

**Bureau of Land Management
Alaska Resource Advisory Council
Wiseman Community Center
Wiseman, Alaska
August 12, 2008**

Council Members Present: Charlie Boddy, Tom Crafford, Scott Hala, Teresa Imm, June McAtee, Amalie Couvillion, Jim Posey.

Council Members Absent: Greg Beischer, Suzanne McCarthy, Sandra Key-Holsten, Keith Tryck, Denise Michels, Mike McDougall, Steve de Albuquerque, Phil Driver.

BLM Representatives Present: State Director Tom Lonnie, Fairbanks District Manager Bob Schneider, Office of Communications (OC) Chief Sharon Wilson, OC Deputy Chief Ruth McCoard, OC Editorial Assistant Pam Eldridge, FDO Invasive Plants Project Lead Ruth Gronquist, FDO Natural Resource Specialist Ingrid McSweeny, and student intern Rehanon Nehus.

Wiseman Residents Present: Jack Reakoff, June Reakoff, Tom Hobrle, Heidi Schoppenhorst.

CALL TO ORDER – 2:30 p.m.

Acting Chair Charlie Boddy called the meeting to order. Boddy asked everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. Motion to approve the minutes of the March 25-26, 2008, meeting in Anchorage was seconded and approved with unanimous approval.

BLM-AK State Director Tom Lonnie talked about the completion of the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Supplement and the oil and gas sale slated for September 24, 2008. Information is posted on the BLM-Alaska Web site at <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en.html>. He also discussed:

- Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP has been signed, and the next step is the completion of the ROD in September.
- BLM is attempting to complete the Bay Resource Management Plan; the Director is reviewing the four protests received.
- Natural gas pipeline: BLM has issued casual use permits to Denali for studies. No application submitted yet, but we expect Denali to submit a right-of-way application for crossing federal lands in the next few months. Congressional visits are planned for this summer and next week. There's much interest in oil and gas leasing and development. There are 700,000 barrels a day throughput in the TransAlaska Pipeline now, but we expect that to decline over the next 10 years to 300,000 barrels a day. It will then be a mechanical challenge to operate the pipeline, and will be uneconomical for the companies. It is important to increase production so the pipeline can be maintained.

- BLM Director Caswell visited Alaska last week and came through Wiseman, stayed at Coldfoot and visited the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center and Marion Creek campground on the Dalton Highway.
- FBMS, a new government-wide accounting system, will go into effect Bureauwide October 21, and BLM will be in a financial blackout state until November or later, depending on how the transition goes. If we don't get RAC travel vouchers in before the deadline, reimbursement could take up to three months. With the current travel restrictions under the Travel Ceiling and the implementation of the FBMS, WO has requested that all BLM RACs postpone their next RAC meeting until the first quarter in 2009.

Q: If you allow drilling in NPR-A, won't that increase the oil flow?

A: Yes, if a pipeline is constructed from NPR-A to meet feeder lines that will take it to Pump Station 1 and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

Q: How large will your NPR-A sale be?

A: We will offer about 2.9 million in the Northeast area, in the southern portion, and acreage in the Northwest area that we have not yet identified.

Q: Will there be drilling in the Utukok Uplands area?

A: There is no management plan covering the South area of NPR-A (including the Utukok Uplands), so drilling is precluded.

Q: We've seen surveyors up here and there's talk of a gas pipeline; will the Dalton Highway stay open?

A: Past history indicates the Dalton Highway will remain open.

Fairbanks District Manager Bob Schneider, presented updates on **Anchorage District** for District Manager Gary Reimer:

- The Glennallen Field Office has been issuing Subsistence permits, working to identify and improve 17(b) Easements, and resolving trespass issues, such as unauthorized cabins or sites where people have stashed or dumped equipment without authorization.
- New employees: Will Runnoe is the new Glennallen Field Office Manager and Jim Fincher is the new Anchorage Field Office Manager.
- Anchorage Field Office (AFO) plans to initiate an amendment to the Ring of Fire RMP.
- AFO is working toward issuing 5-year reindeer grazing permits.
- Glennallen Field Office (GFO) has initiated an amendment to its East Alaska Resource Management Plan.
- GFO is working on management plans for the Delta National Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River, and an update for the Gulkana National Wild River Plan.

For Fairbanks District:

Schneider talked about the Anaktuvuk Fire on the North Slope that burned 256,000 acres July through October 2007. Staff from the Alaska Fire Service and the Fairbanks District Office met with village residents to discuss health impacts. The University of Alaska Fairbanks has issued a grant that will provide follow-up to the fire: UAF students will set up monitoring transects to determine the effects of the fire. This was a high-severity fire that, in some places, burned so hot it didn't even leave ashes.

Q: Was this a one-year event or a sign of the future?

A: Weather conditions were very dry that summer, but wildfire on the North Slope is rare.

Q: When do you expect analyses or reports from the study about effects on subsistence hunting and human health?

