

Northwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2025

Location: Grand Junction, CO

RAC Members

Name	Location	Cat.	Interest Represented
Shawn Brennan	Glenwood Springs	I	Energy & Minerals
Michael Camblin	Maybell	I	Federal Grazing
Kirk Daehling	Battlement Mesa	I	Energy & Minerals
Scott Robertson	Rangely	I	Federal Grazing
Carl Conner	Grand Junction	II	Archaeological & Historical Interests
Sean Burke	Fraser	II	Dispersed Recreation
Kathy Chandler-Henry	Eagle	II	Dispersed Recreation
Merrit Linke	Granby	III	Elected Official
Kris Middendorf (call in)	Steamboat Springs	III	Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Sherry Schreiner	Grand Junction	III	Public-at-Large
Hattie Johnson	Carbondale	II	Dispersed Recreation
Callie H. Stritchfield	Meeker	III	Public-at-Large

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Staff

Name	Title	Office
Bob Swithers	District Manager	Northwest District Office
Greg Larson	District Manager	Upper Colorado River District
Erin Jones	Associate District Manager	Upper Colorado River District
Jim Michels	Associate District Manager	Northwest District Office
Stacey Colón	Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Lisa Dawson	Field Manager	Colorado River Valley Field Office
Stephen Leonard	Field Manager	Kremmling Field Office
Kymm Gresset	Field Manager	Little Snake Field Office
James Roberts	Acting Field Manager	White River Field Office
Jeff Starosta	Assistant Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Christina Stark	Assistant Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Jim Lovelace	National Conservation Area Manager	McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Areas
John Monkouski	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Kremmling Field Office
Colleen Peterson	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Colorado River Valley Field Office
Tracy Perfors	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Colorado State Office

Jessica Lopez-Pearce	HazMat Specialist	Upper Colorado River District
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Congressional Staff Attendees

Name	Office
Riley Scott	Congressman Hurd
John Whitney	Senator Bennet

Public Attendees

Name	Office
John Justman	Public

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: House Keeping, Introductions, and Opening Remarks

Facilitators: Greg Larson

Greg Larson took over duties as the Designated Federal Officer and welcomed RAC attendees, facilitated introductions, provided an overview of the agenda, and discussed logistics and “housekeeping” items for the day. Emphasis was placed on teeing up this consensus body to advise on some upcoming challenges facing the BLM.

Notice was given that Beatriz Soto Ruvalcaba had to withdraw from participating on the RAC.

Agenda Item: Review and Discuss yesterday’s Field Trip to 27.25 rd shooting ranges and proposed solar development on 21 rd.

Facilitator: Stacey Colón

Stacey and RAC members noted the high points of the shooting ranges and proposed solar developments.

RAC member perspectives and questions:

- Scott Robertson—s Impressed by the complexity of issues involved in managing a shooting range.
- Kathy Chandler-Henry—Are shooting issues being looked at/evaluated programmatically or holistically on a state level?
 - James Roberts and Lisa Dawson both agreed that it is rather ubiquitous across multiple field offices they’ve worked in. James Roberts spoke to multiple dispersed sites in his field office and previous field offices which have non-permissible levels of lead in the soil and the threat that poses to non-shooting visitors to public lands.
- Kathy Chandler-Henry—How do shooting ranges come into existence, how do they get developed?
 - Discussion ensues about the history of leases under the Recreation & Public Purposes Act (R&PP). James Roberts provides example of college with a shooting range leased to them via R&PP who eventually bought the leased land from BLM – important factor is that, when an entity leases via R&PP and whose activities contaminate the site (e.g. shooting = lead), only that party can buy directly from BLM as the primary responsible party. If they let the lease lapse, there is essentially no legal path forward for conveyance.

- Carl Conner—Trash begets more trash, so we need a way to clean it up.
- Shawn Brennan—Need a way to get past the hazmat concerns for volunteers who want to steward their public lands.

Agenda Item: Shooting Sports

Facilitators: Stacey Colón and Jeff Starosta

Colón and Starosta presented an overview of recreational shooting on public lands across the BLM and provided a history of the development of the 27.25 rd shooting ranges.

Jessica Lopez-Pearce elaborated on soil sampling at 27.25 rd ranges from a 2017 Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment.

