

**Bureau of Land Management**  
**Northern California District Resource Advisory Council**

Field Tour and Business Meeting  
Oct. 25-26, 2023, Susanville, California

**Summary Minutes\***

**Wednesday, Oct. 25**

Committee members met with BLM staff at the Eagle Lake Field Office and departed for a field tour to see land acquisitions in the Rush Creek, Smoke Creek, Bald Mountain, and Rice Canyon areas. The field trip was designed to familiarize RAC members with the BLM land acquisition process and the varying reasons the BLM acquires lands from willing sellers into public ownership.

**Thursday, Oct. 26**

The business meeting was held in the conference room of the Eagle Lake Field Office in Susanville.

**Opening Business**

Chairman Leonard Moty called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

RAC members attending: Leonard Moty, Jim Rankin, Jeff Blewett (virtual), Bill Kuntz, Carol Montgomery, Pat Frost, Richard Karem, Dan Efseaff.

BLM staff: Northern California District Manager Dereck Wilson, Applegate Field Manager Craig Drake, Arcata Field Manager Collin Ewing, Eagle Lake Field Manager Emily Ryan, Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata, Redding Field Office Assistant Field Manager Laura Brodhead, Redding Field Office Planning Specialist Chad Endicott, King Range National Conservation Area Manager Paul Sever.

Guests: Jora Fogg, Conservation Lands Foundation; Ryan Henson (virtual), California Wilderness Coalition; Justin Crellin (virtual), Friends of the Lost Coast.

Agenda review: Members approved the agenda as presented.

Minutes review: Members approved the minutes from the last meeting as presented. Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana thanked Carrie Richardson of BLM headquarters for her support of the RAC.

**Northwest California Integrated Resource Management Plan**

Chad Endicott summarized the process and activities to date in developing the plan that will guide BLM management of public lands managed by the Arcata and Redding field offices for the next 20 years.

A draft plan and environmental impact statement are now available for public review and comment on the BLM's online National NEPA Register, in field offices and in libraries of the eight counties (Butte, Shasta, Trinity, Siskiyou, Tehama, Humboldt, Del Norte and Mendocino) with BLM lands included in the plan. The comment period closes Dec. 28.

In a PowerPoint presentation, Endicott highlighted several aspects of the draft plan. He said resource management plans are high level, providing broad guidance for management. RMPs do not set forth specific on-the-ground activities such as placement of specific recreation trails in specific areas. Rather, the RMP sets forth direction that will guide future implementation-level planning decisions. He summarized the four planning alternatives now presented for public review and comment, including a no-action alternative that would leave in place the current management plans that date to the early 1990s.

Endicott provided specific information on how the draft plan addresses lands with wilderness characteristics, establishment of Wilderness Study Areas, establishment of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and designation of wild and scenic rivers. Endicott provided guidance on providing comments that the BLM considers substantive, stressing that comments submitted should be supported by rationale. He also encouraged RAC members to take advantage of a story map on the NEPA register page. It assists plan reviewers by guiding them to specific planning topics and the draft plan's direction regarding them. He said using the online resource is a good way to streamline review of the 1,000-page planning document.

*Action: Because of the Dec. 28 comment period closing date, the RAC determined there will not be enough time to convene another meeting that would enable the Council to draft and forward a recommendation. BLM managers encouraged RAC members to submit comments and to identify themselves as members of the RAC, noting the constituencies they represent.*

Discussion continued.

### **State Director's Report**

The RAC members received in advance a report from State Director Karen Mouritsen on BLM activities across the state. District Manager Dereck Wilson summarized part of the report that pertain directly to the Northern California District. There were no questions or comments.

### **Public Comment**

- **Jora Fogg, Conservation Lands Foundation:** Said her organization fully supports the business plans developed for the King Range National Conservation Area and for recreation areas managed by the Redding Field Office. She said the BLM process for public involvement has been robust and transparent, and said the fee increases proposed are modest; they will not cause hardship for visitors to these BLM-managed lands.
- **Ryan Henson, CalWild:** Noted he served 20 years on the former Northwest California RAC. Free or low-cost access to BLM-managed lands is important to maintain, and the

BLM needs more funding to provide adequate visitor support and maintenance. He welcomed resumption of the NCIP planning process, commended the field office staffs for their clear public presentations, and said he supports completion of the planning process.

