



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Northern California District Resource Advisory Council

Business Meeting
Virtual via Teams
May 15, 2025

Summary Minutes*

Opening Business

The meeting came to order at 8 a.m. with Chairman Leonard Moty presiding.

Attendance

Category one: Jeff Blewett, commercial recreation; Jim Rankin, energy and minerals; Joe Tona, transportation and rights of way; Casey Bokavich, OHV interests; Richard Mackey, federal grazing permit holders. **Category two:** Carol Montgomery, dispersed recreation; Steve Martin, dispersed recreation; David Lile, wild horse and burro interests; Ryan Henson, national/regional environmental interests; Bill Kuntz, national/regional environmental interests. **Category three:** Dan Efseaff, state natural resources agencies; Pat Frost, elected officials; Richard Karem, public at large; Leonard Moty, public at large.

There are majorities in all membership categories, and therefore a quorum of the RAC.

BLM Staff: Acting District Manager Jennifer Mata, Acting Applegate Field Manager Kevin Kunkel, Arcata Field Manager Collin Ewing, Eagle Lake Field Manager Emily Ryan, Acting Redding Field Manager Alden Neel, Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana, Deputy NorCal District Manager Phil D'Amo, NorCal District Realty Specialist Dan Ryan.

Approvals: By full consensus, the RAC approved the agenda for today's meeting and the summary minutes from the September meeting held in Cedarville.

Election of Officers: By full consensus, the RAC elected Leonard Moty to continue as chair and Dan Efseaff to continue as vice chair

Ethics Training: Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana advised members that the agency will be suggesting dates for an administrative training session on ethics rules for RAC members, and an overview of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Executive and Secretarial Orders

Acting District Manager Jennifer Mata provided an overview of recent Presidential Executive Orders and Secretarial Orders (Interior Secretary Doug Burgum) that affect public lands managed by the BLM:

Secretarial Order 3417 addresses the President's national energy and critical minerals emergency. It directs expediting development of infrastructure for energy and mineral development and aims to streamline

development. Under the order, Interior will immediately identify all emergency and legal authorities available to facilitate the identification, permitting, leasing, development, production, transportation, refining, distribution, exporting and generation of domestic energy resources and critical minerals. Secondly, the Department will identify all emergency and other legal authorities available to expedite the completion of all authorized and appropriate infrastructure, energy, environmental, and natural resources projects. The Secretary will report the use of such authorities and submit recommendations for exercising certain authorities as necessary to the President.

Secretarial Order 3419 mandates the Interior Department to take immediate steps that will reduce living costs for American families. The order initiates a department-wide review of all programs and regulations that are unnecessarily causing higher living costs for hardworking American families to identify and recommend future actions to lower costs.

Secretarial Order 3421 directs the Department of the Interior to support President Trump's deregulation agenda, as outlined in the Executive Order "Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation." The goal is to reduce red tape, enhance national security and improve the quality of life for U.S. citizens. Interior will eliminate at least 10 existing regulations for every new one introduced and ensure that the costs of new regulations are offset by removing the costs of previous ones. All Department bureaus and offices are tasked with streamlining financial management and reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens.

Executive Order 14225, titled **Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production**, highlights the importance of timber production and how forest management and wildfire risk reduction projects can save American lives and communities. This EO not only helps address the threat of high severity wildfire but also provides economic activity in the manufacturing sector. The EO aims to combat mill closures by boosting timber availability in rural areas that will support lumber processors and result in increased jobs and improved markets for thinning projects near communities that face increased fire risk from BLM forest lands. It recognized that:

- Thinning treatments are critical for reducing the risk of the most severe and destructive active crown fires in BLM forests. The extent of crown fires can be reduced by thinning to create spaces between tree crowns.
- Thinning is an environmental imperative in overstocked and fire-prone forests. Extreme wildfire events are destroying fire-adapted forests. On California BLM lands, fires resulted in the death of old-growth giant sequoia and ponderosa pine trees.

Executive Order 14241, Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production, requires minerals projects to be transparent and requires agencies to develop a list of all mineral production projects for which an operations plan or application for approval has been submitted and can be immediately approved or permitted. It also calls on the agencies to identify as many sites as possible on Federal land that may be suitable for leasing for private commercial mineral production.

