

Keyesville Dam RMZ Workshop Meeting Notes

This summary represents a best effort to capture discussion at the meeting. If we've missed anything, please let us know! If you have additional comments, questions, or suggestions you can submit them by phone at (661) 391-6186 or email at hfriedman@blm.gov.

RMP Background

The workshop started with a powerpoint presentation on guidelines for the Dam RMZ that will come into effect under the upcoming Bakersfield Resource Management Plan, set to be signed in the next few months. Highlights from the presentation:

The RMP provides the framework upon which decisions in each Keyesville RMZ must be based. For each RMZ, it specifies:

- Overall vision: Targeted market segment, recreation management objective, targeted activities, experiences, and benefits. For the Dam RMZ, the focus of all of these is mainly on whitewater boating and water play. See RMP (linked below).
- Natural Resource Recreation Setting-- description of environment of the area. Dam RMZ is Front Country; close to town with improvements and higher levels of visitation.
- Management Activities-- the rules/ management actions that will be applied to the area.

The RMP continues some current management:

- Manage Special Recreation Permitting for whitewater boating in collaboration with the US Forest Service. Maintain existing white-water boating facilities
- Limit use of "Granite Launch" to authorized Special Recreation Permit holders. Prohibit use of the "Low-water Launch" by boaters upon completion of Granite Launch.
- Restrict motorized access to street legal vehicles only
- Prohibit the discharge of firearms
- Coordinate with CDFW to prohibit hunting.
- No cables, ropes, or tethers across river

It also calls for some new management:

- Prohibit overnight camping and use of campfires except for limited designated camping areas on Sandy Flat.
- Establish the RMZ as an area requiring a 15 day notification prior to any activity under the mining laws, including Casual Use.
- Establish a permit system for prospecting in the area withdrawn from the general mining law.

Full text of the Proposed RMP is available at:

www.blm.gov/pgdata/etc/medialib/blm/ca/pdf/bakersfield/planning/prmp_feis2012.Par.79.998.File.dat/Bakersfield_PRMP-FEIS.pdf

General Issues

The next part of the workshop was an open period for public comment and time to brainstorm issues which people hoped to address during the visit to the field and discussion later in the workshop. The list of issues raised were:

- The need (or lack thereof) for permits for camping
- The need (or lack thereof) for permits for recreational mining
- Soil compaction in camping and parking areas
- Trail systems
 - The need for trails that reach destinations vs. journey being as important as the destination for some trail users, desirability of loops rather than out and back trails.
- The need to prevent/ control invasive species
 - Certified weed free hay
- Access to cultural resources
- The need for family and group oriented areas near the river
- The needs for wildfire mitigation and fire safe zones
- Water quality-- potential problems with E. coli and/or other contaminants and the need for testing
- Protection and preservation of prehistoric sites
 - Problems with tagging, trash, human waste near sites and bedrock mortars
- Size of the camping setback from the river
- Impacts to riparian areas from trails and erosion
- Concern over the increases in burdensome restrictions and regulation
- The need for public education
 - Problems with language barriers-- many/ most visitors during the summer are Spanish speaking
 - The need for adequate and well designed signage
 - Ways of reaching people who won't respond to signs and brochures
- Hunting in the RMZ (in general)
- Safety along the river (in general)
- Educational outreach-- ways of getting the community and/or schools involved and fostering a sense of appreciation and stewardship for the area
- Defining/ refining the specific boundaries of the RMZ
- Problems with homelessness
- Problems with trash and graffiti in general
- The desirability a bridge for pedestrians and bicycles across the river

Site Visits

The third portion of the workshop included visits to and discussion of key sites in the field. The locations visited and topics discussed there are listed below. As elsewhere, each bullet point represents a suggestion made by at least one member of the public or summarizes broader discussion.

