
COLORADO RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Dates: 4/25/2016 – 4/25/2016

Meeting Location: Hotel Colorado, Glenwood Springs, CO

Recorded By: Kayla Davin

RAC Meeting

Monday, April 25, 2016

Begin 12:10am

▪ **RAC 101 – Chris Joiner**

Contact Chris for RAC Orientation PowerPoint

▪ **Welcome – Ruth Welch**

- RAC Members Introductions
- Overview of Agenda

▪ **Department of Natural Resources Update – Bob Randall, DNR**

- DNR-Decentralized State agency with 6 divisions
- **Colorado the Beautiful**- initiative announcement Governor Hickenlooper a year ago. Builds on existing efforts to promote Colorado outdoors. Will help to grow and enhance rec opportunities. Goal is within a generation every Colorado resident lives within 10 miles of a trail or open space. Currently there are 16 priority trails. Helped to jump start a more focused and coordinated discussion across the State. Coordinated with local state to nominate trails there were 200 nominations. Trails will connect with communities. In various stages. None of this results in funding from the state. Urban pop, increase opportunities, paved and multi-surface trails, increase partnerships. GOCO, State Parks trails have funded. Develop trails system map online-intended to help public plan when recreating –version 1.0 will be released this summer
- **Colorado Habitat Exchange**-Cattleman’s association, oil and gas, 5 independent oil and gas. Adequately mitigate and optimize the protection for the species. Market driven will add value of conservation.
- **Gunnison Sage - Grouse**-EIS participates. Have challenged FWS with the decisions to list as threatened. A long-term goal is to return species to state management. All in for conservation of species
- **Oil and Gas**-Task force met for 6 months and made recommendations which include: legislative funding of additional inspectors and to health department, earlier notice to government to work with operator that are close to local communities for additional mitigation measures and practices and to notice issues that may impact local communities.
- Data driven response to the Gold King-funding is a challenge. Better communication and coordination with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Emergency Response Management across the state. Are working better more see what we know develop list of priorities to get a better handle on it and came out as result from the gold king release.
- Monitor and regulate methane gas- handled with health department air requirements. The state has sought to address that and have regulations of venting and flaring. Methane leaks are a waste of a valuable resource. It’s a topic the state has tried to address.

Questions

- How will the Trans-West be affected by the greater sage-grouse plan?
 - Transmission lines-exchange wouldn’t be required. Trans-West right of way has specific exemption from mitigation of greater sage grouse plan.

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife strategic plans (regarding the merge) - anything to add on the internal culture 5 years in to a merged agency?
 - Colorado parks is a big entity strategically planned help to step back and decide what we wanted the entity to look like and develop structure to make these agencies work together as one.
- Recreations economy emphasized by Sally Jewel and is an interest of the Colorado Governor. Mountain biking is not listed on the Parks and Wildlife website. How come trails aren't recognized and not designated as trails on the wild life side as it is on parks side?
 - Wildlife areas are used differently than parks and bought with different money. For example, sportsman's money is used for wildlife areas. Differences in management and is required for these areas.
- Do the State and the board incorporate the mitigations efforts made by BLM?
 - Yes, requires communication and coordination with the BLM.
- What is the DNR's involvement in state water plan?
 - Hold voting seat on the board and oversight of the divisions. Participated in the wean event to try to identify places in the permit process that didn't add value and bogged down the process. Seeking to protect what we have now and investigate potential for new storage opportunities. Working to develop options for long term funding and storage needs.
- How does geothermal play in to the water plan?
 - MOU with BLM on geothermal- federal government is already leasable and at the state we treat it as a water right they hadn't been defined on how to work together. This is the Health Department's issue. We realized we had more data than we thought we had.
- Recent oil and gas task force rulemaking-have you started to see some results from the regulations or the process of going through the process by having different perspectives?
 - That was the goal, no data from Oil and Gas Conservation Commission; they don't have enough time but is a good idea to have a status update. Very arduous process but everybody's perspectives were out on the table but hopes that rewards.
- How would you classify produced water-division of water resources when through and determined tributary or not?
 - Producers were required to present data to state engineers.
- Explain the Peabody process?
 - The largest coal company filed for bankruptcy (Peabody) had a self-bond that was approved by the State and adopted federally. Four mines in the state looked at their self-bond 27million dollars to reclaim their. Initiated conversations with Peabody, they had significant liability about 1.3 billion in reclamation liability offered up putting of their liability in corporate shares. Accepted and released the self-bond and took on their corporate shares before they filed bankruptcy.

