day public review period spring/summer 2009.

Charlie: What emission controls are being recommended in alternatives?

Air models are not complete. Need to know what impacts are, what needs are. State regulates air quality.

Dave C: When you cluster development to reduce surface impacts, creates a more concentrated emission over short-term.

Charlie: Statewide ozone problem that RAC needs to address. Grand Junction has violated new ozone standards. Shows up on top of Aspen mountain. Ozone from oil and gas development is huge. Look at Wyoming. Current on-going development could put in pollution controls that pay for themselves, no cost to industry. If we wait for all the RMPs and models, it will be too late. Can't RAC and BLM be proactive and get requirements that companies must use these BMPs? Shouldn't these be required in RMP Amendment?

Jamie: don't disagree. Need to go through planning process so we can see what trade-offs are. Eg a timing limitation may make it harder to use more efficient rigs. More emphasis on elk habitat or air? need to look at broad scale. Can only do on public lands.

Kathy: Cars are the primary source of ozone. It is a problem in Grand Junction, but it's from cars. BMPs are in place on a lot of this.

Dave C: Strict regulations just put in place by state. New regs may solve some of these issues.

**Oil Shale PEIS update:** The public comment period on the Programmatic EIS for Oil Shale and Tar Sands on BLM lands ended in April after a 30-day extension to the original 90-day comment period. Approximately 83,000 comment submissions were received, most of which were form submissions. The comments are available for viewing from the BLM website, but the comment analysis is not complete. A Final EIS is expected by the end of the year.

**Oil Shale RD&D update:** IDT Corporation, which recently acquired a controlling interest in EGL Resources, has submitted a Plan of Development for their 160-acre RD&D oil shale lease. BLM is currently reviewing the plan.

**Busy season anticipated for range program:** The White River Field Office's range program is currently finishing its eight grazing permit renewals for FY 2008. This summer it will begin the work on its 12 renewals for FY 09. The weed work will continue with two seasonal employees and a contract helicopter to be hired this summer to spray weeds.

**Black Footed Ferret:** The minimum known population of black-footed ferrets in the Wolf Creek Management Area at the end of 2007 was 16 animals. Survival and reproduction continues to be documented only in a few colonies near the eastern margin of the Management Area. We have initiated a research project on ferret resource selection to help identify why we are observing success in some areas and not in others. This is a cooperative effort with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, United States Geological Survey – Biological Resources Division, and the University of Missouri. We recently completed our spring survey in mid-April and documented 10 individual ferrets while surveying only two colonies. We have a habitat manipulation planned for late this summer in order to expand currently suitable habitat and have requested 10 additional captive-reared ferrets for release this fall.

T wright: How do you improve habitat for ferrets?

Barb: Improve prairie dog habitat by clearing brush, junipers. Will be in conjunction with DOW.

Jeff: BFF working group hasn't met for several years. Would be worth reconvening BFF working group to go over these projects. Right now seeing prairie dogs as an excuse to manage ferrets. Working group would help you.

**Prescribed Fire and Fuels Program:** The White River Field Office has 10 projects planned covering a total of 5,450 acres. We have targeted 1,700 acres for completion by



the end of the year. The planned projects will benefit Wildlife, Range and Hazardous Fuels Reduction programs.

**Seismic Projects:** The White River Field Office has received applications for three seismic surveys from ExxonMobil, CGGVeritas and WesternGeco. The largest project covers 1,300 square miles. Environmental analysis and documentation is currently being performed on the projects.

#### **Numerous Pipelines in the Works:**

##### Questar:

- ❖ FERC related project. 24” coming from Greasewood, going down Hatch Gulch to Piceance Creek to tie into the Meeker Hub which is located down County Road 5 to the East.

##### Overland Pass:

- ❖ NGL 14” pipeline leave the Williams Willow Creek Plant going into Greasewood and proceeding north following the WIC pipeline route up to Echo Springs, which is east of Wamsutter, Wyoming.

##### Enterprise:

- ❖ 12” water line, 24” gas gathering line, & 36” residue line. The 24” gas gathering line leaves the Buckskin Mesa Compressor Station proceeding west and then turning south going through Greasewood, down Hatch Gulch into the Meeker Gas Plant.
- ❖ The 12” water line will leave the Meeker Gas Plant heading east down to County Road 5 and connecting into an existing EnCana facility.
- ❖ The 36” residue line will connect the Meeker Gas Plant to facilities at Greasewood that will be transported into the main transportation lines going north from Greasewood.

