

# **Boise District (BD) Resource Advisory Council (RAC)**

## **Boise District Office**

**3948 Development Avenue. Boise, ID 83705**

**Thursday June 14, 2012**

**9:00 a.m. ~ 1:30 p.m.**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **Boise District (BD) Council Members Present:**

Donna Bennett, Stacey Baczkowski, Rick Just, Gene Gray, Karen Steenhof, Gayle Poorman, Sara Braasch, Dr. Neil Rimbey, Richard Raymondi, Sara Schmidt

**Boise District Members Absent:** Ralph Richardson, Ted Howard and Kathryn Alder. Dr. Ted Hoffman, Brenda Richards, Bill Walsh

### **BLM Advisory Present:**

Meagan Conry, Boise District (BD) Acting District Manager, MJ Byrne, BD-RAC Coordinator.

### **Other BLM Staff Present:** Arnie Pike, Bruneau Field (BFO) Manager;

Terry Humphrey, Four Rivers Field (FRFO) Manager; Loretta Chandler, Owyhee Field (OFO) Manager Owyhee Field Office (OFO) by telephone; Andy Delmas, BD Fire Management Officer Jon Beck, District Planner/Lead FRFO, Resource Management Plan (RMP); Marsha Buchanan, BD (Note Taker); Katie Wood, Safety and Occupational Health Specialist, Idaho State Office.

**Guests Present:** Dave Franzen, Intermountain Rangeland Consultants, Phil Hardy, Regional Director and Kyle Vester, Intern, U.S. Congressman Labrador's Office (Dist. 1)

**Welcome:** Gene Gray, Vice Chairman opened the meeting 9:11 a.m. Gene welcomed everyone.

All RAC members as well as BLM staff members introduced themselves, and all guests were thanked for coming.

**Minutes:** The Minutes from the March 2012 meeting were approved.

**Approval of agenda items:** The draft agenda was amended at Gayle Poorman's requested, to include a discussion of BD-BLM and county involvement in weed management.

**Discussion of Action Items:** Action items from the March 2012 meeting were reviewed:

- Dr. Neil Rimbey provided the article on The Great Basin Wildfire Form and it has been included in the materials for today's meeting.
- Brenda drafted a letter of support on behalf of the BD RAC to the Governor's Sage-Grouse Task Force. As Brenda was unable to attend today's meeting she will work with MJ to distribute the draft letter to RAC members via email for comments and edits. She (MJ) will incorporate comments and edits, Gere Gray will sign final and it will be mailed to the Governor.
- Dr. Neil Rimbey provided the article on Fuel Treatments on Rangelands and it has been included in the materials for today's meeting.
- Dr. Ted Hoffman provided an updated draft on the Comprehensive Plan of Conservation Measures to Address the Threats of Fire and Exotic Annual Plants to Greater Sage-Grouse and its Habitat. It is included in the materials for the June 14, 2012 meeting.
- M.J. was unable to get permission to post to the RAC's website, the power point presentation on the State of BLM by Steve Ellis, Idaho State Director. The presentation was shown by M.J. during the June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Due to unavoidable conflicts Ted Hoffman was not able to contact other RAC Advisory groups within the State of Idaho.
- M.J. scheduled and facilitated a conference call with Joel Larson and Robert Winthrop, BLM-WO, and the RAC's sub-group to discuss the BLM's Socioeconomic Strategy 2012-2022 document. Rick Just chaired the sub-group and develop recommendations on behalf of the RAC for the Socioeconomic Strategy 2012-2022 document.
- MJ forwarded the sub-group's comments to the above document to Larson and Winthrop by April 30, 2012, and emailed a copy to the Full RAC.
- All general correspondence that needs to go out, to the RAC members will go through M.J. first, including sub-committees.

