



Twin Falls District Resource Advisory Council



MEETING MINUTES
1/31/2013
Sawtooth Best Western, Jerome, ID

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members present:

Category One – Commodity Interest

- Gerald Orthel
- Mike Henslee
- Daniel Butler
- Jeffrey Williams
- James Wills

Category Two – Non-Commodity Interest

- Scott Boettger (*arrived at 10:57, departed at 2:07*)
- Shauna Robinson
- Denise Alexander
- Peggy Stanley
- LaMar Orton

Category Three – Public Interest

- Todd Wadsworth
- Afton Patrick
- Charles Howell
- Katie Shewmaker
- Hunter Osborne (*arrived at 9:44*)

Quorum Present: Yes No

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:

Mel Meier, District Manager
Jenifer Arnold, Associate District Manager
Heather Tiel-Nelson, Public Affairs Specialist
Michael Courtney, Burley Field Manager
Brandon Brown, Acting Shoshone Field Manager
Holly Hampton, Craters of the Moon Monument Manager
Codie Martin, Jarbidge Assistant Field Manager
Meghan Sorensen-Pereira, Contact Representative
Brent Ralston, Planning and Environmental Coordinator

Public Attendees:

Tim Duffner, Idaho Department of Lands
Mike Mathews, Representative of Senator Jim Risch

Note to readers: A copy of each handout listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Shoshone Field Office. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Meghan Sorensen-Pereira at (208) 732-7263, or by email at mpereira@blm.gov.

*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*

Meeting called to order by Chairman Mike Henslee at 9:12 a.m.

Item I: Welcome and Introductions

After the meeting was called to order, a welcome was made to all parties present. Introductions were made around the room, including the introduction of three new RAC members: Daniel Butler, representing commercial recreation under category one; Shauna Robinson, representing historical and archaeological interest under category two; and Hunter Osborne, representing tribal interests under category three. Also introduced was the new Twin Falls District Manager, Mel Meier.

Public comment period opened at 9:17. Two members of the public were present at the meeting, but choose not to comment. The public comment period formally closed at 10:05.

Item II: New RAC Member Orientation

Heather Tiel-Nelson directed a presentation designed to orient newly appointed RAC members to the BLM and to their responsibilities as a RAC member. The orientation discussed the history of the BLM, its programs and mission, and local information.

Item III: Election of Chairperson/Vice Chairperson

Denise Alexander opened the floor for nominations for a chairperson for the RAC. Afton Patrick nominated Mike Henslee. The nomination was seconded by Daniel Butler. No other nominations were made. The motion for Mike Henslee to be the RAC Chairperson passed with no opposition.

Denise Alexander opened the floor for nominations for a vice-chairperson for the RAC. Peggy Stanley nominated Denise Alexander. The nomination was seconded by Mike Henslee. No other nominations were made. The motion for Denise Alexander to be the RAC Vice-chairperson passed with no opposition.

Item IV: Update of RAC Subcommittees

The RAC addressed its existing subcommittees. All subcommittees were opened up for changes and additions. Members whose terms had expired and were no longer on the RAC were removed from the subcommittees.

Subcommittee for the Jarbidge Resource Management Plan

Added Todd Wadsworth

Added Shauna Robinson

Subcommittee for Wild Horse and Burro

Added Todd Wadsworth

Added Jamey Wills

Subcommittee for the Proposed China Mountain Wind Project

Cancelled the subcommittee due to the project being inactive

Subcommittee for the Gateway West and MSTI Transmission Line Projects

Cancelled the MSTI Transmission line portion due to the project being inactive; the subcommittee will now be solely for the Gateway West Transmission Line Project.

Added Jeff Williams

Added Daniel Butler

Added Hunter Osborne

Subcommittee for the Cedar Fields and Castle Rocks Closures

Added Shauna Robinson

Added Hunter Osborne

Created a subcommittee for Greater Sage-Grouse, including:

Jeff Williams – Chair

Mike Henslee

Daniel Butler

Todd Wadsworth

Katie Shewmaker

Scott Boettger

Denise Alexander

Jamey Wills

It was also mentioned that there would be five expiring terms for RAC members. These positions are open for nomination and include one opening in category one, two openings in category two, and two openings in category three. All present RAC members with expiring terms indicated that they would like to reapply for their appointments.

Item V: Craters of the Moon National Monument Resource Management Plan Amendment Overview

In 2008, the Western Watersheds Project (WWP) challenged 16 Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and their associated Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) in six states—California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming—alleging that the BLM violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) by failing to consider a reasonable range of alternatives, and reasonably assessing the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of uses and development that were authorized in greater sage-grouse habitat.

In 2009, as part of the case management, briefing on two test cases was proposed—one of these test cases being the Craters of the Moon RMP, which was approved by the court. In September 2011, Judge Winmill ruled that the BLM violated NEPA in refusing to consider reductions in livestock grazing in the RMP for Craters of the Moon, and violated FLPMA by failing to uphold the National Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy.

