



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Uncompahgre Field Office  
2465 S. Townsend Avenue  
Montrose, CO 81401

## RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL SUBGROUP MEETING #2

Friday, June 25, 2010 (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

**Meeting Location:**  
**Holiday Inn Express**  
**1391 South Townsend Avenue, Montrose, CO**

### Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Angie Adams (EMPSi), Shelby Bear, Robbie Baird-LeValley, Bill Day, Richard Durnan, William Ela, Bruce Krickbaum (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Peter Mueller, Amy Sharp (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Barb Sharrow (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Steven Weist, Kate Wynant (EMPSi)

**Handouts:** Agenda, Resource List, Highlights of the Resource Management Planning Process to Date, Summary of Public Comments by Resource Planning Issue Category (excerpt from internal Draft Scoping Report section 3.3), Alternatives Development PowerPoint slides, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Existing and Proposed ACECs Considered, Figures (Existing and Proposed ACECs, Potential ACECs), RMP Planning Area Fact Sheet 4.3 (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern), Wilderness Characteristics PowerPoint slides, and RMP Planning Area Fact Sheet 4.1 (Wilderness and WSAs)

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#### 1. Welcome (Barb Sharrow and Angie Adams)

- This week internally we worked on the no-action alternative from the old Resource Management Plans (RMPs); making sure Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data matches up; etc. so that moving forward with alternatives development we make sure that the baseline is accurate. We have not started developing any alternatives yet.
- Next time we'll bring back snippets from the alternatives development workshops that occur the same week as the meetings. Next time we'll also bring themes and goals from the alternatives for you to see.
- Handout: Resource List. It has all of the resources that this field office will cover in the RMP.

#### 2. Introductions (All present)

#### 3. Ground Rules (Angie Adams)

- Are there any ground rules this group would like to set? One is that the public has a chance to speak at 11:00am but they can't participate in discussion.
- *Question:* What type of rules did you come up with for the Cooperating Agencies? *Answer:* Only representatives can be at the table speaking for the agency. Other things such as no one's idea are bad ideas, all ideas are documented in notes and all have the opportunity to review meeting notes before we finalize them for the web, didn't need to raise hands to speak. We don't necessarily need to write these things down.

- Group agrees that formal ground rules are not necessary.

#### 4. RAC Subgroup Functions, Charter, and Role (Angie Adams)

- The group wanted to table this until this meeting. Are there any thoughts?
- *Question:* What are the types of decisions we'll be making? *Answer:* You'll [RAC Subgroup] be looking at what we've [BLM] been doing to make sure we're on the right track. At some point we'll show you all of the alternatives and we'll be looking for approval that the BLM has covered a range of alternatives and that everyone's interest is captured somewhere in the range. Perhaps small decisions that would lead to that such as are you happy with the themes? Are the goals good to lead to a range of alternatives?
- *Question:* Can you define a quorum? Where do people get in trouble? *Answer:* You get in trouble when people don't come to meetings because a certain number of people have to attend meetings where we are voting on things. We would probably elect one of the non-RAC members to be a representative to run those votes.
  - *Comment:* My feeling is that we can be informal as long as the RAC members are able to get the full idea of what we are thinking and get a consensus from the group to take back to the RAC.
  - *Comment:* That makes sense. Are parties that are not here today people that are likely to show up? Were they here last time? *Answer:* Yes, they were here last time. So it seems like we have a good RAC Subgroup. It's important that if people are not going to attend that they let Bruce know so that if only a couple people are going to show up we can make other arrangements.
- *Question (Bruce K.):* In e-mails I send before the meeting, should I ask people to RSVP only if they cannot make it? *Answer:* Yes, if there is no reply then we assume that you are going to make it.
- The informal group process makes sense to me as long as we can get a consensus from the group and take things back to the RAC. We can still put things to vote, we just don't need to have a quorum.
  - *Comment:* I think Bill and Peter should call for a vote if you are not sure what the consensus of the group is so that you can be sure you understand where the group is leaning.
- There are actually three categories of the RAC and the RAC wanted to make sure that there was a liaison for each of those categories represented.

