

# Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council

**May 13, 2010**

**ATTENDEES**

Resource Advisory Council Members

Glenn Vawter, Cat 1	T Wright Dickinson, Category 1
Steve Gunderson, Cat 1	Steve Smith, Category 2
Dave Grisso, Category 1	Kai Turner, Category 3
Pat Kennedy, Category 2	Dean Riggs, Category 3
Lanny Weddle, Cat 3	
Clare Bastable, Category 2	
Tom Latham, Cat 1	

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

**BLM Staff**

Jamie Connell	David Boyd
Maryanne Kurtinitais	Kent Walter
Steve Bennett	Erin Curtis
Catherine Robertson	
Dave Blackstun	
Dave Stout	

Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Jon Hill		
Lyn McCormick		

T Wright called meeting to order at 8:13 a.m. Quorum present

Pat Kennedy nominated to chair, T Wright co-chair. Unanimous.

### **Wild horse and burro update**

Kent Walter -- 37,000 wild horses and burros now on public land. 23,000 at passage of whb act in 1971. To maintain balance check BLM is gathering more horses than BLM can adopt annually. Salazar wants BLM to address balancing herd growth with adoption rate, establish preserves in mid-west, showcasing some herds in the west with special designations. In oct 2009 Salazar issued that challenge. In Jan 2010 BLM starting addressing Salazar's challenge.

Five key areas :

population control,

gathers, adoptions

aml throughout nation

increase number of animals in private care

partnerships

Draft strategy out for public review next week. Will involve rac. There has been silent majority on this issue locally and nationally. Report to congress in Oct.

T Wright: pleased to hear some of what's in our resolution in there. How else can we be involved? 60-day period between rac meetings

Kent: could call a special session, get document to you ahead of time. Might want to interface with wild horse and burro advisory board

Jamie: agree we would have to hold separate meeting

WHB committee will meet in Denver in June.

Informal working group on horses: Dona, Dean, Steve Smith, Tom

Group will meet in Meeker June 3, 10-2 p.m. Not a formal meeting of the RAC, what they come up with will be discussed at an advertised rac meeting later.

Kent will ensure all members receive the document.

### **Antler collecting**

Limited amount of information received from people in the field. As big of an issue in NW Colo as anywhere. Only one call this year, usually one call at least a week. (user conflicts).

Gunnison and Montrose a big issue as well.

Camping too many days, travel management concerns

Dean: DOW Regional managers 3 of 4 opposed to any restrictions. Some are concerned about jurisdiction, state manages wildlife. The wildlife commission may need to discuss. Hasn't been a good discussion among blm and regional managers. That needs to happen.

Dave Blackstun: Once we had data from this season, we are planning to invite DOW to discussion with team.

Jamie: issue would be charging fees for collecting commercially. Other agency says they have jurisdiction

Dean: Antler considered same as wildlife under state rules

T Wright: they were out earlier, but fewer OHVs and more people on horses. One thing that concerned me was they were out in Feb pushing the wildlife around.

Steve Smith: How is this BLM issue? You do travel management anyway. Private land issues not BLM issue. State has authority over wildlife.

Dave BL. Antler gathering catalyst for these issues. Damage to fences, etc.

T Wright: somebody needs to step up and manage this issue. Doesn't matter which agency

Dean: make the contact with Ron Velarde when group is ready to go.

### **Renewable energy presentation**

Maryanne Kurtinaitis

37 fast track projects should be approved by Dec. 2010 following public participation. Wind, solar, geo, transmission. None in Colorado (that's because of where companies applied for ROWs) Eligible for ARRA funding

BLM Colorado has 11 positions approved for renewable. 5-person team in San Luis Valley. 3 part-time positions in State Office. No projects yet.

We have the door open in Colorado, it's just not here yet.

Glenn: why is hydropower not part of renewable?

Maryanne: nothing new happening with hydro, but it's there. Old permits being renewed. I didn't include it in presentation

Glenn: needs to go forward

Steve S: same scrutiny for solar and wind as we would for hydro. We want to see more hydro potential on existing hydro plants

T wright: concerned about projects that Wyoming is the lead. How does NW RAC get to participate.

Maryanne: Will get MOU about ROWs crossing more than one agency boundaries. Dave Boyd will distribute to NW RAC.

