



BLM MONTANA/DAKOTAS

Eastern Montana

Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES:

Miles City, Montana: September 16, 2014

Miles City BLM Main Conference Room

Attending RAC Members: Lance Kalfell, Cal Cumin, Mack Cole, Becky Kallevig, Doug Kary, Ed (Ralph) Bukoskey, Brad Clark, Larry Pilster, Todd Anderson for Harold Guse, Rita Harding

Attending BLM staff: Mark Jacobsen, Jim Sparks, Todd Yeager, Eric Lepisto, Reyer Rens, Dawn Doran, Jesse Hankins, Donna Bradley

Attending Public: John Beardsley, Marian Hansen, Nate Solberg, Dean Seifert Larry Rau, Jessica Flint—Field Representative for Steve Daines

Members were welcomed and the meeting was brought to order, housekeeping items for the meeting were reviewed. Introductions were made for those that had not previously met other attendees.

State Director RAC Meeting- Lance Kalfell

Lance reviewed the summary of the meeting with RAC chairmen and co-chairmen that was held August 26, 2014 at the BLM State Office in Billings. All in attendance supported continuing these statewide RAC meetings.

Lance suggested that the RAC re-consider the decision to function without a chairman. He noted that the current system works well for the EMT RAC but realized that the other RACs who had a designated chairman presented a stronger force and were more active working on issues. RACs with a chairman seemed to be recognized and acknowledged more by BLM staff; there appears to be a preference to work through a chairman.

The Central Montana RAC issued a Resolution to endorse Director Kornze's proposal to revamp the BLM planning process. The Eastern Montana RAC shared their thoughts and voted to not support the resolution at this time as there was more to consider than just ratifying the Central Montana RAC resolution.

The group discussed options for reconfiguring the Montana/Dakotas RACs. The options were suggested by BLM and PROs and CONs were identified by the representatives. A hand-out of the proposed reconfiguration was provided. Lance encouraged members to consider the proposal.

He stated his concern with the options that decreased or combined RACs because issues and concerns vary widely across the state. He cautioned that any changes should consider the size of the area and common issues. He stated that the EMT RAC is a strong RAC and covers such a large area that some proposed options could 'weaken' the group.

Members discussed their concerns, ideas and issues that this RAC faces, i.e. quorums, timely appointments and limited actions accomplished. The frustrations are similar across the state. Members asked questions about the various options and discussed what would fit Eastern Montana best. The Montana/Dakotas RAC charters expire in 2016 and may be changed by adopting one of the reconfiguration options. Todd suggested the RAC provide feedback and rank their preference to **Diane Friez** and she would **forward the recommendation** to Jamie Connell, BLM Montana State Director.

Reconfiguration options supported were:

- Reduce number of RACS to three, but keep Eastern Montana intact.
 - ND and SD are similar, could be combined with the EMT RAC.
 - Part of Central District is similar, could be combined with Billings area.
- Increase terms to four years.
- Maintain the number of representatives (15).
- Ensure distribution of representation.
 - Across state lines.
 - Keep current categories.
- Consider that RAC divisions may not match established District Offices but could be determined by surface and subsurface acres, travel, landscapes, issues and office missions
- Select option prior to the expiration of the Charter in 2016 to avoid any problems or delays with implementation and meeting Federal Register timeframes

Recruiting and RAC member appointments were discussed. Mark, Todd and Jim provided information on the member application process and historical scenarios that have previously affected filling vacancies. Members recommended more transparency with the selection process so applicants are aware of the status of their application and, as possible, why the applicant was selected. Primary and secondary nominees are selected by the Field Manager and District Manager, forwarded to the State Office, Governor, DOI and finally the White House. **Mark will inform future applicants of their status after the Governor Office review.**

Pumpkin Creek Subcommittee Report

The BLM requested the subcommittee to provide management objectives and suggested types of uses to be permitted on the site. An example of an objective is to have a proper functioning riparian area; and the uses permitted would be activities that would meet that objective.