#### 5. Planning Process to Date (Angie Adams)

- Handout: Planning Process to Date.
- *Action:* When the BLM posts documents to the Web site, Bruce will send an e-mail to the group notifying them of its availability.
- Changes from last time:
  - Wild and Scenic River (WSR) Final Eligibility report is complete and will be on the web in the next couple weeks.
  - Recreation Focus Groups were held in February and March; the report will be on the web in the next week or two.
  - Draft ACEC Evaluation Report will be on web in next week or two. This is draft; we welcome your feedback and the feedback from those citizens and groups that made recommendations for ACEC. We want to make sure that we got the boundaries and values right and the area represents what they were intending.
  - Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS): This will also be on the web in next week or two.
- *Question:* Last time you mentioned coal report going on the Web site but I have not seen it yet. Is it on there? *Answer:* The coal report is not on there yet and won't be available until the draft RMP comes out. The reports that the public has been involved with via public meetings or

another way such as scoping will be posted. The reports that are internal for information purposes won't be posted.

- A reminder that none of the studies make any decisions but rather gather information in one place and document the baseline condition.

## 6. Summary of Comments from Draft Scoping Report

- Handout: Summary of Public Comments by Resource Planning Issue Category (excerpt from internal Draft Scoping Report section 3.3). The summary from the internal draft scoping report is a snippet from the internal draft which has just been reviewed by BLM. We [EMPSi] are now going to finalize it and then it will be available on the web. This shows you where the most comments were received and what people had to say. For example, we didn't hear much on livestock grazing and people are generally ok with it.
- On page 3-5 at the top it talks about special management areas. About 30 percent of comments we received were on this topic and we know this is a big deal. This gives you an idea of what those comments had to say.
- There's probably not much in here that you didn't expect as you know what the public has to say on certain issues.
- When the final scoping report comes out, it'll have every unique comment that was received. Over half the report is the comments.
- We got five times more comments than any other field office in the state which is great but it also means that there is lots of discussion out there.

## 7. Summary of the Analysis of the Management Situation (Bruce Krickbaum)

- Bruce passed around AMS, to be posted on web soon.
- Chapter 2 characterizes planning area; discusses what's out there now, what resources look like, what are trends and forecasts for resources and resource uses. This information feeds into chapter 3 of the RMP.
- Chapter 3 describes current management which describes how we're managing lands now and reflects the old RMPS and their amendments as well as other policy that might have replaced our decisions in the RMPs. This forms the basis of the Current Management alternative.
- Chapter 4 takes those decisions from Chapter 3 and asks the question does it work or doesn't it work? Are they still valid or do they need to change? Those that need to change we describe some opportunities for change and document why it doesn't work. Those opportunities for change fold into the alternatives and provide us ideas for some of the alternatives for changing current management.
- The AMS will be on the web site soon.
- All of the pieces get rolled into the RMP/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It's all useful and is a good exercise to put all of the current management in one place to get a picture of what that looks like. This is what we've been doing this week with the team to make sure what we have down is correct and is an accurate baseline.

## 8. Alternatives Development (Angie Adams)

- PowerPoint presentation on alternatives (refer to handout).
- The RMP planning area is the field office minus the Gunnison Gorge and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Areas. Plans for those are separate. Decision area is all BLM lands and Federal mineral estate in the planning area. BLM has to make decisions on the federal mineral estate.
- Land use level planning is broad scale. Specific details are project level planning which tier to this plan. Project level plans include things like open/closed to mineral development. Think polygons on the landscape.

