

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council
UNAPPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

August 28, 2009

Mosley Theater
Lake City, CO

ATTENDEES

Resource Advisory Council Members

Jevin Croteau, Category 1	Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Jim Cochran, Category 3
Ken Emory, Category 1	Nik Kendziorski, Category 2	William Ela, Category 3
Al Heaton, Category 1	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2	Alan Staehle, Category 3
Kathy Welt, Category 1	Wally White, Category 2	Tony Gurzick, Category 3
Jim Young, Category 1		

Not present: Dan Morse, Category 2; Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3

BLM/FS Staff

Lori Armstrong, BLM, Manager, Southwest District	Barbara Hite, Physical Scientist, BLM Colorado State Office
Arden Anderson, Recreation & Wilderness Specialist, BLM Gunnison Field Office	LouAnn Jacobson, BLM, Manager, Anasazi Heritage Center & Canyons of the Ancients National Monument
Jed Botsford, BLM/FS, Recreation Planner, Columbine Field Office	Matt Janowiak, BLM, Acting Field Manager, Columbine Field Office
Erin Curtis, BLM, Public Affairs Officer	Barb Sharrow, BLM, Manager, Uncompahgre Field Office
Bill Dunkelberger, BLM/FS, Associate Center Manager, San Juan Public Land Center	Brian St. George, BLM, Manager, Gunnison Field Office

Visitors

	Representing	City/Town
John Whitney	Congressman Salazar	Durango
Ty Churchwell	Trout Unlimited	Durango
Ron Anthony	Anthony & Associates	Lafayette
Kim Dugan	Anthony & Associates	Lafayette
Henry Woods		Lake City

Opening Remarks/Introductions

Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Introductions included new Gunnison Field Manager Brian St. George. St. George provided information on his background and welcomed all to the Lake City area of the Gunnison Field Office.

Southwest District Manager Lori Armstrong was also introduced. She spent the last four years as Field Manager for BLM's Shoshone Office in Idaho, and 13 years prior to that working for BLM in Richfield, Utah. She reported that the Southwest District management team participated in leadership training last week, and heard from new BLM Director Bob Abbey. Director Abbey was a career BLM employee prior to retirement working in multiple states, including as Associate State Director in Colorado and he retired from the BLM as State Director in Nevada. He was confirmed as BLM Director in early August.

Abbey identified four key topics for BLM. They include:

1. Renewable energies – wind, solar, geothermal, transmission lines, etc.
2. Treasured landscapes
3. Youth and youth initiatives
4. Energy development– a focus on producing energy locally and nationally, lessening impact on foreign sources; this includes understanding and assessing impacts on climate change

Armstrong reported that BLM is currently in the hiring process for a new Colorado State Director.

Designated Federal Officer Barb Sharrow reported that RAC member nominations are moving through the process. We are still waiting for the Secretary of the Interior to make the appointments. If appointments are not made by the next Southwest RAC meeting November 6, the sitting RAC members will continue to serve. A message will be sent out to the RAC members as soon as we get word about the nominations.

Update on the statewide Recreation RAC – Ken Emory is the Southwest RAC representative. That RAC is also waiting for reappointments to be made. They won't have a quorum to meet until that occurs. The statewide Recreation RAC – USFS and BLM – looks at issues where we want to charge fees or change fees.

Field Office Updates

Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) Update, Manager Barb Sharrow

UFO Resource Management Plan (RMP): Sharrow reported that the UFO is still working on getting its Resource Management Plan project contracted although it should be soon. Public scoping meetings will start about 30 days after the contract is awarded, likely in mid to late October. The UFO has sent out letters to towns and counties, and other agencies in the planning area, asking if they would like to be cooperating agencies for the planning process. Eighteen have agreed to be cooperating agencies.

