



# Missouri Basin Resource Advisory Council Minutes

## Web-based Video Teleconference – July 15, 2025

---

### Individuals Present

#### MBRAC Members (quorum present):

- *Category 1:* Kevin Wagner, Jeff Schafer, Perri Jacobs, Miles Hutton, Trisha Tonn
- *Category 2:* Greg Jergeson, Mark Good, Doug Krings, Bill Jensen
- *Category 3:* Jody Mason, James Moore, Stacey Barta, Cliff Merriman

#### Public (online via Teams):

- Lih-An Yang, Regional Manager, Glasgow Water Resources Regional Office, MT–DNRC
- Brett Slaughter, Senator Steve Daines' Conservation and Natural Resource Liaison
- Megan Myers, Montana Conservation Corps Intern

#### BLM Staff (online via Teams):

- Wendy Warren, MBRAC Designated Federal Official and District Manager, Eastern Montana/Dakotas District (EMDD)
- Zane Fulbright, District Manager, North Central Montana District (NCMD)
- Mark Jacobsen, EMDD Public Affairs & MBRAC Co-Coordinator (lead)
- Gina Baltrusch, NCMD Public Affairs & MBRAC Co-Coordinator
- Donna Bradley, Administrative Support Assistant, Miles City Field Office (meeting notetaker)
- Ben Hileman, Field Manager, Havre Field Office
- Eric Lepisto, Field Manager, Miles City Field Office
- Edward Kraft, Field Manager, North Dakota Field Office

- Jake Williams, Field Manager, South Dakota Field Office
- Stacie Thompson, Assistant Field Manager, Billings Field Office (BiFO)
- Brittany Jones, Supervisory Public Affairs Specialist, Office of Communications
- Rebecca Cooper, Monument Manager, Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument (UMRBNM)
- Michael Borgreen, Field Manager, Glasgow Field Office
- John Klinkel, Monument Manager, Pompeys Pillar National Monument

**Meeting opened at 8:00 a.m.**

Facilitated by Mark Jacobsen and Gina Baltrusch.

---

**BLM Manager Briefings – MBRAC Meeting Notes**

**Wendy Warren – District Manager, Eastern Montana/Dakotas District**

Members received a written district update on recent and upcoming projects prior to the meeting. Warren highlighted:

- Welcomed members and thanked them for their participation.
- Reviewed staffing changes: departures through the Deferred Retirement/Resignation Program (DRP), retirements, vacancies, and the hiring freeze. Nine to ten employees left under DRP. The freeze may end in mid-October, with waivers requested for petroleum engineers, technicians, civil engineers, and park rangers. Hiring continues for safety-related positions (fire and law enforcement).
- Reported on a proposal to rescind the Public Lands Rule. The process will mirror original rulemaking, including public comment.
- A national team is preparing a Sage Grouse Plan amendment.
- Emergency NEPA procedures apply only to oil and gas EAs/EISs. Solar and wind projects are not covered. The Butte Field Office approved a natural gas pipeline under this authority.

---

**Edward Kraft – Field Manager, North Dakota Field Office**

- The Record of Decision for the 2025 Resource Management Plan (RMP) is under litigation and has been stayed by the court. Congress also disapproved it.

The 1988 RMP remains in effect. Next steps—revision or amendment—are under review with the solicitor and Department of the Interior.

- Two coal mine expansion applications are under review:
    - **Falkirk Mine:** 800-acre expansion (requested 2019). Public comments being collected via ePlanning and meetings.
    - **Freedom Mine:** 1,350-acre expansion (requested 2017). Public comment closed; final decision expected August 2025.
  - So far in 2025, 218 Applications to Drill have been received; 224 processed.
- 

### **Jake Williams – Field Manager, South Dakota Field Office**

- Completed Ft. Meade water pipeline project, adding potable water to the campground and upgrading grazing/wildlife tanks.
  - Two unsafe bridges will be replaced by September 2025.
  - A 36-acre Deadwood Creek parcel exchange will address housing and wildfire mitigation.
  - A rancher proposed a land exchange consolidating small, scattered parcels into a 3,000-acre block.
  - Recreation fee increase at Horse Creek begins October 2025.
- 

### **Zane Fulbright – District Manager, North Central Montana District**

Members also received a written update. Fulbright noted:

- Six employees left under DRP; three retired.
- Approval to hire petroleum engineers; seasonal hiring also authorized.
- Stage 1 fire restrictions in effect in some areas.
- Contract awarded for Cow Creek culvert replacement on Dry Fork Road.
- Great Falls office contracting six additional orphan well projects (completion in 2026).
- Perri Jacobs requested early road closure signs for Cow Creek project due to limited turnaround space. Fulbright and Jacobs will select sign locations.
- Little Rockies Travel Management Plan contract cancelled.

---

## **Stakeholder Perspectives**

### **Perri Jacobs**

- Phillips County FSA (Farm Services Agency) drought assistance programs were activated on July 1.
- It appears that the Public Lands Rule could be rescinded. As of now that may include public comment opportunities.
- MT Stockgrowers Association recently adopted policy against the sale of large swaths of public land.
- A recent University of Idaho 10-year study indicates that livestock grazing when properly managed does not have a negative impact sage grouse population numbers.
- Pleased with the resolution of the Maude case in South Dakota.
- Appreciate the work of Reg. Harriett Hageman, WY on the EARA act. This bill authorizes a party that files an appeal of a Department of the Interior decision with the Interior Board of Land Appeals to submit a written request for expedited review of the appeal.
- Rumor has is that wildlife migration corridors may be an upcoming legislative issue at the Federal level.