In April 2012, there was an evidentiary hearing where BLM employees testified about BLM practices for managing grazing. After months of preparation, the judge adopted the BLM's suggestions of no interim measures. However, the BLM is ordered to revise the Craters RMP and associated allotment management plans by the end of 2014 to remedy the faults found in regards to grazing and sage-grouse conservation. The BLM is working on a 53 month timeline from November 2012—scoping is scheduled to be completed by May 2013, and a draft RMP Amendment and EIS is scheduled for November 2014. The RMP amendment will include no grazing and reduced grazing alternatives.

Item VI: Milner Recreation Site Overview

The Burley Field Office is working to update the Milner Historic Recreation Area located 9 miles west of Burley. There will be a programmatic focus on The Great Outdoors and Scenic and Historic Trails. Adjacent to the Milner Recreation Area lies 4 miles of pristine Oregon Trail routes, which have not been highlighted to date. Funding from the Scenic and Historic Trails program was used to contract the development of a conceptual design to better use this area as a recreation area and highlight the California and Oregon trails. A decision to implement the Milner Recreation Site upgrades was issued on January 22, 2013.

This conceptual design will clearly designate camping areas, and develop consistency of signage and materials used within the recreation area, improve boating facilities, improve and increase amenities and camping and picnic areas, and provide a 10' walking path along the 4 miles of Oregon Trail. The concept also includes redesign of the fee collection process so that the Milner Recreation area could be visited free of charge, with fee collection tubing located at the campsites to collect for overnight stays. Updates to the Milner Recreation site will be conducted in a phased approach, due to funding constraints.

The Milner Loop Road (BLM Ownership) has been included in the Federal Lands Transportation Program; it scored high enough on the list to be schedule to be paved in 2014 or 2015. Because the Milner Loop Road was selected into the Federal Lands Transportation Program, Cassia County and the Burley Highway District are now eligible to receive funding support from the Access Program for paving the access roads to the Milner Loop Road. The Access Program will

help the highway district fund the paving for more than 10 miles of access roads for a 7.5% match.

Item VII: Sage-grouse EIS Update

In March 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) identified the greater sage-grouse as warranted but precluded for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Based on litigation from a number of environmental groups, the FWS developed a timeframe for making a decision whether to list the species under the ESA, and the BLM and U.S. Forest Service have begun the process to revise land-use plans (LUPs) for federal lands that include sage-grouse habitat to incorporate consistent objectives and conservation measures into all relevant plans by September 2014.

In 2011, BLM initiated the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy to address regulatory mechanisms for sage-grouse and their habitat. Idaho is part of the Great Basin Planning Region, Idaho and southwestern Montana Sub-region. In July 2011, BLM convened a National Technical Team (NTT). In December 2011, BLM released interim management guidance (until land use plans are readdressed in 2014), and a NTT report for review. A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published to amend LUPs with sage-grouse habitat. Following the NOI was a 90-day public scoping period, and public meetings.

After scoping, the regional and sub-regional teams started developing alternatives. The Governor's Task Force developed an alternative that was submitted to the BLM. The sub-regional interdisciplinary teams have developed 6 alternatives for detailed analysis, which were presented to and approved by the Regional Management Team. They are now working on an effects assessment for each alternative.

After the effects assessments have been completed, they will conduct detailed analysis of each alternative. The goal is to compile the draft EIS for public release in June 2013. After public release, the teams will assess and respond to comments, and develop proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) amendments. The next benchmark will be to release the final EIS and proposed RMPs in spring 2014, and then a record of decision and the final approved RMP Amendments by fall 2014. The record of decision will be signed by the BLM Idaho State Director for Idaho BLM.(*see handouts 2, 3 and 4*)

Item VIII: Burley Field Office Update (*see handout 5*)

Cedar Fields:

The Burley Field office is in the process of writing an EIS to address the issues at Cedar Fields. There are five alternatives that were developed based on public comment and participation from the RAC (*see handout 6*). Four informational kiosks have been ordered and will be placed in strategic locations to help disseminate information to the public. The Burley Field Office is working with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes on information to be placed on the kiosks; the kiosks will also provide information and direction on recreational activities and locations. The Burley Field Office is also working with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) on processing a revocation of the BORs withdrawal of land within the American Falls Archaeological District.

Upon completion, the BLM will manage and control the entire area, which will make management and understanding easier for both the public and the agency.

Castle Rocks:

Castle Rocks is facing similar issues to those at Cedar Fields, except Castle Rocks has been under a temporary closure to climbing since 2003. That temporary closure order expired in November 2012. Since the public interest in the issues at Castle Rocks was significantly less than that at Cedar Fields, an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed. The EA will assess two alternatives: the first alternative is to amend the LUP and prohibit climbing, camping, staging and trail building; the second alternative is to allow climbing, camping, staging, and trail building.