##### Exxon Mobil:

- ❖ Connecting road and pipelines between the Freedom Unit & the Piceance Creek Unit. Natural gas – transport to valley gas trunk line for processing/sales; Produced Fluids (condensate/water) transport to valley combined liquids collection trunk line for processing at Exxon’s Black Sulphur separation facility; and Produced Water – distribution for us as filling fluids.
  - ❖ 8”, 10” 27” gas gathering pipeline (steel)
  - ❖ 4” produced water distribution pipeline (steel). (pb)
  - ❖ 4”, 6” combined liquids pipeline (fiberspar)

##### Williams-Northwest:

- ❖ Connecting pipeline between the Northwest Ignacio-Sumas pipeline on Douglas Creek to the White River Hub near Piceance Creek.
- ❖ Approximately 29 miles of 20 inch line with associated structures.

##### XTO:

- ❖ Trunk gathering lines for wells in McCarthy Gulch to the new XTO gas plant on Magnolia.
- ❖ 21.6 miles – 18.8 miles of 20 inch and 2.9 miles of 16 inch natural gas line

❖ 22 miles – 4 inch steel waterline to follow gas line plus connection to existing waterline system

Barb: Large turn-over in staff. 30 percent vacancy. Housing and workload issues, particularly related oil and gas activity.

Jamie: we are also struggling with this due to the high cost of living

### **Kremmling Field Office, Dave Stout**

**Glenwood/Kremmling RMP revisions:** Interdisciplinary teams from the two offices continue their efforts with alternative development. In Kremmling, the ID team has spent many full days working on travel management. The area under our jurisdiction has been divided into zones and the ID team has been identifying routes in each zone that should be designated for continued use, those needed for administrative access and those needing to be closed. The results of this effort will be presented in the Draft RMP/EIS. We continue meeting with our agency cooperators. At the last meeting, a draft summary of our reasonably foreseeable development scenario was presented and discussed. We still are waiting for proposals from both the Wild and Scenic River Stakeholders group (for the Upper Colorado River) and the Lower Blue River Management Plan Stakeholders group offering alternative management options for management of those rivers. The schedule for both RMPs is slipping due to the need to conduct air quality monitoring. Alternative development will be ending soon, with briefings for the State Director, State Office program leads, and the Solicitor planned for June. Impact analysis should begin in July, with a Draft for public review available in the summer of 2009.

**North Park Stewardship:** The Stewardship Contract with Jackson County has been signed. A work plan for FY2008 has been developed and approved. A cultural inventory on the final segment of access road should be completed by the end of May, and work on the ground will begin when concurrence with the cultural inventory and recommendations is provided by the State Historic Preservation Office.

Haven't cut any trees yet. Will soon. As soon as ground is free of snow, arch clearance will be completed.

Lanny: Very disappointed this hasn't been done last year. Value of timber is going down everyday. IF we enter into one of these again, we know some of the pitfalls are, like the cultural study. We'll be following the next one more closely. Frustrating how slow gov't can work. Jackson county will be happy to share info with any other counties who enter into one of these.

Larry: Does BLM allow outside contracting to fill gaps in staffing. Hearing this staffing problem over and over.

John: Yes, project by project.

T wright: How many other projects are in the cue; how much resource is impacted by beetle kill.

Dave S: have several salvage sales. Fuels crew are treating areas. Stewardship project has been delayed by contracting. 60,000 acres of lodgepole that will probably be impacted. Salvage sales are usually several hundred acres.

**Oil and Gas Leasing:** The May 8, 2008, included eight parcels in Jackson County. Six parcels were sold competitively during the oil and gas lease sale; the remaining two were sold non-competitively.

**Oil and Gas Activities:** The 36-square-mile geophysical project in North Park was completed early in April. We expect applications this summer for two additional geophysical projects in North Park. The EOG Company is completing a second well in North Park, south of the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge. We received two APDs, have conducted on-sites for those, and expect to approve them in the next couple of weeks. The proposed wells are near the two already drilled, south of the Refuge. Five Notices of Staking have been submitted for wells in the same area.

