

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Idaho Resource Advisory Council Meeting**  
**October 19, 2022, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time**  
**Twin Falls District Office/Virtual via Zoom**  
**Meeting Notes**

**RAC Members Present:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>BLM Idaho District Affiliation</b>	<b>Interest Represented</b>
Leon Smith	Idaho Falls	Federal Grazing Permits/Leases
Steven Lentz	Twin Falls	Commercial Recreation
Scott Nichols	Boise	Dispersed Recreation
John Robison	Boise	Environmental Organizations
Kathryn Rinaldi	Idaho Falls	Environmental Organizations
Skip Brandt	Coeur d'Alene	Elected Official
Skylar Jett	Boise	Public-at-Large
Chad Colter	Idaho Falls	Tribal Interests
Tyrone Daniels	Coeur d'Alene	Tribal Interests
Jennifer Pierce	Boise	Academia

**BLM Leadership and Staff Present:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Office</b>
Karen Kelleher	State Director	Idaho State Office
Serena Baker	Deputy State Director, Communications	Idaho State Office
MJ Byrne	RAC Coordinator	Idaho State Office
Hannah Cain	Public Affairs Specialist	Idaho State Office
Jon Beck	Associate District Manager	Boise District Office
Mike Courtney	District Manager	Twin Falls District Office

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Heather Tiel-Nelson	Public Affairs Officer	Twin Falls District Office
Todd Kuck	Associate District Manager	Idaho Falls District Office
Bruce Hallman	Public Affairs Officer	Idaho Falls District Office
Michelle Brown	Associate District Manager	Coeur d'Alene District Office

**Agenda Item: Welcome and introductions**

**Presenters:** Karen Kelleher, BLM Idaho State Director; Skip Brandt, RAC Vice-Chair

Kelleher welcomed RAC members and members of the public. She noted this was the first meeting of the full RAC since she began serving as Idaho State Director in March 2022. Brandt also welcomed RAC members and members of the public and informed participants that he would serve as Acting RAC Chair as RAC Chair Scott Nichols was traveling and would participate as possible. Each RAC member introduced themselves, stating their name and the interest they represent.

**Agenda Item: Housekeeping, review agenda and approve prior meeting notes**

**Presenter:** Serena Baker, BLM Idaho Deputy State Director, Communications

Baker discussed housekeeping and logistics items for in-person and virtual participants. She informed RAC members that they needed to approve February 11, 2022 and June 15, 2022 meeting notes, which had been sent to them. Tyrone Daniels made a motion to approve the meeting notes, Kathy Rinaldi seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. Baker stated that BLM guidance enables the RAC Chair to approve meeting notes and that procedure will be implemented for future RAC meetings.

**Agenda Item: State Director updates**

**Presenter:** Karen Kelleher, BLM Idaho State Director

Kelleher provided updates on key statewide issues, programs, and activities. Congress has not passed a Fiscal Year 2023 budget for the BLM yet, so the agency is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution that expires in December. BLM Idaho has received substantial funding increases through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) and anticipated additional funding through the Inflation Reduction Act. BLM Idaho is using BIL funding to significantly enhance fuels and ecosystem restoration treatments and is using GAOA funding to address the substantial increase in outdoor recreation on public lands that has been occurring for the last several years. BLM Idaho is receiving significant interest in potential renewable energy projects, primarily wind and solar, in southern Idaho where resources and existing and planned transmission infrastructure are located. BLM Idaho is developing a strategy to respond to proposed renewable energy projects, which will be discussed in detail during this meeting. Like many organizations, BLM Idaho is currently facing staffing challenges and is employing a variety of strategies to fill vacancies, including hiring student interns through the Pathways program, which can lead to permanent positions.

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**ACTION ITEMS:**

- \*Provide Jennifer Pierce's contact information to the BLM Idaho recruiter to schedule presentations for her students on BLM Idaho employment opportunities and navigating USA Jobs.
- \*Provide RAC members with a list of BLM Idaho GAOA projects.

