



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 #6

Friday, January 28, 2011 (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

Meeting Location:

Holiday Inn Express (Jordan Room)
1391 South Townsend Avenue, Montrose, CO

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Angie Adams (EMPSi), Robbie Baird-LeValley, Shelby Bear, Walt Blackburn, Bill Day, Richard Durnan, William Ela, Barbara Hawke, Bruce Krickbaum (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Peter Mueller, John Reams, Barb Sharrow (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Steven Weist, Kate Wynant (EMPSi)

Handouts: Agenda; Highlights of the Resource Management Planning Process to Date; Comment Form for Internal Rough Draft Alternatives for Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review; Internal Rough Draft Alternatives for Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review; Maps for Internal Rough Draft Alternatives for Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review; Dolores-San Miguel River Basins Supplemental Comment Period

1. Welcome (Bruce Krickbaum)

2. Introductions (All present)

3. Planning Process to Date (Angie Adams)

- See handout: Highlights of the Resource Management Planning Process to Date.
- Gray highlighting indicate changes from last meeting.
- The Class I cultural resources overview has been completed. It's an inventory of cultural resources known on BLM land. It documents the sites and their quality. It's an inventory and will get rolled into the RMP in the alternatives.
- The wilderness characteristics inventory report is underway and a draft is expected in the spring. In the 1990s the BLM inventoried lands for wilderness characteristics and those lands became wilderness study areas. BLM's authority to do that ended around 1993. Since then, the BLM's authority to inventory and protect wilderness characteristics has changed over time and may continue to do so. Right now, the BLM inventories lands outside of wilderness study areas (WSAs) to see if they have wilderness characteristics. That is what the report is. The alternatives can look at different ways to manage those wilderness characteristics. There is no mandate for BLM to protect lands with wilderness characteristics, unlike WSAs that the BLM must protect until Congress acts on their recommendation. The alternatives will lay out different scenarios for protecting or not protecting the wilderness characteristics. Secretary [of the Interior] Salazar issued a Secretarial Order regarding Wild Lands. As an agency we do not

know what that means. It will take time to figure out how to implement Salazar's order. Direction is how we know it today but things may change.

- *Question:* Have you gotten any clarification if decision making comes down to the Field Office level? *Answer:* Yes, we would still make the decisions in the land use plan. We have always been required to inventory. Our office has done what we were supposed to do so I think we can react if things should change.
- *Question:* Do you have a sense of timing on when you'll get written instruction? *Answer:* Generally it takes at least six months for things to trickle down.
- *Question:* Is it in writing? *Answer:* The Secretarial Order is in writing but the interpretation will take some time. Our draft plan is not due to come out until fall of 2012 so we have time to react to whatever the policy will be. The inventory is the biggest piece of the puzzle and we are doing that. Now the question will be whether or not we have to make certain decisions in the plan that we have not yet included.
- *Question:* With the government having concerns over budget, how will that affect the BLM's ability to manage lands as a certain classification? *Answer:* The same as it always has. We didn't know what the budget would be like in the last 20 years and we can't predict the future.
 - *Question:* But what if you determine a stream segment is wild and you can't manage for that? *Answer:* Part of suitability does include manageability and cost, so that will be considered for wild and scenic river (WSR) determinations.

4. Internal Draft Alternatives (Angie Adams)

- See handouts: Comment Form for Internal Rough Draft Alternatives for Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review; Internal Rough Draft Alternatives for Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review; Maps for Internal Rough Draft Alternatives for Cooperating Agency and RAC Subgroup Review.
- Please note that these are ROUGH DRAFT alternatives. The BLM Interdisciplinary Team has not even seen these all put together. We know there are errors and inconsistencies and we will be working through those things. This is a content review and not an editorial review.
- What we are asking you to do is review these rough draft alternatives for two things. We'll take any feedback but focus on two things.
 - Ensure that we've captured a reasonable range of alternatives. It's not to identify what you like and what is the best decision. Right now we just want to make sure we have the correct range of alternatives. You should be thinking about whether or not what you want to see is somewhere in the range. If it's not, we need to know that.
 - If you think there are concepts or actions among alternatives that seem very similar, you can give us feedback on where alternatives can be combined. It might vary by row (action) or resource, not necessarily whole alternatives being combined.
- Layout:
 - The first page of the Alternatives handout states your mission.
 - Second page of the matrix is the Table of Contents and shows you what page all of the resources start on.
 - The top of each page shows the different alternatives the BLM is considering for resource management. In your notebook you should have a two-page handout that describes the alternatives and a few words. If you don't have that or can't find it, e-mail Kate to get a copy (kate.wynant@empci.com).
 - At the top of each resource section, it shows us the minimum decisions that should be made per the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1). The next line for every resource will have the goal for that resource. As we talked about previously, the goals are the same for all alternatives. Objectives and actions are ways to reach that goal.
 - The first map in the map packet shows land status (yellow=BLM; green=US Forest Service; purple=Park Service; white=private; blue=state). Note that the Gunnison Gorge and

- Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Areas are excluded from this plan. Every map is the same color scheme.
- Alternative A is current management and what is happening now. Remember that Alternative A is included in the range of alternatives. Sometimes Alternative A forms one of the “edges” of the range.
 - Alternative F is blank because that will be the Agency Preferred alternative which we have not gotten to. The Interdisciplinary Team has just thought of the four action alternative scenarios (Alternatives B, C, D, and E) without focusing on what they want to do (preferred alternative). We want to ensure that we have an adequate range of alternatives before moving to the preferred alternative. In March, the Interdisciplinary Team will get together to develop the preferred alternative.
 - *Question:* When we’re looking to see if there is an adequate range of alternatives, is there another set of sideboards like what the BLM can legally do? *Answer:* Yes. At one of the first meetings we discussed automatic sideboards or planning criteria. These include the BLM following the law. If it’s illegal, we can’t consider it so it shouldn’t be in the alternatives. Because cultural resources have such strict regulations, the decision space is not very large.
 - *Action:* EMPSi will send planning criteria to the group.
 - *Question:* For high-intensity management, can that include written rules, more fences, etc.? *Answer:* It could be more fences, it could be more rules, more police enforcement, more structure to competitive events. It doesn’t necessarily mean the BLM has to put more resources on the ground on an on-going basis. In one form or another it means more management inputs.
 - We are not near the preferred alternative. The BLM will meet in mid-March to talk about that. The RAC Subgroup and Cooperating Agencies will have an opportunity to review Chapter 2, including the preferred alternative, in May when the Field Office is reviewing Chapter 2. You’ll also see it when it goes for public review as the Draft RMP/Draft EIS.
 - Note that some sections have acreages and maps made and some sections do not. We know that without acres or maps it will be hard to tell us whether or not there is a good range or a bad range, but we did the best we could for today.
 - Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs): Just because a certain alternative does not list an ACEC for protection as an ACEC doesn’t mean that those values won’t be protected. It might be inadvertently protected by other actions in that Alternative. For example, ACEC overlapping lands managed to protect wilderness characteristics. Each of the alternatives has to agree with itself. They each need to be implementable as a stand-alone RMP. If you see any inconsistencies within an alternative, let us know. The management for ACECs is divided by each ACEC (there is a row for each ACEC). For some resources, there is a row that shows management common to all (for example, ACECs), and then gets more specific by area or species (in the case of wildlife).
 - *Question:* Is there any way to get a map that would have all the designations that exist or proposed? *Answer:* No, you wouldn’t be able to see everything. Perhaps in a future meeting we can do live GIS and we can add layers so you can see what overlaps are. As you go through the alternatives, keep a list of what you’d like to look at. Just be aware you might come across inconsistencies. We just want you to be aware that just because something isn’t an ACEC, for example, doesn’t mean the area isn’t receiving protection. A lot of that analysis will come out in the impacts analysis.
 - *Question:* What about clickable PDFs so we can look at all the layers? *Answer:* We can ask the GIS folks but they have a lot of work to do on the alternatives that is very much a priority.
 - *Question:* On the top of page 213, it says closed to fluid mineral leasing for the Adobes? *Answer:* That is an example where actions don’t all fit on one page for a topic, so that action belongs with Needle Rock ACEC on the previous page.

