

Keyesville* Gold Fever RMZ Workshop Meeting Notes

As usual, this summary represents a best effort to capture discussion at the workshop. If we've missed anything, please let us know. If you have any additional comments, questions, or suggestions not represented here, you can submit them by phone at (661) 391-6186 or email at hfriedman@blm.gov.

*See discussion on spelling of Key(e)sville below. Based on recent research and apparent public support, the BLM will gradually be transitioning to the historic spelling, Keyesville.

RMP and Background

The workshop started with a powerpoint presentation providing general background and guidelines for the Gold Fever RMZ that are set to come into effect under the upcoming Bakersfield Resource Management Plan (RMP). Note that decisions made in the RMP have been available for public comment and discussion since the release of the draft RMP in 2011 and the proposed RMP in 2012. While the decisions in the RMP are definitively the framework in which the BLM and public have to work on the Keyesville Recreation Area Management or Implementation Plan, the details of what these decisions will look like on the ground as they are implemented are what is under consideration in the current Keyesville planning process.

Highlights from the presentation:

Background and history:

- ❖ Keyesville has a rich mining history spanning from the 1850s to 1930s. Well known historic sites include the Keyes Mine and Stamp Mill (c.a. 1852 and 1902, respectively) and the Walker/ Brite Spot cabin and barn (c.a. mid to late 1860s). Other extensive evidence of all of this history is scattered throughout the landscape in Keyesville in the form of arrastras, mines, an extensive ditch and flume network used to move water to the from the Greenhorns, sluicing features, and stamp mill and cabin/ camp sites, etc.

RMP guidance:

- ❖ In the Gold Fever RMZ, management focus is to be on interpretation of gold mining history and other historic resources, motorized and non-motorized trail use, and recreational gold prospecting.
- ❖ RMP continues some of existing management:
 - No Target Shooting in the RMZ, but hunting is allowed.
 - Historic buildings/ sites are to be stabilized and maintained to support public use.
- ❖ And calls for some new management:
 - Creation of a permit system in the withdrawn recreational mining area and a 15 day notice requirements for mining claimants (discussed in the Dam RMZ workshop).
 - Provide more extensive opportunities for interpretation and education.
 - Establishment of a visitor contact station/ visitor center for the area.

- ❖ RMP also guides cultural resource management, and calls for:
 - The reduction of imminent threats to cultural resources and the resolution of conflicting uses.
 - The conservation of the Walker Cabin, Keyes Mine, and Keyesville Cemetery for future use until these sites can be made safe for public use.
 - The restoration or stabilization of cultural resources when they are damaged or deteriorating to the extent possible.
- ❖ Note that the full text of the Bakersfield RMP is available at:

http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/bakersfield/planning/Bakersfield_ARMP_ROD.Par.35153.File.dat/Bakersfield_ROD-ARMP.pdf

Key management questions for the RMZ BLM hoped to discuss at the workshop:

- ❖ Historic sites and interpretation. How can we balance the need for preservation of historic sites with a strong ongoing desire for use by the public? Where should a visitor/education center be and what information should it provide? Is there a need for interpretive signs and trails in the RMZ?
- ❖ Trails and roads. What are the desired conditions and features of a Keyesville trail and road network? How does this compare to the current conditions? Within the Gold Fever RMZ, is there anything that needs to be done with the Keyesville Classic Route?
- ❖ Future of the former Pearl Harbor Memorial. What should be done with the existing developments? Should the area be preserved as a memorial in any capacity? Is the current enclosure useful as a natural area and reference point for comparison with other parts of Keyesville?
- ❖ How is Key(e)s ville spelled? Historic documents indicate that the original spelling was “Keyesville.” Should the new SRMA (and future signage) reflect the historic spelling?

