

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

**January 23, 2025**

**RAC MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jerry Atkinson  
Kathleen Blair  
Jack Callaway  
John Cornell  
Roy “Skip” Gooch  
Clifton “Earl” Greer  
Dr. Sabrina Pack  
Gill Sorg  
Charles Turner  
Emily Wirth

**RAC MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Teofilo Holguin  
Robert Matulich

**PUBLIC:**

George Pack, volunteer

**BLM STAFF/MEETING SUPPORT:**

Denny Apachito, BLM Socorro Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Matthew Atencio, BLM Socorro Field Office Manager  
Wendy Brown, BLM Southern New Mexico RAC Coordinator  
Scott Cooke, BLM Las Cruces District Office Manager  
Sabrina Flores, BLM Albuquerque District Manager  
Jamie Garcia, BLM Public Affairs Specialist  
Dawn Jones, BLM Carlsbad Field Office Manager  
Ella Kiley, BLM Public Affairs Specialist Intern  
Michael Mora, BLM Socorro Field Office Assistant Field Manager  
Charles Schmidt, BLM Roswell Field Office Manager  
Ashley Shreves, BLM Carlsbad Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner

**SCRIBE:**

Wendy Brown, BLM Southern New Mexico RAC Coordinator

**CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME:**

BLM Southern New Mexico RAC Coordinator Wendy Brown called the meeting to order. The meeting was a field trip, and participants got into various vehicles and followed the main vehicle, a large van containing the RAC members.

## **FIELD TRIP VISITS:**

### **Socorro Nature Area:**

The Socorro Nature Area is a 120-acre environmental education area in the Rio Grande Bosque. The area includes a half-mile, self-guided nature walk with interpretive signs, a pond, and amphitheater. It also has picnic tables, a group shelter, and a restroom.

### **Johnson (Gordy's) Hill Off-Highway Vehicle Area:**

Johnson (Gordy's) Hill offers diverse recreation opportunities including many roads and trails traversing deeply dissected canyons, high sandstone and limestone bluffs, terraces, and escarpments. On the higher ridges, there are scenic views of the Rio Grande Valley to the west. There are a variety of recreational opportunities, most notably off-highway vehicle riding on existing routes, offering challenges for all experience levels.

### **The Box Recreation Area:**

The 640-acre Box Recreation Area is a highly scenic, rugged area which is popular for technical rock climbing and bouldering. The five cliffs on either side of this box canyon provide popular rock climbing for even highly skilled technical climbers. Challenging climbing opportunities include the Waterfall Wall, Corner Block, and the Fillet, a Papillon Wall.

### **Datil Well Recreation Area Campground:**

Datil Well Recreation Area Campground includes one of 15 water wells along the old Magdalena Livestock Driveway. The old cattle trail was established in the 1800s and stretched 120 miles from Springerville, Arizona, to Magdalena, New Mexico. The area includes three miles of hiking trails in piñon-juniper and ponderosa pine woodlands, with scenic views of the San Augustin Plains. The trail and vistas also offer an occasional glimpse of wildlife in a setting of quiet and solitude.

## **Meeting adjourned**

**January 24, 2024**

## **RAC MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jerry Atkinson  
Kathleen Blair  
Jack Callaway  
John Cornell  
Roy "Skip" Gooch  
Teofilo Holguin

Dr. Sabrina Pack  
Gill Sorg  
Charles Turner  
Emily Wirth

**RAC MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Clifton “Earl” Greer  
Robert Matulich

**DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL:**

Jim Stovall, BLM Pecos District Manager

**PUBLIC:**

Ethan Wright, Regional Manager, New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau  
George Pack

