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Subject Minutes from August 5, 2004 Cooperating and Federal
Agency meeting

Here are the meeting minutes from the Cooperating and Federal Agency meeting yesterday. Note that the next meeting will be on October 14, 2004 at 10 am in the conference room at the address below . See you then.



2004-August 5 Cooperating Agency Minutes.

Thanks for all your help.

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Cooperating and Federal Agency Meeting Minutes
August 5, 2004 10 am – 4 pm
345 East Riverside Drive
St. George, UT

Facilitator – Marietta Eaton
Recorder – Rebecca Davidson

Meeting Objectives:

- 1) Discussion of Draft Plan/DEIS Sections
 - A. Chapter 2, Alternatives
 - B. Chapter 4, Impact Analysis and Environmental Consequences
 - C. Chapter 5, Coordination and Consultation
- 2) Information on review and printing of document
- 3) Public Meetings on the Draft Plan/DEIS

Agenda

Introductions and lunch arrangements – Marietta, Diana

New agenda, slight changes to draft agenda, may need to move around schedule, will play by ear.

- Objectives discussion of Ch. 2, 4, 5
 - Chapter 4 didn't get as far as hoped: today will be presenting methods of how Chapter 4 will be drafted, currently is not completed, as soon as finalized will be emailed.
 - Primary thing to happen today – SO review of Chapter 2 alternatives, significant changes to the Chapter 2 resources sections. The focus of today's meeting: let us know what the major changes are, Mike Herder will lead discussion because Vegetation, Special Status Species, and Wildlife had the most changes and additions as well as some changes to Recreation.
- Information on review and printing – scheduling – public meetings

Chapter 3, not too many changes since it was emailed to you. We have not had time yet to incorporate all of your changes and edits.

Review and Approval of June 10, 2004 meeting minutes – Marietta

Minutes read and were approved. Accepted into record with changes that. Brent Mackleprang proposed on soil compaction discussion.

Proposed Rule on Cooperating Agencies, MOUs - Diana

Marietta began discussion on which Cooperating Agencies had signed MOUs. These are Kane, Washington, and Coconino counties and the Kaibab Paiute Tribe and the Town of Fredonia. They are the only Cooperating Agencies since it is necessary to have a signed MOU to have that status. Some of the federal agencies attending these meetings will not enter into cooperating agency status; including US Fish and Wildlife Service and Grand Canyon National Park. They will continue to receive the same information as all the

Cooperating Agencies and we will continue to collaborate with them. There are several other federal and state agencies in the same status such as Grand Staircase-Escalante NM, Glen Canyon NRA, Kanab BLM FO, Las Vegas BLM FO, St. George BLM FO, Arizona State Land Dept., etc. We have been sending the planning information to all who are adjacent to the Arizona Strip and are hoping that this collaboration will insure consistency and that there are no problems across boundaries.

A recent Federal Register Notice for a Proposed Rule to formalize cooperating agency status in planning. Anyone can comment on these proposed rules at this point. It will formalize what we are doing already, but making part of regulations, next administration will be required to carry on. Not really different than what we are doing now. Comments must be submitted by Sept 20, 2004. BLM wants early and consistent input, building relationships, etc. 1508.5 – agency becomes a cooperating agency only after a signed agreement has been formalized.

Decision to identify a preferred alternative will remain the BLMs authority (and NPS for GCPNM).

For comments, identify what will help us as cooperating agencies, what changes you think should be made to this proposed rule.

Planning Bulletin #6

The latest Planning Bulletin was posted to the web yesterday. It was mailed out last week and contained a card to return if individuals wanted printed copies of CD copies of the Draft Plan/DEIS. The primary reason for sending out this planning bulletin was to let people know we were still alive and are working on the Draft EIS and that it should be available sometime in the Fall. We also wanted to cull down the mailing list. Copies of the draft will be sent to all agencies, tribes, or communities on the mailing list – we will never cull any organization or agency from the mailing list. But we may eliminate individuals who do not respond to this mailing. Let us know today how many copies of the Draft Plan/DEIS and in what format you would like it sent. We'll make sure we order enough copies to do that.