- This site characterization data is 8 years old, so concentrations may be higher now.
- BLM-CO State Office has contracted site characterizations for informal and formal shooting areas across the state to understand the levels of lead and heavy metals contamination.
- BLM may allow staff and volunteers to be on site and perform solid waste clean ups where lead concentrations in the soil are below 800 parts per million (ppm).
 - This is based off guidance from the Environmental Protection Agency, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and BLM Policy.

Discussion turned to the EXPLORE Act's mandate to establish a shooting range within each district of BLM, and if the 27.25 Rd facility acceptable/appropriate. Similarities between 27.25 rd and 34 & C rd shooting areas were discussed, including their Facility Asset Management System (FAMS) replacement costs.

BLM-Arizona's Phoenix shooting range examples provided by Lovelace.

Discussion:

- Shawn Brennan—Are multiple partnerships to fund the improvement and upkeep of these places possible? Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, National Rifle Association, local gun clubs, etc. Given direction in EXPLORE act to have a shooting range, it makes sense to continue to work with this existing site. From a high level this seems to be the most responsible thing.
 - Big caveat within the EXPLORE act direction is “subject to available funding”.
- What other funding opportunities exist?
 - BLM understands that HazMat program will provide funding for final closure, but the place can't be re-used for shooting.
 - Lovelace—Perhaps there is an avenue to tap into a local initiative like “pennies for trails” or roundup at the point of sale for ammunitions, clay pigeons, etc?
 - Larson—Initial thoughts on a fee? Larson has reservations about charging fees but recognizes all the costs associated with the re-development and maintenance of the site.

- Shawn Brennan—Strong support for fees based off this RAC’s experience with fees thus far.
- Bob Swithers— Concern around charging fees and that pushing people into more dispersed shooting which then creates hazardous conditions elsewhere. Lack of closures (or support from above for closures) for shooting puts us in a position where we invest all this money, charge a fee, and realize small gains from the fee and simultaneously experience an increased occurrence of recognized environmental conditions from dispersed shooting.

Agenda Item: Upper Colorado River Fee Program Update

Facilitators: Lisa Dawson and Stephen Leonard

John Mankouski and Colleen Peterson are the subject matter experts. Highlight of the fee program is the now-consistent management beginning from Kremmling SRMA down to State Bridge and further downstream to the entry of Glenwood Canyon.

New fee schedule was reviewed.

This includes day-use fee for the whole stretch of river.

Campsites fees used to be different between the two offices, now they’re the same.

There is now a season pass that covers visitors for both field offices.

There is now a high-capacity vehicle fee.

New fees for Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) yielded a nearly 100% increase in revenue between FY23 and FY24 (\$23k to \$40k)

Construction related to expansion and improvement of the river corridor is on track.

Feedback from public on changes almost all positive.

Capacity study for Upper CO River on hold due to funding constraints.

- Hattie Johnson—What impacts would that have on the business plan and camping opportunities for the public?
 - Mankouski—This is a capacity study, not a decision document. Through the study, the BLM is hoping to generate data or identify data needs that would serve to inform a management plan, should one be needed, to preserve certain experiences and settings that facilitate the outcomes identified in the Resource Management Plan.
 - Peterson—The main idea of how we might move forward from this capacity study survey is to have a new set of baseline data that reflects visitor’s experience in the wake of these recent changes (new camping fees, new ISRPs, new river management plan between KFO and CRVFRO, etc.)
- Callie Stritchfield—We need to keep in mind the underserved communities who might not be able to afford such things like day-use fees.
 - Shawn Brennan—We’ve discussed this before – folks who are participating in these activities are doing so oftentimes with tens of thousands of dollars of gear,

- so \$10-25 isn't much.
- Stephen Lennard—Majority of public lands remain free
- Lisa Dawson—A reminder that BLM works to maintain partnerships with organizations that get underserved communities out on the ground.
- Hattie Johnson—Continue to feel concerned about compliance with new system. Would be interested in hearing more about the return on investment of this effort.

Agenda Item: Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Facilitator: Tracy Perfors, Christina Stark

Perfors provided an overview of BLM's Solar PEIS, an 11-state planning effort with a decision signed in December 2024.

BLM-CO: 600,000 acres out of 8,000,000 available for solar applications per the plan. Despite this, the expectation is for only 30,000-40,000 acres to be developed over the next 10 years due to the discretion that remains at the level of the field office to account for site specific resource concerns.

