

Southwest Resource Advisory Council

Minutes of Meeting on Friday, October 24, 2003
Fort Lewis College, Center of SW Studies
Durango, CO.

9:00 a.m. Mark Stiles said that two other people may show up, but could be delayed at the pass due to road construction. He will also determine if there is a quorum.

Dave Umbell called for introductions: **Kathy Welt** (Hotchkiss) – Energy/Minerals; **Alan Staehle, Howard Heath** (Montrose) – Off-Road ATV Vehicles, State Broker/Farmer/Rancher; **Ann McCoy** (Bayfield) - Citizens at Large, **Lon Abadie** (Durango) – Energy/Minerals, Attorney; **Nik Kendziorski** (Durango) – History/ Archaeology; **Andy Gulliford**, Ph.D, Director, Center of Southwest Studies, FLC, Durango, **Art Goodtimes**, San Miguel County Commissioner, Western Colorado Congress Senate representing environmental interests; **Mark Stiles**-BLM/FS (Durango) and he has determined that attendees today constitute a quorum. If anyone plans to leave early please let us know; we have a quorum in Category 2; **Della Zeller**, Executive Assistant and note taker; **Tony Gurzick** (Durango) – CDOW; **John Field** – Rancher, represent Grazing; **Kelly Wilson** – Montezuma County Commissioner; **Andrea Robinsong** (Hotchkiss) – Conservationism; **Dave Ubell** - Montrose County Commissioner; **LouAnn Jacobson**, Manager of CANM/AHC; **Howard Sargent** – Deputy Forest Supervisor/Associate Center Manager; **Ann Bond** – Public Affairs, Forest Service (does external affairs work and coordinator across the unit) and **Katie Aggeler** (Durango) – Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell on the Western Slope District-Director.

Dave Ubell says thank you to Ann/Mallory/John for working on the draft Sustaining Working Landscape Initiative letter the past month.

Mark Stiles mentioned that folks occupying the entry way, first floor are connected with the San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA) and the Site Stewardship Program (SSP) and asked LouAnn to tell the group about SSP. She said SSP started four years ago with a grant from the Colorado State Historical Society to write a planning document putting together a Site Stewards Program. The fund also helped implement the Sties Stewards Program. The Site Stewards go through a two-day workshop learning some basics about cultural resources, how to visit a site and implement and are assigned an archaeological site that they are responsible for monitoring on a regular basis. She is unsure as to how many people there are on the program as a whole but CANM has between 30 – 40 volunteers that go out and visit archaeological sites and they have become a very important facet of our cultural resources program and our eyes and ears out on the ground. Every year SJMA usually puts together a three-day conference, two days of lectures or discussion bringing special speakers and then the last day consists of a field trip or a special workshop.

Andy commented that he is happy to host the SSP; it is an event that goes on all day and he encouraged RAC to wander downstairs during break to see the exhibits, mentioned the silent auction and Native American dancers participating later in the day.

Mark Stiles gave a brief summary on SJMA's work with FS/BLM and where they are located. They manage a lot of our visitor services with the help of volunteers, not just in Durango but also Dolores, Pagosa and Columbine and we get a huge amount of support out of this group and they do a great job. We are well over \$1 million worth of contributed labor.

Other Topics: Mark Stiles shared BLM State Director, Ron Wenker's tour of the whole unit and hiking adventures. Mark also stated that Howard Sargent is our Deputy Forest Supervisor and is a BLM employee; Mark is now a FS employee (Howard came from the FS and Mark came from BLM) and they are interchangeable. If you ever need to get hold of either one, Della keeps track. He reminded all RAC members to get their travel to Della for processing.

Old Business: Mark says that Barry wants to bring Sustaining Working Landscapes to a close – it's on the agenda later on. There was an article in the paper from the Director of BLM talking to Oil and Gas Industry but being fairly critical of BLM managers across the unit. At noon today, BLM managers and most State Office minerals staffs across the oil and gas producing states will have a conference call with the BLM Director.