Two transmission projects in Colorado:

Energy Gateway South and Transwest Express: LSFO, WRFO, GJFO, sometimes CRVFO. Working on alternatives

39 wind applications for commercial development, none in Colorado. Colorado ranks 11<sup>th</sup> nationally in wind potential

No commercial scale solar projects on BLM lands. 131 commercial solar applications

Geothermal. No leases in Colorado. (wind and solar are ROWs, geothermal are leases)

Biomass – same story – gearing up and ready, nothing happening from the industry

Maryanne will check on whether Geothermal PEIS addresses that use affects neighbors geothermal potential

Steve Smith: why isn't priority on renewable near the grid, ie already paved areas, roof tops, etc

Maryanne: Not resources we manage. NREL says rooftops won't do it alone

T Wright: RAC needs to weigh in on powerline spacing, could end up with 5-mile corridor. Is this something we should weigh in on?

Clare: Wants resolution about RAC being involved in transmission, renewables. Two different things, not opposed to what T Wright is proposing.

Steve G: Presentation needs a cost comparison for all these power choices

Tom Latham: Second that. No discussion of economics on this one or the wild horse discussion

Energy group will draft on renewable, transmission

**Public comment:** Jon Hill. Local rancher. Submitted letter regarding wild horse and burro management.

Kent: urged Jon to include this as comment on draft strategy.

Jon: Seeing new horses in West Douglas that were probably released into the area by someone. Can tell because they look totally different from West Douglas horses.

Steve: What is impact on wildlife from horses?

T Wright: Livestock are rotated, wildlife migrate, but horses stay in same place all year. Plants need time to recover.

Dean: why are stallions not gelded when released?

Kent: Managing for natural thriving herd, geldings aren't considered natural.

### **Ruby-Horsethief Canyons – Catherine Robertson**

Four alternatives:

#### **No action**

First come first served

Permit offered in advance by GJFO during busy times, on site slow times

Permits fully office issued

All alternatives \$7 for camping. Non-fee permit for day-use

Pat Kennedy: Agree with this. What about REC RAC that needs to review.

Catherine: REC RAC hasn't met in more than a year

Steve Smith: need a different procedure for reviewing fee proposals. Do you have to take no-fee portions thru REC RAC.

Clare: let's do resolution or letter to state director. REC RAC broken, holding up several fee proposals in our offices. Propose either REC RAC gets fixed or proposal goes to another entity.

Group votes on the general concept of resolution and will draft it for future review

#### **Subgroup updates**

WRFO: Rac approved five new members to team. Letters sent and received. Meeting scheduled for June 2. They will look specifically at reclamation strategy. Kai and Dona are RAC liaisons. Cesark and Jon Hill are now on subgroup.

CRVFO: Met May 4. 30-day review on Chapter 4. Outfitter representative no longer on. Also Steve Smith now a full RAC member. Steve S nominated Peter Hart to take his place. Group approves Peter Hart as new member. Clare would like Steve Smith to be the RAC liaison. Approved.

KFO: Met May 5. Need two new members. Recommended John Bramer for motorized recreation in Grand and Jackson counties. Trout Unlimited Erica Straught.

GJFO: Steve G: high level of attendance, meets twice a month. Approved reasonable range of alternatives. Need to recommend to this RAC to support range of alternatives. Tom needs to be replaced as he's now on the RAC

McInnis: Met March 4. Bob S stepped down as chair, Pat K can't be on it because he is on this RAC, and the group is now a subgroup of this RAC. Most issues have been addressed. Not a whole lot going on for this group at this point. Catherine – review of public comments on fee river proposal.

## **Carbon sequestration presentation Vince Matthews**

### **Field manager updates**

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

##### **Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council subgroup for Kremmling:**

Nick Peterson, representing motor recreation on the subgroup has declined further participation. We ask the NW RAC members to appoint a replacement for the motorized recreation position on the subgroup. With the approval of the RAC, we will provide the new member with copies of the preliminary draft RMP, and include him/her in the next meeting of the subgroup, currently scheduled for June 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Kremmling RMP Revision:** The Kremmling Field Office's RMP team has revised Chapter 2 (alternatives) and Chapter 4 (impact analysis). A preliminary draft RMP was presented to representatives of cooperating agencies and members of the RAC subgroup, on May 6<sup>th</sup>. Thirteen cooperators and five subgroup members participated in the meetings. (There were no RAC liaisons at the subgroup meeting.) The meetings included a review of activities since the last meetings with the groups, discussions of Chapters 2 and 4, details on how to make substantive comments. Comments from those groups are due June 4<sup>th</sup>. The next meetings with the groups are scheduled for June 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Fuels Treatments:** Three prescribed burns are planned in Jackson County this spring: the 200-acre Fischer Draw burn on Independence Mountain, the 700-acre Sheep Mountain burn, west of Walden, and the (approximately) 200-acre Vils burn, southeast of Walden. The 200-acre Dry Gulch fuels treatment project in the Yarmony area in Grand and Eagle counties, planned for the fall of 2009, may be attempted this spring. The Vils, Dry Gulch and Sheep Mountain burns are intended to improve forage and habitat for wildlife and livestock. The Fischer Draw burn will focus on modifying rangeland vegetation and regenerating aspen. We are contracting with a fuels crew from The Nature Conservancy to assist with some of the burns in North Park.

