

CENTRAL MONTANA RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

MAY 13-14, 2014

LEWISTOWN FIELD OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM

LEWISTOWN, MONTANA

All RAC Members were in attendance on the first day of the meeting, with the exception of Dana Darlington.

The first Agenda item was the Public Comment Period. Dyrck Van Hying, of Great Falls, was the only public signed up to speak. Dyrck distributed a handout and asked the group, "Does the Federal Government, through the BLM, have the ability to manage public lands or has it lost the ability to govern?" The reason for the question was due to several recent cases making national news...i.e. Clive Bundy grazing dispute in Nevada, federal worker being threatened on the highway in Utah, problems identified through FOIA requests regarding permittees lack of ability to abide by terms & conditions of permits, etc.

Nick Schultz asked why Dyrck used the word "govern"? The regs don't use that word. Dyrck replied that the newspaper article says people don't like the way the federal government is taking care of the government land. He sees the problem as a failure to govern to get this mess cleaned up.

Dyrck also mentioned that he is very interested in and trying to learn Arc GIS for use with remote rangeland monitoring.

Clive Rooney reviewed the Agenda and then asked for unanimous consent to act as Chairperson until 2:00, when the Election of Chair and Vice Chair was to take place. It was unanimously passed.

It was announced that Mark Albers is the new "Designated Federal Officer" for the Central Montana RAC.

Troy Blunt moved to adopt the September Meeting Minutes as written, it was seconded and adopted.

As part of the New Member Orientation for Damien Austin, Kaylene introduced the BLM Staff and then asked the members to go around the room giving their name, category they represent and a little about themselves.

\* Public Comment Officially Closed at 10:30 \*

Kaylene reviewed:

- Team Rules – "Do's"
- Facilitator's Role
- Brand New Charter
- SOP's – need majority in each category to have a quorum (3)
- Haven't received a nomination for "Energy" category
- RAC can form subgroups

Meeting Procedures – Public Comment Period available both days. RAC can choose the TIME.

The RAC had been asked to change the way the Public Comment Period is run, i.e., having it after a presentation, as opposed to before. Troy Blunt replied that this can be a double edged sword....some people want to talk before a presentation, some want afterward.

Jim McCollum asked if the agenda items are available to the public. Kaylene replied that they are available in the Federal Register, newspaper, radio and at the office.

Hugo Tureck stated he felt the change from 8 am to 10 am, for the Comment Period, was successful. He also felt that 90% of the comments have nothing to do with the agenda of the day. Public comments are more broad than the agenda.

Ralph Knapp proposed putting the comment period towards the end of the meeting on the second day.

Troy Blunt reminded everyone , whether it's one or one hundred comments...we need to take them into consideration.

It was clarified that during the Public Comment Period, we do not carry on dialogue. This is important to note. It's just the presentation of information.

Dave Reinhardt asked, "Can the RAC ask questions to the public that is commenting?" Clive replied, "Yes, but not for public/presenter to ask RAC questions."

Public can listen and observe the RAC – it's an open meeting. We don't interact with the public so we can have productive meetings and not debates. Hugo stated that Kaylene has been very good as facilitator, in seeing to that. It was also stated that there must be a Designated Federal Officer (DFO) in attendance, to hold a RAC meeting.

Jason Birdwell asked how it is decided what goes on the agenda. Mark responded that it's a combination of RAC , District Managers, Chairman and Staff. Jason stated that he didn't know about "Buffalo Wallow" until a public mentioned it and that it has never been discussed.

Mark Albers asked Kaylene to go over the procedure if there is no quorum. Kaylene stated that we focus on consensus and described using thumbs up/down/sideways. We also use a Fallback Vote – goes to a majority vote. Must document each category's votes –need 3 out of 5 to pass.

Regarding description they are providing advice upon, what does classification mean? Clive inquired. Mark answered, "Land tenure". "What does the RAC not have a say in? Personnel and budget?" Mark replied, "Yes."

Consensus on recommendations goes all the way to the Secretary. Authority can go beyond Manger, State Director and up to the Secretary.

Hugo stated the RAC is here to assist the BLM.

Kaylene went over the definitions of Consensus and Collaboration on the flipchart.

**BUILD COLLABORATION TO BUILD CONSENSUS TO REACH A DECISION.**

Kaylene reminded RAC members to bring hotel receipts in tomorrow.