### **Greg Jergeson**

- Agreed that rescinding the Public Lands Rule would be disappointing.
- Said the rule created a foundation for collaboration between BLM and the public.

### **Mark Good**

- Expressed concern about losing the Public Lands Rule; said it encouraged landscape restoration and was consistent with past RAC recommendations.
- Mark brought up the issue of legislation proposing to eliminate WSAs and asked whether anyone was interested in beginning discussions that could lead to some collaboration to resolve the issue.

### **Doug Krings**

- Disappointed at the potential rescission of the Public Lands Rule, which he said supported healthier landscapes.
- Noted habitat deterioration over the past 30 years and stressed the need for improved grazing management, especially where land stewardship is poor.

## **William Jensen**

- Expressed appreciation for BLM staff and asked that gratitude be shared with all employees.
- Raised concerns about lack of transparency and misinformation regarding what federal and state agencies can and cannot do.
- Warned that public land sales or transfers would reduce recreation opportunities, citing North Dakota's land ownership breakdown: 95% private, 2% tribal, 1.5–2% federal.
- Supported RAC sending a letter to Congress opposing land sales or transfers.
- Wendy Warren noted that State Director Sonya Germann and Associate State Director Scott Haight have been proactive in providing HR information to staff, which has also benefited other agencies.

## **Jim Moore**

- Reported that the Judith Basin landscape looks good this year.
- Said hay production is down due to heat and weevils.

## **Jody Mason**

- Reported that permittees are satisfied working with the Glasgow Field Office.
- Said other topics of concern had already been addressed by earlier presenters.

## **Stacey Barta**

- Provided a DNRC perspective as administrator of two BLM Good Neighbor Authority grants.
- Said the grants were frozen at the end of March and communication with BLM has been difficult.
- Reported the uncertainty affects projects with Montana Conservation Corps, RSA, and Winnett ACES, which benefit Eastern Montana communities.

---

## **MBRAC Round Robin**

### **Miles Hutton**

- Reported on attending the Montana Natural Resource Coalition meeting.

- Cited Executive Order 13132 (Clinton, 1999) requiring federal agencies to coordinate with local governments.
  - Raised concerns about violations at a Stanford/Washington listening session.
  - Said the council acknowledged concerns in the Federal Register and sent a letter recognizing that local governments felt overlooked.
  - Appreciated the coalition's opportunity to present issues to a national panel.
- 

## **New Business**

- **BLM Director:** Position remains filled by Acting Director.
- **Public Land Sales Letter Discussion:**
  - **Gina:** reminded members to keep the scope within MBRAC boundaries.
  - **Eric:** said BLM may need to dispose of landlocked tracts or consolidate parcels through the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act.
  - **Mark J.:** explained complications with appraisal values, congressional approval, and competition with private buyers. Suggested referencing positions of state delegates (e.g., Daines, Zinke).
  - **Doug:** warned that large-scale disposal, such as the "Lee Bill," would harm ranches. Supported RAC opposition.
  - **Mark Good:** agreed small tract disposals may be useful, but wholesale sales are unacceptable.
  - **Greg:** proposed consensus language, a draft letter, and including member names and categories. Suggested RAC minutes could also be sent instead of a letter.
  - **Miles:** opposed a letter unless it clearly distinguished between small disposals/trades and wholesale sales.
  - **Perri:** summarized that members support limited trades or disposals but oppose large-scale sales.
  - **Mark Good:** recommended framing the letter positively in support of retaining public lands.
  - **Trisha:** encouraged members to suggest wording for the draft.

## **Action Items:**

- Perri will draft a letter and circulate it to members for input.
  - Comments due **August 1, 2025** to Perri, Gina, Wendy, and Trisha.
  - Perri and Trisha will prepare the draft.
  - Letter will be reviewed against RAC charter bylaws and CFR to ensure it is within scope.
  - Final draft will be an agenda item at the next meeting and transmitted through the Designated Federal Official.
- 

### **Tabled Items – RAC Membership**

- Several member terms expire in 2026; members should notify Mark if they do not wish to continue.
  - Members may serve two terms; after a one-year break, they may reapply.
  - Mark will provide a roster with term dates.
  - Public Affairs staff from MT, ND, SD, and WY may be consolidated.
  - Future RAC structure and recruitment process pending Washington Office guidance.
  - Local managers will discuss recruitment planning.
- 

### **Future Meetings**

- **Agenda Item:** Public Land Sales letter.
- Next meeting to be set by doodle poll:
  - October 15–16, 2025
  - October 16–17, 2025
  - December 3–4, 2025
- Preference for in-person meeting in Billings (funding dependent). Virtual option available.
- Possible field trips (weather permitting): Pryor Mountains or Acton Recreation Area.
- Members should send agenda topic requests to **Perri Jacobs** or **Trisha Tonn**.

---

## **Adjournment**

All agenda items completed. Meeting adjourned at **1:00 p.m.**

**Public Comment (11:00 a.m.–Noon):** Two attendees present but provided no comments.

- Brett Slaughter (Sen. Steve Daines' liaison for conservation/natural resources)
- Megan Myers (Montana Conservation Corps intern)

---

*Minutes approved by Missouri Basin RAC Chair Perri Jacobs, 9/24/2025*