**Agenda Item: District updates**

**Presenters:** Todd Kuck, Idaho Falls Associate District Manager; Jon Beck, Boise Associate District Manager; Mike Courtney, Twin Falls District Manager; Michelle Brown, Coeur d'Alene/Spokane (WA) Associate District Manager.

Kuck provided an overview of the Idaho Falls District and Field Offices and updates on key District and Field Office issues, programs, and activities. The Upper Snake Field Office is in the early stages of developing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the impacts of disposing 40 acres of public land to Teton County to develop a public shooting range. The Field Office has been implementing online reservation and pay systems at select campgrounds, which appear to be successful and have been helpful given difficulties in obtaining volunteer campground hosts. The Field Office also implemented a fee increase this year, as previously approved by the RAC, for sites on the South Fork of the Snake River. In addition, the Field Office recently completed a Riparian Habitat Restoration EA that will help streamline aquatic and riparian habitat restoration projects. The District is working to release a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Husky 1 North Dry Ridge Phosphate Mine. The District is also working on the proposed Konnex Empire Copper Mine, Pilot Gold Exploration Plan and Burnstone Calcium Carbonate Limestone Quarry. The District has been conducting timber sales and fuels projects. In Fiscal Year 2022, the District completed a record 84,000 acres of fuels treatments and is working to increase that in future years with additional BIL funding. The District is also working on a variety of ecosystem restoration projects, including in the Antelope Pasture and Curlew Fire areas. The District is engaged in a variety of planning efforts, including the Upper Snake East Travel Plan, Sand Dunes Recreation Area Management Plan and the PacifiCorp Dry Canyon Pumped Storage Hydropower Project. The District is developing an EA to analyze proposed restoration and public access improvement projects on the Morgan Bridge property acquired in Bingham County, including construction of boat ramps for non-motorized floating of the Blackfoot River. The District is also working to acquire a Conservation Easement on 1,992 acres near the Sand Creek Wildlife Management Area to facilitate public access and protect big game habitat. The District is using GAOA and BIL funding to enhance outdoor recreation at numerous sites through a variety of projects, including road repair and maintenance; campground, trailhead, kiosk, and sign improvements; and irrigation system replacement. The Salmon Field Office is working to determine contamination levels at the Gilmore Townsite, some of which is located on public land, and develop a cleanup plan. The District experienced below average wildfire activity this year, with 54 wildfires that burned 18,300 acres. Construction is underway to expand capabilities at the Pocatello Airtanker Base, which will enhance aerial firefighting capacity in the region. The District is considering constructing a new fire facility and barracks in Salmon to alleviate housing issues that hinder efforts to recruit seasonal firefighters.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- \*Kuck will check to make sure that camp sites at campgrounds that have implemented online reservation and pay systems can still be reserved through other means to ensure the ability of Tribal members to exercise Treaty rights and accessibility for populations that may experience technical challenges, per

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requests of Chad Colter and Skip Brandt.

\*Kuck to contact Chad Colter regarding the Morgan's Bridge acquisition and opportunities to partner on aquatic and riparian habitat restoration projects.

\*Send link to BLM eplanning site, and provide a demonstration of it, to RAC members.

