

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
Friday, September 15, 2006
San Juan Public Lands Center
Sonoran Rm. A & B, 15 Burnett Ct.
Durango, Colorado**

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Don Bennett, Category 1	Drew MacLeod, Category 1
Kenneth Emory, Category 1	Dan Morse, Category 2
Al Heaton, Category 1	Alan Staehle, Category 3
Nik Kendziorski, Category 2	Kathy Welt, Category 1
Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3	Kelly Wilson, Category 3
Betsy Marston, Category 2	Ellen Stein, Category 3

Not present: Andrea Robinsong, Category 2; Andrew Gulliford, Category 2; Jim Cochran, Category 3

BLM Staff

Helen Mary Johnson	Barb Sharrow
Mel Lloyd	Mark Stiles
Kenny McDaniel	Loren Wickstrom

Visitors	Representing	Town/City
Ann Brown	Sen. Salazar Durango Office	Durango
Tony Gurzick	Colo. Division of Wildlife	Durango
John Whitney	Congressman Salazar	Durango
Jon Showalter	International Uranium Corp	Nucla
Lisa Schwantes	Sen. Salazar Durango Office	Durango
Ann McCoy Harold	Sen. Allard Durango Office	Bayfield
Susan Thomas	Dolores River Coalition and San Juan Citizens Alliance	Cortez

Opening Remarks, Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum. There was a round of introductions. Reappointed RAC member Nik Kendziorski and new Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members Dan Morse and Al Heaton were welcomed. New members Jim Cochran and Andrew Gulliford were unable to make the meeting.

Barb Sharrow informed the RAC that it will receive a response to its Special Recreation Program (SRP) Resolution once points brought up by the Northwest RAC are addressed at the state level. A Federal Register and press release will be issued on the Recreation RACs (RRAC) next week. One statewide RRAC will be administered by the Forest Service with joint Designated Federal Officers being Regional Forester Rick Cables and BLM State Director Sally Wisely. One

national charter will guide each state's RRAC. Ken Emory volunteered to serve as the Southwest Resource Advisory Council (SWRAC) representative.

The RAC's Split-Estate Resolution was forwarded to the State Office and BLM is developing a report for Congress based on these and other comments received during the national listening sessions.

The July 21 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

New Member Orientation

Mark Stiles explained that the RAC concept was established in 1995, and that he played an integral role in their development. He explained the who, what, why and how of the RACs and their processes, including the voting process and make-up of the RAC. The RAC strives to operate by consensus and is chartered by the Secretary of the Interior. RAC details are enclosed in the charter, which can be viewed at http://www.blm.gov/rac/co/swrac/co_sw.htm. Barb Sharrow added that BLM State Director Sally Wisely is committed to responding to RAC Resolutions and inquiries when appropriate.

Field Manager Reports

Gunnison Field Office (FO): Kenny McDaniel reported that the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests (GMUG) and BLM are conducting a joint travel management planning process for the entire Gunnison Basin. The public scoping period ends in late October, at which time a proposed plan will then be developed and issued. The Alpine Triangle Recreation Plan is being updated; an effort being undertaken jointly between the Columbine and Gunnison Field Offices. Three public scoping workshops are scheduled for early October. RAC members asked to see a copy of the existing plan and to be kept apprised of the developments. The Hartman Rocks plan continues to be implemented and enjoys widespread community support. The GFO is continuing to work on Gunnison sage-grouse issues, improving habitat and developing guiding documents to support the effort. The GFO is celebrating the centennial of the Antiquities Act tomorrow by hosting an interpretive tour of historic mining sites along the Alpine Loop.

San Juan Public Lands Center: Stiles reported on the revision of the BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP) being conducted jointly with the Forest Service and their lands. The public process is completed, and Washington review is scheduled for the coming weeks. A draft plan should be out in January. The Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) Resource Management Plan (RMP) is currently being developed. The process was delayed for several months as a new planner was engaged. The draft should be out in about five months. The Silverton Mountain Ski Area was granted a BLM permit for ten years, covering 450 acres and approving unguided extreme skiing for 200 skiers per day. An appraisal is being redone to determine an accurate value of the land in order to consider a land lease, which would allow a longer-term, 40-year lease to the ski area. BLM will receive cost reimbursement from the ski area owner for the additional work.

Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO): Sharrow noted that a National Public Lands Day event is scheduled for tomorrow to clean up 150 tires dumped on public lands. The Department of

Energy (DOE) held three public meetings on the Environmental Assessment for its uranium leasing program, of which BLM is a cooperator. The November oil and gas lease sale includes several parcels from the UFO. UFO is working with local counties to provide a website that will provide information to the public on lease status, minerals ownership and applicable stipulations. It is being tested now. UFO is a cooperator with DMEA on a proposed power line project near Delta. An open house is scheduled for September 25 at the Bill Heddles Recreation Center in Delta. Senator Salazar is proposing a National Conservation Area (NCA) for the Dominguez-Escalante area. He recently sent a letter to the county commissioners for Montrose, Mesa and Delta Counties. The Public Lands Partnership (PLP) has been asked to play a facilitator role and to host public meetings on the proposal. The first PLP meeting will be held November 2 at Bill Heddles. Funds have been obtained to begin a travel management plan for the UFO, which will also address an area seeing increased use by technical 4X4 enthusiasts. The UFO is hiring a volunteer coordinator for the purpose of improving customer and public room services at the UFO.

San Juan Basin Planning Activities

The proposed final Northern San Juan Basin Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was recently issued by the FS/BLM. A 2001 proposal from industry for coal-bed methane exploration created the need for an EIS, in which the RAC and its working group were instrumental in providing valuable feedback for its development. Alternatives 6 and 7 were added as a result of the significant public comment received on the draft. Stiles explained that gas seeping to the surface is a natural phenomenon that can be accelerated by nearby drilling activity. The EIS analyzed these and other impacts to the area. The preferred alternative #7 allows drilling and then monitoring, prior to expanding to the next area in the controversial outcrop area. Additionally, a bond system would be established to further goodwill relations between industry and private owners. Less than 5,000 acres of the roadless areas would be impacted. Within that 5,000 acres, impacts would be limited to existing roads and infrastructure, which can exist in roadless areas. Local communities, other than the city of Durango, still oppose drilling activity in the outcrop area. Stiles will be developing the final decision in the coming weeks.

Stiles explained today's headlines from the *Durango Herald*. During the initial phases of the project, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) declined the Center's invitation to receive a draft plan for review and comment. While extensive media coverage has brought the project to the forefront frequently throughout the past several years, CDOT sent a letter on September 11, 2006, claiming they had no opportunity to read the draft and provide comments. This letter arrived on the last day of the protest period for the proposed final plan.

BLM Regulations for Uranium Mining/Claims

Helen Mary Johnson explained that the BLM must follow the Mining Law of 1872 and the 1976 Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA). Prior to the 1960s, there was no guidance for hard rock mining. 43 CFR 3809 Regulations provide guidance on management of surface-disturbing activities. Unnecessary or undue degradation is regulated by specific standards, and several performance standards exist to protect resources. Three BLM classifications of use for mining include casual use, notice level (exploration only for < 5 acres), or plan level (larger level). A complete notification, plan of operations, and financial guarantee are provisions required by BLM for active notices. As part of BLM's approval process, onsite visits and

cultural surveys are conducted, and stipulations are included for such sensitive areas as Wild & Scenic Rivers. The State of Colorado must approve the provisions as well and can override the BLM, ordering mining activity to cease if deemed necessary. It's best if all parties can work closely together. Access to the mining claim is authorized under the plan, rather than through issuing a right-of-way. Once a claim is patented, it becomes private property and BLM has no control over it. Since 1992, there has been a moratorium on patenting any mining claims.

Public Comment Period

Ann McCoy Harold, Senator Allard's Durango staffer, toured the Alpine Loop recently and reported that the motorized users were all very courteous and respectful of other users. She feels there should be no major changes to management of that area. She thanked the RAC for doing such a great job.

Susan Thomas spoke on behalf of the San Juan Citizens Alliance and Dolores River Coalition. The Dolores Canyon is a tremendous natural resource that contributes to the local economies. Those groups are concerned with the DOE uranium leasing program. They ask BLM to be cautious in supporting the DOE and make an effort to preserve that river corridor.

Revisiting RRACs

Details are still in development for RRACs. Alan Staehle motioned to appoint Ken Emory as the RRAC representative and Ellen Stein seconded. The vote was all in favor, none opposed.

Next Year's Meeting Schedule

January 19, Anasazi Heritage Center

April 20, Montrose (suggested field trip: technical 4x4 route)

July 20, Silverton (suggested field trip: cultural resource) [**since changed to Crested Butte**]

September 21, Ridgway

November 16, Delta (suggested topics: Tread Lightly and ATV etiquette)

Next Meeting and Closing Comments

Potential topics:

Cultural archaeological protections

Section 106 consulting, law enforcement

CANM RMP

Field trip to tour carbon dioxide/oil & gas activities

PLP Dominguez-Escalante project

New chair/co-chair elections

Sharrow thanked the RAC for their valuable time and expressed her appreciation for their commitment to attend each meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.