

Southwest Resources Advisory Council
MEETING MINUTES
 Friday, November 14, 2008
 Holiday Inn Express
 910 East Tomichi Avenue
 Gunnison, CO 81230

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Nik Kendziorski, Category 2	Wally White, Category 2
Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Dan Morse, Category 2
Andrea Robinsong, Category 2	Tony Gurzick, Category 3
Kathy Welt, Category 1	Jim Cochran, Category 3
Ken Emory, Category 1	Jim Young, Category 1
Jevin Croteau, Category 1	

Not Present: Al Heaton, Category 1; William Ela, Category 3; Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3; Alan Staehle, Category 3.

BLM/FS Staff

Kenny McDaniels, Manager, Gunnison Field Office	Barb Sharrow, Manager, Uncompahgre Field Office
Bill Dunkelberger, Associate Manager, San Juan Public Lands Office	Julie Jackson, Recreation Planner, Uncompahgre Field Office

Visitors

	Representing	City/Town
John Whitney	Congressman Salazar	Durango
Lawton Grinter	High Country Citizen Alliance	Crested Butte
Bill Bottomly	West Slope Mediation	Montrose
Wade Haerle	Citizen	Grand Junction
Tom Spezze	DOW	Gunnison

Opening Remarks/Designated Federal Officer and RAC Chair Time

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. There was a round of introductions. Today's attendance does not constitute a quorum (one short, category 3).

Barb Sharrow, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Southwest Resource Advisory Council (SWRAC), welcomed new RAC members Wally White, Category 2 and Tony Gurzick, Category 3. Tony Gurzick has previously been a member of the RAC. Betsy Marston and Kelly Wilson were not reappointed.

There was a question on the status of the Canyon of the Ancients sub-committee as Kelly Wilson was chair of that subcommittee. He is no longer a CANM subcommittee member either.

As requested by a resolution from the SWRAC, the next RAC meeting will be a combined meeting for all three CO RAC's. It will start at 1pm Tuesday February 22 – and go through noon on Thursday, February 24, 2009, at the Double Tree Hotel in Grand Junction.

Barb provided an update on three tier restructure. The State Office is presently interviewing candidates from the 45 applications for three District Manager (DM) positions. They hope to have a decision by early January with the DM's in place by early March. No additional District staff will be hired until FY2010. The new districts match present RAC boundaries

BLM is operating on a continuing resolution until March 2009 and are currently transitioning to a new budget system. Travel payments may be delayed. No large purchases nor contracting will occur until the new budget system is in place.

Field Managers Update

Gunnison Field Office (GFO): Kenny McDaniel

Kenny thanked RAC Members Andy Gulliford and Wally White who attended the aspen field trip yesterday. GFO personnel changes include hiring a new Natural Resources Specialist with plans to offer the position on Monday. Kenny had hired a new Archaeologist, but he will not be coming due to a family emergency, so he will advertise the position again. A new administrative support assistant is on board.

The Gunnison Basin Sage Grouse committee took a petition to DOW to allow antler-shed hunting from 10:00 a.m. until sunset in closure areas. RAC member Jim Cochran attended the meeting and reported that the petition was accepted by the DOW and will be considered in a two step process.

Kenny met with town of Crested Butte, regarding the preliminary report for Slate River Trail Project. Due to river course changes and avalanche danger it will not be feasible to build bridges. They may be able to create temporary structures for winter crossings.

The GFO is working on a new project with CSU, the DOW, and the sage grouse committee to research grazing treatments in sage grouse habitat, conditions, chick survival etc.

BLM lost the IBLA appeal of the gold mining project in Lake City. There has been no response from mining proponent and may be due to the economic downturn.

San Juan Public Lands Center (SJPLC) and Canyon of the Ancients National Monument (CANM): Bill Dunkelberger

Bill Dunkelberger introduced himself as the new Associate Field Manager for the SJPLC, he is also cross-designated as Deputy Forest Manager for the USFS. He arrived a few weeks ago from Bishop, CA.

A Press Release was distributed for public comments on an EA to expand uranium and vanadium mining at the Sunday Mines southwest of Naturita, CO.

A Draft EA for the Dennison Mine Expansion near Naturita – is now open for public comment.

The SJPLC is working on a combined land use/RMP supplementary EIS with the USFS. The draft is due out in July 2009.

Starting to work on a Dolores River Management Plan.

Dolores Field Office has received proposals for placement of temporary wind monitoring towers to determine potential for future development of wind energy on the rim of the Dolores river canyon.

Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO): Barb Sharrow

The UFO is nearing completion of the 10-year Land Health Assessment process and renewing grazing permits.

A joint river restoration project on the San Miguel River was successfully completed. They worked with CDOT, San Miguel County and the DOW to keep the river from encroaching on the highway.

An interagency and citizen's group has been formed to look at a North Rim (east of the north rim of the Black Canyon National Park) landscape strategy. They will be looking at all aspects of the land health and use, sage grouse, elk, recreation, etc.

