

**Northwest Resource Advisory Council**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, November 10, 2005**  
 BLM Grand Junction Field Office  
 2815 H Rd.  
 Grand Junction, Colorado

**ATTENDEES**

Resource Advisory Council Members

David Bailey, Category 2	Kathy Hall, Category 3
Geoff Blakeslee, Category 2	Jon Hill, Category 1
Dave Cesark, Category 1	Pat Kennedy, Category 2
Jeff Comstock, Category 3	Charles Kerr, Category 2
T. Wright Dickinson, Category 1	John Martin, Category 3
Wade Haerle, Category 2	Larry McCown, Category 3

Not present: Charlie Yates, Category 1; Ken Currey, Category 1; and Forrest Nelson, Category 3

**BLM Staff**

Jamie Connell	Mel Lloyd
Doug Diekman	Catherine Robertson
Dan Haas	John Ruhs
John Husband	Kent Walter

<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Town/City</b>
Rich Baca	Congressman John Salazar	Grand Junction
Matt	Senator Ken Salazar	Grand Junction
Ron Velarde	Colorado Div. of Wildlife	Grand Junction
Barbara Hill	Self	Grand Junction
Joyce Olson	Self	Grand Junction
Steve Smith	The Wilderness Society	Glenwood Springs
Corrie Bonnar	Colorado Environmental Coalition	

**Opening Remarks**

Chairman Jeff Comstock called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum.

**Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time**

Jamie Connell noted that the RAC appointments will hopefully be announced by the next meeting. She handed out a briefing paper on grazing permit renewals, which was requested at the last meeting. Catherine Robertson distributed packets received from Gateway Canyons Resort during yesterday's RAC field trip. Comstock introduced Rich Baca, Congressman John Salazar's local representative. Mel Lloyd announced that BLM is hosting a public meeting from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on December 5, 2005 on the programmatic vegetation Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the Grand Vista Hotel in Grand Junction.

## **Field Manager Updates**

Glenwood Springs: Connell reported that her office is pleased with their fiscal year 2005 targets/accomplishments. The East Eagle Trails and Hardscrabble Projects are going well, but there are access issues complicating the Gypsum Hills Project.

Kremmling: John Ruhs reported on a mountain pine beetle epidemic in the KFO's resource area. BLM is exploring ways to market the dead timber and efficiently use the resulting biomass. Impacts from the beetle kill and ways to prevent future epidemics will be studied. Glenwood Springs and KFO are in the preliminary phase of conducting a joint Resource Management Plan. Two land sales have been completed, and the Blue Valley land exchange is progressing. About 2,500 acres were treated for fuels reduction in the urban interface. The KFO has 18 grazing permits that will expire. Field work has been completed for those, and the paperwork will be finalized within the specified timeframe.

White River: Kent Walter reported that the final decision for the West Douglas Herd Area was to totally remove the herd. The protest period ended October 18, and five protests were received. The final decision is expected in January 2006. Construction of two industry pipelines has been approved. The Entrega pipeline is well underway, and Wyoming Interstate Company's pipeline is scheduled to proceed soon. The Encana Gas Plant and Pipeline Project has been approved and is open for a 30-day protest period. An application was received from Exxon Mobile for a gas plant and related facilities; it's currently in the scoping period. Industry has expressed an interest in developing 13,000 to 15,000 gas wells in the Piceance Basin in the next several years. As a result of the oil and gas activity, the WRFO is entering into an EIS early next year. Industry has been asked to fund the EIS, which is a common requirement from BLM. There were 20 nominations nationwide to conduct oil shale research, design and development on public lands, and 10 of those were in Colorado. All were located in Rio Blanco County. WRFO renewed 19 grazing permits last year, and this year's numbers will likely be similar. Inventory and field work has been completed, and the deadline will be met.

Little Snake: John Husband reported that those same industry pipelines in the WRFO are also crossing the LSFO resource area. Application for Permit to Drill activity is steadily increasing but not at the rate of surrounding FOs. The FO did recently receive a proposal to develop 900 to 4,000 wells. An Environmental Assessment associated with the Emerald Mountain land exchange is being completed, and appraisal reports will be out soon for public review. The LSFO RMP is progressing well. The Northwest Colorado Stewardship group has been a great help to the LSFO in working through this process. They are working on their own alternative to present to BLM. The Sand Wash Basin Wild Horse gather went well in October. The herd management level was reduced to about 163 animals; an amount that will help sustain a healthier habitat for both horses and wildlife. Roughly 250 grazing permits are managed, and to effectively manage the workload, permit renewals will be processed in phases.

