

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
January 14-15, 2009
Malta, Montana

The meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. in the community room of the First State Bank in Malta. RAC members attending were Ron Moody (Vice Chair), Troy Blunt, Barb Cole, Ron Moody, Clay Vincent, Dan Tiegen, Brian Gasvoda, Pat Gunderson and Mike Bryant. Tom Carrels arrived after lunch.

Absent were Lisa Huestis, Larry Epstein, Vicky Marquis, Terry Selph and Bob Valach.

BLM personnel in attendance were Stan Benes, Mark Albers, Stanley Jaynes, Scott Haight, Kaylene Patten and Kay Haight.

Public Comments

Public comments were offered by Janelle Holden and Mary Jones. The comments are attached to these minutes.

Welcome, Synopsis, Meeting Minutes

Kaylene welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting agenda. The September meeting minutes were previously corrected following the September meeting (clarification of bighorn sheep management in the Malta area), and no further changes were suggested at this meeting. The corrected minutes will be signed on January 15 and Kaylene will send the revised minutes to RAC members.

The RAC members and BLM personnel in attendance then introduced themselves.

Ron Moody noted that the RAC continually evolves in what they do and how they do it. This process is to help people agree to share uses of public resources, rather than resorting to litigation. It is important for RAC members to speak for their constituency and participate in discussions.

Charter Review

Stan Benes, Lewistown Field Manager and RAC Designated Federal Official, reviewed the RAC charter. Key points included the following:

- The RAC gives advice to the Secretary of the Interior, forwarded through the Designated Federal Official and Montana State Director.
- The BLM will soon return to a three-tier organization. The Central Montana Zone will include the HiLine District and the Lewistown District.
- The RAC charter will be renewed in October 2009 (a process completed every two years).
- The RAC will report to the Montana State Director through either Stan or Mark Albers, Malta Field Office.
- The Lewistown Field Office provides administrative support for the RAC.
- The RAC can give advice to the BLM, but not on financial or personnel actions. Stan noted that he welcomes informal visits at any time from RAC members on an individual basis.
- Stan offered to send to RAC members the emerging issues updates that he prepares for the State Director every four to six weeks.
- The RAC members are welcome to accompany field trips to the river as conditions allow.
- The RAC can recommend subgroups.
- The BLM will bring any fee proposals to the RAC for advice.
- The RAC is an important method for people of polarized viewpoints to come together.

Mark Albers commented on the importance of finding common ground and the RAC's work in that regard.

Troy Blunt said the RAC members need to hear from the BLM if there are issues that the RAC should consider.

Pat Gunderson noted that Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) has a citizens advisory council for each region of the state. Those meetings always have a roundtable discussion that provides citizens with an opportunity to provide feedback to MFWP. This could also be added to RAC meetings.

“Do’s” and Facilitator’s Role

Kaylene reviewed a list of meeting guidelines, or “Dos” for every RAC meeting.

- Stay focused on the agenda (deal with the task at hand).
- Commit to mutual respect of all council members.
- Be attentive – a good listener – look for the worth in an idea.
- Participate actively – be open, take risks, avoid defensiveness, seek balance.
- Monitor yourself – avoid dominating or disrupting discussions.
- Trust among council members.
- Ask/seek clarification when you don’t understand.
- Time limits may be considered for council member input.
- Reach a specific conclusion – finish an issue.

The Facilitator’s role is as follows:

- Won’t contribute own ideas
- Try to remain neutral
- Focus group energy on task
- Make process suggestions
- Defend participants from personal attack
- Enforce the process agreements
- Capture the basic ideas on a flip chart
- OK to misspell
- Will write only key words

Consensus/Logistics/Procedures

The RAC is based on collaboration and consensus. Collaboration is building trust and respect in order to achieve common objectives from uncommon perspectives. It is a process to seek a win-win solution. Benefits include better solutions with a broader understanding; a protection of all interests; long-term and lasting solutions.

Consensus means that each party can live with the solution and support the decision of the RAC, both inside and outside the meeting.

Thumb up:	I support the decision.
Thumb sideways:	The decision may not be everything I want, but I can support it.
Thumb down:	I cannot support the decision; may have questions, may need technical advice, may need to meet with constituents.

If consensus cannot be reached, a fallback vote may be taken with a majority from each category required for the vote to pass. The minority opinion is forwarded to the Designated Federal Official stating their viewpoint on why consensus could not be reached.

Meetings follow a relaxed Robert’s Rules of Order format. Each day of a meeting typically begins with a public comment period. Interaction with the public ends after the public comment period, and all discussions are held internally within the RAC. If a constituent is in the room and a caucus is needed, a five-minute break should be requested.

RAC members should complete travel vouchers at the end of each meeting and Kaylene will submit the information for reimbursement of travel expenses. Per diem and hotel costs cannot be paid for RAC members living within 50 miles of a meeting location; however, mileage is reimbursed. Expenses are typically reimbursed within two weeks through direct deposit. Phone cards are available if needed.

Private information (social security numbers, etc.) needed for expense reimbursement is kept secure and not released to the public. If a RAC member chooses, all mail or information from the public can be sent to Kaylene who will forward it to the RAC member. The public would not receive the private contact information.

Russian Olive Eradication Project

Chad Krause, BLM hydrologist in the Lewistown Field Office, made a presentation to the RAC on Russian olive eradication along the Upper Missouri River at the PN Ranch (Judith Landing) and on Council Island. No Russian olives have been seen downstream from Council Island. PP&L matched BLM funding for the eradication project. It is hoped that grant monies can be used in the future.

In 2007-2008, 520 acres of riparian habitat were cleared of Russian olives. Herbicide was applied to the stumps immediately after cutting the branches by using either a paintbrush or a hand sprayer. Some areas may need to be re-treated in 10-20 years.

Russian olive infestations have negative impacts to cavity nesters and migratory birds, as well as native vegetation. Once they enter a riparian corridor, they are invasive and spread rapidly. Russian olives form self-replacing stands which preclude any native shrubs or trees (e.g., cottonwood trees) from ever establishing.

There are no immediate plans for where to go next.

2009 RAC Work Plan Overview

Stan Benes reviewed the 2009 RAC Work Plan Overview.

- Limekiln/Ruby blowdown. BLM is trying to salvage timber as part of travel planning process.
- Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Record of Decision and Approved Plan is completed and the appeal timeframe is in progress.
- HiLine Resource Management Plan is in progress.
- Over 600 grazing permits and leases in the Lewistown Field Office.
 - 154 grazing permits renewed in FY08
 - Data collection on 73 allotments
 - Hope to have all allotments processed by Fiscal Year 2009.
- Three preliminary watershed EAs are out for public review and comment.
- Judith-Moccasin landscape analysis has been completed.
 - Interest by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in elk habitat, travel planning, fuels projects.
- Noxious weeds are managed by BLM personnel in the Lewistown and Havre offices. Funding of this program is currently low.
- Zortman/Landusky mine reclamation. Looking at stimulus opportunities to keep the water treatment plant going.
- Public access. The RAC could be very helpful on some aspects of this issue.
- A schedule of RAC meetings for the year is part of the work plan. RAC members agreed to the following:
 - Three meetings per year (this meeting plus two more prior to September 30).
 - Dates to be the end of May or first part of June (a warm month so a possible river trip could be included); and September.
 - The work plan should be in phase with the charter – from September to September.
 - **Consensus was reached to add the above general dates to the work plan.**

Orientation

What are the expectations of the RAC?

- Stan Benes: Emphasized that he is looking for an informal exchange of emails and visits, along with the formal exchange through RAC meetings. What is on the minds of the public you represent? The BLM is looking to utilize the resources of public land for this generation while preserving the land for future generations.
- Mark Albers: A large project like developing Standards and Guidelines was handled well through the RAC process. When no large issues are pending, the RAC's role could be a sounding board. What are those things that the BLM and RAC should be working on together?
- Tom Carrells: Expects to learn a lot about historical, archaeological and management issues. Hope to be a good sounding board for those with the same interests.
- Mike Bryant: Would like to be part of a public process and have contributed to how western land is managed. On energy and minerals, specifically oil and gas, a balance is needed. Extractive industries may be changing with the new administration. We will be dependent on hydrocarbons for some time to come. The royalties paid by individuals and companies are beneficial, and should not be cut off arbitrarily.
- Pat Gunderson: MFWP works a lot with the BLM on management plans, and involvement in the RAC is a good way to engage with BLM in a broader context. Trying to make things mesh between agencies.
- Brian Gasvoda: Trying to keep AUMs the way they are. Would like to find a happy medium with the floaters who hate cattle along the river. Would like to facilitate work between the BLM office and other permit holders if it is needed.
- Dan Tiegen: It is frustrating to see side-by-side, parallel efforts. Would like to see more merging of efforts. Russian olive, riparian areas habitat, grazing AUMs, getting the public to appreciate public resources and commercial users, economic stimulus money being used for productive projects on the ground, range monitoring. It is all inter-related and if it could be coordinated more, would be more efficient and more effective.
- Clay Vincent: Representing the general population is a balance. The land must be managed for generations to come.
- Ron Poertner: Selecting high value projects. For example, water rights on the Judith River and Arrow Creek. The RAC should track what is happening. As the BLM implements the Monument plan, perhaps there are issues the RAC can assist with. The new camping rule of not farther than 50' off the road will attract the attention of a lot of hunters next year. A huge issue is the restoration of the northern great plains (buffalo, prairie dogs, ferrets).
- Barb Cole: Consider the BLM to be the experts in their specialties. The RAC should be an advisory board and look at an issue from the interest of the specific groups represented. With the new administration there may be new issues coming up that the RAC will want to discuss.
- Troy Blunt: The RAC should find key issues that are important to the BLM and the RAC and find consensus on these issues.
- Ron Moody: There are differences between process expectation and product expectation. Decisions reached by the RAC should be similar to successes by the Blackfoot Challenge and others. The RAC can make recommendations that help build long-term relationships with stakeholders.
- Stan Benes: We want it to be worth your while to attend RAC meetings.

- Brian Gasvoda: Those with deeded land along the river are very concerned about the Monument and the potential for no future grazing. It would greatly affect their income.
- Ron Poertner: A lot of the public in the Winifred area doesn't understand what the BLM is doing. A nuts and bolts look at what the BLM is working on in a public outreach effort would be extremely helpful. We look at all the vehicles and see personnel driving by, but don't understand what they are doing.
- Dan Tiegen: The same sentiment could be said about all interest groups present. What are county road crews doing? Conservation groups? Fishermen? Hunters? The universal thread is that the stereotypes are probably inaccurate for everybody. We need to deal with everybody.
- Ron Moody: The constituency that I represent have suddenly intruded themselves on public policy and resources much more than they have in the past. It is a real challenge because they all live someplace else, and all they know about a place like central Montana is what someone tells them. The challenge is the tens of millions of people who have come to consider themselves stakeholders in BLM land in central Montana.

Election of Officers

When an actual discussion is occurring between RAC members, the chairperson conducts that discussion. The chairperson is also responsible for helping set the agenda. Formal letters of recommendation are signed by the chairperson. The vice-chair fills in when the chairperson is absent.

A motion was made by Pat Gunderson and seconded by Mike Bryant to elect Ron Moody as chairperson.

A motion was made by Barb Cole and seconded by Clay Vincent to elect Troy Blunt as chairperson.

A motion was made by Ron Poertner and seconded by Troy Blunt to elect Terry Selph as chairperson.

Ron Moody was elected chairperson by written ballot.

A motion was made by Clay Vincent and seconded by Troy Blunt to elect Barb Cole as vice-chairperson.

A motion was made by Barb Cole and seconded by Ron Poertner to elect Troy Blunt as vice-chairperson.

Troy Blunt was elected vice-chairperson by written ballot.

Field Managers Updates

Lewistown Field Office

- Plan to move forward with implementation of the Monument Resource Management Plan. The appeal period is open until February 9.
- The Lewistown Resource Management Plan will be the next plan. Wilderness inventory is the only task for the plan to be completed this year. Staff members are working on the HiLine Resource Management Plan.
- Hope to complete the Lime/Ruby blowdown project with the State of Montana. We hope to reduce fire risk and salvage timber while it is still has value. A travel management plan in the same area needs to be finished, and the two projects can be worked together.
- Plan to continue and enhance recreation opportunities along the Missouri River and other areas like the Half Moon trail head.
- Will work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to increase public access where possible, and continue work with MFWP biologists toward protecting wildlife habitat.
- Will continue to work closely with local and state government and fire districts.
- Will continue to work with the local community.

- Will continue to support the ranching community.
- Trying to expand weed treatment efforts and work on riparian projects.
- Wildlife habitat opportunities.
- Stan believes in collaboration; choosing sides is easy, but not productive

Great Falls Oil and Gas Field Station

The Bowdoin Environmental Assessment Record of Decision was signed on December 5. No protests were received.

Malta Field Office

The Malta Resource Management Plan (RMP) project manager has moved to Virginia. Jerry Majerus has taken over as the project manager. The No Action alternative has been reconfigured for the RMP. The current schedule is as follows:

- Hoping to have the Draft RMP out to the public in late summer or fall.
- Public comment period would run through the fall and winter of 2009.
- Final RMP would be available in the summer or fall of 2010.
- Record of Decision (ROD) would be out in the Spring of 2011.

A briefing can be given to the RAC at the next meeting on the preliminary preferred alternative. The briefing will go into depth on hot topics (e.g. oil and gas, ACECs). The travel plan will be completed after the RMP is done.

Comments/Questions

Q: Are utility corridors a consideration that needs special oversight?

A: It should be held as a subject for further discussion.

Q: Is the RMP the all-encompassing plan for what happens in your area of supervision?

A: It is a broad look at the types of actions that can take place.

BLM Regulations for Livestock

Rich Adams reviewed regulations for livestock on BLM lands. In the past five or ten years non-traditional livestock managers have come to the area (foundations, absentee landowners).

How does BLM decide if a person is a qualified applicant to hold a grazing permit on BLM land? Grazing regulations are based on three laws:

- Taylor Grazing Act of 1934
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976
- Federal Range Improvement Act of 1978

An applicant needs to be a citizen of the U.S. or a corporation doing business within a state and must make a grazing application. Before 1994 an applicant had to be engaged in a livestock business. Over time, the regulations were changed to better manage public lands and in 1994 that regulation was removed. An applicant must control or own base property (deeded land). The permits are tied to the base property, not the people owning the property.

A citizen or corporation doing business must submit an application and be of good standing if he has a permit in another BLM district or with the Forest Service. The applicant must accept the terms of the permit (number of cows, season of use, etc.)

For non-traditional applications (e.g., American Prairie Foundation), the approval process includes discussions across BLM and in the Washington office.

When a permit comes up for renewal, the existing permittee would be given the permit again as long as he is in good standing. Public land permits are not like a state lease that is open for a bidding process. If, for example, a permit comes up in 2009 and a neighbor makes a conflicting application, assuming that the existing permittee has followed the rules the permit renewal would default back to the rancher. That practice has been upheld by the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

Comments/Questions

Q: If you have a vacant allotment and have two qualified applicants, how do you choose?

A: If that occurs, six to eight additional criteria are considered.

Q: It seems that bison can be classified differently depending on where it is.

A: The bison in Montana is considered livestock as opposed to wild and free roaming. Therefore, it falls under state regulations for livestock (health standards, etc.).

Q: Will hunting domestic bison go the way of game farms?

A: An animal is considered private property. It is either owned by a private entity and considered private property or by the federal or state government and considered public property. For example, an elk is publicly owned until someone shoots it when it becomes the private property of the owner.

Q: How many allotment changes are processed in a given year?

A: On average, about 12 transfers a year for Malta; 10 for Havre. These generally occur because of the sale of base property. Allotments are looked at on an individual basis.

Ranchers Stewardship Alliance

Dale Veseth made a presentation on the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (RSA). The board has recently expanded and all major agencies will be asked to be part of the technical advisory board. Five conservation groups are included in board membership.

Programs and projects include:

- Land protection
- Cooperative land management
- Consensus building
- Science and stewardship
- Education and outreach

Irons in the Fire:

- Ranchland network
- Incentive-based conservation
- Partners for fish and wildlife projects
- Science and stewardship
- Carbon credits

Linda Poole spoke about Partnering for Vibrant Prairie Communities and emphasized that conservation of the area requires partnerships with ranchers. They would like the RAC to consider how to maintain the culture, economy and community of the HiLine area. It has not been made clear to the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance how a change in grazing allotments from cattle to bison can maintain the culture, economy and community of the area.

Comments/Questions

Q: Are you working with the tribes?

A: The Alliance has tribal members, but is not officially working with any tribes.

Q: Are you giant slayers? World Wildlife Fund is worldwide.

A: We need to look at projects where we can work together.

Q: What is your funding?

A: We are still in the process of gaining 501(c)(3) status. Funding until now is from private donors.

Comment: MFWP is finding out you can't do it alone. Definitely look forward to working in partnership with the Alliance.

Q: How do we keep up with the economy of the area? If you bring in free ranging buffalo over that large an area, how can the ranching economy be sustained? Is there a plan to do that and to sustain the tax base of Phillips County?

A: We spend time on incentives: look at all the natural resource variables. For example, to get ranchers paid for grassland birds; carbon marketing; undaunted stewardship. Perhaps it can be packaged to expand a niche market for Montana beef where they get a premium for beef dollars because you can prove you are sustaining the land.

Q: The RAC needs to make an effort to develop an ongoing relationship with presenters such as the Alliance. They are encouraged to come to future RAC meetings and speak during the public comment session.

Q: Aren't you creating a big open, only with cattle?

A: Basically, yes. The Alliance has agreed on conservation values. They have one and five-year leases. Nineteen different ranches have had grazing leases on the Matador. Whatever conservation ranchers do on their home spreads determines how much they pay the grassbank to graze on the Matador. The only livestock on the Matador are run in the grassbank.

Q: Can you characterize the neighbors' hunting access?

A: It is all on an individual ranch basis. The Matador is a first-come first-serve, open to the public hunting program with a limited number of hunters allowed each day.

The meeting adjourned for the day at 5:10 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on January 15. RAC members in attendance were Ron Moody, Troy Blunt, Barb Cole, Ron Poertner, Clay Vincent, Dan Tiegen, Brian Gasvoda, Mike Bryant and Tom Carrels. Absent were Lisa Huestis, Larry Epstein, Vicky Marquis, Terry Selph, Bob Valach and Pat Gunderson.

Public Comments

Public comments were offered by Don Woerner and Mike Waite, Congressman Rehberg's Field Representative. The comments are attached to these minutes.

Riparian Information along the Upper Missouri River

Jody Peters and Mitch Forsyth from the Havre Field Station made a presentation to RAC members on riparian management along the Upper Missouri River.

Impacts to riparian areas occur from grazing, ice, beavers, recreation, porcupines and big game, sediment, scouring, upstream dams and noxious weeds.

Of 1,000 trees planted, the biggest impacts occurred from drought and wildlife. Dams controlling floods are the major impact to the reestablishment of cottonwoods. Noxious weeds have been identified as the biggest impact to riparian vegetation along the river.

Tools and techniques implemented by the BLM to improve riparian areas include off-site water developments, prescribed burning on allotments, a resource reserve allotment, placement and use of supplements, fencing, and noxious weed management.

An adaptive management strategy would provide flexibility to respond to conditions as needed. This involves meeting with the grazing permittees in the winter to discuss what has worked and what has not, and changes to grazing permits.

Collaboration is the most important aspect of management along the river.

Comments/Questions

Q: You had a riparian team come out. How does that connect to your work?

A: The National Riparian Service Team came out last fall in a collaborative effort to contact different publics and get them together to discuss their viewpoints.

Q: It was a real good description of the relationship between grazing management and plant communities. How are you affecting mule deer, sheep and antelope communities by manipulating vegetation?

A: If done properly, usage of the allotment is distributed evenly. The goal is 60% of the allotment used for wildlife, 40% used for wildlife. AUM numbers have not changed; management of the AUMs has changed. Prescribed burns favor elk, bighorn sheep and mule deer.

Q: The presentation was really informative. As a public outreach project, folks would like to see it. At Hole in the Wall, how has the cottonwood project been working out?

A: A drip irrigation system was installed, powered by solar panels.

Q: Are they discussing flexible flows for the Upper Missouri?

A: The Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Engineers control the dam releases. The hope would be to get enough water along with normal spring flows to get cottonwoods established. 50,000 cfs is needed and has not occurred since the dams were built.

Q: Are there any studies that show if this power plant goes in at Great Falls, the amount of water it would use would affect the river flows?

A: We do not know.

Comment: Hire another person to handle FOIs and get your communication person to promote the good things you are doing, clarifying myth vs. reality.

Comment: It was very impressive. The permittees want to help also, and we as a group can get the information out.

Limekiln/Ruby Blowdown

Bruce Reid, a forester in the Lewistown Field Office, made a presentation on the Lime/Ruby salvage timber sale. The Limekiln Ruby area was identified as the #2 priority area for forest work in the 2006 Judith Moccasin Landscape Analysis (JMLA). A significant wind event occurred last May following a record setting saturating rain, which resulted in a blowdown of several hundred acres scattered over several drainages.

The salvage project is a joint project with Montana DNRC. It includes 837 acres, of which 416 acres have been identified for mechanical treatment (logging). The project involves seven miles of new road construction and relocation of about 400 feet of easement.

Collaboration has included a series of public meetings that started with the JMLA. Because that collaborative effort had taken place, the proposed project was much better understood and agreed to by the public.

The first mile of road would be left intact. The road past the right-of-way will be closed off. There are some areas that are too steep to be totally recontoured. Out of the 7 miles of road, after the first 1 to 1.5 miles, 2 miles would be totally reclaimed, and the last 3-4 miles look like it would fit with the trail system. All of the road system would be narrowed to a six-foot width during reclamation, which could provide opportunities for mountain biking. Adaptive management would allow for change in recreation opportunities as needed.