Beck provided an overview of the Boise District and Field Offices and updates on key issues, programs, and activities. The District experienced below average wildfire activity this year, with 78 wildfires that burned 18,000 acres. The District hosts the only Type 1 aerial firefighting helicopter in the BLM, this year it supported wildfires in seven western states. Construction of the new Bruneau Guard Station, which will facilitate staging firefighters closer to areas where wildfires occur, is expected to be completed this fall. The District is working to ensure wildfire response capability by enhancing firefighter recruitment and retention through Workforce Transformation efforts and providing training to cooperators. The District is working to reduce wildfire risk through fuels treatments, such as conducting the 3,500-acre Graves Creek Prescribed Fire to reduce juniper, completing treatments within the Bruneau Owyhee Sage-grouse Habitat project area to restore sagebrush habitat, and constructing fuel breaks through the Paradigm and Tri-State projects. The Bruneau Field Office is working on projects in the Shoofly Oolite area to provide for public use while protecting rare plants; in the Perjue Canyon area to create an outdoor classroom; and in the Cottonwood Creek Stream area to enhance fish and wildlife habitat through "low technology" measures such as constructing Beaver Dam Analog structures. The Owyhee Field Office, which moved into a new building in Marsing this year, is working to respond to the proposed Delamar Gold Mine; developing a programmatic EA to facilitate future wild horse gathers as needed in the Black Mountain and Hard Trigger Herd Management Areas; and implementing efforts to enhance outdoor recreation, including installing an outhouse at the Wilson Creek trailhead and working through the process to institute recreation fees at Jump Creek as previously approved by the RAC. The Four Rivers Field Office is working to finalize a Resource Management Plan; acquire land and conservation easements in the Boise Foothills to enhance outdoor recreation and preserve winter range for wildlife and in the Hixon Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Habitat Area of Critical Environmental Concern near Weiser to protect habitat; enhance the Cove recreation site at C.J. Strike Reservoir and the Beehive Bend site on the Payette River with GAOA funds; host National Public Lands Day events; and issue a Right-of-Way to the Idaho Army National Guard to expand training on Federal and State land near Mountain Home. In the coming months, the Boise District will be working to start travel management planning to address new developments including Ebikes and larger off-highway vehicles; planning to conduct the Johnston Draw Prescribed Fire; and continuing treatments in the Bruneau Owyhee Sage-brush Habitat project area.

Courtney provided an overview of the Twin Falls District and Field Offices and updates on key issues, programs, and activities. The Shoshone Field Office is implementing the Bald Mountain Stewardship Project to improve forest health through targeted thinning to remove dead and dying trees, which has been completed on 27 acres. Trees that are being removed are being converted into firewood for Tribal elders at the Duck Valley and Fort Hall Reservations through a National Forest Foundation program, with more than 500 cords delivered to date. The Burley Field Office is working to issue the Cedar Fields Plan Amendment Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Monument Resource Management Plan to address the impacts of rock climbing and Off Highway Vehicle use in the American Falls Archaeological District. In addition, the Burley Field Office is also implementing the Jim Sage Grazing Permit renewal, which authorized an additional 1,900 Animal Unit Months to use targeted grazing, along with chemical treatments, to reduce hazardous fuels and invasive species and restore sagebrush. The Burley Field Office is also implementing recreation fee increases at the Milner and Lud Drexler sites, which were previously

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approved by the BLM Idaho RAC. This generated a significant amount of additional revenue this year that will be used to develop a camp host site with power at the Milner recreation site and to repair the RV dump and boat ramp at the Lud Drexler recreation site. The Jarbidge Field Office is working on 93 livestock grazing permit renewals, in compliance with court orders, that are in various stages of completion and implementation and a proposal to construct the 26-mile single track Balanced Rock Trail for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking. The District is receiving numerous inquiries regarding a variety of proposed renewable energy projects and is prioritizing response due to limited staff capacity. The District has developed a Renewable Energy Availability Map that shows areas where proposed renewable energy projects can and cannot be constructed due to land use plan designations and decisions. Currently, approximately 30% of the public land within the District is available for renewable energy development. The District experienced below average wildfire activity this year with 71 wildfires burning 34,000 acres. That is attributed in part to completion of fuels treatments, since 1997 the District has conducted treatments on 1.8 million acres including 40,000 acres this year.

**ACTION ITEM:**

\*Provide Jennifer Pierce with contact information for the University of Idaho staff that are working with the District to evaluate fuel treatment effectiveness.

