

**BOISE DISTRICT RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING**

November 29, 2012 9:00 a.m. ~ 1:00 p.m.

Boise District Office

3948 Development Avenue, Boise, Idaho 83705

MEETING MINUTES

Boise District (BD) RAC Members Present:

Charles Lyons, Bill Walsh, Donna Bennett, Stacey Baczkowski, Tina Reay, Gene Gray, Karen Steenhof, Gayle Poorman, Sara Schmidt, Ted Howard, Kathryn Alder, Richard Hall

BD Council Members Absent:

Brenda Richards, Rick Just, Dr. Neil Rimbey

BLM Advisory Present:

James Fincher, Boise District Manager; Marsha Buchanan, Boise District RAC Coordinator

BLM Staff Present:

Terry Humphrey, Four Rivers Field Office (FRFO) Manager; Aimee Betts, Bruneau Field Office (BFO) Assistant Field Manager; Andy Delmas, Fire Management Officer; Lance Okeson, BD Fuels Management; Michele McDaniel, Owyhee Field Office (OFO) Assistant Field Manager; Mike McGee, Wildlife Biologist with the Fuels Management Group; John Sullivan, Supervisory Resource Management Specialist

Guests Present:

Bob Howard, Jessica Howard, Steve Damele, Dave Franzen, Dan Ogle

Welcome:

Gene Gray opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. Marsha explained that due to issues with a Federal Register Notice the meeting would be an Administrative Meeting, and as such no votes would occur.

Three new RAC members were introduced, including: Charles Lyons, Tina Reay and Richard Hall. Jim Fincher, Boise District Manager, was also introduced.

Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes from the June 14, 2012 and September 13, 2012 were accepted by consensus.

Hot Topics: Jim Fincher

- Jim briefly spoke about the 2013 budget, explaining the BLM continues to operate under a continuing resolution and a final budget for 2013 has not been determined.
- The status of the sage grouse continues to be a driver in many BLM programs.
- The Final Gateway west project EIS release has been extended thirty days and will be

released in late January.

- The Owyhee 68 permit renewal project group expects to release the Group 1 Final EA and draft decision in February.
- The RFPAs (Rangeland Fire Protection Associations) were of great assistance during the 2012 fire season. This is a great of public private partnership.
- The BLM has continued talks with the ITD (Idaho Transportation Department) to be more aggressive in maintaining the gravel apron along I84 for fire prevention.
- The Owyhee Land Exchange may be delayed due to the current budget situation.

Four Rivers Field Office: Terry Humphrey

Terry provided an update to the RAC members including; status of various EAs, closures, agreements, ROWs (rights-of-way), trespasses, and employee turnover.

The Oregon Trail mapping project will be sent to the SHPO (state historic preservation office) this week. Terry also provided an update for the Gateway West project schedule.

Terry mentioned the BLM hopes to continue funding transportation for school trips.

Sara Schmidt asked about the BLM's strategy for filling vacancies considering we are operating under a continuing resolution. Jim replied that all positions we have requested to-date have been filled, but each vacancy is looked at on an individual basis. Jim was then asked about the socioeconomic analyst positions. One position was just filled. The staff member will be based out of Salt Lake City and will serve Idaho, Nevada and Utah.

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs): Andy Delmas & Charles Lyons

The Mountain Home RFPA was approved to operate by the state in July 2012. Numerous private citizens want to assist land managers fight fire in rural areas - to this point, that cooperation has been difficult to manage as the BLM's top concern is the safety of the public and personnel fighting fire.

The RFPA received training from the BLM. Members also have insurance, a water truck, PPE (personal protective equipment) and radios issued by the state, and non-profit status.

The 2012 season showed the ability of the RFPA and the BLM to work well together, providing a positive experience. The RFPA members are able to communicate with BLM dispatch and assist with dozer projects, supplying water, and logistics. The RFPA's ability to assist during initial attack is a benefit to all.

Andy credited Charles with laying the groundwork for other RFPAs in the state of Idaho. The Owyhee and Saylor area RFPAs will be training with BLM staff in January, followed by additional training for those from the Mountain Home area. Andy commended this first association noting that is never easy to be the first to start a program. A Mutual Aid agreement between the Mountain Home RFPA and the BLM is almost completed.