Meetings are recorded per the Federal Register.

Mary Jones asked about what happens after a RAC member's 3 year term ends. Kaylene stated that members must reapply. It used to be that you had to be off a year before being on again, but that has changed.

Jim McCollum said his reapplication letter said, "As of the date of this letter....." This could be a problem.

Nick asked what ever happened to the idea of the Super RAC? Mark explained that it had been discussed due to difficulty in recent years in trying to attract and retain RAC members. Hugo interjected that it had been discussed in the past and we were strongly against it. Clive said it was not endorsed or favorably thought of. Hugo replied that they would not be as effective because we are so spread out.

## **2014 WORK PLAN**

Jonathan Moor revised the 2013 Plan and added some new recommendations. The new 2014 Work Plan was gone through page by page to check for necessary changes.

Recreation fees will remain under Action Items. Jim McCollum noticed the Forest Service is listed under "Recreation Fees." Mark explained, it is a requirement to take fee requests to a RAC. Instead of the Forest Service building their own RAC just to discuss fees, they use ours to get recommendations.

Ron Poertner suggested there should be a follow up on the use of the iron ranger and the amenity fees.

On top of page 4, it was requested that it be changed from "Preliminary document" to Proposed RMP/Final EIS. Clive asked if we should add the Lewistown Sage Grouse Plan to the list. It will be included within the RMP amendment.

11:30 LUNCH BREAK

## **Field Trips**

It was felt that this is an integral part of the work of the RAC. It was asked if any field trips to the Bullwhacker area were planned. It was stated that it could be done, we just need to plan for a long day. Clive asked how much it would cost to build a road around the Bullwhacker area. Stan Benes said he would expand on that tomorrow. It was then asked if there were any other field trips of interest? Stan mentioned looked at some prescribed fire areas, but that weather was such an integral part to getting to these areas. Mary Jones commented that it would be very interesting to see the after effects of the fire and plan. Hugo suggested keeping the door open to other field trips. Ron proposed a field trip to where they are doing a logging project. Clive asked Stan about this, but the Limekiln area work is finished. It was agreed to leave text "as is."

## **RAC Subgroups**

There are currently three ongoing subgroups.....1) Fees, 2) OHV, 3) Limekiln

Limekiln is active, but the other two aren't. Is there a point to having them? Hugo suggested we keep them. Clive asked for volunteer on "Fees" subgroup. Some people are no longer here that were on the subgroups. Hugo Tureck, Wayne Fairchild & Clive Rooney will form the subgroup for Fees.

It was felt that currently we are not ready for an OHV Subgroup and this should be moved to another year.

Limekiln/Ruby subgroup includes Mary Jones and Jason Birdwell. Clive asked if we need representation from each category? It was decided that it all comes back to the RAC anyway, so it should be ok if there's not.

The possibility of forming a Bullwhacker subgroup was suggested. Hugo offered that we wait until tomorrow's presentation and then revisit the idea.

### **RAC Appointment SOP – Amendment**

It was decided to scratch this from the Work Plan. Discussion to take place tomorrow.

### **District Manager Updates**

It was agreed to keep the updates.

### **Noxious Weed Management**

It was agreed to keep Noxious Weed Management. Hugo informed the groups that the County can be hired to come on private land and spray weeds. Clive said people can also loan out equipment from the County so private landowners can do it themselves.

### **Travel Management Plan**

It was decided to scratch this from the Work Plan.

### **2014 RAC Meeting Schedule – Proposed Agenda Items**

Meeting date to be scheduled at a later time.

Ron asked if the Land Swap/Monument Issue can be listed. Clive suggested keeping it under the District Manager Updates.

### **ROUNDTABLE**

Hugo Tureck – It's been pretty quiet. The most common comments heard are about the Bundy case. People shake their head, but hasn't been negative to BLM. They are interested but not hearing that BLM is at fault.

Dave Reinhardt – Comments heard about buffalo, i.e. against free-roaming issue. Bundy case – hearing comments not about whether Bundy was right or wrong, but use of SWAT and snipers being there. Sheriff's office should have handled it. Most comments about Law Enforcement response.

Ralph Knapp – Comments have revolved around sage grouse and their protections. It is felt that they should be consistent with grazing rights.