- Slippery Rock Boat Launch
 - The boat launch is one of the primary sites used by rafting outfitters to launch on trips down the Kern in years of normal water flow. Developments at the launch (paving, picnic table, bathrooms) were put in with Boating and Waterways money.
 - There are currently no parking signs at the launch to prevent cars from blocking the launch and making it impossible for outfitter busses to turn around with raft trailers. Seasonal changes in management may be appropriate here; no parking signs might not be needed in times of year when rafters are not operating.
 - There is an abandoned county burn dump and hazmat site on the hill near the boat launch. BLM is working on plans to address it. If the site is capped, it could make a nice, fairly large flat area for camping or other purposes.
 - If the current highway bridge over the Kern is modified during dam construction, BLM should push for the Army Corps to put in a pedestrian and cyclist bridge cantilevered off its side to improve safety of bike access to Keyesville North from Keyesville South.
 - There needs to be a general effort to keep rules consistent with surrounding USFS. It is confusing to the public who manages what sites and what rules apply where.
 - Keyesville brochures in particular are confusing. Mining information in them is outdated and incorrect. The brochures need to be updated.
 - The homeless population in Keyesville is a problem and social justice issue. It would be excellent if homeless could be put to work on small projects (trash collection) in Keyesville.
 - Archaeological sites in the general vicinity of this location have been severely affected/ trashed and are an unfortunate example of the cumulative negative impacts of camping on cultural sites in the area.
- Staging Area
 - Near universal agreement that the current staging area is a good place for people to stop and get information. It is one of the few spots that everyone must pass on their way in, it has a bathroom and kiosk, and already exists as a reasonably large parking area.
 - There may be a need for a sign right on the road directing people to go to the kiosk for rules and information. The kiosk and roadside signs should include soundbite style messaging that clearly conveys certain key messages.
 - Crosswalks and caution signs from the staging area parking lot across Keyesville road to the trails are desirable/ and or needed. May be difficult because the road is county owned.
 - A roadside hut/ pay station at the entrance to Keyesville, even if not always staffed, may provide people with the impression that the area is watched and managed. It may not be possible, because Keyesville is a county road.

- There was some question as to whether county ordinance allowed non-street legal vehicles on county roads. BLM understanding is that it does not, but if other information is available, BLM would be interested to see it.
- The current fire danger sign at the Keyesville entrance is confusing. “Campfire permits required” and “Fire ban-- no burning” are conflicting messages. Need to be clearer in these and other signs.
- Staging area needs to have sufficient parking. The way the closure of part of the area was implemented eliminated some parking. Alternative solutions, like capping, might be preferable.
- The staging area was once a popular place for both tent and RV camping before the west half of it was blocked off. Camping will be further restricted in the area under the RMP because the area falls in the Dam RMZ camping ban; this is undesirable.
- It would be good for the staging area to be big enough for a trailer to turn around in without driving onto vegetation or blocking traffic on Keyesville road. The staging area as currently set up may not be quite large enough for a trailer to easily turn around, especially when other vehicles are parked in the area.
- Sandy Flat
 - Sandy flat will include some designated sites for camping per the RMP.
 - Number and type of camping sites that should be allowed in the area is in question. Some thought that there should be no large group sites so close to the river, others thought that there should be both group and individual sites.
 - The number of sites that could be put in the area would depend on their size and other considerations. Suggestions ranged from 6 sites to 20 or more. There is a need to determine the true carrying capacity of this and other areas to determine definitively how many people and vehicles can be accommodated in the area.
 - Some USFS campsites near meadows are defined by a post with a number, with camping allowed within a certain radius of the post. A similar system might work here.
 - Sandy flat does not need to be a sacrifice area. Denuded vegetation is a management question, not an inevitability. Need to determine effective management for the area to protect vegetation. There is a need for effective management near water.
 - Traffic flow in the area on busy weekends needs to be controlled and the footprint of the area to drive, park, and camp on needs to be defined.
 - A permit system of some kind is needed to control the number of people using the area and ensure accountability for the condition of sites that a given group uses.
 - A parking location separate from camping sites could free up space and congestion, improve traffic flow, and allow easier access for people wishing to use the area just for day use. If parking is kept separate from camping, walk in campsites would be something that people would be willing to use.
 - If camping or parking areas are defined, there is some question as to what material should be used to delineate their boundaries. Stone bollards to accommodate pedestrians were suggested. Rock was thought to be less obtrusive than post and cable fencing. Still would need to use care in selecting rock-- USFS inappropriately used a bedrock mortar rock in the past when

delineating a camping area using native rock. Rocks from the rock pile in Keyesville south might be used to delineate boundaries, but don't match the native rock of the area.