**Forestry:** Cooperative efforts continue with Jackson County on the North Park Stewardship Agreement. A 160-acre project on Independence Mountain will commence this fiscal year. The Colorado Youth Corps will thin dead lodgepole on about 130 acres along roads, and a crew from The Nature Conservancy will pre-commercially thin another 30 acres. This project will have a biomass component. Commercial timber sales contracts under the Stewardship Agreement have been affected by 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. Outside of the Stewardship Agreement, the 200-acre Parsons Draw sale will be reoffered in June. The 60-acre Hogback sale has been cancelled at the request of the contractor, and will be reoffered. Negotiated sales of the Willow Creek (47 acres) and the Little Buffalo (17 acres) projects have been completed and work should begin in the spring. The 100-acre Reed Creek commercial sale is planned for late summer or the fall.

**Jackson County Shooting Range:** As previously reported, Jackson County submitted an application for a Recreation and Public Purposes patent for a shooting range east of Walden. The shooting range, on public land, has been in use for many years but hasn't had formal administration of the site. The Colorado Division of Wildlife was in the process of purchasing the site for public use, but has deferred to the County's interest in owning the range. Work on the application will begin shortly with completion of a paleontological survey, a mineral report, and an environmental site assessment, key steps in processing the application. Additionally, a BLM Cadastral Surveyor will "monument" the legal location of the range, so that work on the application can be completed.

**Union Telephone Cell Tower Location:** 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, with mitigations. The Colorado SHPO raised concerns with the location due to Native American concerns and cultural sites, and Union Telephone was asked to look at alternative locations for cell towers. Union has finally reported back on their further analysis, and we have completed another round of consultation with the affected tribes, to consider alternatives to the location originally proposed by Union. We will go back to the SHPO for further consultation on Union's preferred location.

**Rangeland Management:** We are preparing a "drought warning letter" which will be sent to grazing allotment holders. As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, the Upper Colorado Basin was at 76 percent of average, and other drainages and basins have even lower percentages of average. While snows in April provided some relief, we still expect water flows to be substantially below average. In our letter, we are offering suggestions about possible courses of action, such as reductions in livestock use or adjustments in grazing seasons, should the need arise.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Projects:** The Kremmling Field Office's three ARRA projects are moving through contracting. The North Sand Hills Special Recreation Management Area Resource Protection project will delineate camp areas and roads to protect cultural sites. An on-site visit with potential bidders has been completed. The Kremmling Bunkhouse Replacement project will replace a very unsafe employee bunkhouse, and provide additional housing capacity over the old bunkhouse, so that we can move summer employees out of travel trailers. An on-site visit with potential bidders has been completed. The North Park Stewardship Agreement Biomass project will result in a timber resource inventory on about 9,000 acres in the Independence Mountain area, to support future timber management in the area. Bids

have been received and are being reviewed. All three projects should be completed by the end of the fiscal year.

**Kremmling Field Office Summer Employees:** Much of our summer field work is accomplished by temporary employees hired for the summer. We have hired 10 employees: two in forestry, two in range/hydrology/weeds, two in river recreation management, and four in upland recreation management (especially OHV management). Additionally, our range SCEP, Tina Transtrom has been afforded the rare opportunity this summer to serve as an intern with the Department of the Interior's Solicitor's Office in Lakewood.

### **David Blackstun, Little Snake Field Office**

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:** The Little Snake Field Office received some funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA (economic stimulus bill) to support a six proposed projects in the LSFO management area. These funds are being managed out of the Colorado State Office for projects 1 and and out of the LSFO for projects 3-5. The proposed projects include:

1. Gravel re-surface of 3 miles of the East Cross Mountain Road;
  2. Energy Efficiency improvements to the HVAC control system for the LSFO building;
  3. Vegetation enhancement and fuels projects to include brush beating, juniper removal, or other vegetation treatments to support habitat enhancement and fuels reduction;
- Summer 2010
4. Additional cultural resource surveys in support of the Sand Wash travel Management plan development. – Ongoing Summer 2009 through summer 2010
  5. Conversion of 3 windmills to solar powered livestock water systems. – Summer 2010

**Oil and Gas:** Applications for drilling permits continue to be submitted at a relatively slow rate in FY 2010. Wexpro has commenced drilling for 2010. We expect drilling activity to be on par with last year, but activity will be more for development wells than for exploratory wells.