Comments/Questions

Q: Is there a difference between salvage operations in a burn area as opposed to in a green area?

A: When a tree is killed overnight the decay process starts right away. The tree may have value for 18-24 months. In a blowdown situation, a tree with a rootball attached has value for up to 28 months.

Q: Do you know how many jobs may be created?

A: A very simple project last year involved 2 guys on the ground, 4 guys taking the logs to Laurel, and from there the wood went to a mill with many more employees. There is a trickledown effect to the employment.

Q: On your six-year timeframe, at what point do you envision recreationists being back?

A: People will still have the opportunity to hike in the area while the work is being done. Some areas might be shut off for short periods of time.

Q: What can the RAC do for you?

A: Bruce will continue working with the RAC subgroup. Beyond that, support and understanding from the RAC is appreciated. The next public meeting will be held February 4 to introduce the preliminary EA and to open the formal 30-day public comment period.

Comment: We should be getting more feedback from the working group.

U.S. Forest Service Fee Proposal Discussion

A conference call was held with Joni Packard, Jane Weber and Elizabeth Casselli, who has been selected as the new recreation officer with the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

At a previous RAC meeting proposals were presented for fee increases at four different sites. However, due to a glitch in the Federal Register process, the fee increases have been delayed. By law, the Federal Register Notice for

new fee proposals must be published with a six-month public comment period. The Notice was submitted in December 2007 but inadvertently contained a mistake in formatting. It did not get sent back in time and was not published. The Notice for the four new fee proposals will be submitted soon. Following the six-month public comment period a presentation will be made to the RAC.

The Federal Register Notice requirement only applies to new fee sites. Changes at existing fee sites do not require a Notice.

Q: Have we received any information on these four proposals?

A: Yes, they were presented at the May and September RAC meetings.

Q: Did this include the Monument Peak cabin and another cabin at Benchmark?

A: No, that was handled correctly and it has been implemented.

Q: The RAC's charge in relationship to the Forest Service is specific to the fee program. I have heard the Forest Service is considering camping facilities outside of developed campgrounds. Is this part of an effort to close dispersed camping and force people to developed campgrounds?

A: No, The Forest Service is closing a few sites with severe resource damage with the hope of opening them again in the future. In this region, 25% of camping sites charge a fee; 75% are free. They want to continue to offer dispersed camping opportunities.

Q: Why is the RAC looking at Forest Service fees?

A: The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act requires the Forest Service to utilize our RAC for fee proposals. This is totally separate from any BLM fees or proposed fees.

The RAC members ended their discussions with the Forest Service folks and asked some general questions in regard to the Kipp Recreation Area.

Q: We approved a fee increase for Kipp last year. How has that worked out?

A: It has been fine. Some people stated that our charges were too low before.

Q: Has BLM worked out an agreement with the State for maintaining the rest stop at Kipp?

A: The State is plowing the road into Kipp.

Pride and Perseverance

The RAC viewed a video entitled "Pride and Perseverance, Settlers in the Upper Missouri River Breaks." The video tells the story of early homesteaders in the Missouri River Breaks up to present-day landowners.

American Prairie Foundation

Bryce Christensen made a presentation on behalf of the American Prairie Foundation (APF). As a result of discussions between World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), APF was started in 2002 in order to purchase lands for conservation. The majority of APF properties are in block management and open to public access. Stream restoration has occurred on Box Elder Creek with the cooperation of the CMR, APF, WWF and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Trees and shrubs have also been planted.

The APF is going slow on building up their bison herd due to genetic concerns. Only three or four sources have pure bison breeds. APF is getting theirs from the Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota.

APF's goal is to create the largest wildlife reserve in the lower 48 states.

- An American treasure on par with Africa's Serengeti.
- A million acre larger than Yellowstone, open to the public and easy to visit,
- Financially endowed to last forever.

They hope to have 100 animals this year, and increase to 400-500 as soon as they can.

APF's landholdings are 30,000 deeded acres and 55,000 leased acres, predominantly BLM with some State lands, for a total of 85,000 acres. APF does not own Cow Island, but has purchased 400 acres on Cow Creek right across from Cow Island.

The APF's ultimate goal is to own 500,000 acres deeded with connectivity to 1.2 million acres of CMR land and 2 million acres of BLM land, for a total of 3.5 million acres. They are trying to create a landscape as it was before settlement, and to create tourism and a sustaining economy. This is over a 25-year timeframe.

Comments/Questions

Q: You used the term "building a wildlife reserve." What do you mean by "reserve"?

A: It is not for one or a select few people, it is for the public.

Q: Won't Yellowstone bison be kept on reservations next to your herds?

A: They will, but APF does not want to have anything to do with those herds due to the lack of genetics and the problems with brucellosis, both real and the public perceptions.

Q: What plan do you have to control the numbers and keep them at 400-500?

A: It would mean moving bison once adequate fencing is in place.

Q: How do you reconcile having genetically pure bison and more natural, historical landscape, when 150 years ago they could roam much farther? How are you addressing what you have in mind with management that has evolved with reservoirs, cross fences and other modern structures?

A: It is a mix. The plan works way easier if you own everything. Discussions are under way with CMR to allow genetically pure bison to roam on their lands. When deeded land is purchased the interior fences can be removed to allow the bison to roam within a greater area.

Q: Your mission statement refers to creating lasting economic benefits. If you are displacing ranch families, what is the benefit to the displaced ranchers?

A: They haven't been displaced, the money is in their pockets. And some were not living here. National Geographic will be here for several months next year. There will be economic benefits from their visit. APF is paying property taxes. They spent \$130,000 last year on fencing.

Q: I don't know how you project what you will spend and contribute versus what the ranchers would? That economic analysis is needed.

A: We don't want to get into an argument of which is better or does more. This would be for the public's benefit.

Comment: Would like a presentation from APF on what they think the prairie would look like in 30 years.

Comment: Temperate grasslands were not included in your slide showing Africa. Some economic benefit nationwide that includes folks in Phillips County would make it a lot more saleable down the road.

Comment: The concern is that leasing back to ranchers will not occur in the future.

Q: How will you control the bison herd as it grows?

A: Until they are declared wildlife, the hope is they will have enough land to continue to expand.

Q: You were talking about 5,000-10,000 acre prairie dog towns. In a dry year that would create a huge dust storm.

A: Right now we are saying no to translocation. There are landowners who will be interested in it.

Q: APF is one player in a grander scene covering a huge area. Are you working together with these diverse groups and interests?

A: All of those groups are talking with each other and with government agencies. APF is working with TNC and WWF. Those two groups are the big ones in the Northern Great Plains.

Fire Presentations

Gary Kirpach, BLM Zone Fire Management Officer for the Central Montana Zone out of Lewistown, made a presentation on the fire program. The zone covers suppression, interagency dispatch, fire education, and fire management for a 16-county area.

BLM has initial attack agreements with eight counties. Blaine, Phillips and Valley Counties have offset agreements to fight BLM fires that are close by and they can reach quickly. The zone provides direct protection of the Big and Little Snowies for the Lewis and Clark National Forest. It uses Rural Fire Agreements, Volunteer Fire Agreements, and other grants to help small local fire departments with training and equipment.

National Fire Plan dollars are used for fire mitigation and education in coordination with private, city, county, tribal and federal cooperators/partners. Currently, 10 cooperator agreements are in place with conservation districts, tribes, North Central RC&D, Snowy Mountain Development Corporation, Teton and Valley Counties. Mitigation projects include removal of dead and decadent shrubs next to homes.

The BLM has been paying for Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) that FEMA requires for the counties. Currently, 15 of the 16 counties in the Central Zone have CWPPs.

Firewise information can be found at www.firewise.org.

Fire restriction calls are made every Tuesday during the fire season. Several agencies are included in the call, along with weather folks, to get a big picture of fires and fuel conditions in a 13-county area. A decision is made during those calls on whether restrictions need to be put in place. The fire restrictions include:

- Stage 1: Some actions are prohibited, with exemptions
- Stage 2 Tighter restrictions, also with exemptions
- Closure

Steve Knox, the Fuels Program Manager for the Central Montana Fire Zone, spoke about the fuels management program. The top 10 reasons to use fire today:

- Reduce hazardous fuels
- Dispose of logging debris
- Prepare sites for seeding/planting
- Improve habitat
- Manage competing vegetation
- Control or treat diseases
- Improve forage for grazing
- Enhance appearance
- To perpetuate fire dependent species
- To improve access

Projects in the last six years have included the Little Rockies wildland urban interface; Zortman contract thinning; Landusky contract thinning; Zortman hauling contract; Zortman stewardship; Landusky dump prescribed fire; Landusky Plateau prescribed fire; Fort Belknap crew thinning; Becket fuels reduction project; Wild Horse prescribed fire. Other projects are planned for the future.

Comments/Questions

Q: Do you have a different suppression plan for the Monument?

A: In order to use mechanized equipment in the Monument, authorized officer approval is required. No aerial retardant is allowed in the white cliffs area of the Monument.

Next Meeting Agenda/Travel Vouchers

Agenda Items

Field trip with float (separate from the meeting)
Fee proposals from the Forest Service
Public access (information presentation and discussion time)
Discussion about RSA/APF presentations (issue-specific discussion relevant to BLM)
HiLine RMP
Field managers update; with new Secretary issues
CMR update
MFWP Conservation Action Plan – interface with this area
Industry presentation on oil and gas development on BLM land
Pheasants Forever, RMEF, or other organization: How can we help with these activities?
Will RAC be involved in the implementation plan for the Monument (including water rights)?

Where: Lewistown
When: Wednesday, May 27 and Thursday, May 28 (10-5 and 8-3)
Public Comment Period: 1/2 hour at the beginning of each day
Social: Yes

**Central Montana Resource Advisory Council Meeting
March 14-15, 2009
Public Comments**

Janelle Holden

I'm Janelle Holden. I'm the Northern Prairie Campaign Coordinator with The Wilderness Society. I'm based in Bozeman with the Northern Rockies Regional Office. I'm the only person who works on prairie in the office. I didn't really expect to take up too much time. I just wanted to introduce myself to all of you. Some of you may have known Will Patric. He was the person in my job before me. I've been there for four months.

We're a national organization so you may know of Montana Wilderness Association. The Wilderness Society is a separate organization, but we work closely with MWA and a whole host of partners. We have a lot of interests in the northern prairie, particularly in the CMR and BLM lands. I don't work too much south of the Missouri.

I am originally from Montana. I grew up at Valier. My parents still ranch there. I am very invested in the State. I am very invested in our public lands. My public land heritage and wildlife heritage, I grew up spending time in the Bob Marshall Wilderness and really enjoyed that experience. That motivates me to do the job that I do.

I was a public lands and environmental reporter in Colorado for several years in the Four Corners area right when they were designating a new monument there. I understand you have a lot of the same controversies and issues that I covered as a reporter. I also covered RAC meetings which were interesting and sometimes lively. I guess if I had one piece of advice for the RAC, if I may, is to try and see things when issues come up perhaps from your opposite's point of view. To put yourself in somebody else's shoes for a few minutes and try to broaden the discussion from there. I think everyone in this room has one thing in common, and that is that we all care very deeply about the management of these public lands. We may not have very much else in common, but we at least have that in common and we can start from there and hopefully the dialogue on the RAC will be productive and will get us more towards coming to some common goals.

Other than that I don't have much else to say. Just happy to meet everybody in person and will be around for today and tomorrow, so please do come talk to me. I would love to get to know you all better. Thanks.

Mary Jones

My name is Mary Jones and I'm with Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument in Lewistown, Montana. I wanted to bring up first that last month, I don't know if the BLM has mentioned it, but last month Secretary Dirk Kempthorn signed a Secretarial Order to officially designate the 258 million acres that are under the BLM as the National System of Public Lands. That's to raise their view in the public. I think many people, and I think the BLM has felt many people of the public don't realize what BLM lands are. They know the national Forest Service, they know the Park Service. There's all these services, but the BLM was just the BLM with leftover lands. So now it has been elevated to the National System of Public Lands.

In the 1990s people with vision set out to prevent the loss of our natural and cultural landscapes and watersheds through stronger federal leadership and land management. Under Bruce Babbitt at that time, public lands he felt and the administration felt should be administered primarily, though not exclusively, to maintain and restore their natural values. That sustainability was to be the primary land management.

The land within the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument we feel should be managed for sustainability to restore the natural values. Not exclusively, but primarily the natural values of the land. As you know, the plan is now filed in the Federal Register and the final plan is out. We feel that the plan leans too much towards BLM management of the past before sustainability was the primary concern. I'd like to give just a couple of examples.

First of all, cattle are being stocked at a guaranteed rate of 38,000 AUMs, equal to past years. Standards of Rangeland Health is now being used as the basis for everything BLM is doing in cattle management. But the Standards of Rangeland Health, as all of the people that were on the RAC that formed those standards were developed as the minimum standards for BLM lands, and there's nothing in those standards which says that stocking rates should be guaranteed. It is a minimum and the Monument is to be raised to a higher level than the minimum in land management we feel.

Secondly, a stable configuration of land important for land management has been established in national parks, in wildlife refuges and national forests which are enclosed with boundaries. BLM lands are still scattered about. Boundaries make a difference in management. This monument needs the boundary established by the Proclamation.

Third, corridors running through this monument for utilities, pipelines are all wider than three-quarter mile, which is the width that was recently accepted as the national standard for corridors across the United States, north and south and east and west. The corridors in the Monument are a mile wide.

The Proclamation stated there should be a transportation plan that addresses the actions, including road closures or travel restrictions, necessary to protect the objects identified in the Proclamation. The Bullwhacker, which contains some of the wildest country in all of the Great Plains as well as important wildlife habitat, now has almost twice as many roads as were originally evaluated in 1979.

Again, the transportation plan should include actions necessary to protect the objects identified. The Monument's remote and undeveloped landscape, its solitude, should be protected, at least with one section of the Wild and Scenic River reserved for quiet travel during some part of the summer months, not just for a few days in a few weeks. Thank you.

Don Woerner

My name is Don Woerner. I'm a veterinarian from Laurel. I've been in the Billings/Laurel area since '68 when I graduated. Right after graduation went to work for a guy named Gus _____ and we worked the north stockyards there in Billings. I worked for him for five years. He was kind of a veterinarian's veterinarian in the whole area.

My family background, on my wife's side we have a ranch down in Wyoming. On my side it's a little further back. We had a ranch in Nebraska but it was two generations before I was born. I've always liked animals of all kinds. Large animals, the bovine especially. That includes not only the domestic bovine but the wild bovine that's native to this country. As I worked as a veterinarian, mostly with large animals in that area, I got into feedlots and dairies and ranching, cow/calf. That was about 80 percent of my early business. Here lately I have a place called the Animal Lodge Pet Resort down in Laurel. We've changed our horse barn to a pet resort. We had to adapt to what was going on locally. But I still maintained a real love for the bovine, both wild and domestic, the hump back and the flat back ones, the fuzzy ones and the smooth ones, and I respect both of them a lot.

I've watched agriculture change. When I first came people were only maybe a generation off the ranch. A lot of people. But now they're two and three generations off the ranch and they don't have any concept of what's going on. Especially, they think their food comes out of the grocery store and their milk comes out of a bottle, and all this. That's really not their fault, it's just kind of the fault of our system. We've got this agricultural system that's been going on since World War II that's been more and more industrialized. All of you know what I'm saying.

I sort of revolted against it. I mean, I go into a feedlot and I try to figure out what's the best antibiotic to give to a calf with pneumonia, a calf that we've just weaned. I kept trying to figure this out. The drug companies would come up with new drugs and new pesticides, insecticides, vaccines, and I sort of started to revolt against that because if the conditions right you don't have a lot of disease. What are we doing wrong? What's in our management that's wrong? Why is this happening?

I've always had a lot of respect for the American bison and I've worked with bison producers. The average bison producer has a cattle background. The best bison producer I know is an architect from Seattle because he came to this without a lot of cattle baggage. I'm not downing our cattle traditions. I value them a lot. But we came up to

this land and we settled it and we brought with it our European traditions, our Spanish traditions, we brought our animals and their diseases. They happened to give it to some of the wildlife, and now it's imbedded in the wildlife. When we think bison, we think brucellosis in the same breath which is not true, for example.

I do believe that people should work together and I believe that a lot of us, a lot of folks that are three or five or seven generations on the land started out maybe in Ireland or somewhere in Europe and they had no concept of what it was like to be over here. I was over at the museum yesterday and going through the records of the homesteaders. Down on the Weidrich Ranch where the APF is, and it was really eye opening to see that. To see all the quarter sections, half sections, little pieces broken up that were originally homesteaded and they're gone. There's no trace of them. They left fairly fast. This area was settled. First we came in and hunted out all the beaver. Then we came and we changed the commerce for the Indian. They started hunting buffalo. We had horses.

I don't want to just ramble on and on, but I do feel that yesterday, I want to go back just a little bit. I feel that as we settled up this land, we had the railroads coming here and Jake Cook, he asked all these folks to come out. Rain follows the plow. Come out and sell the land and own some land. We've got these people over here in the heartbreak of all that that went on and we learned how to adapt and we got bigger and bigger. We have some successful ranchers here now, but ranching is still tough. We're still learning how to become natives on this place, how to live on the Northern Great Plains and live in an economically sound method.

I am very optimistic that this is possible, and I think it's possible because man is the ultimate weed. We have inhabited all parts of this world. Some of them with the help of a black product we've taken out of the earth that is finite. We've used this fossil fuel as a crutch to develop our technologies. We've developed something that's unsustainable and not really resilient. Billings has a four day supply of food on the shelves. We lose our transportation and people in Billings start to get very hungry very fast.

What I'm basically getting at is that when I heard about the APF coming up here and about calling together ranchers and community members, I got real interested in that because I think that's important to work together. Yesterday when Dale got up here, I was going to leave right after Dale's, but I decided to stay because some of the things that he said about collaboration and working together is so important. I think we need to become natives to this country, quote, unquote, and we haven't done that yet. But we're working on it. Instead of the model of commercial bison production using the domestic cow, why can't we think about, and we are basically when you look at what Dale told us yesterday, we're looking at how the bison lived on this land and we're adapting our cattle to how that happened. Our cattle are a very resilient breed and we should have them and I want to have them and they should be part of our economy. But we also have people in this town and around the nation and across the world that value our wildlife and we can't give that up either. I think when the APF moved in it was a wonderful thing because it stimulated folks like the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance to come together and to kind of question what they've been doing and to come up with new ideas.

I'd like to say that I think it's really important that we work together and we respect each other. There's room for all of us. There's room for a conservation herd of bison on a large landscape. There's room for cattle, fenced cattle. There's room for agriculture. One of the ultimate weapons of mankind is the plow, but we need to learn how to use it properly. They mentioned yesterday you don't get to use the grassbank if you're plowing land that has never been broke before.

I'd like to just sum up by saying that I value this state and its future and I want it to be sustainable, and I am encouraged by what I saw yesterday. I think that this community could work together and people in this state could work together. Thank you.

Mike Waite

I was going to do this yesterday but I thought more people would show up and gather and be here today. All I want to do real simply is tell you who I am and what I do. My name is Mike Waite. I work for Congressman Denny Rehberg out of the Great Falls District Office. I've worked for him for seven years, starting in 2002. I've been involved with coming to RAC meetings for seven years plus. My first introduction to the RAC really was via the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument scoping meetings and got involved there in that whole process.

Denny wanted to make sure that all parties were coming to the table and coming up with a good plan for the breaks area. Then I started coming to the RAC meetings.

For your group I just want you to know that I'm going to be around at your meetings. I'm back in the Great Falls office. I'd run the Great Falls office for four years and then I got transferred to Helena for three years. Seth Bruesder, who may have been to these meetings in the past, left our office in July and they moved me back to Great Falls. I don't plan on moving again. I don't like to drive down the Wolf Creek Canyon as well as I do the trip from Great Falls up to Malta.

I'll be coming back on a regular basis to the RAC meetings and talking with your folks. We just want to know what is going on and keep engaged with what's happening out on the landscape. Thank you.

Ron Moody: I would be interested to know if Congressman Rehberg has a particular interest in any business that we're discussing.

Pretty much anything that's happening in the State, he's going to be interested in. As kind of a side note, I was born and raised up north of Chester in the Sweet Grass Hills so the home country to me is the HiLine area. Nonetheless, as a little follow-up too, when I first came on, the reason I was hired in Denny's office was to cover the state on ag and resource concerns. That's what I did for that first four years. So anything that happens out on the landscape, anything that you're involved in, that's what I'll be covering. My charge is to be eyes and ears for Denny at the grass roots level. We meet with all kinds of groups. That's what I do, I go to meetings and talk to people about whatever's going on in their community. If it happens to be The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, I'm there. If it's the Comprehensive Conservation Plan on the CMR, I did all those pre-scoping meetings. If it has to do with oil and gas leasing on the Rocky Mountain Front, down on the Monument, I'm just trying to be his eyes and ears out here in the State and keep him apprised of what's going on.

If you guys have some concerns that you want me to pass on to him, that's what I am charged to do, pass those on, either on a one-to-one basis or a group basis. He gets the updates, my field reports, he gets the BLM quarterly updates. He may ask me too, if there's something specifically that you're working on, it could have been the project that they're doing over there in Lewistown with the blowdown stuff. He reads the papers as much as I do, all of the weeklies, also the daily news. He at times will call and say would you run over and talk to Stan or the RAC group, and will want to know what's going on with a project. That's my charge, to be responsive to all 900,000 plus people in Montana as the field rep for him. If there is something that he has a keen interest in, I'll be letting him know.

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
May 27-28, 2009
Lewistown, Montana

The meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. in the BLM Lewistown Field Office conference room. RAC members in attendance were Ron Moody, Terry Selph, Tom Carrels, Mike Bryant, Barb Cole, Bob Valach, Ron Poertner, Dan Tiegen, Vicki Marquis, Larry Epstein, Brian Gasvoda and Troy Blunt. Absent members were Pat Gunderson, Lisa Huestis and Clay Vincent.