Jim McCollum – So much misinformation exists. Big things in the last six months in the Great Falls area have been land exchanges, not only here but elsewhere, where no federal land is included. Durphy Hills, Bullwhacker are on no one's agenda. Then all of a sudden land exchange is proposed, then off the table. The RAC is supposed to be involved, but nothing's been brought forth. I knew only as much as anyone else who read the article. The RAC should have had some input. The RAC went away in September and now it's back after a lot of stuff is over and settled. Where does the RAC stand in regard to this issue? What is our purpose, if not to have input into this kind of thing? Stan Benes explained that he will touch on this during the District Manager's Update portion of the meeting tomorrow morning.

Nick Schultz – We all know the big story of the Wilkes Brothers. How can these big people come in and BLM goes to work with them for land exchanges? The small farmer/rancher can't get any type of exchange and BLM won't pay attention to those that live here, where it makes sense to exchange some land around.

Jason Birdwell – A group of sportsmen are pleased with what's taking place and what work is being done in getting access to the Bullwhacker area.

Troy Blunt – Topics rolled around in conversation include free roaming bison, sage grouse and the Wilkes Brothers (not local to us). The only thing different is the question as to where the RI dollars are going and being spent? 50% is mandated to come back as improvements on the range. The law says they need to come back.

Dan Kluck – Topics have pretty much been covered by everyone else. Clive asked Dan about the grass in his area. Dan stated that the grass is coming in good with enough rain.

Damien Austin – Same stuff....Bundy, Bullwhacker, and free roaming bison vs. livestock.

Ron Poertner – Thank you to the BLM for cleaning Judith Landing – fishing starts early. BLM planted cottonwood trees and there was a lot of ice this spring. Headwaters Economics – check local Chamber of Commerce and relate it back to the Monument. Publish documents with misinformation. Thanks to BLM for fixing flood damage. There is some concern with Antiquities Act statements by Secretaries. Free-roaming bison – stay involved even though the state would be the major player.

Wayne Fairchild – Outfitter groups had their annual meeting with Mark Schaeffer in attendance. Good policy to meet once a year. Use on the river was high during the bicentennial, then down, but numbers are starting to go up again. There was ice damage at Coal Banks & Kipp. Outfitters concerned about boat ramp situation – eventually obsolete. Hot topic for outfitters on the river. River Outfitters support use fees. 3% of their income goes to fees.

Mary Jones – Water & fracking are topics of interest. Headwaters Economics? Surprised they had negative comments because they usually do studies.

Clive Rooney – BLM Planning process. Encouraged to see Neil Kornze agrees there is too much time spent producing plans and not enough time for doing work.

## **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Nominations for the position of Chair for the Resource Advisory Council were opened. Dave Reinhardt nominated Clive Rooney for the position. Troy Blunt seconded the motion. The nomination passed unanimously.

Nominations for the position of Vice Chair for the Resource Advisory Council were opened. Jim McCollum nominated Dana Darlington. Troy Blunt seconded the motion. The nomination passed unanimously.

## **FRACKING – Don Judice, Great Falls Oil & Gas Field Office**

Don presented the RAC with a Hydraulic Fracturing 101 Powerpoint presentation.

Fracking and horizontal drilling is a game changer. Drilling has become very precise. They are able to go two miles down, two miles lateral and have the accuracy to hit a 5 gallon bucket! This process has seriously reduced the environmental footprint on the surface. Technology is advancing rapidly. In 45 days a site can be ready for fracturing. It can take 100 semis just to bring the rig in.

Ralph asked, “What is the lifetime of casing?” and, “Has there been any failed casing?” Hugo asked, “Does the steel corrode?” In response to all three questions, this varies over time depending on the environment, i.e.

Jim questioned what they do to maintain the distance between casings. Don replied that they use centralizers and then each layer of tubing is surrounded by cement.

Ron inquired, “Is there always going to be an aquifer when you drill?” Don replied, “More likely than not.”

There can be 12 wells per 1280 acre spacing unit, with 18 legs on a 1280 just ok’d by the commission & BLM.

There can be up to 24 wells on a pad. 40-60,000 more wells are expected in North Dakota in the next 10-15 years.

Environmental concerns include: Groundwater protection

Well integrity, design & construction to ensure isolation in wellbore

Surface protection

It was asked how much water pressure is used in the process. Don responded that 10,000-12,000 lbs. psi are used.

98% of the chemicals and additives used in the process consist of water & sand.

