

**SUMMARY MINUTES**  
**SOUTHERN NEW MEXICO RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**March 29, 2023**  
**Las Cruces District Office**

**RAC Members Present:**

Gill Sorg  
Kathleen Blair  
Charles Turner  
Sabrina Pack  
John Cornell  
Roy Gouch  
Emily Wirth  
Marianne Smith  
Robert Matulich

**Federal Official:**

Jim Stovall, Pecos District Manager

**RAC Members Absent:**

Jack Callaway  
Clifton Greer

**Public:**

Shadin Nez, Continental Divide Coalition  
Kitty Benzar, Western Slope No-Fee Coalition

**BLM Staff/Meeting Support:**

Charles Schmidt, Roswell Field Office Manager  
Tye Bryson, Pecos District Deputy Field Manager  
Sabrina Flores, DM Albuquerque District Office  
Matthew Atencio, Assistant Field Manager Socorro District  
Allison Sandoval, State RAC Coordinator  
Amy Dahl, State Office Ethics Specialist  
Jonathan Beck, DM Las Cruces District Office  
Emily Metcalf  
Glen Garnand

**U.S. Forest Service:**

Chris Nicholas  
Todd Harbin  
Tina Carson  
Ryan Means  
Amanda Loy  
Kyle Granby

Scribe:

Monica Brito

## **CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME & OPENING STATEMENTS**

The meeting was called to order by William Wight, Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Coordinator, who introduced all the council members, the BLM Participants, Forest Service Representatives, and members of the public. Mr. Wight explained that there would not be a quorum for Category one as not all members of the RAC were yet present.

### **Presentations**

#### **Resource Advisory Council (RAC) 101 – Allison Sandoval**

Mrs. Sandoval presented a slide show on the history of the RAC, explained the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), discussed the publishing of a Federal Registry Notice, terms of council membership as well as how nominations can be sought for subcommittee info.

#### **Ethics Responsibilities of the members – Amy Dahal**

Mrs. Dahal gave an overview of the ethics responsibilities for RAC Members.

#### **Mr. Wight Addressed the Limited Quorum**

Due to the limited quorum Mr. Wight asked if the committee would like to proceed with the overview of the proposal. The committee motioned to hear proposal and do refresher and vote at the next meeting.

#### **U.S Forest Service programs and major actions overview/proposals -Ryan Means, US Forest Service**

Introduction: Mr. Means is the Southwest Regional Rec Fee Coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service, who introduced his team.

#### **FLRA Training: Amana Loy, Rec Fee Program Specialist**

Ms. Loy discussed Understanding the Federal Lands Act, REA, Public Involvement, and how the RAC plays a part. She discussed that the Forest service has more recreation opportunities than other public lands. She also discussed how REA allows for the standard amenity expansion & SRP REA does not allow for entrance fees or fees for those under the age of 16.

RAC involvement in REA- The implementation of fee recommendations on fee proposal must include a Quorum. RAC Roll: the RAC is part of the larger public involvement effort. The goal is to identify future public support along with the BLM and Forest Service shared RAC approach. The RAC meeting is the last step in assuming public support.

Proposals: There were three fee proposals The Gila, Lincoln, and Magdalena District over 2.6 million acres. There are 5 National Forest working in collaborative efforts to ensure this proposal is working for sustainable strong connections. REA 95% differed back into the forest and 5% for

National & State level. Discussed how the fees are used and due to increase in traffic due to the end of COVID 19. Ninety Five percent of the fees must be sent back to recreation enhancement. Current recreation fees are set by public involvement and market analysis.

**Kyle Granby** presented on the behalf of the Gila National Forest:

Proposal: 3550.00 visitors 19 new fee proposals 9 new campgrounds increase amenities 1 new group campground, 2 rental one lookout, new pay station.

The Lincoln National Forest covers 1.1 million acres with over 1 million visitors a year. Diverse landscapes and a good amount of history in the Lincoln. To include Smokey the Bear the historical iconic figure that is used today who was found in Capitan. Propose that of the 14 recreation sites to decrease the extra vehicle fee, reduce to a \$5 fee to keep consistency across the forest. 61% of areas will charge a fee and 39% will remain free.

**Mr. Nicholas** Presented on the Cibola- Magdalena 800,00 acres Fire risks, Primitive in nature 4 fee proposals 1 or 2 areas. The water canyon picnic area. The district only needs one site increase fee. 60% of the areas will remain fee free. They will all have a uniformed fee structure across the Forest Service. 56 proposed fee changes 33 new 21 fee increases and 2 decrees.

