



United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management
3028 East Main Street
Canon City, Colorado 81212



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES January 20, 2009

Category 1

Keary Hallack
Gene King
Virginia Patton
Jim Coleman
Charles Wm. Rech

Category 2

Donna Murphy
Aaron Clark
Tom Olson

Category 3

Loren Whittemore
Michael Bush
Al Trujillo
John Stevenson

ATTENDEES: Roy Masinton, Diana Williams, Cassandra Cairns, Joe Vieira, Shelley Hovland, Bruce Rittenhouse, Leah Quesenberry, Keith Berger, Devin Paszek

GUESTS: Hal Brown, ROAR; Joe Rall with Congressman Lamborn's office; Kathryn Wadsworth, citizen; Debbie Marsicano, Park Center Water District; Clint Allen, Park Center Water District; Larry Allen, Park Center Water District; Christopher "Kit" Shy

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND 2009 MEETING SCHEDULE

Current Officers are Loren Whittemore as Chair and Michael Bush as Vice-Chair. Jim Coleman made a motion to keep both Loren and Michael in their current positions. Virginia seconded the motion. Gene asked to keep both positions separate in the nomination process. Jim amended his initial motion to include Loren only; Virginia seconded. John Stevenson motioned to close the nomination and Virginia seconded. The vote was held; all were in favor and Loren was voted in as Chair. Jim again amended his initial motion to include Michael only; Virginia seconded. The vote was held; all were in favor and Michael was voted in as Vice-Chair.

Future meetings were moved to Wednesdays. The 2009 meetings will be held on April 22, July 14-15 (in the San Luis Valley), and October 21. All meetings will begin at 9:15 a.m.

A large majority of members will be attending the State-wide RAC Meeting which will be held in Grand Junction February 24-26.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathryn Wadsworth explained that a contractor is being selected who will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Over The River Project. This process will officially begin within the next few weeks and is expected to take up to two years to complete. Ms. Wadsworth asked that Christo and Jeanne-Claude be given the chance to address the

community's concerns during the course of the EIS and that the community should reserve judgment until a rational and informed decision can be made.

RAPTOR DEMONSTRATION, Devin Paszek

Devin Paszek gave an excellent and informative presentation on raptors. She had all members complete a "pre-test" to assess their knowledge of raptors and then reviewed the answers. The group learned about the various types of raptors, their hunting techniques, predator-prey relationships, threats that raptors must endure, and why raptors are important to our ecosystem. She also explained the permitting process. She brought in her Red-Tailed Hawk, Ares, and her Great Horned Owl, Athena, to give us an up-close and personal view of these raptors.

MANAGERS UPDATE

Bruce Rittenhouse, San Luis Valley Public Lands Center (SLV) Associate Center Manager, welcomed Joe Vieira who will be working in the SLV; Joe will still be working on the Over The River project.

Due to the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act, a RAC will be established for the Rio Grande National Forest. Anderson Ditch comments have been completed – he reminded the group that this project exchanges land for water to augment the Blanca Wetlands. Appraisals have also been completed on the project.

A decision for the BLM Travel Management Plan for the San Luis Valley will be prepared to amend the RMP. The Governor's Consistency Review was completed on January 19. A protest period will then be held; if there are no protests, an implementation decision can be issued.

Regarding renewable/solar energy, one application has been received for a 2100 acre parcel of BLM land near Saguache. Bruce explained the differences between photo-voltaic and concentrated solar power. This project will be reviewed with the Governor's Energy Office, SLV COOP and Xcel Energy. A solar forum was held in Alamosa on January 17 to discuss this project as well as other water issues.

Roy explained the new 3-tier structure that BLM has adopted. There will be three District Managers (DM); one each in Canon City, Montrose, and Grand Junction. The Grand Junction DM has been selected; the other two have been re-advertised.

Joe Vieira gave an update on the Over The River (OTR) project. The Notice of Realty Action (NORA) was sent out in December. Over 390 comments were received. They are continuing to look at the Area of Critical Environmental Concerns (ACEC). Competitive bidding of a third-party contractor has been completed and a selection has been made. An announcement will be forthcoming in the near future as soon as the third-party contract is signed. The EIS is scheduled to be completed by April of 2011.

