

**Bureau of Land Management
Alaska Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Campbell Creek Science Center
Anchorage, Alaska
March 25-26, 2008**

Day 1: Tuesday, March 25, 2008

ATTENDANCE:

Council Members Present: Greg Beischer, Philip Driver, Suzanne McCarthy, Sandra Key-Holsten, Steve de Albuquerque, Michael McDougall, Charlie Boddy, Keith Tryck, Tom Crafford, Scott Hala, and Amalie Couvillion.

Council Members Absent: Teresa Imm, Jim Posey, Denise Michaels, and June McAtee.

BLM Representatives Present: Thomas Lonnie, Ted Murphy, Bob Schneider, Gary Reimer, Sharon Wilson, Mark Fullmer, Pamela Eldridge, Teresa McPherson, Jim Ducker.

DOI Representative Present: Sharon Warren, representing Hans Neidig, the Secretary's Representative in Alaska.

CALL TO ORDER - 1:15p.m.

Chair Greg Beischer called the meeting to order. Motion to approve the minutes of the November 2007 meeting in Fairbanks, seconded, unanimous approval.

Discussion on format of minutes: Sandra Key liked their organization; Greg said that the minutes would be shorter in the future. Sharon said the next minutes would attach the BLM presentations and the minutes would briefly cover the discussion on the topics—it will be an attempt to reduce the length of the minutes. Greg thought that was appropriate.

Sandra Key-Holston offered her opinion on representation roles within the RAC: “It always bothers me when I say ‘conservationist’ because we all have a pro-development side and we have a pro-conservation side. I have a long history of multiple use philosophy with the Forest Service. One of the things I want to stress is that when we come to the table a lot of that gets forgotten. Even people who are in the development side are passionate outdoor people and have many more outdoor experiences than I’ve had. So I really urge you to not think about the group you’re in but think about the larger group that we have, because we’re all in there somewhere and nobody’s at the far ends.”

BLM State Director Tom Lonnie thanked Sandra Key-Holsten for her comments on how the RAC members interact in their discussions. He discussed

- recent VIP trip from Washington, D.C.,
- status of the Supplemental to the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Amended plan,

- the upcoming programmatic EIS on Geothermal Resource Development (public meetings in Anchorage and Fairbanks in July) and recent meeting with the president of Iceland regarding geothermal resource development,
- budgets—the BLM has cuts in several programs; conveyance program is holding its own. In the fire program, the air tanker “scoopers” were saved and there is a planned increase in smokejumpers.
- The Legacy Well program is moving forward, with the East Teshekpuk well site being cleaned up right now, expected to be completed in next few weeks, and
- congratulated Bob Schneider for 35 years of federal service.

Anchorage District Updates by District Manager Gary Reimer (see attached handout).

Fairbanks District Updates by District Manager Bob Schneider (see attached handout).

Public Health Concerns Analysis in Planning: Jim Ducker, BLM project lead for the Northeast NPR-A Supplemental Plan, introduced invited speaker Dr. Aaron Wernham, a Public Health doctor from Fairbanks. Dr. Wernham explained how the public health world was looking at and analyzing public health impacts on underdeveloped communities not only in Alaska, but around the world. He also discussed the process of identifying and evaluating impacts and mitigating measures.

Dr. Packard, from ConocoPhillips in Houston, called in to listen to the presentation over the speaker phone. Dr. Wernham handed out a CD with presentation material and additional reference material.

Comments from the RAC:

Sandra Key suggested that if you can manage the boom cycle better and slow it down, the social-economic impacts would be lessened.

Greg Beischer cited information about several villages where people have changed their lives because of zero tolerance policy for getting a job. Dr. Wernham replied that the public health field and land managers need data like that.

Sandra Key commented that land managers have no expertise in this arena nor do they have the largest piece of responsibility, which properly belongs with health agencies. Responsibility should go to the state.

Steve de Albuquerque pointed out that much of what Dr. Wernham was talking about was well-known fact. As the director for health, safety and the environment for ConocoPhillips, he felt there were a lot of contributory impacts to health that were not caused by the development of energy resources. Dr. Wernham noted that ConocoPhillips had commented on the draft EIS and he thought the document was better because of their comments. Dr. Wernham recommended that land managers contact local authorities early in the planning process to find out what issues were of concern to the community, and address those during the process.

