

Bureau of Land Management  
Alaska Resource Advisory Council Meeting  
Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
November 29 & 30, 2011

Day 1: Wednesday, November 29, 2011

Council members present: (Category 1) Michael Wald, David Brown, Stanley Foo, Sharon McClintock (new member), and Gary Morrison. (Category 2) Suzanne McCarthy, Amalie Couvillion, and Michael McDougall. (Category 3) Verne Rupright, Rachel Klein, Teresa Imm, and Peter Fix (new member).

Council members absent: Theresa Fiorino, Roy Ashenfelter, and Scott Hala.

BLM representatives present: Bud Cribley, Ted Murphy, Michael Schoder, Artealia Gilliard, K.J. Mushovic, Mark Fullmer, Ramona Chinn, Michelle Ethun, Lenore Heppler, Lon Kelly, Lisa Jodwalis, Craig McCaa, Steve Hartmann and Michael Gibson

Members of the public present: Stan Leaphart, Karrie Improte, Dave Schmitz, Ronda Boyles, Randy Zarnke, Bill Ohman, and Carey Mills.

1. Meeting called to order at 9:30 by vice chair Mike McDougall.
2. Bud Cribley, BLM Alaska State Director, spoke about the importance of the BLM RAC. RAC members introduced themselves followed by the BLM staff introductions and introductions of members of the public.

Mike McDougall will be absent for afternoon meeting on Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>, Rachael Klein will chair. Teresa Imm stated the April 2011 minutes on page 11 regarding subcommittees were not all inclusive. Motion to approve and seconded. 2011 RAC meeting minutes are unanimously approved.

3. Jennings introduces topic of **charter renewal**. No additions proposed to charter. Jennings recommends that RAC members review throughout the day and forward any suggestions through the chair.

**4. Cribley provides BLM State Directors update.** Gilliard presents BLM-AK's move into social media sites e.g. Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, and Twitter. Cribley discussed:

- BLM Organizationally – approximately 25% of the BLM-AK workforce is eligible to retire in calendar year 2012.
- Federal budget and impacts to BLM-Alaska.
- Workload and priority changes.
- Conveyance program is still a priority.
- Permitting will become an increased workload in the future.
- Recreational shooting on public lands.

Sharon McClintock asked a question about losing positions in the cadastral survey division and BLM stance on doing conveyances without surveys. Cribley answered that BLM is bound by law to convey land only with a completed survey. It would take a change in the law to circumvent the required survey.

Another question was asked regarding what percentage of ANCSA entitlements are left to convey. Cribley replied that if Interim Conveyances (IC) are included, above 90 percent, but fully conveyed are approximately 60 percent complete.

**Cribley's BLM-Alaska Core Functions** - monitoring, permitting restoration, NLCS, managing public land records, conveyances, and subsistence. BLM-Alaska program priorities are national priorities such as renewable energy, climate change, treasured landscapes (NLCS), youth and natural resources (an educational program), work safety in the field, tribal consultation, and American Recovery Reinvestment Act projects (Iditarod Trail and legacy well projects).

Cribley also talked about landscape initiatives, budget cuts and preparing for tomorrow (BLM 2016), budget impacts on future RAC meetings, and the BLM continuing to inventory lands with wilderness characteristics and include that inventory in the land use planning process.

**5. Commercial Structures Discussion (Action Item):** McDougall provides background about commercial structures on BLM lands from last meeting and the subcommittee research. This included a summary of testimony by trappers during the April 26-27, 2011 RAC meeting. Highlights:

- Subcommittee recommends that BLM structure cabin permit fees to minimize cost to trappers and be consistent with fees charged by the USFWS
- The importance of emergency shelters
- Limited use period and potential summer use
- Enforce trapping use only
- If income requirement is too little, people may abuse the system
- Include investment receipts in criteria
- Harvest records show level of activity
- Emergency shelters are often used every year
- Temporary vs. permanent cabins
- Site cleanup and cabin removal when permit is terminated

Cribley discussed when a policy is developed the BLM is still required to complete the NEPA process. He highlighted the need for the RAC to clearly define the difference between commercial and recreational trapping. He also reiterated the requirement once a permit expires, the permittee is required to remove the structure and clean the area returning the land to the pre-cabin condition.