The Rock Springs and Little Snake Field Offices continue to work with Questar and other cooperating agencies on a proposed energy development project that could include up to 4,200 new wells. About 33% of the new wells would be in Colorado. BLM is currently working through issues related to sage-grouse habitat and air quality. The Draft EIS is now scheduled to be complete in January 2011.

Questar Management Inc., BLM-LSFO, and SHPO, in consultation with Moffat County Commissioners, Eastern Shoshone, Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Northern Ute, are pursuing an agreement on how to handle archaeological discoveries during oil and gas development in Hiawatha and Powder Wash basin. During 2009 development, discoveries of archaeological sites became increasingly common, necessitating a way to protect those resources with less time delay. This agreement has been reviewed and will be finalized and signed in the near future.



**RMP Update:** We have prepared the Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Little Snake Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The LSFO and the CSO are currently conducting briefings and in discussions with the Washington Office and the Department of Interior to inform the personnel in these two offices of the RMP management actions contained within the proposed plan. Release of the Final EIS is pending Washington review and approval.

**Fire Management** – Seasonal fire crews including the Craig Hot Shots are now on board and training for the 2010 fire season.

**Colorado River Valley Field Office, Steve Bennett**

**RMP update:** The Colorado River Valley Field Office and the Kremmling Field Office have completed the preliminary draft Resource Management Plan Revision and Environmental Impact Statement. The Cooperating Agency and RAC subgroup reviews have been initiated with a series of meetings held May 4 and 6<sup>th</sup>. The Cooperating Agencies and RAC Subgroup have 30 days to review and comment. The Colorado River Valley groups have been able to review and comment on Chapters 1,2 and 3 as well as supporting documents last year. This review will be focused on Chapter 4, Environmental Consequences. We plan to share the travel management implementation components of the alternatives and collaborate with them over the selection of the Preferred Alternative at the next series of meetings. The RMP revision schedule has been revised and the draft is expected to be ready for public release in winter 2010/2011.



## Bureau of Land Management

### Joint Glenwood Springs and Kremmling RMP Schedule

Internal Working DRAFT Schedule-----**Not for Public Release**-----Dates are Approximate

Milestones	Dates
Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review of the <i>Preliminary</i> Draft RMP (excluding Air Quality) including Chapter 4	May 4 – June 4, 2010
State Office Review	July 12-23, 2010
Air Quality & Socioeconomic Modeling complete	August 17, 2010
Washington Office and Solicitor Review	September 13-24, 2010
Release Draft Resource Management Plan	Winter 2010/2011
End of public comment period	Spring 2011
Release Proposed Plan /Final EIS	Fall 2011
Protest period ends	Fall/Winter 2011
Sign RODs	Winter/Spring 2012

“\*\*” = excludes Air Quality Section

**Interagency Energy Team:** The Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) is fully staffed with four Petroleum Engineering Technicians (PETs) and one Lead PET. These positions will accomplish the Director's priority for increased inspections for production accountability; both in the field on production facilities and in the office doing production audits on producing cases. This is a Washington Office goal for Colorado BLM for FY2010. As a result of this our inspection numbers have been increased (by the direction of the Colorado State Office) and this is reflected in our Inspection and Enforcement Matrix Strategy as required and planned inspections. The BLM in Colorado received an increase in funding in order to fill three positions within the State, and one of these positions is located in the CRVFO. Having a full complement of PETs will enable us to increase production accountability and to ensure safe working conditions and environmentally sound drilling practices for the approximately 200+ wells that are drilled on federal lands within our field office jurisdiction every year.

Although drilling activity and approval of Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) have slowed we are still working on Master Development Plans (MDPs) that will provide for future permitting and drilling of federal wells.

MDPs approved this FY = 3 analyzing 303 new wells

MDPs pending approval = 3 analyzing 326 new wells

APDs approved this FY = 104

APDs pending as of today = 66 (61 incomplete and 5 complete and pending)

There have been a total of 132 new well starts since October 1, 2009 with 42 wells completed (all of which are producing gas wells).

