



United States Department of the Interior

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



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES April 20, 2010

Category 1

Keary Hallack
Bill Dvorak
Virginia Patton
Charles Wm. Rech

Category 2

Donna Murphy
Aaron Clark
Tom Olson
Michael Nelson
Lucy Bambrey

Category 3

Loren Whittemore
Michael Bush
Al Trujillo
John Stevenson
Christopher "Kit" Shy

ATTENDEES

Greg Shoop, Designated Federal Officer (Front Range District Manager); Keith Berger, Royal Gorge Field Office Field Manager; Cass Cairns, Front Range RAC Coordinator; Kathy Kurtz, San Luis Valley Public Lands Center Acting Manager; Shelley Freer, Front Range RAC Administrative Assistant.

GUESTS

Kathryn Wadsworth and SeEtta Moss

INTRODUCTIONS AND OLD BUSINESS

All RAC members, attendees, and guests introduced themselves after the meeting was called to order by Loren Whittemore at 9:20 a.m.

The question was raised about the duration of the RAC Charter; Cass explained it is two years. No other old business was discussed.

Loren read a letter of thanks and support from Roy Masinton, former RAC Designated Federal Officer and Royal Gorge Field Office Field Manager.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS, 2010 MEETING SCHEDULE, CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Virginia Patton motioned to retain all current officers; Al Trujillo seconded; all were in favor, and the motion was passed.

It was determined that the 2010 meeting schedule is as follows: July 14-15, 2010 in the San Luis Valley, October 13, 2010 in Cañon City, and January 12, 2011 in Cañon City.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no responses.

ARKANSAS RIVER TMP PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTAL RULES, *Leah Quesenberry, RGFO Renewable Resources Supervisor*

The original Arkansas River Travel Management Plan (TMP) was signed two years ago. Some of the decisions in the TMP are not specifically addressed in the current Code of Federal Regulations so they cannot be implemented. To implement, a formal rule-making process beginning with a Proposed Supplementary Rules publication in the Federal Register is required. The Federal Register notice initiates a 30-day public review and comment period. Comments will be addressed, which will lead to the Final Supplementary Rules. Once the Final Rules are published, the new rules can be implemented and enforced. This process may take several months to complete.

The Proposed Supplementary Rules are:

1. You must not operate a motor vehicle more than a total distance of 100 feet in any direction off a designated road in the ARTMP;
2. You must not ride mountain bicycles other than on roads and trails designated open to mountain bicycles on public lands in the ARTMP;
3. You must not engage in recreational target shooting on public lands in the following areas: Methodist Mountain and Turkey Rock; and 4
4. You may operate a motorized vehicle within the area known as Turkey Rock only if it is a motorcycle specifically designed for trails riding.

Draft maps are being developed and should be available in approximately one month.

Al mentioned a concern about shooting area closings as well as clean-up of hazardous materials in these areas. Keith briefly explained our current situation and it was determined this would be a future agenda item and should include participation from the Front Range Sports Shooting Round Table group.

MANAGERS UPDATE

Greg Shoop, *Front Range District Manager (Designated Federal Officer)*

Welcome

Greg extended the Front Range District's appreciation for each RAC member's interest and willingness to be of assistance to the BLM. He announced that Helen Hankins is the new State Director and John Mehloff is the new Associate State Director.

Colorado BLM 3-tier Organization

Greg provided an overview of the new 3-tier District structure system. The District Office is a centralized administrative office that will provide management direction and oversight to the Royal Gorge Field Office and the San Luis Valley Public Lands Center and its Field Offices: the Saguache Field Office, La Jara Field Office, and Del Norte Field Office. There are three districts covering three geographic areas in Colorado: Northwest, Front Range, and Southwest. The 3-tier structure adds another level of management between the State Office and the Field Offices.

Workforce Planning

The BLM is in the process of workforce planning. All programs are planning for a five percent decrease in their budgets in each of the next three years as a part of the exercise. Through this process there will be a need to identify the retention of critical positions.

Department of the Interior Initiatives

The Front Range District is committed to and engaged in several projects that are focused on the Secretary of the Interior's special initiatives for renewable energy and youth. The Front Range District has implemented several important initiatives which include renewable energy, youth initiatives via employment, and volunteer opportunities. (Youth is defined as 25 or younger.)