Grand Junction: Catherine Robertson reported that South Shale Ridge parcels are included in today's oil and gas lease sale. Additional stipulations have been added to protect threatened and endangered species found in the area. The North Fruita Desert management plan implementation is going well. Travel signs have been installed with the help of community partners who enjoy using the area. The statewide OHV crew installed the remaining signs last month. Construction

of the improved campground, located in the bicycle emphasis area, is nearly complete. A rights-of-way application was received from CAM Holdings for proposed expansion of coalmining activity, also located in the NFD. The ROW is currently being evaluated by BLM, and a third-party EIS will likely be initiated. This process will provide for extensive public involvement. Comments on the Bangs Canyon Implementation Environmental Assessment are being analyzed. GJFO received about 200 unique comments, with several thousand more received as form-type comments. Access to public lands at Bridgeport has been restricted for about 25 years because of the dilapidated bridge. A new foot/horse bridge is being constructed by BLM and should be completed in mid-December. Robertson introduced BLM GIS specialist Doug Diekman, who worked with Mesa County IT specialists to develop a web page on the Mesa County website allowing property owners to search mineral ownership status and determine whether their property would be affected by the quarterly lease sales held by BLM. The web page should go live late next week. The RAC was provided a demonstration of how the online tool works.

Charlie Kerr commended the GJFO for moving forward on the Bridgeport bridge project, as well as the new online notification tool. He would like the new web page to also show post-lease information.

### **Public Comment Period**

Barbara Hill was disappointed there were no public meetings in Grand Junction on the Roan Plateau RMP. She hopes that the community alternative is selected and no drilling occurs on top.

Connell explained that many times Glenwood and Rifle residents are forced to travel to Grand Junction for meetings, and the decision was made to hold meetings in those communities' backyards. A RAC member suggested that Hill contact RAC members as another way to communicate to BLM.

Ron Velarde announced that the Colorado Division of Wildlife is revising its elk management policy for Data Analysis Units E2 to E6, which hold the largest migrating elk herd in the nation. CDOW has asked other agencies, including BLM, and affected county commissioners for guidance.

### **Working Group Reports**

The wildlife working group has asked CDOW for a presentation on these plans.

The BLM has formed a split-estate task force, which is interested in identifying interested stakeholders. The energy working group expressed their interest in being considered.

Dave Bailey pointed out that the local history museum is now called Museum of the West, which is undergoing a major renovation. The Ute exhibit, which included artifacts from BLM public lands, has been one of the museum's most successful. Former RAC Chair Don Peach would be pleased with the results. Bailey will draft a letter to Peach summarizing the RAC's progress in promoting cultural resources.

Geoff Blakeslee pointed out the letter he drafted for submission to the new State Director regarding noxious weeds. The RAC would like a response, and Connell will follow-up.

The BLM is reconsidering the use of standard RACs, in lieu of forming Recreation RACs, to provide recommendations to the BLM and US Forest Service on their fee programs.

### **Roan Plateau RMP Discussions**

Larry McCown noted that throughout the entire process, he has gained a whole new respect for BLM and the challenges the Bureau faces in accomplishing its mission. Nine, day-long meetings were held with cooperators, and the process has been both complex and comprehensive. New ideas were explored, and although extensive discussions were held, consensus was not achieved. McCown summarized the Department of Natural Resources proposal, which he felt has great potential. To avoid redundancy in industry infrastructure, an undivided federal unit was proposed, along with several other innovative best management practices. McCown pointed out that No Surface Occupancy stipulations impact not only oil and gas activity but other activities as well, such as recreation, hunting and livestock grazing. Several questions and extensive discussion followed.

Velarde pointed out that numerous agencies were instructed to work together. There was disagreement throughout the process, and DNR's Shane Henry deserves credit for facilitating the meetings. It is vital that wildlife have some place to migrate to, and the native cutthroat habitat be protected. Because everyone participated in the meetings, everyone was represented, and the CDOW feels it did its part. Velarde announced that a new energy liaison will be hired to facilitate CDOW's relations with industry.

Connell explained the final concepts developed by cooperators. Below the rim, all winter wildlife timing stipulations would be continued, and critical wildlife range would be protected with an even higher level of stipulations. On top, the entire area would be protected, including trout populations and habitat. NSO stipulations would apply, and seclusion areas would be used. Clustering well pads is also recognized as important as a way to limit fragmenting wildlife habitat and to protect cultural resources. Connell asked the RAC for conceptual guidance today and provided copies of the DNR proposal to the RAC.

Each RAC member had the opportunity express what he/she felt is important to their interests:

- Pat Kennedy: It appears that progress is being made, with the focus on the when and how of extraction in conjunction with protecting natural resources. No large mountain biking issues known.
- John Martin: NSO stipulations for oil and gas activity could impact recreation, and it shouldn't. The JQS road is a landmark, and the Hubbard Mesa trail system is important to members of the public not necessarily living in the Rifle area.
- Wade Haerle: Discussions are headed in the right direction.
- Geoff Blakeslee: McCown and others working with the BLM are to be commended for their efforts. Details for habitat types and plant systems should be provided to benefit migrating wildlife.
- David Bailey: More access through the use of spur roads can provide more access to cultural sites, resulting in damage. This is a concern knowing that BLM's monitoring efforts are limited because of budget issues.

