

**Bureau of Land Management**  
Northwest California Resource Advisory Council  
Field Tour and Meeting  
July 15-16, 2010, Redding, California

**Summary Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, July 15**

Council members toured the Hatchet Ridge wind energy project west of the community of Burney. The project is under construction and expected to be operational by October. Members were interested in the project because they are considering providing input to the BLM Ukiah Field Office as it considers a proposal for a wind energy project at Walker Ridge.

**Friday, July 16**

The meeting was held in the conference center at the Oxford Suites in Redding.

**Attendance**

Category One: Bob Warren, Stan Leach. Absent: Stan Leach. Two vacancies.

Category Two: Michael Kelly, Ryan Henson, Diane Beck, Rondal Snodgrass.

Category Three: Shirley Laos, Julie Rogers, Tony Shaw. Absent: Kendall Smith, Tony Shaw.

*There is no majority present in category one, and therefore, no quorum.*

Staff: Northern California District Manager Nancy Haug, Arcata Field Manager Lynda Roush, Redding Field Manager Steve Anderson, Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns, Northern California District PAO Jeff Fontana, Central California District PAO David Christy, Washington Office analyst Laquita Whitener.

Guests: Tehama County CAO Bill Goodwin, Dennis Poshein, Jenny Seely, Jim Cooksley, Peter Eaton of AltaWind.

**Opening Business**

Bill Goodwin complimented Steve Anderson and Kelley Williams for their work with Tehama County on management issues in the Sacramento River Bend. He expressed support for the Sacramento River NCA legislation being promoted by Sen. Barbara Boxer. The county board of supervisors has voted 3-2 in support of the proposed legislation. He said there is a discussion involving Shasta and Tehama counties on a proposed trail system that would connect the Bend Area with Shasta County.

**Approvals**

The agenda was approved as mailed with the addition of an Arcata Field Office item regarding dunes management. The minutes from the March meeting were approved as mailed.

## State and District reports

Nancy Haug presented the state office update on behalf of Acting State Director Jim Abbott:

### National/State Issues:

- **New Leadership** – We're well into this Administration and all our key positions in Washington are now filled. Until a new State Director is chosen, Jim Abbott will serve as Acting State Director.
- **2010 Budget** – We're more than halfway through Fiscal Year 2010 and of course already thinking about 2011. The President's budget is out and looks good for BLM. President Obama has proposed \$1.1 billion for BLM in FY 2011, an \$8 million increase over last year. It's possible that we won't have an approved budget and we'll be under a "Continuing Resolution" for the rest of this year.
- **Legislation** – We are now in last few months of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. As for pending legislation, we have about half a dozen proposals – including two in Northern California, Stornetta on the Coast and Chappie-Shasta near Redding.
- **State Priorities:** Our statewide priorities are in tune with the National priorities: 1) renewable energy, 2) the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 3) Youth initiatives; and 3) the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Landscape Conservation System.
- **Renewables:** Statewide, we have more than 150 solar and wind applications covering more than a million acres, most of that in the Desert. Here in NorCal, we have about 20 applications for wind projects, 15 in the wind testing stages and 5 in the development stages. The public will be involved at every step.
- **ARRA or the Recovery Act or Stimulus** –BLM-California received \$40 million to fund 115 projects on public lands in California. Most contracts have been let at this point, all with the goal of creating or augmenting jobs by putting boots on the ground. These investments will restore landscapes and habitat, spur renewable energy development remediate abandoned mine lands; and build roads, bridges and trails.
- **The National Landscape Conservation System** is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2010. Here in the Northeast, you have a number of Wilderness Study Areas in the System. Statewide, California has more units within the System than any other State.
- **Youth in the Great Outdoors** – Secretary Salazar is very committed to connecting our young people with the outdoors. This includes not only environmental education, but hiring youth to work on public lands and with Interior offices and personnel. His new "Youth in the Great Outdoors" unveiled recently sets goals for this effort.

There was a discussion about cumulative impacts of alternative energy developments and BLM's ability to analyze these impacts in advance of project proposals. Ryan noted that it is important to consider clustering developments.

District Office:

- The District is losing field managers in Cedarville and Susanville. The search is on for replacements.
- Wild horse issues, grazing permit renewals are taking time on the northeast side.
- Nancy confirmed that the RAC will continue to advise the Ukiah Field Office despite Ukiah's organizational alignment in the Central California District.

### **Wild Horse and Burro Strategy**

Bob Warren noted that his lack of experience on the issue renders his opinion nearly valueless. He said BLM should seek advice from people who are most knowledgeable.

Steve Anderson and Lynda Roush suggested that the RAC approach the questions about ways to improve the wild horse and burro program in a broad way, avoiding comments on specific areas where they have no detailed knowledge.