BLM personnel in attendance were State Director Gene Terland, Stan Benes, Scott Haight, Rich Adams, Gary Slagel, Willy Frank, Vinita Shea, Zane Fulbright, Adam Carr, Craig Flentie, Kaylene Patten and Kay Haight.

Bison Conservation Initiative

Ron Moody called the meeting to order and changed the agenda to include the Department of the Interior bison conservation initiative, which many members of the public were in attendance to comment upon. This agenda item had been removed recently because a presenter from the Department would not be in attendance.

Stan Benes, Lewistown District Manager, said that according to the Washington Office nothing has been finalized, and the public comments offered during this RAC meeting will be forwarded to the Washington Office for their review and inclusion in the process.

Copies of the initiative were made available to RAC members, and it is also available for review on the Department of the Interior's web site at:

<http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/bison/Bison%20Bridge%20Page%20DOI%20Bison%20Conservation%20Initiative%20framework.pdf>

Public Comment Period

Twelve people offered public comments, which are attached to these minutes.

Public Comment Follow-Up

RAC members were then given an opportunity to comment or ask any questions they might have.

Troy: There are issues of private property rights, disease, herd management, and not enough time today to discuss this in-depth issue.

Brian: Eight of the 12 speakers have the same concerns I do. I've seen problems with the Fort Belknap bison. There are major concerns with allotments going to bison and there should be major environmental impact studies on bison.

Vicki: It is clear the APF (American Prairie Foundation) is not proposing a standard livestock grazing issue. How does this impact the Taylor Grazing Act? The RAC needs to discuss/analyze this issue further. On tourism, the past numbers have not always supported the ideas of a big, booming business. Tourism does not support local economies the way ranching does. On riparian areas, there is work being done on a lot of these issues. The RAC should look at what is already being done and what we can add to it.

Dan: Private property rights can cut both ways. I have the right to do what I want with my private property; I can keep ranching or sell it. All options have different ramifications. We rail against people taking away our private property rights, but then we rail against free market transactions. We need to realize that simplified stereotypes don't work. There is a lot of gray area in there.

Ron P: The RAC needs the facts if we are going to have a part in this and do our job. What agreements have been made? What are the partnerships? Linking millions of acres of public land with private land, you'll have a huge American Serengeti, and who has bought into this?

Bob: This is an important issue that the RAC needs to deal with, but we need a lot more information to be able to make a recommendation.

Barb: Agriculture is paramount in Montana. We need to pursue this further.

Mike: I appreciate those who voiced their opinion with agricultural concerns. It shows that still waters run deep regarding APF and bison restoration. We have a finite number of public resources with a lot of people who want to stake a claim on it. We could spend a lot of time managing the pristine areas we already have without trying to get the rest of the state.

Tom: We need to be allowed a question period after each presentation to clear up false information, to clarify points. Are grazing allotments still tied to the base property? [BLM Response: yes.] Have grazing privileges been transferred? [BLM Response: yes. On the initial application for bison, we went through an environmental analysis that went out for public review. We looked at all information, especially the type of allotment they will be running bison on, and again this is for domestic bison and not wild bison. A hold has been placed on other conversions for the time being.]

Terry: The Kipp homestead is now owned by the American Prairie Foundation, along with a few other acres down there. That is private land and they can do what they want, just like anybody else that has private land. Are there bison on that area? [BLM Response: Not that we are aware of.] On an article that Mary passed out, according to groups new cottonwoods can no longer establish because the natural cycles of rivers have been altered, and intensive cattle grazing on the banks harms the few that do survive. Back a little while ago we had a letter that guides on the river had put together. We support the BLM, as a group of guides, for the most part, that they have done a good with the riparian area down there. We do not feel that there are intensive grazing situations going on. The BLM has done an excellent job managing the grazing and the riparian areas.

Ron: A newspaper story extolling one stakeholder's aspirations is no way to start a public discussion on a subject of managing public resources. The folks who spoke this morning made it clear that this subject will not be treated lightly.

Stan Benes/Gene Terland:

We recognize the importance of this issue and appreciate everyone's comments. It will help frame the issue. After the draft initiative was put together, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and BLM held a science symposium where they talked about the science of bison. No movement has occurred since then. It was developed under the previous administration, has not been reviewed by the current administration, and the Secretary of the Interior has not taken a stand on it.

On conversion of permits to bison, similar discussions have taken place in Utah and ended right back in the middle of private property rights. Can you convince your neighbor who he should sell to or shouldn't sell to, and should you even try? We have had conversations with American Prairie Foundation. From our standpoint those are domestic livestock. We've gone through the permit conversions, we've done the environmental assessments like we would do on any other conversions we still do in the watershed assessments. We're very much aware of the concerns and the issues surrounding it. No partnership agreements have been made that we are aware of.

The bison discussion closed.

SCEP Program

Vinita Shea and Rebecca Smith talked about the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). The BLM and other agencies have this program, which provides paid positions for college students. The students are usually hired between their sophomore and junior years. They work in their field of study to get practical experience and see if they would be a fit with the federal agency. The SCEPs have both a supervisor and a mentor. The mentor offers advice and suggestions to help them be successful employees. If successful in the program, they are eligible to be converted into a non-competitive permanent job. Advantages to the BLM are that the SCEP participants are experienced, aware of the rural setting, and this is a good way to replace an aging workforce. Unfortunately, there are often not enough applicants for these jobs.

Rebecca Smith is majoring in wildlife biology. She started in the STEP program, which is a temporary employment program, and then converted to the SCEP program, which emphasizes experience across a broad range of activities.

Gene noted that although the BLM needs more students in the SCEP program, it must be balanced with employment opportunities, and having positions available for students after they complete the program.

Meeting Notes

The meeting notes from the January 2009 RAC meeting in Malta were signed as approved.

Cultural Resource Program

Zane Fulbright, BLM Archaeologist, made a presentation on cultural resources, National Register nominations, and cultural interpretation.

The Frank Hagadone Homestead on the Upper Missouri River was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The BLM acquired the property in 1980. Interpretive signs have been placed inside the buildings. The intention was to not have signs as part of the landscape, but rather to place them as an item of discovery for visitors exploring the site. The road to the Hagadone site is not drivable, but can be used for walking to the area.

Five interpretive signs are being installed; two at Hagadone, and one each at the Gus Nelson homestead, Ervin cabin, and at Hole in the Wall.

Another site they are trying to get on the National Register is the "Bulls Eye" site, which was a training site for World War II bomb testing in 1942-1943.

The Montana Site Stewardship Program is funded to monitor historic sites. It is an organization of volunteers, overseen by a public land manager, who are committed to cultural resource protection and preservation activities. The first training session for volunteers was recently held in Lewistown. Volunteers are assigned to particular sites for inventory and monitoring. Training will be done annually, along with refresher courses for those who have taken the training previously.

Opportunities for RAC involvement include:

- Identify sites to nominate to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Identify sites in need of monitoring or at risk of vandalism/looting.
- Identify interpretive opportunities: historic, prehistoric, paleontological, geological, biological, recreational.
- Identify partners for any of these ventures.
- Promote the site stewardship program.

The video *Pride and Perseverance* will air on June 25, and July 4 and 5, on Montana PBS. The video, which shows the story of early homesteaders to the Missouri River Breaks, was viewed by the RAC during the January meeting.

An interpretive sign discussing Cow Creek will be placed at the James Kipp Recreation Area. Also, a Nez Perce Trail interpretive sign will be dedicated at Lewistown Kiwanis Park on May 28.

State Director Briefing

Gene Terland, Montana State Director, thanked RAC members for their time and contributions. He briefed RAC members about various items. Ken Salazar is the new Director of the Department of the Interior, and David Hayes was confirmed last week as Deputy Secretary. Wilma Lewis will be nominated as Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals, which oversees BLM. The BLM Director has not been announced, but Senator Reid indicated to newspapers recently that Bob Abbey is a frontrunner for the position. He was the State Director of BLM in Nevada for a number of years and retired a few years ago.

Annual work plan dollars are just now being allocated due to the change of administration and delay in Congress in getting the budget passed. For Montana and the Dakotas, \$18.5 million in stimulus funding is available to BLM. The money is not for hiring federal employees. These dollars are aimed at contracts or hiring crews to get projects done. The types of projects are habitat restoration (including weed control), abandoned mine reclamation, maintenance and upgrade of roads, recreation trails, facilities, dam repair, updating land status records in preparation for renewable energy applications. Contractors will be required to prepare reports which will be posted to a web site so the public can follow all the work being done.

Budget increases will be coming for NLCS (National Landscape Conservation System) lands, which include the Monument, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness study areas. Carl Roundtree, the new Director for NLCS, will be floating the river for three days in July.

Priorities for the new Secretary of the Interior Salazar include energy, especially renewable energy like wind and solar, treasured landscapes which include NLCS lands, and a large emphasis on establishment of a youth corps for involvement of youth in BLM projects and day-to-day activities.

Until the Assistant Secretary and new BLM Director are on board, which could take a year to eighteen months, no new policies will be coming down from Washington.

RAC members asked the following questions:

Ron P: What will be different about having NLCS under one umbrella? How does it translate for the west?

Response: Wilderness is under the Wilderness Act; wild and scenic rivers are under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; each monument has its own proclamation and direction. The idea behind establishing the NLCS is to try and provide more focus. For BLM, prior to that any work done in any of these units came out of the budget program with no distinction for individual units. There was no way to track expenditures for each unit. Subactivities have been created to track spending on NLCS units. It also is a way to garner public support for increased budgets for these units. Management will not change.

Ron P: Will there be more money for land acquisition opportunities?

Response: The President's request for 2010 has more money for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Having a designation or being part of the NLCS is one of the considerations when prioritizing. It does not mean a request could not be submitted for acquiring additional public access to BLM lands if we had a willing individual who wanted to work with us.

Ron P: The Park Service manages some wild and scenic rivers, the Forest Service manages some, and BLM does the same. Why aren't all federal agencies under the NLCS?

Response: NLCS applies only to the BLM. Congress designated the Forest Service. They reserved it for purposes of national forests. They did the same thing with national parks. In U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, each of the refuges is a congressional designation. BLM basically was the property nobody wanted and there was no designation. Secretary Kempthorne and Jim Caswell, before they left office, gave all BLM lands a designation of National System of Public Lands.

Ron M: Is the Undaunted Stewardship program still active and still funded?

Response: The program is still active, but no funding has been available for the last couple of years.

Ron P: Do you care to speculate on Secretary Salazar's treasured landscapes priorities?

Response: The National Park Service has a centennial celebration coming up. For BLM, it would be in terms of the healthy lands initiative, the health and restoration of public lands; along with NLCS-type units.

Terry: Could the wild and scenic river be funded separately from the Monument?

Response: Funding for the Monument came in under the NLCS subactivity, but funding for the wild and scenic river comes under another subactivity. A separate subactivity for the river may be used for 2010, which would help with tracking costs.

Gene: Oil and gas lease sales are continuing. The BLM has begun sending notifying letters to surface owners where BLM has split estate leases going up for sale.

Gene: On the bison conservation initiative, it is unknown if the current administration will carry it forward. Gene left a summary of the initiative for distribution to RAC members. One statement in the summary says, "Where there is strong local support, the Department anticipates forming partnerships to permit small bison herds to recreate their natural role in areas where they are not now found. Such arrangements may help support the restoration or maintenance of other native species and habitats. The herds could become an important tourist attraction." Part of the conversations we have had with the American Prairie Foundation is the issue of what the local feelings are.

River Trip Follow-Up

Last week several RAC members toured the Upper Missouri River by jet boat to view sites from Judith Landing to Kipp. They looked at recreation sites, a cottonwood enclosure, an historic site, ice damage, grazing allotments, viewed sheep. Another trip is scheduled for June 3.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Darren Knuteson, Assistant Field Manager for Engineering in the BLM Lewistown Field Office, and Gary Slagel, Monument Manager, addressed the projects to be completed under ARRA. One of the requirements for use of ARRA funding is that projects be ready to go. Those approved projects include:

- Lewistown retardant plant paving project. Paving the loop for retardant planes to come in, load retardant, and leave; paving the parking area.
- Little Rockies fire station in Zortman. The water system will be redone to bring in drinking water from the Camp Creek water line.
- Confined space wellheads will be brought up to safety standards.
- Duck Creek Dam is a high hazard dam in poor condition. The rehabilitation work will bring it up to a safe standard.
- Bullwhacker culvert replacement, where Bullwhacker Creek crosses the Cow Island Trail. Over 100 feet long, the 9x13 metal pipe is corroded and will be replaced.
- Ruby salvage road in the Judith Mountains. The road will be built to access the salvageable timber from last year's blowdown.
- Small log structures at Coal Banks Landing and James Kipp Recreation Area. The 20x40 feet structures will be used to provide visitor information. A water system will also be installed at Kipp. The building at Kipp will probably be located where the existing host trailer is currently parked.
- Judith Landing boat ramp. The BLM would like to complete this in the fall when the water is lowest.
- Additional weed management and control on the river, including the release of biocontrol agents this year and next year. The focus would be from Fort Benton to the CMR boundary near Kipp.

- Cultural inventory projects in the Monument.
- Range and riparian habitat improvement projects for BLM lands outside the Monument.
- Transportation plan for the Monument. A map will be developed for the public showing roads that are open. Roads will be numbered with a sign similar to the system used by the CMR.
- Cultural inventory at Square Butte. An exchange and easement is in progress that will provide access to Square Butte, and cultural inventory work needs to be done on site.

Darren asked that anybody noticing needed repairs contact BLM. Of primary concern are unsafe items such as bridge abutments.

Field Manager Updates

Lewistown Field Office – Stan Benes

- Stimulus (ARRA) projects have taken up a lot of time lately. Stimulus money must be obligated within the next 16 months. \$3.3 million was allocated to the Lewistown Field Office. This money is to be passed through to local contractors and individuals to stimulate the local economy.
- Time-sensitive efforts involving the Lime-Ruby blowdown are ongoing.
- An 1,800 acre prescribed burn on Cottonwood Creek was recently completed. It should improve grazing and wildlife habitat. A burn is planned for Lion Coulee in the Monument when conditions permit.
- 15 new seasonal fire employees are on board.
- Watershed assessments and allotment permit renewals are ongoing.
- The weed program is high on the priority list.
- Appeal of the Monument Record of Decision. The groups appealing the decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) recently withdrew their appeal. Implementation of the approved plan can now proceed.

Malta Field Office – Rich Adams

- A time extension has been requested for the HiLine RMP. The proposed schedule change would have the draft RMP out by March 2010, the public comment period would end in June 2010, and the final would be out in April 2011.
- Decisions in the Bowdoin oil and gas development plan are being implemented. Antelope in the area have been captured and collared during the last couple of years for monitoring.
- Monitoring is taking place for ash borers.
- Stimulus (ARRA) projects on the HiLine include restoring bighorn sheep meadows in the Little Rockies for forage and security; a Milk River integrated weed management proposal that would go from Fresno Reservoir to Fort Peck Reservoir along the river corridor; and a wind generator associated with the water treatment plant at Landusky.

Malta Field Office American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Projects

Remediation of Abandoned Mines

Zortman/Landusky Mine – Install wind turbine to supplement electricity needs for the water treatment system (\$3,000,000).

Habitat Restoration

Little Rockies Meadow Restorations (\$95,000)

North Central MT Invasive Species Management – Inventory and treat invasive species along the Milk River corridor (\$88,000)

Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Monitoring (\$79,000)

Project Total = \$3.3 M

Questions from RAC members included:

Question: How often are you meeting with the cooperating agencies on the HiLine RMP?

Response: Every three or four months. The next one is scheduled for July in Glasgow.

Question: In terms of oil and gas permitting, drilling, etc. is it business as usual under the existing plan?

Response: If there are proposed leases in critical wildlife areas, we have been postponing those until completion of the RMP. Each biologist is familiar with critical winter ranges and where the leks are located.

The limitations placed on a lease when it was issued are valid existing rights. Under standard stipulations a drill site can be moved 200 meters by BLM. However, if NEPA shows that such a move would not protect the habitat, then an EIS must be prepared. All leasing in the old West HiLine area has been deferred until completion of the HiLine RMP.

Question: Would it be advisable to implement an intermediate scoping process since the RMP is taking so long? The issues may have changed since the scoping three or four years ago.

Response: The cooperators can provide us with a sense of new issues that may have come up, but so far that has not happened. The four or five main issues have not changed.

Great Falls Oil and Gas Field Station – Don Judice

All post-lease activity for central Montana is managed out of the Great Falls office. Fort Belknap is now selling gas. Rocky Boys is also active, and the Blackfeet have received bids and agreements with major companies and oil and gas exploration drilling is ongoing. The Bowdoin oil and gas environmental assessment (EA) was signed and implemented in January 2009.

Two applications have been received for permits to drill wells in the Monument. One was received in May 2002, the other in December 2003. The applications were submitted during preparation of the Monument RMP and were on hold until completion of the RMP. The Klabzuba application is for an area with an existing road and pipeline. The Devon application is for the north half of a section in the Chimney Butte area. A well in the south half of the same section (not in the Monument) has already been approved. An on-the-ground inspection will occur in the near future to see if the site is compatible with the RMP. Public comment will be sought on both wells, and participation from the RAC is welcome.

A discussion by industry on the rules/regulations on operating in central Montana was planned for this meeting, but no industry representatives were available. They have made a commitment to participate in the next RAC meeting.

Stewardship – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Bruce Reid, Forester with the Lewistown and Malta Field Offices, made a presentation on stewardship projects. Stewardship authority allows funds earned from the sale of timber to fund other stewardship projects. The BLM has until 2013 to enter into 10-year stewardship contracts or agreements. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) is one of the non-profit groups that have expressed interest in assisting BLM with land management activities through stewardship agreements. The Foundation can facilitate various groups working together.

The Judith-Moccasins Landscape Analysis is the NEPA document which provides the basis for forest health treatment in the Judith and Moccasin Mountains, which in turn provides good wildlife habitat. The RMEF would provide additional funds (grants) and would be an additional source of manpower for accomplishing forest health projects.

This agreement does not give RMEF exclusive rights to all the work in the Judiths and the BLM would still issue firewood permits, etc. Local contractors would continue to have an opportunity to bid for work on various projects. Dialogue has been ongoing for about two years. The formal agreement has not yet been completed.

The annual operating plans have to show a benefit to wildlife habitat and also must show a benefit to the public. The BLM will not engage in a proposal that may provide excellent hunting but would not benefit the general public.

Educational Partnerships

Mark Schaefer, the River Manager for the Upper Missouri River stationed at Fort Benton, spoke about educational outreach partnerships with the Salish-Kootenai College and other American Indian colleges throughout the state. The purpose is to expose those students to resource management issues and work opportunities on the Upper Missouri River.

Funding is available from the Washington Office for this type of program, and a proposal was approved in April which will be effective in June. The Salish-Kootenai College will open it up to all other tribal colleges in Montana and the Dakotas.

Once selected, the students will be provided with equipment and expertise by the BLM. Projects will include river patrols, staffing launch sites, working at the interpretive center, interacting with the public to learn customer service skills, and working on exclosures.

\$28,000 will be provided by the Washington office. The students will not be paid for their work, but will be paid a stipend and will earn college credits. \$5,000 to \$6,000 will be needed for equipment. The program will begin with three to four students.

A press release will be coming out soon about the dates for boating restrictions.

National Public Lands Day

Sandra Padilla, Park Ranger for the Monument, made a presentation on the National Public Lands Day, which will be on September 26. This will be the 16th year. Past projects have included planting shrubs, removing fencing and cleaning up trash.

Five events have been scheduled for this year. The first was a river cleanup on May 13 and 14 by a youth group from Minnesota, river outfitters who cleaned up trash from Coal Banks to Hole in the Wall, and the fire crew from Zortman which removed posts at Kipp and did trash cleanup. Other scheduled projects include:

- June 22 Wood Bottom cleanup and fence project
- July 10 Ear Mountain project and dedication
- August 12 Coal Banks drip irrigation system installation
- September 26 James Kipp cleanup and project day

Volunteers will get a free t-shirt and a pass for free entry any day during the next year at national parks and other federal sites.

Ron Moody asked if the RAC could reach consensus for the BLM to produce a 20-25 minute video on Native American history along the river. Larry suggested the discussion be placed on the agenda for a future meeting.

Bison Conservation Initiative

Ron Poertner asked how concerns expressed during this morning's discussion on the bison initiative will be forwarded to the Washington office. The public comments will be transcribed and attached to the meeting minutes. The minutes will be forwarded to Gene and on to the Washington office. The BLM will try to have a presenter at the next RAC meeting.

The bison initiative was generated at the national (conceptual) level, completely apart from the local APF issue here in Montana. RAC members asked what discussions have taken place at the Washington level between the BLM and groups that are promoting bison on public lands and offered that the RAC could provide comment now to influence how it proceeds.

Vicki had questions that she did not have an opportunity to ask during the morning discussion and shared them with the RAC, as follows:

Questions/Comments on Bison Conservation Initiative (BCI):

- 1) What is the BLM role in the BCI?
- 2) How do the recent conversions of grazing permits from cattle to bison for the APF fit into the BCI?
- 3) Given that the Taylor Grazing Act provides for the “sustainability of the western livestock industry and communities that are dependent upon productive, healthy public rangeland” how does the BLM justify changing grazing permits from cattle to APF bison when the APF has a clear objective to establish a wildlife reserve, not a livestock operation? Can the BLM take part in the BCI and still comply with the Taylor Grazing Act?
- 4) How will the cumulative impacts (to local economies and communities as well as to riparian areas and rangeland health) of the allotment changes and other bison expansions be monitored? Shouldn't there be a NEPA process to look at these?
- 5) How is the BCI Management Working Group funded and who are its members?
- 6) The BCI Introduction (page 3) states “it may be possible to develop partnership arrangements that will permit bison herds to recreate their natural role in areas where biologically suitable and socially acceptable.” How will the “socially acceptable” part be determined?
- 7) What work is being done with the Tribes, specifically in Montana?
- 8) Please explain the site-specific action on the CMR Refuge cited on page 7.
- 9) Has a Federal Advisory Committee been convened (page 8)? What outreach efforts have been made?
- 10) What is the draft conservation action plan being developed by the World Conservation Union and how will DOI use it?
- 11) Action Item 5 of the BCI states that several projects have been suggested, but none ready for action. Is that still the case or are projects being developed and if so what are they?