▪ Panel: Congressional Relations with the BLM

Betsy Bair, Regional Director – Senator Gardner's Office
Noah Koerper, Regional Director – Senator Bennet's Office
Brian Meinhart, Regional Director – Congressman Tipton's Office
Facilitator: Steven Hall, Communications Director – BLM Colorado

RAC Meeting

Question: Brief introductions and what issues your office is working on.

Answers:

Betsy- Regional Director for Gardner's office that is based out of Grand Junction, region includes 18 counties on the western slope that include public lands and natural resources. Work as a liaison between federal agencies and constituents. Priorities are energy and natural resources, small business, foreign relations (Iran and North Korea and national security) and Good Samaritan.

Brian-Regional Director for Congressman Tipton's office and work heavily as a policy advisor for public lands and natural resources.

Noah-Regional Director for Senator Bennet's office, the region includes Golden-Central Mountains and dealing with natural resource issues in the state. Priorities include energy bill passed through last week, number one issue funding from land management agencies is heard from constituents. Working to fix budget issue and determine what tools we have to help address the issues. Financial services committee a lot of issues we deal with are public lands and natural resources issues. Fuels treatments, water rights protection action-leveraging of permits (FS) American energy act- promote American energy security.

Question: Example of the relationship held with BLM and where they can improve.

Answers:

Betsy-Our relationship is good at the state and local level-Southwest does good at giving congressional briefings on a quarterly basis, they reach out to us when there is going to be a controversial issue when it will be out in the press and are going to be. Higher level could be better-we hear that we need more time to offer feedback. When asked for more time we are shorthanded but we understand we are coming back from the top. Good interactions and appreciate relationship at state and local levels.

Noah-good state level communication and are not good at reaching out before we reach out to each other's bosses. Outreached with issues and when tried to reach out but don't know how we internalize those questions, go in and don't know where it is at within the bureaucracy or who to get those answers from.

Brian-BLM's responsiveness is good when we have questions. Most problems aren't at the state and local office levels. Getting quorums established was difficult and frustrating because of how long it took at the Washington level.

Question: What are your thoughts on how the RAC's function and the value they bring to the BLM?

Answer:

Betsy-The issues that are brought forward to the RAC and the diversity of comments that are acquired on those issues from the RAC are good to hear not only for the BLM but our office as well.

Noah-Results in consciousness for the agency at the local level about how the stakeholders and community are feeling about different issues. Members are tuned in to the process of the agency and can provide their support.

Brian-Getting all of the voices out of there and try to figure out the best way to meet those needs under the multiple use concept. Encourage that it is useful to hear those conversations but is helpful to have a resolutions.

RAC Meeting

Question: Why is there so much pressure on the BLM to change their management plan why would we advocate for a longer extension?

Answers:

Betsy-We heard so much from constituents that they need more time. People are mistrustful and stakeholders are mistrustful anytime you are making those big of changes, it is good to slow the horse down.

Brian-Taking additional time for a procedural change, it is important to get it right. Hard to figure out how it's going to affect me, it doesn't do the BLM any good to get a rushed document for comment.

Question: What is the stance of your bosses on returning the public lands to the states?

Answers:

Brian-If the states want to do a study and determine that. We are not pushing it and haven't given it a whole lot of though because it is driven at the state level.

Betsy-Boss agrees that the lands should stay with the federal they were put in the public trust and they belong in the federal and public trust.