- There will be three major publications during: 1) Draft RMP/Draft EIS (large document); 2) Proposed RMP/Final EIS (smaller document); 3) Approved RMP/Record of Decision (smallest document).
- *Question:* When you get it down to the Proposed RMP, is the RAC Subgroup through? *Answer:* That's for this group to decide. The first mission is to decide whether or not the BLM has covered an adequate range of alternatives. If this group decides you want to continue and help with comment review and response and help BLM select a preferred alternative, then that is an option that this group can think about.
- Planning criteria are sideboards. They help define the decision space for the BLM and what they can and cannot do.
- Planning issues help focus the alternatives. These come from scoping, including internal (BLM) and external (public). The issues cover most everything that the BLM does. The alternatives have to respond to those issues. They help keep the alternatives focused.
- Management units: we talked about the possibility last meeting with this group. This week with the BLM Interdisciplinary Team we got feedback on the usefulness of these units. The group, having worked with two RMPs that have emphasis areas, decided that they didn't think they needed units. The reason is because of GIS which can readily show the areas where we are going to do something or not do something. We can say "open xx acres for oil and gas leasing" and then show those areas on a map instead of having to talk about it in terms of management units. We can still do units if BLM, Cooperating Agencies, or RAC Subgroup thinks we should. It doesn't mean there are not going to be geographical differences, we just don't need to have the extra management unit layer. We might still use them for certain resources. Any feedback?
  - I think just using GIS is a good idea and not adding that extra layer.
  - The old system seems a bit antiquated (no GIS), so I'm all for simplifying.
  - *Angie:* It adds a lot of repetition. The blue blob on the map is going to be the same whether or not you add the units. This does not take away the understanding and importance of the social, economic, etc. of the differences of the communities in this field office. This doesn't minimize those differences.
    - *Comment:* No, it seems like it actually emphasizes them because you don't have to make one size fit all for a certain planning unit. You can see the differences graphically in the different areas.
    - *Comment:* Sounds like we can be more effective that way. *Angie:* At least as effective without another layer of confusion.
- Goals are the same for all alternatives. There are goals for a resource and that is the final outcome that the BLM wants to get to. Each resource section has its own goal.
- Objectives are different ways to reach the goal. They may or may not be different between alternative.
  - *Question:* Has there been some internal guidance? It seems like in some litigation the BLM has gotten in trouble? Is there guidance to make these more bullet-proof? *Answer:* Court cases are increasingly defining what we can do. Methane capture is one thing that is a big issue right now. There is no specific guidance right now, but I hope that soon we are going to get more specific guidance. Air quality is another example. Each plan is different because there is new guidance coming down. We'll take the latest guidance in this plan and go with it. I think where plans really get in trouble is when they disregard guidance from Washington.
- *Question:* My guiding light is sustainability. If you come up with so many animal units per acre, I'd like to see somewhere in this sustainable. It's hard to achieve because population grows, but it's the only way to make sure the land is used properly for the future. Have I missed sustainability anywhere here? *Answer:* It's in BLM's mission (multiple use and sustained yield). Animal Unit Months change over the years and there is space in this plan for change due to adaptive management.

