

Bureau of Land Management – Wyoming Resource Advisory Council Meeting

04/23/2025 Virtual

RAC Coordinators: Allegra Keenoo, Micky Fisher, and Jacqueline Alderman

Name	City	Interest Represented	Term Expires	Present	Notes
Jennifer Leinonen	Casper	Energy/Minerals	12/25	Y	
Craig Rood	Green River	Energy/Minerals	05/27	N	
Michael Massie	Laramie	Archeology	4/26	Y	
Mel Shumway	Afton	Dispersed Recreation	05/27	Y	
John Espy	Rawlins	Elected Official	05/27	Y	
Stephanie Kessler	Lander	Public-at-Large	4/26	Y	
Mary Thoman	Green River	Elected Official	12/25	Y	
Yufna Solider Wolf	St. Stevens	Tribal	4/26	Y	

Name	Title	Office	Present
Kris Kirby	Acting State Director	WY State Office	Y
Paul Hohn	Acting Associate State Director	WY State Office	Y
Frank Keeler	District Manager	High Desert District	Y
Ben Bigalke	Acting District Manager	High Plains District	Y
Johanna Kramer	District Manager	Wind River Bighorn Basin	Y
Caleb Hiner	Associate District Manager, Wind River Bighorn Basin District	Wind River Bighorn Basin	Y
Brad Purdy	Deputy State Director	WY State Office	Y
Micky Fisher	Lead Public Affairs Specialist	WY State Office	Y
Jacqueline Alderman	High Desert District Public Affairs Specialist	WY State Office	Y
Melissa Towers	Deputy State Director, Support Services	WY State Office	Y
Jennifer Fleuret-McConchie	Deputy State Director, Resource Policy and Management	WY State Office	Y
Al Elser	Deputy State Director, Minerals and Lands	WY State Office	Y

Agenda Item: Welcome

Presenter: Kris Kirby, BLM Acting State Director and Jennifer Leinonen, RAC Chair

- Welcome, RAC Member/BLM introductions, and agenda review.
- Discussion on nomination process and plans throughout 2025 to fill vacancies.
 - Identify special nomination process for now, then again in Oct 2025, BLM will work with Carrie Richardson to identify best approach/way ahead.

Agenda Item: Resource Policy Updates

Presenter: Jennifer Fleuret-McConchie, Deputy State Director, Resource Policy and Management

- Highlighted recent and upcoming focus on timber sales within the state.
- Conveyed how Wyoming stacks up nationwide comparatively to other heavy-hitting timber states like Oregon.
- Discussed the collaboration BLM WY has with the state and other agencies in conducting timber operations/sales. Efforts aligning with current Administration priorities.
- DOI reverted to 2020 NEPA regs from CEQ / Explorer Act, due to litigation.
- Sage grouse RMP Amendment update.
- Answered questions regarding Rock Springs RMP, highlighted the mechanisms for review/revision amendment.
- Provided brief update on coal leasing within the state, Buffalo Field Office Resource Management Plan.

Agenda Item: District and Field Manager Updates

Presenter: Frank Keeler, HDD Manager; Ben Bigalke, HPD Manager; Johanna Kramer, WRBBD Manager

High Desert District (HDD), Frank Keeler – District Manager

- Wild Horse adoption and gather updates.
- Rawlins gather for 2,179 horses. Rock Springs gather for ~3,000 horses, both slated to start in the Summer of 2025.
- Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS) update of current project proposals.
- Wind energy project updates. Noted current pause in all wind projects due to Administration's direction.
 - Focused on Lucky Star, highlighted how this project is a transmission line. So, this one is being worked.
- The BLM Pinedale Field Office is seeking public comment and input on the proposed Dry Piney Helium and Carbon Sequestration Project.

- Land Exchanges, focused on Miller Mountain land exchange. The land exchange as proposed, would transfer approximately 1,802.5 acres of public surface estate to Mr. Thrash (Fort Hill LLC), in exchange for up to 2,274.68 acres of private surface estate, located primarily within the Miller Mountain Management Area. All private parcels are owned by Mr. Thrash. No mineral estate would be exchanged.
- Mike asked about transmission line processes for approval and development.
 - How can we work to expedite timelines for transmission infrastructure.