Noah-Coloradans do not think this is a good idea and Senator Bennet will support that they stay federal.

Question: Any visions to turn dependable process for these counties

Answers:

Noah-response is easy-PILT should be funded and is thrown in as a bargaining chip on certain bills on big picture things. Advocate for permanent reauthorization and funding.

Betsy-Push back on SRS funding but ditto on PILT it's a western issue, constitutional needs to be funded.

Brian-a Western U.S. vs Eastern U.S. having a state or federal land is in one county. Outreach is an issue in the house then in the senate

Question: Commercial interests in public lands all interests development level of uncertainty on these public lands.

Answers:

Betsy-Oil and gas specific to your industry Gardner is concerned with the regulation proposed by the BLM-states should make these regulations. We are looking at these rules and the big picture.

Noah-In general, to agree that it is better to come up with certainty on these issues. Seeing issue last a few years instead of getting things done now, we generally don't weigh in on comment period unless we hear from constituents.

Brian-Both sides have to comply, regulatory perspectives are things are constantly changing it is hard to keep up as a small business owner to try and make sure you are in compliance.

RAC Meeting

Question: Is there any action for congressman/senator for decoupling firefighting from agencies specifically in budget.

Answers:

Betsy-Firefighting funding fix is an issue-there are supposed to be reforms coming but there is a broad push- getting hung up on the funding fix but a bigger reform on management-best acres not cheapest acres not just fixing the funding.

Noah-Wildfire Funding Disaster Act-omnibus bill to come up with what we thought would be the best package, got certain amount of agreement in senate but the house decided not to take it up. We have had the discussion to get the package to pass and are hoping that the reforms will show the work put in to this issue.

Brian-Want to avoid agencies dipping into their regular budgets and then we see other areas that hurt from this. If there is a way that we can dedicate more permanent funding but also avoid having more and devastating fires that would help.

Question: Talk of ski areas to return more money to the National Forests in order for them to continue to exist. Who introduced that and are you involved?

Answers:

Brian-White River National Forest a lot of funds don't stay with the forest. This is a relatively new issue.

Noah-A lot of provisions require 75% goes back to the forest. A lot of different provisions that need to be looked at, deals mostly with forest service.

Question: Do you have any stance on how the management of wild-horses?

Answers:

Betsy-Hear from both sides, continuing to monitor and listening to our constituents.

Noah-Listen to the experts and who are working on the ground and if there is a consensus on how to solve this issue.

End 4:30pm

April 26, 2016

Begin: 8:00am

- **Colorado RACs: Where we are and moving forward – Discussion – RAC Members and District Managers**

How the RAC is functioning currently?

Tom Heinlein-Front Range: Difficult time maintaining quorum over time, we are hoping to rebuild momentum with focused meetings to get back on track. Has been successful in the past, not lacking of opportunity to do that now. Update of Arkansas River plan and Browns Canyon plan. Looking at how to engage the RAC in different ways will ultimately help us with BLM's mission.

RAC Meeting

Joe Meyers-Proactive and stability within the RAC, not as much turnover well diverse with all the issues we have dealt with in the past. Good discussion and valuable tool getting good input from discussions. Good recruitment, not many vacancies.

Barb Sharrow-Engaged in various planning projects. Have had sub groups for different projects including Uncompahgre, Southwest master leasing plan proposal. They help look at what issues should be addressed. Like to get involved, good recruitment try and keep diversity geographically to help the BLM with multiple use and think through issues.

Katie Stevens-Dominquez-Escalante sub group council, decided to be active to help resolve issues and digging in to winter wildlife/ATV. Good mechanism for public to be involved and engaged with the planning process. Sub-RACs Grand Junction RMP range of alternatives do we have a wide enough range. RAC member plus other interested people that have experience assisted with the process.