Fencing was finally completed to protect clay-loving wild buckwheat, an endangered species, in north Montrose.

Ken Holsinger, the new fuels lead is in place.

It has been a great fall for prescribed fires. The UFO completed all planned projects for the season.

Uranium exploration appears to be slowing down, and is likely because the price of uranium is down to \$45/lb.

The UFO is working on several oil and gas well proposals in the North Fork area. An EA for 16 wells in the North Fork area will be going out for 30-day review next week. A scoping letter for a 55 well proposal in the North Fork area was sent out today.

The West Elk Mine Mine methane vent wells EIS is in litigation involving the USFS regarding methane gas capture.

The Oil and Gas sale this week had included 17 tracts in original sale, but all but 10 were deferred due to sage grouse issues, potential wild and scenic river issues, and the town of Norwood's source water protection area.

The UFO has started work on their Resource Management Plan and are doing community assessments in 22 communities in 30 days in all the area towns and counties affected by the plan. They are trying to connect early with city/county land use plans to look at how public lands near towns interact with communities and what the communities' concerns are. This is being done prior to the start of formal scoping per NEPA. Notes from community assessments will be posted on the website in January.

Renewable Energy Presentation Maryanne Kurtinatis, COSO

Maryanne gave a presentation on the geothermal, wind, and solar energy national programmatic EIS and each of the renewable energy concerns were discussed.

Update on Gunnison Travel Management Plan: Kenny McDaniels

The Travel Management Plan is being done jointly with the USFS. 86% of Gunnison County is public land. The plan will be ready for area managers to review after Thanksgiving, and out for public comment after the holidays. Presently there are 1,650 miles of roads on Gunnison BLM. The most conservative alternative would leave 900 miles of road. The preferred alternative leaves 1,200 miles of road. There was much discussion amongst RAC members on language allowing parking outside of designated roadways. Copies will go out to the RAC members. Provisions for sage grouse vary in alternatives.

Update on Alpine Loop Plan: Kenny McDaniel

A handout was provided on the Alpine Loop Plan update. A draft plan EA will be complete by the end of December or January with final plan completed by April. The Alpine Loop has seen a big increase in ATV use in recent years. The city of Lake City does not allow ATV's to pass through town, so ATV's cannot make a complete loop. The plan does not make any mention of a future NCA for the Alpine Loop area, but does not restrict it from happening. The RAC may want to consider a future resolution on a potential Alpine Loop NCA.

Update on Dry Creek Management Plan: Julie Jackson/Barb Sharrow

Julie Jackson made a presentation on the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan. The plan is on its way to the printer and will be available for 30 day public comment soon.

Tentative SWRAC Meeting schedule for 2009

February 24 – 26 Grand Junction Doubletree Hotel, Combined 3 CO RAC's

May 29 - Dolores or Canyons of the Ancients Area

August 28 - Silverton Area

November 6 -Delta area

Public Comment Period:

Tom Spezze SW Regional Manager for DOW stopped in to introduce himself to the RAC. He has been in the Gunnison area for ten years.

Wade Haerle, Grand Junction, CO, private citizen (not representing anyone today)

Wade handed out a "Summary of Testimony by Rebecca W. Watson, Federal Preemption of COGCC Proposed Rules".

Nik Kendziorkski: A mountain lion exhibit being developed, looking for input on Mountain lions in SW Colorado. The exhibit, "Beast in the Garden", is planned to open in August 2009, and may be available as a traveling exhibit.

Kathy Welt: Had a discussion with Robbie LeValle, she is concerned that not all of the BLM range specialists/technicians have been through the new rangeland management training. At a future RAC meeting, consider a letter of support that Range specialists complete the training.

Possible RAC agenda items for 2009

Dolores river wild/scenic area – possible river trip
Jim Burnell - CGS presentation on energy minerals
2009 update on Dominguez/Escalante
Ames electrical plant FERC relicensing process.
Micro Hydro-electric renewable energy
Speaker on methane capture (Wally White has contact)
Southern Ute off reservation hunting rights – Tony Gurzick or tribal members
“Toxic” fluids used in mining/drilling operations
NCA advantages
Sage Grouse
Weeds/HLI
Alpine Loop tour

Healthy Lands Initiative Update: Bill Dunkelberger

HLI funding will occur for FY2009, but don't know how much will be distributed.
GFO will be working on weeds
The UFO will partial funding for 2009 and will go towards weeds on the San Miguel project.
Colorado BLM HLI dollars will go toward sage grouse, riparian areas etc
The biological treatment with bugs (beetles) is working well on tamarisk.

National Register listing successes: Bill Dunkelberger

The Tobasco Mine and Mill Complex was listed on National Register as of October 7, 2008
Several historic mining sites in San Juan County have been nominated. The Town of Silverton has received a Preserve America Grant. A grant has been received to help stabilize the Pacific Boarding House. A grant to conduct a “Settlement Pattern Survey for the Northern San Juan Basin EIS” has been awarded. Regarding Radioactive Mineral Mining Context, they are completing a survey of historic radioactive mine sites.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.