General Discussion

The next part of the workshop was an open period for public comment. Discussion generally focused on trails, recreational mining, law enforcement, and thoughts on the planning process overall, but varied widely. Each bullet point represents a suggestion or comment made by at least one member of the public or summarizes broader discussion. Comments are roughly organized by topic. [Statements by the BLM are in blue.](#)

Trails:

- Singletrack in Keyesville tends to grow wider and wider over time as atvs, and then side by sides, and then jeeps start to use them. Trails need to be designated for specific uses and specific widths.
- Constriction points-- properly sized barriers on either side of the entrance to a trail-- could be used to maintain singletrack character and allow only properly sized vehicles on trails designated for particular vehicle types/ sizes.
- Trails need to be better delineated and signed. 'Forests' of signs/ overabundant signage detracts from user experience, but basic trail markers of some kind are needed, including signs that specify which types of vehicles are allowed on trails at their entrances.
- Where is the BLM going to get money for trail redesign and restoration?
 - [Grants from the California OHMVR division are available for OHV related projects in California thanks to green and red sticker funds. BLM Bakersfield Field Office has not historically pursued these, but definitely will in the future, especially after a plan is developed.](#)
- If BLM is going to invest in trail redesign and restoration, there will be an increased need for law enforcement after the redesign/ restoration project to ensure that the investment isn't lost to riders traveling off trail through restoration areas.
- There is a need for increased education on proper uses and opportunities for different users. There is a need for better trail maps-- the Keyesville brochure doesn't show which trails are open to which vehicles, doesn't match what is on the ground, and are difficult to follow.
- The USFS has developed standards for trail design, maintenance, construction, etc. The BLM does not need to reinvent the wheel with its trail improvement projects and should subsume USFS guidance where it can.

Law Enforcement:

- BLM needs to pay special attention to fire protection in Keyesville. Danger is high, particularly with abundant dead trees, drought, and high camping use. BLM should ([and does](#)) cooperate with other agencies (USFS, Kern County), and Law Enforcement to better enforce fire restrictions.
- There should be a law enforcement presence 24/7 in Keyesville throughout the area. Much illegal activity in the area isn't evident during the day, but occurs late at night, usually after BLM LE are gone, or occurs in areas away from the main roads and trails

that don't see much law enforcement presence. Trespass onto private property and off road riding are major recurring problems.

- It is often hard to get a law enforcement response in Keyesville. Public and property owners don't know who to call when they see something wrong. BLM needs to do a better job of informing the public of who to call in case of problems (911 in an emergency, porterville dispatch otherwise).
- There needs to a better BLM presence in Keyesville in general: staff or law enforcement. A BLM equivalent of the USFS forest protection officer (non-law enforcement recreation staff authorized to write tickets for resource violations) is needed.
- A BLM docent/ camp host who could write tickets, or at least call LE and/or discourage misbehaviour by their presence would be helpful, especially during times of high use.
- BLM should find a way of excluding repeat offenders from Keyesville entirely ([BLM can advocate for this in court, but the decision would be up to the judge handling the case](#)).
- The BLM should cooperate more with Kern County Sheriff more on law enforcement issues.

Cultural Resource Management:

- Cultural resource management includes management for traditional uses. Equestrian use is a traditional use throughout Keyesville-- from its earliest days, prospectors depended on stock for all of their transportation, on and off trail. This use should be recognized as traditional and maintained.
- Where trails intersect with cultural resources, the trail should be re-routed rather than closed. The re-route should be constructed and opened before closure to maintain recreational opportunities. Routes should be evaluated on a case by case basis through the established travel management process and include required public involvement.

Pearl Harbor Memorial:

- Joe Nemish (memorial creator) wanted all of the US Arizona artifacts from the memorial moved to Tank Park in Lake Isabella where they are today. None remain in the BLM area and Nemish wouldn't/ didn't consider the memorial area a memorial any more.

Recreational Mining:

- The RMP's requirement for a 15 day wait before mining is extremely constraining for out of town users who want to just pull up and do some casual use prospecting. Does the BLM really expect these miners to complete a notification process or programmatic plan before every single hole? Is there really a need for a 15-day wait for casual use prospecting?
 - [It's important to note that the 15 day notice requirement applies only to people mining on *claims* rather than in the recreational mining area. The requirement is directed at claim owners for the overall operations on the claim rather than individual miners and their individual actions.](#)
- What will the recreational mining permit look like? Can the public review it before it comes out?