South Hills Trails:

The South Hills Trails project is for a proposed system of 60 miles of single-track user-built trails used for motorized and bicycle recreation. BLM is coordinating with the South Idaho Mountain Biking Association on this project. A good portion of the clearances have been completed, but other workload has slowed the progress on the EA, and it most likely will not be completed before the 2013 riding season begins.

Jackpot 200:

The Jackpot 200 is a motorized vehicle race for all types of vehicles, with a 50 participant limit. This is authorized by Burley Field Office for the weekend before or after July 4. The Burley Field Office currently working on the EA and decision record to authorize the race for another five years.

Item IX: Jarbidge Field Office Update *(see handout 7)*

Jarbidge Draft RMP:

The Jarbidge Field Office is currently focusing most of their efforts on the Jarbidge Draft RMP, which is limiting the capability of working on other projects. The staff members are currently working on chapter four, which contains approximately 1,000 pages of impact analysis by resources. They hope to have this chapter forwarded to the Idaho State Office by next week. Following this chapter, there are still other sections and appendices that need completed, and the staff will be incorporating feedback to the other chapters that have already been reviewed. The goal is to have the proposed completion of the Final RMP to the Washington Office by August 2013.

New Hires:

One new person to the Jarbidge Field Office is Kelly Fischer, who is the Writer-Editor for the RMP.

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs)

BLM is excited and supportive of the development of a new working partner, the Saylor Creek RFPA. The Saylor Creek RFPA will be an additional available resource for fire much like a rural fire department. The Saylor Creek RFPA is comprised of about 30 members who have started the process for acquiring insurance and training.

Post-Kinyon Road Fire:

Drill seeding was completed in December on approximately 22,700 acres with a mixture of native grasses and forbs. About 3,300 acres of fuel breaks were aerial seeded with a mixture of forage kochia, alfalfa, and blue flax in early January. Fuel breaks were seeded along main travel routes on the east side of the Saylor Creek Air Force Range, within and adjacent to the Saylor Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Area. Fuel breaks were a total of 600 feet wide -- 300 feet on either side of the travel route where both sides of the road burned; 600 feet where only one side of the road burned.

Item X: Shoshone Field Office Update (*see handout 8*)

Ketchum Land Exchange:

The Ketchum Land Exchange has been completed, with the deeds and patents recorded in December 2012. There may still be some media coverage on this event.

Ketchum Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act Application:

The City of Ketchum and the BLM have formed a steering committee which will chart a course forward based on the limited ability of the SFO staff to work on the Ketchum R&PP project. The work capacity of the Shoshone Field Office staff is limited due to the workload associated with the required litigation work and court-ordered mandates. This non-discretionary workload, along with any other non-discretionary projects with appropriated funding will be our priority work. Discretionary work may not get addressed, due to these constraints.

Point of Rocks Ranch Direct Sale:

This project is close to being completed. It involves a small triangular portion of isolated public land. If the sale is completed, North Picabo Road would become the boundary between public and private lands, creating a more effective and manageable boundary.

Dry Creek Trespass:

The Dry Creek Trespass has been moved up to the Idaho Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) and the Solicitors office. Two decisions were issued to the trespassers for unauthorized development and unauthorized removal of mineral materials, and a Notice of Assessment for an Archaeological Resource Protection Act (ARPA) violation. The trespassers filed a Notice of Appeal and a Request for Stay, and requested a hearing with the office of Hearings and Appeals. It will be some time before there is a final resolution. Scott Boettger suggested the BLM use aerial mapping such as Google Earth to monitor boundaries and advise land owners of possible trespass concerns when time and workload permit.

Item XI: Poster Presentations

Peggy Stanley

Codie Martin

Item XII: Other Business

Future agenda topics:

Craters RMP Amendment

Tribal Matters Orientation - Ted Howard (Shoshone-Paiute Tribe)

Payette N.F. Fee Proposal Update

Next Poster Presenters:
Mel Meier
Mike Henslee

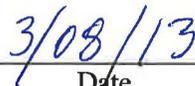
Meeting adjourned at 2:56.

Handouts Provided:

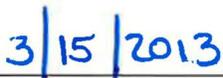
1. Bureau of Land Management Idaho 2012 Annual Report (8 pp)
2. National Greater Sage-Grouse, Idaho & Southwestern Montana Sub Region, Idaho Sage-Grouse Advisory Committee, January 31, 2013 (2 pp)
3. Idaho and SW Montana Sage-Grouse Habitat BLM NTT Alternatives (3 pp)
4. BLM Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Proposed Alternatives Summary Table (4 pp)
5. Burley Field Office Update (2 pp)
6. Cedar Fields EIS Alternatives (5 pp)
7. Jarbidge Field Office Update (2 pp)
8. Shoshone Field Office Update (4 pp)

Minutes certified by:


Mike Henslee, TFD RAC Chairman


Date


Mel Meier, TFD Manager


Date

Mel M. Meier

Minutes recorded by:
Meghan Sorensen-Pereira, SFO Contact Representative