Will copies be made available at public libraries in the communities affected by the plan? Some are on mailing list, some not. We will post notices in each of the communities to get the word out before the public meetings.

Maps

Some Preferred Alternative maps are posted around the room. We also now have the Preferred Alternative map for the Management Units which we did not have at the last Cooperating Agency meeting. Later today, this meeting will focus on changes in the Alternative Tables. Most of these were made to Vegetation, Wildlife, Special Status Species with some minor Also, MWCs both supply (roadless areas), and preferred. Changes to special status species decisions, wildlife, vegetation will be presented by Mike Herder.

Any other maps, Diana has small copies of all the maps for Chapters 2 and 3 to look at.

The maps for the route evaluation/designation tree will be available on a CD and will be released at the same time as the Draft Plan/DEIS. Remember that this is an implementation level decision and is in a lot of detail. It is too much to print these maps but our intent is to have these maps available on cd and distributed at the same time as draft.

Scheduling for printing DRMP/NOA/public meetings

Completed document was supposed to be done Aug. 16 for SO review. But it will be a little later than expected. We are still trying to be as close as possible to scheduled dates. We want to get the Draft Plan/DEIS to the public as soon as possible, perhaps by mid-October. Environmental Consequences sections are still being worked on by the specialists and will be sent to the cooperators as soon as they are completed. Text for chapter 2 has changed and this will be sent out to all of you again for review. Anything sent out will have a fairly short turn-around time for review based on the schedule.

We still have a State Office review of the entire document by the end of August including appendices.

Mid-September is scheduled for the Washington Office BLM/NPS/DOI review. The NOA needs to be signed off by Washington Office before it is published in the Federal Register, hoping it will be published in Fed. Reg. in mid to late October.

Draft Executive Summary and the draft NOA was given to cooperators.

Public meetings on the draft will be in at least 8 places. Beaver Dam, St. George, Kaibab, Page, Flagstaff, Phoenix, Kingman, and Las Vegas. They will be informal open houses from approx. 4-6 or 7 pm within a 2 week timeframe. They will be similar to the other public meetings we have had. Cooperators and federal and state agencies are more than welcome to come and help. Let us know and we can get you name tags and information.

Comments from the Cooperators will be needed no later than approximately Sept. 30th in order to incorporate comments. If you have comments, send them ASAP so they can be considered.

Chapter 4, Impact Analysis and Environmental Consequences

So many decisions are in the alternative tables, looking at consequences has been a daunting task. So all the Alt tables were separated into similar types of decisions and lumped for analysis. Staff completed matrices, for resources/use to identify consequences/effects to other resources and uses. They used these matrices as a tool to identify what decisions would impact their resource or use.

Each resource specialist will review other resource specialists matrix evaluating effects. Each specialist is presently writing up their section of Chapter 4. Impacts will be summarized in Chapter 4. Grand Staircase, Craters of the Moon, and others are being used as templates and examples. A format was developed and given to each specialist. Each section will detail how information was derived to make decisions, then what assumptions were used, and then impact by alternative and by planning area are discussed. Remember we have three separate planning areas so this complicates the DEIS.

Once a first cut is taken, NPS has a requirement to do impairment analysis for Park Service Lands. This is a separate step to ensure that monument objects will not be impaired. Need this baseline info. CEQ also requires identification of the "environmentally preferred alternative." This may not necessarily be the same thing as the preferred alternative.

We will also need to identify short, long term, and cumulative impacts.

How will cumulative impacts be addressed? Matrices used as a tool, but resource specialists will look at direct, indirect, cumulative, beneficial and adverse impacts. Each specialist will take a cut at this using professional judgment. The Chapter 4 sections will not be exhaustive but will summarize and hit highlights on impacts and consequences.

Reviewers look at impacts analysis and identify other effects. Look at cumulative analysis. BLM tasked to do a more thorough job of identifying cumulative effects.