The issue was tabled until the next day's discussion.

The meeting adjourned for the day at 4:45 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on May 28. Absent RAC members were Brian Gasvoda, Pat Gunderson, Lisa Huestis and Clay Vincent.

Public Comment Period

Two people offered public comments, which are attached to these minutes.

Monument Newsletter

Stan Benes and Craig Flentie reviewed the newly printed Monument newsletter, a project that came out of the National Riparian Service Team workshop last September. The newsletter will be published twice a year for people who are interested in the BLM work that is occurring in the Monument. RAC members are welcome to join in any of the action items. Also, if they have suggestions for future articles, please contact Craig in the Lewistown Field Office, or Mary Jones at Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument.

Craig and Mary will be refining a distribution list. A suggestion was made to have the newsletter available in a public location in order to do outreach with people besides BLM and the Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument. Suggestions included Don's Store in Lewistown, libraries, local community centers, newspaper inserts, Montana Stockgrowers Association and the Public Lands Council. It would be an opportunity to highlight work being done by ranchers and for education on riparian issues.

The newsletter is available on BLM's web site at:

http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/mt/field_offices/lewisstown.Par.24164.File.dat/newsletter1.pdf

Update on Forest Service Fee Proposals

Elizabeth Casselli, along with Jane Weber and Joni Packard, presented the RAC with an update on Forest Service fee proposals. They noted that the dedication of Kenck Cabin will be held on June 19 and the cabin will be available for rental this summer.

Four campgrounds have been identified for fee changes:

- VandeRiet “Fly-in” Campground
- Indian Hill Campground
- Hay Canyon Campground
- Dry Wolf Campground

The Federal Register Notice for the proposed fee changes was published on February 17, 2009. The final public comments are due by mid-August. Information on the proposed fees will be issued through a news release and display posters on campground bulletin boards. They will come to the RAC again with a formal fee proposal for the RAC’s consideration.

Prior to Federal Lands Recreation and Enhancement Act (FLREA), as part of fee demonstration projects the Forest Service tried items such as access fees. It failed miserably with the public and was dropped out of FLREA. Under High Impact Recreation Area (HIRA), day use fees are charged in select areas with heavy public use.

Typically, no public comments are received from the Federal Register Notices. People occasionally talk to the ranger after seeing signs in a campground. Overall, less than 20 comments (written and verbal) are usually received.

RAC members requested a copy of the comments that are received, both verbal and written, prior to making a recommendation on the fees, and made the following suggestions:

- The Forest Service should emphasize what the facility takes in terms of time and money, and that the fees are returned to the campground.
- The information is important, but it should not be necessary to purchase ad space. Talk radio would be a good venue to get the word out.
- Hunters would not see the notice in the campgrounds until the fall, after the comment period ends. The Forest Service may want to extend the comment period into the hunting season.

Elizabeth Casselli can be contacted at ecasselli@fs.fed.us, or her telephone number is 406-791-7711.

Joni Packard distributed a news article on proposed fees for the Lewis and Clark National Forest. As point of clarification re: HIRAs, the region (which covers Montana, North Idaho, North Dakota and South Dakota) has only one HIRA or area fee site, Lake Como on the Bitterroot National Forest, and is a site that has strong local support. In this region, Seventy-five percent of Forest Service recreation sites do not charge fees. Sites with higher infrastructure investments are places that the agency typically charges a fee. All forests have a mix of fee/free sites and the intent is to continue to offer a full spectrum of recreational opportunities across the region.

Joni distributed a sample spreadsheet page for a regional fee schedule, that builds on the concept that was shared with the RAC at the State-wide BLM RAC meeting last spring, and which the RAC had indicated support for at that time. The intent of the regional fee schedule is to allow the public to see the current fees and any anticipated fee increases for several years into the future. The schedule is being expanded now to include all proposed new fee sites in the future (such as new rental cabins the Forest Service would like to add to the system), as well as a listing of all free sites. Under statute, if an agency is offering the same services or amenities as a private entity, the fees must be comparable to local markets in order to not undercut private entities. The spreadsheet is still in draft form right now, but once finalized, the spreadsheet will go through public involvement, with supporting information (price tool, local comparable pricing, etc.) posted on the web. Additionally, this fee schedule is a pilot or “test”, and if supported by the public and the RAC’s, could also be used as a model for other parts of the country.

The team also reviewed the pricing tool used by the Forest Service. Local comparable prices are reviewed and a scoring sheet is used to determine a fee range for a site.

The public feedback on the regional fee schedule will be presented to the RAC along with a full package proposal of estimated costs, maps, photos, etc. They will ask the RAC for their recommendation on the regional fee schedule, and that recommendation would then be forwarded to the regional office.

A question was asked by one of the new RAC members how the RAC makes a recommendation in general. That process was clarified by the BLM RAC coordinator and the RAC chair. Joni also shared the RAC recommendations are important to the agency and that RACs do have a strong and important role in that while an agency can move forward with fee proposals without RAC recommendations, the agency would have to go before Congress and inform them that they are going forward without a RAC recommendation. So RAC review and recommendations are important, and if there are issues, the agency wants to work with the RAC to address early on.

Joni stated that she also recently shared the fee schedule concept with another BLM RAC who was supportive and who also suggested having RACs review/revalidate the schedule on an annual basis, to make sure the assumptions (such as inflation factors used) were still valid. She asked the Central MT RAC if the Forest Service was “on the right track” regarding moving forward with the regional fee schedule. RAC members indicated yes, with an additional comment that the RAC has been supportive of fee proposals to date because of the development scale and amenities provided, and that would need to be looked at with the regional fee schedule as well, with the number of different sites.

As a final point of additional clarification, Joni also stated that Federal Register Notices are required for new fee site proposals only, not proposed changes for existing sites. This notice requirement for new fee sites is different than a Federal Register notice requirement notifying the public about a RAC meeting.

Additional handouts included a newspaper article on Silvertip Cabin, and a sampling of how 2008 Special Recreation Permit (outfitter and guides) fees were used. The RAC requested information be sent to them two weeks prior to the next RAC meeting.

Stakeholder Presentation

Ron Moody explained that during the last RAC meeting, American Prairie Foundation and Ranchers Stewardship Alliance gave stakeholder presentations. He invited the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP), and the energy industry, other stakeholders in the region, to make presentations at this meeting. The energy industry will have a presenter at the next meeting.

Bill Geer from TRCP said it is a fish and wildlife organization that represents issues of interest to hunters and anglers. TRCP works on conservation initiatives of national significance, and they believe responsible energy development can occur with consideration of conservation, restoration, wildlife needs, and traditional social values.

The Montana Sportsmen Mapping Project by TRCP shows hunting and fishing areas identified by organized groups of sportsmen throughout Montana. This GIS layer will complement Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks critical habitat maps to show decision makers the access opportunities sportsmen value the most and wish to have retained. All clubs pointed to the Missouri River Breaks as a place of high interest and as the most important hunting area in the entire state.

The sportsmen maps could be used for the following purposes:

- Provide baseline information to BLM, USFS and Montana DNRC to use when preparing RMPs.
- Show sportsmen how their interests are supported by the Montana Comprehensive Fish & Wildlife Management Strategy.
- Support the Crucial Areas and Corridors Initiative of the Western Governors Association.
- Identify key habitat areas.
- Identify areas that need additional public access.

TRCP has sent letters to various BLM offices requesting that specific areas be off-limits to new leasing.

Discussion included the following:

- RAC Comment: Is there a core group of membership organizations?
Response: TRCP has about 1500 affiliated organizations, partnerships, and affiliation with labor unions. All told, it includes about 9 million people.
- RAC Comment: When hunters and anglers marked the best areas, did you get input on the main threats?
Response: Loss of access is the greatest threat. The group is trying to work on getting better access for recreational users.
- RAC Comment: You have transferred loss of access to withdrawal of oil and gas leasing and they aren't necessarily related.
Response: The biggest concern is access, but most are also concerned with loss of habitat quality. Most of the data on the breaks is from hunters; anglers go to Fort Peck.
- RAC Comment: The picture of the Jonah Field should be taken out of the presentation because it does not apply to any oil and gas activity ever done in the State of Montana; instead use photos of operations in Montana. TRCP should reach across the aisle to energy companies before going to BLM.
Response: An energy company recently said there is low potential in the breaks area identified as a key area.
- RAC Comment: If it is such a low potential area and the BLM has regulations to minimize the impacts, why are we taking away somebody's private property right to lease their energy? With patchwork land ownership, they will not lease if a certain amount of government land and state land cannot also be leased. This impacts personal property rights, and state revenue, which in turn impacts schools because of lost potential revenue.
Response: They are asking for no leasing only during the life of the RMP, not permanently.
- RAC Comment: Part of the mapped area is not the Missouri River breaks.
Response: Most folks refer to the breaks and the adjacent lands as the breaks.
- RAC Comment: If a gas company could only drill 1 or 2 wells per section, the impact to hunting would be almost zero. Therefore, you are limiting potential in the guise of making a hunting preserve.
- RAC Comment: Has anyone said they want both leasing and fishing and hunting?
Response: They all evaluated areas according to what their club believes.
- RAC Comment: In Montana you are looking at one well per square mile unless you apply to increase it. With technology changes, an area that has low potential today may have good potential in the future. Directionally drilling would be a good option.
- RAC Comment: In this scenario you wouldn't have someone coming in on BLM land to take gas from a private lease.

Visionary Conversation

Ron Moody introduced this segment of the meeting, a discussion among RAC members on whether stakeholders can find common ground and mutual trust to reach consensus in advising BLM. What would people like to see the region be in 30 years? The visionary conversation could include:

- Common grounds/agreements
- What we see in the region in 30+ years
- Essential values as a RAC

- Mutual trust with RAC members

RAC discussion:

- Terry: Represents outfitters and guides. Strongly support doing this, but unsure how to do it. Stakeholder interests are changing, and all stakeholders are concerned about keeping families, small towns and small businesses in operation. Terry read a letter composed by most of the guides on the river which was published in the Lewistown News-Argus on April 4, 2009. Some SRP holders are not happy with the Monument plan, and the letter signers wanted BLM to understand that they are happy with it. It was hard to compromise, but they can live with the compromises. River use was up last year by 290 people after a five-year decline. At this point usage may reach half of last year, due to the economy.
- Guides pay 3% of net income back to BLM as a user fee. A little over \$25,000 was put in last year by guides and went to care and maintenance of the river, such as cleaning toilets and waste management.
- Mike: Represents oil and gas. To promote an exchange of ideas from different venues is a good idea.
- Barb: Represents grazing. It is a good idea. Since we do not meet often, it would be helpful to have opposing viewpoints at the same meeting.
- Bob: Represents historic interests. It is a good idea, but may not be fruitful in general terms.
- Ron P: Represents the public at large. Is willing to hear different perspectives, but does not support this work because it's like trying to swallow a watermelon in one bite. It is a huge concept. If you took a map of Montana and colored in the various special interest groups, the whole thing would be filled in. A subgroup is needed to make this idea productive, and it would need to be a three-year process. The work involved is tremendous to end up with a product that doesn't collect dust.
- Vicki: Represents the public at large. The concept is good if it translates into concrete tasks that are in the work plan or could be added to the work plan. We need to recognize the sideboards already in place. Our primary duty is to provide advice to the BLM.
- It is valid to recognize the stakeholders, but we shouldn't forget the science. The conclusions reached by science professionals at the National Riparian Service Team as to the reasons for lack of cottonwood regeneration on the river were not presented in Mary Jones' article in the newspaper this past week and are different than what she stated in the article.
- Dan: Represents conservation groups. We need to get back to core principles versus the particulars. We are often distracted by the particulars, which hinders our ability to collaborate on something like a principle of multiple use.
- Ron M: Represents national environmental organizations. His personal definition of success would be if this group finds shared values.
- Larry: Represents environmental interests. Has trouble with this concept. Sometimes conversations like this are best done after hours, with stakeholders present. It is hard at times to figure out what the RAC really does. We do not have a firm job to get done. We review things and get educated. Oftentimes viewpoints heard here could be heard in a coffee shop, and am not sure if we have an impact for BLM.
- Troy: Represents elected officials. Visionary conversations are a good idea, but they are ever changing and time consuming. It is immaterial unless we can draw out some of those issues true to our hearts and try to come to a consensus to advise the BLM, which is what we are here for. Would like more direction from the BLM on what they want advice on.

- Tom: Represents archaeological and historical resources. The Council needs to promote a bio-regional vision. The biological foundation for the region needs to be maintained and preserved, which would drive the regional unique lifestyle.
- Ron: The two most common things heard are that the RAC needs to talk about shared values, but needs to be practical and focused on the job at hand; and needs to know how we can best give advice to the BLM.
- Stan Benes: BLM could use advice, as well as physical help in some of these areas:
- weeds
 - support wildlife
 - grants and agreements
 - grazing; We have 122 one-cow permits that require the same level of analysis and monitoring as larger permits.
 - plant cottonwoods
 - youth programs – ideas to get youth involved
 - access issues
 - assess recreation sites – should they be moved somewhere?
 - homestead restoration
 - improve the roads we have left
 - develop upland water sites
 - science is needed to address key questions
 - field trips for oil and gas development
- Barb: This group has a lot of common values, but may not agree on a process to achieve them. If we are going to have these discussions, we should stay focused on a particular issue, rather than general things. That should come from our work plan.
- Rich Adams: The RAC he previously worked with in Nevada was given specific work assignments by the BLM managers. This RAC has evolved into a self-directed group, and the BLM needs to give specific direction to their focus. The reason everyone is on the RAC is that they all feel strong about issues in the Lewistown-Malta area and each person brings a unique perspective to the table. A discussion of different viewpoints is as valuable as consensus. For example, when the HiLine RMP is at the decision stage, the RAC's help will be needed on four or five points. Transportation issues in the Little Rockies will need to be addressed after the RMP is completed. Oil and gas leasing protocols is another area where the RAC's opinions will be needed.
- Vicki: We also need to bring issues forward that come from our constituents, and find a balance between those issues and ones brought forward by the BLM.
- Ron M: Asked Stan to work on his list and send it out to the RAC for consideration and discussion at the next meeting. Also, the RAC should review the work plan before the next meeting.
- Vicki: Some issues may not fit with the work plan, but we shouldn't lose those issues (e.g., bison initiative, riparian issues, oil and gas issues).
- Tom: The bison issue warrants a subcommittee.

Next Meeting

Agenda Items

Bottom up bison folks (stakeholder presentation) (Tom to arrange speakers)
HiLine RMP – provide input before the Draft is issued

Bison Initiative (FWP information and resources are available)
Visionary Conversation – What is the RAC’s direction?
Campsite payment collection methods – options such as punch cards or pre-pay cards
Fee proposals from the Forest Service
Review the RAC work plan – where is progress?
Stan/Mark to bring list of ideas for things the RAC could work on
Stakeholder presentation from oil and gas industry
National Riparian Service Team workshop -- review of the workshop and how those goals are being implemented
River use update and statistics
Native American use of the river video (question raised to ask Zane Fulbright)

The agenda above is basically informational. Stan and Mark will finalize the agenda.

RAC members asked that any BLM proposed changes to the work plan be sent to the RAC prior to the next meeting. RAC thoughts and suggestions on the work plan should be emailed to Kaylene. She will consolidate the suggestions and send them out to the team.

Date/Location

September 15 and 16, 2009
Malta (GN Hotel)
Public Comment Periods: 10-11 a.m. on September 15
8-8:30 on September 16

Mike requested that the agenda on the 15th be loaded as he may need to be gone on the 16th.

Travel vouchers were completed and the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
Public Comments
May 27, 2009

Gladys Walling

Honorable members of the RAC, my name is Gladys Walling from Winifred, Montana. My husband Tom and I ranched there for over 42 years and I now lease out my ranch since I am retired. For many years ranchers have had a good relationship with the BLM in their cattle grazing leases. When cattle stray off the allotment or in a dry year must be taken off early, ranchers respond to take care of this rough government land that has an important use of feeding cattle for safe, nutritious food for the people of our United States.

I understand the American Prairie Foundation is planning to buy up to 500,000 acres of private land and want additional grazing permits on federal and state land. How many buffalo are they planning to have? What is their plan to control the size of the herd? Wouldn't 500,000 acres be sufficient? The present cattle grazing permits could be transferred to other area ranchers so controlling these wild buffalo wouldn't be a problem passed to the government with the permits. Who would build fences to keep these buffalo on their permitted sites?

The United States government should not accept their 500,000 acres of land as a transfer from a non-profit organization because of the huge expenses to taxpayers in initial cost and for maintenance. The loss of this much needed agricultural land in this area from taxpaying ranchers is a huge impact on the local economy.

I would ask the BLM to make an assessment on the economic, cultural, social and environmental impacts this huge proposed prairie reserve with buffalo would have on this area and to make no agreements concerning grazing leases with the American Prairie Foundation until the assessment is completed.

The record of the past few years show that extreme environmentalists, such as are involved in the American Prairie Foundation, have unlimited funds for frivolous lawsuits to keep our BLM offices from functioning as needed in caring for your government land. I believe that we should not open a door for them to start any such action. Keep their buffalo out. Thank you.

Linda Newman

Thank you for allowing us to speak here today. I am Linda Newman. I am speaking on behalf of myself as well as Montana WIFE, I am the president of that organization, Women Involved in Farm Economics, and of course we are always looking at issues like this.

First of all, we ranch right across the river from Phillips County, which is already in progress with some of this. I am looking at the impact that it would have on cattle just like it had in Yellowstone National Park, so I don't want anything like that happening in our area, for one.

I am not in favor of environmental groups coming in and telling us what we need to be doing. I think that is already happening, and I'll give you an example of that in a bit.

I am also concerned about the tax base in our local communities. The Winifred area is a great place to raise kids. If we turn it into a national park or whatever, who's going to be living there? Where are we going to raise our kids? We have a foster family there now that has 13 kids and I'm sure there's none of those kids that they have that they are fostering that are from ranching communities. What better place to raise kids.

I believe the BLM is doing a good job of monitoring what we have, our leases. They're always calling us up, your cows are here, so I feel they are doing a very good job. They don't need help from these other so-called environmentalists and experts in the situation.

Also, we are in the process right now at the Woodhawk area of upgrading our leases or renewing them for another ten years, so I believe these people are already involved in protesting. I have our actual protests right here. One of the groups is the WWP, Western Watersheds Projects, and they have outlined in here every little parcel of our land that needs to be changed or whatever. So it's already starting, folks, and if you don't believe that they want to put a fence around Montana and make it a national monument or a national park, I believe that's happening and if we don't stop it we're going to be in big trouble. Thank you.

Shane Slivka

My name is Shane Slivka. Together with my folks, my wife and our four children, we farm and ranch in Winifred. I am going to try to make, I spent probably a whole 30 seconds on this presentation. I was rushing out the door this morning and went to pick out a hat to wear for the day, and I had a little idea of maybe how I could make a point. I'm going to try that.

What I'm going to talk about is the displacement of agriculture for tourism. I am not anti-tourism, so let me make that clear. But any time we start displacing something for something else, that's what I am going to comment on. This is just a little blurb here, a sentence, that helps make my point. How the American Prairie Foundation expenditures compare with revenues generated by the displaced farm and ranch operations is not known but one can only speculate that agriculture makes up a much greater contribution to the local economy. This is just to make my point.

In our business, what do we do? We run equipment, and this (John Deere hat) obviously represents an implement dealership. Between the implement dealerships and equipment, pickups, cars, things that you need to run your operation, this hat could probably represent on a local level five things. I don't know if I'm making my point very well.

This is a new product (Onset IN hat), a hat I received, and it's a new cattle vaccine product. This represents cattle input and what you spend on that. It also represents veterinarians on a local level and the amount of money that's spent there.

We farm and ranch and a certain amount of our products obviously are grains and they obviously get sold. That's what this (Busch Ag hat) represents. This actually is barley that's sold, but anyway, this hat on a local level would probably represent three different markets that we use right here in central Montana to sell our product.

You obviously need bulls to run with your cattle, so there you go there (Arntzen Angus Ranch hat).

Crop input, fertilizer, fuel, right there (Central Montana Co-op hat). This hat actually, as far as us doing business that way probably represents crop protection, fuel, all that. This probably represents three different businesses in central Montana. I only have one right here, but this represents three.

Now the American Prairie Foundation probably does have to borrow money and deal with banks in order to pull off what they have to pull off, but this (Farm Credit Services hat) is a local branch and in our specific operation we probably actually, as far as banking, savings, borrowing, deal with three different lending institutions. I've got two left.

Volunteer organization (Winifred Volunteer Fire Department hat). Winifred Volunteer Fire Department. How does that stack up against the American Prairie Foundation?

And the most important hat is the one I wore (Winifred Red Raiders hat). This represents our community and our school system. Like I said, I have four kids in the school. You've got to have young, and you've got to have old to make up a community. So the school system, I guess, is the young part of making up the community. That's what this represents. Think about how this stacks up if you displace agriculture for tourism. That's it. Thank you.