**BLM STAFF/MEETING SUPPORT:**

Denny Apachito, BLM Socorro Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Matthew Atencio, BLM Socorro Field Office Manager  
Wendy Brown, BLM Southern New Mexico RAC Coordinator  
Lindsey Chavez, BLM Roswell Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Scott Cooke, BLM Las Cruces District Office Manager  
Amanda Eavenson, Assistant Field Manager, Roswell Field Office  
Sabrina Flores, BLM Albuquerque District Manager  
Juan Gamon, BLM Las Cruces District Office Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist  
Jamie Garcia, BLM Public Affairs Specialist  
Dawn Jones, BLM Carlsbad Field Office Manager  
Warren Kasper, BLM Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area Manager  
Ella Kiley, BLM Public Affairs Specialist Intern  
Don McClure, BLM Las Cruces Office Assistant Field Manager for Resources  
Jennifer Merino, BLM New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Planner for Branch of Planning,  
Recreation and Cultural Resources  
Michael Mora, BLM Socorro Field Office Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources  
Allison Sandoval, BLM New Mexico Public Affairs Specialist, BLM New Mexico RAC  
coordinator  
Charles Schmidt, BLM Roswell Field Office Manager  
Ashley Shreves, BLM Carlsbad Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner  
Jim Stovall, BLM Pecos District Manager  
Jesse Vinson, BLM Roswell Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner

**SCRIBE:**

Wendy Brown, BLM Southern New Mexico RAC coordinator

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

BLM Southern New Mexico RAC coordinator Wendy Brown called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting had a quorum. BLM New Mexico State Director Melanie Barnes attended via Zoom to welcome everyone to the meeting. RAC Chairman John Cornell provided welcoming remarks and asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves. BLM Socorro Field Office Manager Matthew Atencio.

## **PRESENTATIONS:**

### **BLM Albuquerque District updates: BLM Socorro Field Office Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources Michael Mora and BLM Socorro Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner Denny Apachito:**

BLM Socorro Field Office Michael Mora provided an update on the Alamocita Bipartisan Infrastructure Law improvements. The 5,867-acre Alamocita Creek property is open to the public and provides access to Cibola National Forest land and other BLM-managed lands. The completed improvements have included tree thinning and structures to control sediment along the creek. Mora answered questions from RAC members about continued maintenance and fencing. The BLM will continue maintenance of the area and will also leave fencing in place, he said.

BLM Socorro Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner Denny Apachito gave a presentation on a proposal to increase the standard amenity fee at Datil Well Recreation Area Campground. The amenity fee helps enable the agency to improve services at the site, offset operating costs, and reduce dependency on appropriated funding. The draft business plan for the Datil Well Recreation Area Campground would incorporate the Recreation.gov reservation fee into the visitor entry fee, raising the fee from \$5 to \$20 per standard site, and \$5 to \$30 for sites with electrical hookup. Group site fees remain the same at \$15 for day use and \$30 for overnight camping. This proposal is to ensure that the facilities remain operational for years to come.

RAC members had several questions and concerns about the plan. Their concerns regarded public input, the amount of the proposed increase (\$15 increase for a campsite), the cost to senior citizens, and the use of the Recreation.gov website to reserve camping spaces. RAC members were concerned that use of the website would cause people to drive all the way out to Datil only to find that all the sites were already reserved through Recreation.gov. In addition, the RAC expressed concern about the lack of public comments to review. The BLM began the 30-day public comment period on January 16, or about a week before the meeting. The RAC was also concerned that the BLM had not adequately advertised the need for public comments. In addition, the RAC had questions about potential fee increases due to the Consumer Price Index. BLM New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Planner for Branch of Planning, Recreation and Cultural Resources Jennifer Merino explained the potential fees to the RAC.

### **Las Cruces District updates: BLM Las Cruces District Office Manager Scott Cooke, BLM Las Cruces District Supervisory Rangeland Management Specialist Juan Gamon, and BLM Las Cruces District Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources Don McClure:**

Scott Cooke provided updates on the Afton Solar Energy Zone auction, the land exchange

between the BLM and the Mexico State Land Office, the Achenbach land acquisition, the Southline Transmission Line Project, and the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Resource Management Plan. In addition, Juan Gamon gave a presentation on virtual fencing and how it is used in ranching.