- **Justin Crellin, administrative director, Friends of the Lost Coast:** Encouraged the highest level of management possible for lands with wilderness characteristics in the NCIP. He supported ACEC designation for lands in the Mattole and Gillham Buttes areas and supported the designation as a Wilderness Study Area for Gillham Butte as presented in Alternative B of the draft NCIP. He encouraged the BLM to enlarge public holdings in the Mattole and Gillham Butte areas.
- **Jim Rankin (RAC member):** Speaking for the Shasta Miners and Prospectors and the French Gulch Mining District, Rankin said mining claim holders should be consulted in development of the NCIP. He said the BLM needs to recognize that mining claim holders have possessory interest in the lands where claims are located, and expressed concern that there are provisions in the NCIP that could adversely affect mining claim holders.

## Land Tenure

Dan Ryan, a BLM realty specialist focusing on land tenure and acquisitions, explained the BLM land tenure program and acquisition process. He said the BLM has assigned realty specialists to focus on land acquisitions, freeing up other realty staff to work on other important actions. It has made the BLM acquisitions program more robust.

Dan said there are active acquisitions underway in each of the four Northern California District field offices. Using maps, he highlighted activities in each of the offices:

### Applegate Field Office:

- Divine Spring was a 40-acre acquisition providing access to thousands of acres of public lands in the Hays Canyon Range. The action is complete.
- Sage Grouse Habitat: Work is underway to acquire for public ownership multiple parcels totaling 1,280 acres near Wall Canyon Reservoir. These lands provide excellent habitat for greater sage grouse, a species of special concern. The action could close next year.

**Eagle Lake Field Office:** In addition to the sites visited on the field tour, Dan highlighted several other actions:

- Upper Smoke Creek: Work is underway to acquire isolated parcels totaling 680 acres, including the headwaters for the Smoke Creek drainage. Most of the lands are within the Twin Peaks WSA.

- **Biscar Reservoir:** The field office acquired 40 acres, the last private inholdings in a wildlife area northeast of Susanville. The two reservoirs are popular for fishing, hunting and wildlife watching.

**Redding Field Office:** A continuing overall focus is acquisition possibilities in the Sacramento River Bend Outstanding Natural Area and along the Trinity River, including a reach managed as a Wild and Scenic River.

- Action is nearly closed on a 20-acre acquisition in the Chappie-Shasta OHV area north of Redding.
- The Cramer acquisition in the Sacramento River Bend has been completed. The acquisition was a partnership between the BLM and River Partners and adds to restoration goals along the river.
- There is a potential for acquisition of lands at Jelly's Ferry which would increase public access to the Sacramento River within the Bend.

#### **Arcata Field Office:**

- Closing is underway on the Zagory Anderson acquisition of 150 acres in the Lost Coast Headlands area west of Ferndale. The land is near the Guthrie Creek Trailhead and adjacent to a land unit of the California Coastal National Monument.
- Lost Coast Redwoods, Mendocino County: The BLM has been allocated \$18 million to acquire 4,400 acres of forested coastal properties from the Save the Redwoods League. There is strong support from BLM leadership and elected officials. Local support is evident as well. With additional funding, the acquisition could be completed by 2025.
- Elk Creek, Mendocino County. BLM has the funds and has made an offer on 3,800 acres adjacent to the Yuki Wilderness Area. Much of the land was burned in the Mendocino Complex wildfire in 2018. There is potential for the acquisition to be completed next year.

#### **Field Managers Reports**

Each field manager provided an overview of the lands and resources under the jurisdiction of their offices and updated the RAC on current activities and projects. Members of the RAC received the written reports in advance of the meeting.

**Redding:** Jennifer Mata highlighted restoration work in the Sacramento River Bend, a co-stewardship agreement with the Mooretown Rancheria, ongoing partnerships, and restoration work along the Trinity River.

**Eagle Lake:** Emily Ryan called attention to a project to expand the Doyle Fire Station, the recently completed Twin Peaks wild horse gather, post wildfire restoration projects, a long-

standing partnership to improve greater sage grouse habitat and a National Public Lands Day partnership.

**Applegate:** Craig Drake called attention to the recently completed Surprise Complex wild horse gather, new exploration for gold (and potentially lithium) at the site of the former Hog Ranch heap leach gold mine, juniper removal projects to improve sage grouse habitat, fire and fuels treatment projects, and pending completion of an environmental assessment for a proposed population management gather of the Carter Reservoir wild horse herd.

**Arcata:** Collin Ewing highlighted Arcata Field Office major program areas and workloads including tribal partnerships, work in the Headwaters Forest Reserve, work in the King Range NCA, the field office involvement in the California Coastal National Monument, wilderness and WSA management, recreation management, beach and dunes issues, threatened and endangered species and forestry and fuels projects.