Wind River Big Horn Basin District (WRBBD), Johanna Kramer -- District Manager

- Fuels update given, Johanna referenced the prescribed burnings that are planned and have taken place.
- Highlighted fire response efforts
- Well-plugging efforts
- Highlighted the camping/rec-site fee increases and new fee implementation.
- Heart Mountain conveyance.
- Mining plans within the district.
- ROWs, focused on Park County Shooting Complex, working with state since it involves state lands.
- Muddy Ridge revocation, brief history provided on the 56K+ acres being revoked by the BOR. Steff asked what some of the possibilities were, for example back to BLM for management, back to Tribes.
- Rec update provided, adding 3-mile trail to Johnny Behind the Rocks trail system.
- CCUS project update.
- Castle Gardens Rec Area withdrawal extended another 20 years.
- Dump site cleaning, consisting of 40 acres.
- Mike referenced BLM's vast mission set and appreciation for all the support BLM provides and especially to rural fire departments. (Rural fire assistance program).
- Jennifer L. asked about the camp site fee increases, what are they used for and what public feedback looked like. Johanna explained the feedback was a mix bag, some against but lots of positive feedback understanding the purpose and need. Jennifer F. added an explanation of what the Rec RAC is and how they're looped in for reviewing fee increases.

High Plains District (HPD), Ben Bigalke-- District Manager

- Ben shared details surrounding Casper's new Air Tanker Base that was finalized in June of 2024. Expressed appreciation of partnerships to make that successful.
- Highlighted several fire/fuels actions and accomplishments within the district to include Alcova Reservoir.

- National Historical Trails Center facility updates, closed since Dec 2024, now open after renovations and safety upgrades.
 - Adjusted hours to work better for the public, seeing lots of school groups come through.
- Oil and Gas update -referenced litigation surrounding the ground water modeling within the Converse County EIS. Reporting back to the court now with updated modeling.
 - APD approval process paused until litigation resolved.
- Marton Ranch management update, grazing does continue on the property.
- Land Disposal efforts on lands locked in by private lands in Converse Country, ~800 acres to be sold to the private landowner.
- Status provided on Newcastle/Nebraska RMP revision which is now 25+ years old. Expecting to have final EIS prepared late summer 2025.
- Quarter Circle 7 Ranch update.
- Coal leasing update, Buffalo RMP to amend coal leasing in the Powder River Basin. Working a course of action alongside MT/DAKs for the revision.
- District continues to process APDs, yet we've seen a slowdown of APD submissions received.
- Jennifer L. noted the 0 APDs out of Casper Field Office, Ben explained how the various litigations and court order have those halted.
- Jennifer L. asked about staffing levels/cuts. How are they impacting the state and High Plains District. Kris responded to this question saying although we've seen 10%+ take the Deferred Resignation Program offerings or VERA/VSIP early retirements. The losses seen are not due to layoffs, and speaking to staffing impacts right now wouldn't offer a clear depiction of where we're at currently and where we're heading.

Agenda Item: Minerals and Lands Update

Presenter: Al Elser, Deputy State Director, Minerals and Lands

- 500-600 expected APDs in FY25, which is ~300 less on average over last few years.
- Discussed the quarterly lease sales to include the additional sale taking place in June 2025 using previously offered parcels.
- Talked through the NEPA remand and litigation affecting APDs.
- Working through deferrals from previous lease sales to determine if they can be offered again in upcoming sales.
- Working to streamline lease sale and ADP review process.
- Land Disposal process, touched on Affordable Housing.
- Mike asked if there was any work toward rare earth minerals. Al answered no proposals currently exist for any big mining projects.
- Mel suggested landlocked lands being most ideal for affordable housing, Al/Frank answered saying local RMPs would be a proper starting point for determining this.

- Mary asked if there was any upcoming availability of lands for disposal/exchange near Green River. Frank replied saying yes and that we'd keep her in the loop on NEPA docs.

Agenda Item: Office of State Lands and Investments Letter to BLM

Presenter: Kris Kirby, BLM Acting State Director and Jennifer Leinonen, RAC Chair

- Sale of Kelly Parcel suspected to being the origins of this letter.
- RAC expressed the significance of including mineral rights, especially for the Powder River Basin and in the Checkerboard areas.
- Noted a previous MOU that existed for reference. Steff would share BLM OSOI MOU for us to reference as we move forward, as to not recreate the wheel.