**Hot Topics: Meagan Conry,** Welcomed everyone to the meeting. Boise District managers and staff have been very busy with a number of multiple use issues since the last RAC Meeting. Meagan discussed the following topics:

\*\* The NPDS permit has been signed as well as the District herbicide use proposals for the

weeds program

\*\* 21,000 acres have burned year-to-date. While some local resources are in Utah the district is staffed and we expect a busy fire season

\*\* District staff are busy with permit renewals. Monitoring is ongoing and temporary staff have been hired

\*\* The river recreation season ended quickly and most staff are no longer working

\*\* District staff are working on fuels projects, including Paradigm

\*\* The Battle Creek litigation is continuing

\*\* There is no additional budget information, we should have updated information at the next meeting

\*\* The Owyhee Field Office is in the planning stages for a proposed wild horse gather in November

**Election of Officers:** for FY 2012 was postponed during the March meeting. A Quorum was present to hold elections.

Donna nominated Gene for the Chair position, seconded by Gayle and passed by Neil with all in agreement.

Donna nominated Karen as Vice Chair, seconded by Neil and passed by Gene with all in agreement.

## **Gayle Poorman, Community Weed Management Areas (CWMAs)**

Gayle Poorman, RAC member, discussed her concerns with current weed management policy on BLM lands, including use of beetles to control invasive weeds as well as areas of leafy spurge infestation.

The CWMA she is a member of is interested in using chemical control of invasive species on BLM lands to prevent the spread of weeds to other public and private lands. Gayle asked if there exists some compromise for control of the weeds. Gayle is offering community resources to assist with the control of the weeds.

District staff are willing to discuss options for treatment but recognize there are concerns including liability, range of tools, funding, and regulation. Terry will meet with staff to discuss options. The BLM weed program is based on partnerships.

The BLM has a variety of contracting options when working with counties. District staff will review the various contracting options that can be used, Arnie and MJ will compile the information and distribute it to the RAC.

Gene asked Gayle to provide a list of locations that may need treatment. Gene also notified those present that the state is adding a 5<sup>th</sup> type of weed to its classification system – invasives.

Other non-chemical treatments were discussed, including the use of small ruminants.

## **M.J. Byrne, Paradigm Update**

M.J. updated the group on the Paradigm project. Kathi Kershaw had given a presentation on the project in March. Since that time the Phase 1 and Timpanuk botany clearances are underway and the cultural clearances are being done under contract.

## **Dr. Neil Rimbey & Dave Franzen, Comprehensive Plan of Conservation Measures Addressing the Threats of Fire and Exotic Annual Plants to Greater Sage-Grouse and Habitat**

Neil is currently receiving peer reviews of the reports.

The workgroup is pushing forward with the demonstration and monitoring projects as part of Paradigm. They are working seven transects now. Neil discussed the option of using livestock as a tool for invasive weed control. This project is being studied on private and state lands as current BLM permitting is not flexible enough for the high intensity grazing and other options that are being studied.

Dave is continuing the search for appropriate study areas. The group had chosen 10 to 12 study areas, but they are narrowing those choices now. They are looking for plots with existing perennials as the project is only four to six years long and the study areas need to be healthy now.

Some benefits of this project include the study of ways to reduce of fuel load, promote perennials, and the study of loads and competition. The goal of this project will be a plan for targeted and prescription grazing to reduce cheatgrass fuels and fire load.

Dave provided a brief description of the life cycle of cheatgrass, explaining the germination and maturation cycle.

The group is working with four grazers to test this project. Dave emphasized the risk these grazers are taking as they are willing to lose profit to aid in this study.

## **BREAK:**

## **Gene Gray, Idaho Governor's Sage-Grouse Task Force Update**

Gene is a member of the Governor's task force, the group has met eight times to date. The group has been tasked with researching sage-grouse in Idaho and providing a report to the Governor including recommendations on policies and actions.

Gene provided maps showing Idaho sage-grouse "priority" and "general" habitat areas. At this time the maps have not been ground-truthed. While these maps have been referred to as final

Gene and Neil cautioned the attendees the maps will change.

