

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council  
MEETING MINUTES  
Friday, July 22, 2005  
Silverton Town Hall, 1360 Greene St.  
Silverton, Colorado**

**ATTENDEES**

**Resource Advisory Council Members**

Mallory Dimmitt, Category 2	Howard Heath, Category 1
Art Goodtimes, Category 2	Nik Kendziorski, Category 2
Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Drew MacLeod, Category 1
Anthony Gurzick, Category 3	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2
Ann McCoy Harold, Category 3	Ellen Stein, Category 3
	Kathy Welt, Category 1

Not present: John Field, Category 1; Don Bennett, Category 1; and Alan Staehle, Category 3

**BLM Staff**

Arden Anderson	Howard Sargent
David Blackstun	Barbara Sharrow
Mel Lloyd	Mark Stiles

<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Town/City</b>
Pete McKay	San Juan County, Commissioner	Silverton, CO
Wally White	La Plata County, Commissioner	Durango, CO
Ann Brown	Senator Ken Salazar	Durango, CO
Mary Hupf	Senator Ken Salazar	Durango, CO
Michael & Sherry McDonald	HAER	Solana Beach, CA
Heather Rusch	HAER	Milwaukee, WI
Alan Tansey	HAER	Kent, OH
Courtney Gunderson	HAER	Osh Kosh, WI
Beverly Rich	San Juan Co. Historical Society	Silverton, CO
Andreca Milea	ICOMOS	Cluj, Napoca, Romania
Bill Simon	ARSG	Durango, CO
Jen Alder Brill	Silverton Mountain	Silverton, CO

**Opening Remarks/Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time**

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum.

Uncompahgre Field Manager and Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Barb Sharrow asked for a round table of introductions. Sharrow mentioned yesterday's field trip hosted by San Juan Public Lands Center (SJPLC) staff and San Juan County Commissioner Pete McKay. Several RAC members toured the area involved in the proposed Sunnyside Gold land exchange with San

Juan County and the Bureau of Land Management. Welt thanked the SJPLC for the informative tour and Ellen Stein of the Mountain Studies Institute for the reception for RAC members following the tour.

### **Field Managers Update**

**Uncompahgre Field Office:** Sharrow reported on several new BLM policies being implemented by Washington. UFO has a 580-acre Type II fire that is nearly contained and a fire use fire (allowing fire to play its natural role in the ecosystem) on Naturita Ridge. A new beltway has been proposed through Montrose that, as proposed, crosses through the Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area and a plant area of critical environmental concern. Oil and gas lease parcels that were deferred in BLM's May lease sale will be included in the August lease sale, with the exception of those found to have active sage-grouse leks. UFO staff have attended several educational oil and gas forums held in local communities. The RAC requested an electronic copy of the UFO Crawford sage grouse study.

**Gunnison Field Office:** Acting Field Manager David Blackstun introduced himself and announced that Kenny McDaniel will take over as the new field manager in early September. Community meetings have been held regarding issues surrounding the Gunnison sage grouse (GUSG) and, as a result, Blackstun feels the public is now more comfortable with the issues.

**San Juan Public Lands Center:** Mark Stiles mentioned a fire use fire near Pagosa Springs, which fire managers began suppressing when weather conditions changed. Another Type II fire is near Mancos and located on the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation with 2,800 acres burned. Several other smaller fires have recently ignited in the Four Corners area. A Forest Service firefighter from South Dakota died in his sleep of an apparent heart attack earlier this week and Stiles lamented that fatalities, whether on the fire line or not, are stressful. A new Field Manager/District Ranger, Steve Beverlin, reports August 21 to the Dolores Field Office. The Canyons of the Ancients Advisory Committee includes two positions represented by Native Americans. One of these positions has been vacated and the other has been asked to resign because of lack of attendance. Others have already been recommended to fill the seats. Grazing permit renewals include three allotments incurring significant reductions in AUMs in the Canyon of the Ancients Monument. The Spring Creek wild horse Appropriate Management Level has recently been set at 35 to 60 head. One appeal to this decision was received. To obtain genetic diversity, the appellant purported that 170 head are required, but the BLM believes that the existing habitat cannot support that many animals. A round up is scheduled for the Fall 2005. BLM has finalized its first ever ski area lease agreement with Silverton Mountain. Some level of helicopter use will be authorized on an annual basis. The access road will require a 15-foot easement, and because lynx habitat could be impacted, consultations are ongoing with the appropriate agencies. A request for a new mountain bike trail on the mountain's backside was denied.