Conflicts are to be identified and mitigated if possible. Some uses that may be considered are grazing, wildlife habitat, oil and gas development and numerous recreational activities. Uses may be area-specific due to the diversity of habitat and terrain at Pumpkin Creek. Todd provided a spreadsheet that captured the discussion of objectives and uses that were discussed at the June 12, 2014 tour and meeting with the subcommittee.

Doug informed the RAC of the subcommittee's observations; he was impressed with the variety of the area, prairie, farming, grazing, and recreation opportunities. OHV use will be an issue for the large area; long distances to retrieve game, Prairie Dog town access, archeological sites, etc. He recommended that trails be inventoried, numbered and remain open and that maps be provided. He thought that the shooting recreationists will follow the Prairie Dog town movements; old trails may have to be closed as the towns move. The large amount of grass could be a fire hazard. Improving access to the area could result in increased vandalism.

Subcommittee members requested maps indicating big game winter range, Sage grouse leks, existing projects, fences, etc. Todd will prepare a summary of the historical data that is available for the group. The BLM does not assess private land, so there is not a record prior to the exchange. The BLM manages the habitat, and Fish, Wildlife and Parks manages the wildlife.

The BLM requested that the subcommittee select a chairman for the group. Doug nominated Ed to be the chairman for the Pumpkin Creek subcommittee; Lance seconded the nomination and members were all in favor. Todd will coordinate a meeting with Jamie Connell and the subcommittee. The next step after meeting with Jamie will be public outreach.

Public Comment Period

Marian Hansen stated she was pleased to see livestock on the Pumpkin Creek Ranch. Noted some hay baled. Water sources on the ranch will benefit wildlife.

Nate Solberg, a Ranch Manager in Ismay has concerns regarding noxious weeds on public land. He would like to see this issue receive a higher priority in BLM management. He thought that funding needs to be available for noxious weeds and suggested funding should be obtained from other programs to do it. Suggested staffing be adjusted and assigned to noxious weed projects. He would consider meeting with BLM staff, other agencies and counties to develop a plan for weed control on his ranch, but the issue includes neighboring lands.

John Beardsley is a producer grazing on Pumpkin Creek; one of the five members of the Pumpkin Creek Grazing Association. He stated that the Prairie Dog population is rebounding from the plague that devastated the towns about four years ago. He has noticed that game birds this year had a huge hatch. Grazing will help with predator issues because it will decrease the cover. Hay was produced on the farmland this year. He supports management being tied to individual owners; the owners have a vested interest in taking care of the land and check the water, fencing and animals daily or every other day. Water sources are wells and pipelines and need to be checked often. Leafy Spurge was discovered and BLM has treated it. An adjoining land owner (to BLM) can respond quickly to fires, damaged fences and pipelines and move/remove livestock to prevent overgrazing. He encourages the BLM to develop a long term plan so producers can make plans.

Todd would like to have the subcommittee submit their recommendation so that grazing application decisions can be made prior to April 2015; requested a meeting with the subcommittee before December, 2014.

Dean Siefert is a member of Pheasants Forever, but represents himself. He reviewed the Pheasants projects and rest rotation grazing schedules that have been implemented on part of Pumpkin Creek. He is pleased to see the site grazed too.

Larry Rau is a farmer/rancher near Rosebud and retired from BLM. He shared the historical perspective of the owners desire to exchange their land and the initial vision of BLM managers to pursue the Pumpkin Creek land exchange. The goal was to protect riparian and wildlife habitat and provide access to the public for recreation. The management plan for Pumpkin Creek is a real opportunity because there is tremendous flexibility for creativity; a new area without historical limits in place.

RAC Member Briefings

Becky reviewed the Site Stewardship volunteer work she has been doing with Doug Melton. Monitoring at Cedar Creek Battle Field, Powder River Depot (publication should be issued in the spring) and Sheridan Butte, an area Bison Jump, and recorded Triceratops bones. She has a collection that Doug and CJ are helping catalog that is on private land. Doug Smith, a Sheridan County Planner is working with the BLM and the Charles M. Russell Wildlife Refuge (CMR) to create a backcountry trail through a segment of BLM and CMR; called the Sand Arroyo Trail.