Gene explained the maps, including the habitat zones.

- Core Areas – 5.7 million acres in Idaho are described as Core Areas. These areas support the highest number of breeding areas and 75% of the male sage-grouse are located in these areas.
- Important Areas – 4.1 million acres in Idaho are described as Important Areas. These areas support 20% of the male sage-grouse population.
- General Areas - 5.4 million acres in Idaho are described as General Areas. These are fragmented areas of habitat.

## **Field Reports:**

Field Managers Terry Humphrey, Arnie Pike, and Loretta Chandler provided field updates.

Andy reported the fire season has started and the District is very active. 27 separate fires have started and more than 18,000 acres have burned to date. The group discussed ways to educate the public to reduce the number of human caused fires.

## **Phil Hardy, Guest:**

Phil Hardy of Congressman Raul Labrador's office was in attendance for part of the meeting. He informed the group that the Congressman's Grazing Improvement Act is on Capitol Hill. The Act would extend grazing permits from 10 to 20 years and it would designate Trailing permits as categorical exclusions within the NEPA process. At this time he believes the Act will pass in the House and they are hoping for the same outcome in the Senate.

## **Working Lunch:**

**M.J. Byrne, State of the BLM in Idaho: New Challenges and New Opportunities, power point presentation by Steve Ellis, BLM State Director of Idaho Environmental Forum March 15, 2012.**

## **Donna Bennett, Owyhee County Sage-Grouse Workgroup:**

Donna shared plans for a field trip at Cow Creek on July 18. Another field trip is being planned for September in conjunction with the USAF.

## **Review of Action Items from Meeting:**

1. Gene Gray will forward the Gov.'s Sage-Grouse Task Force's recommendations to M.J. for her to email to the RAC as soon as he gets the "Green Light". (Completed on 06-18-12.)
2. M.J. will work with Brenda to get the RAC's draft letter of support for the Governor's task force and email it to RAC members for comments and edits. She will incorporate comments and edits, Gene Gray will sign final and it will be mailed to Governor.
3. M.J. will contact Grant Simons to contact Greg Simons, author of the Adaptive Management Plan, in regards to a future meeting
4. Terry will discuss CWMA with Lonnie and BLM will determine if there are additional ways to work with counties and weed control, M.J. and Arnie will compile contract information to determine what options BLM has when working with counties for weed control.
5. M.J. will send electronic version of sage grouse habitat maps to RAC members – (Completed on 06-15-12.)
6. Terry H. will provide information about bank barbs to RAC members.
7. M.J. will provide twitter contact information to RAC members, as well as contact information for NIFC updates.
8. M.J. will email RAC members and solicit feedback for upcoming July and September tours.

## **Identify dates for 2012 RAC meetings:**

Next Meeting date set for September 13, 2012, time and place to be announced.

Field Trips were discussed, the Owyhee County sage-grouse working group has a tentative plan for a field trip on September 12, 2012.

## **Meeting Adjourned: 1:10 on June 14, 2012**

**Marsha Buchanan**  
**Boise District**  
**Note taker**

Minutes Certified by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gene Gray  
BDO RAC Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Meagan M. Conry  
Designated Federal Official (Acting)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **LIST OF HANDOUTS**

1. Paradigm Change in the Four Rivers Field Office – Boise District Fuels/Four Rivers Field Office
2. Fuel Treatments on Rangelands
3. Great Basin Wildfire Forum
4. Owyhee County Sage-Grouse Local Working Group ~ Draft Minutes
5. Bruneau and Four Rivers Field Office Updates
6. Idaho Sage-Grouse Habitat Area Maps
7. Grazing Invasive Annual Grasses for Rangeland Restoration ~ Restoring the Range and Reducing Fire Through Prescribed Grazing and EBIPM
8. AUM Calculation and Grazing Costs worksheet