

Bureau of Land Management
Northwest California Resource Advisory Council

Field Tour and Meeting
Wednesday and Thursday, Sept. 7-8, 2011
Arcata, California

Wednesday, Sept. 7

RAC members participated in a field tour to the Lost Coast Headlands and the South Spit Management Area. At Lost Coast Headlands, Arcata Field Office staff members provided a tour of the former Centerville Navy Station, where buildings and other developments have been removed as part of the return of the facility to public land status. The group hiked the Fleener Creek Trail to the beach for a close look at the unique geologic features in the area. At the South Spit, the group toured the Lighthouse Ranch property, recently acquired for public ownership.

Thursday, Sept. 8

Attendance

Category one: Bob Warren, Stan Leach, Dennis Possehn, Eric Lueder.

Category two: Ryan Henson, Bob Schneider, Rondal Snodgrass, Michael Kelley

Cat three: Shirley Laos, Julie Rogers, Kendall Smith. Absent Tony Shaw

There is a quorum

BLM Staff: Northern California District Manager Nancy Haug, Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush, Arcata Assistant Field Manager Kathy Stangl, Redding Field Manager Steve Anderson, Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns, Public Affairs Officer Jeff Fontana, Arcata Interpretive Specialist Rachel Sowards-Thompson, King Range Manager Gary Pritchard-Peterson.

Opening Business:

Michael Kelley extended thanks to the Arcata field office staff for their excellent field tour land for hosting the RAC.

The agenda was approved as mailed. The minutes were approved with the following corrections:

- Reference should be to Baldy Mountain, not Baldy Peak, in the Walker Ridge discussion.

State Director's Report

District Manager Nancy Haug presented information on behalf of Acting State Director Peter Ditton:

- Jim Kenna, new state director, reports Monday. Associate State Director Jim Abbott retired on Friday after 35 years of service. Doran Sanchez, new deputy state director for external affairs, begins Monday, Sept. 12. Rob Nauert, the state budget lead, retired last Friday as well. Central California District Manager Kathy Hardy is returning to the Forest Service to become supervisor of the El Dorado National Forest.
- **Wild Horse & Burro** – We are winding up our adoption season, with a number of adoption events concluded and two more to go – Sept. 10 in Redlands and Sept. 16-18 in Napa. Our biggest priority for the state is the High Rock Complex round up, scheduled to begin October 15 in the Surprise Field Office. A Decision Record for the environmental assessment of the round up was signed August 15. The goal of the round up is to return the population to the appropriate management level. Additionally, nearly 400 wild horses are roaming on public and private land outside of designated herd management areas and will be removed.

There was continuing discussion about horse management and the mechanics of gather operations.

- Legislation – The 112th Congress is back from their three week summer break. As you well know, the primary focus of this Congress so far has been on budget and economic issues. There are about a half dozen legislative proposals that we are tracking. A few that might be of interest to the RAC include:
 - H.R. 1581 (Rep. McCarthy) – releases BLM wilderness study areas that are not suitable for wilderness designation and release U.S. Forest Service-inventoried roadless areas. BLM Director testified in strong opposition to the bill on behalf of the Department on July 26.
 - S. 138 (Sens. Boxer and Feinstein) – establishes the Sacramento River National Recreational Area (Tehama & Shasta counties) to be managed as part of the NLCS.
 - OH.R. 1237 (Rep. Herger) – Involves a land exchange between the BLM, Forest Service and Trinity Public Utilities District. BLM would acquire 47 acres known as the Sky Ranch parcel.
- **Wilderness** – As part of Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar's push to build a bipartisan wilderness agenda that can be enacted in the 112th Congress, BLM state offices solicited suggestions and recommendations from state and local elected officials, Tribes, and other federal land managers on areas that deserve wilderness protection and that have broad support for congressional designation.

The focus of this effort is to identify lands that have strong backing for protection as wilderness and that might be appropriate for congressional action. The best ideas for conservation come from the ground up, and we hope this effort will help lay a foundation for a bipartisan wilderness agenda in this Congress. We've heard from the public and many people have expressed how much they value wilderness areas. This effort is an extension of Secretary Salazar's June 10, 2011, letter to Members of Congress requesting their ideas on "crown jewel" areas of public lands that have strong local support for permanent protection as Wilderness under the Wilderness Act. This fall, the Department of the Interior will submit to Congress a list of "crown jewels" that it believes are ready for Wilderness designation by Congress based on the combined input from Congressional, state, local and tribal partners. BLM-CA is reviewing the 10 responses sent in by county supervisors, tribal leaders and a state park. We will provide our recommendations to the national office for further review and consideration and they will forward to the Secretary for his report to Congress by mid-October.