Wisconsin was mining sand for use in the fracking process, but a shortage is occurring, so ceramic bead is being used as a replacement.

Mary asked what the proper disposal is for the water used in fracking. Don responded that North Dakota injects it back in the ground (disposal formation). The Montana Board of Oil & Gas does the

same, with some recycling. It is authorized by federal and state. When asked what happens after it's injected, Don replied that it stays in the formation, so nothing that we know of.

Hugo inquired if the saline water can be used again for fracking. Don said the water has to have certain characteristics to be sold/used by the companies.

Water volumes typically are 45,000 to 120,000 barrels per well (2-5 million gallons) are needed for fracture stimulation. 30-40% will flow back to the surface. Use is temporary, not a long term commitment. The amount used can be reduced when frac fluids are recycled.

Fluid Disposal consists of underground injection, commercial disposal facilities and treatment/reuse.

Hydraulic Fracturing Regs were Drafted, comments received, and changes made. A Supplemental Rule was added. 1.35 million comments were received with 7 people on the team to review them. BLM is working on this and the Final rule is expected this calendar year.

Hugo asked if there is more energy used to get the product than energy we'll get from this. Ralph stated that the money put in vs. what they get out is overwhelming. There are HUGE returns....2,000 barrels of oil @ \$85-\$105/barrel is pretty substantial.

Flaring of gas wells can go for 6 months and can extend to a year. Piping can't keep up with production. The gas produced in North Dakota is extremely rich, i.e. the gas coming to your home via NorthWestern energy is 900 BTU's vs. 1600 BTU's in North Dakota.

#### **MISSOURI BREAKS INTERPRETIVE CENTER FEE INCREASE – Connie Jacobs**

Connie stated that the Wild & Scenic River was designated in 1976, the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument was established in 2001 and the Interpretive Center opened in October 2006.

Visitation is about 6,000 a year, give or take. They seek to share stories and educate people. Education is the main point. The first year and a half there was no admittance fee. In 2008 a presentation was made to the RAC, asking to establish a fee. Amenity fees are the lowest in the region at \$2.00, with 15 yrs. and under having to pay no fee.

Since that time new exhibits have been added and more educational programs have been added. These programs reach approximately 1,000 students every year.

65% of visitors pay no fee – using Federal Passports, etc. The requested fee increase from \$2.00 to \$4.00, will only affect people that come for the day.

Over 18 programs are presented at the Center. All these things cost money. Interpretive programs are offered free. Hands on the Land, is a student river trip journey through the Monument. The "River Explorer" book put together for kids (\$4,000 printing), Activity Book developed for little kids (\$2,000 printing), Teacher's Tool Kit also developed (\$2,000 for 50).

Connie declared that after 5 years, she has \$15,000 saved up and slated for Cow Island Crossing of Nez Perce.

\$2.00 to \$4.00 will affect approximately 18% of visitors annually. Trip Advisor Comments were very complimentary. The Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center in Great Falls charges \$8.00. Fees will also be used for maintenance.

Brian Morger, a local artist from Great Falls, is completing a backdrop on the wall behind the recently acquired grizzly bear display.

Jim McCollum mentioned the plexiglass box for donations. Connie said this is used by people and they gather approximately \$1,000/year from it. She currently has a \$10,000 slush fund balance.

Clive asked if they were asking the RAC to endorse the recommendation, or if it was just a presentation? Mark and Connie both responded that they are requesting an endorsement for the increase to the entrance fee.

Hugo asked how they came up with \$4.00 instead of \$5.00. Connie responded by saying it would then be over a 100% increase and over double the current fee and people don't like that. \$4.00 is what they "need" but \$5 would be ok too. Wayne commented that most people only go once, so they wouldn't know it used to be \$2.00.

Clive asked for a proposal. Hugo proposed increasing the fee to \$5.00. Ralph seconded. Mark asked if that could be instituted immediately. Connie said they should be able to do it by June. Stan said he thought it would take longer. Connie will check on the timing.

#### **WOODHAWK UPDATE – Mike Kania, Monument Manager**

Mike Kania distributed a copy of the Environmental Assessment-Finding of No Significant Impact on the Woodhawk Allotment (20031) Grazing Permit Renewal to the RAC. The BLM lost the lawsuit with Western Watershed. The judge said we violated NEPA by not having a "No Grazing" alternative.