### **Update on Joint U.S. Forest Service Plan/BLM Resource Management Plan Revision**

Howard Sargent reported that a series of community study group meetings have been well attended. The planning area has been divided into landscapes with planning themes. Study groups have commented on these themes and are in consensus on the majority of issues. Draft

planning documents should be finalized and released for public comment in late 2005. The RAC was asked for its initial thoughts on the process, and several questions and suggestions followed.

Goodtimes motioned and Andrew Gulliford seconded writing a letter to the BLM DFO commending the BLM and USFS for conducting a joint planning process. Ellen Stein requested that a second letter be written encouraging the BLM to work with Grand Mesa, Gunnison and Uncompahgre National Forest (GMUG), as well as that the USFS take it a step further and conduct forest-to-forest planning efforts (advising the BLM directly). The motion passed unanimously. Welt will develop the first letter with Stein drafting the second. Stiles added that water issues are being addressed through a government-to-government roundtable.

### **Update on Recreation Guidelines**

Off-highway vehicle area designations in several Colorado BLM field offices were provided by Sharrow. Compared to 2003, there are more miles in the limited and closed categories and less miles in the open designation. More travel management planning is underway in Canyons of the Ancients and the San Juan Forest/BLM resource management planning efforts. The UFO RMP, which will address travel management, was slated for 2007 but may be pushed back to 2008 due to funding limits. A BLM Colorado recreation committee developed a statewide strategy and, in part because of that effort, the State is anticipating receiving a 36 percent increase in recreation program funding.

### **Hanging Flume Update**

UFO archaeologist Julie Coleman announced that the Hanging Flume was recently placed on the 2006 World Monuments Watch list of 100 most endangered sites. Ron Anthony and Jill Seyfarth spoke about the history and importance of preserving the Hanging Flume, which is located near Naturita in Montrose County. Coleman asked the RAC for additional input, as well as full support for rebuilding a short section of the flume for on-site interpretation. Goodtimes noted that San Miguel County has provided funding toward preserving the flume. Other county commissioners present at the RAC meeting agreed to have further discussions with their boards on working together to support the project. Sharrow suggested putting together a communication plan showing what organizations should be contacted for support and added that funding would need to come from interested organizations as budget constraints prohibit BLM from fully funding this project. The RAC will provide feedback to BLM on their position in supporting the project.

### **Alpine Loop Resource Mapping Project**

Arden Anderson, from the Gunnison Field Office, made a presentation on the Alpine Loop mapping project. This project is important because of the changing character and use of the area in recent years. Individuals are building second homes on patented mining claims. There is potential for significant landscape changes and infrastructure issues for the county and towns. In order to revamp the area's management plan, collaboration with local counties is important, and visitor use surveys and economic analyses are being used. Both public and private lands are being mapped, funded by a grant.

### **San Juan Alpine Task Force-Purchasing Land for Public Use**

The San Juan Alpine Task Force ([www.sjalpine.org](http://www.sjalpine.org)) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of historic, scenic and recreation assets in San Juan County. The organization feels that backcountry dispersed development is threatening the quality of life and thus the economic vitality of the area. They are working to create opportunities for acquiring lands through donations, acquisitions and exchanges to protect them. The Task Force is asking for full support from both the RAC and BLM in this initiative. Stiles advised the RAC to offer a formal Resolution to the BLM if they choose to support the Task Force. The RAC would like a presentation on other LWCF priority projects proposed for the SWRAC area, before supporting this single project. Ann McCoy Harold moved that the RAC commend the San Juan Alpine Task Force for working with county governments and Goodtimes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Leasing Notification Process**

Andrea Robinsong stated that many landowners were unaware of the ownership of minerals underlying their properties' surface when they bought, and their surface property rights need to be protected. Robinsong developed a Resolution for the RAC's consideration, which she presented. Harold stated that the notification process should not be the responsibility of the government, nor can the RAC direct the BLM—it can only advise. She felt the last three items of Robinsong's proposed Resolution were too burdensome for the BLM as well. Goodtimes disagreed and pointed out that the half-mile notification stipulation is fair. Today's technology should allow BLM to notify landowners in a timely manner. Tony Gurzick offered that the RAC can advise the BLM to be more proactive in notifying the public of upcoming lease sales, and if they don't improve the process, revisit the issue. Gurzick agreed that the last three items are too onerous on BLM, and the landowners need to take responsibility for becoming informed about minerals ownership under their lands. Robinsong stated that a general statement asking the BLM to do a better job is not enough. Welt suggested that the BLM work with counties to provide an improved notification process. Sharrow pointed out that notification must be consistent Bureauwide, and BLM Colorado is already looking into changing the process. Stiles reminded the RAC that the BLM has already done additional news releases, paper and web postings that are above and beyond what the law requires. Welt asked the RAC to provide references in future Resolutions and letters to substantiate claims made in proposed resolutions. Stiles added that examples are also helpful when submitting requests or suggestions to the BLM. Goodtimes moved to ask the BLM to explore better notification procedures for oil and gas lease sales, and to thoughtfully consider the six points presented in Robinsong's Resolution (shown below). Gulliford seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Six Points:**

