



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
3170 EAST MAIN STREET
CANON CITY, COLORADO 81212



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
CANON CITY, CO
September 19, 2006

MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

GROUP 1

Virginia Patton
Jim Coleman
Chuck Rech
Gene King

GROUP 2

Donna Murphy
Aaron Clark
Tom Olson
Frank (Dusty) Yeager

GROUP 3

Loren Whittemore
Al Trujillo
Frances Mathews
Michael Bush

GUEST: Joe Kendall

BLM/USFS PERSONNEL: Roy Masinton, Jim Rhett, Paul Trentzsch, Ken Reed, Leah Quesenberry, Ken Smith, Dave Walker, Cindy Giles

COUNCIL BUSINESS: Members were introduced.

Loren Whittemore read a letter to the group explaining that Jim Bensberg had resigned in order to prepare and campaign for re-election. Roy explained the timeframe of the nomination process for RAC membership and determined it would be best to renew this position along with the normal nomination process next spring.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Joe Kendall asked the RAC what the outcome was from the public comment forms submitted regarding the Over the River proposal and how they would be used.

Roy Masinton explained the scoping for the EIS was extended until August, 2006. A total of 1,350 public comments were received during the 6 month comment period covering issues of socio-economic impacts, visitor levels, traffic safety, bighorn sheep and other wildlife impacts, recreation conflicts, structural safety, etc. Those issues have been entered into a project database and will be used in the EIS. The Over the River project proposal was elevated to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) level of analysis in June 2006 based on controversy, applicant request, and the likelihood that the agency would be unable to make a Finding of No Significant Impact. The public will also have an opportunity to comment on the EIS.

MANAGERS UPDATE:

Jim Rhett, San Luis Valley Associate Field Manager: Jim attended a U.S. Fish and Wildlife hosted meeting in Crestone. **Lexam Company** is interested in drilling for natural gas on the northern part of the Baca Grant near Crestone. The federal government owns the surface and the subsurface is privately owned.

Tom Goodwin, Field Manager for the Saguache Field Office, has accepted a four-month detail at the Forest Service Regional Office.

The San Luis Valley will have a **draft travel management plan** prepared within the next couple of months. This has been delayed by the fire season.

Roy Masinton, Royal Gorge Field Manager: updated the group regarding the **Salida Ditch Company**. In 2005, the Salida Ditch Company reconstructed about a 1/4 mile of the Salida Ditch across public land (and more on private land) upstream of Salida and outside of the historic disturbance of the ditch. Although the Company has settled the damage to resources by completing restoration, they have not applied for a FLPMA – right-of-way to authorize the work they have done outside the original disturbed area, some of which they will continue to need.

There is a good possibility that Congress will act on the **Browns Canyon Wilderness bill** before the end of this session. There has been very little opposition. A few motorized users have some concern about an old trail in the area. Most of those issues had been previously settled. This proposal includes about 20,000 acres of public lands; 12,500 acres managed by the U.S. Forest Service and about 7,500 acres managed by the BLM.

The **new Recreation RAC** will consist of 11 members and will be administered by the U.S. Forest Service. The nomination period will begin shortly. It was suggested the Council may want to select a member to apply for a position on the RRAC. The purpose of the new RRAC will be to make recommendations on any changes of recreation fees for both the BLM and U.S. Forest Service in Colorado.

Forest Management and Biomass Utilization, Ken Reed RGFO: Colorado's forests and woodlands are densely overcrowded with small trees, leading to some of the most destructive wildfires and largest bark beetle outbreaks seen since the settlement of Colorado. The Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO) is removing this low value material to reduce the destructive impacts to forest health and the safety of surrounding communities. The Royal Gorge Biomass Use Project involves utilizing these small low value trees (biomass) as a renewable energy source at the Aquila Power Plant in Canon City, Colorado. Historically, supply of biomass has been the limiting factor for the local Aquila Power Plant.

In FY05, RGFO began to work toward meeting Aquila's supply issue with stewardship contracts to meet the woodchip supply need in FY06. These contracts also include pre-commercial thinning of ladder fuels, meadow restoration, and road improvements. In September of 2006, the first load of woodchips arrived at the Aquila Power Plant and over 200 tons has been delivered since the first project began. The RGFO recently awarded a multi-year contract that will provide the Aquila plant with a continuous supply of woodchips for 5 years.

LUNCH

Following lunch the Council members decided on the meeting dates for 2007:

January 25, 2007

March 21, 2007

May 23 & 24, 2007

July 17 & 18, 2007

September 26, 2007

November 14, 2007

All meetings will be in Canon City except the July meeting will be in the San Luis Valley.

Arkansas River Travel Management Plan, Dave Walker: Dave updated the Council on the status of the Travel Management Plan and briefly explained the draft Alternatives. There will be further discussion of the draft alternatives at the December meeting. BLM is currently preparing the Environmental Assessment (EA) and is in the final phase of the Arkansas River Travel Management Plan. The EA is expected to be available for public review in January or February of 2007.

The next meeting is November 15, 2006.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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

Loren R. Whittemore
Chairman
Front Range Resource Advisory Council