The Southwest RAC has talked about possibly creating a subgroup for the UFO RMP. Sharrow said she would welcome such a subgroup. The UFO will be scheduling fairly frequent meetings the first year or two. Subgroup members and cooperating agencies would have to attend all of those meetings. All meetings would be advertised and are open to the public. As such, the time

commitment would be fairly significant. Sharrow suggested that at least one person from the SW RAC act as a liaison to any subgroup that is formed.

Dominguez-Escalante NCA: Sharrow reported that the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) was formally dedicated at an event on August 12 attended by U.S. Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. About 150 people attended. The NCA enjoys support from all three counties – Montrose, Delta and Mesa. The BLM will be developing a resource management plan for the area – UFO will be working in conjunction with the BLM Grand Junction Field Office to accomplish that task. Interim D-E NCA manager Katie Stevens will be coordinating the planning in the short term. Sharrow said BLM will be hiring a permanent manager for the D-E NCA eventually. The legislation for the new NCA stipulates that there must be an advisory committee appointed to help develop the resource management plan. That will be a 10-member RAC, and BLM will be announcing the call for nominations for that RAC soon. There must be representatives from Mesa, Montrose and Delta counties, as well as a grazing permittee within the D-E NCA. The other six positions will represent the various interests within the NCA. Sharrow said she hopes to have a community celebration for the new NCA this fall.

Dry Creek Travel Plan: Sharrow reported that the UFO received one valid protest from Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition and Trails Preservation Alliance on its plan. That protest now goes to the Washington Office (WO) staff, who look at the plan and administrative record to answer all issues in the protest. Once BLM has addressed the protest, the public has another 30 days to appeal individual route by route decisions. Those appeals go to the Department of Interior Board of Land Appeals. UFO must go through all of these processes before the plan can be implemented. That will likely be next spring or even later.

UFO is conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the rest of the field office regarding going from open to limited and existing routes. Travel management decisions are normally made in the RMP process; however, due to the booming populations in the area, UFO is seeing impacts on trails now and needs to make decisions now. Further travel management planning will be done area by area.

Land Health Assessments: BLM offices have been working on a 10-year land health assessment process as part of renewing grazing permits. UFO is starting the second round of assessments this year for the next 10 years. This time UFO is trying something new. Staff will go out and do land health assessments as before, but will look at how all other activities in addition to grazing have also impacted land health. UFO will look at recreation sites, rights-of-way, and all other activities that occur on the land with respect to land health assessments and look in depth in an interdisciplinary way at what might be causing any impacts. Staff will be going out late September and early October to look at Escalante Canyon, which is next on the schedule.

Gunnison Field Office (GFO) Update, Manager Brian St. George

Grazing Permits: GFO is also conducting land health assessments and term permit renewals for grazing permits. They won't complete the 10-year process this year; it will roll into next year a bit. They are working closely with the BLM Colorado State Office, the Stockgrower's

Association, and other partners to make sure everyone's informed of what is occurring and the status. The GFO is focusing on improving its outreach and communication with its permittees. This is a top priority for the office.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Projects – GFO has about seven projects funded through stimulus money. Most are umbrella projects, under each there are multiple things going on. Two abandoned mine lands (AML) projects include funding that pays for as many as 15 AML closures. Other projects include recreation site improvements. Most will begin in 2010.

Renewable Energy Projects: GFO has two opportunities to be working on renewable energy projects. One is a geothermal project proposal including BLM lands, USFS lands and state lands within the Gunnison basin. GFO is working closely with the county and USFS on their parts of the proposal. The proposal is from an outside source, requesting to lease lands for the intent of developing. They are not yet analyzing actual development, but looking now at whether it's an appropriate use of those lands. The proposal is for exploration to determine the geothermal potential on state land board lands. The same proponent has nominated about 12 sections of USFS and BLM lands for leasing.

Western State College is about to bring a biomass boiler on line. BLM and USFS are working to understand the project and how to support it. There is a good local market for biomass (wood) products. BLM offered a letter of support to further develop a market for biomass projects locally.