Therefore be it resolved that the SWRAC advises the BLM to improve notification in the leasing and drilling of federal oil and gas minerals by:

1. notifying surface estate owners and adjacent property owners within ½ mile of any lease parcel in writing at least 45 days in advance of lease sales;
2. posting lease information on the BLM website 45 days prior to a lease sale. This information should include maps showing the parcels that may be leased;
3. posting legal notice in local papers in the communities that will be affected by the leases;

4. notifying surface estate owners regarding the identity of the lessee within ten working days after a lease is issued;
5. notifying surface estate owners in writing concerning any subsequent decisions regarding a lease, such as modifying or waiving stipulations and approving rights of way; and,
6. notifying surface estate owners within five business days after receiving application for a drilling permit on a lease.

### **Public Comment Period**

Bill Patterson, representing the Uncompahgre Valley Association and Western Colorado Congress, thanked Sharrow and her staff for their support in the recent oil and gas forums hosted by WCC. Patterson stated that the issue of lease sale notification is important, and the public must be informed. His organization endorses the Resolution presented by Robinsong and urges the RAC to adopt the Resolution.

Margie Welch from Montrose stated that the lease sales have impacted her neighborhood. She emphasized that times are changing, and BLM needs to recognize that citizens need to be involved through adequate notice. Many don't know that the government owns the minerals beneath their surface lands. She pointed out that the Colorado Division of Wildlife cannot give the BLM comments on lease parcels unless they are specifically asked, and she supports the Resolution submitted by Robinsong.

Bill Simons with the Animas River Stakeholders Group provided a slide show on damage incurred to the area's wetland resources by off-highway vehicles going off trail. The Stakeholders Group also reclaims abandoned mining sites, and those sites are being damaged as well. Simons asked that BLM consider more informational and warning signage and stated that the State of Colorado needs to license ATVs. Howard Heath reminded everyone that ATVs must be registered each year to operate on public lands and have registration numbers on reflective stickers. Simons thanked the RAC for its presence. Stiles offered that SJPLC is adding another law enforcement officer, but that officer will be responsible for patrolling about 700,000 acres.

### **Silverton Ski Area**

Jen Ader Brill provided the RAC with a brief background on Silverton Mountain. The ski area has concerns with the power transmission line to its property and has experienced delays in obtaining line upgrades from San Miguel Power. They have invested in a generator, but it's not adequate to safely operate its systems. The Town of Silverton also suffers economically when power outages cause canceled reservations. The ski area would like the RAC to recommend that the BLM look at the power line replacement as a maintenance issue, rather than a new installation as no new poles are needed. San Miguel Power has an easement on BLM land and Stiles will look into the matter.

### **Mountain Studies Institute**

Stein provided the RAC with a brief presentation on MSI, which partners with educational institutions to conduct field research. The Avon Hotel provides a gathering place for participating organizations, which includes the EPA and USGS. The Town of Silverton is critical to MSI, as is its work with the San Juan Historical Society, San Juan County and the San

Juan Mountain Center (SJMC). Stiles asked the RAC to consider a Resolution suggesting the SJMC be viewed as office space, allowing administration funding rather than recreation funding. Gulliford moved that the SJMC be considered an office space for BLM and cooperating agencies. Goodtimes seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Other**

Goodtimes proposed a motion to send a letter to the UFO supporting the Hanging Flume preservation project. Gurzick seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Goodtimes also showed a map of San Miguel County and asked that BLM work with the county to protect sage-grouse habitat.

Stiles informed the RAC that six fatalities have occurred on the Animas River this season. BLM is installing signs to inform the public of the skill level required and risks involved in floating this section of the river, and is working with outfitters to improve public safety.

Minimal progress has been made on the HD Mountains EIS. The final EIS is due out in December. The RAC recommendations will be included in the document.

### **Next Meeting, Closing Comments**

Due to budget constraints, a river trip needs to be held in conjunction with a meeting. The Dominguez-Escalante pre-plan has been sent to Washington, but lack of funding will likely postpone the project, possibly to 2008.

Robinsong proposed that a separate organization coordinate a RAC float trip the day before the next meeting. Delta was discussed as the location, and the date is to be determined.

RAC appointments should be announced in August and letters will be sent out by Secretary Norton's office in Washington, DC.

Next meeting topics:

New sage grouse policies and strategies  
BLM improved processes for lease sale notification  
Land Acquisition Projects-Southwestern Colorado

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.