Keith Tryck said there are regulatory agencies for collecting data, and using these agencies and their skills would get to your goal more quickly.

Tom Crafford agreed, saying this is a concept the state is struggling to get its arms around. He asked who should be collecting the data, analyzing and evaluating? For a variety of reasons, the state would like to see them done in a consistent manner, by an entity that has that as part of their role. Alaska is dependent on its rural development and this is a big deal for the State of Alaska.

Sandra Key said she had real trouble with the concept of how you weigh the pros and cons of figuring out the cause of diabetes (as an example); how you determine whether it was caused by the project or the television. Dr. Wernham agreed that it is hard to identify cause and effect (he discussed the difficulty of obtaining caribou for subsistence food and the effects of substituting other foods for the traditional subsistence food).

Steve de Albuquerque asked how the smoking issue was addressed. Dr. Wernham said that he understood the dynamics involved, and smoking was a huge factor.

Greg Beischer closed discussion and reminded the RAC that someone could make a proposal.

Mark Fulmer, acting for Ramona Chinn, Deputy State Director for Alaska Lands, discussed land conveyance priorities. He explained processes and procedures for conveying title, and what happens with over-selections. Native regional corporations have until June 10, 2008, to provide their land selection priorities to the BLM. The deadlines set by the Acceleration Act of 2004 have helped increase the speed of filing and conveyance. The deadlines are helping the BLM get closer to its goal of transferring 98% of Native allotment claims, 94% of ANCSA entitlements, and 96% of state entitlements by the end of calendar year 2009.

Fulmer said that the BLM's main challenge is getting the land surveyed prior to patent.

Greg Beischer adjourned the first day of the meeting.

Day 2: Tuesday, March 26, 2008

CHANGE IN ATTENDANCE:

Jim Posey joined the RAC members who had attended day one. Sharon Warren did not attend second day.

CALL TO ORDER by Chair Greg Beischer at 8:35 a.m.

Anchorage District Manager Gary Reimer introduced Jeff Brune, manager of the Campbell Creek Science Center. Brune described the Friends of the Campbell Creek Science Center organization and told the RAC about donations made the previous day from corporate donors. Brune also passed out the Campbell Creek Science Center annual report.

Laurie Thorpe, Natural Resource Specialist from the Anchorage District Office discussed Reindeer Grazing in the Seward Peninsula region. Reindeer management boundaries changed from the Fairbanks District to the Anchorage District when the previous reindeer program manager, Randi Meyers, retired. The BLM is administering permits, working with partners to revise the Memorandum of Understanding, and developing a programmatic Environmental Assessment. Thorpe discussed socio-economic issues of reindeer grazing in the Native culture, effects of reindeer grazing on the tundra, and difficulties reindeer herders have with reindeer running off with wandering caribou herds and predation by wolves.

Tom Crafford suggested Thorpe talk with RAC member, June McAtee, whose grandparents came to Alaska from Finland and brought reindeer with them.

Chair Greg Beischer requested future updates about the reindeer grazing program as new information emerged.

Ruth Gronquist, Wildlife Biologist from the Fairbanks District Office presented the Integrated Pest Management and the Dalton Strategic Plan for Weed Management. Gronquist gave a PowerPoint presentation and discussed which invasive weeds are appearing in Alaska, where and how they are gaining a root-hold, what measures the BLM is taking against invasive weeds, and funding allocated to implement mitigation efforts.

The RAC members questioned why the BLM-Alaska budget is only \$30,000, and how many people used that money. Scott Guyer, BLM-Alaska Natural Resource Specialist, explained the money equaled one work-month each for four people, and is only enough for these four employees to talk about the issues but not enough to put an eradication program into action.

Mike McDougall asked if graduate students from the University of Alaska Fairbanks were involved in this effort, and expressed his concern about the spread of white sweet clover along the Dalton Highway corridor as described in the presentation, citing that white sweet clover alters the soil chemistry. Gronquist said graduate students are involved and Scott Guyer reiterated budget constraints.

The RAC had questions about how invasive plant species might be introduced to remote areas, wild flower seed mixes used for roadway seeding projects, herbicide and pesticide use especially near waterways, and whether invasive species data collected in the Lower 48 could be extrapolated for Alaska.