The RAC's role in OTR is to keep current on the status of the project. They have heard OTR's proposal and need to hear those that oppose this project, specifically, Rags Over the River (ROAR) who will be making their presentation at the next RAC meeting in April. A RAC

member may express their individual point of view about the OTR project to the press but not as a point of view on behalf of the RAC.

Roy gave an update on recent personnel actions. Diana Williams will be acting in the State Office for the next five weeks; Erik Brekke will be Acting Support Services Supervisor in her absence. Keith Berger will be the Acting Field Manager in Gunnison for the next 4-6 months.

Al Trujillo made a motion for resolution to send a letter of thanks to former employees for their service and assistance to the RAC. Aaron Clark seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Cass will draft the letter and send to: Dave and Toni Toelle, Joe Vieira, Merle Blankenship, Dave Walker, Terry Baxter (Forest Service), Dave Hallock, Ken Smith, John Dow, and Ernie Gillingham.

BISON GRAZING ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA), Keith Berger

Keith gave an update on the Eleven-Mile Canon allotment situation. The current grazing permit includes authorization to graze bison on public land in certain pastures on the allotment. Keith gave an overview of the past decisions and problems on the allotment, including livestock trespass and complaints from neighbors. Grazing use on certain portions of public land within the allotment is currently under suspension due to on-going drought and livestock trespass problems. The permittee is applying for bison grazing use on scattered parcels of BLM land that are currently designated for cattle only. The permit is up for renewal and an EA is required to review the environmental impacts of the bison grazing on the additional parcels. BLM is now working on the EA utilizing agency solicitors to determine the scope of the EA.

PROPOSED RECREATION FEE INCREASE, Leah Quesenberry

BLM has submitted a proposal to raise campground fees on The Bank and Sand Gulch locations. Current fees were instituted in 1995; there has never been an increase to address the increasing costs of operations, maintenance, and need for improvements to facilities. BLM would like to make improvements to the campsites which will include rebuilding the Sand Gulch access road, installing shade structures, and replacing signs. The current fee structure is \$4 per site/per night at both campgrounds and \$8 per night for group campsites. BLM examined the current fair market value for similar sites and services in this area and found fees ranged from \$10-16 per night and \$20 for group sites. Suggested fee increase is to raise standard campsites from \$8 to \$10 and \$16 to \$20 for group campsites. Donna made a motion for a resolution to approve the \$8 rate for standard campsites and \$20 for group campsites; Al seconded the motion. A motion was made to amend the suggested \$8 rate increase to \$10 for standard campsites. Donna and Al agreed with the change; a vote was taken and all were in favor of the rate increase.

GARDEN PARK FOSSIL AREA TEMPORARY CLOSURE, Leah Quesenberry

BLM has recently acquired two parcels north of Canon City on Shelf Road (County Road 9). A Federal Notice has been published establishing a temporary closure that restricts travel to non-motorized use only. This will remain in effect during the development and finalization of a travel management EA to determine an appropriate travel management use for this area. The EA should be on the BLM website within the next month; it will have three alternatives and will give the opportunity for public comment. A sign is posted designating the motorized vehicle closure until further notice.

PARK CENTER WELL, Roy Masinton

The Park Center well was drilled over 80 years ago during the period of 1923-1927 and is leaking badly which would cause multiple problems and create a safety hazard. BLM believes it is in the best interest of the taxpayer to cap the well and drill a new well. BLM is hoping to cap the well this spring. Park Center is currently seeking funding for the new well from various entities including BLM and the Colorado Water Conservation Board. A right-of-way will need to be created to provide use of public land for the new well site.

Jim Coleman made a motion for adjournment at 2:40 p.m. and all were in favor.

/s/ Roy L. Masinton

Roy L. Masinton, Manager
Royal Gorge Field Office
Bureau of Land Management

/s/ Loren Whittemore

Loren Whittemore, Chair
Front Range Resource Advisory Council