Carl Seilstad

My name is Carl Seilstad, and I'm a Fergus County Commissioner. I'm going to make this short and to the point because I see Representative Butcher has about a three-page document he would like to read. Anyway, I would like to refer to page 50 of the Missouri River Breaks National Monument and read a deal here. It says "If the opportunity is available (through the cancellation or relinquishment of a grazing permit or acquisition of additional land) the BLM could establish reserve common grazing allotments. These allotments would be available to offset the impacts of drought or to implement a project such as a prescribed fire that could create a temporary loss of AUMs."

So to me, rather than giving up a bunch of allotments to bison, we should be looking at protecting the local producers that are in the area. If we're not going to take these allotments and offer them up to the surrounding neighbors, then at least get something in place so that if you have to do a prescribed fire or in case of drought, these local producers that are already here have a place to go with their cattle, rather than reducing the numbers that they put on BLM land. We are not for putting bison down there, and I cannot imagine this agency wanting to take the chance of putting the area producers in central Montana in the same situation or have the same issues that they have down around Yellowstone Park. Thank you.

Steve Forrest

My name is Steve Forrest. I'm from Bozeman, Montana. I'm one of the extreme environmentalists. I just want to say for the record that I was just passing through and thought I would drop in on this meeting, but seeing the interest I am willing to stick around for a bit longer. I am happy to talk to any number of you about your concerns, and I will stay as long as I need to, to do that.

My comments to the committee are my organization, World Wildlife Fund, we work with the American Prairie Foundation. We also work with the American Bison Association. It's a producer group. There are about 500,000 commercial bison in this country today that are owned privately. A lot of those are dispersed on BLM leases throughout the west. I think it would be a mistake to cap the number of bison. I think some of the concerns, though real, I think with some more discussion can be resolved. Questions about the American Prairie Foundation, who we work very closely with, again, don't believe everything you read in the paper. Make no mistake, this is an issue about private property rights and those public leases that go with that private property. If you want to start changing the rules of the game now and make it so that only certain people get to have those allotments – it's a legal right to run the kind of livestock or the kind of animals that are allowed by law – I don't think you want to open that can of worms. But we certainly would be willing to sit down and discuss more. I'm going to be here, again as I said, and I'll be happy to talk to any one of you individually or collectively after this is over. Thank you.

Matt Knox

My name is Matt Knox. My wife Karla and two daughters, Sally and Sarah, we ranch 24 miles northeast of Winifred in the Missouri Breaks. Our BLM lease is in the national monument. I was going to talk some about riparian issues, but I guess we're pretty short on time. We did have an ice event along the river this year and I have some pictures if anybody wants to see them. I guess I'll leave that there.

I am also concerned about the intentions of the American Prairie Foundation to create a buffalo preserve in our backyard. Apparently they bought several ranches and they intend to buy more. The constant refrain we always hear when we're about to be assaulted is that everybody's getting old on these ranches and agriculture's in decline. The reality of it is there's been very few farm and ranch foreclosures in the last ten or fifteen years. It's a pretty stable industry. Domestic demand for beef is pretty good. Overseas demand is increasing. So that doesn't really sound like an industry in decline. As far as age goes, that's just population demographics. Just do a survey of furniture store owners. You find the same thing.

In fact, the population in the U.S. is aging probably everywhere except where there's a large immigrant population. As far as young people not coming back to the ranches, I dispute that. On a personal level, my two girls would sure

like to. One says she's for sure coming back. In fact, she's out there fencing this morning. There's also a lot of young people in the Winifred area, and I'm sure you could find this in other communities, that are working part-time jobs, they're working construction, they're doing everything they can to be able to stay around so that they can eventually fit into their family operation. Wouldn't it be great if the type of resources that the American Prairie Foundation is putting in to creating a buffalo preserve, if instead those kind of resources were put into helping young people get onto these farms and ranches.

Another concern, of course, I believe we would be in constant jeopardy to lose our brucellosis-free status. We all know how hard that's been to maintain anyway. BLM claims at this point that they have no choice to convert those leases. I dispute that. We're in the heart of bighorn sheep country, and if I made the suggestion that we change from cattle to sheep, I know they'd find a way to stop us, so they do have some leeway there. This is a major policy change as far as I'm concerned, and an economic analysis should be done.

Finally, I would urge this RAC committee to make a recommendation to BLM to put a moratorium on these leases until some of these concerns are addressed. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak.

Joe DeMars

My name is Joe DeMars. I did not prepare a statement today because I wanted to come in and kind of get a feel for what everybody was saying. It's my understanding, from what I've been told, there have been ranches purchased across the river from us. We ranch in Winifred. We have BLM permits out from the power plant down, and we border the C.M. Russell game refuge. Last fall they started fencing because we had BLM in with CMR in our end pasture. They started fencing the CMR out and didn't say anything to us about it. So I went in and had a meeting with Bill Berg and Dan Harrell and they made it very clear to me that we were out of there for the next two years. We could reapply, which I don't think is going to do us any good, because to my understanding they are throwing in with this prairie reserve. They made it very clear that if I didn't abide by what they are saying, they could make it very messy for me.

So my concerns are I don't want bison across the river from us. I don't want bison on the east end of us. Like Matt said, we've really got to worry about our brucellosis-free status in this state. We are known for our beef in this country. We have some of the best genetics in this area, and we're known for it. We sell our beef all over the world, and it comes from right here in Montana. It's not just because of luck, it's because we've spent a lot of time doing this. We've put our whole lives into this.

If you can go back on our record, we've had good riparian ratings for thirty-some, forty years, ever since we've been there. We don't abuse our range. I'm every bit an environmentalist as you are. If we don't take care of it, it don't take care of us. It's very fragile country, and I know as well as anyone how fragile it is. That's really all I have to say. Thank you.

RAC Question: How many acres were you fenced out of? About half that pasture, maybe a thousand and some acres, fifteen hundred.

It was taken away from you? Yes.

Was this an excuse to cancel the permit? For two years, then we can reapply. But I don't personally think reapplying is going to do us any good.

The reason for fencing you out was? We had cattle in there when they weren't supposed to be. That was because of a water gap issue. It wasn't because the cattle breached the fence or anything else. When they built that fence, they redid it and they brought it right down, kind of at a 45degree angle right in along the river like that, and I can't keep them from huddling in there. I go down there to get the cattle out whenever they call. I redo the fence.

Ed Butcher

Members of the RAC, BLM, for the record I'm Ed Butcher, Winifred. I represent House District 29 which includes, of course, northern Fergus County. I'm not going to reiterate the points that were well made. I think, all the way along, I didn't see any of them except possibly one that I disagree with. The rest of them I wholeheartedly support.

I strongly object to this whole consolidation of the government's land under various government jurisdictions, which eventually will obviously wind up under one sole jurisdiction at some point, or at least under coordinated management. I think that this has been made very clear, that it's objectionable to the people of the State of Montana. Now, I know there's all kinds of surveys made that everybody supports all this crazy wilderness idea, but when you have two sessions of the legislature that with strong majorities rejected the Missouri River monument, when you have a tied legislature in this last session which strongly passed a resolution, 19, to request the federal government, since that's all a resolution can do, to bring in local management input into the CMR, I think CMR is a classic example of what we have to face, and that's where the concern of the agricultural community is. They are obviously very stronghandedly throwing people out who have had grazing permits in there, was part of their original agreement when they took the thing over. I'm not going to reiterate that, but I think it is very, very important.

I also wanted to inject another proposal which hasn't been mentioned. This is a proposal to remove another quarter of a million acres from oil and gas development which would be a total detriment. This is your BLM land so it's very, very important that BLM not get caught up in this crazy prairie wilderness nonsense that is being developed. So this group of, I think, misguided sportsmen who are propelling this thing are obviously mouthpieces for this whole big environmental movement. This is critical for our tax base in the State of Montana. As this land comes off, I realize these conservation groups are still paying taxes. It's only a question of when they will simply convert that into government land, probably with big tax benefits since there's been legislation before Congress for years to give them huge tax credits. When that land comes off of our tax rolls, you and I and everyone else in here have to pick up that property tax base, which is reliant upon this extra land. So with that, I would strongly urge that this group seriously look at the economics, not only in this region, but of the entire State of Montana. Thank you.

Jay Bodner

Good morning, members of the RAC, BLM. My name is Jay Bodner. I'm with the Montana Stockgrowers Association and the Montana Public Lands Council. I would like to just visit a little bit about this bison issue in particular too. I know a lot of folks are saying that maybe this is premature, but I think there are a lot of things in the works that kind of lay down the groundwork for why this is a very important issue. Not only has the Department of Interior put together their draft Bison Conservation Initiative, but also the CMR as they go through their comprehensive management planning, they are discussing bison. We also have Fish, Wildlife and Parks who put, a few years back, a comprehensive fish and wildlife strategy together that encompassed pretty much all the game animals. Within that 700 page document there was considerable discussion also about bison, bison restoration, where it will occur. So there's a lot of things that are all kind of coming together on this issue that certainly, I think, is going to impact, certainly, and is going to concern a lot of these livestock producer who not only live within maybe the CMR or the monument, but also the State of Montana.

Some of the concerns that I guess we have as a livestock industry as we discuss some of these issues, and they've been brought up today. Disease is one. As they are classified as livestock, I think we have a better handle at keeping an eye on disease, disease transmission as livestock, but also bison can be classified as wildlife. If we jump into that area, certainly that presents more of a challenge and really no authority from the livestock producer to address that.

Not only is disease a threat for Montana, if we lose our Class Free status, but even if it is perceived as a threat there's going to be other state vets that can produce sanctions, they can write rules, they can make import requirements on the State of Montana. So even if the disease does not occur and there is a perceived threat, we're still going to have those sanctions on the State of Montana which impacts every single livestock producer in the state, not only just the ones in certain counties. So certainly that is a huge concern for us.

Also, this classification issue. I did bring that up a little bit. American Prairie Foundation, those animals are classified as livestock. If these animals come out of the quarantine facility out of Gardiner, then are they wildlife? When do they make that transfer? How is all this going to occur? Certainly that presents some real challenges.

In the DOI restoration conservation initiative, they talk about restoring animals in the size of about a thousand head and certainly, that would concern us. I don't know that there's too many places where you can restore animals to that great a number without presenting tremendous challenges. Also, management or lack of management. Do we know if these animals are going to be kept at a reasonable number? Do we know if they are just going to be turned loose and it's going to be a natural regulation type of situation? Certainly all of these issues are going to have huge impacts on the State of Montana.

As the transfer of grazing permits go, we know that these ranches can buy and sell, and we have no authority over private transactions or property. I will just wrap up real quickly. As far as the RAC goes, I think that you have a great opportunity here, because I think you have an opportunity to look at maybe some of the, or move the BLM into a comprehensive or a cumulative impact type of situation that's been mentioned earlier. I think we can derive this from a local economy, a local driven direction, so I guess I would stop there. Thank you.

Robert Fink

I'm seventy-eight years old. I give over six thousand bucks to the county every year for my taxes. If you're going to run buffalo on my place, I'm not going to be able to do that. You don't say how you're going to take care of these buffalo or anything about it. You're just going to talk about buffalo. Well, I say not no, but hell no.

Janelle Holden

Hi, I'm Janelle Holden. I work for The Wilderness Society in Bozeman. I live in Livingston. I'm not here to talk about bison, but I am a radical environmentalist, I guess. I do have something that I wanted to share with the RAC. Last time I was up here in Lewistown I was listening to the radio and I heard some advertisements that kind of puzzled me. They were for the CMR and for the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument. Yesterday, when I got back to my office I noticed this ad that was in the paper. I just wanted to make you aware that Montana tourism is highlighting what they call the high plains, and they have a web site, montanahighplains.com, where they've got information about the monument, the CMR and the Big Horn, and in case you're feeling lucky, you can go there and sign up to win a free trip to the high plains which includes a \$250 gas card and three night stay and a thousand dollars to recreate in this area. So I thought I would pass around this advertisement in case you wanted to see it and write down the web site address.

The other thing that I wanted to mention to the RAC was that we have sent a letter to the Deputy Secretary for Water and Science in the Department of Interior to try and get a meeting between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers and the BLM and other stakeholders to discuss flows on the Missouri and the impact of flows on cottonwood regeneration and endangered fish populations. I was at the Conservation District's meeting and it seemed like this is something that a lot of people can agree on about flows, and we should at least get a meeting together to try to get all the parties involved to talk about who's going to make the decisions about flows along the Missouri. So I thought it might be something that the RAC could consider sending a letter as well, just to get a meeting together of the Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, the BLM and other stakeholders. That's all I have.

Mary Jones

I am Mary Jones with Friends of the Missouri Break Monument and I have a couple two or three different things today. First, I would like to mention what Janelle had said this morning about the ad. I got a little email that said it's now on the backs and sides of the Seattle buses for people to look to the high plains for vacations this year. So this is not only on the internet and the radio and the TV, but it's also on the buses in Seattle so maybe there'll be people coming out here.

I wanted to bring up a newspaper article that was in the News Argus. On the back it talked about there is an MSU study for a master's degree on keeping cattle out of riparian areas and some positive things that can be done and have been proven successful to keep the e-coli out, keep the bacteria out of the stream, and I thought that this study, along with what we had been doing with the Friends and with the BLM lately, is we do have also another article in the News Argus talking about fencing off a small part of a riparian area to try to see if we could get some of the cottonwood seedlings to continue growing that were deposited there in a flood last year and last June. This article talking about that, I won't read it or say any more about it, but I did have copies for the RAC to pass around.

Last, I'd like to bring up that we do have walks and hikes and so forth in the Monument area and they are in this wilderness walks book. They're to the Hagadone, the Woodhawk bottom, north of the river to the Bullwhacker area, and if somebody would be interested in coming along and sharing with us some of the information that you know about these areas, I would certainly be pleased to have you along. The BLM has copies of this out in the lobby and I encourage you to ask for one. I think they have it back in the cupboard and it's on the web as well. That's it.

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
Public Comments
May 28, 2009

Bryce Christensen

Good morning. I am Bryce Christensen. I'm the manager of field operations for the American Prairie Foundation based in Malta. I had the opportunity to make a presentation in January to your group, and I thank you for that opportunity about the workings of the American Prairie Foundation. Unfortunately, as always in these meetings, there were a few members of the RAC that were unable to make it. I understand there's still a lot of questions out there. Unfortunately, I didn't realize the most exciting part of the meeting yesterday was the public comment period. I was unable to be here, so I don't know everything that was discussed there, but I just would offer the opportunity to answer any questions that you might have and hand you my business card too in an effort to promote better communication so that we prevent miscommunication. I think that would be helpful for everybody. I'll be here all morning if you have any other questions and will hand my business card around, and welcome the opportunity for you to call at any time. Thank you.

Dyrck Van Hying

Good morning. I'm Dyrck Van Hying from Great Falls and I had, in my opinion, a really nice presentation for you this morning on a DVD. There is no computers that will play it. My sister has a brand new Vista and unfortunately, it's just out of the box and the software isn't in there and I couldn't load it. However, Kaylene is just going to show a couple of files on there.

One thing I want to say. Most of us have been here a long time working on this, but I have never seen Gary Slagel like he was out at this Ford enclosure. That was on this video, and maybe we can play it at another one. There's sound on there, there's music, all the pretty horses. But he did just an excellent job of explaining what was going on out there. Along with Ms. Holden, they did a super job.

I'm just going to go backwards on this thing and maybe forwards. I know there's another trip coming up here on June 3rd, and if it's anything like that we had out there last Friday with the weather, no wind down there in the canyon, the temperature probably didn't get above 69 degrees, the group that was there, some of the new RAC members, some of the old RAC members, you couldn't have a better day.

I'm going now alphabetically order. These are just files that I had. Down at the end, I think across from Greasewood Bottom on the south side of the river, saw 35 sheep. It was on this slope and also on the slope that goes around to the south. I also had a video on that and that was pretty neat. I guess one of the things that Craig Flentie was always trying to do was point out the bighorn sheep. Boy, he did. All over the place. It seems like there's one, there's two or three, there's one. That was probably the most exciting point of the trip. I think what we did, and you're going to see coming up here in a minute, how we started. Here's our group of how we started at the Judith Landing and then we were basically looking at the riparian and cottonwood regenerations.

Vicki told me that the last big ice storm down there was 1996, but I guess you can't read into it this is a ten-year deal. This just happens when it's going to happen. But this year, I think this is probably way down at Woodhawk. But these are all cottonwoods that have popped back up from the ice storm. Vinita and Vicki and I went at Greasewood Bottom and looked at some of these on the south side. They were kind of covered by mud. They were probably like a half an inch to an inch in diameter, but there was little leaves coming out all over the place from these that are down. I guess I would think that maybe some of these would pop up. Go ahead and look at the next one.

We spent quite a bit of time at the Ford enclosure which is right here, looking at the electric fence. This is where Gary Slagel, in my opinion, really started talking about the permittees, how the cows started up at one end one year and worked down, the next year work up, and this permittee has really done a tremendous job on this one.

I was impressed by the group that got out there the week before. I guess there was seven Friends, three or four from the BLM, and they cut this path. Some of these sagebrush were pretty good sized and really did a tremendous job. What is that, five acres? (Response: 12) The video that I had really looked pretty good. Go ahead on to the next one.

Then what we did, and I think Ron you're probably going to see the same thing in your group that comes this next one, but we started at Ford bottom, went to McGarry Bottom. Here's one of these cottonwoods that have popped back up. There's little ones all over the place. Then we went to Greasewood Bottom and Brian Gasvoda, this is kind of a neat deal for him I think, and for me, because of these piped water projects on the top, and maybe his cows won't make it all down the bottom until he wants it, and in pretty good shape.

Vicki and I looked at these right at the Judith Landing. I think her picture's probably coming up next on these. I coaxed her, get over there, that type of deal. Mike was probably pretty photogenic in all of these. I had him in two or three pictures. He just turned up. But what he is looking at here is, this maybe like a D-6 Cat or something got in here and ripped all this up, and that's the damage that the ice did on the banks. I don't know if you call it damage, but it definitely ripped up the sod on the side.

We got to have lunch, and I tried to set this on a tree and I tried to get myself in the picture, and this is Greasewood bottom, just a tremendous place. Let me just say something. I think it was Vinita or Gary said this, these old cottonwoods were probably born 150 years ago when there was flooding, when there was no dams on the river. And now, because of the dams on the river, the only generation that we're getting and stuff is on the lower banks here, and that is susceptible to ice and all that sort of thing. As I think I remember Gary saying in this one, this is a young river. This is a very young river so the bars, there isn't these big bars of sandbars and soil for the cottonwoods to generate on.

Here's another one of riparian areas with the cottonwoods really coming back. I think is probably McGarry Bar also.

Okay, here's Vicki right over here. Here's Vinita, and here's some of these that we're looking at that. If you would have looked at these probably two weeks before we were there, you would think this whole thing is dead. But now these leaves are just coming out of the mud and stuff down there and really coming back. It made me feel pretty good.

Here we are. Here's our Mike. I don't exactly know where we're at right here, but we're getting back on one of the two boats. We had Mark Schaefer, which is the new river guy down there, was our captain and did a tremendous job of explaining everything. He's also got eagle eyes and can just point out everything.

I guess that's my presentation. I probably went a little fast. Does anybody want to ask a quick question, other than where is that? I'll let somebody like Ron Poertner tell you where it's at or something here. Thanks for taking me, all the new RAC members, the old, and the BLM. It was really super. I will have that video one of these days and all the pretty horses on it.

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
September 15-16, 2009
Havre, Montana

The meeting convened at 10:00 am in the conference room of the Best Western Inn, Havre, Montana. RAC members attending were Ron Moody, Troy Blunt, Barb Cole, Clay Vincent, Dan Teigen, Brian Gasvoda, Pat Gunderson, Mike Bryant, Vicki Marquis, Terry Selph, Larry Epstein, Tom Carrels, and Ron Poertner.

Bob Valach and Lisa Huestis were absent.

BLM personnel in attendance were Gene Terland, Mark Albers, Ed Roberson, Doug Powell, Kaylene Patten, Darren Knuteson, Gary Slagel, Scott Haight, Don Judice, Stan Benes, Willy Frank, Stanley Jaynes, Jerry Majerus and Nita Vandegrift took minutes.

Ron Moody brought the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. First on the agenda is a 30 minute public comment. Past meeting business, extensive public comment on the subject of bison reintroduction. More on the agenda today of this subject. Upcoming for the first time we have an opportunity to hear from the industry side of the oil and gas on our BLM lands. Last meeting subject to bring forward informally resolved response that Stan made that we focus on important specific items for the BLM and give advice. We will be seeing more recreation fees from the FS at our next meeting. The new RAC appointments are still in Washington and we will be losing Bob Valach and Lisa Huestis.

Terry Selph suggested that we allow a half hour of public comment at the end of the day's meeting as the RAC can expect more comments after the day's presentation by the Washington Office folks.

Kaylene informed the members that as a RAC they can add time to the agenda. All members agreed to add an additional half hour of public comment at the end of the day for public comment.

Public Comment:

18 people signed up to comment and they were given 3 minutes each. (Transcribed notes attached.)

Welcome, Synopsis, Meeting Minutes:

Kaylene went over the agenda and introduced BLM personnel. 19 questions generated by the RAC members on the Bison Initiative from the last meeting to be addressed by the Washington Office folks. Ron Moody approved minutes from last meeting and approved as written.

Bison Initiative (WO Representative): Introduction of Ed Roberson Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning and Doug Powell, Range Management Specialist.