**Grazing Permit Renewals:** The CRVFO has no backlog of grazing permit renewals that are not fully processed with NEPA. Some permit transfers are pending due to problems with base property leases. Applications for transfers frequently are missing proper paperwork, incomplete and not submitted timely.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA):** There are a total of 5 projects that are in various stages of within the CRVFO. Total estimated value of \$ 554,000. Projects include:

- Habitat Restoration Wilderness Weed Control – Completed 2009.
- Abram's Creek Fish Barrier Removal
- Roan Plateau Travel Management Implementation
- Roan Cabin Solar Retrofit
- King Mountain Cabin Energy Conservation

#### **GRAND JUNCTION FIELD OFFICE**

**RMP Revision:** The 1.2 million acre Grand Junction field office in western Colorado is revising its Resource Management Plan, which was approved in 1987. The GJFO has completed the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), Areas of Critical

Environmental Concern report (ACEC report), and Community Assessment documents and posted them to its planning website. The Reasonable Foreseeable Development for fluid minerals, the Mineral Potential Report for solid minerals, and the Lands with Wilderness Character report will be posted soon. The next opportunity for public comment will be when the draft RMP is released in June 2011.

### Wild & Scenic River Analysis

The RMP Revision includes an inventory and analysis of BLM rivers as "eligible" and "suitable" for consideration in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS). The GJFO has completed an inventory and eligibility determination, this report is available on-line. The next step is evaluating eligible segments for suitability. The purpose of the suitability phase of the study process is to determine whether eligible rivers would be appropriate additions to the national system by considering trade-offs between corridor development and river protection. The Colorado River District has convened a diverse stakeholder group to discuss options and provide consensus-based recommendations to the BLM. The group plans to meet in late May to negotiate their final recommendations, to date they have reached consensus on Colorado River Segment 1 & 2; Gunnison River Segment 2; Little Dolores River; Roan Creek and Carr Creek. All comments will be considered, analyzed and incorporated into the alternative development of the RMP and presented in the Grand Junction Field Office, Wild and Scenic River Suitability Report scheduled to be available late June 2010.

### Travel Management

BLM staff and cooperators (USFS, County, State, Municipalities, DOW) recently completed six weeks of interdisciplinary meetings that included and incorporated thousands of public comments into three alternatives for 3000 miles of routes. The goal of the process is to create a balanced travel and transportation system that incorporates the overall motorized and non-motorized commercial, administrative and recreational access needs while minimizing impacts to natural and cultural resources. Cooperators are encouraged to review and comment on the maps available at the BLM office through May 14. The travel management plan is being developed concurrently with the RMP Revision, the public will be able to comment on the proposed travel management alternatives when the draft is released.

**Recreation:** A familiarization tour was provided to the Grand Junction VCB volunteers and staff to highlight the types of recreation opportunities that are available in the Bang's Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (Lunch Loops mountain biking area, Mica Mine trail as well as various motorized opportunities). The focus of the "fam" tour was to educate the VCB regarding how we manage these areas so they can provide precise information to visitors to assure the visitors are "fit" to the appropriate opportunity.

2009 Colorado Volunteer of the Year Recognition: The Bureau of Land Management Colorado State Office announced its 2009 Volunteer of the Year Award and the organization recipient was the Colorado Plateau Mountain Bike Trail Association. COPMOBA is one of the most effective trail stewardship organizations in western

Colorado and one of the most active volunteer groups. They contributed hundreds of volunteer hours in 2009 to build and maintain sustainable trails. COPMOBA celebrated its 20th year as an organization in 2009, and was inducted into the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. COPMOBA's partnership with BLM has been key to the development of some of the premier mountain biking trails in the nation, from the long-distance Kokopelli's, Tabeguache and Paradox Trails to the groundbreaking Rustler's Loop educational trail and Free Lunch freeride trail. "The COPMOBA/BLM partnership serves as an outstanding model for creating and maintaining well-designed, sustainable trails that provide world-class recreational opportunities while protecting public lands.

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA):** There are a total of 16 projects that are in various stages of completion within GJFO, Dominguez-Escalante and McInnis Canyons NCAs. Total estimated value of \$2.5 million. Most projects have either been awarded, completed, or are scheduled to be awarded by BLM's June 30 deadline.

Four projects are completed, including upgrades at the West Creek Picnic Area near Gateway and upgrades to the Mud Springs campground. Other projects include solar improvements at the Air Center and at the Whitewater Ware Yard, and road/access upgrades on Coal Canyon Road into the Little Bookcliffs Wild Horse Herd Area. Improvements at the 27 ¼ Road pistol range will be completed shortly.