## **Business Plans**

Staff from the Arcata and Redding field offices used a PowerPoint presentation to detail business plans for recreation site management. The Arcata plan involves the King Range National Conservation Area, and the Redding plan focuses on several sites within the field office jurisdiction. Each plan contains provisions for fee increases and RAC review is required under provisions of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act, a federal law that allows the agency to collect fees and use them for improvements in the recreation sites where they are collected.

Laura Brodhead, assistant Redding field manager, provided an overview of the FLREA, including standards that must be met to enable fee collection, and the public review process, including RAC review and comment. The RAC can consider whether: the proposed fee complies with FLREA, there is adequate public support, the proposed fee will benefit visitors, the proposed fee will benefit communities, the fee is reasonable, and whether the RAC recommends affirming, modify or reject the proposal.

The proposals are as follows:

**King Range National Conservation Area:** Manager Paul Sever summarized the proposal. He said public support has been strong. During a public comment period only seven of 97 comments received expressed opposition to the proposal. The Conservation Lands Foundation and the California Wilderness Coalition have supported the proposal.

The business plan would:

- Increase campground fees from \$8 per night to \$15 per night at four developed sites.
- Set an overnight wilderness permit fee at \$12 per person, in addition to the current \$6 reservation fee.

He projected annual revenue from the wilderness fee at \$135,984, and campground fee annual revenue at \$40,020.

Sever said the revenue would be used to hire more park rangers, fund more trail maintenance, support search and rescue and continue maintenance levels at campgrounds and recreation sites.

**Redding Field Office:** Laura Brodhead said the fees proposed in the business plan would allow the field office to improve and reopen a campground along the Trinity River and improve services at other campgrounds.

The business plan calls for:

- A \$15 per night fee at the Steiner Flat Campground. Historically, the campground had been unimproved, with no fee. Fees would allow for upgrading the facility.
- Setting the fee at \$60 per night for up to 30 people at the Ohl Olsen Group Campground lower site and setting an \$80 fee for up to 50 people at the campground's upper site.
- Increasing the Douglas City Campground fee from \$10 per night to \$20 per night
- Increasing the Junction City Campground fee from \$10 per night to \$15 per night.
- Increasing the Steel Bridge Campground fee from \$5 per night to \$15 per night.
- Increasing the Shasta Campground fee from \$10 per night to \$20 per night.

The plan would also establish new standard amenity fees:

- \$6 per day, including one night of parking for those using shuttles at the Douglas City Day Use Area.
- \$2 per shower at the Douglas City area.
- \$6 per day for the Steel Bridge Day Use Area, including one night of parking for shuttles.

Business plan analysis shows that the new fees would contribute 50 to 75 percent of operating costs, compared to the 9 percent fee contribution under the current fee structure. Fees would be used to support waste removal, vault toilet pumping, fuels reduction and vegetation management, maintenance of tables, grills, bear boxes, tent pads, signs, septic and electrical system maintenance, law enforcement and recreation staff time and support for camp hosts.

***Action:** Members of the advisory council, by full consensus affirmed the business plans presented and agreed to develop a statement of support.*

***Statement of Support:***

*The Bureau of Land Management Northern California District Resource Advisory Council heard business plan proposals from the Arcata and Redding field offices during a meeting held in Susanville, California on Oct. 26, 2023. All council members supported and affirmed the provisions in these plans for the King Range National Conservation Area and Redding Field Office Recreation sites as being fair and reasonable, meeting the requirements of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.*

*Details on each of these proposals can be found in the business plans. A summary is available in the RAC summary meeting minutes for Oct. 26, 2023.*

There was additional discussion about the possibility of a future RAC statement supporting a provision that would allow field offices to automatically set fee structures when new campgrounds or recreation facilities are established. Further discussion was deferred to an upcoming meeting.

### **Closing Business**

The RAC agreed that the next meetings will be held as follows.

**Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2024**

Redding

**June 5-6, 2024**

Arcata

**September 25-26**

Cedarville

Each meeting will include a field tour on the first day, with a business meeting to follow on the second day.

**Future agenda topics:** NCIP update, fire and fuels projects, partnerships, wild horse and burro management, land tenure updates, conservation of sage grouse habitat, law enforcement. Additional topics will be added to each meeting agenda. The BLM will publish a single Federal Register notice announcing these meetings.

The meeting was adjourned.

*Summary minutes compiled by  
Jeff Fontana, Public Affairs Officer  
BLM Northern California District*

*\*These minutes are a summary of the advisory council proceedings. They are not a verbatim account.*