

**Bureau of Land Management**  
Northern California District

**Resource Advisory Council**  
Wednesday and Thursday, Aug. 26 – 27, 2015  
Redding, California

**Summary Minutes**

**Wednesday, Aug. 26**

This was the inaugural meeting of the BLM Northern California District Resource Advisory Council. Established in June, the council replaces the former Northeast California and Northwest California RACs, and will advise the entire district.

**Opening Business**

Northern California District Manager Nancy Haug called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

**Attending:**

**Category One:** Todd Swickard, Russ Hawkins, Roger Kirkpatrick, Alan Abbs, Skip Willmore.

**Category Two:** Jennifer Powell, John Bernstein, Bill Phillips, Frank Bayham. Absent: Carol Montgomery.

**Category Three:** Pat Frost, Mary Nordstrom, Jessica Diermier, Leonard Moty, Martin Balding.

*There is a quorum.*

**BLM Staff:** District Manager Nancy Haug, Associate District Manager Dereck Wilson, District Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana, Applegate Field Manager Dennis Sylvia, Arcata Field Manager Molly Brown, Eagle Lake Field Manager Ken Collum, Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata, Eagle Lake Field Office Travel Technician Nadine Miller.

**Guests:** Elyse Gardner, Sherry Oster. By conference line: Carla Bowers, Mary Beth Devlin

**District Manager's Report**

Nancy Haug provided welcoming comments to the new RAC members and thanked them for their service to the BLM and the public lands. She summarized major issues and topics:

- The district is in the early stages for developing a resource management plan for the Arcata and Redding field offices. The plan will address land use planning on a landscape scale, crossing field office boundaries.
- Field offices on the east side of the district are monitoring rangelands and wild horse and burro herd health. There are drought impacts and some areas are still recovering from wildfires.

- There have been two fires this year: Dodge Fire on the east side (about 10,000 acres on lands managed by the Applegate and Eagle Lake field offices) and the Horse Fire (about 150 acres) in the King Range National Conservation Area.
- The Eagle Lake and Applegate field offices are part of a west-wide effort to amend resource management plans to include conservation measures for greater sage-grouse and their habitat. The plans will be signed and put into place in September and the field offices are preparing to implement projects. A district team will lead the effort to identify priorities and projects to address habitat threats, primarily from invasive weeds and fire

### **State Director's Report**

State Director Jim Kenna was not able to attend. He sent forward thanks to the RAC members for giving of their time and expertise to help the BLM with management of the public lands and their resource values.

His written report:

#### **1. Leadership in Washington:**

- o Neil Kornze, Director
- o Steve Ellis, Deputy Director for Operations
- o Linda Lance, Deputy Director for Programs and Policy

#### **2. Leadership in California**

- o State Director Jim Kenna welcomed Joe Stout as the new Associate State Director in May.
- o State Director Jim Kenna announced that he'll be retiring in early October. A replacement has not been named.

#### **3. Budget**

- o Approaching the end of the fiscal year. New year starts Oct 1.
- o President Obama requested \$1.2 billion in appropriations for the BLM for Fiscal Year 2016. The request for BLM's operating accounts represents an increase of \$91.4 million above the 2015 enacted level. Four priority funding areas include:
  - § Supporting and Modernizing Management of Increased Energy Production
  - § Restoring Sage Grouse Habitat through Partnerships and Collaboration
  - § Supporting the BLM National Conservation Lands, American's Newest Conservation System

## § Establishing a BLM Foundation

In the last fiscal year, the BLM generated over \$5 billion in receipts from public lands, benefiting State governments and the U.S. Treasury.

### 4. 114th Congress and Legislation

- o State Director conducted congressional visits in Washington DC in May and met with 18 members of the California delegation. Issues included energy production, conservation, sage grouse, recreation, and others.

- o Several legislative proposals of interest to Northern California include:

  - § California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act (Boxer & Feinstein). Bill was introduced in August and has not been heard in committee.

  - § Federal land into trust for the Susanville Indian Rancheria (LaMalfa). BLM testified in support of the legislation subject to a site-specific analysis prior to disposal.

### State Issues:

#### 1. Fire

- o No new wildfires on BLM public lands in recent days and overall fire activity remains about the same. BLM staff have been busy on both fire suppression and burned area emergency stabilization efforts. The BLM is in the process of preparing several Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation plans, totaling several million dollars. During this same time, the northern District has reinstated its fire restrictions limiting fires to designated campfire rings.

- o The BLM, a leader in our nation's wildland fire management efforts, undertakes a broad range of activities to safely protect the public, the natural landscape, wildlife habitat and recreational areas for our country's citizens.