Where are we in the process? April 29<sup>th</sup> it was signed, then there's an appeal period. We've heard that it will be appealed by Western Watersheds because they feel it's not significant enough. Does the appeal have substance? Mike said he thinks it will hold up. Hugo asked how many AUM's are involved. Mike replied, 3140 AUM's. It would be reducing 60 AUM's. Grazing would be removed from 3 miles of river, using drift fences where cliffs come down to the river.

Clive asked if there is a water issue. Mike explained that this wasn't a problem, as there are water catchers and water available in the allotment.

Ron inquired, "When fencing off islands, who pays for the fence when ice takes it out? Mike explained that temporary, electric fence would be used.

There is a three week season of use, from May 1<sup>st</sup> to May 20<sup>th</sup> or May 21<sup>st</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>. There is no hot season of use grazing.

Nick Schultz asked, "What did the National Riparian Team say?" Mike responded that the entire allotment is meeting properly functioning condition.

This reduction is only 1.8%. Hugo expressed that we need to recognize as a RAC that this is a tiny reduction and we serve a very broad spectrum, not only ranchers.

Ron stated he feels this is not a grazing issue, but rather, a program issue. Process problem, not grazing, admitting original had flaws.

Hugo asked if that was so bad. Ron asked what was missing in the original plan. He had concerns this would open litigation to all allotments up and down the river.

It was asked if reduced grazing and the No Grazing alternative is on all new renewals. Mike answered, "Yes, it is."

Nick said, "It may seem like a small thing, but it's setting a precedence." Ron Poertner agreed. Mary stated, "They had to do something because the judge said they had to." Nick countered, "They didn't have to do anything but add the alternative."

Hugo commented, "The BLM is taking a stronger and stronger look at riparian areas in and out of the Monument. I see it coming, not just in the Monument."

## CENTRAL MONTANA RAC – DAY 2

MAY 14, 2014

### DISTRICT MANAGER'S UPDATE

#### Mark Albers – Hi-Line District

The Hi-Line Proposed RMP/Final EIS has updated Lands with Wilderness Characteristics, based on information submitted by the Montana Wilderness Association, during the public comment period. They identified 13,000 additional acres as having Wilderness Characteristics. The Proposed RMP proposes to manage 16,400 acres (3 areas) to protect wilderness characteristics verses 10,700 acres (2 areas) in the Draft RMP. The new area (Lena Coulee; 5700 acres) is located in south Valley County and adjacent to the other two areas to be managed to protect wilderness characteristics.

The boundary for **Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Habitat** was expanded to include all Core habitat as identified by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The Draft RMP did not identify all core habitat as 'priority habitat.' The amount of priority habitat acreage was increased from 1.2 million to 1.4 million acres. This includes Bitter Creek WSA in north Valley County and the Mountain Plover ACEC in south Valley County. The proposed management for these two areas (85,000 acres) didn't change; it was already sufficiently "restrictive" to protect sage-grouse habitat.

**Greater Sage-Grouse General Habitat** had the No Surface Occupancy (NSO) oil & gas lease stipulation around grouse leks reduced from 1 mile to a 0.6 NSO lek buffer. The Controlled Surface Use (CSU) oil & gas lease stipulation for nesting habitat was replaced with a 2 mile CSU lek buffer in **general** habitat.

Additional greater sage-grouse guidance/information also included expanded adaptive management discussion, expanded mitigation & monitoring discussion, incorporated guidance from Montana's Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Conservation objectives Team (COT) Report, addressed cumulative effects for sage-grouse at the management zone level. Management Zone 1 includes Alberta, Saskatchewan, Eastern Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Northeast Wyoming.

Renewable Energy – identified 1600 acres near Shelby, Montana as Potential Wind Development Areas.

Oil & Gas – included additional background information on hydraulic fracturing (fracking), improved consistency in proposed oil & gas lease stipulations with other on-going Montana/Dakota RMPs, added lease stipulations for Tier IV engines to address air quality concerns, added lease stipulation for Visual

Resource Management (VRM) Class II areas. The objective of VRM Class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape.

Bison – added language recognizing the State’s role in managing native wildlife and clarified that BLM would work cooperatively with MFWP, USFWS, other agencies, partners, and cooperators in the development of a wild bison restoration plan if/when MFWP initiates an effort to restore wild bison on a large landscape.