**KFO Land Exchange Updates:** The Windy Gap Land Exchange, west of Granby, has not yet been completed. Approval by the BLM's Washington Office is expected soon. Following that approval, a Decision Record will be signed and the Notice of Availability of Decision published. A binding exchange agreement will be signed locking in the values of the exchange, until Congressional notification has been completed. As explained at prior RAC meetings, the exchange is between the BLM, the Forest Service and the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. The District will gain lands around their infrastructure. The BLM will gain land along the Colorado River; the Forest Service will gain a small amount of land in Arapaho National Recreation Area.

**Blue Valley Ranch Land Exchange:** The Blue Valley Ranch Land Exchange remains in hiatus, pending completion of the Kremmling RMP revision. An appraisal of offered and selected parcels will be conducted this summer at the request of the Blue Valley Ranch, as a means of determining the accuracy of the original appraisal. The new appraisal will be an interim appraisal. This fall, KFO staff will give a critical review of the NEPA document prepared for the exchange by Blue Valley Ranch's contractor.

**Lower Blue River Cooperative Management Plan:** Work continues on developing a management plan for the lower Blue River below the Green Mountain Reservoir. The BLM has been participating in developing the plan, which will address public use of that stretch of the river, most of which is bordered by private lands. The plan also addresses management of outstandingly remarkable values that were identified during wild and scenic rivers inventories on three segments of the Blue River. The Plan will be addressed in an alternative of the Kremmling RMP revision, if the Plan is substantially completed in time to be analyzed as part of the Draft RMP. The stakeholders group is moving toward establishing a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to implement their plan and provide formal management of the Blue River under the plan. The BLM, USFS, and BOR are slated to be advisors to the Board established under the nonprofit organization. Minutes of meetings, and plan drafts for review are posted on the Summit County website: <http://www.co.summit.co.us/> Look for a "Draft Lower Blue River Cooperative

Management Plan” link under the “Documents for Review” section in the upper, right corner.

**BLM and Kremmling Chamber of Commerce Activities:** The Kremmling Field Office is cosponsoring with the Kremmling Chamber of Commerce a number of events this summer, which will occur on public lands. The annual Kremmling Golf Classic will be part of the Kremmling Days celebration in June. Four running events are scheduled between May and October: the Coyote Creek Run, the Kremmling Classic, the Road Kill ½ Marathon, and the Gore Grind.

**Visit from Senate Appropriations Committee Staff:** On May 4th, the KFO (along with David Boyd) hosted a member of Senator Allard’s personal staff in Washington and three staff members from the Senate Appropriations Committee. The visitors had a float trip on the Upper Colorado River between Pumphouse and Radium. BLM staff had the opportunity to discuss public land management issues and respond to questions from the visitors.

### **Little Snake Field Office, John Husband**

**RMP Update:** LSFO continues to progress on the supplemental air quality analysis to the Little Snake Draft RMP/EIS. As reported at the last RAC meeting, EPA Region 8 reviewed the DEIS and found the air quality analysis to be inadequate. The primary concern is proximity to Class 1 air quality areas and the amount of new oil and gas activity projected to occur within the planning area over the next 20 years. After numerous discussions with EPA to determine the best way to proceed, we decided to conduct a supplemental air quality analysis, which will entail an additional public notification and comment opportunity. We worked with EPA to develop a protocol, and an air quality consultant has been conducting the modeling and analysis. The supplemental analysis is scheduled to be released in September of 2008. LSFO is developing the alternatives for the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. We have met with cooperating agencies to discuss preliminary alternatives.

**Hiawatha work continues:** The Rock Springs and Little Snake field offices continue to work with Questar and the Cooperating Agencies on a proposed energy development project that could include up to 4,200 new wells.(will probably be fewer wells, but will analyze this original number) About 66% of the new wells would be in Wyoming. The project schedule was delayed in January 2007 due to Questar’s requested modifications to the Proposed Action. The draft EIS is now scheduled to be complete in August 2008, and the Record of Decision is anticipated in the spring of 2009. Cooperating Agencies on this project are the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming State Geologic Survey, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, Wyoming Business Council, Colorado Department of Natural Resources (Colorado State Land Board and Colorado Division of Wildlife), Sweetwater County Commission, Sweetwater County Conservation District, Moffat County Commission, Northern Arapaho Tribe and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**Emerald Mountain:** BLM has been working closely with the City of Steamboat Springs conducting a number of public participation workshops to further understand and be able to integrate the public's interest in some of the more detailed aspects of resource and recreation management on Emerald Mountain. The next workshop is scheduled for May 29, 2008 at the Steamboat Springs Community Center. Implementation plans for the summer of 2008 are to improve signage and interpretation at Emerald Mountain, and complete some of the final pieces of the Ridge Trail. Development plans include beginning the concept and design for the Kemry Draw day use area

**Wild Horses:** The Little Snake Field Office is beginning the preparations for a wild horse gather in the Sand Wash Herd Management area. The appropriate management level (AML) for the Sand Wash herd is 163 to 362 horses, and the current population is estimated to be near the top or above this range. The gather is tentatively scheduled for the first week of October 2008.

**Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit:** Long winter and wet spring have brought a slow start to the fire season. Crews have done a lot of slash pile burning over the winter, especially for the Kremmling Field Office. Prescribed broadcast burning this spring was disappointing due to the unsettled weather and above normal moisture. Little Snake accomplished about 100 acres total on three different projects. All three FOs had planning and prep work ready to go, the weather just didn't allow much accomplishment. Browns Park Refuge did a small amount of burning, both piles and broadcast, and Dinosaur National Monument didn't have any burning planned. Initial attack crews and the Craig Interagency Hotshots are trained and ready to go. We have made resources available to assist in other places to help out.

BLM has announced a shift in our Wildland Fire Management Policy, which will be piloted in western Colorado. The changes are designed to implement the concept of Appropriate Management Response, to get away from some of the constraints that the concepts of Fire Use v. Fire Suppression have had on availability of rehabilitation funds and flexibility in management of fires. Wildland fires may now be managed for one or more objectives based on the Land/Resource Management plan direction. A new decision support process called the "Wildland Fire Decision Support System" (WFDSS) will be tested. The changes will be tested this season prior to being finalized in a proposed Implementation Guide to be used nationwide in 2009. If the units testing the new policy and decision tools find there are problems, they can use our existing systems this year (Wildland Fire Situation Analysis and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan)

T wright: meets suggestions in the past from this RAC. This RAC has written numerous letters in support for appropriate management response. Glad to see RAC has had some influence.

**Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan:** After twelve years of work the Northwest Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan was signed by numerous parties during a ceremony at the Little Snake Field Office on May 12, 2008. The Conservation Plan is meant to address the needs of greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) in the context of multiple land ownerships, uses, and species through a Conservation Plan. A key attribute of this Plan is that the Northwest

Colorado Greater Sage-Grouse Working Group (GSGWG) intends to enhance greater sage-grouse populations while taking into account the importance of local economies for the long-term maintenance of greater sage-grouse habitats and while maintaining all existing human uses of sage grouse habitats in Northwest Colorado. The plan is intended to prevent or preclude the federal listing of greater sage-grouse as threatened or endangered in Northwest Colorado by demonstrating the ability and the intent to maintain or enhance greater sage-grouse populations and greater sage-grouse habitat well into the future.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determines the need to list species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by evaluating five listing factors. These factors are:

1. The Present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the species' habitat or range.
2. Overutilization of the species for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes.
3. Disease or predation affecting the species.
4. The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms to protect the species.
5. Other natural or manmade factors affecting the species' continued existence.

The Conservation Plan addresses all five listing factors both directly and indirectly, identifies potential solutions, and provides for implementation of conservation actions to address impacts to greater sage-grouse and sage grouse habitat. If greater sage-grouse are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, it is intended that the Conservation Plan will serve as the basis of a recovery plan for the species in Northwest Colorado.

Signatories to the Conservation Plan include Moffat County, USFWS, CDOW, NRCS, State Land Board, BLM, numerous private landowners and many others. Additional individuals, companies, and agencies are expected to sign the plan. Signature on the plan indicates an understanding of the concepts and guidelines and intention of implementing them. BLM's signature does not constitute a RMP change, but many of the concepts in the plan are being carried into the LSFO RMP revision. A copy of the Conservation Plan is available from CDOW web site.

RMP revision for little snake will take this into account.

Larry: just signed this for Garfield/Rio Blanco sage grouse agreement as well.

Have a grant for partners in time. Volunteer archaeologists help us out. Will be going out to Sand Wash which will be designated open to OHV to help us with

## **Kevin King, COGCC**

Power point. Will work with BLM when state rules conflict with fed. If can't reach agreement, whichever agency has primacy rules will apply.

Jamie: Did BLM seek party status?

Answer: No. So they have some status as public.

Jeff C: USFS has party status.

