



# **BLM MONTANA/DAKOTAS**

*Dakotas  
Resource Advisory Council*

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## **RAC MEETING MINUTES: Bowman, North Dakota: February 12, 2015 *Bowman City Hall***

### **Attending:**

#### **BLM**

Mark Jacobsen, BLM Public Affairs  
Lori “Chip” Kimball, South Dakota Field Manager  
Loren Wickstrom, Acting North Dakota Field Manager  
Diane Friez, Eastern/Montana Dakota’s District Manager  
Jared Bybee, Montana State Office Wild Horse & Burro Specialist

#### **Category 1**

Bruce Bowman  
Drew Combs  
Ray Gilbert  
Brenda Rettinger  
Vern Timmerman

#### **Category 2**

Kevin Forrester  
Gary Colbath  
Ronald Waterland  
Mike Kain

#### **Category 3**

Ryan Brunner  
Jay Volk

#### **Public Observing**

John Cameron, Senator Hoeven’s Office

### **Mark Jacobsen opened the meeting with:**

- Housekeeping items
- Ground Rules
- Introductions

### **Jared Bybee -- Presentation on Wild Horse & Burro Program**

- Gave a presentation on the program and the issues for ND and SD (such as horse population, holding facilities, etc...)

- The RAC discussed the program and formed a subcommittee to address issues concerning the Wild Horse & Burro Program.
- **Wild Horse & Burro Program Subcommittee Members are: Brenda Rettinger, Ray Gilbert, Bruce Bowman and Ron Waterland.**

**Loren Wickstrom: (Acting North Dakota Field Manager) --- Presentation on flaring and venting in the Bakken Play:**

Loren provided some background on issues and circumstances around the current controversy about venting and flaring, capture and transportation of gas, and issues regarding pipeline infrastructure needed for gas capture.

**RAC Chair Reports:**

The RAC discussed the need for new chairpersons and after discussion voted to keep the status quo.

- ND Chair – Bruce Bowman
- SD Chair – Kevin Forester

Jay made motion to keep the same chair members, Drew seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

The chairmen reported on the RAC Chair/State Director meeting that was held in Billings. Topics covered were:

- The 2015 nomination period.
- Certain situations where the RACs don't have enough members participating was discussed. Options to call members to vote over the phone or by email will be entertained for those who can't make the meetings in person.
- There will be an upcoming statewide conference call on Feb. 24, 2015 and the discussion will include RAC resolutions and RAC reconfigurations. The Chairmen will give a report on this to the RAC at the next meeting.

**RAC Member Briefings:**

**Ray Gilbert:**

- Wild Horse & Burro is the biggest agenda item and the RAC needs to look at it.
- Went to the public land council meeting in South Dakota; is concerned with the RMP on the 3 percent disturbance rule. Diane will get the BLM presented PowerPoint from this meeting sent to the RAC members.

**Drew Combs:**

- Appreciates all the efforts and changes from a few years ago on the N.D. State and Federal mineral rights issues related to the high water mark on the Missouri River.
- Looking to do more mineral swaps with the feds in the future to get the isolated tracks developed.
- Ordinary high water mark issues are ongoing. Will report as more info develops.

**Kevin Forester:**

- Congratulated the SDFO on Travis Lipp getting the fire award.

- Trail project – started last fall on the first stage on Ft. Meade area, next stage will start in 2015; talked about grant issues.
- Long eared bat – glad that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife service didn't list the bat in the Ft. Meade area due to the likely poor effects that would have on other programs.
- Will email out the 2014 BLM flyer 'connecting with communities' on outdoor recreation.

**Bruce Bowman:**

- Concerned with the drop in oil prices and how it could affect the BLM.

**Ryan Brunner:**

- Discussed the public land council meeting; is concerned about the 3 percent surface disturbance rule.
- Said that the SD RMP closes an Army Depot near Hot Springs; has talked to Mitch about this issue. Also talked with the State Archeologist about the closure and he would be willing to talk with Mitch about the depot, too.
- Said he would be happy to assist in future travel management planning.