Andy is interested in talking about the oil and gas industry in today's meeting. As a RAC member he gets a lot of public comments; people are very concerned about oil and gas and decisions seem to be coming very quickly from the top down. Those who have contacted Andy want to know what they can do but he does not know how to answer.

Mark says we may have time on the agenda later for discussion. At a previous RAC meeting held at the Center of SW Studies, there was a briefing on Northern San Juan Basin EIS. Mark gave a brief summary for new members. Industry has proposed a level of drilling for natural gas within the Fruitland formation in the San Juan basin coal just outside of town; we are talking about an area as close as two miles from this building and then over toward Pagosa Springs. Industry has 296 wells they would like to drill. Our planning base that we have in place since about 1992 projected a certain level of development, did an analysis, and figured how we'd manage that level of development. If we drilled 26 more wells in that particular part of the basin we've gotten to the level we've analyzed. Anything beyond that is something new that was not contemplated in 1980/1990. This is why we launched into an EIS to say "now that you are talking about smaller drilling windows, this means a greater density of wells and putting wells in the HD Mountains which is a particular area of interest, then we'll need to do further analysis. The draft EIS (joint BLM/FS) will be out in December however we may have to hang on to the package until after the holidays. The comment period will account for the holidays being in the middle of it. This will be very controversial. Mark received a flyer from the Wilderness Society (membership drive) and it gave a list of the Bush Administration's major proposals threatening wildlands in the nation and the first one on the list was the Roan Plateau and San Juan Basin was second.

Andy says that if there is an actual public comment question and answer session, he will be happy to offer the Center. Ann Bond will contact him.

Mark explained that parties will come in and apply for a certain use of public lands and then we are obligated to go through an analytical process and make our decision as to whether it should be authorized or how it should be authorized, and almost every time it seems like we end up as if we are the ones who own the proposal as opposed to an outside party. We are always on the target zone when all we really are just trying to figure out the best way to manage the public lands. We are going to be in the center of the target zone on the HD's because of the huge amount of interest. The HD Mountains are inventoried roadless areas for the Forest Service, although there are existing valid leases for oil and gas and that is the issue. We are just embarking on revising our Forest Management Plan which is now about 20 years old. This will be in the press in January/February. Howard and Mark did some brainstorming as to how to get the best decision and make the best use of public comments. This is a challenge because there

are six or seven companies involved, they have their leases and they are helping to fund the process.

Kathy W. She wants to make clear that this financing package that both the FS/BLM has moved to overlap the last 5-8 years, it's a very detailed contractual process that all the industry does to provide the boss and they have no control whatsoever on data, who does the work, etc.. And the other point she wants to make is that the process is very similar in having similar data in oil and gas element in the San Juans and what is going to happen in the piceance stage and is happening in the north side of it in the Rifle Guard Station, but when talking about resource then it's mixed; there is no similarity between the type of balance that is going on in the San Juan's to happen in resource because they are different.

Public Comment:

Ann McCoy has a Southern Ute friend who is an archaeologist and he wants to know who is responsible for applications for permits to drill in BLM and who has ownership of the minerals.

Response by Mark Stiles: BLM manages the down-hole portion, in trust for Tribes nation-wide. This includes application for permit to drill, i.e. a company already has a lease, they come in and file an application for permit to drill (it talks about where they are going to drill, how deep, how big the hold is going to be, what kind of surface disturbance, how large the pad will be, what kind of pit, circulation water disposal, concrete, etc.), all this comes in a APD. It is then filed and BLM takes responsibility for everything that is down-hole. We can't always separate down-hole from surface because you store mud, water just to keep and maintain circulation as they drill. BLM works closely with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who take care of the surface and concerns on the cost. BLM's primary responsibility is to take care of down-hole to make sure geology and casing is done properly and to make sure Tribes minerals are recovered properly and they are not wasted or contaminated. They are getting the royalty coming out of the down-hole.