Travel Management Plan – GFO is working on a travel management plan for the Gunnison Basin in conjunction with the USFS. A public comment period has closed, and staff is working through comments now and trying to develop a preferred alternative.

San Juan Public Lands Center Update, Associate Manager Bill Dunkelberger

Dunkelberger reported that several members of the San Juan Public Lands Center law enforcement and cultural staff participated in investigations and enforcement actions on the recent archaeological artifacts theft cases this summer. BLM hopes the cases send a message that collecting historic or prehistoric artifacts on public lands won't be tolerated.

The center is working on a joint BLM/USFS land use plan. The center had to do a supplemental environmental impact statement to accommodate increased potential for oil and gas. Also the oil and gas Reasonable and Foreseeable Development report for the entire unit had to be redone. The center had hoped to get a draft out in November, but it probably will now go out for public comment on January 10. The goal is to get a record of decision on a proposed RMP in December 2010.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) Update, Manager LouAnn Jacobson

Jacobsen reported that CANM is continuing to work on oil and gas and grazing permits. Briefings on the RMP have been provided to congressional representatives, the SW RAC

Monument RAC Subgroup, County Commissioners, the Wilderness Society, Colorado Historical Society, Division of Wildlife, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the National Parks Service. A tribal consultant is scheduled in early September.

CANM is currently replacing the plaza at the Heritage Center. One of ARRA projects for the Center will fund the installment of photovoltaic panels at the center. The Center is analyzing three options for a location.

Columbine Field Office (CFO) Update, Acting Field Manager Matt Janowiak

Janowiak reported that the CFO expects to have all grazing range permit issuing projects signed by the end of year. The office has issued several rights-of-way around Silverton, most of them for folks looking to build roads to get to mining claims to build cabins. The CFO recently got a new office building on its compound, and now all staff are in one location. Perins Peak continues to be a hub of activity lately. There is the potential to withdraw the Perins Peak area from mineral leasing. No mineral leases currently exist there and one recent nomination for leasing was deferred from the lease sale. The CFO is also looking at a joint fuels reduction and habitat improvement project that would include state and BLM land that is critical big game habitat.

Staff is trying to launch a fuels reduction project at Animas City Mountain just north of Durango, as well. They are currently trying to get access through private lands. The hope is to use hand crews for the project, and ARRA funding might make that possible.

A number of safety closures have been implemented near Hound Mountain Mines. Recently there was an incident with a contractor running across the tundra with ATVs. The site has been reclaimed now and the incident resolved.

The CFO AML program lead took a position in the BLM national office. The CFO is now looking at filling that position sometime this winter. AML is a very dynamic program. The Animas River was not supporting aquatic life in Silverton – now thanks to AML projects, it does. Metal loading has gone down considerably in the last 13 years. The stretch of river is now suitable for consideration for Wild and Scenic designation where it was not 10 years ago. Water quality has been dramatically improved thanks to the AML program.

Alpine Triangle Recreation Area Management Plan Update – Arden Anderson, BLM Recreation & Wilderness Specialist

Anderson provided an update on the Alpine Triangle RMP. The last plan was finalized in 1986.

The proposed plan finds that the current plan is working well. Some changes are being suggested, including:

- Meet state's goals for a scenic byway management plan
- Break the area down into three recreation management zones with management goals for each. The three areas are:
 - Alpine Backcountry
 - Heritage Roads

- Animas & Lake Fork Rivers
- Mountain bikes stay on designated routes
- 16 miles of existing trails added to system so they can be maintained
- Recommend adding 15 miles of Corkscrew Pass to the scenic byway
- Expanding facilities and improve several trailheads
- Work to distribute visitors more evenly throughout the year

The plan will go back out for public review and comment this fall. A final decision will hopefully be made by the end of the year.

Update on Potential Land Acquisitions in Silverton Area – Matt Janowiak

Janowiak provided an update on several land acquisition proposals in the Silverton area.