While there was no quorum, the RAC members present agreed:

- Sustainable herds: The members present agreed with the concept of managing for sustainable herds. The RAC supports the need to gather excess animals in the most humane and efficient ways possible.
- There should be wide application of fertility control to reduce the number of animals that must be removed from the range.
- The RAC supports the BLM's efforts to increase the adoption rate.
- Broadly, the RAC members present support the BLM's exploration of the methods described in the draft goals, objectives and management actions document
- The BLM long term priority should using the bulk of wild horse and burro funding should be used for on the ground management, and should not detract from other programs.

Julie Rogers supported the BLM's direction to improve transparency. She was concerned that the proposal adds more to BLM's responsibilities. The RAC members present agreed that the funds spent for holding horses off the range must be decreased.

The following letter was sent to the state director:

*Dear Mr. Abbott:*

*At its meeting on July 16, 2010, the Northwest California Resource Advisory Council discussed the BLM's proposal for a new direction for the Wild Horse and Burro Program. While this RAC has had limited involvement with the program, we recognize its importance in BLM's multiple use mission and thought it important that we provide the BLM with some comments.*

*We did not have a quorum present at our meeting, and cannot provide a formal recommendation. The following comments, however, reflect the consensus of the 10 members present at the meeting:*

- *The members present agreed with the concept of managing for sustainable herds. The RAC supports the need to gather excess animals in the most humane and efficient ways possible.*
- *The RAC supports wide application of fertility control to reduce the number of animals that must be removed from the range.*
- *The RAC supports the BLM's efforts to increase the adoption rate.*
- *Broadly, the RAC supports the BLM's exploration of the methods described in the draft goals, objectives and management actions document.*
- *The BLM's long term priority should be using the bulk of wild horse and burro funding for on the range management, not for long term holding.*

*We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Wild Horse and Burro Program, and hope that the BLM is successful in finding a sustainable path for the program.*

## **Walker Ridge Wind Energy**

Rich Burns led the discussion on the status of a wind energy development proposed by AltaWind for Walker Ridge between Lake and Colusa counties. He explained that half of the wind energy projects for the ridge are in Lake and half in Colusa County. It also splits congressional districts: District One (Mike Thompson) in Lake and District Two (Wally Herger) on the Colusa side. He said there are communication and outreach challenges because of the two-county split.

The field office is working on the environmental review process. A tour of the proposed project site was held June 8.

There was discussion about the response from initial discussions with interest groups. Peter Eaton of AltaWind said the environmental organization Tuleyome has already indicated opposition. The Sierra Club has remained neutral. The counties see jobs benefits from the proposals.

The BLM has developed a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental document and developed a communication plan. There will public scoping meetings in Clear Lake and Williams. Dates have not been determined.

The scoping process will start for the EIS when the Notice of Intent is published in the Federal Register. A publication date has not been determined. The environmental analysis will be a joint NEPA/CEQA document with BLM as the lead agency. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will be a cooperating agency.

The proposal by AltaWind is for a 60 to 70 megawatt wind farm (25-29 towers on the ridgeline). The company has filed a plan of development with the Ukiah Field Office. The company now has a right of way to explore wind energy potential on about 8,000 acres on the ridge.

A primary concern is that Walker Ridge Road will have to be widened to 40 feet to allow space for towers to be brought in.

Rich said there will be two years of botanical studies on the ridge and detailed information presented on the specific turbine locations. There will be a total of three years of botanical inventory work done in the planning phase of the project. There are also concerns with wildlife impacts, including raptors. There will be a two year eagle monitoring study in a two-mile radius of the project, expanding to a 10 mile radius later. There will be studies and tribal consultation on the potential impacts to cultural resources.

Ryan questioned how a draft EIS can be completed without complete botanical surveys.

Bob Warren suggested that the RAC consider a recommendation supporting alternative energy development as a way for the nation to produce its own energy.

Shirley suggested that all meeting handouts include source and contact information.

Nancy suggested that detailed discussions about the project are premature because the environmental process has not been started.

Rondal requested that BLM find ways to move alternative energy permitting onto a faster pace. It is important for the nation to reduce dependence on petroleum products.

Ryan said the top issues of concern on Walker Ridge are the botanical resources and the potential for new roads in this roadless area. He said the Baldy Mountain area, the highest point on the ridge, is the most important to him. Ryan said his concerns can be accommodated with a wind project, but he wants all issues fully examined. He said the California Wilderness Coalition is most concerned with the west side of the ridge and said wind turbines should not be built there. He suggested that the council tour the site.

The RAC wants to switch the next meeting to Ukiah to allow for a tour of Walker Ridge.

