

Twin Falls District
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CEDAR FIELDS AND
CASTLE ROCKS PROPOSED CLOSURES
MEETING MINUTES
3/28/2012
BLM Twin Falls District Office

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Subcommittee members present:

- Peggy Stanley, Chair
- Denise Alexander
- Katie Shewmaker
- Jeff Williams
- Hank Mayland
- Afton Patrick
- Jamey Wills
- Charlie Howell
- LaMar Orton
- Yvette Tuell

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:

Mary DeAguero, Acting District Manager
Jenifer Arnold, Associate District Manager
Michael Courtney, Burley Field Office Manager
L. Suzann Henrikson, Burley Archaeologist
Heather Tiel-Nelson, Public Affairs Specialist
Meghan Sorensen-Pereira, Administrative Assistant

Public Attendees:

Jack Brennan, Eastern Idaho Climbing Coalition
Randy Kline, Power County Prosecutor
Ted Howard, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes
Lynneil Brady, Shoshone-Paiute Tribes
Mike Mathews, Representative of U.S. Senator James E. Risch
A.J. Church, Representative of U.S. Senator Mike Crapo
Sherice Gould, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Verlon Gould, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Merceline Boyer, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Lionel Boyer, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Carolyn Smith, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Linda Culver, Representative of Congressman Mike Simpson

Note to readers: A copy of each attachment listed in these minutes, is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Burley Field Office. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Meghan Sorensen-Pereira, (208) 677-6627.

*Copies of certified minutes are posted on the Idaho BLM website at:
http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/res/resource_advisory/twin_falls_district/meeting_minutes.html*

Item I: Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 6:05 p.m. with a welcome and overview of facilities by Michael Courtney. Brief introductions were made around the room including RAC members, BLM staff, and members of the public present. Courtney explained that the subcommittee meeting would be held with a very informal, open-forum in order to gather as much public input as possible regarding the proposed closures to climbing, staging, camping, and trail-building activities at the areas commonly known as Castle Rocks and Cedar Fields.

Item II: Public Input

At 6:08 p.m. Jack Brennan presented several photos to refute the assumption of adverse effects caused by climbing and its associated activities. Brennan stated that he used to support the government more, but over the last few years he has become dissatisfied with their policies and decisions, and therefore has become more publically and politically active. Brennan went on to explain that he was not at this meeting to further inflame the situation or to insult anyone, he just wanted to make sure that everyone seriously considers the situation and the repercussions that could come with a decision for closure.

Brennan showed a picture of the high school class years painted on the cliffs near Arco (private land) dating back several decades. He asked the group if they would consider the markings as art, cultural resources, graffiti, or vandalism. He further stated that this viewpoint was different from person to person, so questioned who was qualified to make that determination.

When Brennan learned about the proposed closure to the Cedar Fields area last year, he made it a goal of his to climb all 5.10 rated climbs, of which there are about 180 in the area, and to also increase his awareness to possible cultural resources in the area. Brennan stated that he did not observe any cultural resources in the area during all of his visits; however, he also admitted that he did not have any formal training in this area.

Brennan also shared photos of the minor traces the climbing chalk left on the rocks. He stated that many times the naturally occurring white streaks in the rock were thought to be chalk, when in all reality the chalk was only visible on difficult and popular hand-holds. White streaks naturally occur on much of the basalt at Cedar Fields. Brennan also shared photos that showed other impacts in the area, such as cattle trails, cow manure, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) tracks and trails.

Brennan asserted that climbers were not responsible for the bare patches, often referred to as bald spots, adjacent to the cliffs. He showed a photo where the overhang of the cliff face made it impossible for anyone to walk on the bald spot, meaning the lack of vegetation was not due to trampling from climbers. Brennan suggested that perhaps the geography of the cliffs and their overhangs prevented vegetation from growing at the base of the cliffs.

Brennan also refuted the correlation between climbers and fire pits. Fire pits are located at the base of climbs, and climbers would not risk dragging their expensive gear/ropes through the debris left in a fire pit, nor would they want to step in a fire pit to begin their climb.

Additionally, climber's shoes are tight, so they often go barefoot when not actively engaged in climbing, and therefore were not the parties responsible for the debris, trash, and broken glass located adjacent to climbing sites.

Brennan stated that the climbers have history with the Cedar Fields area as well. There was a climbing guide that was created before the area was designated as an Archaeological District.