McDougall suggested BLM to put guide together for trappers to outline the process and requirements to obtain or renew a permit. He felt an administrative fee was reasonable and consistent with other agencies.

**6. Dalton Highway Integrated Invasive Plant Strategic Plan (Action Item):**

Shelly Jacobson, Central Yukon Field Office Field Manager presented information on invasive weeds and the history. The plan was written in 2009 and focused on early detection and rapid response, education, monitoring and partnerships. She highlighted the typical species found and recommended herbicides or other methods used for eradication.

The Environmental Assessment for the Dalton Management Area Plan is due out for public comment in Feb. 2012.

**7. Commercial guide capacity (Action Item):** Overbaugh presented information concerning the BLM potential to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The MOU would focus on information sharing and formal documents review.

Peter Fix asked about the process to establish capacity. Overbaugh stated that the BLM would use NEPA to conduct a Guide Capacity Analysis. The State would ultimately like the BLM to partner with them and implement a joint permit or DNR concession guide lease program.

A question was asked about the maximum number of guide use areas the State will authorize one guide to work in. Overbaugh believes up to three and stated the guides also have to coordinate with private landowners and comply with their rules. Overbaugh believes this process will be less of a biological issue and more social coordination.

Another question was asked whether the State has established an MOU on this issue with any of the other agencies. Overbaugh responded they have coordinated with State parks but not with another major land manager similar to BLM.

The state has an elaborate screening process for guides. Timeline for completion is targeted for January 2014.

**8. Public Comment Period**

- Randy Zarnke, AK Trappers Association commented on the RAC's draft proposal regarding trapper's cabins on BLM lands. Reiterated the old policy requiring 25 percent of income to maintain cabins wasn't working and appreciated the subcommittee work making a new policy. He also stated new applicants, if a new policy were instituted, might total 15 over a couple years as interested parties become aware of the new policy.

- Carey Mills spoke to the RAC regarding RS2477 issues. He believes the State of Alaska has adequately documented historical trails but BLM doesn't recognize them. He believes BLM and the federal government should recognize the RS2477 trails.
- Bill Ohlman commented on the RAC's draft proposal regarding "trapper cabins" on BLM lands, specifically the Steese Conservation area. Mr. Ohlman spoke to the necessity of line cabins for safety of the trappers. He reminded the RAC that trapping and mining was something Alaska was built on and he'd like to see it continue.
- Dave Schmitz, trapper with 29 years of experience. Had a previous cabin permit for 20 years. He lost his permit and can no longer continue what he considers his heritage and life style. He painted a picture for the RAC as to how difficult it is to be a trapper and losing the permit for a cabin made this line of work that much tougher.
- Stan Leaphart, Executive Director, Citizens Advisory Commission on Federal Areas. Commented on the RAC's draft proposal regarding trapper's cabins on BLM lands. He urged the RAC and BLM to develop financial criteria the trappers can meet.

MEETING ADJOURNED Day 1 at 4:30 p.m.

RAC Meeting, Day 2  
November 30, 2011  
Princess Lodge, Fairbanks

RAC Members present: David Brown, Rachel Klein, Teresa Imm, Peter Fix, Stanley Foo, Mike McDougall (morning only) Vern Rupright, Amalie Couvillion, Suzanne McCarthy, Sharon McClintock, Gary Morrison and Michael Wald

BLM Representatives: Bud Cribley, Ted Murphy, Steve Hartman, Mark Fullmer, Lenore Heppler, Lon Kelly, Bill Overbaugh, Thom Jennings, K.J. Mushovic, Shel Ethun, Lisa Jodwalis and Craig McCaa

Members of the Public present: Randy Zarnke, Rhonda Boyles, William White and Katherine Richardson

RAC 9 a.m. work session was facilitated by K.J. Mushovic. Draft elements for all three action items were agreed on by all RAC members to be developed into formal resolutions.