Ed Roberson: Have worked in the Washington office for 2 years and previously in NM. Spoke a little about what they do in DC. Spoke about the wildlife and range programs that have interest in the bison program. Bison Conservation Initiative was brought to his attention a year ago. Spoke of the new directors in the BLM. Bison came out of the last administration. FWP was directly involved in this and they may be considering the CMR area for this. Understand they are to bring the best minds together for this project with some involvement of the public and their concerns. RAC is perfect opportunity for BLM to bring issues to the public to discuss. He would like to see the executive order fulfilled in a way that will engage in dialogue with the public. Stress the environmental process

we go through when looking at making these kinds of changes. Doug has been researching the details of this through the committee he is on. FWP thought it was important to have BLM involved because we have bison that we manage. Henry Mountains herd of 200 head is managed by the Richfield Field Office. They have been met with conservation issues and herd management. Domestic bison can be trained as cattle are trained; however, they will go through fences just as a cow. We understand the management of the herd when introducing into the area. Genetic diversity; look at all the ways to prevent transfer of diseases from bison to domestic herds. Look at these issues in a cooperative way. We are going to manage under the best of science, with a process. Moving wild and free roaming bison is not something being addressed at the department level. A Workshop is to be looked at for 2011 with an SRM meeting to bring scientists and folks who manage bison together. Referenced Oklahoma fire and bison on the landscape and their management and impact that Gene Terland talked to you at last meeting about this. WO is involved to help understand more of the science around these animals. The livestock regulations allow us to change the type of livestock per permittees request.

Doug Powell, Rangeland Mgmt Specialist replaced Ken Viser on Bison Committee Group. He has an interest in the subject, previously being a liaison with the public. Bison do graze differently than cattle. There would be some changes on the impacts, but not huge. If looking at herds then the impact would be different. Working Group does not meet but once or twice a year. Very informal, NPS and FWP make up this group which is focusing on coordinating and talking about issues that involve all the agencies. Some of the issues this group has been working on are: Science, genetic purity, management of wild herd, disease in the herds is a concern that is looked at; they need to be very careful not moving animals that might have disease. Late 2008 they came out with Bison Conservation Initiative and at that time BLM became involved because we had lands in Utah that bison were being used on BLM lands. They have expanded this group and made it a little more formal by adding USGS, BIA etc. March was last meeting and talked about units where they have bison now, which herds' do they consider to be genetically pure, and health issues. This was the focus (Genetics) of this meeting. Bison Conservation Initiative Workshops for genetics issues was held in 2008. Workshop on diseases and health issues are being looked at now. Grazing ecology of bison and how compared to grazing cattle workshop. Working group would be the lead for questions when somebody wanted to deal with the possibility of introducing bison. This group would help answer questions of genetics, science. etc. Aware of these kinds of situations, but none had developed to take a response at that first meeting.

Group of Scientists interested to bring forth best science to bring bison to BLM lands and manage. Help provide guidance. This group would not dictate but would give guidance.

The RAC voiced a concern on the conversion of cattle to bison under the current grazing regulations. APF Group may be interested in bison being run as wild animals at some point. BLM manager Mark Albers stated we currently manage bison as livestock under the regulations; we are not seeing the wild management at this time. Land use plan would need to address the issue of a wild herd versus domestic herd if it comes to that. Currently there are 6 states that have bison as grazing herds.

Bison Presentation and Discussion:

Ron suggested that the RAC members take turns going around the room asking questions and try to cover all the questions previously compiled by the RAC members at the last meeting and get those answered first.

Troy Blunt: Ed you discussed putting bison on CMR? In scoping meetings it was stated that bison would not be put on the CMR, do you know which way they are going?

Ed Roberson: Will go back and ask folks of the refuge system to get an answer; you could invite CMR to a meeting and ask them questions about Bison and their ideas.

Mike: #2 & 9, makeup of the group, demographics? The Working group has made no decisions yet?

Ed Roberson: Peter Graffs is the chairman from NPS, and it's science oriented. There are representatives from Yellowstone NP and others from units that have bison now. There were 14 people in the meeting and their focus was coordinating and researching the science.

Vicki Marquis: Where is the impact of the natural resources with the free roaming bison concept? Are there some proposals to take out the fences for free roaming bison and how will that impact riparian areas?

Ed Roberson: This will be looked at.

Ron Moody: Clarify free roaming? If they are in fences are they free roaming?

Ron Moody: Brucellosis issue? Fathers worked to keep this out, what kind of rules are we going to have for this?

Ed Roberson: Take some of these smaller herds and improve genetic breeding. This is an issue that this group will talk about. Other diseases will not be ignored as well. 1st workshop was on genetics, 2nd workshop on disease. Waiting for results from the 1st workshop to move forward with other concepts.

Dan Teigen: Livestock/wildlife, private/public, some of this is confusing and vague. We need to see more clarity and emphasis on that distinction and how they are handled. Wyoming elk feeding grounds is an example, being fed as livestock but then going into the wild and possibly spreading disease. Concerns on how this breaks down for everyone, ranchers, public. What can you say about that example?

Ed Roberson: Not sure I can give a good answer. Familiar with brucellosis in Wyoming. Gave an example of rancher who fed with non weed free feed that did spread this disease to livestock? Not just a government issue, ranchers are involved in this issue. Not easy to eliminate brucellosis from the elk population. Not a simple resolution. Not a one issue problem.

Tom Carrels: Is there a Mission statement of the working group or objective that is stated somewhere? Group has a draft charter. (See if we can get a copy of this to include in minutes?) Need for a social analysis of bison into the tribal social environment. Is BIA involved? Would be nice to hear from the tribes on this issue.

Ed Roberson: Yes. BIA was there, but remember they do not represent the tribes. Will work on talking to tribes regarding this issue.

Ron Moody: Our Dept did survey in Yellowstone Park and past percentage showed one group had 3%. These are the wild herds that travel thru 3 states of Yellowstone.

Larry Epstein: Is there an issue of brucellosis being introduced.

Ed Roberson: Yes.

Ron Moody: American P. has spent a lot of money in this issue of bison introduction. This thing is up and running. Is DOI sincere about only considering if this is socially accepted? In Phillips Co. this has not happened. Do an assessment of Phillips Co. and then go to the next step. What do you plan to do about this?

Doug Powell: Free roaming herds require private lands, negotiations. Permits for a different class of livestock are being done now. We have two sets of policies on two different issues. A bison is a bison with it doesn't matter how many acres are involved. Before DOI can give one more grazing lease an assessment should be done and then an EIS.

Barb Cole: As I listen to public comment they are very valid. #3 (read) Please comment on that?

Doug Powell: We don't have a national policy. Would rather have a local manager answer this question. Gene?

Gene Terland: Don't know if anything has been formulated.

Barb Cole: Need to have the local people involved.

Clay Vincent: Negative problems in 2 counties with bison and fences. Not against bison, but free roaming is like introducing the wolves. The Utah group, do they have fencing, disease?

Ed Roberson: Treated like wildlife. Haven't heard enough to answer that question. Not aware of brucellosis but haven't heard anything else. Would have to check with the local manager regarding this.

Doug Powell: Will look into this and forward the answer to Gene. APF is managing like other livestock. If managing permit with no problems or with neighbors, not sure if BLM is considering a change?

Clay Vincent: Lots of herds managed in US without problems or disease.

Gene Terland: Land Use Plan, involve all parties, permittees, get into full detailed environmental statement.

Ron Moody: Conversion BLM grazing allotments. Single permittee to convert allotment without controversy? Where do you decide to take this to the next level if it would impact on a large scale?

Mark Albers: Aware of this issue and what would be the appropriate answer is a NEPA analysis. We don't decide who owns and buys lands in MT. Looking at how other land owners are changing in MT. If lands are being used according to the permit, where do we decide to look at them? Our decision to say yea or nay is very limited.

Ron Moody: So does the RAC have a say in this decision?

Ed Roberson: Difference between a grazing permit and free grazing herd, with a look at social interaction.

Ron Moody: State of MT recognizes that Bison have a dual legal status, privately owned livestock and permitted owned wild animal or public wildlife. They are one or the other? There is a legal process that is done on the state side to accomplish this.

Vicki Marquis: List #11.

Ed Roberson: Nothing in Bison conservation initiative that conflicts with Taylor Grazing Act. If making application to run livestock, there is no automatic conflict with Taylor Grazing Act. Some gray area.

Mike Bryant: MT State statue, has it been tested in court? There needs to be a clear distinction between wildlife and livestock legally.

Ron Moody: No. Seems to be ripe for one. Discussion ensued. Federal agencies are not going to move livestock without state approval.

Vicki Marquis: #17. No formal public involvement in this process? Has a Federal advisory committee been formed?

Ed Roberson: There has been no discussion on this yet.

Vicki Marquis: Who makes that decision?

Ed Roberson: If we feel there is enough interest from the public and enough different views that would warrant public involvement then we would look at a committee. We are evaluating the science at this time and it hasn't risen to that point of involvement.

Vicki Marquis: Who would make that call?

Doug Powell: There has been discussion of a pocket committee for this issue. Discussion held at the director level of the agencies. Have to have enough interest with a wide variety.

Vicki Marquis: With the public comments from today it looks like we have the interest?

Ron Moody: Thank you gentlemen!

Public Comments: 4 individuals provided comments (transcribed comments attached).

Stakeholder Presentation:

Linda Guthrie, Devon Oil & Gas and Dave Galt, Montana Petroleum Association
(Power Point presentation):

Linda: Who we are:

- O&G exploration and production company
- Nation's largest independent oil & gas producer
- Produce more than 2 BCF of natural gas a day
- Fortune 100 Best Co. to work for (received in 2008 & 2009)

Worldwide operations:

Primarily N. America 94%, 66% Gas, 34% oil, \$29 million

Montana Presence:

Proved reserves: 112 BCFE

Production: 31 MMCFED

Acreage: 1.5 million

No. countries with leases: 32

Being a good neighbor:

- 2008 BLM National Best Mgmt Practices Award in 2008
- Developing practices that prevent avoid or mitigate adverse environmental effects.
- 2008 EPA Gas Star Continuing Excellence Award
- Greenhouse Gas Reductions
- 2008 Interstate Oil & Gas Compact Commission Chairman's Stewardship Award

Water conservation tech.
Community donations
2008 \$1,000,000

The Flow of Energy

Upstream
Midstream
Downstream (Refineries)

Asset Variety

Independents operate primarily on cash flow
Look to replace reserves each year
Typically have two main types of assets
 Established fields 86%
 Repeatable over long period of time
 Fund other activities
 Compared to your checking account
Growth areas 14%
 Looking to add to the asset base
 More costly to develop
 Similar to your investments in the Stock Market

Devon MT Activity

Bear Paw Field
Mature asset that has been producing since 1970's
Goal is to maintain consistency
Production stable to slight growth
70 wells per year would yield slight growth over 5 years.

S. MT

New exploratory play
Much slower timeframe to evaluate
Infrastructure not in place
Rechecking assumptions after each well

Technical Well Selection

Review seismic data and build fault map
Evaluate seismic and existing well data to calculate Gas in place
Risking scenario
Probability of success?
 High risk or low
 High success rate or low
Economics evaluations
 Expected costs
 Directional, stipulations, remote
Uncertainties such as market, regulatory environment
Present to mgmt
Plan for the year is developed

Exploration

Seismic tech uses sound waves to allow us to see beneath the earth's surface.

Seismic comparison (map)

Preparing to Drill

- Lease agreements, rights-of-way and title clearance
- Survey the land for a suitable drill site
- Application for permit to drill
- May need to obtain partner approvals
- A location is prepared
- Access roads may be built

Drilling

- A drilling rig is brought to the site and a well is drilled
- Electronic instruments are lowered into the well to determine the presence of oil and natural gas.
- Steel pipe, called casing, is cemented into the well to prepare for completion and to protect the environment.
- Rig crews work 24 hours a day, seven days a week to get the job done and minimize intrusions on the community.

Extracting the Gas

- After the rig is removed, the well is cased.

Gas Gathering

Reclamation

- Once well is completed, the site is reclaimed to the minimum disturbance needed for production
- Location is returned to as near as the original as possible
- Permit conditions of approval may determine seed mixture
 - Wildlife needs
 - Native vegetation
 - Landowner request-agreement.
- Utilize additional reclamation tech such as hydro mulching as needed
- Equipment may be painted/sized to minimum visual impact
- Activity restrictions based upon wildlife needs
- Utilize remote well monitoring to minimize trips to the location

Vicki Marquis: Question about water disposal?

Jason (A member of the Oil Company): We truck our water to an evaporation pit that is in the general area.

Ron Moody: Do we do hydraulic fracking?

Jason: Yes. We use cross link bore jell.

Ron Moody: Do you have history of ground water contamination with fracking fluids?

Jason: No Sir.

Linda: Spend a great deal of money and time to know where our fracks are going. We have an excellent record. We are a regulated entity. Gas travels across the Canadian border thru pipeline called Blaine County number 1.

Don Judice: The point of gas transfer for the government is at the well. Some goes into gas storage for the east coast.

Linda Guthrie: We have paid over 8 million in taxes in 2007 for MT.

Ron Moody: What plants are being planted in your hydro mulch?

Don Judice: Every application sets the seed mix and it is mandated as all native, unless the landowner wishes to plant something else.

Dave Galt, Executive Director of MT Petroleum Association: Has been in this job for 3 years. Presented an information show. (Montana Petroleum Industry). This presentation is available on the following website: www.montanapetroleum.org if you would like to view.

Handed out Fracking Literature to the RAC members (Montana Petroleum Report, August 4, 2009). You can also access this on the above website.

Contact 406-442-7582, email address: MPA@montanapetroleum.org

Questions and Answers session on Stakeholder presentation:

Ron Moody: Do you have Stats on state/public/private lands?

Dave Galt: No.

Ron Moody: When it affects the mineral owners it affects the state budgets as well. A discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of exploration and mineral rights.

Don Judice: Created a drawing to demonstrate the fracking process.

Ron Moody: Fort Peck Res. Negotiating energy leasing of the area. Sense that the industry would reject any lease pulling.

Dave Galt: Don't see this in the future. Think it is a big mistake. Rocky Mountain Front is a good example. Discussion ensued.

Linda Guthrie: Industry as a whole does not know where we will be in the future so once we let this land go we will never have the opportunity if it were to arise?

Ron Moody: What's wrong with setting aside land for our future generations as being free from exploration?

Barb Cole: We have to have support for our schools, state, etc.

HiLine RMP Update:

Jerry Majerus: Following was a presentation:

Update

- Range of Alternatives

- Oil & Gas leasing and reasonable foreseeable development
- ACECs
- Additional Analysis
 - Oil & Gas Reasonable Foreseeable Development
- Schedule

ACECs – Preliminary Preferred

- Malta Geo 6,153 acres
 - Paleontological values
 - Would not be designated an ACEC

ACECs – Preliminary Preferred

- Woody Island
 - Designate as an ACEC 32,109
 - NSO for oil and gas leasing
 - Closed to renewable energy – wind

ACECs – Preliminary Preferred

- Frenchman – 42,000 acres
 - Designate as an ACEC
 - NSO for oil and gas leasing
 - Closed to renewable energy – wind

ACECs – Preliminary Preferred

- Zortman/Landusky Mine 3,436 acres
 - Designate as an ACEC
 - NSO for oil and gas leasing
 - Continue with the mineral withdrawal
 - Closed to commercial renewable energy – wind

Additional Analysis

- Oil and Gas Reasonable Foreseeable Development
 - Areas by development Potential
 - Closed or controlled surface use
- Air Quality Analysis
 - Emissions Inventory
- Wind Energy Development
 - Consider two levels of development
 - Look at high potential areas

Schedule

- Preliminary MSO Review
 - Winter 2010
- Draft RMP/EIS
 - Summer 2010

- Proposed RMP/Final EIS
 - Spring 2011
- ROD
 - Summer 2011

We will be doing separate travel plans.

Ron Poertner: Is the RMP going to consider land for bison?

Jerry Majerus: Will look at 3 parts.

Bison

1. Change in class of livestock – No change from cattle to bison
 - a. Alternative considered but not analyzed in detail
 - i. Federal grazing regulations outline who is, and who is not qualified to be a permit holder and under what conditions an applicant would be denied a grazing permit
 - ii. Grazing regulations apply indiscriminately, both to species of grazing animal and qualified applicant
 - 4110.1 Mandatory qualifications.
 - 4130.3-2 Other terms and conditions.
 - 4130.6-4 Special grazing permits or leases.
- Change in Class of Livestock – No change from cattle to bison
 - Alternative considered but not analyzed in detail
 - Is not reasonable or necessary except in specific, localized situations where bison use may be incompatible
 - With attainment of standards for rangeland health,
 - With other multiple use resource management objectives, or
 - With other authorized users of the public lands
 - No scientifically based reason has been identified for why bison should not be permitted to graze public lands
 - No resource management based reason has been identified for why bison should not be permitted to graze public lands in the planning area
 - Wild Bison
 - Address as an issue considered but not analyzed further
 - No proposals or recommendations from Montana FWP to manage any BLM lands in the planning area as wildlife ranges for bison
 - Any such future proposal or application would require extensive planning/analysis and would likely require a plan amendment
 - Social and Economic Implications
 - Potential changes with landownership
 - Change from cattle to bison
 - Change in landownership in the planning area
 - Conservation Strategies
 - Establish free-ranging, disease-free American bison populations in suitable grassland habitats outside Yellowstone National Park where they can function ecologically and operate as keystone species to restore grassland systems

**RAC Meeting
DAY 2
September 16, 2009**

Members Present: Troy Blunt, Larry Epstein, Dan Teigen, Tom Carrels, Pat Gunderson, Barb Cole, Vicki Marquis, Ron Poertner, Clay Vincent, and Terry Selph. Absent were: Bob Valach, Lisa Huestis, Mike Bryant, Ron Moody and Brian Gasvoda.

Public Comment: 2 Individuals provided public comment (Attached)

The RAC members engaged in some general conversation about the Bison issue and other issues relevant to the RAC:

Ron Poertner: Bison issue and the RAC, public are looking for us to do something? We haven't yet? Would like to propose a recommendation to set aside 15 to 20 minutes to get this going?

Mark Albers: There is no request for a decision at this point. Box Elder and Telegraph Creek are two areas with Bison.

Vicki Marquis: Understand domestic versus livestock. No other forum for public involvement. The RAC needs to take this up. We do not need to make a decision on this but we need to open this up to more of the public.

Larry Epstein: Small vocal group has been involved in this. We should not take action based on one group's opinion.

Ron Poertner: Let's advertise this and get more of the public a chance to get involved?

Dan Teigen: Frustrated with this meeting. Past meetings of the 20th century involving the monument, we only hear statements from the public. We leave here with bits and pieces and nothing set. We need to have better dialog with ourselves and the public. Need to be able to ask questions of the public and ourselves regarding the Bison issue.

Tom Carrels: Agree, we could be doing a lot of bridge building while the public is making their comments. Could possibly happen after the public comment? We need to be able to carry on a better dialogue with the public.

Vicki Marquis: We must be aware of the time that we have as a RAC to gauge where we can add this to the agenda with data and facts, outside of the public comments.

Clay Vincent: Have never seen a decision made by this board. How do we get a decision? Do we make a motion?

Kaylene: Yes. Make a motion and recommendations. If passed then goes to Stan Benes and Mark Albers. This would eventually get forward to the DOI.

Barb Cole: We don't want to marginalize this subject as a group. Don't want big money people coming in and telling us what we can do as Montanans. However, BLMs hands are tied regarding sales of leases?

Tom Carrels: Private property rights of APF are being ignored. It's dangerous to stifle new land uses.

Barb Cole: Would like to see this land used as production for the people in the area.

Mark Albers: Have looked at this issue for many years. There are groups that want BLM to stop what APF groups are doing? We cannot do that. Legislation is the only way to stop this kind of movement.

Ron Poertner: Not suggesting that. Would like to see a recommendation out of the RAC for more time to assess this issue.

Terry Selph: Past RAC would have study or work groups to study these kinds of issues and then would present to the RAC. These groups could then make a recommendation of some sort. Maybe we need to form subgroups.

Ron Poertner: Study groups can take a long time to produce something?

RAC deeply concern with the APF.

1. Lack of assessment of large herd by DOI
2. Need of protocols, Analysis of multi-acre use on local use and social acceptability.
3. RAC recommend temp moratorium until assessment is completed to DOI.

Do we want to recommend an EIS?

Troy Blunt: Would this be useful to you Mark?

Mark Albers: Nothing in front of us to drive a decision. No big action for us to assess? No decision space to do EIS for some huge action out there. You can make a recommendation on our day to day use of cattle/bison. We need legal reasons to say, No you can't do that.

Ron Poertner: Would like RAC to make a decision on my recommendations. Look at the protocols on how these leases are converted.

Stan Benes: Look at what the council is to perform for this issue. If we have met this concern then we can forward a recommendation on up to the DOI. That would give Mark and I something to work with.

Mark Albers: BLM permit recognizes domestic livestock.

Clay Vincent: We need something to guide us.

Vicki Marquis: Can't argue wildlife preserve would not have an effect on the folks in this area. We need to pull the reins up until we can look at this.

Dan Teigen: Regarding meaningful public participation with the RAC. We had 18 people yesterday, but for us we can't take a statement and take action on that. Be careful of what we ask for. Bison ranchers should not be restricted to run livestock by BLM. We are discriminating. Wildlife/livestock permits, agree for a moratorium to look at this issue.

Ron Poertner: Just saying we need a time out to look more closely at this.

Vicki Marquis: BLM operates under Taylor Act. This is tourism not livestock.

Pat Gunderson: Mark, if APF comes for changes of class of livestock will this trigger an EIS?

Mark Albers: Yes, there would be an action in front of us. Maybe the APF could come and talk to the RAC again to see if they are asking for this.

Barb Cole: Don't want to see private property rights taken away from anyone. Definition of livestock/wildlife?

Mark Albers: Legal Language of wildlife/livestock.

Larry Epstein: Dude ranches have BLM leases. Do we take their leases away?

Troy Blunt: Ron is just talking about a recommendation of a moratorium. Do we want to vote on this?

Stan Benes: Have Ron draw this up and give to the RAC to move forward on?

Ron Moody: Will formalize this suggestion and get it around to the group via email and we can make a recommendation then.

Troy Blunt: Ron put it together and gets it out to everyone else and bring before next RAC meeting.