Also, Don McClure gave a presentation about Starvation Draw. The BLM is preparing to reclaim five earthen dams located within Luna County in and around a wilderness study area. Personnel are analyzing five Starvation Draw dams with full involvement by the community of Deming. Analysis currently underway will inform decisions on how to best ensure that the dams give another 70 years of service controlling stormwater and sustaining watershed health. The benefits from the dams no longer support the resource management program.

**Pecos District updates with programs and major actions overviews: BLM Roswell Field Office Manager Chuck Schmidt, BLM Carlsbad Field Office Manager Dawn Jones, Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area Manager Warren Kasper, BLM Roswell Field Office Assistant Field Manager for Resources Amanda Eavenson; and BLM Carlsbad Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner Ashley Shreves:**

BLM Roswell Field Manager Chuck Schmidt updated the RAC that the office plans to close on the 247-acre Pecos River Oxbow Acquisition near Roswell in the next six weeks. The office plans to use the land to provide recreation opportunities. Schmidt also updated the RAC on the status of idle oil and gas wells at the Cato Unit, a decades-old oil and gas field outside of Roswell.

BLM Carlsbad Field Office Manager Dawn Jones provided an update on the office's Resource Management Plan. The office plans to have a draft ready for review by the fall, Jones said.

Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave National Conservation Area Manager Warren Kasper gave a presentation on proposed fee increases at the Rob Jagers Campground and Valley of Fires Recreation Area. As proposed, RV camping fees would increase at both campgrounds by \$5 or \$7 to \$25 per night; camping fees with horse corral access at Rob Jagers would be \$30 per night; tent camping at Valley of Fires would increase by \$8 or \$3 (depending on the site) to \$15 per night; the dump station fee at Valley of Fires would increase by \$15 to \$30 or be included in camping fees (the fee is already \$30 at Rob Jagers); at Valley of Fires the daily cost for use of a group campsite would increase by \$10 to \$35 (the cost is already \$35 at Rob Jagers); a new site-specific annual pass at Valley of Fires would cost \$30; and the fees for all day-use single vehicles at Valley of Fires would be \$5 (currently it is \$3 if there is only one person in the car).

BLM Roswell Field Office Assistant Field Manager for Resources Amanda Eavenson gave a presentation on proposed fee increases at the Haystack Mountain and Mescalero Sands Off-highway Vehicle areas outside of Roswell. As proposed, the fees for all day-use single vehicles with up to nine occupants would be \$5 (currently it is \$3 per car for single occupant and \$5 per car for up to nine occupants); day-use fees for vehicles with 10 or more occupants would remain \$15; camping with no hookups, a new fee, would cost \$10 per night; camping with hookups, a new fee, would cost \$20 per night; once a newly established dump station is constructed at Haystack there would be a \$30 dump station charge; and once a newly established group shelter is constructed at Haystack there would be a \$25 a day fee.

RAC members had several questions and concerns about the plans. Their concerns regarded public input and the use of the Recreation.gov website to reserve camping spaces. In addition, the RAC expressed concern about the lack of public comments to review. The BLM began the 30-day public comment period on January 13, or about a week and a half before the meeting. The RAC was also concerned that the BLM had not adequately advertised the need for public comments. The RAC also had questions about potential fee increases due to the Consumer Price Index. BLM New Mexico Outdoor Recreation Planner for Branch of Planning, Recreation and Cultural Resources Jennifer Merino answered several questions.

BLM Carlsbad Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner Ashley Shreves gave a presentation on Carlsbad-area recreation sites, which do not charge any fees. Shreves said the office is moving toward implementing fees at sites, but they must meet certain criteria before the BLM can ask to implement fees. The BLM has no solid plans to implement fees at this time, but Shreves said the office is moving in that direction and wanted the RAC to know.