Afternoon session called to order 1:19 p.m.

Chair Klein- The agenda needs to be amended because more time was used in morning work session than planned. The social media session was cancelled and the NPR-A session was moved to after 2:30 p.m.

**Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan (RMP)** (Lenore Heppler, Eastern Interior Field Office Manager) Heppler gave a PowerPoint presentation to indicate location and land status. The plan covers BLM managed lands and selected lands until they are conveyed. 30 million acres are in the planning area. 6.7 million acres of public land is within planning area. The area is broken into four sub units, White Mountain Recreation Area, the Steese National Conservation Unit, Upper Black River, and Fortymile.

Overview of planning process. The plan is in draft stage. It will go to public comment, then proposed RMP, revision period and final RMP. Decisions in the plan will include desired outcomes; land use allocations; allowable uses; administrative decisions. Heppler said the State of Alaska and Fort Yukon are unofficial cooperators. Draft should be released in February 2012 for an extended 150-day public comment period. Couvillion expressed appreciation for responding to public input to extend the public comment period.

**The Road to Umiat** (Melissa Riordan, Army Corps of Engineers/ Gary Foreman, Branch Chief Realty and Visitor Services, Central Yukon Field Office.) Introduction by Foreman. The BLM became involved in this program after the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) gave right of way in September 2011. The project path crosses seven miles of BLM managed lands. The BLM is a cooperating agency with the Army Corps of Engineers, the lead agency. None of alternatives discussed as of yet affect BLM land so the BLM is only concentrating on the seven-mile segment near the Dalton Highway. Additional information can be found at: <http://foothillsroad.alaska.gov/>.

Riordan presented a PowerPoint overview to show land status, involved agencies and location. Project area will run from Dalton Hwy to Umiat. The applicant, the Alaska DOT, is proposing an all season road to connect with a state owned airport facility on west side of the Colville River. Wetlands are a big concern. The Army Corps of Engineers is the lead agency. Other cooperating agencies are the BLM and the State of Alaska DNR. North Slope Borough has not signed on officially, but they are working as an unofficial cooperator. The purpose of the project is oil and gas resource access west of the Dalton Highway within the foothills province. The scoping period ran May 20-July 26. Alternative routes were presented to the public. Scoping results indicated that biological resources represented over half the comments particularly caribou migration, subsistence use and hunting. Other comments are related to environmental hazards, land use and management. Due to the public access intent of this project, related issues of increased access to lands were a component of the comments. A draft EIS is in process.

Presentation also discussed an additional northern route alternative from the Spine Road/Meltwater former road on North Slope. These are controlled roads (not open to the public). This option is different because of the controlled access and not being open to the public.

Cribley - Point of clarification. On the new alternative, the one suggested in scoping; that route links into existing routes. Is that a publically built or industry built road?  
Answer: The state owns land but industry built the road.

**Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project** (Beth Maclean, Glennallen Field Office Manager) This session was canceled because the presenter encountered bad weather forcing her to return to Glennallen. Beth Maclean will come to the next RAC meeting. There is a copy of the PowerPoint presentation in the briefing materials given to each RAC member. This project is in the earliest stages of planning.

**NPR-A IAP/EIS and Lease Sale** (Lon Kelly, Arctic Field Office Manager /Ted Murphy, DSD Resources) Lon Kelly presenting. The Integrated Activity Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS) began in 2010. Kelly gave a description of exemption of BLM's requirements of planning in NPR-A; however the field office chose to do a plan for leasing and protection of surface resources and subsistence. The planning process will take a couple of years. The North Slope Borough, State of Alaska, Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM), US Fish and Wildlife Service are cooperators, the BLM is the lead agency. The draft plan should be released in April 2012; anticipated final in fall. Four alternatives are being developed. This plan covers the spectrum of energy development via leasing, and protection of surface resources and subsistence.