Mark Albers: Would welcome the group to get together with these kinds of issues. Protocols, this group makes recommendations to Stan and I. Then it would move on forward to DOI.

Field Manager Updates:

Mark Albers

Malta District:

- 3Tier (handout of organization)
- Prescribed Burn assessing results
- 2 Applications on Monument – onsite Thursday

Stan Benes:

Lewistown District:

- 3 Tier delegations & Review level will be started
- 2 Lawsuits Pending litigation to the Missouri River Breaks and Woodhawk Appeal
Need to complete administrative review. 2 fulltime employees preparing this. Index is 130 pages. Record could reach up to 60,000 pages.
- A lot of projects going on within the District.
- Education partnership completed with Salish Kootenai College. Hopeful to expand with other colleges. Secured 3 FEMA trailers to help with the housing.
- Grazing program, 620 leases and permits out of the central district. Completed 3 watershed plans.
- Flatwillow thinning project going on.
- American Recovery Stimulus projects. Judith boat ramp project.
- Dealing with fire at Holter Lake.
- Expanding weeds program wherever we can.
- Completed L&C NF Backcountry horseman Red Hill Road project.
- Workshop in the planning stages for December, river flows on the Missouri for restoration of cottonwood on the monument. Rough agenda and list of attendees we will try to get out to everyone. Will circulate out to the RAC.
- Judith landing is a seasonal lease and will see it closed Oct 15. Parking lot is closed at that time. Boat ramp is ours and cannot be closed, opened year long.

- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation agreement of 10 years involving Judith MT Health Treatment.

Pat: BLM did a good job with the Monument? Disappointed with the litigation.

Troy: Thanks Stan and Mark for the river boat trip for the RAC members.

Access Program Manager Update:

Janne Joy gave background of her experience in this area. Worked with FS for many years in the lands area. Excited to be in this position. This fall I will be going around and meeting people, RAC, State, Local interest groups. Access is not a new issue. Now seems that in MT it is a good time to look at Access again. Have come up with 3 main points to take this forward:

1. Acquire new accesses. Many avenues, boat ramps, roads, etc. Will need 3rd party assistance. RAC could give letters of support for funding if necessary.
2. Taking care of the current accesses we already have. Could help with educational information for groups such as hunters, etc. Working with user groups, clubs, to get them involved.
3. Bureau working with other agencies. We may not be the lead on some of these issues so we will need to work closely with the agency that is. Block management is being looked at as a tool. Possibly reactivating a multi-agency working group.

Envision working closely with field managers and district managers. Would like to get a large involvement from everyone. Looking forward to serving all parties involved in the access issues. Ask for your input from the RAC.

Pat Gunderson: What does your budget look like now?

Janne Joy: No money in the checkbook right now. Next RAC meeting will have more information on upcoming funding. Looking for appropriations directly to BLM in the hopper from DC.

Dan Teigen: Process could be improved.

Janne Joy: Understand what you are saying. Time is sometimes needed for the proper language to be gathered by say ranchers to BLM. I will be there to assist in gathering this information together.

Troy Blunt: How much consideration to other entities, such as counties is given? Rural property owners are not as involved in the decision making as should be?

Janne Joy: Will keep that in mind as working through these access situations.

Ron Poertner: Do you feel that you will be competing with groups that want to close roads, such as the monument?

Janne Joy: Will be working with field managers/district managers to see if I will be involved. Have a lot of interaction with public/groups regarding access issues on a day to day basis. Will look at issues case by case. Field Managers will need to be involved with this type of issue.

Border Patrol update:

Craig with the Border Patrol: MOU made with DOI regarding the boarder. Created a program for BP called Strategic Border Patrol Initiative. Border Lands Management Task Force involving BP and DOI, State, Tribal. Curtis Oman with the office of the secretary is involved. We are in the process of setting up a startup meeting. Just

wanted to give you a heads up on this. BLM has 8 miles of lands on the border. Looking for help from you with EIS, etc.

Troy Blunt: If the group or individuals would like to tour American Prairies Foundation feel free to setup with them or give them a call.

Future Projects & 2009 RAC Work Plan:

Stan Benes: Do the members of this council feel that the time used on this plan is well spent by us?

Dan Teigen: Look at formal format of public comments. We need to take the opportunity to get a better dialogue. Change the format to involve more debate with the public.

Stan Benes. Want to have a national RAC to make a difference. (Handed out copy of plan)

Action Items:

A. Recreation Fees

Recommend we move forward with a sub group with a completion date in mind. Action item in the 2010 plan to recruit RAC members to include a completion date.

Gary: Gilmore Cabin on Bullwhacker Road. Will be putting in a cook stove, replace windows, and other things. Fee would go to the maintenance of cabin.

Vicki Marquis: Can we identify what ones will be coming up to be worked on?

Kaylene: This will be an action item on next plan.

B. Travel Mgmt Plan – Judith and Moccasin Mts.

Suggest we drop from 2010 plan but schedule a presentation for the group. Completion of subgroup that did travel plan.

C. Resource RMP

Recommend we drop Monument Plan

HiLine RMP & Lewistown RMP updates and action

Pat Gunderson: in 2010 how will RAC be involved in HiLine RMP?

Mark Albers: Will come to the RAC with items we need input on. We will not have the RAC involved with as much detail as the Monument RMP.

D. Limekiln/Ruby Blowdown

Recommend we drop for 2010, but get report back to the council on before and after.

E. Watershed Planning, Grazing Mgmt and Grazing Permit Renewals

Grazing still a priority. Recommend in the 2010 plan with a schedule of dates. Add more specifics and definitively, weeds stuff and improvements. Put this in the information items.

Pat Gunderson: Standard letter regarding watershed sent yearly to folks, would it be appropriate to send to the RAC members to see if they individually want to follow-up on this?

Willy: Will try to get the rangeland preliminary process involving the public this early winter late fall.

- F. Judith Moccasin Landscape Projects Move forward to 2010 plan:
 - Fuel reduction projects
 - Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
 - Specific projects list in description

- G. HiLine RMP
 - Should be a sub item.

2010 RAC Work Project Considerations

Vicki: Recommend we move Item 9. Up to an action item.

Pat Gunderson: Item 6 move to an action item. Work with Janne on a list of access.

Stan Benes: Item 8 move to an action item. Hope to follow up on Youth Partnership program. Item 5 special interest to me. Move to action item?

- H. Informational Items
 - Field Manager Updates: Continue with these.
 - Noxious Weed Mgmt: Moved to action item.
 - Zortman/Landusky Mine Rec. Remove from items list.

Next Meeting Agenda/Vouchers:

Suggest we add Bison initiative to Action item list.

Mark Albers: would like a subgroup for this action item.

Pat Gunderson: Regarding Bison issue, something would need to come through the state. Should RAC have a presentation by the State to offer their viewpoints?

Stan Benes: Leave this as an informational item.

Vicki Marquis: Should make this an action item.

RAC: Agree, make this an action item. Subgroup, FWP presentation for CMR, information gathering.

Ron Poertner: Told story of previous attempt at something like this without a facilitator. We need a facilitator to oversee this item.

RAC: Agree. Look into getting a facilitator for this item.

Vicki Marquis: Appreciate Stan's effort to get DC people out here to discuss this issue. Perhaps we need a DOI person to come out and talk to us about this also?

Stan: ARRA Stimulus Money should be an action item as well.

Finalize Meeting Schedule:

RAC: Agree. No more Malta meetings in the winter.

Vicki Marquis: Suggest we put next meeting close to the workshop in December in Great Falls.

Terry Selph: Salt cedar coming up the river fast. See this as a big player coming up.

Next Meeting Agenda:

When: January 12-13, 2010

Where: Lewistown

Time: 10-5:30, 8-3:00

Public Comment: 10:00-10:30

RAC Comment: 10:30-11:00

Public Comment: 8:00-8:30

Discussion ensued about public comment time.

Dan Teigen: Recommend ½ hour of comments from the public and a second ½ hour comment session for the RAC.

Mark: Reiterated the purpose of the RAC is to bring recommendations to the BLM.

Agenda Items:

Election of Officers

Adopt Work Plan 2010

FWP Presentation

RAC subgroup & Bison Recommendation

Subgroup fee proposal initiate

HiLine RMP Update

Kaylene: Oil & Gas Presenter wanted to remind us that you can look on their website for their presentation. Also, do we want to give our work titles next to our names on the next agenda?

RAC: Yes

Meeting adjourned

**Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
Public Comments
September 15-16, 2009**

Johnny Schultz

Mr. Chairman, members of the RAC committee, thank you. My name is Johnny Schultz. I am current vice-chair of the Montana Public Lands Council. I am a rancher in Grass Range, previous local State School Board member. I want to go on record as being against issuing permits for grazing bison on BLM allotments. I am here representing groups that like multiple use concept, hunting, recreation, domestic livestock permittees. All are beneficial to our Montana communities. Hunting and recreation access provided bring revenue to communities on a seasonal basis. Domestic livestock permittees, along with recreation hunting are all stable industries which we need for our schools and local businesses for our communities.

When buffalo were introduced in the community, a case in point was Hot Springs, Montana in the early 90s, the result was a loss of families so schools suffered, tax base diminishes, and there's a loss of local business. It doesn't have to be that way. You will lose the people who care for the resource and the small communities that now exist in rural Montana. Before anything is done to remove or change the status of animals that graze on any federal land, there must be hearings and assessments from the people who have the most to lose by such a dramatic change.

A few groups seem to delight in the collateral damage imposed on ranchers by removing their permits to graze these lands. There will be some unintended consequences if we allow domestic livestock to be replaced by bison, which are essentially a hard-to-manage grazer.

Please do the right thing and give a lot of thought before the action is taken. If at all possible, keep in mind the difference between a want and a need. Some groups want to put in a single purpose use of the resource and the local communities need to keep permitted domestic livestock and a multiple use mentality. I thank you for this privilege of doing this.

Leslie Robinson

Members of the RAC, my name is Leslie Robinson. I am the chairman of the Phillips County Commissioners. Replacing cattle grazing on federal land with bison would have a huge impact on the economies of the affected counties. Phillips County has 3,222,362 total acres. Of that, 1,078,672 acres, or 33 percent, are BLM. 240,514 acres, or 7 percent, are CMR, and 5 percent are State lands. Forty-nine percent of the land in Phillips County is privately owned. Ownership of the land in Phillips County is checkerboard. Changes in federal land grazing have far reaching effects. If the family-owned ranches are displaced by bison, the community supported by these ranches will suffer. A thorough economic study should be done before any decisions are made concerning placing bison where they don't currently reside. Thank you for your time.

Linda Poole

Good morning. My name is Linda Poole. I'm with the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance. We are a private group of ranchers that have organized as a non-profit conservation group in south Phillips County, although we are incorporated to work across a five-state area.

In its management of lands of northcentral Montana, BLM is at a crossroads. At stake is the most intact, vibrant prairie grassland left in North America. At stake are decades of cooperation and ever better management of the mosaic of public and private lands. The American Prairie Foundation told this BLM RAC in January of 2009 that their intent is to assemble a multi-million acre wildlife reserve that is hoped to include 1.5 million acres of BLM land. That's 1.5 million acres where they intend to ask BLM to shift grazing use from cattle to bison. They are concurrently seeking to have bison reclassified as wildlife, and when and if that is done, they intend to request that

BLM retire livestock use of their 1.5 million acres of allotments. This we submit will not sustain the culture, economy, environment, or community of the areas affected.

We of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance therefore request that BLM desist from changing use from cattle to bison on BLM allotments unless and until there is full EIS and public process. We further request the Department of Interior halts further planning and any implementation of their bison initiative until there is a similar widespread discussion and full NEPA consideration of the issue. To do less than this is to ignore the Taylor Grazing Act and the enabling legislation of BLM, to ignore the law of the National Environmental Policy Act, and to violate the spirit of democracy. Thank you for this chance to comment.

Gladys Walling

Honorable members of the RAC, my name is Gladys Walling from Winifred, Montana. Agriculture is the number one industry in Montana. Cattle ranchers with BLM land grazing permits can increase herd size with additional pasture to help make their business profitable while they provide safe, nutritional food for America. And beef exports help our country's balance of trade. Ranchers have taken care of BLM land for many years. They've built fences, improved water sources, and worked successfully with the BLM.

Who will build fences for holding bison? Cattle are easily managed to stay on their allotments or moved when necessary. Bison are unmanageable animals that go through fences and threaten the property of neighbors. How will they be kept on allotments and moved when necessary? Because the proposed Serengeti of North America is an area larger than Yellowstone Park, that will detrimentally affect the economy of many communities since it will replace many ranchers and the money they spend locally. We would urge the BLM to not allow this government land to run bison. Any existing cattle grazing permits attached to land owned by the American Prairie Foundation should be given to neighboring cattle ranches to help the economy of this big area of Montana. We are very concerned about the possibility of bison running in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument since many of us border that large amount of government land as well as own some of the 80,000 acres of private property included in the boundary. There is a movement in the United States to remove all cattle grazing on government land. We would ask the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior to stand with us in the present traditional land use. Thank you.

Linda Newman

Thank you for letting me testify here today. My name is Linda Newman. My husband Dean and I lease 43,000 acres in northern Fergus County, which is, 17 miles of our north boundary is the Missouri River. We are also, not very far east of us is the CMR. So I believe that we are probably going to be heavily impacted by this so-called Serengeti idea. I'm also Montana State President of Women Involved in Farm Economics, so I'm representing all of our members here today. A passion of WIFE, and always at the top of our priorities, is private property rights. So whenever we hear of any property owner of anything – a home, ranch, farm, etc. – being harassed, coerced or forced to sell their property, our WIFE members see red. Probably which is why we wear red.

Then they say, well okay, private property rights, if someone buys the land they can do whatever they want to. Well, we also have what we know as being good neighbors. For example, my neighbor Matt Knox is here today. The place that we're on, we've had people say, "Oh, this would be a perfect place to run buffalo." Well Matt, what would be your reaction? We can't even keep our yearlings out of his pasture, so what would we do with buffalo? That's right, private property is what it is, and whoever owns whatever can basically do what they want to. But you have to think about the people around you.

We talked about these people are willing sellers. Well, on their web site the American Prairie Foundation says they want to accumulate all of these acres. Okay, they've come in and bought five ranches. What's that saying to the rest of you out there? They want to accumulate these acres, but yet they still say that they are willing sellers. So I think there's a double standard there that's going on.

We can only look at the problems that Yellowstone Park has had with area ranchers, so I can't see that it could be all that different. And also, for the life of me I can't think of how prairie dogs can help the land. If you drive along the interstate in Wyoming you can see what they've done down there.

The economic has already been discussed. I don't think that it would be, we would have seasonal recreationists probably in the area, but what are they going to do in the wintertime? Most of these people won't be out here in the winter. They know what winters are like up here. Thank you, and I would suggest that you don't allow all of these grazing allotments to go to buffalo that are currently for cattle right now. Thank you for your time.

Vicki Olson

My name is Vicki Olson. I am a rancher from south Phillips County. I am a member of the RSA and also past PLC, Public Lands Council chairman. I've dealt a lot with public lands, ranching, and stuff over the years. My comments today are on the conversion of cattle grazing to bison and the fact that it is legal now, but what happens when the bison become wildlife and the Taylor Grazing Act says that the BLM land is for a sustainable livestock industry and the cumulative effects of these ranches being bought up and changed to bison is going to have a terrible effect on not only our customs, our culture, and our economy, but it will devastate our area.

I went and did the thing with the amount of money that is paid in south Phillips County in grazing alone. The livestock sales in Phillips County per year, in just the southern half, is 19 million dollars a year. If you think grazing bison out there is going to raise that kind of money, it will devastate our community.

I don't think that it should automatically convert to bison. I think the cumulative effect thing needs to be addressed. I also encourage the Department of Interior to look at the bison initiative and do the total public comment and analysis on that before it is initiated. We like to think that we are range managers, and we not only manage our own range, but the BLM as well. We are the people on the ground that see things happening and pull our cattle if its drought or grasshoppers and stuff, and we are very good managers. From what I've see with the bison so far, they can't even deal with a hundred head of bison. I don't know what they're going to do with thousands and the detriment that that would do to the BLM land is astronomical. Thank you for your time. I'll save some of my time for later. Thank you.

Fergus County Commissioners (letter read by Ron Poertner)

I'm Ron Poertner from Winifred. The county commissioners in Fergus County submitted a statement, passed it on to me and asked that I read it to the assembled group here. It reads as follows:

The Fergus County Commissioners are deeply concerned about the bison restoration effort that has been initiated by the American Prairie Foundation in Phillips County. We are specifically opposed to any and all bison restoration efforts that may be contemplated either now or in the future for Fergus County. We are especially concerned that the Department of the Interior is collaborating with APF's bison restoration effort in the absence of any assessment being made on the social and economic acceptability in the local area for establishing a bison herd. Such an assessment is provided for in the bison conservation initiative from Department of the Interior that is dated October 2008.

In addition, we firmly believe a formal environmental impact statement should be undertaken by DOI and that establishment of a multi-million acre prairie reserve, primarily on federal land, represents a major change in land management of the area as well as significant economic change and impact to local communities. Until DOI conducts the necessary assessments on bison restoration initiative, Fergus County urges DOI to place a moratorium on the conversion of grazing leases from cattle to bison on federal land associated with base properties owned by BLM. It is imperative that DOI make the necessary assessments in the local area before any further cooperation is provided to the American Prairie Foundation. Thank you.

Craig French

My name is Craig French. I'm from south Phillips County and I currently ranch there, fifth generation. A little history, my grandfather got told to move off the Missouri River when they put the Fort Peck dam in, and here we go again, we're getting pressure a couple of generations later. At least I feel that.

I was at a meeting with the Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge and they made sure they emphasized that this is a wildlife refuge and that's what our focus is on. And here again we've got bison, bison, and bison. It's more important to focus on the land and water. I am a cattle rancher. They cattle take care of themselves if I take care of that land, open a gate, move them around a little bit, and provide water, not only for them, for antelope, white tail, sage grouse, whatever. If that is, indeed, your intentions to take care of the land, that I will have respect for you. If you're embracing this buffalo as the next poster animal for saving the American West, well then, no. I am out there and I get great pleasure in taking care of the land that we operate on. When the rain falls from the sky we put vegetation above the ground because our root systems are strong. They are not recovering from mismanagement or being overrun. Granted we go through cycles with drought and wet years, but our plant community is intact. We've been in a grazing system for 35 years and there are other ones to entertain besides what we have as far as grazing systems, but we are extremely proud of how we take care of our land. So there again, if you would put your emphasis on what's best for the land, and maybe there's a difference of opinion there as far as what animal, but you can take care of the land and the water with domestic livestock. Thanks.

Nancy Ereaux

I'm a third generation rancher in Phillips County. My name is Nancy Ereaux. First of all, I want to be sure to clarify that I am against grazing allotments on the BLM fee lands going for the grazing of bison, going to a multi-million acre prairie reserve. They are funded by wealthy investors, yet they have a non-profit status. That's pretty hard to swallow. We have to pay taxes and they don't have to pay the same traditional type of taxes. Taxwise, it makes a big impact. It will also mean we'll experience a lot less families on the land due to the funds that they have. Since they have such wealthy investors they can come in and offer so many times more for a piece of property than what we can. We would like to enlarge our place, but we can't compete with that kind of funding.

So by that happening, then they buy it up and those families disappear that were there before. That means that there is less money spent in every avenue that that family had been contributing. They'd been contributing children to the schools, money to our downtown stores on a day-in, day-out, year-round basis, not seasonal. So by this it means a lot less steady income for our local economy and the way of life is just not the same. When your neighbors are neighborly, we help each other brand. We help each other ship. We let each other use each other's property. We go together and purchase. We own property, pieces of equipment with people right here in this room from other ranches. That's how neighborly our neighborhood is and we want it to stay like that. We can. It's the mentality that's being passed on from generation to generation if we can do that.

But if we allow this prairie reserve to come in and take over our community, then that will no longer be of existence. That means a lot to me. Third generation, right in Phillips County, our roots run deep and our neighbors are our strongest family. And we want them to stay that way. We don't feel that with the APF. Allowing these grazing allotments to go to Buffalo, I think is not taking into consideration the Taylor Grazing Act, the need to be a sustainable livestock industry. I don't think that equates for buffalo, and I think grazing in this manner would not be socially acceptable or good for sustaining the quality of life in our community. So I urge you to please stop the leases to graze bison. We need a moratorium on this. Thank you very much for your time.

Leo Barthelmess

Good morning. My name is Leo Barthelmess. I am a member of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance from south Phillips County, and as has been expressed from multiple interests here, I am opposed to the wholesale conversion of grazing permits from livestock to bison.

With recent court decisions in Utah stating all BLM permit renewals westwide must undergo a NEPA assessment, it is imperative the BLM adhere to NEPA before converting cattle permits to bison. This comprehensive assessment must include the impact of a multi-million acre prairie reserve on the customs, culture, and economy of northeastern Montana. This assessment must also include a public input process conducted by the BLM and the Department of Interior. Upon completion of this assessment the Department of Interior should issue a detailed report on the findings, recommendations, and decisions of the assessment and any future plans to coordinate activities with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, local governments and the RAC concerning APF initiative.

The effects of bison on other species of concern inhabiting private and federal lands should be thoroughly examined by a diverse scientific body which should include land grant universities, livestock specialists, and wildlife interests. This is a huge decision for northeastern Montana and it's being approached far too quickly and without enough study. Thank you.

Brian Kendall

Good morning. My name is Brian Kendall. I'm a fourth generation rancher from up in the valley, not in southern Phillips County. I guess one of the reasons I'm here is I have a range science degree and I've worked out on the range all my life. I've been around, I have some experience. My family tried some full blood buffalo. They're the same family as cattle, the Bos genus. As I understand it, there is consideration that maybe they do not need, running bison, there is no need to look at impacts. I say that's wrong. They need to be evaluated the same as cattle. They have the same impacts as cattle. They will trample a riparian area. They will overgraze if they are not managed.