Charles noted that the state provided much assistance. He also stated a priority for the program will be to source better dispatch and communication services. Without communication tools

RFPAs may not have a chance to succeed.

Kathryn Alder suggested Charles consider sourcing radios from federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security.

Andy briefly updated the group on the 2012 fire season, noting the large number of human caused fires and the issues with exploding targets. The Boise District Office continues to work with the Idaho State Office to create a public outreach message warning people of fire danger. The ultimate goal is to work with local groups to share the message.

Bruneau Field Office: Aimee Betts

Aimee provided an update to the RAC members including; National Public Lands Day projects, litigation, and data collection and sage-grouse telemetry projects.

Aimee invited the members to tour the native garden located outside of the office building. Aimee also recognized Ted Howard and thanked him for his assistance with the project.

Donna Bennett noted the Ashby Fence (High Timber Fence) is in disrepair and needs fixed prior to next spring. She noted that many fences bordering wilderness areas are in disrepair.

The group briefly discussed the sage-grouse telemetry project.

Owyhee Field Office: Michele McDaniel

Michele provided an update to the RAC members including permit renewals.

Paradigm Project: Lance Okeson

Lance described the project for the benefit of the new members; outlining what the Paradigm is, the number of fire starts in the Paradigm area, and the need to solve issues within the Paradigm so more attention can be focused on area outside of the Paradigm.

The project includes installing and maintaining a series of fuel breaks aligned with main roads in the area. At this point we are still working to determine what the breaks will be, including green areas, disc lines, and graveled spaces. Lance stated the forage kochia has worked well as a break material in some areas, and disc lines are instant and effective. Lance did caution the group by stating that these fire breaks will not stop fires from occurring, but fires may be contained and easier to control if these measures are adopted. Charles asked about the possibility of blading / scraping current two tracks as another means of fire break

Gene recognized Lance for the progress to date. Lance mentioned the RAC is a key group with this project.

The group had a discussion about forage kochia and its use in fire breaks. The plant is high in protein and is well accepted by large game and cows.

Paradigm Project: Dave Franzen and Dan Ogle

The transects have been established. The group is looking for sites that can support historic grasses and other plants. There was a brief conversation about the size and care of the transects. Gene recognized local landowners in attendance that are participating in the project: Jessica Howard, Steve Damele, and Bob Howard.

Dave Franzen mentioned the group is using protocol approved by BLM in their monitoring process. The IRC will be working together with BLM to complete a MOU.

Public Comment

Bob Howard asked about the role of the RAC. Jim replied that the BLM values an outside perspective and we incorporate the RAC's opinion when it is appropriate. The end result is for the BLM and the RAC to work in a collaborative way for the betterment of public lands.

Discussion: Role of the RAC

Donna Bennett:

Donna spoke about the Paradigm Project.

Sara Schmidt:

Sara spoke about the tremendous opportunity the RAC and BLM have to work together. She would ask the group to reconsider reports from Field Offices and in turn ask the BLM to focus more on presenting challenges and opportunities rather than status updates. Sara also mentioned the benefits of new member orientation and field trips.

Richard Hall:

Richard Hall appreciates the diverse views represented on the RAC and the chance to take a 'fresh look' at the issues. He believes the RAC should serve in an advisory role to the BLM.

Ted Howard:

Ted pointed out that RAC members represented various interests, and he represents sovereign tribal governments. Ted reminded the RAC members that Tribes have a unique standing with the US Government (BLM) and they (US Government) have legal obligations to the tribes as the Tribes still hold aboriginal title to southern Idaho.

Ted also stated "Tribes are living cultures, we still practice our traditions. The sites and resources on public lands (our homelands) are still important to tribal members."

Ted noted that we all have different points of views and we all learn from each other. Times change, due to changes in leadership, changing policies, etc. The thing that does not change is tribal traditions and federal obligations to tribes.