In one proposal, Sunnyside Gold would give BLM some of its mining claims, and in return would acquire BLM properties with tailing ponds on them. This acquisition has been in works for seven years and the hope is to have it done by end of calendar year.

Another project nearing completion involves BLM land adjacent to the town of Silverton including two parcels deeded to the town of Silverton. BLM staff is hoping to get cadastral surveys done this fall, and finalize the transfer next year. Silverton's goal is to create nature trails and camping areas on the land. The town is also hoping the land will give them a little more control over where people camp out there on holiday weekends, as well as where people ride ATVs and motorcycles.

The Trust for Public Lands approached BLM with a couple of willing sellers of mining claims in Jackson, around Gladstone and Hancock Gulch. BLM staff is looking at the parcels now to see if they are interested and determine the state of the parcels. Other mining claims in San Juan and Hinsdale counties have been suggested for either exchange or donation to the federal government and BLM staff is also working with the counties to determine suitability.

CANM RMP Presentation

LouAnn Jacobson briefed the RAC on the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Resource Management Plan revision. The Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Canyons of the Ancients National Monument was released July 31. A 30-day protest period will end August 31. Protests are expected. Upon resolution of all protests, the BLM will issue an Approved RMP and Record of Decision (ROD).

The Proposed RMP will provide a framework for future management direction and appropriate uses of the Monument. It emphasizes cultural-resource values and protection, as well as natural-resource protection and enhancement, while providing for resource use and development. Its land-use planning and implementation decisions will guide multiple-use management of the Monument, in addition to the guidance in the Presidential Proclamation and existing laws and regulations.

Planning documents will be posted on-line at:

http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/BLM_Programs/land_use_planning/rmp/canyons_of_the_ancients/documents/prmp.html.

Discussion took place regarding the CANM RMP Sub-RAC. Al Heaton made a motion that the CANM Sub-RAC continue to exist as a subgroup to the SW RAC. Andy Gulliford seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Hanging Flume Proposal Presentation

Ron Anthony of Anthony & Associates made a presentation regarding a proposal to restore a portion of the Hanging Flume near Gateway.

Heaton moved that the SW RAC pass a resolution urging the BLM to support the efforts to stabilize and protect the flume. Bill Ela seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (see Resolution 2009-1).

Public Comment Period

Chair Kathy Welt opened the public comment period at 2:30 p.m.

Ty Churchwell, of Trout Unlimited (TU) introduced himself and TU's Sportsmen's Conservation Project. The project is focusing on getting some kind of federal protection designation for two areas – the Hermosa Creek area and the Alpine Triangle, whether it be by NCA or other designation.

John Whitney, of Congressman Salazar's staff commented regarding the Congressman's wilderness proposal in SW Colorado. His staff is sorting through public comments received and are trying to address concerns. The Congressman is hoping to have something to introduce in the fall, depending on how discussions go.

Camille Richard of the Lake Fork Watershed Stakeholders said the group is set to merge with the Lake Fork Valley Conservancy. The focus is the Lake Fork Watershed, and one of its primary objectives is the cleanup of abandoned mines, working closely with BLM and other federal and state stakeholders. The key initiative now is the Alpine Triangle. The group is trying to identify a clump of private lands it can acquire through the Trust for Public Lands or with the county through a land trade with BLM.

Henry Woods, Mayor pro tem for the town of Lake City reported that he is well aware that the Alpine Loop is a big part of the town's bread and butter, as the town is experiencing a lot of heritage tourism. The town would applaud any restoration and preservation of historic buildings on the loop. The town voted three times to not allow ATVs on its streets in town. Woods said the State of Colorado should do something to register ATVs statewide, as that would solve the problem for the town. Businesses in town do transport ATV users, and the town put in an ATV parking area. However, the lack of bathrooms at those parking areas has become a serious

problem. Woods also mentioned that he has 170 acres of mining claims he would be interested in trading with the BLM.