Agenda Item: New Business/Public Comment Period

Presenters: Jennifer Leinonen, RAC Chair

- Public participants on Teams – “Rev It Up Girls” Eva and Angela Wyatt.
- No members of the public were in attendance for the public comment portion. No public participation.
- RAC brought up the Wild Horse and Burro Recommendation previously submitted. Kris and Brad confirmed that a review needs to be finalized in-house by BLM before submitting to HQ via Carrie Richardson. Carrie will then provide transmittal letter to the Secretary.
- John mentioned how BLM has not been supporting recent lek counting. Jennifer F. explained how this supporting action largely fell under our previous sage grouse assistance agreements, but with changing priorities from the administration, we're left to do without this function. Shift in focus to energy, less on landscape conservation and wildlife surveys.
- Steff brought up the idea of inviting local Mayors, City/County Representatives, NGOs, industry, etc. to an upcoming RAC Meeting (team later agreed Casper in Oct makes the most sense for this, assuming it's authorized to invite them *Brad is confirming).
 - Brad will contact HQ FACA expert and follow up with Jennifer L.
 - Jennifer L suggested that the RAC compile a list of contacts for invitation, Jennifer to follow up with RAC directly to iron this out.
- Mike asked if the RAC could get a better timeline on Affordable Housing actions so the council can determine if and how they can support this effort. Brad referenced educational tool regarding Affordable Housing criteria (ex: 5K people within a city)
- Mel brought up the idea of putting together Working Groups to review options to lessen the timelines of energy infrastructure projects. John included a testimonial where something similar had been done and they ended up just shortening the cooperator participation in the process, which was not helpful.

- Team discussed the Wyoming Pipeline Initiative, Steff suggested we investigate that process for the sake of pulling lessons learned to apply to RAC efforts moving forward.
- Mike suggested the first Working Group meeting will need to establish core objectives.
- Team collectively agreed to await formal guidance from BLM to establish a plan.

Agenda Item: Topics for Future RAC Meetings/Action Items

Presenter: Jennifer Leinonen, RAC Chair

Future Topics:

- Resurrect speaker plan previously scheduled (Governor, LEOs, Fire, etc.)
- Work Group Update
- Land Tenure Program
- Office of State Lands and Investments Letter
- Next meeting date was requested for July 9th in Cheyenne, WY, unless Teams Meeting is required. Following meeting to be had in Casper which the RAC may loop in additional attendees like Mayors, Wyoming Association of Municipalities, WCCA, Representatives, NGOs, and Industry reps.
- Housing topic to be discussed at October 2025 RAC meeting.
- Keep District Reports

Action Items:

- BLM will adjust duration and topics of next meeting.
- Jennifer L. and Brad will schedule a time to discuss what Brad learns from HQ FACA rep regarding who can be invited to a RAC meeting, via what means. (i.e. Mayors, City/County Reps, NGOs, Industry, etc.). He'll get the "can and can't dos." Jennifer will follow up with RAC.
- RAC to compile list of contacts for Oct RAC Meeting Invitation (once Brad gives greenlight). Sync with BLM.
- Send all referenced EOs, SOs and Memos to RAC (see below).

For reference, here are the Executive Orders and Memos discussed throughout the RAC Meeting:

1. Temporary Withdrawal of All Areas on the Outer Continental Shelf from Offshore Wind Leasing: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/temporary-withdrawal-of-all-areas-on-the-outer-continental-shelf-from-offshore-wind-leasing-and-review-of-the-federal-governments-leasing-and-permitting-practices-for-wind-projects/>
2. New Federal Employee Category to Enhance Accountability: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/04/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-creates-new-federal-employee-category-to-enhance-accountability/>

3. Secretary Burgum, HUD Secretary Turner Announce Joint Task Force to Reduce Housing Costs: <https://search.app/FK9tcuyoPnvHNYH2A>

2025 Tentative Meeting Dates – final dates and locations will be posted on the RAC website prior to each meeting - [Wyoming | Bureau of Land Management \(blm.gov\)](https://www.blm.gov)

- July 9-10, 2025 (postponed)
- October 21-22, 2025