Kathryn Alder:

Kathryn described how prior to joining the RAC, BLM was almost considered an enemy. Since joining she is excited to hear reports from BLM staff as well as the RAC. Kathryn appreciates that everyone is recognized and is surprised at the openness and is happy to be able to participate. Kathryn joined the RAC to be a voice of the people and she understands the need to

not only protect public lands but to utilize public lands as well.

Gayle Poorman:

Gayle mentioned that she is still in the learning stage as a relatively new RAC member, but she stressed the importance of learning. She also enjoys representing the people in her community. One of Gayle's chief concerns is litigation and how that hinders BLM from operating.

Karen Steenhof:

Karen appreciates the opportunity to provide advice to the BLM. She stated what RAC members can learn from the group, and then share with outside groups, is a benefit to the BLM and the community.

Charles Lyons:

Charles encouraged every member to read and understand FLPMA (Federal Land Management and Policy Act). He reminded everyone of the opportunity for rural citizens to have a voice in BLM policy. Charles also pointed out the value of the land, the value of wildlife, and the value of land use.

Bill Walsh:

Bill hopes that common sense will prevail. Bill also stated the need for involvement of the congressional delegation and the need to change laws.

Stacey Baczkowski:

Stacey mentioned that the RAC is a good group but it is not used to the extent it could or should be. Stacey feels one of the roles of the RAC is to identify issues and solutions to those issues.

Tina Reay:

Tina is excited to participate in the RAC on all levels. She found her first meeting to be very educational. Tina became a member of the RAC to promote the wild horse and burro program, but she also sees the need to seek and promote balance with other uses.

Gene Gray:

Gene is thrilled to lead this group of diverse and exciting people. He recommended we all enter the forum with integrity and honesty. Gene recommends the group keep the thought of litigation out of their minds and decisions; the RAC should be prepared to face hurdles.

James Fincher:

Jim was happy to hear that RAC members are leaning forward and looking to the future. He mentioned the urgency of the Paradigm Project as future funding for hazardous fuels might be at risk. He also spoke of the frustration of spending most of our time reacting. Jim looks forward to having the RAC as our advocate, especially when researching new 'tools' and new programs. Jim asked for RAC members' opinions to make the RAC meetings more productive. Jim ended by stating the beauty of a multi-use agency such as BLM is we all come together to address resource management issues.

Governor’s Sage Grouse Working Group Update: Gene Gray

The Working Group’s report has been sent to Fish and Wildlife. Gene and Donna will be attending the December meeting.

Action Items:

- The RAC asked for more information about the joint BLM AND USGS fire science project. Marsha will get the information from Terry and forward to the RAC.
- The RAC asked for more information about the golden eagle telemetry project, including project objectives. Marsha will get the information from Terry and forward to the RAC.
- The RAC asked for more information about the 365 acre project. Marsha will get the information from Terry and forward to the RAC.
- Charles Lyons will draft a letter to the Idaho Department of Transportation discussing fuel breaks.
- The RAC requested a map showing BLM areas and field office delineations. Marsha will coordinate with the GIS staff to obtain a map and will forward it to the RAC.
- Donna noted many fences adjoining the wilderness areas are in disrepair, specifically the Ashby fence. The field managers will be notified of the problem.
- Donna asked about the size of the Nickle Creek FFR. The Nickel Creek FFR acreage is: 1,939 Acres BLM, 7,547 Acres Private, 323 Acres State. Grand Total: 9810 Acres.
- At the request of the RAC Marsha will resend the document “How Collaborative Resource Management Can Break the Current Fire Cycle” to all RAC members.
- The RAC requested more information about forage kochia. Guest Dan Ogle will forward reports to Marsha, who in turn will distribute the information to the RAC. Marsha will also speak with Kathi Kershaw to gather and distribute BLM forage kochia data to RAC members.
- The RAC will monitor the progress of BLM / RFPA agreement. Marsha will follow up with Andy prior to the next RAC meeting to check the status of the agreement.

Next RAC Meeting: The next RAC meeting will be February 7, 2013. The time and location have yet to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Minutes certified by:

_____ Gene Gray BDO RAC Chairman	_____ Date	_____ James Fincher District Manager, BDO	_____ Date
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