**New Mexico Oil and Gas Association presentation on oil and gas industry: New Mexico Oil and Gas Association Senior Regulatory Policy Advisor Andrea Felix, Mewbourne Oil Regulatory Manager Bradley Bishop, and ConocoPhillips Permian Regulatory Manager Tim Baker:**

Andrea Felix introduced the RAC to the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association, which is a coalition of more than 180 companies that promotes the safe and environmentally responsible development of oil and natural gas resources in New Mexico. She also shared that New Mexico is the second largest oil producing state in the United States, the fifth largest natural gas producing state, and produces 13 percent of crude oil in the United States. In New Mexico, most energy production takes place in the San Juan Basin in the north and the Permian Basin in the south. New Mexico produced \$13.26 billion in oil and gas revenue in 2024.

Southern NM RAC Chairperson John Cornell asked if the organization had opposed the 10-mile exclusion zone for Chaco Canyon. Felix said the organization did not oppose it.

**Discussion of land access issues in southern New Mexico, including Cowboy Spring south of Lordsburg:**

Southern NM RAC Chairperson John Cornell led a discussion of land-access issues, focusing on the Cowboy Spring Wilderness Study Area south of Lordsburg. Unless someone wants to hike five miles one way or can secure permission from a private landowner to cross private land, there is no public access to the land due to a locked gate on private land. Doña Ana County Associated Sportsmen has money and plans to buy a right-of-way from the New Mexico State Land Office that would provide access to the land. Cornell outlined the plan.

**Subcommittee discussion:**

BLM New Mexico Public Affairs Specialist Allison Sandoval provided a presentation about RAC subcommittees. RAC members had expressed an interest at a previous meeting about forming a subcommittee about land issues. Sandoval outlined how to create a subcommittee and the logistics of a subcommittee. RAC members concluded they were not interested in forming a subcommittee at this time and would continue to discuss land access issues at regular meetings.

**Public Comment Period:**

There were no public comments.

While waiting for comments, the RAC discussed future meetings, tentatively deciding to have a meeting May 1 and 2, 2025, at the BLM Las Cruces District Office. The first day would be a field trip. The second day would include district office updates and potential discussions of wild horses; shooting on public lands; an update on the impact of a large conveyor belt near Carlsbad; and recreators defacing public recreation sites with items such as rock-climbing bolts.

**Vote on proposed recreation and campground fee increases:**

The RAC voted on Datil Well Campground, Rob Jaggers Campground, the Valley of Fires Recreation Area, Haystack Mountain Off-Highway Vehicle Area, and Mescalero Sands Off-Highway Vehicle Area. With conditions, all members present voted in favor of the proposals: John Cornell, Jack Callaway, Dr. Sabrina Pack, Roy “Skip” Gooch, Charles Turner, Gill Sorg, Teofilo Holguin, Kathleen Blair and Jerry Atkinson. Emily Wirth had to leave the meeting early and was not present but participated virtually via Zoom and voted in favor of the proposals.

For the first vote, Councilor Sabrina Pack made a motion to approve the recreation fee proposals for Rob Jaggers Campground, Valley of Fires Campground, and the Roswell Field Office’s Haystack Mountain Off-Highway Vehicle Area and Mescalero Sands Off-Highway Vehicle Area, on the condition that the BLM change the proposed business plans to reflect a clarification regarding the fact that senior discounts apply to the fees. Also, the proposed business plans should state that if the sites do adopt the Recreation.gov reservation system, only 50 percent of the campground sites will be available for reservation. The council would like some of the campground sites available on a first-come, first-served basis. The motion was seconded.

For the second vote, Councilor Sabrina Pack made a motion to approve the recreation fee proposals for the Datil Well Campground, on the condition that the BLM change the proposed business plan to reflect a clarification regarding the fact that senior discounts apply to the fees. Also, the proposed business plans should state that if the sites do adopt the Recreation.gov reservation system, only 50 percent of the campground sites will be available for reservation. The council would like some of the campground sites available on a first-come, first-serve basis. This would be fixed on page 19 of the proposed business plan. In addition, the proposed business plan should be clear about possible Consumer Price Index increases being a maximum of 20 percent, not 25 percent. The proposed business plan should also be clear what the target demographic is for the recreation site and conduct a visitor survey within two years. The motion was seconded.

**Meeting adjourned**