### **Salmon Recovery**

Rondal asked for information from each field office on projects underway to conserve salmon populations. He is concerned and has been heavily involved in conservation efforts in the Mattole watershed. He shared information about the importance of salmon in natural systems and in the cultural and historic values of the California north coast. There is great concern that the species could be lost. He said the impacts of climate change have “come home to roost” and are impacting salmon habitat.

He said the species is in crisis in the Mattole watershed and noted that the river is pivotal for the California coho habitat. The history of heavy logging is catching up with the watershed and continues to have negative impacts.

He summarized the work undertaken by the Mattole Restoration Council and the benefits for the species. In the Mattole it appears that climate change is resulting in longer dry seasons and lower stream flows.

Rondal noted that all three salmon species, coho, Chinook and steelhead are listed. He suggested that the RAC could assist the BLM with setting fisheries priorities in their project work. He added that renewable energy projects can have a positive effect on climate change and therefore benefit the salmon species.

Lynda Roush presented a summary of field office projects (handout) and stressed that the BLM is a major player in the Mattole Watershed.

Francis Berg, Gary Diordoni and Bill Kuntz were on hand for a presentation on Redding Field Office work.

Gary noted that the field office manages anadromous streams supporting salmon and steelhead, both listed and non listed. There is also a sturgeon run on the Sacramento River. Fishery restoration is a key part of the Redding RMP. He said the species have benefitted from Redding's land tenure adjustments that have consolidated large blocks of public land. Gary summarized work on the Shasta and Scott rivers, Trinity River, Sacramento River, Clear Creek, Butte Creek and Battle Creek. Projects use ARRA funding and appropriated funds. They include work in stream channels and projects such as trail paving that reduce sediment flow into streams.

Rich included information in his field office report on the office's efforts to conserve salmonid habitat. It highlighted projects at Montgomery Woods, the Garcia River, Hathaway Creek and the Russian River.

RAC next steps:

RAC members agreed to discuss the issue again at the next meeting.

New item: Julie Rogers presented information on the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council and expressed her appreciation for BLM funding.

### **Field Managers Reports**

Lynda Roush, Steve Anderson and Rich Burns presented written reports on work ongoing in their field offices. Copies are attached to the official minutes of this meeting.

### **Eureka Dunes**

Lynda Roush reported the Arcata Field Office will be seeking California Coastal Commission approval to continue the current management practices on the Eureka Riding Area. She asked for RAC endorsement of the current management. The members present agreed to indicate their support in the following letter:

*Dear Commissioners:*

*At its meeting on July 16, 2010, the Bureau of Land Management's Northwest California Resource Advisory Council agreed to endorse the BLM Arcata Field Office's request to the commission to reauthorize use of off-highway vehicles at the Eureka Dunes Riding Area. We advised the BLM that seeking reauthorization is appropriate, given the good track record of agency management at the site.*

*As advisors to the BLM and representing a broad base of public land interests, members of the Council are satisfied that the BLM's management actions including protective signs and fences, natural resource monitoring, restoration projects to restore native plants and partnerships involving volunteers and organizations, are succeeding in protecting the dunes while providing important public recreation opportunities.*

*Since OHV use was first authorized by the commission in 1998 there have been very few adverse incidents involving recreation use conflicts or resource damage attributed to OHV use. Riders are keenly aware that the Eureka Dunes are one of the last areas of the coastline open to OHV use. They want to protect their riding privilege, and abide by the rules and regulations in place. They cooperate with the BLM and partners to keep out of town riders informed of open and closed areas.*

*Thank you for consideration of our advice to the BLM.*

Ryan noted that one cannot exaggerate the benefit to the local community the work being doing by the Redding field office on recreational trails.. There are 25 trailheads close to his door thanks to BLM, and the work goes mostly unrecognized. Steve credited Bill Kuntz for his work in getting funding for projects. It has led to cash contributions from foundations including Redding and McConnell.

### **Member Roundtable**

Julie Rogers: The RAC should send a thank you letter to the Hatchet Ridge project manager.

Stan Leach: Members are welcome to visit his forest restoration project at Whiskeytown.

Shirley Laos: The Trinidad Rancheria has been active in the California Coastal Monument Trinidad Gateway Committee. Additionally, the Rancheria is protesting the Marine Life Protection Act designation.

Bob Warren: The RAC should discuss strategy for managing the Sacramento River National Recreation Area if it is passed into law.

## **Next Meeting**

The Ukiah Field Office will host the next meeting Thursday and Friday, Nov. 4 and 5, with a field trip on the first day to Walker Ridge.

Agenda items: Walker Ridge wind energy proposal, logging practices on public lands, image and identity, BLM mapping and integration with Google Earth, King Range Wilderness Management Plan, fisheries, wild horse and burro program.

*Summary minutes compiled by  
Jeff Fontana, public affairs officer, Northern California District*