- The recreational mining permit is something that is going to be developed with public involvement through the current Keyesville planning process. At the last workshop, possibilities ranging from a self issue educational permit to something more substantial obtainable online or in person were discussed. The public definitely will have the opportunity to review and comment on-- and ideally, help develop-- a permit system.
- These regulations are too burdensome. All that is needed in Keyesville is more education for the public about what and where to mine, including maps of where not to mine and features to avoid.
- A lot of the problems with resource damage on mining claims are coming from trespassers on private mining claims, not the claimants themselves.
- Would a permit be needed for metal detecting-- in and outside of the recreation area?
 - To the extent that metal detecting is conducted with the intent of retrieving minerals, it probably would fall under the same requirements as other forms of prospecting. Metal detecting is a difficult issue in Keyesville, because the line between metal detecting for gold and metal detecting for artifacts is somewhat slim. Metal detecting for gold is legal, detecting for (and digging up/ disturbing) artifacts is not and has led to some serious impacts to cultural resources in the past (stacked rock features being dismantled, etc).

Miscellaneous:

- What are the near and long term goals for Keyesville and this planning process? What is the time frame for completion?
 - In the short term, we're looking to get public involvement in the process and work together to build a plan that the community and BLM can stand behind. In the long term, we'll be wanting to work together with the community/ user groups to implement the decisions in the plan. The time frame for completion of the plan is about 1 year. Implementation will follow that, possibly with some minor improvements to the area in the mean time. We are highly committed to making major improvements in Keyesville and feel strongly that Keyesville has enormous potential to be a gem of the the Kern River Valley.
- Some continued discussion of fees in Keyesville continued from previous workshops (the RMP calls for the establishment of a fee campground in Wallow Rock RMZ and has been brought up as a means of better managing camping along the river/ use in Keyesville in general). As previously, public opinion was split on this point.
 - Part of the charm of Keyesville is that it's free; a place where a person can roll up and be free of the restrictions of the city.
 - If you use a place, you should pay to support it. Some would be willing to purchase an annual pass for Keyesville. A fee station at the entrance to the area would be a way of ensuring contact with visitors to explain rules/ suggest a management presence.
 - Annual pass could be used as a way to ensure that users have received information on rules and uses. A gold prospecting annual pass could serve the place of mining notice/ permit.

- Observations: the BLM seems to be committed to working through this Keyesville planning process. They have already spent 200+ BLM man hours leading workshops to get public input alone, and likely have spent even more time working on it in the office/ field. The challenge in this plan will be in blending traditional uses preferred by older generations like horseback riding with newer uses that younger generations are seeking out, like mountain biking and dirt biking.
- There should be a quad trail to river from near overlook road and place to rent storage space to leave recreational mining equipment locked up.
- Keyesville contains strategic metals (magnetite/ iron?) that can be used to reduce NOx emissions and should be set aside as a “green zone”/ strategic mineral reserve. ([this decision is outside of the scope of a Recreation Area Management Plan](#)).

Site Visits

The final portion of the workshop included visits to and discussion of several important sites in the field, in this case mostly representative examples of the sorts of historic resources present in the Gold Fever RMZ. The locations visited and topics discussed there are listed below. Each bullet point again represents a suggestion made by at least one member of the public or summarizes broader discussion. Discussion, at least of the three historic sites, was surprisingly fairly limited-- people may have been somewhat distracted by exploring the sites. Statements made specifically by the BLM are in blue.