Chapter 3 and 4 should mirror each other. Affected environment will relate directly to Environmental Consequences. Chapter 3 may change, based on changes to Chapter 4. Format will be addressing Parashant, Vermillion, Public Domain as separate units.

Will executive summary include impacts? BLM required to have a summary of alternative table and summary of impacts table by alternative but not they will not be in the executive summary.

A users guide will also be included for readers. Each resource will have a paragraph that will summarize major points for readers.

As soon as Chapter 4 is drafted it will be sent to cooperators for review.

Chapter 2, Changes to alternatives decisions – Mike Herder, Diana Hawks, others

- Question on Wind energy – how does chapter 2 address permitting for wind towers? BLM nationwide is doing EIS on wind energy – Az Strip was not an office that was identified as a place with high wind potential. It is addressed under the lands and reality section. We want to leave door open in case other opportunities for energy development occur in the next 20 years. Older report on energy development in western states, AZ Strip came out high on biomass, solar, but low on wind potential.

Air Force is receiving AZ Strip planning information along with the Cooperating Agencies. They are particularly concerned about continuing their military training overflights. Windmills sometimes conflict with military operations.

Wind towers – information available on negative impacts on birds/bats.

- Geologic Formation maps – there is information that describes geologic formations. Most information will be in appendix, brief discussion in Chapter 3.
- When will appendices be given to cooperators? List of appendices were given to cooperators at previous meeting. Some are finished, most are not. They will be sent when completed. A lot of material!! Everyone is in agreement – it is okay to email it out when it is ready.
- Don't forget – this is a draft document!!! Don't panic! Will still have opportunity to get comments after the draft is published. BUT – better to put in sooner, if you can.

Break

Mike Herder presented information on some of the changes and additions to the Chapter 2 Alternative tables. The primary changes were to Special Status Species, Vegetation, and Wildlife.

State Office was concerned about incorporating paraphrased sections of regulations – exact wording needed to be used. They liked the table format but commented on lack of differences between different alternatives for some resources and uses. Very little detail about Desired Future Conditions on Vegetation sections, concerned that many of the decisions were planning to plan. Write a plan to say what we were going to do, rather than just saying what we were going to do. So revisions were made to Vegetation, Special Status Species, and Wildlife.

We present a new concept in the plan about addressing management of resources on the basis of ecological zones. There are seven Ecological zones on the AZ Strip where vegetation management is addressed zone by zone. Example is Sagebrush Communities, on AZ Strip there is no sage grouse but a historic record referring to one. AZ Strip opted to go with AGFD position that sage grouse does not or has not occurred on the AZ Strip. However, sagebrush habitat will be managed as part of a nationwide initiative.

Descriptions are more complex than what they used to be. Example – actions to achieve, page labeled 66 existing stands of sagebrush. This goes on to discuss what will be included in mosaic communities, size of openings, treatment blocks and the types of conditions that would lead us to treat various communities. Decisions will include that we could treat vegetation communities using a variety of methods.

Is grazing forage considered in this section? Grazing forage is considered under livestock grazing section, and also in the vegetation section.

Developing thresholds – considering life of plan – say 20 years, is it possible that thresholds would change based on other conditions? Thresholds depend on type of habitat and treatment method used. A lot of thresholds are based on applicable life – on establishing number of acres we might treat, under Alt D (most liberal), we assumed the maximum amount we had in this office of treating on an annual basis and multiplied by expected life of that treatment multiplied by life of plan. For Alt B, a much more conservative approach to vegetation treatments, we backed off and said, what would be the number of acres we really need to treat in order to prevent further resource damage that we really felt needed to be addressed. Alt C is balance.

Where are tools/types of treatments addressed? They are in the vegetation sections and appendix. Intent is to not limit tools arbitrarily.

Among other discussions with State Office, a great deal of talk about special status species. In particular, to incorporate as many of Desert Tortoise decisions from the last plan as possible. Those were hard fought battles and we are relatively satisfied that those decisions allow maximum protection for tortoise while still allowing multiple use.