Prevention efforts were discussed, such as how the BLM requires certified hay and straw along the Iditarod Trail to prevent introducing invasive species, or that fire equipment moving into many different areas pick up seeds, so equipment should be cleaned before moving to the next fire.

McDougall recommended that the BLM continue working on partnerships with the university and maybe a science foundation, and Amalie Couvillion urged the BLM to continue working on the issue while gathering Alaska-specific data—and not to wait until all the data are gathered before taking any action.

Alaska Fire Service Manager John Gould gave a pre-season outlook based on data from Boise. The University of Alaska Fairbanks is modeling snow pack and predicted weather. Gould explained seasonal preparation efforts, staffing increases and aircraft inventories available for the fire season. State Director Tom Lonnie explained that BLM-Alaska accounts for almost 50 percent of all aircraft in the Bureau.

Discussion returned to invasive weeds. Charlie Boddy talked about using canola seed in the Interior of Alaska. Canola has a one-year lifespan; no species creep has been observed and native species are coming back into the areas where canola had been used. Mike McDougall encouraged BLM-Alaska to partner with research groups and/or the University of Alaska Fairbanks for resources— BLM should emphasize the importance of heading off a problem. Scott Hala said the RAC seemed to need more information prior to the August 2008 field trip to the Dalton Highway, where the members will see white sweet clover along the roadway. **Beischer asked Mike McDougall to research the issue, ask BLM staff questions, and draft a resolution with the RAC members over the summer.**

Lunch break

RAC Chair Beischer called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m.

Returning to the public health discussion: Council members discussed whether or not to formulate a resolution regarding public health concerns discussed in the Northeast NPR-A Supplement. **Decision: no resolution is necessary.**

Public comment:

Jeremiah Millen from Alaska Wilderness League, present at meeting; and **Dr. Packard from ConocoPhillips**, via teleconference from Houston, Texas.

Summary of Jeremiah Millen, Alaska Wilderness League, comments: The BLM needs to make sure it schedules meetings to ensure all parties involved have the best opportunities to

attend, and that BLM gives a genuine effort to arrange meetings in consideration of timeframes that serve the Native community as well as the BLM. Millen suggested the BLM incorporate conference calls into its meeting process, such as a 1-800 number for conference calling.

The RAC discussed possibility of establishing a 1-800 call-in conference call number, using table microphones and what type of equipment might be best for the RAC to use wherever they might meet (urban or rural). Sharon Wilson will research facts for future discussion.

Summary from Dr. Packard from ConocoPhillips: Dr. Packard discussed elements of statistical analysis, establishing a baseline, and effects of using existing and projected data on that baseline.

RAC Discussion:

The RAC continued in-depth discussion about the levels of NEPA requirements and processes, agency specific responsibilities within the NEPA requirements, Health Impact Assessment issues, and socio-economic issues that affect the planning and approval processes.

August Field Trip plans:

Charlie Boddy offered to arrange a tour to Usibelli Coal Mine for those who had the time to come to Fairbanks on August 11. Sandra encouraged the other members to go on the tour—it was one of the best tours she had ever been on and it would fit into the discussion of invasives perfectly. Tom Lonnie asked Bob Schneider to add the Usibelli trip on as an optional portion of the RAC field trip. Bob agreed.

The draft itinerary for the RAC field trip up Dalton Highway, with public meeting in Wiseman, is attached to these minutes.

Closing Comments:

Sandra said she thought the RAC should do something to thank Danielle Allen for her service as RAC Coordinator in the past—a letter or something. She's gone on to bigger and better things now, but I'd like the group's agreement to draft a letter through everybody then to you, Tom, thanking her. She was excellent to work with and exemplifies the great attitude we find in the BLM. She was really a delight. Greg said he echoed that and would be delighted to help.

Chair Greg Beischer encouraged RAC members to propose resolutions if they felt strongly about an issue and to work on them before the next RAC meeting. Keith Tryck expressed a desire to set up a subcommittee for the Iditarod Centennial and for June McAtee to serve on it. Greg Beischer also suggested that Denise Michels, Mayor of Nome, serve on the committee, and appointed Keith Tryck as lead. Beischer also encouraged current RAC members to recruit applicants for the open seats coming up.

Greg Beischer adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.