**Western Montana Resource Advisory Council Meeting Notes** *January 14, 2025* *Virtual Teams Meeting*

**Agenda Overview**

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| **Time** | **Topic** | **Purpose** | **Presenter** |
| 9:00 AM | Welcome/Housekeeping Items | Admin | Katie Stevens |
| 9:15 AM | CSKT Partnership and Reserve Treaty Rights Program | Discussion | Erin Carey, Katie McDonald |
| 10:45 AM | Break | - | - |
| 11:00 AM | Scratchgravel Hills Implementation Planning | Presentation/Discussion | Roger Olsen |
| 12:00 PM | Lunch | - | - |
| 1:00 PM | Fuels & Fire | Information/Discussion | Erin Thompson, Mike Oheron |
| 2:00 PM | Field Manager/District Manager Updates | Information | Erin Carey, Amanda James, Roger Olsen, Katie Stevens |
| 3:15 PM | Break | - | - |
| 3:30 PM | Public Comment Period | Admin | Chelsea Lair |
| 3:45 PM | Planning for Next Meeting | Discussion | Chelsea Lair |
| 4:00 PM | Adjourn | - | - |

**Meeting Notes**

**Welcome/Housekeeping**

* Katie Stevens welcomed attendees and outlined housekeeping items.
	+ Emphasized the importance of communication regarding RAC membership renewals.
	+ Highlighted challenges in maintaining quorum due to expiring memberships.
	+ Discussed potential re-advertisement of open positions.

**CSKT Partnership and Reserve Treaty Rights Program**

* **Presented by Erin Carey and Katie McDonald**
	+ Overview of the historic co-stewardship agreement signed with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT).
	+ **Key Highlights**:
		- Partnership centered on the Blackfoot River watershed and the 1855 Hellgate Treaty.
		- Importance of treaty rights: hunting, fishing, gathering, and cultural restoration.
		- Priorities include:
			* Reconnection: Facilitating tribal access to ancestral lands.
			* Plant restoration: Focus on culturally significant species like camas and bitterroot.
			* Fire management: Recognizing fire as a restorative tool.
			* Riparian restoration: Addressing fisheries like bull trout.
	+ Implementation mechanisms include Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreements and Reserve Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL) Program.
	+ New initiatives:
		- Hiring an ethnobotanist as a shared resource between CSKT and BLM.
		- Establishing culture camps to engage tribal youth and elders.
	+ Discussion included:
		- Tribal consultation processes.
		- Addressing public access versus tribal cultural needs.
		- Need for inter-agency collaboration on recreation policies, including E-bikes.

**Break**

**Scratchgravel Hills Implementation Planning**

* **Presented by Roger Olsen, Butte Field Office**
	+ Overview of the Scratchgravel Hills Recreation Area Management Plan:
		- 5,500-acre area near Helena, MT, emphasizing non-motorized recreation.
		- Plan developed through extensive community input and environmental assessment.
	+ **Key Plan Features**:
		- Designation of trail zones (11 zones) with specific user focuses (hiking, equestrian, biking).
		- Exclusion of E-bikes to reduce user conflict and preserve wildlife.
		- Reduction of dead-end routes to mitigate private property trespassing.
	+ Implementation Updates:
		- Initial trail construction (1.5 miles) completed with partner support.
		- Trailhead upgrades finalized.
	+ Challenges & Next Steps:
		- Need for partner fundraising and volunteer support for trail construction and maintenance.
		- Establishing a RAC subcommittee to guide implementation priorities.
		- Discussion on balancing recreational use with wildlife protection and trail sustainability.

**Lunch Break**

**Fuels & Fire**

* **Presented by Erin Thompson and Mike Oheron**
	+ Topics included:
		- Updates on fire management strategies across Western Montana.
		- Collaborative efforts between agencies to mitigate wildfire risks.
		- Discussion on the use of prescribed burns and the challenges posed by changing climate conditions.

**Field Manager and District Manager Updates**

* **Updates from Erin Carey, Amanda James, Roger Olsen, and Katie Stevens**
	+ Erin Carey:
		- Progress on Missoula’s partnerships and Co-stewardship agreements.
		- Details on Reserve Treaty Rights Lands projects.
	+ Amanda James:
		- Dillon Field Office projects, including habitat restoration efforts.
	+ Roger Olsen:
		- Butte Field Office updates, including recreation area management.
	+ Katie Stevens:
		- Emphasized integrating indigenous knowledge into federal management practices.
		- Noted challenges in balancing competing land-use priorities.

**Break**

**Public Comment Period**

* Facilitated by Chelsea Lair.
	+ Key topics included:
		- Community interest in trail management policies.
		- Concerns over balancing development with environmental conservation.

**\ Planning for Next Meeting**

* **Facilitated by Chelsea Lair**
	+ Reviewed action items from the current meeting.
	+ Discussed potential agenda items for the next RAC meeting.

**Adjourn**

**Key Takeaways and Action Items**

1. **Tribal Partnerships**:
	* Continued focus on co-stewardship agreements and honoring treaty rights.
	* Support for new initiatives like culture camps and ethnobotanist hiring.
2. **Recreation Management**:
	* Implementation of Scratchgravel Hills trail system with partner involvement.
	* Need for RAC subcommittee to guide priorities and address long-term maintenance concerns.
3. **Wildfire Mitigation**:
	* Increased focus on prescribed burns and cross-agency collaboration.
4. **Future Discussions**:
	* Addressing E-bike policies and inter-agency standardization.
	* Ensuring sustained community engagement in trail maintenance and land stewardship.

minutes were chair certified for accuracy