- *Comment:* If the mission changes, I think that's when people get in trouble with law suits. It comes back to sustainability. *Answer:* Sustainability comes up in alternatives often because I think the BLM team realizes the importance of sustainability. This is the sort of feedback that we need when you are reviewing the materials coming up. If that needs to be more of an emphasis, let us know.
- *Comment:* When you narrow the box because of stipulations, it doesn't allow room for new information. I'm thinking specifically on the Gunnison River. We'd like to implement a research project but we can't because under the RMP it would require an additional amount of NEPA work. We were trying to set up a grazing research project for Gunnison sage-grouse. Could we graze prior to mid-May in the project area for a shorter period of time and move off to see what that would do to forbs development. The RMP said that there could be no grazing before mid-May. *Answer:* That's where we need your help to think through some of these scenarios to see if it's going to restrict some of these things down the road. We know that climate change is happening and plants are moving up higher.
  - *Question:* Have you gotten internal guidance on that? *Answer:* No, but we have flexibility to look at some of those things. We've had examples in the UFO where we had to say no because the RMP didn't allow it. Sometimes it's good, but we also want the flexibility to adapt and change.
- *Question:* Can you talk about the issue statements? *Answer:* There is a handout from last meeting that details the issue statements. The issue statements themselves are the boldface, and there are details below about what the issues entail. You should become familiar with these as we'll be referring to them a lot.
  - *Question:* Are these a compilation of the BLM and public? *Answer:* Yes. Originally they were authored by the BLM through internal scoping. Then they were refined and added to through public scoping. Most of the things the BLM had already come up with which means the staff are in touch with what is not working out there.
- Current management is the baseline; here's what's happening now and here's how we could change it or not change it. Big question is does current management need to change? Is it broken? This is where the BLM is now, getting current management in top shape and then asking whether or not it needs fixing.
- The range of alternatives can play out in the stipulations. In an example of threatened and endangered species, one alternative could protect the species with No Surface Occupancy, one alternative could protect the species with Controlled Surface Use, and one alternative could protect by doing something else. An alternative that says do whatever you want is not a reasonable alternative because it doesn't meet the goal of protecting the species, nor does it meet the law (Endangered Species Act), which is one of the planning criteria.
- The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1) Appendix C; tells the BLM what decisions the BLM has to make for each resource.
  - *Action:* We will provide it as a handout next time and a link to the electronic version for your review prior to the next meeting.
- *Question:* Categorical Exclusions were not considered in the 1985 or 1989 plans, correct? *Answer:* Categorical Exclusions are a type of NEPA document, so they were in existence.
  - *Comment:* I thought that some plans in the old RMPs were changed by Categorical Exclusions. *Answer:* No. At this level, RMP decisions are only changed by RMP amendments, which is a public process. Only an Environmental Assessment or EIS can amend a plan. A Categorical Exclusion is only used for projects that we've already determined to comply with our plan or is on our list of Categorical Exclusions. If it's not on the list, we have to do an Environmental Assessment or EIS. Every federal agency has a Categorical Exclusion list and the projects on the list have been documented that they would not cause significant environmental effects. They still have to go through a checklist to make sure that the project would not have impacts.

- An example is that they do a Categorical Exclusion to increase the flow on the Dolores to protect species.
- Another is putting in a cattle guard. We still check to make sure there are no threatened or endangered species or cultural sites, for example.
- *Question:* Do I understand that if there's a need to change current management, do you need to come up with three alternatives? *Answer:* No. Sometimes an action is the same for two or more action alternatives if the actions would meet the objective under each alternative.

## 9. Resource/Resource Use Discussions

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) (Bruce Krickbaum)
  - PowerPoint presentation on ACECs. Refer to handouts: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), Existing and Proposed ACECs Considered, Figures (Existing and Proposed ACECs, Potential ACECs), and RMP Planning Area Fact Sheet 4.3 (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern).
  - Proposed ACECs must meet at least one relevance criterion and at least one importance criterion.
    - *Question:* Does sensitive mean on the state sensitive list? *Answer:* Yes, it could be threatened or endangered or a BLM sensitive species.
  - The alternatives can have different sizes of ACECs.
  - *Question:* Where is Slick Rock Canyon on the Dolores? I thought that was outside of the UFO. *Answer:* No, it's upstream of Bedrock.
  - The document is going out as a draft to make sure that we captured all of the comments accurately. We are not accepting new ACEC nominations.
    - *Question:* How are you going to distribute? Will it just be on the website? *Answer:* Yes, we're going to post it on the web site and send an e-mail to everyone on the mailing list for whom we have an e-mail address.
    - *Question:* Are there protections that are afforded to these areas? *Answer:* Yes, each area will have specific management prescriptions for the area. The management actions could change across alternatives. There is not a specific set of management actions, they are tailored to each area.
    - For example, Needle Rock (80 acres) is withdrawn from mineral entry and a suite of other actions. Fairview North in the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area we had to fence the area to protect the values.
- Lands with Wilderness Characteristics outside Wilderness Study Areas (Amy Sharp)
  - PowerPoint presentation on Lands with Wilderness Characteristics outside Wilderness Study Areas. Refer to handouts: Wilderness Characteristics PowerPoint slides and RMP Planning Area Fact Sheet 4.1 (Wilderness and WSAs).
  - *Question:* How many areas were nominated by the public? *Answer:* I don't think we got any that discussed specific areas but rather that we do this project. There were some comments that told us to look at Diana DeGette's bill [HR 4289, Colorado Wilderness Act of 2009] and the Citizens' Wilderness Proposals were the same as those in DeGette's bill. We just got the guidance from Washington so this process is just starting, unlike the ACEC process.
  - *Question:* When you analyze GIS and aerial photography will you be using current aerial photography? *Answer:* Yes, and our aerial photography is from 2009, pretty current. If it looks like an area meets all of the criteria, we will be ground-truthing. As Amy said, the definition of a road in this instance is different than travel management. It has to be mechanically maintained. Mechanically made does not necessarily mean mechanically maintained.
  - Actions for other resources might inadvertently protect a single wilderness characteristic. For example, an ACEC might overlap and provide inadvertent protection for a wilderness characteristic.