T Wright: May be concern about federal primacy, so staying at an arm's length.

Larry: Many rules clearly conflict with federal rules.

Nov 1 complete implementation of rules and enforcement anticipated

Kevin will track down what other field hearings, official testimony, public comment? At which meetings

Jeff C: New positions to help you enforce.

Kevin: Approved for 21 new positions next fiscal year, not sure how many we will hire.

## **Renewable energy on public lands – Maryanne powerpoint**

Larry: Do right of ways come before or after leasing for geothermal.

A: like oil and gas. ROWs issued after lease.

Similar process to oil and gas leasing regulations.

Jeff C: How do you define what you own with geothermal?

John H: Considered a mineral value, so when fed has all minerals for an area, they have geothermal. Subsurface value until water expresses to the surface.

Maryanne: leaseholder pays royalties

T wright: Which RMPs were amended for wind energy.

A: San Luis valley, royal gorge. Some plans already IDed for wind energy

Larry: have to have back-up wind energy 65 % of the time. And that's usually premium energy at premium price.

Jamie: High potential areas don't always fit into current energy corridors fo

## **Subgroup selection criteria**

Jamie: do we want consistency on how we select subgroups.

Glenwood and Kremmling came to group ahead of the plan being started.

T Wright: As long as it meets FACA charter, we should be able to tailor towards specific needs of field office and public.

Clare: Don't want to see what happened on the white river happen again. Didn't meet, RAC didn't formally bless group.

Larry: Subcommittee is a tool for the Field Manager to use. Up to field manager whether they want to use that tool or not.

Jeff: We have already told you that we support these groups and we support field offices.

T Wright: Need to talk about deficiencies of White River, but don't need additional direction/rules other than FACA that are in place

Charlie: You need staff time dedicated to these groups to make sure they work.

## **Emerald Mountain Implementation, Gina Robison**

Powerpoint on implementing management plan

Larry: How do you get around ADA for something like building trails?

John H: Hasn't been applied trails in general. Picnic tables, facilities yes.

Gina: can't do solar or wind specifically stated in the plan

## **NEPA Handbook, Joe Stout**

Tool to help us follow NEPA. Significant policy changes cover public involvement. Nothing in 1988 mandated public involvement in EAs. Now we have to do some form or public involvement. It's up to the Field Manager's discretion about how to do it. Early public involvement is emphasized. Comment period on more controversial issues.

Brought a lot of guidance that's already out there into one place for a number of topics like Cat Exs.

Jeff; Cumulative impacts guidance?

Joe: Guidance on how to determine geographic scope, how far do you look into the future or the past.

Jaime: handbook is guidance, not requirements.



## **GJFO Fee Proposals, Catherine**

Fee proposals were sent out for your review. Need concurrence from Rec RAC, and wanted it from this group do.

Mud springs currently charging \$5 a night. Developed new business plan. A lot of improvements in that area.

North Fruita Desert campground receiving tons of use. Support for charging to camp.

Clare: would fees be going back to maintenance?

Yes, more than 85%. Need to redesign of areas People want logistical support like trash removal

Resolution supporting GJFO fees

Pat moves, Kathy seconds. Passes unanimously.

**Pat will get this to me electronically.**

## **Sasha Nelson, CEC**

NW Colorado native, have theory and practical knowledge about communication of natural resources. Here today for Luke Shaffer who has concerns about WRFO and can't be here today. Concern about sub committees up to the field a manager. If Kent didn't want one, why did he have one? Better communication needed. Luke had concerns:

Approval process: not all of the names were firm at the meeting. Approval was done electronically among RAC members, not out in the public.

Lack of understanding of desired outcomes, and specifically the process to get there.

Once meetings did occur, hinky stipulations put on subcommittee. Not to share documents with anyone else? Was that fair to limit distribution? What is appropriate? Perhaps there is a need for overall guidance for volunteers and how these groups should work.

Luke and CEC appreciate being asked to participate. Keen to continue participating in WRFO subgroup.

Jeff: What are you recommending to remedy this?

Sasha: look at existing FACA guidance and write simple handbook for the volunteer group. Don't need to create new guidelines, just review existing one.

Clare: Luke also shared that on-going communication would have helped. Communication by staff and BLM reps.

Sasha: Really curious about where group goes from here.

**Kathy: proposes resolution on supporting Dominguez Escalante NCA**

Lanny: is there a conflict with NCA and wilderness designation?