**Ron Waterland:**

- Talked about the recreational area near Ft. Meade and is working with Kevin to keep this going.
- Talked about Travel Management with respect to the Old Stone Road and the potential to use this as access to get to the Forest Service land on motorized vehicles
- Lawrence County has a lot of mineral surface slivers left over from mineral claims that were staked, his work place (Wharf Resources) would like to do a trade or purchase the land if available.

**Mike Kain:**

- Talked about the project with the Rifle Range (off of Yellow Creek) and has an issue with vandalism. Said the area is currently closed due to liability concerns.
- He is interested in the comment "Connection with the Community" and discussed that further.
- Asked how the BLM is going to determine where to put snowmobile trails. Discussed how the Forest Service did not do a good job planning their snowmobile trails.

**Gary Colbath:**

- The Black Hills Sports Show is this weekend; some participating interests are interested in having a meeting and talking about access issues.
- Feb 28-29 is the State South Dakota Bow hunting meeting and Gary will be talking to them about any BLM concerns/issues they may want to bring forward.

**Brenda Rettinger:**

- She is trying to work towards making more flexible guidelines for reclamation and seed choices. Said that in the past she has had good relationships with BLM field people as far as diversity indexes where there are plans for disturbance. Asked that if there is a certain plant population in a disturbed spot, are we putting in a seed mix that is similar to what was pre-existing. This is regardless of whether or not it fits in the state mix or native mix.
- She has had good luck with some BLM field agents going out looking at the plants and changing the seed mix to more closely match what is already there.

- It is very subjective, depending on the individual field person. One field person is open to changing the seed mixture but another field person says nope --this is what the book says, this is what needs to go here.

**Jay Volk:**

- Is speaking on behalf of the Lignite Industry and has concerns on permitting timeframes.
- Said he needs to look at the process and the agencies that are involved.
- Said this is a mineral issue where the BLM does not have surface ownership.
- He is looking at a situation where there could be a 'stranding' up to 4 tracts of federal coal; which means federal revenue won't be generated because the permitting timeframe is so long.
- Used an example where there was only one permit issued since 2011; the company is looking at 2017/2018 before they can mine a certain tract and needs to plan ahead for the lifetime of the mine. Permits need to be approved in time.
- The whole process needs improvement.

**BLM Member Briefings:**

**Diane Friez:**

- Talked about the status of the RMPs. Washington is still working on direction and changes made to the documents so they can be issued out to the public.
- Getting geared up for the fire season; have fire staff in Miles City and in remote locations such as Ekalaka, Jordon, Ft. Howes and Camp Crook. The district has fire suppression responsibilities for Eastern/Montana and the Custer National Forest. In the Dakotas the states have suppression responsibilities.
- BLM has an approved budget but no official numbers from Washington. The budget is pretty flat this year; it is what was expected for 2015. There was a \$3 million increase in oil and gas BLM-wide; BLM expectations were that we are going to get some additional funding which will support completion of additional inspections.
- Overall, Montana/Dakotas BLM continues to plan for a reduction in staffing. There is a 15% reduction that needs to be made by the end of fiscal year 2018. The North Dakota Field Office continues to increase staffing due to the high priority oil and gas workload in that office.
- Irma Nansel has been hired in the District to serve as the Project Lead for coal projects, oil and gas lease sales and other NEPA documents.
- In the District we have oil and gas lease sales 3 times per year, there are 4 lease sales (one per quarter) and we have involvement in 3 of those. Working on the flaring NEPA documents as well.
- Working on getting the North Dakota Field Manager advertised and filled. Loren is acting field manager at this time.
- Update on staffing in NDFO; have 5 positions where the funding comes from the North Dakota Petroleum Council.
- Happy to have Chip in the SDFO as the new Field Manager. Hoping to get the SDFO a new building.