**Red Cliff Mine/McClane Canyon:** The process of revising the Draft EIS for the proposed Red Cliff Mine project is expected to begin in the next four to six weeks. The project proponent, CAM, has hired a new environmental contractor, and the new contractor is reviewing all of the information and data from the previous contractor. Meanwhile, BLM's project manager for the project has retired, and a new project manager is being hired.

Meanwhile, CAM Coal Company has submitted a proposal to modify its existing coal lease at McClane Canyon Coal Mine. The proposal includes adding 320 acres to provide access to coal resource in the existing lease on the north end. The proposal also includes a 15-acre waste rock pile and construction of a preparation plant (70 feet tall and 60 feet by 60 feet). CAM has hired a third party contractor to prepare the environmental analysis on the proposal, and is finalizing a MOU with the contractor now. Once that has been completed, the BLM Grand Junction Field Office will initiate the environmental analysis. We hope to have it completed in six months. The Colorado State Office will make a decision regarding approving the lease modification proposal based on the EA.

**Whitewater Sewer Uplift Project:** At a meeting several months ago with county staff, the BLM learned about new changes to the project alignment. County staff was aware that new cultural and plant surveys would be required due to these changes. Surveys could not be completed until the spring, and have now been completed. We are currently awaiting results from the surveys. If the surveys reveal cultural or plant species in the new project alignment, new consultations will be initiated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for plants. A consultation with the State Historic

Preservation Office for cultural resources will be scheduled once information from this spring's surveys is available.

**Bridgeport Trailhead:** We are continuing to work with Mesa County R & B and Union Pacific RR with engineering contractor HDR to develop a final feasibility study on our options for providing a safe, legal public crossing in the Bridgeport Bridge area. A geotechnical study has been completed and we are awaiting the results in order to develop the appropriate environmental assessments as well as determine public meetings to discuss the options.

**Proposed MDP for Whitewater Unit:** Public scoping period for Fram's proposed Whitewater Unit Master Development Plan closed May 5. The Whitewater Unit consists of approximately 90,400 acres 15 miles southeast of Grand Junction and eight miles northwest of Delta, in Mesa and Delta counties. It includes nearly 65,000 acres of BLM-managed public land, nearly 20,000 acres of private land, and about 6,000 acres of split estate (private surface with federally owned minerals underneath). The Master Development Plan proposes up to 492 wells on 46 proposed and nine existing well pads beginning in 2011. Included is construction of up to 15 miles of new roads, upgrading of up to 48 miles of existing two-track roads, and maintenance of about 23 miles of existing roads. About 90 miles of gas gathering pipelines and water lines would be installed along the roads. The proposal also includes construction of up to one additional compressor site in addition to the two existing compressor stations. Directional drilling technology would be used to drill the majority of the wells, minimizing surface disturbance from new roads and pads.

The BLM received about 30 comments on the proposal. Comments were mixed, with some favoring the project for its perceived positive economic impact on the region, and others opposed due to concerns about water and air quality and other possible environmental impacts. Nine comments from local governments and organizations provided information to help guide the environmental analysis.

**Proposed MDP for Black Hills MDP:** NEPA analysis is continuing on the Black Hills Master Development Plan (MDP) northwest of DeBeque. A final draft of the Environmental Analysis is expected to be out for public comment in the next month or so.

**Mountain Island Land Exchange:** This land exchange proposal involves the exchange of 788 acres of federal lands for 576 acres of private lands in Glade Park to consolidate public land ownership, provide important public access to the Timber Ridge area and to acquire an inholding within the McInnis Canyons NCA. The federal and private lands will be appraised this summer (appraisal requests have been submitted to the Appraisal Services Directorate). A public meeting will be held this summer to answer questions and address concerns from the public.

**Bangs Canyon Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) Acquisitions:** The BLM is working in partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy, a nonprofit organization, to acquire four parcels adjacent to the south bank of the Gunnison River from two willing sellers. The parcels are edgeholdings to the Bangs Canyon Special

Recreation Management Area and will be incorporated into the SRMA boundary if acquired. The proposed acquisition also includes an easement that would provide public access to the Tabeguache Trail from Highway 141 in Whitewater. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Emergency Inholding money has been approved for this acquisition. Pending appraisals, title approval, and NEPA compliance, a closing this year is anticipated.