Michelle Brown provided an overview of the Coeur d'Alene District and Field Offices and updates on key issues, programs, and activities. In Fiscal Year 2022, the District sold 7.8 million board feet of timber. In Fiscal Year 2023, the District is planning to offer five timber sales, including the Trail Creek Timber Sale, which will be conducted in partnership with the Idaho Department of Lands using the Good Neighbor Authority. The District is currently using this authority to conduct the Gamlin Lake Timber Sale. In Fiscal Year 2022, the District completed fuels treatments on 3,400 acres and is planning to expand that to 3,800 acres in Fiscal Year 2023. The District experienced below average wildfire activity this year, with 171 acres burned. The District is currently using \$1.69 million of GAOA funding to enhance outdoor recreation at numerous sites through a variety of projects, including water system and parking lot repairs and facility improvements. The District is also working on a major project to improve the Ross Point Day Use Recreation site on the Spokane River, which includes installation of sidewalks, a picnic pavilion, a small craft fishing dock and toilet facility. The District is partnering with the Bonneville Power Administration and the Nez Perce Tribe to develop an EA on the proposed South Fork Clearwater River Restoration Project to enhance aquatic and riparian habitat, floodplain connectivity and water quality that was impacted by historic mining and highway construction. The District is working to repair the Eagle Creek and Lolo Creek Roads, which were damaged by weather events. In December, the District will host a Veterans Eagle Watch Cruise and Eagle Watch Week events after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**ACTION ITEM**

\*Brown to provide information to Tyrone Daniels about the High and Dry and Gentle Annie timber sales as well as information regarding cultural surveys completed for the Ross Point Day Use Recreation site project.

**Agenda Item: Statewide Renewable Energy Strategy**

**Presenters: Aimee Betts, BLM Idaho Branch Chief Lands, Minerals and Water Rights; Jarod Blades, BLM Idaho Branch Chief, Biological Resources; Caleb Ashby, BLM Idaho State Office Acting Public Affairs Specialist.**

Betts, Blades, and Ashby provided an overview of the statewide strategy that BLM Idaho is developing to

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respond to emerging interest in developing renewable energy projects on public lands with the goals of enhancing efficiency and consistency in processing applications, increasing staff capacity and engagement with partners and stakeholders. The strategy includes a renewable energy right-of-way application review process that consists of four stages that are all currently provided for in BLM regulations: 1) pre-application; 2) application; 3) pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis assessment; and 4) NEPA analysis. Stage 1 consists of a pre-application meeting with potential applicants that includes identifying potential environmental and siting constraints and conflicts, outlining the Right-of-Way application and NEPA process and requirements, and determine needs for additional information and coordination with partners and stakeholders. In Stage 2, the project proponent submits an application package, the BLM conducts initial screening of it, and if needed, the project proponent revises the application to correct deficiencies and resubmits it. The application package includes a preliminary Plan of Development, geospatial data and a Draft Renewable Energy Factors Analysis Report that documents potential resource conflicts and applicant-proposed measures to address them. The BLM's initial screening includes determining the proponent's eligibility to hold a Right-of-Way and technical and financial capability to construct, operate, maintain and terminate the proposed project on public lands. Once the BLM receives a complete application package, the local office will prioritize it for processing based on criteria defined in agency regulations and work with the proponent to establish a cost recovery agreement. In Stage 3, the proponent submits a final Renewable Energy Factors Analysis Report, Plan of Development and other documents and hosts preliminary application review meetings with the BLM, other Federal/State/local agencies, Tribes, and the public. The BLM determines the readiness to initiate the NEPA analysis process. In Stage 4, the BLM initiates NEPA analysis of the proposed project. BLM Idaho is developing a Renewable Energy Resource Occurrence Tool that will help identify actual and potential natural resource, land use planning and social conflicts with proposed projects on a statewide scale. BLM Idaho is currently meeting with agency partners to explain and obtain feedback on the statewide renewable energy strategy. BLM Idaho will hold in-person and virtual public meetings to explain and obtain feedback on the statewide renewable energy strategy in southern Idaho beginning in November.