- o The program includes fire suppression, preparedness, fuels management, prevention and education, community assistance and protection, and perhaps most significant, safety.

- o The BLM meets these challenges by fielding highly trained and skilled professional firefighters and managers.

#### 2. Priorities Statewide

- o **Sage Grouse**

  - § Great Basin Region Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy is underway and the Nevada and Northeastern California Sub-region encompasses the Eagle Lake, Alturas, and Surprise Field Offices in NorCal District. The final EIS was released in May 2015.

§ Strong management focus on protection of Greater Sage Grouse and sagebrush habitat, including firefighting efforts to protect unburned “islands” of sagebrush that provide food and cover for Greater Sage grouse

§ Emphasis on partnering with local farmers and ranchers

**o Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan**

§ Joint federal/state planning effort for 22 million acres in the California desert

§ Draft EIS/EIR was release in September 2014. Final EIS expected later this year.

**o National Conservation Lands 15th Anniversary**

§ This year marks an important milestone for National Conservation Lands. America’s newest conservation system is 15 years old. Today, these National Conservation Lands include 874 federally recognized areas and more than 30 million acres of National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and Conservation Lands of the California Desert.

§ Northern CA hosted National events in June at Headwaters, King Range, Trinidad

**RAC 101**

Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana provided a brief overview of the RAC’s role and responsibilities, its charter and its bylaws and standard operating procedures:

**Authority and Charters**

The BLM’s Resource Advisory Councils are authorized under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The current council configurations date to the BLM’s Healthy Land Regulations of 1995.

Function of the councils is governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) of 1972. The Act directs the establishment, operation, oversight and termination of advisory boards. Importantly, FACA:

- Recognizes the merits of federal agencies seeking the advice and assistance of citizens
- Notes the importance of federal officials and the nation having access to information and advice on a broad range of issues affecting federal policies and programs, and the importance of public opportunities to provide input into a process that may form the basis for government decisions.
- Requires that membership be balanced
- Mandates that meetings be open to the public and announced in advance

- Requires that meeting records be available to the public
- Requires charters and assigned Designated Federal Officials for each council
- Sets rules regarding financial conflicts for members

### **Overview of BLM RACs**

- 29 RACS operate in the 11 Western states
- RACs can be organized along district lines, BLM state lines, or geographic lines.
- RAC membership is balanced according to areas of interest and geography.

RACs are part of the “fabric” of the BLM and actually predate the agency. The first advisory council was formed in 1937 under the Grazing Service. The councils have evolved and changed with the evolution of BLM’s multiple use mission.

Today’s RACs date to 1995 and the BLM land health regulations which eliminated old district advisory councils and grazing advisory boards, replacing them with RACs.

### **The RAC Charters**

The advisory council reports to the secretary of the interior through the BLM designated federal official. For the Northern California District this is the Northern California District manager. Members serve without salary, but are reimbursed for expenses. Duties include:

- Developing recommendations regarding preparation, amendment and implementation of land use plans
- Gathering and analyzing information, conducting field studies, hearing public comments and advising on issues before the BLM.
- Advising BLM in developing recommendations on ecosystem management concepts.
- Providing advice to the BLM on best ways to work with local groups.

The council does not:

- Advise on budget or personnel matters (the council can advise on long term planning and priorities).
- Lobby members of Congress or other elected bodies on behalf of the BLM.

### **RAC Composition**

Each RAC consists of 12 to 15 members from diverse interests in local communities, including ranchers, environmental groups, tribes, State and local government officials, academics, and other public land users. Each Council must include representatives of three categories:

#### **Commercial/commodity interests**

- o Grazing permit holders
- o Forestry/commercial timber
- o Energy and minerals
- o Transportation and rights of way
- o Commercial recreation (including off-highway-vehicle recreation)

#### **Environmental/historical groups**

- o National and regional environmental organizations
- o History and archaeology interests
- o Wild Horse and Burro interests
- o Dispersed recreation interests

#### **State and local government**

- o State, county or local elected officials
- o State agencies responsible for natural resources
- o Native American tribal representatives
- o Teachers in natural resources or natural sciences
- o Public at Large

#### **Voting**

Our RACs have a history of working toward full consensus when developing recommendations for the BLM. The charter contains a protocol that must be followed if votes are taken.

To forward a recommendation to the designated federal official (northern California district manager):

- There must be a quorum, which is a majority of the members in each voting category present.
- A majority of the members in each voting category must vote in favor of the recommendation. There is not a “one person, one vote” system. This is designed to encourage disparate groups to work toward consensus.
- Forwarding a request directly to the Secretary requires unanimous agreement of all council members.