**Loren Wickstrom:**

- The ADP process takes a lot of time in the NDFO. In fiscal year 2014, they had 583 and have already done 316 so far, in 2015.
- Seeing success in hiring for positions. They are spending 30-40 percent of their time on staffing issues.

- Coal Projects didn't get a lot of traction but now the NDFO has project managers to meet the timeframes and keep everyone on track.
- New guidance is coming out in regards to the Dakota skipper (butterfly). It's a species that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife service has listed.
- The BLM just looks at the habitat; but operators need to look when going out to identify habitat for this butterfly. This is all in the Federal Register Notice. This will affect Dunn and McKenzie Counties.
- Talked about some tweaking in how the NDFO will handle cultural work.
- Have a scheduled cultural workshop in April with industry. An invite will go out.

**Lori "Chip" Kimball:**

- Travis Lipp (Fire Management Specialist) received the 2015 Wildlife Mitigation Award, which was issued by the National Association of State Foresters. The program is where agencies hire Veterans and train them so they can get other jobs in their transition. The award will be presented to Travis in Reno, Nevada.
- Some employees received the Riparian Excellence through Stewardship Award from the State Director for the work that was completed on Battle Creek.
- Travel Management planning course: a 2 day training session will be held in March in Miles City.
- Making a selection on the Reality Specialist job and advertising for the Front Desk position.
- The Dewey Burdock project is a Uranium Mine in the southern hills; and is looking to come online sometime in the near future. Just got the plan of operations from the company; approved it at the end of November, now working on the Environmental Assessment (EA).
- Talked about the potential land withdrawal/transfer on the VA National Cemetery; talking about putting in an application for a BLM land withdrawal to expand the cemetery.

**Tabled Items:**

Tour: Future North Dakota Bakken area tour w/Drew; Meet at NDFO (Fall).

**Possible Project task list:** Yellow Creek (Rifle Range); Wild Horse & Burro issues; High water mark payments issues.

**Next Meeting:**

Rifle Range, release of Big Horn Sheep, tour of gold mine (Lead/Deadwood Area)

Places to stay: The Lodge at Deadwood



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## RAC MEETING MINUTES:

Deadwood, South Dakota: June 9, 2015  
Field Day

### Attending:

#### BLM

- Mark Jacobsen, BLM
- Lori "Chip" Kimball, South Dakota Field Manager
- Loren Wickstrom, Acting North Dakota Field Manager
- Al Nash, Chief of Communications
- Ryan Larson, Recreation Specialist
- Rebecca Newton, Wildlife Biologist
- Daniel Velder, Reality Specialist

#### Category 1

- Bruce Bowman
- Drew Combs
- Ray Gilbert
- Brenda Rettinger
- Vern Timmerman

#### Category 2

- Kevin Forrester
- Gary Colbath
- Branden Bestgen
- Mike Kain

#### Category 3

- Ryan Brunner
- Jay Volk
- Debra Brown

#### Attending Public

- Dave Hague

Mark Jacobsen opened the meeting at 8:00 am at the Deadwood Lodge front lobby with:

- ❖ Itinerary for Field Day and Introductions
- ❖ Orientation for Wharf Mine tour
- ❖ Explanation of Public Comment Period at Lewie's Restaurant

- ❖ Orientation regarding the Yellow Creek Shooting Area tour

The RAC visited the Wharf Mine and got a tour of the facilities and operations at this site. After the tour the group assembled at Lewie's Restaurant to conduct the public comment period and listen to the field manager updates.

**Public comment period (one person attending):**

Remarks to the RAC by Mr. Dave Hague member of the South Dakota ATV/UTV Association:

- 95% that the Rainbow gathering will be held in the Black Hills this summer.
- South Dakota ATV/UTV Association is attempting for the third time to get authorized a permit/sticker for OHV riders for entire state use. Dave would like the RAC to support the riders when they go to Pierre with the proposal in 2016 --regarding the sticker and having a permit system like the U.S. Forest Service. The money for the sticker would go directly to the state OHV program. The sticker program would be enforced by law enforcement. There would be a \$250 fine for riders without the sticker. The state shot down program the last two times and the state Fish, Game & Parks pulled their support for the funding. Next step for RAC members is to draft advice/input/recommendations for the South Dakota ATV/UTV Association and get a copy to Mark Jacobsen.

