

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Idaho Resource Advisory Council Meeting
March 17, 2023, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time
Virtual via Zoom
Meeting Notes

**Resource Advisory Council
(RAC) Members**

Name	Interest Represented/Affiliation
Present:	
Scott Nichols, RAC Chair	Dispersed Recreation
Skip Brandt, RAC Vice-Chair	Elected Official
Leon Smith	Federal Grazing Permits/Leases
Steven Lentz	Commercial Recreation
John Robison	Environmental Organizations
Kathryn Rinaldi	Environmental Organizations
Brenda Pace	Archaeological and Historic Interests
Skylar Jett	Public-at-Large
Chad Colter	Tribal Interests
Tyrone Daniels	Tribal Interests
Jennifer Pierce	Academia
Absent:	
Justin Mink	Federal Grazing Permits/Leases

**Lava Ridge Wind Project
Subcommittee (Subcommittee)
Members:**

Name	Interest Represented/Affiliation
Present:	
Leon Smith	Federal Grazing Permits/Leases
Scott Nichols	Dispersed Recreation
Dan Sakura	Japanese American Community
Chad Colter	Tribal Interests
Garret Visser	Idaho Wildlife Federation
Wayne Schenk	Minidoka County Commissioners
Ben Crouch	Jerome County Commissioners
Jack Johnson	Twin Falls County Commissioners
Rebecca Wood	Lincoln County Commissioners
Shauna Robinson	Historic Preservation
Brenda Pace	Archaeological and Historic Interests
Ted MacNeil	Magic Valley ATV Riders
Absent:	
George Lynch	Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources

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BLM Leadership and Staff

Name	Title	Office
Karen Kelleher	State Director	Idaho State Office
Serena Baker	Deputy State Director, Communications	Idaho State Office
MJ Byrne	RAC Coordinator	Idaho State Office
Mike Courtney	District Manager	Twin Falls District Office
Heather Tiel-Nelson	Public Affairs Officer	Twin Falls District Office
Codie Martin	Field Manager	Shoshone Field Office
Lisa Creswell	Assistant Field Manager	Shoshone Field Office
Kasey Prestwich	Project Manager	Shoshone Field Office

Agenda Item: Welcome and introductions

Presenters: Karen Kelleher, BLM Idaho State Director, Designated Federal Official for the RAC; Scott Nichols, RAC Chair; Skip Brandt, RAC Vice-Chair; Serena Baker, BLM Idaho Deputy State Director, Communications

Baker provided information and guidelines for RAC and Subcommittee members and members of the public to participate effectively in the virtual meeting. She noted that members of the public would have an opportunity to address the RAC during the public comment period from 1:00 to 1:30 p.m. and informed participants about ways to sign up to make comments. Kelleher welcomed RAC and Subcommittee members and members of the public. She explained that the Subcommittee's report on the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project is the focus of the meeting and outlined the RAC's options to act on it. The RAC must have a quorum to make a recommendation to the BLM. The options available to the RAC include recommending the report in its entirety, recommending some items and not others, adding items, or changing items. The RAC could also submit the report to the BLM as a public comment on the Lava Ridge Wind Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Submitting the report as a public comment is also an alternative if there are not enough RAC members present to constitute a quorum. Kelleher requested RAC members present to introduce themselves which they proceeded to do. Although there were not enough RAC members present to constitute a quorum, the decision was made to proceed with the meeting as planned and determine a course of action regarding the Subcommittee report before the meeting adjourned. Nichols welcomed RAC and Subcommittee members and members of the public. He thanked Subcommittee members for their work and highlighted its importance to the BLM and State of Idaho.