County Plans – completed 7 additional county plan consistency reviews. Management actions identified in the Proposed RMP aren’t known to be inconsistent with county planning documents except in cases where items or actions identified in the local plans appear to be inconsistent with federal policy, laws or regulations.

Summer 2014 – Distribute PRMP/FEIS to the public; publish Notice of Availability in Federal Register; begin Governor’s Consistency Review and 30-day protest period; review and prepare response to protests.

Fall 2014 – Prepare Record of Decision/Approved Plan and distribute to the public; publish Notice of Availability in Federal Register.

8 ½ years to date! Changes come & need to incorporate.

Troy asked if this will be a 10-15 year Plan. Mark responded that we are hoping it’s a 15-20 year Plan.

Ron questioned if there would be public meetings. No, at this stage there is a 30-day protest period. Hard copies will be available or you will be able to read it online.

#### **STAN BENES – CENTRAL MONTANA DISTRICT OFFICE**

Stan expressed his appreciation for the RAC group, their suggestions and insight. He feels we need to know each other to work well together and that’s why we include the evening meal .

Stan discussed budget cuts and increased workloads, as well as how we are consumed with planning. The Monument RMP took 7 years....people are saying 4 years for the Lewistown RMP...we will see. Currently there are no drastic changes, although sage grouse could affect grazing and the RMP is taking at least 50% of staff time at times. Additional planning efforts are also taking employee time, such as fire planning, project planning, etc.

Staffing – cut 6 full-time positions and some career 6-7 month positions. With sequestration, 8 full-time positions still needed. 30 more being looked at statewide.

BLM is one of the few Departments that actually **put \$** in the coffers.

We currently have six items in litigation, one of which is Buffalo Wallow in Fergus County. A repair and rebuild was planned several years back, at a cost of \$483,000. It was determined, that there was no public access; 4 private land owners property must be crossed to get there. It is a priority sage-grouse area and we have legal water right for 38 acre feet. It actually covers 160 ac. The reservoir was breached and a stock pond was built instead, at a cost of \$87,000. People took exception to that, so we are now in litigation.

## Bullwhacker Restoration Process Access – Exchange Proposal

The Wilkes Brothers moved in and bought 4 ranches. They came in to discuss the allotments and asked if BLM entertains land exchanges. We informed them that, yes, we do. Their representative met with the State Director and we said – we will not do an exchange where there is historic public access. We could not see the public accepting 5-6 generations of public access being lost. We stated that we would need a formal proposal from them. We have updated the RAC at each meeting but no proposals had come forward.

About a month ago, they brought an official proposal forward, which included the Durphy Hills. We told them there wouldn't be support from the public to give up this area. Actual proposal included 5300 acres Private for 4900 acres of BLM.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is in opposition to Durphy Hills exchanged. It was discussed with the State Director and no exchange would be supported with the Durphy Hills included.

This was all started to “restore” access. If no exchange, then we could build a road. We have had offers from other agencies to assist with building a road.

It was asked, “What kind of criteria does BLM use for land exchanges?” It was explained that it has to be in the public interest. It's expensive, no special conditions. Currently we have budget constraints.

Clive stated that having established criteria to begin with, helps with an exchange. Everyone needs to work together; the two sides are so polarized.

Jim McCollum asked for the RAC to be on the news release mailing list so they are current on happenings.

Clive expressed there is a reasonable expectation of involvement of the RAC on big items like this. It was questioned as to whether a Bullwhacker subgroup is needed. It was determined to wait until there's a proposal to look at.

### **BLM SAGE-GROUSE AMENDMENT – Adam Carr, Wildlife Biologist, Central MT District**

Adam stated that 240 unique comments from 25 commenters or groups were received, with over 7,000 submissions total. The focus was on 8 specific issues: Range of alternatives analyzed, did we look at good range of alternatives, monitoring & mitigation measures, NEPA process, best available science, the bird itself-habitat needs, minerals development (o&g) and livestock grazing.

Schedule – Wanted ROD by December, but it could be pushed back by the WO. Planning takes a lot of time with reviews and briefings. No additional comment periods or meetings. There will be a 30 day protest period after the plan is issued. Governor's review is 30 days and we are waiting on that.