Question: How does a no action alternative satisfy the requirement to provide energy development?

Answer: It is a NEPA requirement and is meant to act as a baseline for the other action comparisons. No action is a difficult term at times; it means that we would not change anything from the current condition.

In the draft plan, there will not be a preferred alternative. The Planners will wait for public input before drafting preferred alternative. Science work done to date includes a climate change analysis by University of Alaska Fairbanks. During the summer of 2011, a team worked on air quality assessment and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) accomplished assessments on oil and gas potential.

Oil & Gas Lease Sales (Ted Murphy) May 14, 2011, the President directed Secretary Salazar to conduct annual oil and gas sales. In June the BLM requested nominations

from industry for areas that should be offered. In Sept 2011 a draft DNA published indicated areas that would be up for sale. In November, a notice of sale published.

**BLM-Alaska and Social Media** (Artealia Gillard, Chief Office of Communications)  
This session was dropped due to the morning work session going overtime. Gilliard will email her presentation to everyone.

**Alaska Lands Update** (Mark Fullmer, Acting Chief, Lands and Realty and Mike Schoder, DSD of Cadastral Survey) Updated the RAC on staffing levels of the conveyances (Alaska Lands) division. Considering an anticipated retirement of many conveyances staff members, there is a desire to attain a staffing level with a range of experiences. Their office handles withdrawals, monitoring of land related issues and the gas pipeline project. As a note, the prior day there was a question about pipelines. Alyeska is monitored by the pipeline office and most pipelines, depending on size, are handled by field office personnel.

Native allotment/conveyance program: Less than 500 cases pending. This compares to over 3000 a number of years ago. This reduction has less impact in BLMs ability to convey lands to the state.

Question: Are many of the pending conveyances title recovery (Aguilar) cases?  
Answer: Many of the cases are title recovery and where BLM has received or developed information reflecting the need for title recovery, those cases are referred to the Department of Justice for law suit. To date, Department of Justice has not taken any of the cases to trial.

Jennings took attendance to check for a quorum. There were only two members in category II. Three are required for a quorum. No further voting can take place.

McClintock read a resurrected resolution regarding ANCSA conveyances. A discussion was held regarding this resolution covers the topic of funding. RAC members and BLM employees may not lobby congress for funding.

McClintock expressed concerns about funding for land transfer work. Cribley stated that a schedule is set and staff is working to keep this work appropriately prioritized. The BLM continuously works to balance priorities and funding for all the competing interests.

Michael Schoder (BLM Cadastral) clarification to statement by RAC member: There are 4 boundary backlogs, not 10. Staff issues and hiring new staff impacts the timeline. Cadastral is working on an outreach program to hire new surveyors and create interest in the surveying profession.

Foo- He appreciates the importance of this issue; however as far as a charter, there is an exception of providing advice on allocation or resource funding. He expressed concern this is outside the RAC's purview.

Imm- She complimented BLM on conveyances made since 2005. It has been an incredible amount of work to convey that amount of acres.

Imm- At the RAC meeting in April 2011, we formed a subcommittee for the NPR-A. She tried to get a committee together but was not able to get that done. In past RAC was more involved in RMP process. How does the RAC get more involved in the planning process?

Cribley- Once the plan comes out in draft, the RAC can draft a response to the BLM.

Imm- In the past, the RAC was more involved in the process. Feedback from the RAC went directly to the planning groups. She was personally involved in Kobuk-Seward plan and more engaged. Historically, RAC was more involved with multiple subcommittees. What is role?

Cribley- I can discuss with staff and find out what has happened and get back to the group.

McCarthy- Is there an opportunity to bring youth into the RAC?

Gillard- There are national level efforts to create a youth RAC, This is much like a subcommittee that the RAC can consult. The RAC has a charter; however there may be some models coming from the national level.

Wald- There is a public at large position that could be aimed at a youth.

Cribley- we will pursue and see what options we have.

Klein- Asked for a motion to adjourn at 3:30 p.m. Foo: moved and Imm seconded. Meeting adjourned.