Kent Walter-Sub-RAC nomination process goes through standing RAC, made up of 12-15 members to make sure the process is consistent with RAC charter. Brought sub-group on early and have them do an analysis to make sure that all areas are covered and concerns of constituents are addressed. Through process set up series of public meetings with BLM personnel there so everyone was compliant to show up at meetings.

Takeaways from Discussion

Positives

- Having a relationship with BLM is important to local government to communicate through. When we are having difficulties with RAC board (scheduling meetings getting quorums) it is appreciated that the BLM is still communicating with us.
- When we have talked about those areas and issues we have field trips to those areas so that we understand and learn exactly what the BLM issues are and what they are dealing with.
- Commend BLM personnel for being good listeners even from people in the public it makes them feel better to have them that listen.
- Great opportunity being a RAC member, have obligation to people you represent. Not about just meeting and coming up with a resolution, but we have to take this info back to people. BLM contacts we make through them are valuable, direct referrals help issues become not an issue. BLM is always willing to answer questions but also find someone who can.
- Valuable to public when we have contacts for people to go to when decisions are made and a name to a face representation at meeting BLM is good at getting those contacts for us.

Negatives

- Challenges with getting a quorum and frustrations associated with that as well as meetings getting cancelled.
- Had a procedural issue, retired members were excused one day and then we didn't have a quorum. Maybe have them excused the last day.
- When meetings are spaced so far out, when we finally get together the BLM has such a large amount of information and it easily consumes our time we never get time for discussion. Would like meetings to be more frequent, should be able to meet on an organized basis without a quorum.

RAC Meeting

- Washington office gets involved with NEPA process, if they are going to be involved would like them be more involved with the RAC by calling in to give us answers directly.

Suggestions:

- Regarding having one RAC- Regions deal with different issues and we need three different RACs to have familiarity with the region and the diversity. Physically and people and economically diverse with three different RAC's and you need the broad spectrum from all corners.
- Starting more sub-racks and meeting closer with them to get these ideas and bring them back to the RAC.
- It would be helpful to follow-up at next meeting by briefing the issues that were discussed at the previous meeting and the process we went through. Regarding having one RAC- Regions deal with different issues and we need three different RACs to have familiarity with the region and the diversity.
- Would like to see the RAC be asked to give more advice. RAC's are dealing with different issues, but are just are being told what the issue is and not what our advice is to address these issues. Would like to feel like we have more of an active role. RAC's have moved from an advice giving to a listening informed body. Currently the meetings are more of a listening session would like more decisions making resolution voice.
- The key is proper framing of the issues it is difficult when the issues are so broad to determine what to focus on.
- Wondering if there is an opportunity to have all RACs meet and have a RAC 101 at a yearly meeting or in a webinar to get that taken care of before meeting to focus on the issues we need to address.
- Of the BLM could provide homework so that new and current members are more aware of issues it would help the BLM with gaining educated feedback. This could help address the issue with it meetings just being informative and having more time for the RAC members to discuss the issues.
- People who have been on the RAC for a while realize how much we learn. Maybe 3 or 4 year term instead of 1-2 year would benefit BLM more because RAC members would be more knowledgeable about issues as a result would provide more knowledgeable feedback and resolutions.
- Consider a standing seat or a selected alternative to address the issue of members not being able to attend resulting in the challenge of getting a quorum.
- Using to the website to facilitate feedback and action items that came out of the meetings. We should utilize the site more than just the list of names.
- Utilizing technology such as webinars to increase accessibility for RAC members.
- Provide opportunity for public to comment and increasing accessibility for them as well because it is important to hear their concerns.
- Need to have a database with contact information for everyone member on every RAC.
- Helpful to have a glossary of acronyms so that we can look it up.
- Getting a better understanding of how other RAC's are addressing the issues they are dealing with. Meeting as a whole group and have informed discussions, where do they come up with ideas and solutions for their issues could help us address issues our RAC is facing.
- Incumbent on every RAC member to research issue that we are giving input on, to tell the public that we are informed and no what's going on to instill public trust.