Brad noted that the Governor has issued an executive order for the Sage grouse conservation plan that sets guidelines for industry. It provides clarity for Energy to move forward to set up procedures to keep Sage grouse from being listed. A new department will be set up by the Governor to implement the plan. Industry expects additional information and guidance once the department is up and running.

Rita discussed three things from different groups.

- The Yellowstone Audubon Society sent information to her on the trail project near West Rosebud that Ernie Strum, past RAC member, was instrumental in getting the trail built. Numerous groups collaborated on the project and it is a model for future planning. Jim stated that the trail has been named the “Ernie Strum Trail”, the trail is on BLM; BLM wanted to honor his service and work on the project.
- Mike Penfold contacted her with concerns about water use from the Yellowstone River. Mr. Penfold is trying to collaborate with multiple groups to identify issues and develop some oversight to the usage.
- Numerous groups are discussing selling public lands to the state. Recreation, Environmental and Hunting groups have concerns about this.

Larry has received calls from the public expressing concern about Sage grouse management and the Resource Management Plan. A Sage grouse listing would affect all public land users, not just grazers. Todd responded that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has the ability to make distinct sage grouse population listings; it’s unknown what will be selected.

Ralph has been asked about water right issues in ditches and streams and how this affects users; topic seems to have died down, but unclear if issues have been resolved. He asked about a dinosaur that was found in the Jordan area. Todd said that some unique tissue had been found in a university dinosaur dig. The status of what they found is unknown at this time.

Cal noted that this is the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act that was signed by President Johnson. He likes that local groups and citizens are being asked to be part of designating new wilderness areas; seems to have greater support in getting the work done. The Forest and Timber Job Act is before Congress now; this was written after a great collaborative effort. He would like to see more areas protected; possibly a ratio based on a growing population. The water drainage issue in Montana is a complex issue. The legislature will decide on a plan next year; it will address irrigation, floods, quality and the quantity of water and how it will be managed.

Lance expressed support for a BLM action regarding right of ways with railroads. He asked that Todd share information on Eco-Regional Assessments and Planning 2.0. David LeFevre completed a brochure for the National Landscape Conservation System; the RAC had provided comments. He expressed appreciation for the support the BLM has provided in Prairie County for the Milwaukee Bridge project. He stated he felt that the amount of negative articles about BLM had increased in the last six months. Mark asked that RAC members assist as disseminators of accurate information about BLM actions, decisions and activities.

Doug talked about OHV/BLM and off road bicyclists volunteering north of Billings. The Magic City 4-Wheelers and the group from Cody, WY worked at the Morrison Jeep trail. The trail has been maintained and a cattle guard installed. OHV use is limited on BLM lands; not many open areas for 4-wheelers; most use is limited to hunting.

Mack shared that he is the Chairman of a Yellowstone River Committee that addresses water issues in the State. Had similar concerns on the West side, Upper and Lower Missouri. The plans are complete and final public meetings are scheduled for the plans that will be sent to the Governor and Montana State agencies. The plan may require some measurements for current and proposed diversions out of the Yellowstone River. The Yellowstone is fairly free-flowing, except for irrigation ditches. The Big Horn River has one dam.

Todd Anderson is a Game Warden for FWP and was attending to take notes for Harold Guse. His favorite BLM area is the Terry Badlands. He has seen an increase in BLM land use, hunters with GPS units are using smaller sections as long as they can access them from county roads or water. Users represent diverse activities, not just hunting and fishing anymore.