- There are certain ACECs where management does really vary by alternative. For example, the Fairview ACEC (page 216) not only do the management prescriptions change, but the size of the ACEC also changes.
 - *Question:* So Fairview is currently there and you can't get rid of it but you can expand it. *Answer:* Actually, under Alternative D, it goes away. The acreages change across the alternatives and we also consider not managing it as an ACEC. This range looks at everything from zero to 4,250 acres and everything in between.
- “No similar action” means zero or we're not doing anything similar in the other alternatives. Another example on page 48, line 135. Sometimes action alternatives say “no similar action” and it's addressed somewhere else. Perhaps areas are not directly called out but discussed more generally. Also line 137 on page 48, Alternatives C and D say “no similar action” which means we're not specifically managing for river otters under those alternatives.
- A row is a concept and the alternatives vary how to do that concept. A column is an alternative or an implementable RMP. If you're working within a column looking up and down, stay within that column.
- *Comment:* Talking about mixing and matching, it seems like if you look at a geographic area there might be a synergistic way to combine some alternatives. *Answer:* Yes, we'll talk about that in a moment.
- *Question:* Do you want one of our filters to be this is a potential place for litigation? You have it written down here but will you actually be able to do it, that opens you up for litigation. *Answer:* Everything in here needs to be implementable. There might be things that seem really difficult to implement but they are still within the realm of possibility.
- *Question:* Can you look at an option, say it takes too much money for BLM to implement, can you look at an option to work with an environmental group to meet that objective? *Answer:* Yes, most resources talk about coordination. So there will be a piece that talks about coordination and cooperation. You won't see that here, but in the full Chapter 2 you will.
- *Question:* Will any of the other agencies sign a Record of Decision? *Answer:* No, not for any of the decisions in this plan. The Field Office reviews and approves, the State Office reviews and approves, Washington Office reviews and approves, etc. We are not getting specific in this management plan as to who will implement what piece, that is implementation. The BLM can coordinate with other agencies and groups without an RMP decision. That is something else to keep in mind as you're reviewing this.
- When groups come in the door and what to do a project, the first thing we do is look at our land use plan to see what it says about that piece of land. There is usually always further NEPA analysis involved in every project besides what's in the RMP.
- *Question:* What about line 238 on page 87? How do you interpret no similar action? *Answer:* This is an example where probably the resource author didn't do a very good job of cross-referencing where concepts in Alternative A are covered in other actions or objectives in Alternatives B, C, D, and E. Also, this is specific to Emphasis Area D, which under Alternative A is a specific polygon on the map and we have not put that information on a map yet.
- *Question:* Is there anything else that we don't have while we're reviewing this? *Answer:* There is a lot. You'll see a lot of places that just have “xx acres” and no map. We know it'll be hard for you to provide feedback on those places but do the best you can. If you don't have enough information to give us feedback, then don't give us feedback. In the original plans from the 80s there were a lot of decisions made that we don't really need a decision to do those actions. So sometimes where it says no similar action it's because we don't need a decision to do the things from the old RMPs.
 - If you can't find something and you think it's important, comment on it and then it's incumbent on the Interdisciplinary Team to make sure it's there. If you have any questions, call us!

- *Comment:* I read the Secretary Salazar memo to mean that lands with wilderness characteristics would be managed as wilderness unless determined otherwise. *Response:* That's why I said the way we manage might be different than what we're proposing but I don't think it changes what we decide as far as areas to be managed. *Comment:* It sounds like all areas with characteristics have to be managed as wilderness. *Response:* Well we are in a position where we can react to how to implement the Salazar direction.
- Alternative A is the current RMPs as amendments.
- Special Recreation Management Areas. There has been new direction on how to address Special Recreation Management Areas so the "decisions to be made" section of the alternatives matrix has been updated to reflect that new direction.
- *Action:* EMPSi will e-mail group Alternative A OHV map from Chapter 3 maps.
- Off-highway Vehicles (OHVs). Under current management, there are two areas open to OHV use. Open means open to cross-country OHV use (for example, the Flat Tops and North Delta). Closed means closed to OHV use. The rest is limited to existing routes, except in Dry Creek, which is limited to designated routes. In Alternatives B through E, routes in the limited area will be limited to designated routes. All acres will fall into the open, limited, or closed category. After the Record of Decision for the RMP is signed, the BLM will go to the limited areas and do route designation. We will not do that in this plan. This plan just sets up the polygons for route designation.
- Remember that if you have any questions about a program and what's going on now, you can refer to Chapter 3 which gives some background information.
- Visual Resource Management (VRM): The classes don't prohibit development, they just set up requirements for protecting the scenic quality of the area. VRM Class I areas are the most restrictive and include wilderness. VRM Class IV is the least restrictive. In the action alternatives, you'll see purple strips (VRM Class IV), which are mostly designated utility corridors from the West-wide Energy Corridor PEIS.
 - *Action:* EMPSi will send FTP site with Chapter 3 and maps.
 - *Comment:* The colors are very close. Can these be changed? *Answer:* Yes.
- Oil and Gas Leasing. No leasing means no future leasing; it doesn't apply to current leases (valid existing rights). This rule also applies across resources throughout the RMP. Geothermal resources are also a fluid mineral and are treated the same as oil and gas, so the oil and gas map also includes geothermal resources. No surface occupancy (NSO) is a fluid mineral stipulation that says you can't occupy the surface of the land on that lease (or portion of lease). You can get to the resource (oil, gas, geothermal) but you have to get to it from outside of the NSO restriction, which means directional drilling. Controlled surface use is a softer version where you can occupy the surface but you might have to move your operation to avoid a sensitive area. Timing limitation is like an NSO but for a specific time of the year. For example a mating season for a bat.
- Rights-of-way (ROWs). This is part of the Lands and Realty program. The maps show avoidance and exclusion areas. ROWs are pipelines, powerlines, roads, etc. In an oil and gas operation, the lease (polygon) where the drilling occurs is leased through the fluid minerals program. The pipeline to move the oil and gas would require a ROW to get it from the lease to the destination. ROW avoidance means move the ROW if you can. Exclusion has essentially no exceptions, more absolute.
- *Question:* Are our comments public record? *Answer:* Yes. If someone requested them, they would be part of the public record, but we won't publish them.
- *Action:* Your comments are due on February 28th to Kate (kate.wynant@empai.com). The ID Team is meeting the week of March 14 to discuss the preferred so we will compile your comments and distribute them to the Interdisciplinary Team to incorporate as appropriate. Be specific and direct with your comments. If the range isn't wide enough, tell us why and what needs to be included.