We took out decisions on what we would do if grazing permittees requested non-use, or if BLM needed to close any allotment. Allotment closures are RMP level decisions. Any allotment closures in future will require RMP amendment. The number of allotments to be

closed in this plan shrunk significantly. Closed – Pakoon allotment, those lands are already closed. Tuweep allotment will continue to be grazed as “forage reserve” and BLM will not reissue permit but use it to compliment research and to rest other allotments. At Pakoon Springs, close pasture because it is part of desert tortoise habitat. Coyote Springs allotment is closed and Lees Ferry Pasture as well. Additional allotments in lower Kanab Creek area will not be closed.

Grazing management section needs to jive with priority acquisition areas. Changes will not show which properties BLM has identified as possible acquisition. We will use criteria for future acquisitions only in the plan but we are required to specifically identify any lands to be disposed in the plan.

Brent Mackleprang brought up the cattle compacting soil again. It won't stay compacted with rest/rotation system, soils recover quickly. An example is that old roads recover with grass growing up within a few years. Brent will provide wording to amend the minutes from the last meeting.

Mark Habbeshaw stated that he understands that Grand Canyon Trust wants to eliminate grazing in the Tuweep Allotment. Kane Ranch and Two Mile Ranch recently acquired by the Trust were told by the Kaibab Forest that they will have to graze on the allotment. Kane County will be appealing the issue of grazing to administrative law judge on November 15, 2004. Secretary of Interior can remove allotments from the Grazing District, if not challenged. If Trust has acquired allotment, then it needs to be used for grazing. The analysis needs to make the decision that the allotment cannot be grazed, not the Trust. The grassbanks designated in monuments have not been used for grazing. This is a problem. We can't use a grazing allotment for non-grazing purposes.

Mark further stated that there will be a public forum of a panel discussion on livestock grazing at the Utah Rural Council at Southern Utah University on Thursday the 12th of August at 9:30am and repeated at 2:00pm. Go on the internet at SUU or Utah Rural Summit and you can see the agenda of meetings. If Trust makes substantial use of allotment, then they are welcome. They will need to be a rancher to some degree. Mark doesn't like 11th hour conflicts. He would rather see the Trust use the allotment for grazing rather than grass banking or other purpose.

Dennis, we will contact the Trust to see what their intentions are for grazing that allotment.

Dennis would like to meet with Mark on this issue, specific to the Tuweep Allotment.

MH – County alternative, collaborative with scientists looking at different ways to manage for cows, economics, range health, society for range management has studies both successful and innovative. Independent scientific group should work with permittees – viable grazing program would hope that conservation groups would accept sight of cow on public lands. Analysis should make decision, not philosophical issues with sensitivity of Tuweep.

Mike Herder the State Office asked that specific species recovery plan components for Special Status Species be incorporated into the decision tables. So it is now more specific than it used to be. Previous versions discussed that we would do good things, now we have specifics. Tortoise is same management as the Biological Opinion in 1998, for other species we have some new management decisions that are incorporated. And we have given more attention to Special Status Plants. We have identified areas to implement special

management for those plants, such as in the ACECs. Those are basically same as last meeting, but better description as to type of decision. Reduced access to OHVs, may include fencing in problem areas. California Condor information incorporated based on agreements with Counties and FWS, management actions nothing more complicated than if a condor shows up at a site where work is being authorized by BLM than contractor needs to call to let us know condor is there.

We included decision under other raptors to augment populations of burrowing owls. Preferred alt is that those owls would be augmented in areas other than where we have other sensitive species or desert tortoise.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat in the Kanab Creek ACEC covers a good portion of the Kanab Allotment. At present BLM is proposing an open season for grazing in the winter months outside of breeding months. The species has never been found there. Permittee was consulted with and has voluntarily been observing that season of use.

Lake Mead still will be reviewing Parashant decisions in the next week. As soon as BLM prepares more finalized draft, they will be emailed. Today BLM is just highlighting the most significant changes.