**BLM Briefings:**

**NDFO FM Loren Wickstrom:**

- ❖ Currently interviewing for the NDFO Field Manager position and also hiring other personnel to fill vacancies.
- ❖ Oil rig counts are down.
- ❖ Monitoring habitat for the Dakota Skipper butterfly.
- ❖ Working on four proposed pipelines; waiting on NEPA/public comment and should have a record of decision soon.
- ❖ Rewriting the flaring topic plan (NTL4A).
- ❖ Working on two coal projects.

**SDFO FM Lori "Chip" Kimball:**

- ❖ SDFO Biologist Rebecca Newton spoke to the RAC on Long-Eared bats and the Black-backed Woodpecker; concerns and status for each species.
- ❖ Introduced Daniel Velder to the group.
- ❖ The SDFO RMP got issued a week ago, and is under protest. The biggest concern is the 'no surface occupancy' for Sage Grouse habitat in Butte/Lawrence Counties.

After lunch, the group drove to the Yellow Creek shooting range; Ryan Larson talked about the issues affecting BLM management of the site and the history regarding a proposed transfer to the county. The area has lead contamination/migration concerns and needs significant earth moving and berm rehabilitation in order to be rendered fit for safe use by the public. The group later traveled to view a nearby fuels project site where selective logging and thinning had cleared out stands to improve grass and forb production, lessen the risk of high-intensity fire behavior, (the area is in close proximity to newly built housing) and lessen the ability of pine beetles to infest and migrate to uninfected trees.

The group convoyed back to the hotel and the meeting was adjourned.

**Next Meeting:**

September 9, 10



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## **RAC MEETING MINUTES:**

**Dickinson, North Dakota: September 9, 2015**

***North Dakota Field Office Main Conference Room***

### **Attending:**

#### **BLM**

- Diane Friez, Eastern Montana/Dakotas District Manager
- Loren Wickstrom, North Dakota Field Manager
- Carmen Drieling, acting South Dakota Field Manager
- Phil Perlewitz, Montana/Dakotas State Office Supervisory Mining Engineer
- Irma Nansel, Eastern Montana/Dakotas District Planning and Environmental Coordinator
- Mike Erickson, NDFO Petroleum Engineering Technician
- Amelia Penington, NDFO Natural Resource Specialist
- Mark Jacobsen, Eastern Montana/Dakotas District RAC Coordinator

#### **Category 1**

- Bruce Bowman
- Drew Combs
- Vern Timmerman

#### **Category 2**

- Kevin Forrester
- Mike Kain

#### **Category 3**

- Debra Brown
- Ryan Brunner
- Jay Volk

#### **Observing Public**

- Field Rep. Justin Rollins: Sen. Rounds (South Dakota)
- Field Rep. Sarah Jennings: Sen. Heitkamp (North Dakota)

The meeting opened with an orientation of the building and administrative details on travel claims. Ground rules were covered.

### Yellow Creek Shooting Range Briefing:

Mike Kain discussed the current status and options regarding the Yellow Creek Shooting range. The county will be assessing the area for insurance and liability considerations. An option is present where the South Dakota Army National Guard can take on the rehabilitation of the range as part of their training mission which may save time and money as the facility gets overhauled. Trespass shooters continue to frequent the site in spite of its current closure status. Future plans under discussion include making the completed facility one where a membership is required, with occasional perks for non-member who need to sight-in firearms ahead of the hunting seasons. Discussed using local materials for the re-construction stage, the county's desire to utilize the on-site gravel for other projects and the need to clarify "conveyance" and how it applies in this case (Bowman).