- **BLM Priorities** – Our priorities continue to be renewable energy and America's Great Outdoors, including the National Landscape Conservation System, youth initiatives and recreation.

District Manager's Report

Nancy summarized activities in the Northern California District:

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- The largest single event will be a wild horse roundup is planned for the High Rock Complex of herd management areas in the Surprise Field Office. About 1,300 horses will be gathered beginning Oct. 15 and continuing through November. The Eagle Lake Field Office will host the state meeting on use of vehicles and helicopters for wild horse management.

RAC letter to Jim Abbott

Ryan Henson moved and the RAC unanimously supported a thank you letter to Jim Abbott for his support of the public lands. The RAC approved the following:

*Jim Abbott
Address*

Dear Jim:

Members of the Northwest California Resource Advisory Council are pleased to extend to you our heartfelt thanks and congratulations on your retirement from an exemplary career in public service.

At our meeting today in Arcata, our members expressed admiration for your efforts to successfully guide California BLM while the state director position was vacant for two years. While you served as Acting State Director during that period, we know you continued duties assigned to the Associate State Director, shouldering a complex and demanding workload. We commend you for your perseverance and dedication during this challenging time.

Your insight and skill in leading BLM-California budgeting have benefitted the BLM in ways that few, including most of us, fully understand. But your effectiveness is evidenced every day on the ground where BLM professionals are receiving the resources they need to complete impressive natural resource conservation work. Northwest California field managers have greatly appreciated your support and visits to the field, and have shared appreciation that with the RAC. Your demonstrated support for the work of the BLM field office staffs has been admirable.

The BLM in California also has benefitted greatly from your leadership at a time of unprecedented interest in energy development, particularly large and controversial alternative energy projects in the California Desert. Proposals for northern California projects, including wind and geothermal development, have added to the complexity.

Jim, you are leaving behind an inspirational legacy of 35 years of public service to the citizens of the United States. We are grateful that a large portion of that time was dedicated to BLM-California, and wish you all the best in all of your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

*Michael Kelley
Chairman*

Field Trip Review

The RAC discussed the tours and considered management recommendations to the Arcata Field Office:

Lost Coast Headlands: a management plan and EA are being developed for public comment. The RAC will be encouraged to provide comments. Michael Kelley suggested a trail network connecting areas east of the county road in the former Navy facility site and connecting to the beach trail to Fleener Creek. Lynda pointed out that connecting the Fleener and Guthrie Creek trails is not possible because of terrain and private land concerns.

Lighthouse Ranch and South Spit: No suggestions.

Walker Ridge Wind Energy Update

Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns updated the RAC on status of the environmental impact statement for the proposed wind energy development:

- The DRAFT EIS will be released for public review and comment on Sept. 30.
- Work has been underway since the last RAC meeting in April to preparing the draft document and various appendices for public release.
- The proposed action has not changed. The project would produce up to 70 megawatts of power. The number of turbines will depend on the generator size selected; bigger generators would require fewer turbines to accomplish the same production.
- There is a maximum wind resource alternative that would affect the location and arrangement of turbines.
- The EIS will consider various transmission line routes.
- There are different alternatives for the grid intertie substation.
- The public comment period is 45 days, running into mid-November
- The RAC could hold its meeting during that comment period to develop its recommendations.
- There will be public comment meetings in Lakeport, Colusa and Sacramento.
- With the EIS release date changed, a possible decision date would probably be sometime in February. If approved, construction could begin in summer 2012. There could be a public land closure during construction, but no decisions have been made.

Michael Kelley suggested that the RAC stick with its earlier plan to hold a meeting dedicated to developing comments and recommendations on the proposal. He suggested that hard copies be provided to members. Several members noted concerns with the cost of downloading and printing a multi-volume document (there are more than 20 appendices).

There was discussion about the BLM providing summary materials, including mitigation measures. Ryan reminded members that using key word searches on electronic documents is a good way to proceed with document review.

Julie from Perry Communications said materials could be provided based on the agenda developed for the meeting.

