



United States Department of the Interior

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



FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES October 13, 2010

Category 1

Bill Dvorak
Charles Wm. Rech
Virginia Patton
Keary Hallack

Category 2

Tom Olson
Lucy Bambrey
Aaron Clark

Category 3

Loren Whittemore
Al Trujillo
John Stevenson

ATTENDEES

Greg Shoop, Designated Federal Officer (Front Range District Manager); Keith Berger, Royal Gorge Field Office Field Manager; Cass Cairns, Front Range RAC Coordinator; Steve Sanchez, San Luis Valley Public Lands Center; Jeff Kitchens, BLM Colorado NLCS Program Manager; Shelley Freer, Front Range RAC Administrative Assistant.

GUESTS

Leah Quesenberry, Renewable Resources Supervisor, Royal Gorge Field Office; Kalem Lenard, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Royal Gorge Field Office; Vince Hooper, Over The River Project Manager, RGFO; Kit Shy; Katherine Wadsworth.

INTRODUCTIONS AND OLD BUSINESS

All RAC members, attendees and guests introduced themselves after the meeting was called to order by Loren Whittemore at 9:25 a.m. There was no old business.

Cass notified the group that RAC nominations have not yet been approved. She also reminded members to complete their statewide RAC questionnaire and turn them in before the end of today's meeting.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no responses.

Arkansas River TMP Proposed Supplementary Rules, Leah Quesenberry, Renewable Staff Officer, Royal Gorge Field Office (RGFO)

The Proposed Supplementary Rules were published in the Federal Register on July 23 followed by a 60-day comment period. Several letters have been received thus far concerning target

shooting area closures (which will be dealt with separately), a concurrence on the mountain biking rules, a concern that the 100-foot rule might open the door to off-route motorized travel, and a one letter representing eight environmental groups requesting clarification on the rules and providing some suggestions for additional rules. BLM will need to discuss these with the local Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) as well as the State LEO before making possible modifications. The final rules should be published in the Federal Register in approximately three months.

Volunteers and Youth Initiative, *Kalem Lenard, RGFO outdoor recreation specialist*

Kalem briefed the group on five recent National Public Lands Day events including work by the Colorado Backcountry Horsemen to clean up trails and built fences, litter clean-up at Phantom Canyon with the ATV Quadrunners. He lauded other volunteer groups who participated in the various projects; Volunteers of Outdoor Colorado, Garden Park High School, Lower Arkansas Mountain Bicycling Association, Colorado Mountain Club, and Rocky Mountain Field Institute.

Overall this year volunteers have contributed 10,000 hours of labor.

Regarding Youth Initiative projects, the RGFO has worked with Greater Arkansas River Nature Association on an ecological literacy program, and hired a student to complete outdoor programs with children. Volunteers of Outdoor Colorado (VOC) and Garden Park High School teamed up on trail maintenance work on the Marsh Quarry Trail.

Travel Management Plan Implementation Grant Opportunities, *Aaron Clark*

The Colorado State Trails Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) fund was established in 1990 and requires registration for all OHVs in Colorado. The current registration fee is \$25.00. There are presently 133,000 registered OHVs in Colorado and registration fees generate approximately \$4 million per year. Funds are delivered through three means: Division of State Parks administration, competitive grants, and Good Management Programs. These funds are dispersed for information and awareness, promotion of OHV safety, establishment and maintenance of off-highway vehicle routes, and the purchase or lease of private land for access purposes. The OHV Subcommittee has recently modified the group and now includes 12 members. Eight of the members are representatives affiliated with OHV recreational interests including the chairperson who is also a member of the State Trails Committee, three are representatives of non-motorized recreational interest with one being a member of the State Trails Committee, one represents multiple-use trail recreational interest and is nominated by the State Park Director, and four represent major land management agencies in the state who will advise the subcommittee and attend meetings upon invitations. Grant application criteria have also recently changed. The criteria have four sections of 25 points each: need and benefit; partnerships and leverage; resource protections, restoration, and enhancement; and travel management implementation, education, and enforcement.