### State Director's Montana/Dakotas RAC Chairmen Meeting:

Kevin Forester discussed the recent decision to keep the RAC configurations the same and that the next round of RAC appointees are continuing to progress through the vetting process in Washing, D.C. A request was made for topics of discussion from the rest of the council members. Bruce directed that any ideas can be forwarded to himself or Kevin. Diane Friez stated that there will be an opportunity for the RAC chairs to report on successes and accomplishments of each council. Bruce stated that he had wanted to address BLM Wild Horse & Burro issues but later reconsidered due to a statement made by a Wyoming official on the topic. Kevin said that this RAC got along well and there was not much need for subcommittees as each worked well with the rest on topics. Diane said that the Fort Meade Recreation Area (RA) was a good example to share. Drew Combs discussed vandalism on public lands and a better way of reaching and educating the public was needed. The rest of the council and BLM managers discussed the current state of vandalism and how to address this with recreationists using different media and hands-on approaches.

### Federal Coal Program:

Irma Nansel gave a PowerPoint presentation that included an overview of the BLM Montana/Dakotas coal program. Her briefing spoke to the following topics:

- Montana/Dakotas federal coal leases and acreages
- Royalties
- Staffing organization
- Coal leasing concepts
- Leasing processes
- NEPA and Fair Market Value factors
- Sale review
- Royalty rates/rate reductions
- Recent program improvements
- Lease valuation
- Bonding

- Permitting

More information: [www.blm.gov/me/st/en/prog/energy/coal.html](http://www.blm.gov/me/st/en/prog/energy/coal.html)

Jay Volk then addressed the RAC regarding the recent BLM Coal-centered listening sessions, hosted by the BLM WO, which have been gathering public input on the Coal program processes. Jay spoke to the topics of royalty rates, lengthy BLM permitting timelines, the need for coal companies to forecast and plan ahead to maintain mine life, possible lost revenues as a result of mines bypassing federal coal deposits, mine costs and the relationship between mine customers (power plants) and the passed-along costs to consumers. He also stated that the coal industry is different in North Dakota due to the quality and high-water content of lignite which precludes shipping methods such as those used in Wyoming, and the essentially non-competitive lease process on active mines and their federal permits needed to expand or mine isolated federal deposits. Jay also stated that due to the nature of North Dakota's largely private coal estate, the cumbersome federal permitting process would push companies to avoid federal coal, thus depriving the U.S. of royalty revenues.

Diane Friez stated that the BLM is looking at the coal program and the listening sessions have been well-attended. The BLM is analyzing the input now. Down the road it is likely there will be program changes.

Drew Combs said that North Dakota is unique in the coal industry. Wyoming can ship bituminous coal by rail, while North Dakota buyers are power plants sitting nearby the mines that supply them. He discussed royalty rates as well as negotiating leases with private parties based on market rates. Once mines skip federal deposits, there is no going back later to mine them; the costs don't justify the returns for isolated parcel recovery.

The RAC continued to discuss possible implications of clean air regulations, monitoring coal mined to ensure accurate royalty collection, and pass-along costs to power consumers. Montana/Dakotas State Office Supervisory Mining Engineer Phil Perlewitz was present via teleconference call and clarified points related to BLM/OSM (Office of Surface Mining) and NEPA related to possible litigation.

Jay proposed he draft a letter for the RAC to approve, endorse and provide to the BLM regarding coal and the issues discussed. Debra Brown said she would like more information on the topic. Jay will forward the letter to the RAC for input once he completes it.

**Public Comment Period:** No members of the public were present to give comments.

### **RAC Member Briefings:**

Debra Brown:

- Ranchers in her area are concerned about possible impacts related to Greater Sage Grouse (GSG) regulations, possible listing.
- Read up on the American Prairie Reserve as requested by Bruce and stated that it may be of concern, however she is evolving in her understanding of the issues.