- *Question:* Knowing that the sections in a column all interrelate, do you want comments on a section? *Answer:* Do whatever is easiest for you. If your comment applies to several rows, include all the rows to which your comment applies. We'll take all your comments at one time, you don't have to piecemeal them.
- Preferred alternative. There are different ways to pick the preferred. 1) Pick something from Alternative A, B, C, D, or E directly; 2) Pick a combination (something in the middle or range) of A, B, C, D, or E; or 3) Pick something outside of today's range. Options 1 or 2 are optimal. We want to get the range right now so that we can do either 1 or 2. It is possible that option 3 could happen but the later that we find out we missed something, the harder the process becomes.
- *Question:* Will there be any cases where the range seems too wide? Are you interested in us telling you that one end of the range is too extreme for consideration? *Answer:* Yes, you can let us know that you think one edge is too extreme and tell us why and where the edge should be.
- *Question:* I'm still confused where you overlap with the US Forest Service. The US Forest Service is a Cooperating Agency and it is incumbent upon the US Forest Service to review the alternatives and let us know if there are any inconsistencies. *Comment:* Maybe we could comment on areas where we would like to see consistency and coordination with the US Forest Service.
- *Question:* Do you anticipate major changes to the alternatives? For example if we spend a lot of time on something and you've already caught it can you let us know so we don't spend a lot of time on it? *Answer:* I don't think there will be major changes such that your comments would not be applicable when we receive them.

5. Other Items Not on the Agenda

- WSR Update (Barb Sharrow) (see handout: Dolores-San Miguel River Basins Supplemental Comment Period). Thank you to everyone for your help in the process. On February 7th the RAC Subgroup will meet and the Dolores/San Miguel leads will give their recommendation to the RAC Subgroup on what the recommendations to the BLM should be. The RAC Subgroup will decide on the final recommendations for the BLM. We decided early on how we would come to consensus, which has been written down and we can review that on February 7th. Barb handed out materials for the group to review and bring with them on February 7th.
 - Keep in mind the classifications for each segment from the final eligibility report. The classifications can be changed from eligibility to suitability.
 - The suitability criteria are also in the final eligibility report.
 - The meeting is scheduled on February 7th from 9:00am-2:00pm at the Holiday Inn Express in the Apex Room.
 - The meeting is public and they can speak during the allotted public comment time, just like the RAC and RAC Subgroup meetings. We may have to limit the time they can speak depending up on the number of public present. It's critical to have as many RAC Subgroup members present as possible.
 - WSR alternatives are in the alternatives and we are currently considering all suitable and none suitable, per BLM Manual direction.
 - If there is time after the WSR discussion is over, the group can ask the BLM any questions that they've come across in their review of the alternatives to that point.
- If there are other issues that you want to meet on specifically, let Barb know. For example, domestic versus wild sheep grazing. We might have meetings with the ranchers about that issue.

6. Public Comments: Two members of the public present. No public comments.

7. Action Items / Next Meeting

- For the RAC Subgroup we have a meeting scheduled for February 7th to discuss WSR. The meeting will be in the Apex Room at the Holiday Inn Express from 9:00am – 2:00pm.
- Next RAC Subgroup meeting for the RMP is scheduled for Friday, April 1. We won't have a preferred for you but can talk about your comments, the next steps, WSR, etc. Richard Durnan may not be able to make it (Spring Break).
- If you have questions throughout, don't hesitate to contact Bruce, Angie, or Kate.
- Action (RAC Subgroup):* Your comments are due on February 28th to Kate (kate.wynant@empssi.com). Be specific and direct with your comments. If the range isn't wide enough, tell us why and what needs to be included.
- Action (EMPSi):* Send planning criteria to the group.
- Action (EMPSi):* E-mail group Alternative A OHV map from Chapter 3 maps.
- Action (EMPSi):* Send FTP site with Chapter 3 and maps to group.