



BLM MONTANA/DAKOTAS

*Eastern Montana
Resource Advisory Council*

RAC MEETING MINUTES: **Billings, Montana: March 6, 2013** ***BLM Main Conference Room-Miles City Field Office***

Attending RAC Members: Lance Kalfell, Harold Guse, John Sterchi, Tim Lehman, Mack Cole, Larry Pilster, Rita Harding, Becky Kallevig, Howard Boggess, Ernie Strum,

Attending BLM staff: Mark Jacobsen, Jim Sparks, Diane Friez, Todd Yeager, Donna Bradley, Carmen Thomason, Shane Findlay, Kirk Anderson

Attending Public: None.

Members were welcomed and the meeting was brought to order, housekeeping items and ground rules for the meeting were reviewed. RAC members were encouraged to participate in the discussions; these meetings are for the Council to come up with ideas and recommendations for the BLM.

Larry made a motion to accept the minutes from the Dec 2012 meeting, Mack seconded and the motion was approved.

Tim and Rita commented on the Pumpkin Creek Field Trip as meeting members viewed a slide show. Rita stated that it was a delightful experience and sees the area as a place that can be developed into a 'show case' area. Group discussion covered how ranchers, ATV users, Pheasants Forever and other groups have an interest in this area; some have donated labor and funding for projects to bring the area back to natural habitat. Acknowledged the education potential of the area to various groups, (Scouts, students, etc.). Tim agreed that this could be a show case, and emphasized the need to get the management of it right for future public land exchanges and to earn the confidence of the public; the area has tremendous interest and potential. The cultural sites increased the value of the area to him; as the field trip viewed an old homestead or stagecoach stop (corrals and dugouts). The area has been farmed so wagon ruts have been removed. Restoration along the creek seems challenging and labor intensive, he is intrigued to see how grazing will be handled, noting that it may be precedent setting.

Rita got the sense that though multiple groups have interest in the site, there aren't contentious relations; from her perspective it would be wonderful to keep that as a collaborative approach with users so that everyone can benefit.

Harold asked what permitted use requests had been made for the area. Todd responded that at scoping meetings in 2004 the public identified hunting, hiking, OHV use, camping and recreation as well as traditional grazing. Retired ranchers wanted to drive out and see cattle and be able to travel the roads easily. A High School instructor was interested in the educational opportunities that could be developed there. The RMP will direct some management; BLM plans to conduct separate Pumpkin Creek scoping meetings so a complete management plan can be issued specifically for Pumpkin Creek.

Todd acknowledged the funding and work that had been accomplished by Pheasants Forever, The Wild Turkey Federation, Mule Deer Foundation and how much this has been appreciated. John stated that the multi-use that is being talked about sounds like a 'park' to him and he's not sure how grazing can or will be integrated into the plan. Todd noted that there will be an educational factor for all users in cooperating with grazers, but his experience with grazing in a Forest Service recreation area gives him confidence that it can be done.

Local and bordering ranchers have noted that it can be an opportunity to show the public a working ranch and the positive role grazing can have on habitat and wildlife management. It can provide an opportunity to educate the public that don't understand where food and fiber come from. This may not be done in the traditional fashion. Lance's concern is that permittees feel that their current grazing rights will be eroded depending on what is implemented at Pumpkin Creek.

Lance asked what baseline was used to determine the native habitat of the creek, prior to farming. Todd responded that old aerial photos (1950's) and using upstream areas that haven't been farmed -for comparisons. John stated that grazing is essential to of the pasture health and is concerned on how that will be integrated. Rita stated that because it is so unique, BLM may not want all uses on all sites at all times. Users may need to be limited or signed in. Harold noted that roads are there and ATV's can use them, public land is available to campers; Boy Scouts are a good cause, but the number of participants could result in a permitted use; colleges may request sites for research studies. He recommends that the BLM have processes in place for frequent and group users. Todd stated that such is already in place as permitted use. Primary use now is recreational and hunting; July and August temperatures decrease the level of use.

The RMP will determine what will be and what won't be allowed; this will include OHV, grazing and other uses. The BLM goal is to have a management plan ready soon after the RMP is issued. Larry stated that originally the RAC supported historical use of grazing and a designated OHV area when the exchange was proposed. Mack asked who had the Water Rights; BLM has obtained all the rights. Harold asked about the quality of the fences and if they would support a grazing system.