New Mexico enchantment Pass. Year around use day use sites only for visitors. \$40 fee covers unlimited access. Pass can be paid for with volunteer hours. 24 volunteer hours can be redeemed for one pass. Families can split up the volunteer hours This pass can be purchased online through the vendor or at local offices. Fee free days discussion of the criteria to be consistent across the area.

Specialty site: Sitting Bull Falls proposed fee increase to \$10.00, \$25.00 for large vehicle more than 15 people.

Dump stations proposed increase to \$15.00.

Quemado mesa district to \$15.00. Group day use sites based on capacity proposed \$100.00 for 100 people \$200 for 200 people. Fees equal out to \$1 per person.

Group Campground Proposal \$1 Dollar per person consistency based on capacity.

Cabin and lookouts- Adding service, 3 cabin recommendations. Kingston work center \$150 up to 8 people.

Fee proposals based on levels.

Level 1 Region environment

Level 2 Washington office & garnered public comment. Public comment was done September 2019-December 2021 12-month process extended till September 30, 2021. Used various outlets to include public engagement. Interactive map was a highlight capturing the public commenting with the ability to virtually see proposed areas. Virtual town hall meeting, 20 people in attendance. The two main concerns of the public were where would the recreation fees go and how would the public comment have an impact.

In the Cibola the proposed fees would address the needs of a changed society and upgrade deer sites to meet the use of modernization. Fees would also be used to help volunteer efforts, Law enforcement efforts. There were two comments for water canyon asking if taxes were paying for such amenities.

Gila fees used to reduce deferred maintenance 38 votes. 6 in support 2 conditional support 19 opposed.

Lincoln Recreation Program manager: Recreation fees go back into deferred maintenance Fire risk improvement to group shelters FRN Requirement for new proposals. 69 Comments, 53 in support, 10 in opposition and 6 needed clarities. Folks requested more ranger presence and enhancement. –

Enchantment Pass 34 comments 21 in support 8 opposed Money from Fed Allocation is not consistent and REA helps with that deferred maintenance.

Next steps RAC Vote -Next meeting

Zack Parsons Closing comments.

The currency is up to current level. Consistent cost to amenities reassures people they know what to expect and increased safety.

Camile Howes stated that the forest service is genuinely committed to diversity & inclusion. With a consistent approach across sites. She is hoping to see faithfulness to community in public comments.

Travis Mosley Commented that he would like to see investment in the communities Tina Kasen Stated that Water Canyon is the highlight of the lower income community as it allows for more involvement with increased opportunity to higher locally as families volunteer.

### Comments:

- Skip Gouch: What are the standard fees for the Lincoln?
  - (See amenities & Services slide)
- Gill Sorg What does the America the Beautiful pass cover as compared to the enchantment pass?
  - The enchantment pass is a pass that covers all the Forest Service for one price see slides.
- Chuck Turner:
  - 1. is this a 5\$ fee?
  - 2. At Cosmic is the proposed fee \$100 for group use?
  - 3. Is tripling the fee for dump trailers equitable or not
- Sabrina Pack
  - 1. First fee schedule What constitutes Forest Service presence?
    - Kyle answered Law enforcement Volunteers and camp hosts.

- What defines the frequency? Where does the 95% go?
  - Kyle responded that it goes to the district developed recreation sites. Fees resalted for larger groups Dollars moved from day use and restated for larger groups.
- Camile Howes A. What is being analyzed is the issue not the amount of people in opposition.
- Ryan Means – The focus is to be the problem to avoid gaming the system.
- Gouch is the standard amenity is specific to the campground.
  - A. The campground fee is for the overnight fee.
- Gouch Do the camp host get paid?
- Mr. Wight: Proposed a Call for a for chairman & New Vice Chairman as a full Quorum was now present. With arrival of RAC member combined with online member.
  - Nomination for Mr. Cornell as Chairperson.
  - Nomination for Gill Sorg as Vice Chairperson
 Motions accepted and seconded and unanimously voted.
- Marianne Smith Hopeful that fee structures can help to manage further damage to archeological structures.
- No further comments
- With an already 21-month public comment period by the NFS on the proposals and no questions on specific ones, the Chairperson moved for a vote on the Fee Proposals. Motion was seconded and unanimously passed.
- LUNCH Break

### Las Cruces Recreation Resources update—Jonathan Beck

Mr. Beck started off by discussing the increase in the staffing of the fire program. He then went on to explain the RMP. When monuments get designated a new RMP is created. A new RMP was created for OMDPNM. There was public scoping involved. This total process was done in a matter of 3 years. He discussed renewable energy and wind energy. He also briefly discussed Afton solar energy. There were 5 nominations 4 expressed interest. He discussed that the solar proposals outside the area are given lower priority. Mr. Beck also discussed that the LCDO accrued funding for starvation draw. He discussed the by partisan infrastructure law, mine reclamation and the restoration and conservation of caves.