Walker Cabin

- Recently installed an information kiosk at the entrance to the Walker Cabin for a National Public lands day in September. It's an (early, unsophisticated) example of the sort of thing the BLM would like to do, with public support and involvement, to interpret sites in the future.
- There has been some misunderstanding among the public about the BLM's treatment of cultural resources, in particular "the 50 year rule." The BLM is required to protect cultural resources that are historically significant, regardless of age. Documentation of cultural resources generally includes evidence for past human behavior that is at least 45 years of age or more. For the Keysville Historical District, the period of historical significance is from around 1850 to 1930. Not every single rock pile or can in Keysville is significant individually, but rather contribute to a larger understanding of Keysville's development. Protection of cultural resources in Keysville isn't an insurmountable barrier to trails and other developments and uses. The BLM just needs to make sure that features that are significant to the history of the area are protected and documented. To do that, the BLM needs an archaeologist to evaluate these resources on a case by case basis to determine which are significant and which are not.
- The BLM should coordinate with new owners of townsite to try to facilitate public viewing of the site.
- Using the Walker Cabin as the location/ facility for the visitor center called for in the RMP is a good idea. If the cabin is turned into a visitor/ education center/ museum/ interpretive site, many improvements should be made, including providing water to the site.
- The BLM has let the cabin and barn deteriorate in the past 10 years. More should be done to protect these structures.
- If the BLM is going to put a new roof on the cabin, it should complete an analysis of the structural integrity of the foundation of the building to ensure that it can accommodate the load.
- If the BLM has to keep the Walker Cabin and Keyes mine areas closed to the public for safety reasons/ to prevent vandalism, it could at least provide occasional docent led tours of the area so that the public can visit them sometimes.
- Trails connecting the Walker cabin (if made into a visitor center) to the nearby townsite marker, cemetery, and mine with interpretive signs describing cultural/ natural history along the way could be a good idea.

- Restoring the cabin to its historical look would be excellent; it currently looks fairly modern.

Keyesville Cemetery

- There are several hazard trees in the area that need removal or limbing.
- It would be nice if the BLM made the area a more attractive place to spend time. Benches, picnic table, and flag pole would be nice.
- A kiosk or other interpretive panel explaining some of the history of the cemetery, in addition to the brochures already available, would be nice.

Guidry/ Highgrader/ Pennsylvania Mine

- The mine (and others in the area) would be a good place for interpretive information about mining history and geology.
- The BLM provides underground tours of other mines. It would be nice to enter and explore some of the mines in Keyesville. This one looks stable enough to allow for some visits. [BLM geologist Gregg Wilkerson believes that this could be possible.](#)
- There is a fantastic view of the lake from the mine spot that make it a nice place to visit.
- An interpretive trail connecting the Walker cabin, cemetery, and mine would make sense.

Pearl Harbor Memorial

- Everything that commemorated pearl harbor at the memorial has been moved to the park in Lake Isabella. It is not a memorial anymore and Joe Nemish would have agreed with no longer considering it one. Remaining installations can be removed.
- A plaque or sign commemorating Nemish's efforts in the area might be nice, but isn't strictly necessary.
- Trail users would like to route the Keyesville Classic trail through the memorial area to get it off the road and help turn it into a more continuous single track loop. The Stewards of the Sequoia have a grant to accomplish this work in the near term.
- The area of the memorial is in a more natural condition than the rest of Keyesville and is a quiet refuge from the noise of motorcycles. It should be set aside and protected as a natural area and wildlife refuge. A motorized trail through the area would ruin it. Any new route for the classic should use existing trails that go around the existing fence line rather than rely on the creation of even more trails in Keyesville. Pedestrian trails, picnic tables, and overlooks are appropriate for the area, not trails.
- [It would potentially be useful for the BLM to maintain the memorial area as an enclosure to serve as a comparison/ reference point for grazed vs. ungrazed land... the ~30 years the enclosure has been in place provide potentially rich biological data. BLM is committed to creating a high quality single track connection for the Keyesville Classic and will continue to work with interested parties to find an acceptable route.](#)
- [Spelling of Keyesville: Historical documents show that Keyesville was likely originally spelled Keysville \(without the second e\). Early maps, early records for the town's post office, and early news articles all support the Keysville spelling. The Keyesville spelling appears to have come into use later, and was formalized by some inconclusive](#)

decisions by the USGS. BLM is considering changing the name of the SRMA to the historic spelling.

- The public (at least present at this part of the workshop) supports a change back to the historically accurate spelling of Keysville.