#### **Subgroups**

The charter provides for various subgroups who report to the full RAC

### **Subcommittees and Rangeland Resource Teams**

- o Members can be from the RAC or outside of the council. Only council members are reimbursed for expenses.
- o Membership must reflect the balance required in the council charter.
- o Subcommittee members may not participate in matters in which they have a direct financial interest.
- o Subcommittees can gather information, conduct research, analyze relevant issues and facts

### **Technical Review Teams**

- o May be formed at the option of the BLM or the RAC
- o Members selected by the BLM based on their subject matter expertise
- o Membership limited to BLM staff and paid federal consultants
- o Terminate when tasks are completed

Meetings of subgroups require the same notification as the full RAC, including a 30-day advance notice published in the Federal Register.

Records of those meetings, along with records of regular RAC meetings are maintained by BLM and available to the public. They are posted on the BLM website.

### **RAC Member Discussions**

This agenda item, conducted over a working lunch and into the afternoon, provided an opportunity for members to introduce themselves and to provide information on their backgrounds and expectations for the council.

### **Summary of member expectations:**

Nancy Haug led a round table discussion focused on the members' expectations for the council. Following is a summary of ideas presented:

- Get beyond presentations and tackle the big issues.
- Address issues by looking at the present situation, determining a desired future situation and the finding options for getting from the present to the desired condition on the land.
- Hold field trips to areas to see what is happening on the ground, especially with wild horses and burros.
- Formulate specific recommendations on substantive and complex issues.

- The RAC should make the best use of the diverse knowledge around the table in a way most useful for the agency. The BLM should provide information early and get information to members in advance of meetings.
- Find ways to reach consensus and present recommendations to the BLM.
- Stay away from BLM “show and tell” after the projects or initiatives are already underway or completed. Involve the RAC early, even at the project level.
- Use the members’ free expertise and knowledge of issues.
- The BLM should recognize members incur expense to provide time and service. Members want to leave the meetings having substantive results to report to their constituents.
- Member of the RAC have the opportunity to help increase community involvement in what the BLM does. The members can assist the BLM to improve the public knowledge about the BLM’s responsibilities.
- The RAC can help the BLM get youth involved in recreation on public lands.
- The RAC can help the BLM identify key issues to focus on in all program areas.

Issue and topic-specific suggestions:

- Integrate archaeology and historical concerns into planning process and management decisions.
- Wildland fuels and the need for treatment, safety issues and the importance of public safety are important messages, and the RAC can play a role in developing them.
- The RAC’s input to the BLM should be issue-driven and precede BLM policy decisions.
- There may be opportunities for the RAC to provide input on the BLM’s natural resource monitoring protocols.
- Consider developing a process for determining which issues the RAC should address.
- The BLM should address the challenge of keeping the RAC up to date and engaged between meetings.
- The RAC should take a balanced approach when discussing and making recommendations, respecting differences of opinion.
- The RAC should consider economic and environmental sustainability in its recommendations. The group could be effective in helping the BLM find the balance between economic and environmental sustainability.
- Members should take advantage of opportunities to expand their knowledge about public lands and various issues.
- Members and the BLM should take advantage of geographic diversity represented on the RAC.

There was discussion about the RAC subcommittee process and the opportunities for subgroups to help the BLM set work priorities, especially in critical areas. Jeff noted that the district RACs have a long and productive history of using subcommittees to develop recommendations for consideration by the full council.

**Key Issues**

**Sage Grouse Conservation:** Eagle Lake Field Manager Ken Collum led a discussion on the need to conserve habitat for greater sage grouse. The Eagle Lake and Applegate field offices manage public lands with important sage grouse habitat. He discussed the history of proposals to list the species on the federal threatened and endangered species list and the BLM's efforts to develop regulatory conservation measures that might be effective in heading off a listing decision by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ken provided an overview of the BLM's Fire and Invasives Assessment Tool, or FIAT, an analysis process that the BLM uses for addressing impacts and setting priorities in dealing with fire impacts and encroachment of invasive plants. The overall goal is to focus the work in areas where there are greatest chances for success and to improve the health of the habitat to improve the quality of sage-grouse habitat and number of birds.

Associate District Manager Dereck Wilson noted that this work will affect management of other areas including livestock grazing and management of wild horses and burros. A team has been formed for the two field offices to ensure a consistent approach for implementing the plans.

**Northern California Integrated Resource Management Plan:** Redding Field Manager Jennifer Mata presented an overview of the project to amend resource management plans (land use plans) for the Redding and Arcata field offices. The plans for both offices are about 20 years old.