One of the reasons I'm here is I've heard, especially in the last few years, how if you put the bison out there, they're just like planting a sagebrush. They just belong there and they'll have no impact. That's wrong. You can pen up any animal in too small an area, it's going to have a negative impact on the environment. It's management. They need to be addressed. The cow need to be addressed, the bison need to be addressed. They have the same requirements as cattle. They eat, they drink, they are opportunistic. I hear about more protein in their diet. I've heard some really silly things too. I won't repeat them. They have an impact. We need to do something with that.

(RAC Question: Did your neighbors oppose you running bison?) No, we didn't run a lot of them. This was back in the 70s. We only had two full blood cows. I tell you what though, when we got them in the corral, most of the neighbors saw on the corral until we got them cut out of there. I can tell you that they are way faster, way more agile, they are better mothers, but that makes them dangerous. The first time we pulled a calf up to brand it, that calf grunted, that mother was right there. We just said, let him go. You pen up cattle, they get mixed up, ball, carry on. Those buffalo and those half-bloods stay right together.

The thing I want to tell you is it's management of the animal. It's not the animal itself. Bison will have an impact. If cattle need to be analyzed, bison need to be analyzed. I hope we can be good neighbors. Thank you for your time.

Clyde Robinson

My name is Clyde Robinson. I'm president of the Fort Peck Game Range Committee and a rancher in south Phillips County. I'd like to go on record as opposing any bison reintroduction on federal lands on not only BLM but CMR. I think it's going to devastate our community, the livestock industry, it's just going to be economically devastating to all of us. That's all I have. Thank you.

Matt Knox

I would first like to thank the RAC for giving me this opportunity to comment on this issue. My name is Matt Knox. We ranch 23 miles northeast of Winifred. I am here on behalf of the Missouri River Stewards, I'm a member of Stockgrowers, and I currently serve on the board of Fergus County Farm Bureau.

I would like to address APF's efforts to create a buffalo preserve. One of my first concerns is that they will lose control of these animals if they get even a tenth as big as they are talking about. From there we will have brucellosis issues. As Linda Newman alluded to, we'll have a lot of problems with fences and neighbors. In our country we have drift fences that go to natural boundaries and cattle find their way around them or through them. We just spent the day with Linda's crew sorting out a mix-up between our two ranches. I can't imagine what buffalo would be like. So that's a major concern in the breaks.

Second is what potential effect it would have on the economies of the affected counties. In the latest Beef magazine they rated the counties nationwide, throughout the whole nation. Fergus County is sixth in numbers of mother cows. Phillips County is nineteenth. The other counties, Blaine, Petroleum, Garfield, are all in the top 100. That is the business of these counties, and these communities are heavily reliant on that business. I just don't think there's been analysis done yet. My understanding is the first lease that was converted through the Malta office was only done with an EA. At the very least, there should have been an EIS and there should have been, as was alluded to earlier, a concern with NEPA laws.

We are preserving the native range and prairie with managed grazing. Range condition has improved in our part of Montana steadily since the 1960s when the allotments were fenced and there was more intensive management.

It's hard for me to also understand how this is going to benefit Phillips County when the highest salaried person associated with this project for APF lives in San Francisco.

To conclude, I would ask of this RAC two things. First of all, let's adhere to the bison conservation initiative. Let's find out if there's local support in these affected counties, whether it be a survey or whatever you need to do. And the second thing is I would urge a resolution recommending to the BLM that we put a moratorium on the conversion of these leases from cattle to buffalo. Thank you.

Dale Veseth

I'd like to thank the RAC for the opportunity to speak. I am the chair of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance. The comments I am going to make today are wholly my own and I'll put out a disclaimer before I start that I was writing this out at 10:30 last night, and I was a little grumpy.

I am in opposition of free-ranging bison. The only other free-ranging bison herd is Yellowstone, which is the last remaining brucellosis reservoir in the United States. The eradication program of this disease in domestic livestock over the last 40 years has cost the U.S. Government and ranchers hundreds of millions of dollars. Gross income in agriculture in Phillips County is 50 million dollars per year. Using the agricultural multiplier of five to seven times, this would equate, contribute at least 250 million dollars to local, state, and national economies. Phillips County is just one of 56 counties in the State.

The Department of Interior bison initiative names Phillips County as preferred status for free-roaming bison. The BLM has been asked by the Phillips County Commissioners, the grazing districts, and the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance for a cumulative effects analysis in the RMP on the American Prairie Foundation's conversion of grazing allotments from cattle to free-ranging bison. The Taylor Grazing Act mandates sustainability of the western livestock industry. The American Prairie Foundation is in direct violation of the Taylor Grazing Act. All grazing allotments held by the American Prairie Foundation need to be reallocated to the local community actively involved in livestock production; i.e., they need to sell production output. Less than ten percent of the American Prairie Foundation's staff live in Phillips County.

Several employees of the BLM and the department of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks who developed the Montana Partners Comprehensive Plan asking for 36 million acres of free-ranging bison in Montana now work for the American Prairie Foundation. I would urge the RAC committee and the BLM to immediately move to rectify any and all inequities in policy between the American Prairie Foundation and the local community. Thank you for this opportunity to comment. There would have been a lot more attendance at this meeting if it had been in Malta, which was the closest to the preferred area, the local community where people are going to be the most impacted. People shouldn't have to drive five hours to testify for three minutes. Thank you.

Scott Laird

Good morning. My name is Scott Laird. I'm the Director of Field Operations with the American Prairie Foundation. I believe our project is part of a topic as of the last several months. My understanding is that at the last RAC meeting we were requested to provide some economic information that we have been putting together.

We have been in Phillips County since 2004. Since that time we have been tracking our economic expenditures in the county and the surrounding area, and we have put these into a brochure. Again, this is just a snapshot in the first four years. We bought our first property in 2004. So I will hand these out to the RAC committee. I think we have a few more that are going to be at the back of the room if someone else would like to pick them up at a break.

There's so many comments going on here that aren't accurate, that I don't have time to address every single one. I will be happy to address these comments at breaks or lunch or whatever. I'll take a couple of minutes and just hit a few that need clarification or that are inaccurate that I've been writing down since people have been getting up.

We pay all of our taxes, all property taxes, not income taxes – we are a non-profit – but all our payroll taxes, all of our property taxes. We pay taxes on our bison. We pay the same taxes that everybody else pays as a landowner. We pay appraised value for the property that we purchase. Willing buyer, willing seller. We have not forced anybody to sell to us. All of our properties are appraised by a third-party independent appraiser, and we operate our sales price off of those appraised values.

We are not, we have made no formal request to transition bison to wildlife in the State of Montana. We have made no formal request to retire BLM grazing allotments. We are not anti-cattle. We own no property in Fergus County. We are doing an excellent job, in my opinion, of managing our bison to this point. We have a little over a hundred. We've spent months and months putting together a memorandum of understanding with the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance in southern Phillips County. We've followed that memorandum of understanding. I would hope that we are being a good neighbor. We get comments that the neighbors we do live by, I believe will have positive things to say about us being a good neighbor and working together with the people out there. There's so many others here, I've just got to skip around.

There's a lot more comments. I'd be happy to take them at breaks or at lunch. Thank you.

Richard Dunbar

My name is Richard Dunbar. I'm a Phillips County Commissioner and I'm also the president of the oil and gas and coal counties. I would just like to leave a few numbers with you guys. There's a presentation this afternoon on oil production. I guess the reason I want to comment is there is a proposal to shut a large area of BLM land down for oil and gas development for sage grouse habitat, and I think there's another proposal just for hunting, to close it down to save it for hunting. I don't believe that completely closing an area down, there ought to be some way we ought to be able to put some restrictions on the development if there is cause to do that.

Just some of the numbers, the federal mineral royalties, for you that don't know, the federal government gets twelve and a half percent royalty and half that comes back to the state. In the last five years, since 2005, 25 percent has come to the counties. The counties have gotten 54 million dollars since 2005 in federal mineral royalties. So that equates to over 200 million that went into the State coffers, and that's royalties off federal minerals from oil and gas development. On top of that, there's production taxes off of them dollars that is a third more than that 250 million, so there's over 350 million in production taxes that have come to the State of Montana, counties, and schools where this gas is developed. They are huge numbers. It's a big economic impact to any county or state or school district where there could be development there.

So any consideration to close down large blocks of land for oil and gas development, the economic impact of that would be great if they happen to find some oil or gas there. And with the Bakken field, no one knows how large it

is. It could come all the way over to Phillips County. I know there is a presentation this afternoon, and I wanted to comment, leave the numbers with you. Thank you.

Jay Bodner

Good morning. Thank you. I'm Jay Bodner. I'm with the Montana Stockgrowers Association and also the Montana Public Lands Council. I'd like to first off, just support our ranching community. They've had a lot of good comments up here today. Our organization supports them wholeheartedly.

I think I will just take a little bit different tactic, at least bring up some additional points. We do support a comprehensive assessment of transfer of these grazing permits, certainly from cattle to bison, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the bison conservation initiative. We're going to hear a little bit about that next, and I certainly look forward to hearing some of the details on that. But specifically, Montana is identified in there, at least a couple of different times, with the APF's conservation efforts and also on the CMR, and specifically it says on BLM lands also.

Bison is a tremendous issue as you can see by the folks that turned out today. But as we look at this type of initiative, I looked at the very first page of it, and the first thing that kind of caught my eye here as you go down through the bullet points, it talks about, the first four things, and the fifth one is talking about we're going to work with interested parties, and they identify an executive order 13352. So I went up and I dug out that executive order and just took a look at it. Actually, the first section of it, it talks about the purpose of this executive order. I don't know if everybody has seen this, but I can hand that in if you haven't, or you can find it pretty easily.

It talks about implementing laws relating to the environment and natural resources in a manner that promotes cooperative conservation with an emphasis on appropriate inclusion of local participation in federal decisionmaking. I don't think we've seen that local participation. I think that's the key. BLM has worked, I think, on an emphasis which previously was the four Cs, and I think that's still the mission, conservation, coordination, collaboration, cooperation. Those are kind of the things that I think the agency was built on and needs to move forward with. We haven't seen that with this type of initiative, so moving forward I think that is essential.

There are some cooperative groups that have had success, but it was an inclusion of everybody. It was local landowners, it was sportsmen, it was agencies, and a variety of agencies. So I guess my recommendation to the RAC and the RAC council members would be that you as members insure that this type of thing happens, that there is local participation. If there isn't support for that, we move on to the next issue. That would be my recommendation to the RAC, and I thank you for your time.

Dana Darlington

Thank you. I know we'd all rather be somewhere else, but we're here. First of all, I'm the chairman of the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council, which if you don't know, it's a group formed of 15 conservation districts from the headwater to the border on the Missouri River. With this issue with the bison, first of all we are pro-cattle grazing and for saving riparian areas through different management tools such as undaunted stewardship and just good plain management.

I guess on the personal side of this I can take my hat off, I guess, we farm and ranch right in the middle of the Monument so we definitely have some issues with bison coming up eventually from CMR up through the corridor. I guess you don't have to be deaf to have heard the comments here. The overall consensus is that the general population around the Phillips County area and everywhere else really doesn't want these bison here. So as a RAC committee I urge that you put your two cents in to the BLM. To the BLM, I just ask that you really listen to the people that have been here for generations and who use this land and who have shown that we take care of it, and we take care of it for the next generation to make a living on.

I'm going to probably miss the oil and gas presentation so I'll put in two cents on that too. We've trucked cattle up into the Bullwhacker area for years and those little pump houses, or whatever they call them, I don't know much

about it, but a lot of times we'll see wildlife laying in the shade next to those pump houses, so I think there's room for some oil and gas. Everything done with good management is beneficial to this area. Once again, I guess that's all I have. Thank you very much for your time.

Linda Poole

Thank you again for another comment period with the BLM RAC. We appreciate this. Earlier today I spoke as a representative of the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance. This afternoon I'm speaking just as a south Phillips County landowner. A group of us are here. A lot of the people here are not just landowners, but BLM permittees.

BLM RAC members and staff, and the Department of Interior staff would do well to carefully review the minutes of the January 2009 BLM RAC meeting. In his PowerPoint presentation APF staffer Bryce Christiansen stated that their intention is to purchase several hundred thousand acres of private lands, thereby securing BLM grazing leases of over 1.5 million acres and to convert the grazing use on those properties eventually from cattle to bison. He stated there are conversations in Montana about reclassification of bison from livestock to wildlife and APF is part of that conversation. He stated that if and when bison are reclassified as wildlife, APF would request that BLM retire grazing use in favor of wildlife use on their allotments. It is disingenuous of us to fail to address right now the full intent of APF, especially in light of their rapid, extensive success in reaching their goals.

Scott Laird can probably, if Scott's still here, or Bryce, could speak better to this, but I believe they've got eight to ten properties already. Purchase of their ranches are tied directly to their larger plans and has already had negative impact on the culture, community, and economy of Phillips County. This information is widely available. Phillips County News had a recent article. Readers Digest, let's see, "In its quest to protect what's here and reintroduce long gone wildlife, the American Prairie Foundation began purchasing land from local ranchers in 2004. It now owns 30,000 acres and has grazing privileges on another 57,000. It's goal over the next 25 years is to assemble three million acres, the largest tract of land devoted to wildlife management in the continental United States."

To some extent a full EIS is required from BLM, whether or not bison are reclassified as wildlife. This is because 1.5 million acres of bison as livestock has significant effect on our community. Bison as free-roaming wildlife has an even larger effect. What we heard during today's information presented by DOI staffers Ed Roberson and Doug Powell is that a shift of bison from managed livestock to wildlife would trigger more extensive public comment. Based on what APF has presented themselves, the time to do that is now. There is already an extensive amount of land changing hands, and frankly, if APF is not going to be able to have these permits be reclassified as bison, they are going to fail to be able to reach their plans. I think that it's in the best interests not just of the other people of Phillips County, but also to APF as a landowner to have this EIS be done rapidly and with full participation.

Some of us in south Phillips County are members of Ranchers Stewardship Alliance. The only part of these comments that do apply to RSA is that we would invite conversation with the state BLM and at the national scale with BLM and the Department of Interior about these plans, because anything less than a full cumulative effects analysis is not in line with NEPA or the spirit of democracy. Thank you.

Vicki Olson

Thank you for again a chance to comment. My name is Vicki Olson. I'm a rancher in south Phillips County. You'll have to excuse me, since I spoke I seem to have been coughing since I got here. A couple of things that I would like to reiterate. Mr. Laird commented that we had some false information, and part of that was on taxes. They do pay property taxes, and they are required that by law. But they do not pay income taxes, which affects our local economy. It also affects, the fact that they claim \$140,000 in employee wages, that also is not within the County of Phillips. They said they hadn't formally asked for a change of use. I think that was stated two meetings ago, that they were the ones that was the push in the legislature to have the change of use. So he was calling us saying false, but it's already been stated in previous public meetings that they have done this.

The change of use, I think we have got to look at that with a cumulative effect. I've spoken to lawyers and according to them, where they've acquired this much land and everything by law you've got to do a cumulative

effect on what it's doing to your counties. I can tell you right now that they're not going to be having any sales of bison or anything compared to the 19 million in livestock sales alone. That doesn't include anything else, just strictly the livestock sales in south Phillips County. That is going to do an economic, huge effect change there.

There's been mention the CMR and if they've got bison they'd have to be fenced, etcetera, etcetera. That's not what we've been told. We've been told that if CMR gets bison they will be run like elk. They will be able to go anywhere and everywhere they want to go, and there would be no further fencing. That was at a public, I think it was a resource management plan meeting.

Also, when they did the change of use on this one that they did change, the interior fences were to be eliminated. They wanted year-round use, which they were denied because of public comment, I think, maybe not. But the rotation and stuff that we have learned over the years is the best for the type of ground that we have would be totally thrown out. They have to meet standards and guides and I would like to see the information on how that's being done, because these guys also are wanting to tear out all the interior dams and water stocks and there's no live streams, and I think that's going to have a very detrimental effect on the land and the dynamics with where are they going to water, because they are like cattle, they have to have water if you tear out all the dams.

They said that this changing of use from livestock to wildlife would have to have a land use amendment to the plan. I'm aware of that, and that is a lot of hoops to jump through, but I think they are willing to do that. As far as what the state is doing, the state has now appointed a bison conservation management, I think that's what his new title is, just for the location of bison and management of the bison in Montana. This is definitely moving forward, and I think we'd be remiss in our duties if we don't look at it in its entirety at this point. Thank you.

Dennis Jorgenson

Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Dennis Jorgenson. I work for the World Wildlife Fund and I'm based in Zortman, Montana. Part of our work is in association with the American Prairie Foundation. We basically act as science advisors on their projects. We do some basic research, baseline research on the property as well as on wildlife in the surrounding area. That does include research on the bison. I felt that it was important that I come up here to make a few comments to try and balance the comments a little bit. I think that when individuals come up here and they speak based on rumor and based on hypotheticals, it actually does a disservice to this discussion because it's one thing to talk about fact or to talk about what has occurred, but it's another to talk about, for example, bison as a vicious animal. I collect bison fecal samples every two weeks, and just as you would give respect to a cow or a bull at any given time of year, you give the same respect to a bison, which is a much larger animal than ourselves. But to talk about these animals as animals that are going to get onto a landscape, run through fences and so on, we may not be able to predict how bison graze, but just as any other livestock if they're given water and they're given appropriate grazing which, in this situation, we're governed by the same restrictions that any other private landowner is in terms of how many animals we can have on our allotments so the food will be there, so that the bison do not go wandering.

We have 100 bison right now. There are commercial operations with thousands of bison. I'm not sure where the concerns come from about managing a hundred bison. If someone can tell us which neighbor has complained about our management of the bison, I'd be happy to hear about that. But I haven't heard about that complaint. When it comes to removing fencing, removing infrastructure and so on, the neighbors are the first people to ask for those materials and they are given those materials when we remove them. So in terms of being a bad neighbor, I'm not sure where that accusation comes from. We're early in our operation so we have relatively few people on the ground in the community, but our intention is that there would be more people on the ground in the community in the future. I do all I can for any neighbor, just as I know any other neighbor would in that area, and I think that Bryce, who is another gentleman who is on the ground in the area, does the same. So I think that generally in this discussion it would be nice if people could stick with the facts.

Another example would be the disease discussion. Since the beginning our animals have been tested for disease. I have concerns when we're talking about brucellosis and generalities. We aren't specifying which bison we are talking about, but at any given time our bison are disease free. We have no intention of bringing in diseased bison and as you heard from others, there is no intention to move diseased bison from one place to another. When we talk

about Yellowstone bison, those are quarantined animals that have been quarantined for subsequent generations and tested fourteen times. If any cattle were ever tested fourteen times for brucellosis there would be no one that would tell that rancher where that cow was going. So to talk about disease concerns, it's fair, but you have to take into consideration that no one is moving around diseased bison. We are moving bison that are disease free. So I think in general I would just appreciate it if we could try and speak in facts.

I understand the social and economic implications of all of this, and I think those definitely have to be taken into consideration, but fact is also appropriate for this discussion. Thank you.

Mary Jones

I knew you didn't want to hear this yesterday in the middle of the bison, so I waited until today. Completely new subject. My name is Mary Jones and I'm with Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument. The Monument was designated in 2001 and with that Monument came a proclamation on how to manage it for the objects. The objects were listed and the values were listed. In 2002 the BLM began their resource management plan with the proclamation as the guiding principle for that plan. Since 2002 the Friends have been involved at every step of the way, at the interdisciplinary meetings, at the public meetings, at comments, at meetings personally with BLM members, with whole BLM staff, with state BLM officials, the national level, all the way along for this seven or eight years. And we continue in the process of working with the BLM and working on this Monument RMP.

As you know the final RMP was published and came out, but the process doesn't end until the end of litigation. We are now in litigation. We have filed a suit to continue our work on this process of getting the best management plan there is for the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. Thank you.

Janelle Holden

Good morning. I'm Janelle Holden from The Wilderness Society based in Bozeman. To just follow up a little bit on what Mary said, The Wilderness Society is also involved in litigation concerning the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument, and we're also involved in the planning processes for the HiLine RMP. We'll be giving comments and providing our input along the planning process for that as well.

I just kind of want to address some of the comments yesterday about local constituencies versus national constituencies, and perhaps provide a little bit of a different perspective. One of the reasons why I love my country is that we're all landowners. All of us get to say that we own Yellowstone National Park or we own the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. That's a tremendous privilege that all of us have, and it's also why many people across this country comment on public land management processes having never been there, which to some of you may not seem fair, but in our legal process and as citizens it's absolutely fair because it means that our children might visit those places or we may just want to have those places preserved even though we have never been there.

The Wilderness Society is an organization that has 500,000 members nationwide, 1500 of which reside in the state of Montana. The vast majority of those people pay twenty-five dollars a year for me to show up at this meeting and represent their voice in this process. They don't get to drive here and speak at a meeting, and I just want to say on their behalf that they do care very deeply about wild places and wildlife, and Montana is very blessed to be very rich in that. For those of you who have traveled out of state and for people like myself who have lived out of state, it is very apparent that we are one of the last places, we are the last best place in terms of that. So I just want to sort of impart with you that there are values for that, and there are a lot of people who care very deeply about that and very deeply who couldn't be here today.

As Ron Moody was sort of mentioning to me yesterday, I think his quote was, "Just because the room was not full of my members, or APF's members, or Mary's members yesterday, does not mean that they are not a force in our existence." They are and they do, in fact, pay for litigation and for other ways of voicing their complaints when they are not heard. So it is to your advantage to try and work with national and regional conservation organizations as

much as possible in trying to find ways of common ground so that we don't end up in court. So that's all I have to say this morning. Thanks.