Billings Field Office Update: Jim Sparks

- He reviewed items that RAC has been involved in and the current status. Wyo Bend Bentonite mine EA is out for 30-day appeal notice. The BLM received limited public comments; the mine is in a Sage grouse core area. The BLM approved increasing the mine by 900 acres.
- The Montana DEQ has settled with Exxon for the Yellowstone River oil spill in 2011. The Oil Pollution Control Act includes a Natural Resource Damage Assessment Process. The BLM, FWS and MT FWP with the Attorney General's office have worked to quantify the long and short term damages of the spill so a settlement can be reached with Exxon. The BLM has 19 miles along the river. The BLM decided to not take action on the limited amounts of oil found; the oil was allowed to degrade naturally. The sites where oil was actively removed resulted in more damage caused by the heavy equipment to remove the oil. The BLM does have some long term impacts; campgrounds were closed for a while. Most impacts were on private land; Montana continues to work to quantify the effects on its campgrounds and wildlife. The agencies have determined an amount that will be needed to fund mitigation projects.
- Grizzly bears are being monitored by the BLM and Forest Service in the Red Lodge area. The terms and conditions for grazing permits will include language to prevent conflicts with the bears, i.e., dead livestock will be removed within a certain number of hours. All these permits are issued with FWS input. Special Recreation permits will include specific terms and conditions for the activity i.e., remove all trash.
- The South Hills-Shepherd land exchange with the Billings Motorcycle club will be forwarded for WO approval in the near future.
- The Green Mountain logging project has been completed. This was to improve forest health by decreasing the pine beetle and to improve aspen regeneration. Reclamation work is being done and the Montana Conservation Corp will assist with reseeding the area.
- Trail work is being done on the Acton bike trails.

- An EA will be available for comments to develop bike trails at Four Dances.
- The Northern Plains Resource Council filed a lawsuit for the Signal Peak mine coal lease that BLM issued. They have requested that mining be halted.
- Northwest Energy has filed an application to build a power line across Bad Canyon which is southwest of Columbus. The line would cross .88 acres of BLM; there are resource values at this location. The Field Office will postpone consideration of the application until the RMP is final.

Eastern Montana/Dakotas District and Field Office Update: Todd Yeager

- DOI is looking at an Eco-Regional Assessment of the Great Plains area (North Dakota, Billings and Miles City). Vegetation, wildlife habitat and population data is being gathered in the assessment. The expectation is that the BLM can study impact analysis across the region versus site specifics at the project level. The field offices will get direction for how to implement and use the information.
- Planning 2.0 is being piloted for developing Resource Management Plans.
- E-Planning is a mechanism that the bureau will use to make all environmental planning documents available on the internet. The public will be able to make comments to BLM on each document. The format is a very complex program, but it will ensure transparency of the BLM. This will be 'live' across all the states.
 - The RAC members expressed concern and frustration with the workload that may be created and the potential delay in decisions being issued timely. The format language is new and unfamiliar to the public; members are unclear why this will streamline or improve communication with the public if they find it difficult to use.
 - **Todd will provide information as it is available.**
- Todd provided a list of ID Team Projects that the Field Office has accomplished through August 2014.
- The Strategic Budget Plan indication is that there will be a 15-18% funding reduction by 2018.

BiFO and MCFO RMP Reports: Todd Yeager and Jim Sparks

The Federal Family (BLM, FS, and FWS) as well as BLM State Directors in the Northern Rockies area met in Denver to discuss Sage grouse management. The Sage grouse management proposed in the RMPs and revisions is consistent across the state for Montana/Dakotas BLM. The selected Sage grouse management plan for all RMPs will be determined in WO; timeframe for issuing guidance to the Field Offices is unknown.

The listing decision for FWS regarding potential listing of the bird remains September 2015.

Chairman for Eastern Montana RAC

The Eastern Montana RAC has functioned without a Chairman and past discussions have resulted in continuing to depend on the BLM to facilitate and coordinate RAC meetings and ensure members are contacted and informed of anything related to the group. Mark stated his experience with the Dakota's RAC that has a chairman and co-chairman. The ability to contact one person aids in accomplishing business and is efficient for BLM. Members discussed the reasons they have elected to function without a Chairman. The BLM countered that the 2016 Charter revision may address this and Todd would prefer that RAC members take the lead on agendas and have a focal point person that would coordinate with all other members.