In the process a new single landscape-level plan will replace the Redding and Arcata RMPs. The new plan will cover about 400,000 acres of public lands and about 300,000 acres of subsurface minerals management, for a total of about 700,000 acres.

The planning process is just getting underway. The plans will be developed under processes directed in the National Environmental Policy Act and there will be opportunities for public involvement at various phases.

**Wild horses and burros:** Applegate and Eagle Lake field managers Dennis Sylvia and Ken Collum summarized issues in their areas:

**Applegate:** There are 10 herd management areas covering a half-million acres. There are drought concerns, especially with water sources drying up, but at this point the horses are healthy. Summer rains have helped sustain some water sources and forage. The horse populations exceed appropriate management level in all areas. The field office has submitted a funding request to implement some projects to inject mares with an immunocontraception drug by remote darting, rather than by traditional injections that require capturing the animals.

**Eagle Lake:** The primary focus is the Twin Peaks Herd Management area. At about 785,000 acres it is BLM-California's largest HMA and the second largest managed by the BLM nationwide. The appropriate management level for horses is a range of 458 to 758; the burro AML is 72 to 116. Recent aerial counts show there are about 1,800 horses and about 400 burros. There are concerns that these high populations are impacting Rush Fire restoration projects and sage grouse habitat.

Drought has impacted springs and seeps. BLM field personnel report that the horses and burros appear to be in good condition.

Ken noted that the BLM is limited in the number of horses and burros that can be removed from ranges because of holding space limitations. Emergency removals have been the priority.

### **Subcommittee Formation**

There was discussion about forming standing subcommittees to address key management issues.

*Action: the RAC agreed to establish two standing subcommittees:*

#### ***Sage Grouse Conservation***

*Members: Mary Nordstrom, public at large; Frank Bayham, history and archaeology; Jessie Diermier, academic sector; Todd Swickard, livestock grazing permit holders; Martin Balding, state agencies.*

#### ***Northern California Integrated Resource Management Plan***

*Members: Pat Frost, public at large; John Bernstein, environmental groups; Leonard Moty, elected officials; Jennifer Powell, dispersed recreation; Alan Abbs, transportation and rights of way.*

The council considered, but declined to name a subcommittee to address wild horse and burro issues. Members agreed to continue tracking developments and looking for involvement opportunities. (Earlier in the meeting, wild horse and burro interest representative Bill Phillips distributed a paper discussing wild horse and burro management and issues relating to maintaining healthy rangelands. It is attached to these meeting notes).

### **Public Comments**

**Mary Beth Devlin (by teleconference):** Ms. Devlin took issue with the BLM's adoption and population figures. She said the BLM's adoption numbers have declined over time because the BLM no longer "counts sales for slaughter" in its adoption tallies.

She referred to AML as "arbitrary management level," and challenged the BLM's position that wild horse herds grow at a 20 percent rate, calling the position "exaggerated, fraudulent and fictitious."

**Carla Bowers (by teleconference):** The BLM needs to provide equal treatment for wild horses and burros rather than favoring livestock in its forage allocations. The nationwide AML of 26,000 is extremely low compared to the other uses of public lands. She encouraged the RAC to consider livestock grazing numbers when discussing wild horse and burro populations, looking at wild horse and burro management in a holistic way. She was concerned that the BLM presents wild horses and burros as a problem and asked the RAC members to avoid viewing wild horses and burros in a negative light. She said the BLM's budget for managing public land livestock grazing is \$120 million "in the red" every year, and asked the RAC members to

consider that when discussing the cost of administering the wild horse and burro program. She said the RAC should focus on local issues when discussing wild horse and burro management.

**Elyse Gardner:** Echoed Carla's comments about the RAC staying locally focused and expressed hope the RAC would not express a "generational bias" against wild horses and burros. She discussed aspects of the Wild Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act, shared concerns that land available for horses and burros has been reduced, and the need for better on-the-range management of horses and burros.

### **Election of Officers**

*Action: The council elected Leonard Moty as chair and Jessica Diermier as vice chair.*

### **Next Meeting**

The group will consider dates in the late October/early November timeframe. Jeff will work with Nancy and Leonard to conduct a poll to determine best dates. The location will be determined.

### **Thursday, Aug. 27**

RAC members convened at 8 a.m. for a float trip in the Sacramento River Bend Area of Critical Environmental Concern. During the outing members discussed the BLM land use planning process and how it resulted in significant increases in public land access along the river. They also participated in a role playing exercise designed to illustrate the diverse public opinions facing public land managers.

*Summary Minutes\* compiled by  
Jeff Fontana, public affairs officer*

*\*These notes are to summarize activities of the council and document actions taken.  
They are not a verbatim transcript of the proceedings.*