Agenda Item: Lava Ridge Wind Project Subcommittee Report/RAC Q&A and discussion

Presenters: Leon Smith, Subcommittee Chair; Scott Nichols, Subcommittee Vice-Chair

Smith requested Subcommittee members to introduce themselves which they proceeded to do. He provided an overview of the Subcommittee's work which began with a field tour in June 2022 (meeting agendas, minutes, and recordings available on the Subcommittee website at <http://bit.ly/3ls4jYL>). The Subcommittee focused on whether the area proposed for siting the Lava Ridge Wind Project is appropriate. The Subcommittee reviewed the DEIS and developed 44 recommendations, which were sent to RAC members and will be discussed during this meeting (recommendations are available on the Subcommittee

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website at <http://bit.ly/3ls4jYL>). The Subcommittee reached a consensus that the critical issues and impacts that they have been exploring are so significant and adverse that they cannot be mitigated effectively or adequately, particularly in light of limitations in information that is currently available, and that they support Alternative A (No Action) outlined in the DEIS.

Subcommittee members Chad Colter and Dan Sakura discussed the 11 recommendations the Subcommittee developed to address issues in the Tribal perspective/cultural resources and Minidoka National Historic Site/Japanese American community category. RAC members expressed concerns that the amount (17%) of the proposed project area that has been inventoried for cultural resources to date appears to be insufficient and may set an inappropriate precedent for other proposed renewable energy projects. RAC members expressed support for proactive measures to protect the Minidoka National Historic Site and other sensitive areas from potential impacts of proposed renewable energy development projects, such as Backcountry Conservation Area or Area of Critical Environment Concern (ACEC) designations.

Subcommittee member Garret Visser discussed the 14 recommendations the Subcommittee developed to address issues in the Wildlife/Avian category. Subcommittee members Shauna Robinson, Brenda Pace, Chad Colter, and Ben Crouch also contributed information. Subcommittee members responded to questions from RAC members regarding the availability of analyses to quantify impacts of the proposed project on all wildlife populations; the availability of examples of renewable energy projects that have been sited successfully on BLM-managed public lands in other States with effective measures to mitigate impacts on wildlife and other resources; the availability of information regarding the sustainability of golden eagle populations impacted by wind turbine mortality; and the age of data used to analyze potential impacts of the proposed project on wildlife.

RAC members expressed support for a DEIS alternative that avoids all impacts of the proposed project on Greater sage-grouse, pronghorn, and other key wildlife species; a specific metric, such as a ratio, for mitigation requirements; and addressing larger migration pathway issues.

Subcommittee member Ted MacNeil discussed the six recommendations the Subcommittee developed to address issues in the Outdoor Recreation category. Subcommittee members Dan Sakura, Wayne Schenk, Garret Visser, and Jack Johnson also contributed information. BLM leadership responded to questions from RAC members regarding the availability of roads that would be built during construction of the proposed project for future public use.

Subcommittee Chair Leon Smith discussed the two recommendations the Subcommittee developed to address issues in the Grazing category. Subcommittee member Wayne Schenk also contributed information. Smith and BLM leadership responded to questions from RAC members regarding how the process for analyzing the impacts of the proposed Lava Ridge Wind project on livestock grazing compares to the process for analyzing the impacts of other types of proposed projects, such as mining, on livestock grazing; and the number of livestock grazing permittees who would be impacted by the proposed project.

Subcommittee members Ben Crouch, Wayne Schenk, Rebecca Wood, Jack Johnson, and Shauna Robinson discussed the 11 recommendations the Subcommittee developed to address issues in the Other category. RAC members expressed support for exploring the possibility of determining the specific impacts of the proposed project on the Snake River aquifer. Subcommittee members responded to questions from RAC

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members regarding whether resolutions that several Counties have passed expressing opposition to the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project apply to all renewable energy projects.

Subcommittee member Dan Sakura delivered a presentation on the history of the Minidoka National Historic Site and the significance of it, particularly to the Japanese American and Native Alaskan communities. He responded to questions from RAC members regarding the specific aspects of the proposed project that would adversely impact the Japanese American and Native Alaskan communities' use, perceptions, and memories of the area.