The Good Management Program is a holistic management approach that provides opportunities while protecting sensitive areas. This includes maintenance, reconstruction, monitoring, signed, education, planning and field presence for visitor contacts and compliance. To qualify for this program, a project must have three previously successful trail crew grants from initiation to final closed, be in a project area identified as “an important OHV area” in Colorado where there is a heavy concentration of motorized recreation, and submit a completed OHV grant application. In

addition to the application, Good Management Program participants will be required to submit a summary of the trail crew's project accomplishments from the preceding season.

The BLM and U.S. Forest Service are eligible for these grants and several are in the process of being submitted by the December 1 due date.

MANAGERS UPDATE

Keith Berger, *Field Manager, RGFO*

A decision may be made in the near future on the New Elk Coal Mine Environmental Assessment (EA) regarding an application submitted by the New Elk Coal Company for a coal lease. The lease parcels are located in Las Animas County near Trinidad. An issue concerning greenhouse gas has been brought to the BLM's attention.

The development of the EA for the Destiny Mine project is ongoing. This project is for an 80-acre gold mine and gravel pit near the town of Fairplay.

An application was received from the Intermountain Rural Electric Association (IREA) for a right-of-way to install a line from Hartsel to Fairplay. The EA has been completed and approved; they are now working on the grant application.

BLM has received a great deal of feedback on the upcoming geothermal lease sale. The EA and Decision of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) have been completed and the decision was made to continue with the sale based on new National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) stipulations. The parcel is scheduled to be sold in the November lease sale.

The Mountain Plover, a small-bird species, has been found in South Park and is affecting the Bison grazing permit renewal. BLM is currently doing a biological assessment.

The Four Mile Canyon fire in Boulder encompassed approximately 1300 acres of BLM land located in the middle of the fire area. BLM and several other entities are now working on an emergency restoration and stabilization plan.

The new Park Center well has been drilled. Drillers hit an unexpected high pressure when approaching the final depth, forcing water and debris to flow from the drill hole at a rate of 1,600-2,000 gallons per minute. They have now gone back to the final depth and are in the process of developing the well.

The Cotopaxi School District has a public permit for a Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) lease for a ball field. A target shooting area is within the lease area that has been utilized over the years. The target shooting area was not part of the original R&PP. The school district wants to keep the shooting area but there is a relatively new residence in close proximity and the shooting area poses a potential safety risk. The RGFO is working with the school district on a resolution.

Vince Hooper, *Over The River Project Manager, RGFO*

The formal comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has ended. Approximately 4,500 comments were received. It is estimated that 1,000 of these were

substantive comments and 700 were form letters. Comments addressed many topics including the definition of art, economic and wildlife issues, and aesthetics. Reviewing the comments will take several months.

The final EIS should be completed by early next year with a final decision to come in the spring. The Preferred Alternative will be identified in the final EIS.

Steve Sanchez, *Acting Associate Center Manager, San Luis Valley Public Lands Center (SLVPLC)*

Travel management implementation has been a high priority this year. There were several closures which were greatly appreciated by private landowners.

Excellent work has been completed on Kerber Creek. Over \$140,000 was raised for the project which has addressed problems in the lower watershed along a 17-mile stretch to improve water quality, aquatic life, riparian and upland vegetations, erosion, and sinuosity. There have been several volunteer events involving schools and providing youth education. Over 8,000 volunteer hours have been contributed in the last few years. Greg Shoop thanked Steve for exceptional work on the project.

The Zapata Falls campground was previously a 26-day maximum use facility but is now being made into a complete campground and should be completed in June of 2011. Sean Noonin would like the RAC to support a campground fee that will be used towards maintenance of the facility.

They are in the process of completing a NEPA document to expand the Blanca Wetlands. Their Volunteer Coordinator has assisted with many Youth Initiative projects.

Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement comments are being consolidated.

The San Luis Valley was omitted from the nationwide Geothermal Programmatic EIS Record of Decision and therefore their resource management plan was not amended by the Programmatic EIS. They are in the process of preparing an EA to consider which lands to make available for geothermal leasing. The EA will include an amendment to the BLM's San Luis Resource Area-Resource Management Plan allowing geothermal leasing.