- There is a critical need to create camping alternatives in other locations before curtailing use in the Dam RMZ.
- The boundary of the RMZ is not clearly defined in the RMP, just drawn in maps. It needs to be clearly defined. It would be ideal to re-define the boundary to just 100ft from the river, which would protect riparian areas and leave room for some campsites in the area that address the public's desire for sites which are near the river and offer some degree of shade
- There is a need in this and other areas to define the boundaries of the Keyesville Recreational Mining area. The boundaries are very unclear to visitors on the ground, particularly at Sandy flat, where some of the area is in the Mining area and some is not. If not all of the rec mining area is ok for mining, a map of where it is ok to pan and prospect is needed.
- Any development in this area should, or at least can, be multi-phase. Might be sensible to start with boulders to define camping areas, then continue to evaluate their effectiveness and improve as needed.
- There is definitely a need for more basic infrastructure in the area, mainly clearly defined roads and more bathrooms. BLM should build more toilets, get contracts to have them reliably cleaned.
- Sandy Flat could be a place that large, organized groups would like to reserve for camping events.
- There is a need for replanting, seeding, and restoration of areas on the flat that are not used for camping in the future.
- There is a need to decide on how to show users in the area exactly where it is appropriate to camp and mine. What signs, barriers, etc. are required needs to be determined.

Management Solutions

The final portion of the workshop was intended as time to return to each of the points raised earlier in the workshop and brainstorm management solutions that could be taken to address them. Each bullet point represents a suggestion made by at least one member of the public or summarizes broader discussion. Some suggestions for management solutions related to each of these subjects were made during the site visit portion of the workshop and are included in those notes rather than here.

Camping

- One option for managing camping in Sandy Flat is designated undeveloped pay sites. Sites could be marked and numbered with posts. Arriving visitors would get a form with information from a camp host as they come and pay and place a ticket/ receipt on the post marking their campsite. Law enforcement could easily check compliance.
- Numbered sites would give the person or group using a site responsibility over it, so that individuals could be ticketed if they left a camp dirty.
- Keyesville could be a nice location for campground targeted to ecotourists. The area contains a lot of special resources that could attract a higher caliber of visitor if nice facilities were provided.
- Mixed opinions on whether campsites should require reservations or be first come first served. Nice to be able to pull up and camp without planning in advance, but also nice to be able to ensure that a spot is available. Some of each kind of site may be desirable.
- Campsites to accommodate different modes of transportation may be desirable. E.g. a bike camping area with access to bike trail, and equestrian camping area with room for trailers, etc.
- Each designated site should have a minimum of fire ring, and perhaps other improvements (picnic table, etc).
- Although Sandy was identified as an area for some limited, designated camping in the RMP, the area includes a number of cultural sites. If camping is allowed/ developed in the area, must protect cultural resources in the area and should exclude whole upper end of flat.
- If a fee is going to be charged, must be able to justify it under FLREA/ in general with nicer facilities. Could look at similar areas for ideas... reasonable range for fees might be \$16-30.
- Additional suggestions in the Sandy Flat portion of the site visit summary, above...

Cultural Sites

- “Cultural Resources” are peoples’ home areas and have deep significance. They’re not just “resources” to be treated as commodities.
- The abundance of historic and prehistoric sites in Keyesville provide a great opportunity for education for the public and community and hands on interaction with the land and it’s history.
- Capping could be one option to protect what remains of sites in areas where use is already ongoing (although it’s fallen out of favor as a primary means of protection).
- Even if a particular site is surface collected and looks destroyed, there may still be resources buried underneath, including grave sites, that still need protection. Management is still required in areas that are already damaged.