It was asked, “In practical terms, what's the worst thing that could happen? Any loss of grazing privileges?” Adam replied, “No. If the bird was listed, we'd consult with FW&P when renewing the permit. If it's meeting objectives, we'd issue decisions based on NEPA. They'd have to agree with the plan.”

Roy asked if the predator situation is addressed. Adam answered, “Yes. We have expanded that language to add the biological side. The predator is a key player. It wasn't in the draft but has been expanded.”

Geoff Beyersdorf replied, "We have brought that awareness up."

Ralph asked, "How much do these birds range?" Adam responded that north of the river they migrate up to 75 miles. Four miles is critical from their lek. In winter habitat, it is dependent on open sagebrush stands, which is 90% of their diet.

Ron offered that it seems difficult to get FW&P to say our plans can be compatible. Are they being looked at for consistency? Adam said, "We are looking to be as consistent/similar as possible, but there are unique circumstances in each area/office."

Stan said BLM is wanting to be reviewed. Changes yet to come from the National Office could be substantive.

Jim asked, "When is the Fish, Wildlife & Parks deadline to get this wrapped up?" The court ordered deadline is the end of September 2015.

Ron asked if we could get Fish, Wildlife & Parks back on the agenda for the RAC. Clive said he will attempt to get them for the next meeting.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mark Sch\_\_\_\_\_, President of Central Montana Hunters for Public Access, expressed his thanks to the BLM and the RAC for the work we are doing. He would like joint meetings with all interested parties on a proposal regarding Bullwhacker Road and the Durphy Hills.

#### **ZORTMAN RANGER STATION RENTAL & BUFF'S DAY USE AREA – Vinita Shea & Kathy Tribby, Malta FO**

Kathy explained that they are currently in the idea phase of a couple projects. This is just a preliminary scoping of these. Buff's Day use area within Camp Creek Complex, is having a lot of requests to reserve for weddings, church groups, etc. We haven't had the ability to use reservations before – this needs to go through the Federal Register. Do we want to set up a reservation process and fee to do that? \$50/day to reserve a site is used in a couple other offices where this is offered.

Jim asked if it was un-reserved, would it be free to use? Kathy replied, "Yes....whoever shows up could use it. The fee is only for "reserved" use for a group."

Clive questioned, "How would people know?" Kathy responded that a placard would be used.

Jim inquired, "Is there a caretaker there?" Kathy replied that during May through November, there is a maintenance contractor.

Hugo asked, "How big a group would this accommodate?" This is a good sized area. Exact number would have to be covered in the NEPA process, Kathy replied.

Jim asked, "Would there be a certain number of camping spots?" No – this would be just a day use area.

Clive questioned if it was possible to reserve campsites near there. There are sites, but they don't have a reservation system. Clive asked if he would be correct in saying that these campgrounds are usually not full? Kathy replied that that would be correct. They are usually only full during holidays.

Wayne questioned if there is a demand for reserving the spot. Kathy replied yes, they get several requests a year.

Hugo expressed that it seems like it sets up expectations and that's good. For exclusive use of an area, one should be expected to pay.

Damien questioned how much staff time would be needed. We would need a maintenance person for cleaning & signing, with eventually a possible campground host.

Jim asked if there was a pavilion – Yes, there is.

Wayne stated that he supports it and there are costs with cleaning, etc.

It was positively received to charge \$50 fee to Rent/Reserve Buff's Day Use Area.

### **ZORTMAN RANGER STATION RENTAL**

In 1965, BLM took over management of the area. Last time it was used by fire personnel, was about 20 years ago.

Last year the foundation was redone. The inside is original. We are looking at what to do next. Locals have asked about possible uses, i.e. possibly use as a BLM rental cabin. Most fees range from \$30-\$75/night. We have talked with the local motel & store and they have all been pretty positive about the idea. It was felt that it would complement and supplement what's going on in their community.

Jim asked where the current Fire Station sits in comparison to this cabin. Vinita showed him on an aerial photo map. This would take a similar process as other things by going through the Federal Register. An Open House was scheduled for people to look at it.

Jim continued by asking if the site would allow rental for the weekend? Allow for tent set up?, etc. We would have to talk with neighbors, etc. and definitely need to be looked at in a site plan and NEPA.

Troy questioned what the potential capacity would be. Kathy replied that there is a kitchen, bathroom, living room, & bedroom, so approximately 6 but it would have to be looked at.