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION SYSTEM, *Jeff Kitchens, BLM Colorado NLCS Program Manager*

Ten percent of BLM lands have special designations such as Monuments, Wilderness Study Areas, National Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and conservation areas. In 2000, the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) was officially designated to protect these crown jewels and interpret them to the public. It is a system that stands proudly alongside parks and refuges as part of our national heritage. In 2008, Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne signed a Secretarial Order to officially designate the 258 million acres of lands managed by the BLM as the National System of Public Lands. Over one million of these acres are located in Colorado. The NLCS has increased funds available for all designations, provided a great integration of science, increased emphasis on partnerships,

restored natural resources, and provided compatible uses for hunting, fishing, grazing, and motorized use. The RAC can provide guidance, direction, and ideas for new opportunities.

FRONT RANGE SPORTSMAN SHOOTING PARTNERSHIP, *Neil Weierbach, Recreation Program Manager, Pike and San Isabel National Forests and Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands*

Shooting sports have had long-standing and appropriate use on National lands including hunting, target shooting, and general recreational shooting interests. Now more than ever, public land agencies must work with its partners to facilitate safe and responsible use; protect public safety, property and natural resources; and explore mutual interests and benefits in developing opportunities for shooting sports. The Colorado Front Range Sports Shooting Partnership was created with these goals in mind. They are 18 partners representing public agencies and organizations who signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on July 24, 2007 that charts a course to provide safe and sustainable recreational shooting opportunities and focuses on the 18 Front Range counties from Fort Collins to Pueblo. The objectives of this partnership are to: identify and assess potentially appropriate federal state, county and private locations for safe shooting range areas that are environmentally and economically self-sustaining; develop local partnerships to construct, improve and manage a wide range of sport shooting opportunities; and establish on-going communication, education, and ethics programs on safe and environmentally sound sport shooting opportunities for all ages. The Federal Lands Hunting and Shooting Sports Roundtable recently proposed standard nomenclature for the various types of recreational shooting opportunities. They identified four types:

1. Dispersed shooting – random and dispersed shooting that occurs throughout public lands, except in firearms closure areas.
2. Undesignated shooting area – popular or well known sites where concentrated shooting use is evident.
3. Designated shooting area – specific locations designated by a land management agency for recreational shooting.
4. Designated shooting range – specific locations designated, developed and supervised for the purpose of informal shooting, event shooting or a combination thereof.

Future objectives include determining what barriers there are to shooting opportunities, forming other coalitions or partnerships, and determining Colorado's needs over the next decade.

PARK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION, *Linda Balough, Director for Park County Historic Preservation*

National Heritage Areas were created by the US Congress as places committed to protecting and promoting the cultural, historical and natural assets of a region. They help to define and interpret the themes, histories and natural attributes that make up the United States of America. Currently, there are only 49 such places in the United States with South Park being one of only three in Colorado.

In 2006, Laura Bush gave national recognition to Park County by designating it a Preserve America Community. They took advantage of a grant to help develop feasibility studies for future use for five South Park properties. In 2008, Park County became one of five regional

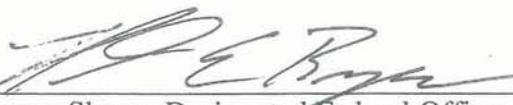
Heritage Tourism projects using grant money to promote the heritage of the area. In 2009, Congress designated the South Park National Heritage Area (SPNHA).

The South Park area lies entirely within Park County, Colorado. It consists of a vast basin surrounded by mountain ranges, literally in the center of the state. The South Park covers about 1,700 of the nearly 2,200 square miles that makes up Park County – one of the 17 original counties established when Colorado became its own territory. The SPNHA has free ranging wildlife, historic ranches, rich pastureland, streams abundant with fish, and remnants of booming mining times.

The SPNHA is looking forward to developing partnerships with private enterprise, local government and federal government for projects within the SPNHA that will promote the history of the U.S. and generate heritage tourism.

They will be working over the next three years to develop a ten-year management plan for the SPNHA.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

For

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


Loren Whittemore, Chair
Front Range Resource Advisory Council