Catherine: NCA often carries a wilderness component. In this case, all the way around wilderness are areas in NCA where you can OHV, mountain bike.

Lanny: Is there threat that more wilderness could be added later?

Catherine: environmental groups did want more. Support did come from ground up, county commissioners in Mesa and Delta support.

Charlie: area proposed for wilderness managed as WSA for 20 years.

T Wright suggests amendment: RAC supports continuation of existing uses of the area and complying with Colorado water law Specifically talking about continuing of grazing and water uses.

Charlie: don't want to see resolution that trail being used a certain way now can't be changed, etc.

Catherine: Some people are currently

Larry: can't support existing uses then changed by management plan later. Want to preserve valid existing rights.

T Wright: does grazing count as valid existing rights?

Add language about valid existing rights and permitted uses (grazing), complying with Colorado water law.

Passes unanimously.

So this one will be passed on to Secretary from state director.

Subgroups.

GSFO: diverse group, developed wide range of alternatives. Very good process. Don't know if WRFO had subcontractor, that may be limitation.

Jamie: We had to modification of contract to use contractor as facilitator.

Clare: just focused on SRMA issues. Were able to go really in-depth. Going for appropriate range, not a consensus alternative, but consensus on the range of alternatives. Field offices much less likely to get a lot of backlash because citizen's were involved. How does the RAC endorse the work of these subgroups?

T Wright: traditionally assumption is we back what these groups have done. Don't think it's right to go back and rehash these things. If RAC members participating say it was a good process.

Larry: not a lot of additional public comments, we asked every meeting.

Clare: we had a lot of additional public involvement.

Jamie: KFO was more specific so it makes sense that they had more specifics

Joe: Representatives went back to their constituents.

Jamie: will need group again once we get public comment on the Draft.

Jamie and Dave S looking for support of what subgroups did.

**Unanimously passes. NW RAC supports work of the GSFO and KFO RMP subcommittees.**

Lanny: failed in my duty to attend these meetings. Plate is pretty full.

WRFO subgroups: Barb: No slight intended to subgroup. WRFO did not feel they knew who all the members of subgroup were.

Jamie: GSFO and KFO brought list of recommended members to RAC. Kent looked to RAC to provide/recommend names.

Charlie: No final list was approved. Never got feedback on my suggestions after Kent sent e-mail out.

Dave C: Requested that he follow the Glenwood model for the selection and process for the RMP.

T Wright: Want to see public involvement that we asked for. Want the subgroup to be involved in drafting alternatives. Request that we send a letter to Kent request that group be involved. Send letter to Sally, meaningful public involvement has been emphasis of this RAC, want to see that brought into the WRFO amendment.

Larry: I was told I was there to observe and answer question about RAC. I was not to direct the group. Dona and Kathy's role would be the same for WRFO.

T Wright: want group to be given meaningful opportunity for public involvement.

Barb: Should have draft alternatives from contractor in July. Will meet with RAC subgroup and cooperating agencies.

Jeff C: Not acceptable. Want parties to help contractor to draft alternatives.

T Wright: I suggest that you convene this group with contractor and go over alternatives in detail. If there are concerns you can bring them in before July

Larry: They are just looking at range of alternatives, not trying to reach consensus.

(Dave will draft letters to WRFO and Sally for RAC to review/before I send it forward)

Jamie: challenge to know how to handle predecisional documents. Show things to members and ask them not to share it with others? Makes you look secretive when in fact you are being more open.

Charlie: notify subcommittee about coop agency meetings?

### **Biomass resolution;**

Clare suggests amendment that treatments be focused in wildland urban interface.

T Wright disagrees.

Clare: with focus on most at-risk areas for first. Prioritizing based on risk.

Larry moves, second. Passes. Clare does abstains

### **Contracting resolution**

Catherine; There is template that they most use. They have little leeway to modify. Some of those flexibilities we will not get. That is a concern.

Charlie: Definitely want to encourage staff time be used for meaningful public involvement up front.

T Wright; want to move public involvement to the front. Procurement

Clare moves, t wright seconds

Goes to Jamie to share with sally to share with director of the NOC.

Add something about unanimously supported by RAC, will follow up with Secretary.

Next meeting items:

Presentation on EPCA III if appropriate to Colorado

Joe suggests lessons learned for KFO and GSFO to share

Send out Kremmling reservation info