Keith Berger, Field Manager, RGFO

BLM Youth Initiative

The BLM's Youth Initiative features a variety of programs that engage, educate, and inspire youth ages 15-25. The objective of the initiative is to get youth interested in the natural world, sustain interest through hands-on education and volunteer experiences that may develop into long-term engagement and stewardship, and hopefully the pursuit of natural resource careers. The RGFO has several upcoming Youth Initiative Projects which include: Fountain Valley Schools on trail reconstruction and maintenance; Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area assisting with field trips; Women in Archaeology that provided a college intern in the Royal Gorge Field Office; and the Mile High Youth Corps which will involve 16-18 year old students building fences.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

The BLM as an agency received \$305 million from the ARRA. The RGFO was allocated a portion of these funds that will be used on several projects including the drilling a new Park Center well: the contract was recently awarded to Hydro Resources from Fort Lupton, CO. This project will begin in May. Water from this well has been leased to the Park Center Water District for more than 40 years, and is currently serving 4,000 District users in Cañon City. Other ARRA projects will include restroom replacement at Five Points, Four Mile Road trail implementation and repair, adding a parking lot at Cucharas Canyon, thinning trees in Southern Park County, and closing three abandoned mine projects.

Elevenmile Canyon (aka Bison) Environmental Assessment (EA)

The Elevenmile Canyon EA is still being developed; the comment period ended in February and the final EA will be complete in the next 30-60 days.

IREA and New Elk Coal Lease EAs

The EAs for the IREA transmission line from Hartsel to Fairplay as well as the New Elk Coal lease sale should both be completed soon.

Applications for Permit to Drill (APD)

There are several APDs near the City of Hartsel with the El Paso Exploration Company. Public comment closed on April 1, 2010 and the EA is in the process of being developed. These APDs involve road access, wildlife habitat, and water well contamination issues.

Destiny Mining EA

BLM has received a mining proposal from Destiny Mining Company for a gold and gravel operation. Five acres of land may be disturbed so further study is warranted. Key concerns and issues from the public are socioeconomic and cultural in nature. The RGO does not have the local resources to do a socioeconomic analysis so that is being done by a specialized Forest Service enterprise team. An archaeological company was contracted to investigate and address the additional cultural concerns and their report was added into the EA's cultural analysis. The additional analysis has created a delay in the development of the draft EA.

Kathy Kurtz, Acting Associate Center Manager, SLV

Garcia Cattle Trespass

The SLV is currently dealing with an on-going cattle trespass and court settlement case. A resident was found guilty of livestock trespass in the riparian area of the Rio Grande. He was ordered by the court to pay a \$500.00 fine and was placed on supervised probation for one year. The BLM was ordered to purchase materials for a fence that the resident must erect. Another court hearing is set for May 2010 to review the conditions of the court order and the progress of the fence construction.

Kerber Creek Restoration Project

The SLV is working on the Kerber Creek Restoration Project which involves clean-up of the Kerber Creek Watershed. In 2008, the Bonanza Stakeholder Group began new groundbreaking work through phytostabilization efforts, which included relocating tailings deposits outside the floodplain and adding soil amendments to remaining tailings to reduce metal mobility and improve plant growing conditions. In 2009, over 4,000 volunteer hours were served on the project and over 1.3 million project dollars were raised. This year's planning efforts include phytostabilizing 23.7 acres and adding seven in-stream structures. Volunteer events will be used to add erosion control structures, re-vegetation work, weed eradication, and fence building.

ARRA

The SLV is administering several ARRA projects including Zapata Falls Campground Construction, Wilson and Zapata Communication Site Repairs, Upper Crossing Archaeological Inventory, Crystal Hill and Whale Hill Mine Closures, Gunnison Sage Grouse Habitat Improvement, Rio Grande Riparian Enhancement, South San Luis Lakes Wetland Restoration, and Simpson Wetland and Riparian Water Supply.

AmeriCorps

Several AmeriCorps Projects including Middle Creek Hiking Trail, Noxious Weed Removal, Reforestation, Range Improvement, and assisting the town of Saguache with repair and cleanup work have been completed.