- *Question:* Is the recreational equivalent to this and ACECs a special recreation management area (SRMA)? *Answer:* An SRMA would be an area that we would intensively manage for recreation. It has its own set of management prescriptions and desired outcomes. The recreation focus group meetings resulted in several SRMA proposals and we will be writing an SRMA report, similar to the ACEC report and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics report. We're finding that most of the SRMAs are located near communities.
- *Question:* By "if lands with wilderness characteristics are present in the planning area, they will be addressed in the RMP" how will they be addressed? *Answer:* We'll call it out in the RMP as an area that met the characteristics and we'll describe the management prescriptions for that area under one or more alternatives.
- *Comment:* I can't imagine that you'll find any areas that you didn't find already. *Response:* Probably not but it's something that we're required to look at in the RMP process. Someone might have also discounted something in the old surveys for whatever reason.

## 10. Public Comments/Questions

- No public present.

## 11. Other Items Not on the Agenda

- Wild and Scenic Rivers (Barb Sharrow)
  - WSR is going to be something big that we have to address in the RMP. Because of all of the RMPs in the state that have gone through the process, there seems to be some confusion and misinformation about what the WSR process entails. I think that it merits extra meetings as water in the West is a big issue. BLM could use your help in conducting these meetings.
  - In 1930s the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) was formed by state legislation and is split up into different districts in the state. The Gunnison River Basin is managed by CWCB in Glenwood Springs. The San Miguel River Basin is managed by the CWCB out of Cortez. Stakeholders for each basin don't necessarily care about issues going on for the other basin so I've determined that we need a group for each basin.
  - The CWCB is willing to lead a group for the Gunnison, including the Uncompahgre Field Office and the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area.
  - I would like to ask if you'd be willing to sponsor the meetings for the San Miguel. We have a lot of groups that are interested but we need a neutral group. The CWCB out of Cortez is wrapped up with the Dolores as the San Juan RMP found most of the Dolores River suitable so there is a large group of stakeholders for that. Is this something that you'd be willing to take on? I'm thinking there would be three meetings in the area. This would be mostly an educational effort as there seems to be a lot of misinformation. The Upper San Miguel has recreation and Lower San Miguel has mining issues. The BLM would pay for the meetings and a professional facilitator. We'd like a certain number of people in the RAC Subgroup to attend to report back to the group here. Not everyone would have to go.
  - *Question:* If we didn't do it what would happen? *Answer:* We'd have to find another group.
  - *Question:* Is there a reason you asked this group and not the public lands partnership? *Answer:* Yes, because I think you can do it and because it's part of your role for this plan to help us come up with alternatives.
  - *Question:* So the perception wouldn't be that this group is promoting one range over another range? *Answer:* No, it would be to try and educate and try to get the best information from the folks that participate at those meetings.
  - *Question:* With there being such a wide range of interpretation between the conservancy districts and others, there seems to be a wide range of interpretation let alone misinformation. *Answer:* Right. That's why we need some education. A lot of questions and issues that come up we'll have to document.