**Agenda Item: Proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project update**

Presenter: Kasey Prestwich, Shoshone Field Office, Project Manager

Prestwich provided an overview of the BLM's development of an EIS to analyze the Lava Ridge Wind Project proposed by Magic Valley Energy. The BLM conducted public scoping from August to October 2021 and released a scoping summary report in January 2022. The BLM has been developing a Draft EIS that includes five alternatives, including the proposed action, no action, and three alternatives with various levels of development and infrastructure and different turbine locations. The BLM has been working with the Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee that the RAC established and engaging in discussions with stakeholders including Native American Tribes, the Japanese-American community and livestock grazing permittees. The BLM has also been holding National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation meetings and developing a programmatic agreement that outlines steps that would be taken to ensure that cultural and historic properties are protected throughout the siting and development process if the proposed project is approved. The BLM is working to release the Draft EIS in January for a 60-day public comment period and will hold public meetings on it after that.

**Agenda Item: Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee update**

**Presenters:** Leon Smith, Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee Chair; Scott Nichols, Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee Vice-Chair

Smith reviewed the members of the Subcommittee that the RAC voted to establish in August 2021 and the

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interests they represent as well as the agendas and topics of discussion of the four Subcommittee meetings held to date (Subcommittee roster, meeting agendas, and meeting notes are available on the BLM Idaho Lava Ridge Wind Project website). Consistent with the BLM Idaho RAC Charter, the purpose of the Subcommittee is to compile information and conduct research. After the BLM releases the Lava Ridge Wind Project Draft EIS, the Subcommittee will meet to review it and discuss it and create a report that will be presented to the RAC for use in developing recommendations to the BLM. BLM Idaho is in the process of setting up Subcommittee meetings in January and February and a RAC meeting in March.

**Agenda Item: BLM Idaho RAC nominations update/Potential Future BLM Idaho RAC Meeting Dates**

**Presenter:** Serena Baker, BLM Idaho Deputy State Director, Communications

Baker informed RAC members that the RAC currently has three vacant positions, two in Category 1 and one in Category 2. BLM Idaho is accepting nominations for these positions through close of business Friday, November 4. If RAC members know anyone who might be interested in serving, please encourage them to submit application materials. BLM Idaho is planning to hold the next RAC meeting on Thursday, March 9 in Twin Falls. BLM Idaho proposes the following dates for future RAC meetings:

Spring 2023: Thursday, May 25; Friday, May 26; or Thursday June 1 possibly in Boise and to include a field trip focused on fuels and restoration projects and recreation sites

Fall 2023: Thursday, October 12; Wednesday October 18; or Thursday, October 19 possibly in Cottonwood

Winter 2024: Wednesday, February 7; Thursday, February 8; Wednesday, February 21; or Thursday, February 22

RAC members are requested to let Baker know their availability on these dates and their preferences for meeting location, topics, and field trips by close of business Friday, October 21. Some RAC members provided their availability as follows: Skip Brandt - challenges with late May, prefers early June; Scott Nichols - March 9 will work; Kathy Rinaldi - available March 9, may not be available in early June, available all Fall 2023 and Winter 2024 dates; Skylar Jett - available all dates; Steve Lentz - available all march and May/June dates; Jennifer Pierce - not available June 1.

RAC members suggested the following topics for future RAC meetings: BLM website navigation, access, i.e. miles of roads and trails available for motorized/non-motorized use, single track/double track, width needed to accommodate larger off-highway vehicles (Skip Brandt); Morgan's Bridge project, aquatic partnership (Chad Colter); proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project (Skylar Jett, Jennifer Pierce, and Kathy Rinaldi); other proposed mining projects (Jennifer Pierce); field trip to Owyhee County to provide context for upcoming Boise District travel management planning efforts (John Robison); presentation from Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Minerals regarding statewide planning for energy development; human-caused fire prevention, including development of a "fire corps, how BLM-managed public lands provide solutions to warmer and drier summers in terms of soils and carbon storage and ways to quantify that (Jennifer Pierce); fuels projects, particularly fuel breaks, recreation projects, and planning (Kathy Rinaldi). John Robison - not available May 25 or May 26, available June 1

**ACTION ITEM:**

\*Contact Jennifer Pierce to obtain information about colleague who might be interested in representing energy/mineral interests.

\*Indicate on RAC meeting agendas if items are for information or decisions, per Skip Brandt Request.