- People enjoy visiting the prehistoric sites in Keyesville near the river and have been visiting them for years.
- There is a need to protect all cultural sites in the area. It may be appropriate to interpret some, but all need to be protected.
- Interpreting sites might draw unwanted attention to them. Signs at the kiosk directing people to leave artifacts for others to see and experience, to come to the Native American activity center in town to learn more about the culture, leave things so that the place is interesting to keep visiting again, etc. might be good.
- The overall goal of protecting the river and its values in general also protects values that are important to Native Americans.
- If the BLM is going to declare (better- determine) sites to be historic, they need to be responsible for their care and maintenance. Too many things have been declared historic but then allowed to fall into ruin or disrepair from neglect.
- There are many people in the community who care about the area and its history and would be willing to volunteer help monitor and preserve historic and prehistoric sites.
- The point was raised that Keyesville is a special recreation management area where recreation takes precedence over other uses.
 - While true, the BLM is still required to protect cultural resources by law, even in SRMAs. Recreation can be designed to avoid impacts to cultural resources. Historic and prehistoric sites in the area also provide some of the recreational value of the area-- people visit in part to see these sites.
- It is going to be important to identify and give users places where people can be encouraged to go that won't impact sites. For recreational mining, need to show people where they can dig rather than punishing them for mistakenly digging where they can't. Education and 15 day notice for claimants will help get the message out.

Recreational Mining Permit

- Additional restrictions and regulations are burdensome and seem like they're growing every year.
- Purpose of the permit could be to educate users on proper practices, similar to a fire permit.
- Some question as to how they would be issued...
 - Could be issued in person and similar to permits issued in the desert to protect tortoises. People would read information and sign for their understanding, be required to have the permit in their possession while prospecting, and be responsible for knowing all of the information it contained.
 - Could be issued online through Recreation.gov, which requires a small (\$1.50) processing fee. People would read information online and agree to follow the rules before printing permit.
 - Both options are problematic for people who just drive up to Keyesville expecting to just be able to pan. There needs to be a way for those people to obtain a permits. This could be solved if:
 - Local businesses in town could issue the permits.
 - The process could be similar to campfire permits. Easy to obtain in person or online by watching a video and answering questions about it to ensure understanding.
- Permits should include a disclaimer that if you don't understand the rules, ask for clarification.

- Many thought that there shouldn't be a fee for the permit. They understand the need for revenue and cost recovery, but passing on yet another cost to users isn't desirable.

Trash

- Universally agreed to be a major problem in the area. Signing and education may not be enough to reach everyone, need to try other innovative ways of reaching out.
- A raffle for kids to win a mountain bike or other prize with an entry for every bag of trash collected could be extremely effective.
- Soundbite messages to get the idea across and stick with people are needed. "Keep Keyesville Clean," "Take care of Keyesville," or other messages that are creative and catchy could be helpful.

Education

- Comments on this point came up throughout the meeting... see site visit section in particular.
- In general: there is a need for clearer signing, more accessible information on kiosks, signs directing people to read information on kiosks, Spanish language information, and soundbite type messages that simply and clearly convey messages to people.

General

- There is a huge need to announce changes in management in Keyesville to the general public as they come into effect. In particular, need to communicate with populations in LA who use the area for camping. Reach out with Spanish language messaging and radio ads.
- There is a need to continue to talk about issues in Keyesville as they come up and keep engaged with the members public-- including both the local community and visitors from LA.
- There is need to continue to discuss barriers for camping areas. Mixed opinions on whether the perimeter of any areas should be natural material that blends in well vs. higher visibility to make sure that people see it.

Issues raised earlier in the meeting, but not fully addressed in subsequent discussion:

- Water quality, Invasive species, Hunting, River Safety, Trail systems, Graffiti, Homelessness

If you have comments related to these or other topics that you wish to share, please do continue to submit them. Email them to hfriedman@blm.gov or call 661-391-6186.