Ellen Stein, Executive Director, Mountain Studies Institute (MSI). Ellen gave a presentation on MSI and distributed handouts. She explained that they are building an institute located in Silverton, Colorado to harness information and knowledge about the San Juans. They are concerned with biology, cultural, social, and historical information. They are putting data on a website to make it available to the public. Millions of dollars of public money go into studies every year and is supported by agencies such as the Forest Service and BLM. The website address is www.mountainstudies.org. They have an active board and Ellen is the first Director of the organization. She gave credit to Katie Aggeler for helping them to secure a Congressional Appropriation that Senator Campbell made on their request. She is in an active fundraising mode figuring out how to diversify their work. MSI is co-locating on 1000 sq. feet on Blair Street in Silverton with SJMA and it is being so well received that the Regional Office of the Forest Service is giving their staff kudos for engaging in partnership with MSI, sharing resources, being efficient and being in service to the public. MSI had over 3500 visitors between July 10 and October 20, 2003. SJMA manages a book store same as they do at the SJPLC. The Education Director of Office has space in that facility and there is a small interpretative area about the mountain environmental exhibits, avalanche exhibits, etc. that they will be rotating on a regular basis. They are exploring ways on how to better serve various organizations in the area and mentioned projects who they are currently working with. She adds that for the interest of agencies, anything in public education they want to support about lands and resources, but also in helping them get their research needs met, MSI has contacts with researchers that want to do work here and MSI is aware of an inventory of projects in fuels to be conducted, please contact

them and they will be match maker. MSI is a not-for-profit independent mountain research and education institution established in 2002.

Andy Gulliford's comment: On his cultural heritage preservation site MSI is really useful. There are thousands of acres of BLM land that were mining claims that were never patented. There are still structures on the claims and the opportunity to use that as some kind of a teaching lab hasn't happened. This is really exciting because it will let the public know about the value of mining in Southwest Colorado in a way that right now doesn't exist. He thinks that as a tourist mechanism, it will work really well. The Forest Service has done a superb job of supporting this, as well as Senator Campbell's Office. The real question is: can the community of Silverton and Ouray realize that their future is indeed their past in terms of tourism, and how do you use these historic resources on public land as an economic vehicle in terms of preservation.

Lon: We are involved in a monitoring study in Telluride as part of the ski expansion and this is a very important aspect of letting that development go forward and satisfy some of the concerns in the community and it's a wonderful research. Dr. David Cooper has been working with them closely, pretty much a national expert. This is information they are holding on to on our little watershed by having the ability to give everyone on the San Juan's the opportunity to look at what we are doing. He also shared information on a study by EPA.

Mark Stiles: On the BLM side, this year we got an appropriation that we'll be working on something for 2005 for out-years for science funding. Mark explained the process and theme.

Andy says that for the record, the BLM was extremely useful in doing work on the Eureka boarding house. Nick was hired by owners to do national register nomination and will be voted in mid-November. Twenty feet was on BLM land; it is 11,000 sq. ft., three story building.

Old Business:

Brief cases handed out to those who did not get one before. Thanks Steve.

LouAnn Jacobson – Update on Canyon of the Ancients National Monument: LouAnn Jacobson, Manager of CANM had several handouts. She summarized the highlights/achievements of the AHC/CANM and Cultural Stewardship to the group. She mentioned the various meetings and workshops held for the Monument and how well everything went. Received many positive comments

Service First Initiative Update: Mark Stiles presented a short PowerPoint presentation discussing how the Forest Service and BLM came together. In 1995 a joint agency was created with Cal Joyner as the Associate Forest Supervisor/Area Manager. In 1998 the SJFO-BLM was created. BLM approved the organization in 2000. This has been an institutional success because we share leadership, share power and it is a one-stop shopping. The savings is in co-location. Most of the employees are cross delegated.