RAC Meeting

Questions

- Seems like good dialogue at meetings, what happens to this information if there is no resolution made what do you do with the results of the communication?
 - Joe Meyers-All field managers are taking notes at meeting sometimes we have to go back and take a look at what we are trying to package if we missed something. We get a lot of interaction and helps inform my managers before we get to a resolution.
 - Barb Sharrow-We take extensive minutes and have on our website so that is available to people.
 - Tom Heinlein- Have gone back at previous set of minutes to see the discussion and take in consideration when working on plans
- Has BLM Colorado had any success recruiting tribal members?
 - Barb Sharrow-Tried hard to get people to apply but have been unsuccessful.
- Is it important to utilize the RAC to support the policies in D.C., congressional delegates? Would it be helpful if BLM utilized different RAC members to support these policies?
 - Greg Shoop-It depends, it is a balancing act. We work with a political appointee that they have their own policies and issues and there can be times that the RAC is working on issues that puts us in a dicey situation with our political appointee. Example the over the river, had political support could have been difficult if there was a resolution from the RAC that went against the DOI Secretary. Sometimes it helps if you have a RAC that comes up with a resolution that helps us navigate the waters.
- When is it helpful for a resolution and when is it not?
 - Joe Meyers-helpful when you are informing your constituents because it is difficult for us to communicate why we made a decisions and the process so it helps them understand when coming from you.
- How limited is the use of technology in terms of getting a quorum through a webinar or the word out with social media?
 - Greg Shoop-We are at a point where we have these opportunities but we see such value with face to face meetings so we want to encourage that.
 - Joe Meyers-We will never be able to substitute the personal interactions. When ready to vote on something it would be good to bring someone in via webinar if they can't be there so that we can finish up the process.

Conclusion of Discussion – Ruth Welch

- When you send us your resolution we send those on to the Washington Office and the Secretary of the Interior it helps us in the decision making process. We can work on communicating what the process is when we receive your resolutions they don't just sit on someone's desk. It is important to have you make informed recommendations.
- Having homework prior to so that we don't overwhelmed you at the meetings.
- Understanding that you don't think fewer RACs is a good idea.
- We spend a huge amount of staff effort and funding to put these RAC meetings on so that meetings are informative so that we get the feedback we need and informative recommendations from you. We want it to be beneficial for all of you too because we know you take time out of your day. We value and are interested in what the RACs have to say. Lots of BLM staff that are ready and willing to provide you with answers.

RAC Meeting

▪ Update-Sage Grouse (Greater and Gunnison) Brian St. George

See PowerPoint

Questions

- Have you worked a lot with CPW in regards with hunting?
 - Yes, work extensively with habitat and population habitat. Not extensive in regards to hunting.
- Is the process the same for private land and federal land when managing the land?
 - No
- Do you differentiate between occupied habitat vs. non by sage grouse?
 - Yes we have to be aware of seasonal and focus on what the grouse needs as habitat and where potential habitat is. Best habitat for the grouse, habitat most at risk, respond to management and treatment options.
- Land acquisition of parcels in the checkerboard land of BLM?
 - Foster collaboration with multiple partners. The amount of resource investment in acquiring habitat may not have a large return. Yes, but takes a long time to acquire land. We are partnering to maintain connectivity.
- Does this plan pertain specifically to Colorado or is this a National plan?
 - Specifically presenting about Colorado plan but the Colorado plan is part of a National effort. Not a one-size fits all approach, need a level of consistency to be able to tell the FWS however we know the habitat types and status of the grouse are different than in other states.