Ryan Brunner:

- Continuing to work on GSG issues with the state of South Dakota.
- Commented on the South Dakota RMP and the language on priority habitat for fire protection; the conversation at the state level is evolving on the matter.
- Spoke to the need to consider fire response at the local level, especially when the BLM assets are deployed to out-of-state incidents and the counties are left with little. There needs to be some communication/coordination with local fire departments on the best strategy to protect these key GSG areas. He will work to get more info to BLM managers on this. Debra stated that there was good cooperative work this year between the BLM and local level fire fighters.

Vern Timmerman:

- Made the observation that wildfire does more harm to GSG habitat than anything else; grazing is a good thing to reduce fire threat. Bruce said that West Nile Virus has been and continues to be a problem in western North Dakota.

Drew Combs:

- Stated that he hasn't seen a lot of negative comments about the BLM from the oil and gas industry but has seen many complaints about the U.S. Forest Service.
- He cited an example where the USFS stopped a BLM permit for mineral development due to the installation of two picnic tables by the USFS that warranted an additional permitting procedure.
- The end result of this additional permitting was that the leases expired, for which the company had paid \$15,000 per acre; a significant loss. USFS officials were not returning calls or were gone when contact was attempted. Companies are frustrated.
- Spoke to the ongoing issue regarding state versus federal jurisdiction for minerals under the Missouri River and its shifting course over time. This needs to be sorted out. There is a cadastral survey contractor at work but no information sharing is happening with the state.
- Diane said there was some BIA-funded cadastral survey work being done on the Fort Berthold river section.
- Drew said that the Federal Register Notice (FRN) is a difficult system to get information from, or monitor for items of interest. Would like to see letters sent by agencies that use the register, sent to interested/affected agencies and parties.
- Diane said the FRN requirements for posting notices don't require additional communication from the originator of the notice; that is left to

the originator's discretion. She will look into the possibility of FRN automated notifications for interested parties.

- The definition of "navigable" waterways is different between the state and federal governments and significant royalties are at stake. For example a certain 32 mile segment of the Missouri River represents about \$9.5 billion in possible royalty payments.
- Companies have been encouraged to put the royalty monies in escrow until the issue is settled. He is concerned about private landowners being left out and shorted the royalties that are due them.
- Diane offered to coordinate with the Montana/Dakotas State Office, and perhaps a conference between the agencies involved in the river survey topic may be scheduled.

Kevin Forrester:

- Discussed the impacts of the recent Sturgis Motorcycle Rally on the Fort Meade RA. The Department of Transportation has done a lot of work to improve the Scenic Byway but the results have been higher speeds.
- He is working with Chip Kimball to address the impacts of rally-goers on the RA and the law enforcement presence.
- Discussed the possibility of allowing the Alkali Creek campground to remain open during the rally; cited a previous event where the city of Sturgis closed city parks, etc. to the public during the rally and events moved elsewhere creating problems. When these locations were re-opened the problems stopped.
- Cited an incident a friend had with law enforcement when he mistakenly turned his vehicle into a closed area near a check point and was detained after he turned around to leave.
- Fort Meade RA trails projects are moving forward; a positive community project.
- Would like to see a revision to the Special Use/Special Recreation Permit which assesses a per-person fee. This is problematic for a charity run that crosses a 3 mile stretch of BLM (without stopping). The \$5 per person fee would seriously cut into the fund raising of the organization that would have to deduct that amount from each runner's entrance fee which is only \$25.
- Discussion followed regarding the recent fire that burned down the "Full Throttle" saloon in Sturgis.

Bruce Bowman:

- Bruce and Drew discussed the state of bighorn sheep wandering and getting into contact with domestic sheep, contracting pneumonia.
- Bruce discussed the American Prairie Reserve Flat Creek Allotment in the Malta Field Office area.
- Expressed concern with turning grazing allotments over for bison use; feels that the purpose of the BLM and USFS over this federal land is to have grazing open to producers. Feels it is a land-grab for the wealthy.
- Called some points-of-contact in the Malta area and discussed the situation.