Agenda Item: Public comment period

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

Ten members of the public provided comments to the RAC: Erin Shigaki, John Ochi, Janet Keegan, Julee Austin, Diana Nielson, Mary Abo, David Sakura, Connie Kincheloe, Wayne Schenk, and Mike Telford. Shigaki, Ochi, Keegan, Abo, and Sakura expressed support for DEIS Alternative A (No Action) due to potential impacts of the proposed project on the Minidoka National Historic Site and other natural and cultural resources and traditional multiple uses of public land; Austin expressed support for DEIS Alternative A (No Action) due to the inability to adequately and effectively mitigate potential impacts of the proposed project; Nielson expressed support for DEIS Alternative A (No Action) due to the potential impacts of the proposed project on water resources; Kincheloe expressed support for DEIS Alternative A (No Action) due to potential impacts of the proposed project on aviation, the Minidoka National Historic Site, emergency service communications, and hunting opportunities; Schenk expressed the Subcommittee's support for DEIS Alternative A (No Action) because after exploring issues, members determined the cons of the proposed project outweigh the pros; Telford expressed support for DEIS Alternative A (No Action) due to the potential impacts of the proposed project on wildlife and farming and for a comprehensive approach to renewable energy development in Idaho.

Agenda Item: RAC discussion on possible recommendation

Presenters: RAC Members

Kelleher explained that due to lack of a quorum, the RAC cannot vote on recommendations to the BLM on the Lava Ridge Wind Project during this meeting. However, the Subcommittee report can be submitted to the BLM as a public comment on the DEIS by no later than April 20, the end of the public comment period, and the agency will evaluate and respond to it as part of the process of preparing the Final Environmental Impact Statement in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Smith and Nichols stated that they would work together to submit the Subcommittee's report as a public comment on the DEIS to the BLM by April 20. Kelleher encouraged individual RAC and Subcommittee members and members of the public to submit individual comments on the DEIS to the BLM by April 20 as well. The RAC can vote to make recommendations to the BLM on the Lava Ridge Wind Project based on the Subcommittee's report during their next meeting on June 1, 2023, if there is a quorum.

RAC members expressed support for development of a comprehensive approach to renewable energy development in Idaho that identifies locations where proposed projects are and aren't appropriate. They noted that renewable energy development is critical to address climate change and that some resources,

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such as wildlife, that may be negatively impacted by construction of renewable energy projects could be impacted more severely by unabated climate change.

RAC members also expressed support for requirements for renewable energy project proponents to demonstrate stakeholder support of them. Kelleher explained that in February, the BLM issued an Instruction Memorandum (IM) that includes this as part of a pre-NEPA Assessment process for wind and solar energy development applications (IM available on the BLM website at <https://www.blm.gov/policy/id-2023-009>).

RAC members expressed support for institutionalizing the process outlined in the IM, as well as the renewable energy strategy that the BLM is developing, possibly through Resource Management Plan development, revision, or amendment.

Subcommittee members and BLM leadership responded to questions from RAC members regarding how Magic Valley Energy would obtain water rights for the proposed Lava Ridge Wind Project; the ACEC designation process; and the possibility of placing a moratorium on renewable energy development on public lands in Idaho while the renewable energy strategy is being developed.

Nichols stated that during the June 1 RAC meeting, he envisions the RAC voting on recommendations to the BLM on the Lava Ridge Wind Project based on the Subcommittee's report if there is a quorum as required. He also stated that he would like for the RAC to discuss renewable energy project siting; how to address multiple renewable energy project proposals; and a three-tiered approach to recreation on public lands that includes a state level policy, local/regional travel management plans, and local working groups that can assist BLM in managing and funding recreation on public lands. Nichols encouraged RAC members to provide input on these and other potential topics for the RAC to discuss in future meetings.

Agenda Item: Wrap-up and closing remarks

Presenters: Karen Kelleher, BLM Idaho State Director

Kelleher thanked RAC and Subcommittee members for their participation, engagement, and feedback and members of the public for their participation and comments. She strongly encouraged RAC members to attend the next meeting, which includes a field tour on May 31 and a meeting on June 1, in person, although there will be a virtual participation option for the June 1 meeting.

Agenda Item: Adjourn

Presenter: Scott Nichols, RAC Chair

Leon Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:30 p.m. Steven Lentz seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.