RAC Comments:

- Rich Karen expressed hope that the orders will benefit fire and fuels projects, while Jim Rankin asked whether it will be possible under the orders to streamline forest salvage projects. There was discussion about effects on timber markets. Ryan Henson noted that increased data calls are common when administrations change, as priorities shift between administrations.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act

Amanda Loye from the Forest Service Regional Office presented an overview of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA). She explained how the Forest Service implements this Act that sets forth recreation facility amenity standards that must be met before the agency can establish or increase fees. The introductory material was to inform RAC members as they prepared to discuss business plans and recreation fee proposals for sites in the Tahoe and Humboldt-Toiyabe national forests. The BLM RAC charter gives the council authority to review and approve these proposals for the Forest Service.

Tahoe National Forest Fee Proposal

Mary Sullivan provided details on a proposal to establish a \$75 nightly camping fee at the Sardine Peak Lookout and to increase fees at the Calpine Lookout from the current \$45 nightly fee to \$75 nightly. Mary provided details about the levels of amenities to be provided, the market research done to determine fees, the public outreach conducted, and the public comments received.

RAC chairman Leonard Moty opened the meeting to public comments on the proposal. None were received.

Action: By full consensus the RAC approved the Tahoe National Forest proposal as presented.

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Fee Proposal

Randy Kyes provided details on proposals to increase fees at the Lookout Campground to \$20 for single, \$30 for double and \$60 for triple sites; and to increase the single Christmas tree permit from \$10 to \$20. Randy provided details about the analysis used in the fee proposals, about the amenities provided, the public outreach conducted, and the public comments received.

RAC Chairman Leonard Moty opened the meeting to public comments on the proposal. None were received.

Action: By full consensus the RAC approved the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest proposal as presented.

Wild Horse and Burro Update

Acting Applegate Field Manager Kevin Kunkel reported that a week remains in the appeal period on an approved environmental assessment and decision to gather excess wild horses from the Carter Reservoir, Coppersmith and Buckhorn herd management areas. The proposal is to reduce the appropriate management level to a range of 134 to 195 for the three HMAs. The current combined population is estimated at 797 wild horses based on aerial observation and projected growth. The decision record and environmental assessment are available online at the BLM National NEPA Register. Kunkel noted that the decision to gather is made at a national level where several considerations, including available space in off range holding, influence decision making.

Discussion continued about the WHB program overall. RAC comments:

- Jim Rankin said he continues to hear interest in a revival of the former Trainer Incentive Program. The BLM staff had no information on a new program to replace TIP.
- Rich Karem said there need to be more effort at making the public aware of the program cost (two thirds of the Wild Horse and Burro Program budget being used to pay for off range holding, for example). He said attitudes could change toward the program.
 - Eagle Lake Field Manager Emily Ryan said that gather plans are fully funded, and that requests for removal of nuisance animals are handled as they come in. Responding to other questions, she said local operations require about a half million dollars in overhead costs and about \$1 million in annual hay costs.
- Carol Montgomery suggested the federal government should investigate tax incentives for those who adopt wild horses or burros. The BLM staff advised Carol that the national Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board would be a good place to forward the suggestion. The NorCal RAC could also discuss the idea and formulate a recommendation to the Interior Secretary through the BLM, as the charter directs.
- David Lile noted that Modoc County is looking for ways that wild horses from the BLM program can be used in the Mustang Challenge event, a program in which 4-H and FFA youth train mustangs, compete in a contest for the most accomplished training, and then offer the horses for adoption. The BLM has a government-to-government transfer program in which horses removed from the range can be transferred to other agencies for work, and Modoc County interests are seeking ways to use that authority for the Mustang Challenge.
 - Kevin Kunkel and Jeff Fontana noted that the BLM's goal is managing healthy horses on healthy rangelands, but often that message fails to resonate with emotional arguments about gathers. Richard Karem said a "tiny minority" seems to be driving the BLM wild horse program.
- Meeting guest Janelle Ghiorso said that overpopulation of livestock is causing more rangeland damage than wild horses.

Land Tenure

Northern California District Realty Specialist Dan Ryan summarized the status of land actions across the District. Highlights by field office:

- **Applegate**
 - Acquired 1,186 acres from a willing seller in Washoe County. The lands are within a wilderness study area and provide habitat for greater sage grouse.
- **Arcata**
 - The Elk Creek acquisition was a partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and brought more than 3,300 acres in Mendocino County into public ownership.
 - The Guthrie Creek acquisition in Humboldt County included 142 acres within the California Coastal National Monument west of Ferndale.