- *Question:* Chris Treese has interpreted information differently than some of the Federal agencies. How would that be presented? *Answer:* We have a lot of information available to us ([www.rivers.gov](http://www.rivers.gov)). if there are different interpretations that come up, we would use those resources to see how the law has been interpreted.
- *Question:* So you're looking for a diverse group to attend these meetings and hear with the locals are saying and distill the misinformation, thoughts, etc. and bring that back here? *Answer:* Yes. That sounds challenging. There is a lot of anxiety around the issue.
- *Question:* Can you give us an idea how much difference this can make? I'm ok with spending time on something if it'll make a difference, but if the management will be the same I might not be interested in participating. *Answer:* The Glenwood Springs and Kremmling Field Offices stakeholder group has come up with an alternative for the RMP that is an alternative to WSR suitability. They have an actual plan for managing the river to protect the values. The purpose of the act was to prevent damming of the river. The biggest fear is that people won't be able to keep their water rights. People are thinking they might want to sell their right and turn the right into municipal water rights. At that point their water rights would be junior. On the other side there are people who want to protect the river for fish, boating, riparian, etc.
- *Question:* Does it take an act of Congress to get that? *Answer:* Yes, it takes an act of Congress to designate a WSR. Whatever we find suitable, we have to manage to protect those values. It doesn't prevent a dam going up, but we have to do what is within our authority to protect the values.
- *Question:* Is this just the San Miguel? *Answer:* It also includes a portion of the Dolores and also the tributaries to it.
- *Question:* Does this look at the Dolores above the confluence with the San Miguel? *Answer:* Yes, those that are eligible.
- There will also be BLM staff that are subject matter experts so that you are not there to be in the hot seat.
- *Question:* Would this replace, similar to the Dolores where they've had monthly meetings, would this be those meetings? *Answer:* We're not as far along as they are, they're only looking at the Dolores within their field office. They've talked to Congressman Salazar and there might be legislation proposed. If there is legislation passed, that would be a done deal and off our plates. They also want to look at the Dolores to the confluence with the Colorado River in Utah. They are also proposing a National Conservation Area and Wilderness. The group isn't unanimous with their desire to look at the stretch all the way to the Colorado River, but it doesn't seem worthwhile to have legislation with just a small piece of the river. So while the legislation might look at the whole thing, the stakeholder group is trying to be more hands off with the lower Dolores and engage the Uncompahgre Field Office and stakeholders here.
- *Question:* Should we put it to a vote? Barb is trying to get help from a group that can filter the thoughts of folks in an area and I am in support of it.
  - I would also like to put in a plug for the importance of the two rivers to resources including wildlife. The issue is as important as anything in the UFO. Anything that affects those two rivers is important to the RMP.
  - I agree. You can see from the comments and ACECs that are proposed, a lot of those areas are along the San Miguel. My interests are recreational and I think it's important.
- It would probably be nights. The group is to be neutral, there to educate the public. You all represent a variety of interests. It's kind of like scoping for suitability. We have specific criteria that we want to get information on.
- Group agrees that they would participate.
- *Question:* Is there someone that can work with Bruce and Barb to get a facilitator and getting the stakeholder group together? Robbie LeValley and Richard Durnan are interested.

- *Question:* Is this something that Mesa State would facilitate? *Answer:* They are a possibility. I [BLM] want a professional facilitator.

## **12. Action Items/Next Meeting**

- Friday, July 23, 2010: WSR, Cultural Resource, Paleontological Resources, Special Status Species
- Friday, August 20, 2010: Recreation, Soils, Land Health Assessments
  - Shelby won't be at August meeting.
- Friday, October 1, 2010: Visual Resources, Lands and Realty, Minerals
- Action (Bruce K. and RAC Subgroup members): Bruce will send out meeting reminders prior to the next meeting. Members do not need to RSVP unless they will not be able to attend the meeting.
- Action (Bruce K.): When the BLM posts documents to the Web site, Bruce will send an e-mail to the group notifying them of its availability.
- Action (BLM): We will provide Appendix C of the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook as a handout next time and a link to the electronic version for your review prior to the next meeting.