Brennan appealed to those present by stating that they are all in this together. Everyone is frustrated due to the lack of information being shared; No one is certain what is out there or where it is at, so it becomes difficult to try to mitigate the issues at these areas. Brennan also brought up public comment during the RAC meeting January 25, 2102; specifically he mentioned Merceline Boyer's account of when she was collecting pine nuts and stated she was offended by what was taking place out there—Brennan pointed out that no one asked her specifically where she was at and what she was offended by. He also stated that Devon Boyer's speech was also very vague. He asked why the public and the BLM would take their comments at face value without question, but not accept what he presented to be valid concerns as well.

Merceline Boyer commented that she had been offended because she saw climbers in an area that she believed was closed to climbing, and they had little regard for the rules.

Carolyn Smith stated that the Tribes are not trying to single out or pick on the climbers. The Tribes support the closure to protect the cultural resources. There is damage at the Cedar Fields area, as evidenced by the pictures that Brennan presented.

Ted Howard stated that the areas were sacred to the Tribes before the country became inhabited by pioneers. Their ancestors could be buried out there. Areas that the Tribes hold sacred may now be designated as public land, but that doesn't mean they lose their status as being sacred to the Tribes, and the Tribes still visit these places. Ted said the Tribes could relate to Brennan's feelings of frustration toward the government, because it was something that Tribes have dealt with for a long time. Howard stated that he knew that there are many other groups that visit these areas as well as climbers, and he could also empathize with Brennan's feelings that the climbers were being blamed for something they feel they didn't do, as Native Americans faced similar situations in the past.

Howard went on to explain that the Tribes are not against rock climbing in general, but they do find it offensive when there is climbing at places that they hold sacred. He stated, with support from other Tribal members, that the Tribes should not have to prove what they hold sacred—their

word should be enough. Howard also spoke about Tribal sovereignty—he stated that based on Tribal sovereignty as mentioned in the Constitution, the government is obligated to protect the lands and areas that the Tribes hold sacred. He compared how the Tribes felt about the climbing at Cedar Fields and Castle Rocks to how we would feel if someone climbed on Mount Rushmore or our churches. Howard volunteered to give a presentation to the RAC on Tribal sovereignty and the history of Native Americans and their rights. In continuance on the topic of Tribal sovereignty, Howard stated that the Tribes are not asking for anything that was not promised to them. The government has legal obligations to the Tribes, not to recreational or special interest groups.

Howard recounted that there was a similar site at the Danskin Mountains near Mountain Home on Forest Service land where bolting was occurring. In support of the Tribes beliefs, the Forest Service removed the bolting, grinding the bolts flat because they couldn't get them out of the rock.

At this point, Jeff Williams directed a question to Jack Brennan, asking him how often and in what concentration would climbers be in the Cedar Fields area.

Brennan responded that last summer he was out at Cedar Fields about 3 days per week. He estimated that there would be approximately 6 - 10 climbers during the week, and 15 - 20 throughout the weekend.

Williams also asked if Brennan felt that climbing was increasing or decreasing in the area.

Brennan responded that he believed that it was becoming more popular, and that impacts to the area were also increasing because restrictions to climbing in other areas cause more climbers to visit fewer sites.

Randy Kline believed that much more damage occurred in the Cedar Fields area in the 1970s than now. He used to frequent the area recreationally, and stated that there were many more people visiting the area in the 70s. What he observed when he went out to Cedar Fields was damage from kids messing around and partying, shooting targets, and burning campfires. He stated that the damage was obviously not from climbers. Kline firmly believes that the closures to climbing and climbing-related activities are not going to solve these issues. Kline stated that climbers are some of the best stewards of the land.

Kline went on to say that if there were any cultural resources left in the area, it is very fortunate due to the heavy traffic and use from the 1970s. He also stated that the adverse effects of cattle were not being addressed, yet they leave significant rutted trails.

Kline stated that that as the representative of Power County, it was Power County's position to oppose a closure to climbing. Rock climbers provide an important economic benefit to the area. The closure is inappropriate - especially when targeting a specific group, such as rock climbers.