Heaton of the SWRAC said he is involved in a sage grouse grazing study project funded to do an extensive study of effects of grazing and sage grouse together, and he wants to make a motion for us to support this and encourage BLM cooperation and coordination to complete this study, which is very important to grazing, the land and sage grouse species.

Jim Cochran provided more information on the study. It is looking at the impacts of grazing on Gunnison Sage Grouse populations in the Upper Gunnison Basin, including Gunnison and Saguache counties. The group has a strong commitment from DOW and legislators to support funding of this project for six years at a half million dollars a year. They have support from USFWS, who is involved in designing the project.

GFO Manager Brian St. George reported that BLM is cooperating in the project and said he would welcome a resolution from the RAC in continuing to do that.

Heaton made a motion that the RAC urge the BLM to continue to support and be involved in the development of the Gunnison Sage Grouse grazing research. Gulliford seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Antlershed Hunting Discussion

The RAC deferred discussion of antlershed issue to the next meeting.

ARRA Update

San Juan Public Lands Center:

ARRA provided \$12 million on USFS side, including \$5 million for roads, \$2 million for trails, and \$2.5 million for recreation facility maintenance.

Funding was also received for hazardous fuel reduction, restoration of a guard station, and Chimney Rock site stabilization.

On the BLM side, CANM and the Dolores FO received most of the ARRA funding. CANM is moving ahead with the installation of photovoltaic panels. Both Dolores and CANM are working on tamarisk removal in the upper Dolores River watershed.

About \$250,000 in funding was also received for an AML project on the Evelyn Mine above Silverton. That project will be done next year.

The Center held a half-day workshop for contractors providing information on how to submit proposals on these projects and regular projects. It was very well attended and well received. A follow up session allowed potential contractors to talk to purchasing agents and get online to see how to sign up and use the online system.

UFO: Sharrow reported that UFO received 17 ARRA projects, including installing photovoltaic panels on the building in Montrose, and putting stucco on the office building and making improvements to the parking lot.

There are seven projects are in the Gunnison Gorge NCA – all are proceeding.

UFO will fill three term positions funded by ARRA, including a wildlife biologist, an archaeologist and a recreation planner. Job creation impacts will probably start to be seen starting this fall.

GFO: A list of ARRA projects in the Gunnison Field Office was provided to RAC members.

Update on Healthy Lands Initiative

Sharrow provided an update on the Healthy Lands Initiative. UFO received Healthy Landscape money for weed abatement in the West Paradox area. Weed treatment has been very successful. Staff had funding to treat 200 acres, but ended up treating 1,200 acres.

Discussion Regarding Resolutions from the Northwest RAC

RAC members asked that air quality and social science resolutions from the Super RAC meeting be put on the next SW RAC agenda.

Gulliford made a motion that the SW RAC support the NW RAC resolution regarding the Wild Horse and Burro program. Heaton seconded. Discussion ensued. **A vote was taken on Resolution 2009-2. The motion passed with Robinsong abstaining and Emory voting no.**

Gulliford moved that the SW RAC pass Resolution 2009-3 supporting the withdrawal of lands from mineral leasing on the State Wildlife area near Perins Peak where there currently are no leases or leasing proposals. Gurzick seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed, with Croteau voting no.

UFO RMP Sub-RAC Discussion

The RAC members discussed the creation of a sub-RAC to assist the UFO in developing its RMP.

Robinson moved that the SW RAC authorize a Sub-RAC for the UFO for RMP Revision. The sub-RAC would include one representative from the SW RAC, and three people from each of category one and category two, with not more than seven members total. The BLM is encouraged to advertise and solicit names for nominations of people interested in serving on the sub-RAC.

Gulliford seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

The next meeting will be held November 6 in Delta.

A Field Trip will feature areas within the Gunnison Gorge NCA.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

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