Bob Schneider asked for assurance that the USGS asbestos map and wind cut-in speeds will be addressed. He also asked about the status of a proposal to expand the Walker Ridge Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Rich said the proposal is under consideration. He noted that expansion would require an amendment to the Ukiah Resource Management Plan (RMP). Rich also noted there is potential for winter construction if the proposal is approved.

Kendall suggested that the RAC lay out their expectations in the process, the decision space and the expected outcome. She suggested a subcommittee could work with BLM between now and the meeting to determine the process. She suggested an advance executive summary and meeting a process format ahead of the next meeting. Rondal agreed that the RAC needs clear sideboards and a description of its decision space. There was discussion about setting a working group to develop a process and possible outcomes for the meeting. Rondal also suggested that the RAC could choose to focus on developing specific recommendations or very broad recommendations.

Redding Field Manager Steve Anderson reminded the RAC about their effective role in the Area 51 and Sacramento River Bend discussions, and suggested that a similar approach could be taken on this issue.

Bob Warren said it is clear that the RAC will not be unanimous in opinion on the project. He said a document showing the council's divergent concerns would be most important.

Bob Schneider suggested a RAC focus on mitigation measures will be important.

Ryan suggested it will be important for the RAC to advise the BLM on engaging with the public and how well the information on the project is being presented.

Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush said that if members are well prepared, a facilitator can lead the group a discussion to find common ground that could be basis for recommendations. It will be critical for the members to fully know the DEIS.

Dennis Possehn suggested that each membership group could study the document in advance of the meeting in preparation for the discussion.

The RAC agreed to appoint a working group comprised of Ryan, Bob Schneider, and Michael to work with the facilitator to structure the meeting.

The group agreed to hold the meeting in Williams on Nov. 2-3. The session will run from 1 to 7 p.m. on the first day, with public comment from 5 to 7 p.m. The session will run from 8 a.m. to noon on the second day.

Jeff will make meeting arrangements.

(Note: This meeting was later delayed, as release of the DEIS was postponed. A new date was not set)

Public Comments

Lynn Ryan, Arcata: Expressed appreciation for the work of the RAC and the trust that BLM has in the committee.

Sacramento River Bend

Steve Anderson referred to his field manager's report detailing recent acquisitions and development in the Sacramento River Bend ACEC.

Bob Warren said there has been no progress on the proposed legislation to create a National Recreation Area. Bob's organization, the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, has been a leading proponent.

Marijuana Cleanup Issues

Rich Burns summarized the results from Operation Full Court Press, a multi-agency operation to clean up growing operations on public lands in his region (Mendocino, Lake, Colusa and Glenn counties), including the Cow Mountain Recreation Area. It involved federal, state and local agencies in July.

Over 632,000 plants were eradicated, 60 percent from the Mendocino National Forest and 40 percent from BLM-managed lands. There were more than 90 grow sites. Rich said 35 sites were cleaned immediately after the operation, up with more than 51,000 pounds of trash hauled away. More than 40 miles of irrigation pipe were hauled out.

BLM staff members are now working on cleaning up and rehabilitating additional garden sites, with plans in place to address 16 sites this year.

Ryan noted that the impact to the land from marijuana growing is undeniable. He expressed hope that efforts such as this can be sustained. He noted the issue has nothing to do with societal arguments about legalization of marijuana; it is about the impacts to natural resources and public lands.

OHV Grants

Field managers presented information on the grant funds they have received from the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Off Highway Vehicle Recreation.

Ukiah: Used grant funds to fund two seasonal employees and operations at Cow Mountain and Knoxville OHV areas. Grant funds were used to hire a new park ranger who starts work in the next month. There are concerns that grant funds might dry up as a result of state budget cuts. The office received \$189,000 in green sticker funds in the current grant cycle.

Redding: Steve Anderson noted that his office expects to receive about 450,000 in FY 2012. The Chappie Shasta Off Highway Vehicle Recreation Area is the biggest OHV area in northern California and funds will be used for operations and management. In 2011, the office used funding to buy a mini excavator, which is very useful for trails

maintenance work. The biggest concern is that there are still needs to acquire lands to improvement management within the OHV area, and the loss of state funds for acquisition could impact that.

Arcata: Lynda reported that the field office received \$75,000 for use in managing the Samoa Dunes Recreation area at the north spit of Humboldt Bay.

