

**Southwest Resource Advisory Council  
MEETING MINUTES  
Friday, January 19, 2007  
Anasazi Heritage Center  
BLM Canyons of the Ancients National Monument  
27501 Hwy 184  
Dolores, Colorado**

**ATTENDEES**

**Resource Advisory Council Members**

Don Bennett, Category 1	Gerald Koppenhafer, Category 3
Jim Cochran, Category 3	Dan Morse, Category 2
Kenneth Emory, Category 1	Andrea Robinsong, Category 2
Andrew Gulliford, Category 2	Alan Staehle, Category 3
Al Heaton, Category 1	Kathy Welt, Category 1
Nik Kendziorski, Category 2	Kelly Wilson, Category 3

Not present: Drew MacLeod, Category 1; Betsy Marston, Category 2; Ellen Stein, Category 3

**BLM Staff**

LouAnn Jacobson	Kenny McDaniel
Marissa Karchut	Barb Sharrow
Mel Lloyd	Rick Ryan
	Mark Stiles

<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Town/City</b>
Jim Hannah	Self	Cortez, CO
Bob Clayton	Kinder Morgan	Dolores, CO
Gala Peck	Self	Pleasant View, CO
Ann Brown	Senator Ken Salazar	Durango, CO
Amber Clark	San Juan Citizens Alliance	Durango, CO
Dirk Hood	Self	Cahone, CO
Carl Knight	Self	Towaoc, CO
Ruth Lambert	San Juan Mountains Assoc.	Durango, CO
Jim Colleran	McElmo Canyon Research Institute	Cortez, CO
Jennifer Burns	US Forest Service	Durango, CO
Miscelle Allison	Self	Yellow Jacket, CO
Phil Weiser	Southwest Colorado Landowners Assoc.	Cortez, CO
Rhonda and Pete Singleton	Four-Corners Real Estate	Dolores, CO

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

Chair Kathy Welt called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Today's attendance constitutes a quorum, and there was a round of introductions.

Mel Lloyd talked about the new process for RAC travel reimbursement and noted the cost due for RAC lunches.

Barb Sharrow, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Southwest Resource Advisory Council (RAC), reported on several items. The BLM's Split-Estate Report, required of the BLM by the Energy Policy Act, was presented to Congress in December 2006. Kathleen Clarke recently announced her intent to step down as Director of the BLM. In part because of the administration change in State Government, the Colorado Tourism Council seat on the U.S. Forest Service's new Recreation RAC remains open, but applications for all other interests have been received. BLM is reorganizing the five existing national centers into one National Operations Center and creating a three-tiered organization for each state—field offices, districts and the state office. BLM websites have a new design, intended to improve customer service and BLM's web presence. Sharrow is coordinating training in land health and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for all three Colorado RACs for the week of March 19, 2007 in Salida. The training is optional but highly recommended, and more details will follow. The call for new RAC member nominations will be coming out in the next month or so. The terms for RAC members Ellen Stein, Alan Staehle, Drew MacLeod, and Andrea Robinsong are expiring in August 2007. Everyone is reminded that the application package must be complete when submitted and include the appropriate forms and reference letters. BLM is operating under what is expected to be quarterly continuing funding resolutions passed by Congress. BLM is not expecting to receive any budget appropriations for 2007 but is operating based on the 2006 budget.

### **Field Managers Update**

**Gunnison Field Office (GFO):** Kenny McDaniel reported on two planning efforts underway; one is a travel management plan being conducted jointly with the Forest Service. Public scoping is completed and comments summarized, various routes are now being analyzed, and an initial draft proposal is expected in early May. A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be developed. The second planning effort is updating the Alpine Triangle Recreation Plan with the Columbine RD/GFO. Comments are currently being summarized. Several grazing permit renewals will be processed this summer. The Blue Mesa Project, a fuels reduction and forest health project, is beginning and involves both private and federal lands. About 700 acres of Gunnison sage grouse habitat has been treated, and water guzzlers are being improved to ensure the bird's safety. The National Park Service is reviewing the boundaries of the Curecanti Recreation Area, which may impact some BLM public lands.

**San Juan Public Lands Center (SJPLC):** Mark Stiles reported that the BLM and Forest Service continue to work jointly on their management plans. There have been delays, but the draft documents are expected out in September 2007. The planning process for Canyons of the Ancients National Monument (CANM) is also continuing. Stiles expects, in the near future, to issue the Record of Decision on the oil and gas projects analyzed per the Northern San Juan Basin EIS. SJPLC is working on travel management and restricted routes will be proposed as designated routes. Chief Dale Bosworth, a federal employee for 41 years, is retiring in February. Gail Kimbell has been appointed as his replacement. San Juan County will be submitting their RS 2477 package soon for review. Managers from several state and federal agencies met this week to discuss oil and gas leasing and development, as well as off-highway vehicle travel.

**Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO):** Barb Sharrow reported that her office is also conducting travel planning. Formal public scoping will begin in late winter 2007. The planning area, Dry

Fork, in which all uses and routes will be analyzed, spans from south of Montrose, north to Delta County, and west to the Nucla road. The appropriate land health assessments have been completed. The UFO implemented temporary emergency closures in late December to prevent increasing damage to natural resources and cultural sites in four different areas. BLM met with interested user groups prior to implementing the closures. Following models already established by the SJPLC and Anasazi Heritage Center, BLM has hired a new volunteer coordinator to manage the front desk and recruit volunteers. A new range specialist/weed coordinator, as well as a new archaeologist have joined the UFO. Jim Ferguson, a BLM wildlife biologist who had a 35-year career as a federal employee, recently retired; his position is currently vacant. Grazing permit renewals are being processed, and the few remaining land health assessments will be completed in the next few years. The Uncompahgre, Dolores and Grand Junction Field Offices are working together closely on the renewed interest in uranium mining. The Department of Energy is expected to issue its decision soon on the uranium lease tract Environmental Assessment (EA). Two EAs on uranium mining activities under the 1872 Mining Law are also being processed. While oil and gas leasing activity in the UFO has lessened the last few sales, BLM Colorado continues to experience record lease sales.

### **BLM Law Enforcement within San Juan Public Lands Center and Canyons of the Ancients National Monument**

One ranger is responsible for 800,000 acres in three field offices, which includes the popular Silverton area. Another ranger is assigned to over 164,000 acres in the Monument. There are common issues for both jurisdictions, and the two rangers assist each other. Adequate law enforcement is always a challenge on BLM public lands, and a special agent was recently assigned to the area to assist with criminal investigations. Illegal activities include vandalism to cultural sites and drug and alcohol abuse, and unlawful activities associated with off-road vehicle use and hunting season also keep the rangers busy. A few such activities include surface collecting, excavating cultural sites, illegal wood gathering, selling artifacts for drug money and partying. A major concern is that record of what is taken is likely lost forever, and the value never known. To this end, a tip line is being established to encourage the public to report suspicious or illegal activities. Willing user groups are being included in the current Monument planning process and appropriate areas will be created for legal OHV activities. The rangers collaborate with city and county governments, as well as the Division of Wildlife. Several questions and comments were fielded by the rangers.

### **Cultural-Archaeological Protections within the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument**

LouAnn Jacobson, CANM manager, provided a brief background on the Monument and explained the BLM programs designed to protect and enhance the area's rich cultural resources. Interpretation and education are critical to an area that is seeing increased visitation. Exploration of the area dates back to 1870 and intensive extraction occurred during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Curation is a core activity of Monument staff. There are 6,000 recorded sites from the Paleo-Pueblo III Period, and staff has conducted significant inventories, which are recorded using a GIS database in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Native American perspectives and consultations are essential, and close relationships have been formed with many of the tribal elders. Consultation and research is ongoing, working with not only tribal elders but the scientific community as well. Comprehensive documentation, restoration

and stabilization activities of sites are ongoing. Backfilling is necessary following excavation in order to preserve sites. Improvements include protective fencing and tamarisk removal. Key land acquisitions have enhanced BLM's ability to protect cultural resources. Grants, as well as contributions from partnerships and volunteers, are invaluable to the BLM in accomplishing management goals. Jacobson fielded questions from both the RAC and public.

### **BLM Colorado Recreation Strategy**

Sharrow explained that a team of 15 employees began several months ago to develop a statewide strategy for managing recreation in a consistent and effective manner. An earlier version of the draft document distributed today was presented to a stakeholder group last fall for their comments, and the refined document is now being presented to the three Colorado RACs for their input. RAC comments were requested by February 15. Sharrow covered the key points of the draft document, emphasizing that partnerships are essential to BLM managers in accomplishing management goals. Core goals of the strategy are to provide positive benefits and experiences for visitors, and to provide for a quality recreation experience and receive fair value in return. Facilities will be managed to meet the settings and characteristics of the public lands they sit on, i.e., rugged and remote, urban interface open space, etc. BLM Colorado is developing a policy for off-highway vehicle use and, with the exception of open areas already designated by BLM, travel will be either limited to existing or designated routes for all BLM public lands in Colorado. Staehle motioned that the RAC recommend BLM continue with the recreation strategy process; Andrew Gulliford seconded. Dan Morse offered a friendly amendment that the BLM delay finalization and provide the Southwest RAC the opportunity to review the final draft prior to adoption by the State Director. The RAC voted unanimously, with none opposed, to pass Staehle's amended motion.

### **Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Resource Management Plan**

LouAnn Jacobson reported that a new planner is onboard and the planning process is again on track. There has been extensive collaboration with the public. Scoping comments numbered nearly 25,000 with 94 percent received as form letters (as opposed to unique comments). Jacobson covered core parts of the RMP, including the four proposed alternatives. The new plan, anticipated to be signed in summer 2008, will provide specific management guidance for the Monument, which is currently managed under the San Juan and San Miguel Resource Management Plan.