▪ Update-Tres Rios and South Park Master Leasing Plans

Tres Rios – Barb Sharrow

See PowerPoint Presentation

Questions

- How would you characterize public input in the area?
 - You tend to get a lot of emotion but you have to get the facts and have that separated.
- Strong protection for public land but how to get that multiple use. There is a lot of diversity amongst who comes to the meetings. How do you make sure have solid protection for the different uses of the land and having a diversified economy?
 - Public meetings, comment letters then the sub-group will get together and present the findings.
- As a sub-group will you try to meet consensus before the meeting?
 - No.
- When formalizing process among sub-groups, how do you bring the recommendation to the RAC also identify issues and concerns where they couldn't reach consensus on so the RAC realizes the issues and why a consensus couldn't be reached.
 - Depends on the subject and area you work in to determine what would work best with the sub-group

RAC Meeting

Tom Heinlein Update South Park Master Leasing

See PowerPoint

- Working on alternatives internally and getting more feedback from the RAC and cooperating agencies.
- Allowed us to get a perspective from the public, getting so much work accomplished from citizens and not without BLM input was helpful.
- Having an outside facilitator can benefit the process helped to keep the meeting moving.
- Developed goals to drive meetings and keep them focus. BLM could participate in these but weren't a part of the formal process. Develop a set of community driven recommendations that we could bring to the BLM. Create more of awareness of everybody's interests. RAC was perfect way to have the community involved and for the sub-rack to get the feedback.

▪ Planning 2.0-Megan Stouffer

See PowerPoint

- Still a multiple use it's taking a look at the broader effort
- Multiple landscapes can exist in one area
- Determining what data do we have, what issues do we have and what are people interests.
- Want consistency on the issue and not where it stops on the line and go across boundaries and look further into the issue just not at the place where the issue.

Questions

- Have you received comments on the impact of the projects and the decisions?
 - Objectives to move slow, but hopefully the second part of the process goes more efficiently. More complex and transparent process may go slower.
- How does the effect the planning capacity and how does it affect budget?
 - Benefiting resources to help with plan effort and not planning dollars forcing you to spend them. Programs to help obtain the information we need for the plan and be ready for the RMP. Budgets are remaining consistent, more about priority and where the resources need to go for the planning efforts. Creating list of plans that are ready to go forward and make them prioritize projects to determine where the need is and where do the resources need to go.
- Field offices have different cultures will this pose some problems?
 - Flexibility built into Planning 2.0, the methods the ways we address issues have more flexibility to create unique opportunities and methods with this strategy. Opportunity within current structure to be flexible.
- Is this planning rule going to help coordination with agencies like the forest service will help everyone get on track?
 - The planning assessment is an opportunity to share these efforts similar to the Forest Service regulation that was put in place. Will be a good opportunity for everyone to be on the same page. Browns Canyon will be a joint plan FS and BLM.

RAC Meeting

▪ BLM Recreation Strategy Implementation Brian St. George

See PowerPoint

- Trying to strike a balance and showing Washington that there is good work from this management strategy and we should see some reward. We should be ranked high among the Nation that we are paving the way for this strategy.

Suggestions

- Addressing the issues of budget cuts and staff cuts: People spend money on their equipment but pay nothing to partake in recreation
- Develop a database that shows all the money saved from the partnerships to get the point across to Washington.

▪ Review of Recreation RAC Function-Joe Meyer, Katy, Pat

See PowerPoint Katie

- Pat discussed the process of how the established fees for camping when realizing the Rec-RAC did not want fees established. See RAC Fee consideration project. Fees go back in to the resource and need to make sure people understand that so that they are less resistant to it.

Questions

- Anything you would have done differently procedurally with Ruby Horsethief or Fruita?
 - Not taking 4 years to do so but wanted to be able to talk to everybody. Ruby Horsethief-We questioned to do recreation permits in person chose to do in person for the first three years and am glad we did it that way.
- Do you have to repeat the process to change the fees?
 - We have to come back to RAC but don't have to go through the whole process again.
- Encountered any issues with dogs and wildlife?
 - Yes concern with desert bighorn. Sending people a message dogs have impacts too, it's a luxury to have them as other government lands do not allow them. May have to get to the point where dogs aren't allowed during certain times but starting with education first.
- How are you tracking the data you presented?
 - Campsite monitoring program for 4-5 years and we also have a database.

▪ Statewide RAC Close-Out Ruth

End: 5:00pm