A: Reports will take several years of observance to truly analyze the effects of the fire, but as yet there is no evidence that animals will divert from the area.

Q: Is traditional knowledge being incorporated?

A: I don't think anyone on the North Slope has seen a fire like this before, so there is no traditional knowledge. We are working with the community and have one staff person in Barrow to help with collecting information.

Q: Does the burn area create an insect relief area?

A: We're not sure; it's too early to tell anything. We have collared animals in the herds and will be able to tell if they go into the burn.

The Anaktuvuk Pass population has about 250 people whose economy is based on the caribou. The fire burned down to mineral soil, and the vegetation is completely gone.

Fairbanks District (continued):

(* indicates a handout is available on this subject)

*Arctic Field Office is working with an Ilisagvik College (Barrow) Cooperative Field School to expose the students to field work on the North Slope and hopefully interest them in future careers in natural resource or land management.

*The district has received a proposal from BP to conduct geotechnical drilling south of Pump Station 4 in a rocky outcrop to find out if it is the right kind of rock. They need 230,000 tons of 5- to 30-ton rocks that will not erode, to provide armor for North Star Island (drilling platform in Beaufort Sea). The BLM's Central Yukon Field Office is working with BP on the timing of their drilling, and had them switch from water drilling to air drilling, and reduced the number of holes from four to two. The best rock is out of Nome, but it is too expensive to transport to the Beaufort Sea (Teresa Imm described what armor rock is).

Concerns have been expressed about the effects a rock quarry would have on subsistence hunting in this area because the rock is in an entryway portal to hunting grounds, there is a resident Dall sheep population in the area, and recreational hikers use the valley to head into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Q: What's wrong with the existing BP rock quarry?

Discussion followed about rock sizes, differences in quality, what type of rock would serve BP's purpose.

Public Comment: Jack Reakoff, Wiseman resident, said he opposed this project (he passed out a letter to everyone at the meeting). Trevor Creek has rocks just sitting by the side of the highway. The BLM should deny this BP permit and the Council should examine this proposed project closely. We welcome the RAC to stop by and look at the rock-strewn Trevor Creek site, right next to the road.

RAC comment: Tom Crafford said the RAC would be driving right by Trevor Creek on its way to Toolik Lake, and even though they wouldn't be able to see the test drill site from the road, the council could get a general idea of the terrain involved.

Q: What about the new 100-man camp put in at Atigun Pass last year?

A: It provides housing for crews working on the reconfiguration of Pump Station 4.

*The Eastern Interior Field Office held public meetings in the community of Chicken concerning navigability of Mosquito Fork, which is a segment of the Fortymile Wild, Scenic and Recreational River. Thirty-five people showed up. If navigable, the bottom belongs to the State, and it could open the river bottom to State suction dredge permits.

* New RMP-Eastern Interior: The scoping phase runs from July to August 15. Major issues were identified: OHV use, Fire, Mining, Wild and Scenic River Management, ANCSA 17(d)(1) Land Withdrawals. The public can bring up additional issues.

The Kobuk-Seward Plan was completed in July.

*The Colville River Special Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment was completed July 18. It focuses attention on the resource of concern, the Arctic Peregrine Falcon, which the Special Area was established to protect.

Bob Schneider introduced the BLM's draft Subsistence Policy under ANILCA: It covers subsistence firewood and forest products under 15 cords, no permit is required. A commercial timber operation permit is needed to harvest over 15 cords. The policy is in the draft stage. BLM management would like to have the Alaska RAC review the draft policy prior to sending it out to Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils across the state.

Public Comment:

Jack Reakoff said he was happy to see BLM is drafting a use plan. However, the plan

- Doesn't discuss the non-timber resources, such as blueberries and cranberries. He wants those subsistence resources to be protected for the use of the local people. It is conceivable that commercial pickers could come in and take all the berries.
- ANILCA language should be changed: the Western Regional Advisory Council (subsistence) will submit comments to the Subsistence Board about changing the language.

Schneider said he did turn down one commercial permit for blueberries.

Jack said that timber resource use has been going on for over 100 years and we have a happy, managed forest. Fuel savings for my log house is over \$7,000 a year by using firewood instead of fuel oil.

Five-minute break.

AFO Wildlife Biologist/State Weed Coordinator Ruth Gronquist, presented two specimens of invasive weeds that are growing along Alaska's Dalton Highway; a second-year plant of white sweet clover and a first-year plant of bird vetch. Gronquist explained the plant's biology, method of propagation, rapid growth rates and destructive properties against indigenous plant species. The white sweet clover plant measured approximately four feet high, and had a root stock the size of an adult's wrist, and would produce millions of seeds. Gronquist described the weed-pulling project the RAC would be doing the next day along Rosie Creek on the Dalton Highway, five miles south of the Coldfoot Camp.