Q's:

Mr. Cornell: Asked if there have been any resources to move the tri-county forward. Mr. Beck responded with Yes. Mr. Turner asked, "What is tri county?" Mr. Cornell responded Otero Sierra and Dona Ana. Mr. Gouch asked, "If renewable energy would make money for BLM?" Mr. Beck responded with Yes.

### Pecos District –Jim Stovall, Tye Bryson, Chuck Schmidt

Jim Stovall presented a survey of the area which the Pecos district covered. Tye Bryson then went on to discuss in further detail the Carlsbad area. He stated there were 176 employees across 3 million acers. No fees have been assessed 100% capacity. Black River south of Caverns has a deck and kiosks. He also gave an overview of wight city, Guadalupe page, La Cueva Mountain

Biking trails built into the Guadalupe peak. He discussed the Hack Derry OHV area that has camping and vaulted toilets. He mentioned that they would like to clean up and make a more formal shooting area in the historic shooting range east of Artesia they have drawn plans for this shooting range. They also discussed the possibility of turning the well pads into campgrounds. With lining the pit for a man-made lake and having game and fish stalk it.

They discussed 300 cave, 274 allotments 204 permittees 209,000 acres used. They discussed reclamation on the caliche pit. Gave an overview of the oil wells. Discussed in January 164 wells were plugged. Mentioned that 60% of crude oil comes out of the Carlsbad area. There are 35000 acres of potash. Realty 10400 realty action in the Pecos district. They are working with Penasco Valley telephone to increase broad band. Cultural: 3 archeologist 100,000 cultural resource inventories. 15 projects in 10 years, as well as several clay survey projects. The cultural team is working to create a public facing website. Martin Stein has rejoined the cultural crew. Chuck Schmidt Roswell: Mr. Schmitt started his presentation by extending an invitation to the RAC to visit the Permian Basin. It is over 8 million acres. Mr. Schmitt gave an overview of relationship with Pattern Energy EA. He stated that the BLM manages the assets of renewable energy with Pattern Energy EA and that the BLM is selling minerals to Pattern. He discussed that Apex has proposed a met tower on the BLM's surface. Stated that they are prepared to do an environmental impact statement. That they will be able to plug and reclaim the areas used.

Mr. Stovall continued with an overview of the Land water conservation funds. The Land acquisition funded by offshore production. The Pecos River Ox Bow Valley of Fires would like to acquire the land adjacent to Valley of Fires, near Rio Bonito.

Ty Bryson discussed partnerships Spring Mesquite treatments to help with prairie chickens and the creosote prong horn habitat.

## **Meeting Break**

### **Socorro - Matt Atencio, Sabrina Flores**

Mr. Atencio and Mrs. Flores gave a basic overview of the Socorro Field Office. They discussed the multiple resources recreation services (Virginia Aguirre), They were the first office with renewable wind energy in carton county. They collaborate with members of the San Antonio school district. Working on Luis Lopez Cemetery Expansion, R&BP changes allowing applications for the Tribes. They also briefly mentioned the cultural paleontology program, the education outreach as well as the abandon mine program.

Michael discussed renewable energy they have 9 staff members 253 grazing 5 community allotments they estimate 150,000 per year for range improvement materials. They do chemical treatments annually. Received 11 CRMPS in cooperation with USDA\_NRCS. They briefly covered the wildlife habitat management. They received the 2023 Conservation Award. Briefly discussed water development and the water shed project Low tech Project Based Reduction (LTPBR)

HMA- Wild Horse and Burrow challenges were briefly discussed those challenges include the vast distance it takes to travel to areas. They also mentioned that Covid increased renewable energy applications and E-Planning.

Q's – NONE

[The Public Comment Period.](#)

Mr. Wight opened the public comment period with discussing the rules.

There were no comments.

At the close of all presentations Proposal was made by Mr. Stovall that the next meeting be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June in Fort Stanton. A half-day meeting with a field trip.

Mr. Schmidt suggested to the Council that if an email is started that they should include the BLM so they might be accommodating in gathering necessary information and Mr. Gouch responded the same needs to apply when the BLM needs information from the public.

Meeting adjourned by Mr. Cornell.