### **MCINNIS CANYONS NCA**

**McInnis Canyons Subgroup:** The BLM will hold an open house June 1 to discuss alternatives for managing the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River. Four alternatives are being considered, including different scenarios for fees and permits. NCA staff is seeking the public's feedback on the alternatives and the potential permit systems. This public input will be used to prepare an Environmental Assessment to analyze options for managing public use and minimizing impacts to the visitor experience and protecting natural resources. Members of the McInnis Canyons subgroup of the Northwest Resource Advisory Council (formerly the NCA Advisory Council) will also attend.

### **DOMINGUEZ-ESCALANTE NCA**

BLM is re-opening the application period for nominations for the Dominguez-Escalante NCA Advisory Council. The final nomination period will begin as soon as the Federal Register Notice is published. The 26 applications received to date are being considered and do not need to be re-submitted.

Meanwhile, internal preparation for the Resource Management Planning process for the NCA is ongoing. One key position (the planning team lead) that will support the planning effort has been hired, and a selection for the Outdoor Recreation Planner will be made within several weeks.

## **White River Field Office Program Updates, Kent E. Walter**

### **White River Oil and Gas RMP Amendment**

The BLM White River Field Office is developing an Oil and Gas Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 are in completed final Draft. 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 launched the quantitative analysis for the development of Chapter 4, the Impact Analysis chapter, in June 2009 with anticipated completion in early June 2010. An updated Air Quality Assessment is on-schedule to be completed in spring 2010. Work is also underway to develop a Resource Management & Monitoring Protocol (RMMP), designed to serve as a cost-effective and publicly accepted approach for landscape-change monitoring and assessment. From a fundamental perspective, the RMMP is an RMPA implementation strategy that has two objectives. First, to determine the most efficient way to inventory and monitor surface disturbance and reclamation activities, with the inventorying and monitoring being completed via some combination of

geospatial technologies and fieldwork. The second objective is to development an assessment protocol, using landscape metrics and fieldwork-results, to determine the ecological effects of landscape change related to O&G development. We anticipate a Notice of Availability for the Draft Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS to be published in the Federal Register in winter 2010. 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**

Two projects have been approved for the office under ARRA. One is the White River Field Office Travel Management Plan which falls under the Trails Maintenance and Construction category. The other is the Missouri Creek Road Repair project which falls under the Roads and Bridges Maintenance and Construction category. Planning is underway for both projects.

### **Energy Program**

#### *Oil Shale RD&D*

WRFO approved American Shale Oil, LLC's (AMSO) Plan of Development (POD) on September 3, 2009. AMSO is currently engaged in detailed design and construction contracts for surface facilities and the heater-producer well. Construction of facilities is expected to commence spring 2010. Shell Frontier's exploration plan for COC 69166 (East Lease) was approved by the WRFO on October 15, 2009. 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. Chevron is analyzing information gathered during their geo-hydrologic drilling /testing and continues to work on a POD.

#### *Pipelines and Infrastructure Projects*

The Overland Pass NGL line from Greasewood Hub to Wyoming is completed and is in service with some reclamation to complete in Spring 2010. Exxon Mobil's Hatch Gulch multi-line project is under construction and scheduled to be completed March 2010. Exxon Mobil and Williams have pending multi-line systems in the Ryan Gulch and Black Sulphur area that they plan to construct in Summer 2010. Route selection for the Gateway South 500Kv AC power line and the Transwest 600kv DC power line is still in progress. Both lines will transmit electricity from Wyoming to Nevada and will include wind generated power. Rio Blanco, Moffat, and Garfield Counties are cooperating agencies. White River Field Office is working with the Rangely Hospital District for the sale of property for the proposed new Rangely facility.

### **Fire and Fuels Program**

Two of the three planned prescribed fires on the agenda for FY 2009 have been completed, East Jordan and Carl's Hole. The staff is working on rehab plans for this summers wildland fires, Crooked Wash, Duck Creek, Spring Creek, Denny, Mellen, and Scenery Gulch.

### **Geographic Information Systems Program**

During early 2010, priorities for the GIS Program included 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**

WRFO is working on the 2010 grazing permit renewals; plans are to finish all necessary field work and issue permits by September of 2010. WRFO is working on approximately 35 renewals at this time; however, only 29 will be expiring in 2010. Field work will be starting for our 2010 and 2011 permit renewals. Grazing Fees have not been set for the 2010 Grazing Season. The 2009 grazing fees were set at \$1.35/AUM.