### **Public Comment Period**

Welt explained the role of the RAC to the attending public. Miscelle Allison submitted a written statement to Welt and expressed her concerns with eliminating the game retrieval provision for vehicles, explaining that hunting or wood gathering for the disabled would be impossible without it. Allison stated that she believes the Monument exists only by proclamation and that Congress never funded it. She expressed concerns that multiple use is disappearing and stated that she disagrees with any excavating or digging in cultural sites.

Amber Clark, with the San Juan Citizens Alliance, cares deeply about the CANM and commended Jacobson's staff on a job well done. Clark stated that energy development and grazing are concerns, and, while it is a multiple-use area, the BLM needs to protect the cultural resources above all other activities.

Phil Weiser, with the Southwest Colorado Landowners' Association, expressed concerns with Monument funding, specifically with regard to the Challenge Cost Share program. Loss of local traditions, federal partnerships formed with non-governmental organizations, and non-congressional funding for CANM operations concern him. Weiser submitted documents to the RAC chair—these and Allison's will be scanned and e-mailed to the RAC.

Ruth Lambert, cultural program director for the Cultural Site Stewardship Program of the San Juan Mountains Association, explained the purpose of the organization, which depends on volunteers for its many successful and award-winning programs, of which monitoring is an important part. They are proud to be partners with the Forest Service and BLM, and Lambert asked for consideration when finalizing the CANM RMP alternatives. She stated that she does not support the alternative allowing all sites to deteriorate back to the Earth.

Realtors with Four Corners Real Estate informed the RAC that a large private in-holding within the CANM has just been listed for sale. There is extensive interest in subdividing the land, but the realtors are approaching the RAC on who to contact about preserving the land and transferring it to the BLM. The RAC provided them with several suggestions but also cautioned that these kinds of deals take a great deal of time to finalize.

Gulliford explained to members of the public that historic laws enable the President to proclaim national monuments. Allison countered that CANM is only an extension of Hovenweep National Monument and that the Monument's establishment is illegal. She believes presidential powers are inappropriate. Staehle cautioned that the RAC is an advisory council to the BLM and Congress is the most appropriate body to express her concerns to.

### **Public Lands Partnership Dominguez-Escalante Project**

The Dominguez-Escalante Wilderness Study Area, the largest in Colorado, was recommended suitable for wilderness designation by the BLM in 1992. A WSA enjoys statutory interim protection for its wilderness characteristics until which time Congress either releases it or designates it to be managed as wilderness. Sharrow reminded the RAC of the joint resolution signed by the Northwest and Southwest RACs two years ago supporting a community stewardship plan for the area, but funding was not appropriated by the BLM. Last year Senator Ken Salazar proposed that Congress designate the area as a National Conservation Area (NCA), and the effort has begun to explore that idea with the public by the Public Lands Partnership (PLP). One public meeting was held late last year, and another is scheduled in Grand Junction on a date yet TBD. Sharrow emphasized that BLM cannot designate NCAs or wilderness; only Congress can, and the BLM stands ready to provide whatever assistance is necessary. Some issues have surfaced, including community concerns about the future of the Camelback WSA and those expressed by some user groups. RAC members asked to be added to the PLP's mailing list and that BLM bring a map showing both WSAs to the next meeting.

### **Chair/Co-Chair Elections**

Welt explained the history of the chair and co-chair seats, and stated that she would be willing to continue as chair for another year. Robinsong nominated Dr. Gulliford as chair, stating that she felt it time for a new chair from an interest other than energy. Welt was nominated by Al

Heaton. Staehle nominated Gerald Koppenhafer, who respectfully declined. Staehle followed with nominating Kelly Wilson, who also declined. The RAC agreed that they preferred to have a vice-chair, not a co-chair, so Robinsong moved that the RAC vote for a chair and the runner-up would be the vice chair. The RAC voted by secret ballot and Welt won the majority of votes. Gulliford will serve as vice chair.

**Potential Topics for April 20 meeting:**

Sharrow mentioned a field trip the day before the April 20 meeting to tour some rock crawling routes in the Dry Creek area, which is located in her FO's travel management planning area. A show of hands indicated that many would attend. Suggested topics are:

- Explain delineation of BLM jurisdiction compared to Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (who does what)
- Lower Dolores River—WSA/Wild and Scenic River potential; leasing/mining activities near river (San Juan staff present RMP alternatives)
- Update on uranium mining activities
- Update on Recreation Strategy
- Travel management for Uncompahgre FO

**Closing Comments**

Koppenhafer spoke about the listed property discussed during the public comment period. The property has a history of grazing permit compliance issues, and the permittee has decided to sell out because of that. Koppenhafer explained that grazing permits are invaluable in preserving open space in rural areas. When grazing permits are relinquished and remote ranchlands sold off in smaller parcels, it creates an administrative problem for not only local governments but surrounding public lands as well.

The meeting adjourned at 3:52 p.m.