Lunch Break

The agenda for the day was set as follows:

9:30 a.m. Public Comment
9:45 a.m. Old Business
10:00 a.m. Update on Canyon of the Ancients National Monument
10:30 a.m. Service First Initiative Update
11:30 a.m. Lunch
12:30 p.m. Election of Southwest RAC Chairperson
1:00 p.m. Finalize Feedback on the Sustaining Working Landscapes Initiative
3:30 p.m. Public Comment
4:00 p.m. Discussion – BLM’s National Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy
5:00 p.m. Adjourn

Southwest Resource Advisory Council Members: Howard Heath, Dave Ubell, Kelly Wilson, John Field, Art Goodtimes, Nik Kendziorski, Anthony Gurzick, Lon Abadie, Andrew Guilliford, Kathy Welt, Kelly Wilson and Andrea Robinsong. The attendees today constitute a quorum.

Election of Southwest RAC Chairperson: Dave wanted to know what the group desired. Art stated that continuity was important and Howard made a motion to nominate Dave Ubell for Chair. Ellen Stein nominated Kathy Welt for Chair. Members voted and Dave Ubell received 10 votes to Kathy’s four. Motion carried. Dave Ubell is Chair. Kelly made a motion to nominate Kathy Welt as Co-chair and it was seconded by Art. All members were in favor and motion carried.

Other (Grazing): Lengthy discussion on regarding grazing and how ownership would be taxed (possessory tax regarding allotments, ownership improvements) and tax implications of improvement on joint ownerships. There is concern regarding livestock use, re-issuance of permits, common allotments, etc. Can allotments be purchased and what are the incentives! Questions/concerns were raised regarding tax on Wilderness Study Areas, AUM’s, etc. Many questions remain – RAC needs more information

- RAC expects to stay involved
- May not be enough spelled out in support; support in concept only
- Where do the RAC acres come from – need clarification and specifics
- What are tax implications of improvement and joint ownership?
 - The cost of assessment by the taxing entity may exceed the tax
- Specific language in regard to wilderness is needed
- What are the incentives
- Draft letter – deadline November 1.

Finalize Feedback on the Sustaining Working Landscapes Initiative: At the September 18th RAC meeting a SWL subcommittee was formed to work on developing a response supporting the concept and summarize concerns or questions as discussed in previous RAC meetings. Ann McCoy distributed a copy of the draft cover letter to the group and after reviewing it, a smaller group was formed to finalize the letter. This was done on-site.

Next Meeting:

The next RAC meeting was set for December 12th in Ridgeway State Park (Alan will make meeting room arrangements).

Next Agenda (12/12/03):

SOLRC Update

FS/BLM Coop in regarding to Oil and Gas – 1 hour

Extend invitation to GMUG National Forest and others

Future Meeting Topics:

New Planning Starts

Sage Grouse

- Appropriate involvement of the SWRAC in National Energy policy
 - Where are we headed?
 - What choices are before BLM
 - How does National policy affect us locally?
 - How should BLM respond
 - What is the role of RAC
 - Advisory to BLM

February Meeting – Silverton

- History
- Legal aspect of RS-2477 (Invite Mark Larson)
- Utah Agreement
- Effects of Wildlife grazing on allotments
- PLP
- CPR
- UP

April Meeting - Dolores

- Watershed Coalition
- Water Issues
- Transferable Development Rights
- AML

Public Comments

Suzan Franzheim thanked RAC for asking for public comment in the newspaper. She provided handouts with numbered items from 1 – to 6 and is looking for a solution. She gave a hypothesis of infestation and the growing numbers of beetle killed and dying evergreens and how to increase the possibility of well-pad perimeter FLASH-fires, recommending safety planning.

BLM's National Sage-Grouse Conservation Strategy: Mallory Dimmitt briefly discussed the history of sage-grouse and the various groups working together to make a difference. She says the objective is restoring habitat and funds are needed. Population numbers are decreasing from year to year. For example, in San Miguel County there were 31 males in 2002, in 2003 the numbers were down to 16 males. This may be partly related to drought. There is a real concern with declining numbers. She stated that sage-grouse are listed as a sensitive species in some states and questioned why all states are not the same. It was stated that this was being considered for special review.

It was proposed that Mallory draft a letter requesting funds.

Andy made a motion that Mallory draft a response to the draft sage-grouse plan and Kathy seconded. Voting was unanimous.

The Meeting Adjourned at 5:00 p.m.