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**Agenda Item: Overview of BLM Idaho website**

**Presenter:** Serena Baker, BLM Idaho Deputy State Director, Communications

Baker provided an overview of the BLM Idaho website, social media sites, and eplanning site and demonstrated how to navigate the website to find information about BLM Idaho Offices, BLM Idaho Programs, and the BLM Idaho Resource Advisory Council and the eplanning site to find information about proposed projects BLM Idaho is conducting National Environmental Policy Act analysis on.

**Agenda Item: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law implementation and projects**

**Presenters:** Jarod Blades, BLM Idaho Branch Chief Biological Resources

Blades discussed BLM Idaho's use of BIL funding to complete landscape scale ecosystem restoration and fuels treatments in cooperation with partners. BIL is providing a "once in a career" funding opportunity for ecosystem restoration and fuels projects for the next five years. In Fiscal Year 2022, BLM Headquarters allocated a total of approximately \$3.4 million in BIL funding to BLM Idaho. This includes \$2.9 million that BLM Idaho used to complete fuels treatments on approximately 300,000 acres and \$453,000 that BLM Idaho used for eight ecosystem restoration projects. The Department of the Interior has identified six restoration priorities and BIL identifies nine restoration project activity areas. BLM Idaho has been working to identify potential restoration projects that meet priorities across all activity areas and to ensure internal capacity to award contracts and agreements to put the funding on the ground, not only through agency staff but also through partners and external stakeholders. BLM Idaho submitted requests for Fiscal Year 2023 funding for restoration projects to BLM Headquarters in October. These include the Crane Creek Noxious Weeds; National Seed Warehouse; Owyhee Conifer and Annual Grasses; Tribal Seeds and Weeds; Springs Restoration; Deep Creek Mountains Forest Health and Aspen Restoration; Land and Water Conservation Fund Riparian and Upland Habitat; and Vegetation Mapping, Restoration, and Weed Washing Station projects. In addition to fuels treatments, BIL is also providing additional funding for post-fire restoration and rehabilitation, wildfire preparedness, and supporting science and research. BLM Idaho is estimating that BIL will provide an increase in annual base fuel funding from approximately \$10 million in Fiscal Year 2021 to approximately \$18 million in Fiscal Years 2024-2026. In addition, BLM Idaho is estimating that BIL will provide approximately \$10 million in additional fuels funding in Fiscal Year 2023 and \$12 million in additional fuels funding in Fiscal Years 2024-2026. In Fiscal Year 2023, BLM Idaho will use that funding to complete fuels treatments on 121+232 acres. Between Fiscal Years 2022 and 2026, BLM Idaho is planning to complete fuels treatments on a total of approximately 1.3 million acres. BLM Idaho is striving to develop integrated fuels and restoration projects, continuing to build and strengthen relationships with partners and cooperators and improving the agency's workforce to ensure effective BIL implementation. RAC members can support BIL implementation by informing BLM about restoration and fuels projects that are occurring, or that are being planned or proposed, to capitalize on opportunities to link them and achieve landscape scale effects.

**Agenda Item: Public Comment Period**

**Presenter:** Serena Baker, BLM Idaho Deputy State Director, Communications

Two members of the public provided comments to the BLM Idaho RAC. Peter Richardson, an energy lawyer that represents independent power producers in Idaho, provided information about Idaho Energy Freedom, a new organization that has formed to support renewable energy development in Idaho. Dan Sakura, member of the Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee, requested BLM Idaho to explain how Secretarial Order 3399 is being implemented, expressed support for the development of a statewide renewable energy strategy, and urged BLM Idaho to reprioritize all renewable energy projects including the Lava Ridge Wind Project.



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**Agenda Item: Wrap-up**

**Presenters:** Karen Kelleher, BLM Idaho State Director; Skip Brandt, Acting RAC Chair

Kelleher and Brandt thanked RAC members for their participation, engagement and feedback and members of the public for their participation and comments. Kelleher encouraged RAC members and members of the public to participate in upcoming public meetings on the statewide renewable energy strategy.

**Agenda Item: Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time

DRAFT