- Lost Coast Redwoods was an acquisition partnership to bring 4,566 acres of coastal property adjacent to the California Coastal National Monument into public ownership. The acquisition was made possible with \$27.1 million in funding from the BLM and a \$17 million donation from the state and partners. The property will be managed for conservation and public access.
- **Eagle Lake**
 - A 750-acre acquisition in Lassen County will provide for improved access to the Bald Mountain Special Recreation Management Area, where more than 20 miles of trails for non motorized use have been established.
 - Near Herlong in Lassen County, acquisition of 280 acres from a willing seller will benefit mule deer winter range and provide public access.
- **Redding**
 - The BLM partnered with Western Rivers Conservancy to acquire 60 acres to improve public access to the Trinity River in Trinity County.
 - A 120-acre acquisition at Quartz Hill in Shasta County will provide improved public recreation access.
 - Working with Western Rivers Conservancy, 120 acres at Jelly's Ferry in the Sacramento River Bend were acquired for public ownership. The public will benefit from additional Sacramento River and public land access.

Ryan also provided information on potential future acquisitions by field office jurisdiction:

- **Applegate**
 - The Modoc Big Game Corridor and Infernal Caverns, Modoc County: The total proposed acquisition is 4,790 acres to acquire lands benefitting wildlife, and to conserve a site containing marked graves of US Cavalry soldiers.
- **Arcata**
 - Eel Wild and Scenic River: Acquiring 3,946 acres would benefit management of the WSR corridor.

Ryan noted that there are multiple opportunities for public land sales in the Applegate, Eagle Lake and Redding field office jurisdictions. All have been identified in BLM resource management plans as suitable for disposal from public ownership for numerous reasons including management costs and management issues involving adjacent public lands, such as public lands being surrounded by private lands.

RAC comments:

- Ryan Henson expressed thanks for the BLM's work.
- Casey Bokavich commented that a recent purchase in the Chappie Shasta OHV area demonstrates the benefit of the agency working with partners, as it did with the Redding Dirt Riders in this case.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

State Director's Report

Acting District Manager Jennifer Mata provided comments on behalf of State Director Joe Stout. Highlights:

Leadership:

- The Interior Secretary is Doug Burgum.
- The Acting Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management is Adam G. Suess.
- BLM Nevada State Director Jon Raby is acting BLM director.

119th Congress:

- California is represented by Senators Alex Padilla and Adam Schiff, both Democrats.
- BLM Northern California District lands lie within the districts of Jared Huffman (D-02) and Doug LaMalfa (R-01). The district's northern Nevada lands are in the district of Mark Amodei (R-02).

Fire and Fuels:

- President Trump recently signed into law permanent pay increases for federal and tribal wildland firefighters. The legislation created by Congress establishes new salary tables for all federal wildland firefighters, including temporary and seasonal employees. It also makes permanent Bureau of Indian Affairs funding to Tribal Nations to offer pay supplements to tribal wildland firefighters who protect Indian Country and contribute to interagency wildland firefighting efforts across the United States. In addition, the legislation establishes wildland fire Incident Response Premium Pay, which allows all federal employees to earn additional compensation when they are mobilized for qualifying wildfire incidents.
- The Interior Department will rapidly implement these long-awaited changes. As wildfires become larger and more destructive, threatening American communities, livelihoods, and infrastructure, the demands on wildland fire personnel are increasing.
- This permanent pay fix will enable the Interior Department to continue hiring and retaining the talented professionals who protect our nation's homes, businesses, communities, essential infrastructure, and landscapes from wildfires.

In August 2023, the Bureau of Land Management signed the **Statewide Wildland-Urban Interface Fuels Treatment (SWFT) Programmatic Environmental Assessment** to streamline plans to protect communities, reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health.

- This plan expedites fuels treatments across 930,000 acres of public lands in 44 counties. Fuels treatment projects are coordinated across land ownerships to permit on-the-ground vegetation management within months instead of requiring years of planning, and it provides the best results for communities, creating a landscape-level network of strategic fuels treatments and breaks within the wildland-urban interface.
- Since 2024, the BLM issued 12 Determination of NEPA Adequacies for wildfire resilience projects using the 2023 SWFT pEA.
- DNAs streamline NEPA reviews and improve efficiency by determining if a previously completed NEPA analysis is sufficient to satisfy current NEPA requirements for a new, similar action proposed.