Lance made a motion to create Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions for the Eastern Montana RAC. Cal seconded the motion.

In Favor-7

Against-1

Abstain-1

- Chairman responsibilities and sideboards
 - One-year terms.
 - Vice Chairman will move up to Chairman.
 - New Vice Chair will be elected every year.
 - To act as signers on RAC documents/resolutions.
 - To be the drafter of resolutions.
 - Facilitate meetings.
 - Coordinate with BLM to develop meeting agenda.
 - Follow topics and committee work through to completion.
 - Be a go-between for RAC and the BLM between regular RAC meetings.
 - Call for votes.
 - Attend Statewide/State Director RAC meetings.
 - If duties are not performed adequately, majority vote of RAC members can remove them from office.

Cal nominated Lance for Chairman, Becky seconded the nomination; all members in attendance voted in favor.

Doug nominated Brad for the Vice-Chairman, Becky seconded the nomination; all members in attendance voted in favor.

Next Meeting:

December 4, 2014 in Billings.

Future Agenda items: Pumpkin Creek Subcommittee report



BLM MONTANA/DAKOTAS

Eastern Montana

Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES:

Billings, Montana: Dec 4, 2014

Best Western Plus Kelly Inn & Suites Conference Room

Attending RAC Members: Lance Kalfell, Cal Cumin, Mack Cole, Becky Kallevig, Ed (Ralph) Bukoskey, Brad Clark, Larry Pilster, Harold Guse, Rita Harding, Jennifer Esp Olson, Art Hayes III, Tim Lehman

Attending Public: D'Jean Peters, Curt Bushman

Attending BLM staff: Mark Jacobsen, Jim Sparks, Todd Yeager, Bruce Reid, Ruth Miller, Craig Howells, Donna Bradley

Members were welcomed and the meeting was brought to order, housekeeping items for the meeting were reviewed. Introductions were made for new members. On behalf of Larry, Todd requested an addition to the agenda; discussion of the failed allotment map that has been in the news.

Planning 2.0 Briefing: Ruth Miller

Ruth briefed members on Planning 2.0; provided members a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. The goal of 2016 Roadmap to Success is to make planning more adaptive, efficient, seek public collaboration earlier and cross landscapes. BLM will use the process in developing and writing Resource Management Plans. The final rule should be published in 2016. Members had opportunity for questions and discussion for better understanding of BLM planning.

Billings Field Office Green Mountain Forestry Health

Restoration Project: Bruce Reid

This project was on 960 acres of very scenic public land near Big Timber. Forest Restoration utilizes a variety of tools to improve the forest; mechanical treatment, prescribed fire and finally a timber sale. A forest health improvement project may take eight to ten years to complete. This project received support and assistance from Lions Head Ranch, Stillwater Mining Company, Montana Dept. of Natural Resource and Conservation, RY Timber, Iron Pine Logging and the Boulder River Watershed Council. Bruce presented a PowerPoint slideshow that updated the RAC on the need and

progress of the project. The commercial portion of the project ended August 2014. Craig Howell has developed partnerships with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, USFS-Gallatin NF, Montana Conservation Corp and local businesses in McLeod and the surrounding area. These are important to continue the next phase of the project to improve the Aspen stands. Members asked questions of interest and for greater understanding of forest stand restoration. **Lance asked Mark to increase public awareness of this project and possibly arrange a tour; invite the press.**

RAC Member Briefings

Mack- Eastern Montana is facing issues with successfully using and receiving the benefit of subsurface resources. Concern that coal mines may be shut down with current legislation and rules being considered. Is there an action that RAC can take to support using these resources? Todd noted that BLM has the management of federal subsurface minerals by statute. Split estate issues, oil, gas and CBNG have traditionally been the mineral estate that Miles City permits. The Miles City office manages the leases for three coal mines as well as sand, gravel and bentonite mines; Billings has one coal mine. Todd reported WO-BLM is determining air quality guidance related to greenhouse gas emissions and the social cost to carbon in NEPA documents.