Stark provided greater background information on the site-specific applications for the 21 road and Mitchell Road areas. Potential resource conflicts for 21 road include sensitive plants, recreation, grazing, and soils & hydrology. A competitive process is planned to select an applicant. Once an applicant is determined, the site-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will begin.

Agenda Item: Field Manager Updates

Facilitator: Greg Larson

Kremmling Field Office- Steve Leonard

Kremmling Field Office (KFO) received a \$111,000.00 off highway vehicle (OHV) grant for more sustainable trails. KFO has seen a large uptick in the number of visitors in the confluence recreation area.

White River Field Office- James Roberts

White River Field Office (WRFO) participated in the Meeker Mustang Makeover pick up and was overall a success. WRFO has put \$780,000.00 over the last three (3) years to improve management in OHV open areas. They also have a new grant to build a covered area at a motorcycle course and skills area.

WRFO is also working on oil and gas permits with surrounding field offices. PRM is the applicant. Two lease sales are scheduled for September and December.

Little Snake Field Office- Kym Gressett

Little Snake Field Office (LSFO) is working on the reclamation of Gateway South. LSFO is also working with Wyoming on managing the increase of wild horses coming down to the Sand Wash Range. There is a wild horse gather in

mid-June with hopes of gathering 45 horses before the summer monsoons. LSFO has also completed the Recreation Management Plan for their OHV open area and hope to start construction this fall. Finally, they hope to improve the roof of the Sarvis Cabin this spring and open it to the public.

Grand Junction Field Office- Stacey Colón

The Grand Junction Field Office has a wild horse adoption event scheduled for the end of June. The event will be held at the Mesa County Fair Grounds.

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (MCNCA) will host its 25th anniversary this year. MCNCA would like to host a volunteer trail event for the occasion.

MCNCA in partnership with Colorado Canyons Association hosted Nature Knowledge Days and hosted over 500 third graders at their annual event.

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) successfully designated the campsites along the Lower Gunnison River and hopes to implement the fees and permits in spring of 2026. The Escalante Ranch is still private land until the end of the calendar year when it will become public. Work in D-E NCA is focused on preparations for the transition from private to public ownership.

Colorado River Valley Field Office- Lisa Dawson

CRVFO is focusing on their partnerships, recreation summits and the backlog of NEPA. CRVFO also discussed their oil and gas work.

Agenda Item: Public Comment

Facilitator: Greg Larson

John Whitney- Senator Bennet's Office.

John expressed the concern for our public agencies and staffing reductions. John also gave a brief view on the Fix our Forest legislation that is in the works. Senator Bennet has some concerns with the bill including the ability to successfully fight fires with fewer Red Card certifications. They have sent a letter to the Secretary of Agriculture. John also stated that Senator Bennet will stand in opposition of selling off our public lands and voiced concerns of the 11,000 acres in Utah being sold for revenue. John stated that the budget bill has a lot of uncertainty and could potentially overturn several Resource Management Plans.

Agenda Item: Open Discussion

Kathy Chandler-Henry- What is the feeling from the Grand Valley concerning solar projects?

Greg Larson- No public process has been undertaken on the applications yet, so it's hard to tell. We don't have any known examples from nearby.

Callie Stritchfield asked if there was any solar interest in White River Field Office and there is no interest yet.

Finding a new chair—Kirk Daehling will be done at the end of the year and the RAC sought nominations among themselves.

Stritchfield nominates **Scott Robertson**, the RAC concurred. Scott Robertson

will be new RAC chair.

Next Meeting- August 19 and 20 in Craig, CO.

Future Topics suggestions from Callie Stritchfield-

- CO passed a bill that bison are now wildlife (big game) unless they are livestock. In Northwest CO, there will be bison on BLM and this new bill should be on our radar. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to request a presentation from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to inform the RAC as to how they will be handling this new bill.
- BLM is multiple use. Installing signage where we can is an opportunity to educate all users. There is opportunity to do this across the state.
- Larson agrees to consider as we build agendas and deliberate on where BLM could best use advice from the RAC in the coming year.

Agenda Item: Closing Remarks

Facilitator: Greg Larson

Greg Larson thanked the group and moved to adjourn

Agenda Item: Adjourn

Facilitator: Greg Larson

Meeting adjourned by Greg Larson, Designated Federal Officer.

Meeting notes certified by RAC Chair: July 17, 2025