Alternative decision tables for Vermilion and Public Domain drafts are closest to being finalized. But Parashant still has reviews. Public domain will be sent asap, Diana will check with Becky Hammond to see that Vermilion is done and then these can be emailed to the cooperators. Once Lake Mead is done with review, then we will see Parashant – in a few weeks.

We know this is not perfect document. We are using the best available data. Draft is for pointing out errors and omissions.

This draft will be presented to the Washington Office. They are looking at the big issues, route closures, MWCs, grazing, etc. Because of the upcoming election, that could affect what happens with the plan. There might be a delay in release of the plan at that level.

Allen Taylor questioned whether BLM specifically identifies lands to be acquired. It might then artificially inflate land value or scare landowners. BLM has identified general criteria for acquisitions, but not specific tracts of lands. We will identify areas to be disposed of (isolated blocks, areas near communities), but not lands that we want to acquire. BLM is required to identify specific parcels for disposal in the RMP.

Any maps that you want electronically, let Diana know. **Diana, for Mark will provide the following maps - grazing, MWC, transportation, for Allen Taylor and Sue Pratt, Diana will send land disposal and MU maps.**

Transportation plan – reasonable foreseeable development still has blanks for public domain because we have not yet completed the Route Evaluation and Designation of routes.

Lunch, pizza and salad (\$7.00)

Chapter 2 Continuation

State Office wanted to see more alternatives under Recreation so these were done. Some of the more contentious issues such as back country air strips or how far to pull off roads to camp were elevated to the State Office. Result of review by State Office, we are now getting guidance. Needed definitions of routes/roads and also needed how far can you drive off road to camp. Decisions have not yet been made. We are waiting for State Office guidance.

Mark stated that the more secondary roads you close, then the more opportunity for camping you lose.

In the plan we will only list authorized airstrips. We will be silent on backcountry airstrips, they will not be authorized.

LeAnn asked if the changes had been made on her comments she sent? Diana, will check to see if they were received. Detailed comments have been received from Lorraine and these were sent to the managers.

How many more cooperating agency meetings do you foresee? See Next Meeting Date Section. If there is a major turn around from Washington, then we may need to meet. But otherwise, it may not be necessary. It would be valuable to have one more meeting after the Washington meeting. Washington office briefing will be in mid-September and the Draft EIS will go to the printer somewhere around mid-October. It will take six weeks to print and mail and therefore should be out to the public sometime in December. There will be a 90 day review period. Public meetings will be at the mid point of the 90-day comment period. Another State Office review will be around the end of August on the entire draft document.

We are still going to want to meet to select the final preferred alternative. This will be after the public meetings and the public comment period ends.

Public comments that BLM gets can be provided to the cooperators. We are expecting ~10,000 or so public comments.

Any additional meetings needed will be set at the October 14th meeting.

Chapter 5: Consultation and Coordination

Chapter 5 rough draft was sent out about 3 weeks ago. Make sure nothing misstated, get comments back to Diana ASAP.

Next Meeting Date: Riverside Drive Conference Room

October 14th, 10am – final discussion on Ch 2, report on Ch 4, report on Washington and State Office briefings and changes.

The next meeting after the October 14th meeting will be after the 90-day public comment period ends and we have had a chance to do the comment analysis on the public comments. So approximately late next spring, April, May, or so.

Follow-up

1. Federal Register Notice on cooperating agency proposed rule, comments due Sept. 20
2. Need to sign and finalize MOUs!!
3. #s of hard and CD copies of draft EIS to Diana

4. BLM will be sending out chapters 2,3,4,5. Today she will send out the updated Chapter 2 Alternative Tables for Vermilion and Public Domain. Parashant Alternative tables will still need Lake Mead review and will be sent to the Cooperators in about 2 weeks. Input needed on next drafts.
5. Appendices will be sent out when they are complete
6. Consider supporting the public meetings
7. Next meeting Oct. 14th

Parting thoughts

Dennis, Draft preferred alternative want continued input. BLM would be happy to come to any community meetings or others if invited. Call and request.

Diana, THANKS!!!

Attendees:

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