### **Cultural and Paleontology**

The cultural program is currently working on providing clearances for grazing-permit renewals (including planning fieldwork for 23 different allotments), and forthcoming prescribed burns. Also for the 2010 field season WRFO archaeologists will survey portions of Canyon Pintado National Historic District with hopes of furthering knowledge of the archaeological sites in the Canyon. Over the past year, paleontologists working in the WRFO have recovered significant new specimens of prehistoric animals and plants, most notably Eocene mammals such as Colodonts (relatives of modern tapirs), and the iconic Uintathere, a saber-toothed ungulate from an extinct branch separated from modern even-toed or odd-toed ungulates.

### **Recreation Program**

The Recreation Program has a multitude of activities underway and planned for 2010. New maps and informational materials are being added to 14 kiosks around the field office. We are continuing with road signing, as well as planning to add many new signs along the boundaries of our Wilderness Study Areas. Recreation staff are also continuing to work with the Rangely Rock Crawlers off-road club to develop trails and operational plans for the group's Spring and Fall events. Plans are underway for multiple National Public Lands Day events (trail maintenance and clean-up) and for the first *Hands-on-the-Lands* event – a program to bring outdoor education to local middle-school students. We are also moving forward with initial steps toward a travel management plan for the WRFO with road and trail inventories expected during the 2010 field season. Planning for the upcoming hunting seasons is underway. The WRFO and US Forest Service will be holding an open-house meeting for all permitted Outfitters to discuss the current issues with Special Recreation Permits and future permitting processes. BLM is currently reviewing an application for a Wilderness Therapy Program, which has been operating in the area mainly on private lands.

### **Soil, Water, and Air Program**

In January of 2010, an air-quality monitoring station was established near Meeker (just south, on the mesa) with plans for a second monitoring station to be established this summer, in the west-central portion of the field office. Water monitoring will also continue in the forthcoming year. Currently, the WRFO maintains four stream-flow



measurement sites in the Piceance Creek watershed and there are plans to add an additional two sites this summer. The WRFO also helps supports seven USGS stream-flow measurement sites to measure surface water quality in areas experiencing natural gas development. A groundwater monitoring program with the USGS will establish 5 dedicated groundwater-quality monitoring wells in the Piceance Basin this year. This summer the WRFO will also: continue collecting information on, and document the location of, natural springs used as water sources for livestock and wildlife in the resource area; and will continue monitoring ten precipitation-recording sites are maintained throughout the WRFO.

### **Wild Horses**

On August 5, 2009 the court ruled in favor of the Plaintiffs and set aside the 2008 Gather Plan for the West Douglas Herd Area. BLM will be completing a census of both the West Douglas Herd Area and the East Douglas/Piceance Creek Herd Management Areas in February. Both areas are currently scheduled for gathers in the Fall of 2010.

### **Weed Management**

WRFO will continue its weed program for 2010. WRFO completed several weed spraying projects in 2009, including the completion of approximately 300 acres of leafy spurge aerial spraying. In addition, weed crews have treated 250 to 300 additional acres of various other weeds within the county. The weed program is looking to complete additional spraying operations in 2010.

LSFO: All summer will be treating wild horses with fertility booster by dart. Trying to dart 62 mares.

Jamie: make sure offices with subtracs can get to regular rac meeting to approve recommendations of subtrac in an open forum

CRVFO: steve smith wants more information about WSA weed control process.

GJFO: discussion of NCA around Gateway. BLM's role is to keep abreast of the situation and provide information as needed. Discovery Channel will be shooting a new show in Gateway, new subdivision going in. May stretch current staff.

WRFO:

Clare: we need an update on where things are with air quality models, assessments, etc with BLM. Where are we in terms of developing the right process for the assessment? Need to follow your progress

Jamie: Regional solution needed

Wild Horse and Burro: Completed counts in February. 466 head of horses were counted: 265 head inside of the PEDHMA, 73 head inside of the WDHA, and 128 head of horses

outside of the Herd Management Area or Herd Area. Gathers scheduled for August. EA on gathers should be out in June for public comment.

Gathers are planned for summer – avoid hunting seasons, hard time for horses like winter, which we heard from the public

T Wright: seen a number of “Section 8” filings, which is a process when permittees and land managers can’t reach agreement on grazing practices on a particular allotment.

**Next meeting:**

Air quality update

Wild Horse strategy update

REC RAC resolution

Conversation about how we are doing on certain issues (T Wright)

Oil and gas leasing reforms if they are out

Meeting adjourned about 3 p.m.