AFO Natural Resource Specialist Ingrid McSweeney described the next day's tour at Nolan Creek. Hosted by mine manager Ray Medina, the RAC will see an active (but closed for the season) mine shaft entrance. BLM archeologist Bill Heddman will conduct a tour of cultural sites from early mining activities. BLM is examining and collecting artifacts so the present-day mining company can continue operations. Mining took place from 1890 – 1930. There is evidence of ditches and mining buildings and cabins. BLM has a programmatic agreement with the mining company.

Q: (Jack Reakoff) As the BLM develops RMPs, will it set guidelines for how commercial guides use the areas? What is the status of guidelines being implemented for sports and subsistence hunting, oil and gas development?

A: (Schneider) BLM is setting the guidelines through land use plans. They address the conflicts between sport hunting and subsistence hunting, limit number of guides, allocate the number of visitors, identify areas that need recreation plans, and identify the number of camps allowed on river miles and number of facility developments allowed. Transporters and air taxi operators will have to obtain permits to operate.

Q: Will reports be required, will numbers of users have to be reported?

A: BLM is trying to establish how to identify numbers of people and activities (working with the Alaska Big Game Commercial Services Board).

- In Game Management Unit #23, the Squirrel River, the borough, federal, and state are managing the numbers
- University of Alaska is conducting visitor surveys at airports and in local community areas
- ADF&G has proposed leasing guide areas for long-term, 10-year permits

Public Comment/Jack Reakoff: I applaud the BLM for working with other agencies. You are addressing the transporter issue none too soon. The Mulchatna herd has been reduced from 200,000 to 40,000 in 10 years. There is only one adult bull per 100 cows. Air taxi operators are primarily responsible for wiping out the herd. In the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, there are 52 bulls per 100 cows. I am concerned that management plans will not directly address the air taxi issue. When will the BLM review the Utility Corridor RMP?

Schneider: We will be preparing a preplan this year. It was scheduled for next year, but we haven't received the funding to start in 2009.

Schneider said the Fairbanks District may be able to revisit the Recreation Plan for the Dalton Highway, and may be able to address those concerns through that document.

Teresa Imm: Which Kobuk-Seward Peninsula guidelines would you apply to Dalton Highway Corridor hunting areas? ASRC is seeing hunting pressure on its lands.

Schneider: There are two guides and lots of transporters in the South portion of NPR-A. Transporters (air taxi operators) are regulated by the FAA since they are only providing transportation services.

Tom Crafford asked Teresa what a hunting consultant is. Teresa described a hunter consultant's role and how it is being used, saying that they are in a vague category, have a vague description. She asked how the BLM was handling them.

A: This new concept of hunting consultant has to be defined and put under a permit system. The permitting model has to transfer into other areas.

Public Comment: Heidi Schoppenhorst commented that she had concern for the future. Mining claims and roads affect subsistence, and the people of Wiseman survive on subsistence throughout the year. When you get roads in you get people up here who want to go wherever they want and they don't care for the land and the resources. Bettles is building a road to Doyon land that has copper. Korea wants copper, so it is exploring all over our area. Is there any limit to roads in the delicate Brooks Range area?

A: Miners are allowed to build roads only to their claims and their plan of operations must include the road plans. Some are restricted to overland travel when the ground is frozen or over ice roads only, depending on the site. The BLM has issued a permit for a mining road up Marion Creek. The miner is required to reclaim the road at the end of the mining use. The community of Bettles has a right-of-way for a winter ice road. The road can only be used when the land is frozen. Overland moves to mining claims are allowed

only in the winter. Authorizations are issued by rights-of-way to state miners and by permit through Plans of Operation to federal miners.

Q: Once a person gets through the five-mile corridor along the Dalton Highway, can that person go wherever he wants to?

A: If travel or activity involves an anadromous stream, the ADF&G has to permit the activity. They protect fish populations with state regulations.

Tom Lonnie commented in closing that the BLM appreciated listening to the discussions and the different viewpoints, and even if agreement is not reached, having that other perspective helps the BLM staff make good management decisions. He assured Teresa Imm that he heard and appreciated her discussion on hunting consultants.

Boddy: Thank you, Jack, for setting up the room and starting a fire. We appreciate everyone attending the meeting and giving us your comments. I'm not a big resolution guy, but judging from the comments today, there is a lot of local concern, and we could put forward these comments about larger rocks.

Summation of recommendations to the BLM from the RAC:

- The RAC will look at the rock quarry issue and consider differences between the conditions and rock at Trevor Creek and the area of BP's interest at Roche Moutonnee, and may recommend an action to the BLM after that.
- BLM should look at the role of "hunting consultants" carefully and introduce control measures in their plans.
- BLM should not issue permits to commercial pickers for blueberries and cranberries.

Acting Chair Charlie Boddy adjourned the meeting at 5:01 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

This document is a fair and accurate summation of the BLM Alaska Resource Advisory Council meeting of August 12, 2008.



Charlie Boddy, Acting RAC Chair

February 19, 2009