Blanca Wetlands

Greg Shoop added that the Blanca Wetlands is a significant wetlands national area. A great deal of research has been completed since last summer. As a result, the BLM has established the SLV Wetlands Complex Healthy Lands Focus Area and will promote this as a working laboratory.

BIGHORN DOMESTIC SHEEP, *Randy Ghormley, SLV Wildlife Program Leader*

Randy gave an informative presentation on bighorn sheep. He informed the group about his current project which involves compiling information on the bighorn sheep in Colorado and providing an assessment and update to the 1996 Forest Plan. Only 73 herds are left in Colorado but by recommending conservation measures, it is possible to bring that number up.

RENEWABLE ENERGY UPDATE, *Greg Shoop, Front Range District Manager*

Greg described the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of the Renewable Energy Team. They are a new group located in Monte Vista and will be supervised by the Front Range District. Their staff includes a Project Manager, NEPA Environmental Coordinator, Realty Specialist, Archaeologist, and Wildlife Biologist. They will be helping to build a clean energy future using renewable wind, solar, and geothermal power.

GEOHERMAL ENERGY UPDATE, *Melissa Smeins, RGFO Geologist*

Melissa reviewed the Geothermal Lease nomination near Mount Princeton Hot Springs. This lease parcel has been deferred three times since September 2009.

FUELS MANAGEMENT, *Ed Skerjanec, RGFO Acting Fire Management Officer*

Ed informed the group that nine out of ten prescribed burn projects have been completed. The fire outlook season is in good shape due to the effects of El Nino and above average precipitation. Soil moisture is also in good shape. There have been 11 red flag warnings so far this year with no significant fire activity. Fire staffing is complete on all three engines in the RGFO with no resource shortages or funding issues.

GARDEN PARK HABITAT IMPROVEMENT, *Glenda Torres, RGFO Natural Resource Specialist (Fire), and Curtis Sorenson, Private Landowner/Partner*

Glenda gave a presentation about the Garden Park Habitat Improvement project on 150 acres of BLM and private lands. The project involves thinning piñon/juniper trees using a hydro mulching machine. All live piñon pine and juniper trees were thinned to a spacing of 30-50 feet. All cut trees will be thinned or mulched. This will increase forage for wildlife in areas away from cultivated fields; thin dense stands of piñon/juniper re-growth thereby improving habitat for deer and turkey populations, and at the same time reduce the risk and severity of wildfire on public and private lands. The project was funded through the Habitat Partnership Program with matching funds from BLM and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

OVER THE RIVER™ UPDATE, *Vince Hooper, OTR Project Manager*

Keith Berger introduced Vince Hooper, the new *Over The River™* (OTR) Project Manager. Vince will be meeting with the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area office to review the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The draft EIS will be available for public comment at the end of June or in early July; there will be a 45-day public comment period and four public hearings will be held in Cañon City, Salida, Cotopaxi, and Denver. The final decision is scheduled for April 2011.

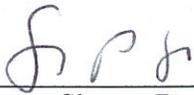
John Stevenson motioned that there be a special RAC meeting to discuss OTR in August with representatives from the cooperating agencies involved in the development of the EIS. Tom Olson seconded; all were in favor, and the motion passed. A tentative date of August 19, 2010 was set.

Al Trujillo motioned that the RAC request a 75-day comment period instead of the 45-day period originally planned. Virginia seconded; all were in favor: the motion passed and a resolution was drafted.

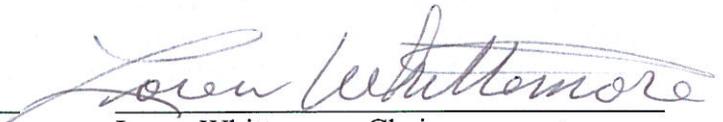
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL, *Loren Whittemore, Chairperson*

Loren read a letter received from fellow RAC member Jim Coleman. Jim will not be seeking re-nomination due to personal issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.



Gregory Shoop, Designated Federal Officer
Front Range District Office
Bureau of Land Management



Loren Whittemore, Chair
Front Range Resource Advisory Council