Eric Lueder noted that the state OHV division has a \$27 million acquisition fund statewide. Last year's budget reduced the grant program to about 22 million. Grants are in operations, restoration, education and safety and law enforcement. He said the restoration part is "undersubscribed" and encouraged managers to continue to apply for restoration funds. Rich noted that the restoration grant fund criteria can be tough to meet. He said the Ukiah Field Office might have a better chance after completion of the Cow Mountain Management Plan which will contain a soils plan.

Eric noted the funds are derived from OHV registration (so-called Green Sticker funds) fuel taxes and entrance fees.

Wilderness

Lynda Roush reported that one recommendation for new wilderness was submitted by the public for lands near Brushy Peak. Rich Burns said Lake County identified about 150 acres near Buck Island, south of the Cache Creek Management Area as suitable for wilderness.

King Range Management Plan

Gary Pritchard Peterson, manager of the King Range National Conservation Area, summarized a wilderness management plan for the recently created wilderness areas within the King Range National Conservation Area. The public comment period closed with eight comments received, most in favor of the plan. He summarized the plan in a PowerPoint presentation.

A major focus is managing to provide opportunities for visitor solitude.

Highlights:

- The 42,585 acre wilderness designation for the King Range was part of the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Act of 2006. The act included the rocks and islands off the coast of the King Range. These are part of the California Coastal National Monument.
- The Wilderness Management Plan addresses management the five component qualities of wilderness and preserving the wilderness character under provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964
- Wilderness qualities are:
 - Solitude or unconfined recreation

- Natural
- Undeveloped – no improvements
- Untrameled
- Unique values, including cultural
- Scoping occurred in 2008-early 2009. Assuring solitude and an undeveloped nature were primary public concerns, along with managing to keep the area natural, supporting wildlife, keeping out invasive plant species and allowing scientific research.

Among the proposed actions to provide solitude are:

- Implementing a visitor allocation program that will limit daily wilderness entries to 60 persons a day during the summer high use season – May 15 to Sept 15; and 30 persons a day between Sept. 16 and May 14. The maximum daily load would be 192 persons per day, wilderness-wide.
- Setting limits on special groups
- Using a web-based reservation system.
- Limiting the size and number of campsites and remove those that exceed established thresholds.
- Removing beach art and structures
- Removing trash and abandoned property, including items washed up from the ocean
- Addressing human waste issues

Bob Schneider suggested the per-person allocation should be based on resource limitations, not the desire to manage for solitude.

Lynda Roush noted that a high volume of comments focused on visitors' desire for solitude, and concerns when campsites are too close together.

Gary also highlighted proposed actions to protect natural qualities, including fire management and suppression techniques, dealing with invasive plants, managing livestock grazing, rights of way, inholdings, cultural values, scientific values, unique and supplemental values.

Ryan said the plan was the best wilderness management plan he has ever read and commended the staff for excellent work. Bob Schneider agreed and said managing the resource is the primary concern.

Interpretive Education

Arcata Fire Management Officer Tim Jones and Interpretive Specialist Rachel Sowards Thompson led the group in an exercise about fire management to illustrate one method of interpretive education. RAC members were assigned roles and then worked with BLM staff to discuss strategies and tactics for managing a simulated wildfire.

The following member comments focused on the field managers' reports:

Redding

Bob Warren noted that the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association is developing a new trails brochure for the Redding area, featuring the trails on BLM public lands. He said the new trails are best used in spring and fall when hotel occupancy could use a boost.

Arcata

Shirley suggested that the narrative in the field manager's report on the archaeological work should describe the tribal consultation that was completed.

Ukiah

Bob Schneider reported that Tuleyome won a \$1.4 million grant for cleanup work near the BLM Oat Hill Extension Mine cleanup.

Closing Business

The RAC agreed with Nancy's suggestion for a combined meeting with the Northeast California RAC. Time will be set aside for a combined meeting, individual meetings and a field trip. The Redding Field Office will host.

Bob Schneider suggested there would be good opportunities to explore statewide priorities and how each RACs dovetail with those.

Meeting date: Wednesday-Friday, Feb. 8-10. Details and location information will be developed and shared.

Suggested Northwest RAC topics: Walker Ridge Status, briefing on northwest Forest Plan, discussion about BLM priorities for the upcoming year, fees and BLM policies toward them, invasive species, overview of BLM wilderness in northwest and how they are managed. Biomass benefits to the land and markets for products, special recreation use permits regulations, processes, and impact on private sector.

One suggested tour would be of biomass projects, before and after completion.

The meeting was adjourned.