Cal- No briefing topics.

Larry- Would like to see royalties paid on flaring. Waiting to see how industry responds to control flaring of natural gas. Members discussed their thoughts and concerns of the environment related to global issues.

Jennifer- Commented that the pipeline that went through the area last year avoided state and federal lands.

Art- Big Game hunting season has ended. Landowners are basing their access decisions on how the public land is used and cared for.

Ralph- Four wolves were spotted northeast of Colstrip.

Rita- the National Defense Authorization Act includes the Rocky Mountain Heritage Act that includes the North Fork and Rocky Mountain Front lands with wilderness characteristics.

Becky- with Doug Melton and CJ Truesdale, BLM Archeologists, has been working in Roosevelt County with a landowner on a pre-historic site. This is in the Lewis and Clark view shed.

Brad- Would like to have an update on the Sage Grouse listing and the effect on RMPs.

Harold-No briefing topics.

Tim- Asked about the increase number of coal trains and if the emissions effect BLM planning and permitting. Todd informed members that when the destination is known, it is considered in the analysis.

Public Comment Period

Kirk Bushman-Public Service Commissioner District #2. The commission is dealing with carbon emissions and the new EPA regulations. A current proposal will affect existing power plants; comments are being received for consideration in the final rule. The commission is preparing a bill for the legislature that will have state and federal railroad regulations identified so the public can access the correct regulations and avoid conflicts. The commission is responsible for issuing common carrier pipelines; this provides access to right of ways and eminent domain if the company chooses.

D'Jeane Peters- Yellowstone River Research Center, associated with Rocky Mountain College She reviewed the process and the results of her survey project on Sage Grouse. Her survey was to study the stakeholder viewpoints related to the Sage Grouse and its potential listing as an endangered species in Montana. The results of the study were provided to members. Analysis of the survey responses placed participants into four categories: Limit Development, Limit Regulations, Landowner Rights and Other. The first three categories were studied more in depth as 'Other' was not statistically significant. She hopes this information will be used to improve communication between the groups and result in better policies. Members asked questions to better understand the research.

Evelyn Cameron DVD shown

Pumpkin Creek Subcommittee Report Ed Bukoskey

The committee met with Jamie Connell MSO- BLM Director after the site tour. Ed provided notes from the Subcommittee meeting. The subcommittee divided into three sub groups, Grazing, Recreation and Right of Ways/Fuels Management. Members discussed potential objectives from each subgroup. The RAC supports the direction the subcommittee is taking. The objectives selected should allow the site to be managed within BLM staffing levels for monitoring.

Agenda Addition Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility: Larry Pilster

An article and map was published in High Country News indicating the health of public lands. The data used for determining the status was gathered on public lands; the map includes the private land tied to the allotment. Montana/Dakotas BLM has sent a response to WO to correct the perception. The map incorrectly implies that BLM Montana/Dakotas is completing Standard and Guide evaluations on private lands.

Billings Field Office Update: Jim Sparks

Jim summarized the following handouts and answered questions regarding these projects and issues in the office:

- Acton Mountain Bike Project
- Signal Peak Energy Coal Lease Application
- Forest Service/BLM office co-location
- Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range Prescribed Fire Program

The RAC reconfiguration that was discussed at the last meeting will not be implemented at this time.

Miles City Field Office Update & Resource Management Plan

Status: Todd Yeager

The Montana Resource Management Plans are waiting executive leadership to address Sage Grouse management. The WO is studying inconsistencies within the Great Basin or Rocky Mountain regions.

Upcoming meetings:

February 24: RAC Chair and Co-Chair/State Director meeting in Billings.

March 12: EMT RAC meeting in Billings.

Future Agenda items:

Pumpkin Creek Subcommittee report and report on RAC Chair meeting.
(Send agenda items to Lance or Brad)

Tour suggestions:

Bakken development and meet with Dakota RAC

Bentonite mine reclamation

Pumpkin Creek

Green Mountain Project area