Master Operations & Maintenance and Consolidation project (MOMAC):

- BLM, Pacific Gas & Electric, and Southern California Edison are continuing to collaborate to reduce the risk of utility-caused wildfires and increase utility-line safety through the Master Operations & Maintenance and Consolidation project (MOMAC). It is a streamlined, proactive approach to operations and maintenance and safety on power line rights of way across public lands.

National Conservation Lands 25th Anniversary Celebration:

- BLM is celebrating its system of National Conservation Lands on its 25th anniversary, highlighting the values and benefits of these special places to encourage public use and support and to ensure they are managed for maximum public benefit now and in the future. Some planned activities for NorCal during the year include:
 - Future activities at the King Range NCA.
 - Trinity Wild and Scenic River clean up, spring 2025.
 - Trinity Wild and Scenic River Bucktail "Adopt-A-Plot" weeds management event, summer 2025.
 - Weaverville Return of the Salmon Festival, September 2025.

Recreation/Explore Act

- The Explore Act has been signed into law (PL 118-234) and the BLM is carefully examining each of the subsections, identifying potential changes in policy/regulations and developing implementation guidance and timelines.
 - Some of the provisions are more easily actionable, while others may require rulemaking and policy development to align with the new law.
 - Some of the provisions are more easily actionable, while others may require rulemaking and policy development to align with the new law.
 - It is also important to note the Explore Act goes beyond outdoor recreation, touching several programs in many agencies and setting the stage for value added interagency coordination on these important requirements. More information will be available in the coming weeks and months.

Field Manager Reports

Applegate Field Office: Kevin Kunkel summarized a written report. Topics included updates on remodeling the Alturas office building, staffing, and priorities for the remainder of the fiscal year. He noted that Field Manager Craig Drake retired, and that the office has hired a new assistant field manager. Kevin provided status reports on the range, forestry, fuels, recreation, cultural resources, weed management and restoration programs. He said the field office has increased its work in developing recreation trails and noted that work continues with mineral exploration at the site of the former Hog Ranch gold mine in Washoe County, Nev. Operators believe there may be lithium deposits there.

RAC comments/questions

- Carol Montgomery and Ryan Henson requested more information on a June watershed restoration tour. Kevin will provide the information.

Arcata Field Office: The written report provided to the council included updates on the Northwest California Integrated Resource Management Plan, acquisition and future management of the Lost Coast Redwoods property in Mendocino County, activities in the Headwaters Forest Reserve and King Range National Conservation Area, and management of recreation opportunities on lands in the Lost Coast Headlands area. The report also updated the RAC on ecological restoration work underway with \$4.9 million in funding from CAL FIRE, restoration projects at Lacks Creek, and projects in the fisheries, wildlife, botany and fire and fuels programs.

Eagle Lake Field Office: Field Manager Emily Ryan highlighted the contents of her report, also provided to the council in advance of the meeting. Topics included status of a building remodel project, staffing updates and accomplishments in the range, recreation, ecology, fuels, forestry, cultural resources and wild horse and burro programs.

RAC comments/questions

- Responding to a question from Ryan Henson, Emily described the restoration work using beaver dam analogs and natural features at McCoy and Stoney creeks.
- Carol Montgomery was interested in the schedule for the next archaeology volunteer week. Emily noted it has not yet been scheduled.
- Emily noted that a nomination has been submitted to add the Smoke Creek Petroglyph District to the National Register of Historic Places.

Redding Field Office: Acting Field Manager Alden Neel summarized information provided in an advance report provided to the council. Topics included land acquisition, staffing, work on a fiber optic project, fuels and forestry program accomplishments, campground openings, recreation program accomplishments, ongoing planning and outreach events.

Closing Business

Comments and suggestions from RAC members:

- Bill Kuntz suggested that the BLM partner with the Back Country Horsemen to hold wild horse and burro adoption events in conjunction with the organization's statewide rendezvous events.
- Responding to a question from Carol Montgomery, Jeff Fontana noted that the RAC charter expires in November. Charters, signed by the Secretary of the Interior, are valid for two years. They must be renewed for the RAC to conduct business. Jeff noted that the charter is posted on the BLM's website.
- Ryan Henson expressed hope that there will be a virtual option for the business portion of the RAC's next meeting which is Sept. 17 and 18 in Fort Bragg.
- Jeff Fontana again reminded members of the need to schedule time for the required training on ethics regulations and the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

The meeting was adjourned.

*Summary minutes compiled by
Jeff Fontana, public affairs officer*

*These minutes summarize the proceedings. They are not a verbatim account.