- Jon Hill: While the public has been focused on drilling, he likes the DNR proposal because it indirectly protects Animal Unit Months for livestock permittees, which in turn benefits wildlife. He wondered why not drill on top first to save the critical wildlife habitat below.
- T. Wright Dickinson: He supports the DNR concept. He believes the resource should be developed for oil and gas, but maintaining multiple use is critical. However, NSO stipulations should not impact livestock grazing. The area should not be loved to death by any one of the user groups. BLM needs to set reasonable and equal use limits for all activities.
- Kathy Hall: All previous points made are extremely important. She was involved in the legislative process transferring the resource from the Department of Energy to BLM. Hall appreciates CDOW's efforts, is pleased with the process, and supports the DNR proposal.
- Larry McCown: See his comments above.
- Dave Cesark: Discussions on how the Roan Plateau will be managed has been going on for many years now, and he is hopeful that the process is coming to an end. Frank, open and honest comments have been appreciated by industry. Energy provides us all with a high standard of living, so it's important but so is protecting our natural resources. He supports the concept of DNR's proposal.
- Charlie Kerr: It seems there is consensus from everyone in the room, as well as the cooperators. This is good but the question of "when" still needs to be considered. The RAC needs to consider recommending the DNR proposal, but that drilling should be delayed.

**Centennial Celebration—American Antiquities Act: *Join the Adventure, Honor the Past, Shape the Future***

Dan Haas announced that 2006 is the centennial anniversary of the American Antiquities Act. A year-long celebration of cultural and heritage events is planned, with volunteers and partnerships playing significant roles. Haas touched on what's needed to protect these resources, as well as the laws enacted to ensure their protection. More information can be found at [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).

**Energy Policy Act Briefing**

Connell provided a brief summary of how the Act will impact BLM Colorado. As a 2,000-page document, it's difficult to cover everything. Leasing, incentives, energy corridors, the interagency pilot projects and permitting practices were the focus today. Five different categorical exclusions were created with passage of the Act, and their purpose was explained. Permitting, inspection, enforcement and monitoring activities will be addressed by 16 additional positions being created and based in Glenwood Springs. These positions are funded by the Act. Onshore Order #1 is currently being revised based on passage of the Act. Several questions were fielded by Connell.

**Public Comment Period**

Steve Smith of The Wilderness Society commended the BLM on the Bridgeport bridge project. Good management of all public lands is important. He is excited about the Gateway Resort comprehensive recreation management plan, which will benefit the Palisade. Smith is amazed at the creative detail involved in Roan Plateau discussions. TWS is skeptical of the need to go into a new gas field. Details of the DNR proposal still need to be worked out, and exploration activities are a concern. Consider all uses and values in the final RMP and incorporate good, solid land-surface prescriptions.

LeeAnn Hill, Colorado Environmental Coalition, is also excited about BLM's development of a recreation management plan for the Gateway area. Hill urged the BLM to initiate a formal planning process that would include the public and interested organizations such as CEC and the Colorado Mountain Club.

### **Potential RAC Action on Roan Plateau RMP**

The energy working group developed a draft resolution over lunch. Unanimous consensus was reached and the document was finalized and signed during the meeting (see attached).

### **Schedule FY06 Meetings**

As has been done in the past, field trips will be planned for the day preceding the meeting. February 8-9, Grand Junction (energy tour), (the RAC would like to invite Sally Wisely for both days)

May 10-11, Kremmling (fuels/butte projects)

August 9-10, Craig (NWCOS/Little Snake RMP)

November 8-9, Glenwood Springs (tour TBD)

While the RAC Charter specifies that members of the public and media are allowed to participate in RAC "field examinations," members felt their field trips to be a day designed for the RAC to gather information and then take it back to their interested publics. Field tours are not published in the Federal Register as no decisions are made during these tours, and some tours are conducted on private facilities not open to the general public.

### **Closing Remarks**

Connell just received word on the 2006 RAC appointments, and she announced the following:

Kathy Hall, reappointment to the minerals and energy interest (1)  
Forrest Nelson, reappointment to the elected official interest (3)  
Clare Bastable, new appointment to the environmental interest (2)  
Steve Gunderson, new appointment to the OHV interest (1)  
Duane Daily, new appointment to the elected official interest (3)

Topics for next meeting:

Mountain pine beetle epidemic  
Power generation from biomass  
Update on the RAC resolution regarding parallel trails (OHV)  
Working group membership updates  
New member introductions/orientation

The meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.

RESOLUTION  
NORTHWEST RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Northwest Resource Advisory Council, after two years of information gathering including hosting a public meeting to hear from the affected public and tours of the area, make the following recommendation for future management of the Roan Plateau.

The Northwest Resource Advisory Council unanimously supports the orderly and responsible development of the resource. In that development, we support the recommendation of the Cooperators to endorse the Department of Natural Resources proposal.

The NW RAC supports a final decision that would not materially affect the historic recreational, grazing and other uses of the Roan Plateau.

The Northwest Resource Advisory Council supports a Resource Management Plan for the Roan Plateau that focuses on outcome-based management that utilizes objectives and best management practices to achieve the desired outcomes.

/s/ Jeff Comstock

/s/ Jamie Connell

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Jeff Comstock, NW RAC Chair

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Jamie Connell, NW RAC DFO