- Cited Ted Turner's experience with fence removal and bison over-grazing pasture areas.
- Wants to know what kind of marketing and culling/herd reduction plan this foundation has. Feels that the BLM is getting itself into something that may be problematic. Wants to know what will happen to the bison if the place is sold, turned over to the state or becomes a national monument.
- Some discussion followed regarding the public process for applications prior to issuing permits and the local RMP having a role in factors surrounding this application and how the decision will be made.
- The RAC discussed this topic further and Bruce asked Diane what input the RAC could give. Diane suggested that the upcoming Montana/Dakotas RAC chairpersons meeting would be a good place to discuss and get more information from the Central Montana RAC and BLM managers handling this situation.

#### Oil and Gas Inspections and Enforcement (I&E) Presentation:

NDFO Petroleum Engineering Technician Mike Erickson presented a power point illustration of the I&E program and detailed the highlights of Petroleum Engineer Technician-performed inspections on oil and gas operations. He covered the aspects and items PETs look for and common scenarios which helped the RAC understand the many factors at play in this important process.

NDFO Natural Resource Specialist Amelia Pennington provided a power point briefing on environmental inspections and addressed:

- Inspection of surface operations on federal and Indian leases
- Applicable laws
- Inspections: construction, drilling, interim reclamation, production and final reclamation and abandonment
- Enforcement actions: Incident of Noncompliance, Order of the Authorized Officer
- Compliance
- Penalties
- Appeals

#### **BLM Manager Briefings:**

##### North Dakota Field Office:

Loren Wickstrom has been installed as the new field manager for North Dakota, replacing Rick Rymerson who transferred to a new position in Utah. Loren spoke to the NDFO workload which primary focus is oil and gas. NDFO continues to process Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) of which 800 have been completed so far this year. Sundry Notices, which are submitted electronically—continue to be processed. Inspections and Enforcement procedures are composed of both high and low priority inspections and the NDFO is scheduled to do 600 high-priority inspections this year. The NDFO continues to process

pipeline project proposals, rights-of-way applications and administers one recreation area; The Schnell Recreation Area. The Schnell RA has great potential for a variety of project ideas, however it is relegated to a low priority due to the lack of available staff to oversee and administer such. Bruce asked about contracting the work out and some discussion ensued.

Loren said that the APD workload continues and as many come in each month as are processed. There will be a hike in the APD fee effective October 1, 2015, and producers are submitting applications in considerable numbers to get ahead of the price increase. Loren said the states where the fees are collected will now receive a portion of those funds which will be utilized to pay for staffing.

Loren also said that the NDFO would be transitioning to doing more of the NEPA work on Indian Trust lands in the near future. There also continues to be some mineral trespass in regards to sand and gravel, scoria which is sold for road improvement work. Drew stated that he will include the BLM more concerning tribal meetings where there are mineral rights jurisdictional issues.

#### South Dakota Field Office:

Diane Friez passed around some printouts for the RAC: a field office project spreadsheet that showed the office staff involved and project start and end dates; and a table of organization showing the position titles and names of assigned staff. Any questions may be directed to either herself or Field Manager Chip Kimball –who was unable to attend this meeting due to other work-related commitments.

#### Eastern Montana/Dakotas District:

Diane Friez reported on the Eastern Montana/Dakotas end of fiscal year wrap up. Accomplishments have been called for and spending has terminated. The FY16 budget has not arrived yet. There is talk of a government shut down and/or continuing resolution which has an impact on staff productivity. The draft budget is flat with a decrease for the oil and gas program, soil, water and air, the wild horse and burro program, wildlife and threatened and endangered species, however there will likely be some sort of increase where the Greater Sage grouse is concerned. BLM budget handouts were passed around to the RAC.

The next meeting date is set for February 3, 2016 in Bowman, North Dakota. Bruce will check into a new venue location.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.