Lionel Boyer responded to Kline's arguments. He stated that the Cedar Fields area was his people's land. He compared the sacredness of the area to religion. He stated that people always

try to find a way to work around laws. He stated that Kline needed to do his job as Power County Attorney and protect the cultural resources as the law states. Sherice Gould stated that she had brought a written statement to read, but felt that it would be a disservice just to read it considering all of the previous discussion. She related back to Howard's concept of Tribal sovereignty, stating that the Tribes have a unique relationship with the United States Government. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes signed a treaty to quit fighting based on the promises that were given to them by the government. This issue falls under the promises made to Native Americans to protect what they hold sacred. She quoted BLM Director Bob Abbey's statement regarding the revised programmatic agreement [PA] for historic preservation. "The BLM's stewardship of the public lands includes respecting our unique relationship with Tribes and carefully considering their views and concerns through consultation. This PA implements those principles as the BLM examines proposals for activities on public lands, knowing that future generations will appreciate our efforts to preserve treasured resources on public lands." At this point in the meeting, Suzann Henrikson, Burley Archaeologist, gave a presentation on cultural resources [see handout 1]. Henrikson stated that Cedar Fields is a very unique geological feature which is roughly 15,000 years old, and was possibly caused by late Pleistocene flood events, such as the Bonneville flood. The area is composed of basalt cataracts (cliffs) and sand dunes/deposits. The Cedar Fields area is predominantly contained within the American Falls Archaeological District (AFAD). In order for a site to be a historic property or for multiple sites to qualify as an archaeological district, these resources have to meet at least one of four criteria. The AFAD meets two of those criteria; A & D as outlined in the PowerPoint presentation. Criterion A is related to events that make a property or district eligible, while Criterion D is based on a property's or district's scientific value. Because the AFAD represents a long history of events associated with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes' traditional (and sacred) use, it is considered as eligible under Criterion A. The sand at Cedar Fields created complications in relocating previously recorded historic properties. Many sites have been reburied, while new historic properties have been exposed. It is therefore difficult to determine where other historic properties may be buried within the AFAD. A condition assessment, conducted in 2011, disclosed adverse effects to known historic properties within the AFAD. Many of these effects are due to climbing activities and OHV traffic. A redacted copy of the condition assessment will be available to the public after it has been reviewed by the Tribes, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Henrikson presented photographs of artifacts and features that were located during the assessment and specific damage to historic properties. She also presented the pertinent federal laws that were in place to protect cultural resources and which clarify the government's obligations to Native American Tribes. Following the presentation, public input continued. Carolyn Smith reinforced the Tribes' views about the importance of this area to them. She stated that because so much of the Shoshone-Bannock's homelands were converted to private land, it makes the portions that are left as public land even more sacred to them because it is all that they have left.

Randy Kline expressed that he felt it would do more damage to try to remove climbing bolts than simply continuing to use them for climbing.

Charlie Howell stated that he couldn't refute the fact that driving something into a rock (like a climbing bolt) causes damage.

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The RAC subcommittee on the Cedar Fields and Castle Rocks proposed closures would be interested in obtaining a redacted copy of the 2011 Condition Assessment.

Yvette Tuell thanked the RAC members for being open minded. As a Tribal representative, she also shares the importance of the Tribal trust with the federal government. She asked that members of the public also keep an open mind and take into consideration what was said by the Tribes. The last thing they want is a heated divide between groups and cultures. She stated that just because these areas are designated as public land doesn't mean that all activities are allowed. Some activities are allowed, some may be limited, and some may not be allowed at all. The Tribes are not trying to single out one particular group, such as rock climbers. They are just trying to protect the area, which is one of two Archaeological Districts along the Snake River. Kline stated that the Tribes were not the only party that had legal rights to be consulted by the federal government. He stated that federal law also requires the government to coordinate with local governments. He also felt that no matter what was being said, this issue was targeting rock climbing.

Lionel Boyer addressed the group saying that it is not only the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes concerned with this—there are many bands who gather together in the area.

Ted Howard also wanted to remind the group that although there are two areas designated as Archaeological Districts, there are many other sites that are sacred to the Tribes as well. It is a way of life for the Tribes to protect their history for future generations. There will be a full RAC meeting Wednesday, April 25, 2012 which will primarily address the proposed closures at Cedar Fields and Castle Rocks to rock climbing, staging, camping, and trail-building. A field tour of the Cedar Fields area will take place in the morning followed by a meeting in American Falls in the afternoon. BLM will present a summary of the comments they received on the Land Use amendment proposal.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

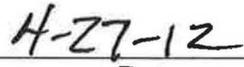
Handouts Provided:

- 1- Cultural Resource Issues presentation (26 pp)
- 2- Summary of Events and Facts (2 pp)
- 3- Programmatic Agreement (20 pp)
- 4- Federal Regulations Regarding Cultural Resources (4 pp)

Minutes certified by:



Peggy Stanley, Subcommittee Chair, TFD RAC



Date



Jenife Arnold, Acting TFD Manager



Date

Minutes recorded by:

Meghan Sorensen-Pereira, Administrative Assistant