Wayne asked what it would cost to get it up to rental standards. Kathy responded that there currently is no running water, so upgrades would have to be done in phases.

Vinita explained that the outside is historic, but not inside because its already been changed, so we have options. It would be set up with a reservation system.

Troy asked who people would contact for reservations. Kathy replied that people would just call the office phone number.

Recreation.gov website use is possible.

Jim stated, "I've found that you need to call at the beginning of the year because cabin reservations fill up quickly. Demand may be less here, but it's something to consider."

Wayne explained, "We've used this system a lot online. It's easy to use, marking the days you want."

The final fee will depend on what amenities will be included. Fees paid would go to maintain the site. We would probably hire a local for maintenance. We are very excited about this project.

Clive stated that he would recommend to people to check some of these places out.

Item to Interject \* \* \* Naming of Limekiln Trail – Mary Jones

Mary brought up Limekiln Trail and possible naming of the trail. She had previously proposed the trail be named after Kris Moser. BLM has been looking into what's involved in making this happen. Mary stated that she knew this was unusual, but that she'd like to at least informally bring this forward. It was noted that this is a lengthy process.

Jim suggested at least having an informal dedication sign.

Ron asked, "Who would take charge of a dedication? BLM probably couldn't."

Mary suggested Geoff could help. BLM has to decide if it's possible or not first.

Clive suggested talking to the adjacent private landowner and putting the sign on their side of the fence. Then there wouldn't be a need to go through the BLM process.

Mark suggested calling it a "tribute". Lots of people care about public land, but we can't begin naming things after people on public land. To say the trail is named after someone is not a good idea.

Jim declared, "A woman pushed through changing the name of Crooked Creek to Sacagawea River. It's a long process. I don't see a problem naming for a local person. I don't oppose the idea, but I understand where Mark is coming from."

Clive questioned, "Do we need any RAC action on this?" Not on private land.

Jason suggested dedicating a sign to Kris.

Stan said that he agrees with Mark.

Mary will check into who owns the land next to the trail for a possible sign.

\* \* \* \* \*

Stan mentioned that BLM Law Enforcement wanted to clarify that it does not have SWAT teams or snipers. (Re: Clive Bundy, Nevada Rancher discussions.)

Stan stated that he had a Mutual Issues meeting with the Fergus County Commissioners and that these **are very productive sessions.**

Clive mentioned the sequestration and cutting of positions and how BLM is the hub of fire management with a substantive staff, which are indispensable to county and state who are dependent on it. Cuts could come to some of this.

#### PLANNING PROCESS DISCUSSIONS

It was decided to endorse Director Kornze's plan to revamp the RMP process. This was moved and seconded by Dave & Ralph.

**The Central Montana RAC endorses Director Kornze's proposal to revamp the BLM's Planning Process. As part of this effort, BLM should estimate the current amount of staff time dedicated to planning is excessive.**

Troy motioned to approve the statement, Dave seconded, Motion Approved.

It was agreed that with this statement, we are conveying a sentiment to cut time. It was mentioned that Planning and RMP Process are two different things.

Dave responded that Planning the RMP and all types of planning are what we want to cut.

Nick replied that it all boils down to the NEPA process.

Clive explained, "The message isn't getting up the ranks regarding the disdain of the planning process. This is the first time a Director of the BLM has said we need to revamp the RMP process, so we should support him."

#### **RAC SOP APPOINTMENT AMENDMENT PROPOSAL**

The term of a RAC member will end after 3 years; however if upon expiration of the member's term, a replacement member has not been appointed, the outgoing term will be extended until the Secretary has appointed a person to fill that position. Motion to accept – Hugo, Seconded-Troy. Unanimous.

Jim replied, "Somebody told me this goes through the Whitehouse. I'm surprised at the level of scrutiny." Mark responded, "Yes, it does."

Ron questioned, "Does that fit with renewing of term?" Yes. 3 year term ends – new application.

#### **NEXT AGENDA & LOCATION**

The proposed date for the next RAC Meeting will be October 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> in Fort Benton.

Agenda Topics to include:

- Follow up on Boat Ramp & Fees from Iron Ranger

- Bison & Sage Grouse Update (Jodie Bush)

- Bullwhacker Update/Land Exchange

- DOI Yellowstone Bison Report

- Status of Hi-Line/Lewistown RMPs

- Bison/Sage Grouse – State

Meeting Adjourned