Todd stated that the boundary fence is in good condition, the BLM Fire employees have provided a lot of work on that, the interior fences are limited and a few are in good condition. Lance noted that water and fencing is a concern for the management. Todd informed members that in response to opening Pumpkin Creek for grazing for ranchers affected by the Ash Creek fire, solar pumps were purchased for existing wells; there is one functioning pipeline on the west side. The wells are not high volume wells, averaging about one gallon per minute.

Cattle owners burned out from wildfire chose not to bring cattle to Pumpkin Creek in 2012 because the animals were stressed and burned and the distance was too great to provide good animal husbandry. Todd said that Ft. Keogh and MSU are interested in establishing some research projects at Pumpkin Creek.

John asked what was envisioned for the RAC involvement. Todd would like members to seek out public comments for use; the public may be more open to give comments to the members versus the government; wants the RAC to increase the public awareness and bring those viewpoints forward.

Becky suggested that an area be designated as a study area for schools and said the BLM will have to reach out to schools; there are archeological resources in the area and the library could help with mapping sites. John questioned the health of Prairie Dog towns, Todd stated that the towns had been infected with the plague and just small ones are left.

Public Meetings for the RMP are scheduled for May 1-12 in local communities and the Pumpkin Creek scoping meeting will be scheduled the end of May in Miles City (this scoping meeting was later postponed.) June 5 is the end of the comment period for the RMP. Tim noted the VIP treatment they received on the site tour and thanked the employees for their involvement.

Fire and Mitigation Update – (Carmen Thomason)

Carmen provided handouts for Billings and Miles City Hazardous Fuels projects and Community Assistance Agreements in place for fiscal year 2013. Community assistance agreements help communities or counties request funding for fire mitigation projects to reduce hazardous fuels. Education programs are presented to inform the public of what has been done, and why these projects will benefit the community.

Miles City has agreements with Custer, Carter and Garfield County; Rosebud County worked themselves out of projects by doing a great job. Treasure County doesn't have a formal agreement but information is still shared. Billings has Community Assistant Agreements with Stillwater, Yellowstone, Carbon, Musselshell and Sweet Grass counties.

The BLM has been actively working with partners to make these projects happen (rural fire departments etc.) and offered to take RAC members to the Yellowstone Bighorn Research Association field camp to see what has been accomplished around the camp. Information for the Fire Safe Montana conferences that will be held across the state will be sent to members. One is in Forsyth, April 6 at 12:30 p.m. at the Haugo Center.

The group discussed the benefits of completing mechanical work to protect homes so they are defensible. Counties could improve rural road signage to assist firefighters. Carmen participates in many meetings across the area to promote fire education but isn't able to attend all of them.

RAC Member Briefings:

Becky Kallevig updated members on issues in the oil patch area; infrastructure-schools, lagoons, medical facilities and the impact of increasing numbers of people on public lands. Becky reviewed the Powder River Depot project that she is working with BLM archeologists. Sites such as the Bison Jump and the Medicine Wheel are being considered for ACECs.

Touring the Bakken area was discussed; there was personal interest to go as a group and tour but the benefit to the RAC as a whole was questioned. Becky offered to provide a virtual tour, or arrange a tour for interested members, but not conducted as an official RAC activity. There is a CO2 project in the Belle Creek field near Ekalaka and Baker. Jim stated that the Billings FO has received requests for fracking sand.

John Sterchi stated that permittees are concerned that AUMs will be dramatically cut due to the drought. Todd said permittees are calling in, already making changes in numbers and grazing use in anticipation of the drought. The BLM MCFO range staff is communicating with permittees to maintain adequate forage for the year and the future. Decisions regarding any grazing reductions will be addressed case by case and site by site. Lance appreciated Todd's comments as he was concerned that an across-the-board reduction would be issued.

Jim noted that the precipitation for the year is normal, but comes after the hottest and driest year recorded in history, at least for some areas. Larry stated that you manage the best you can, cut back the herd size, and then build back up when it's feasible.

Todd reviewed the regulations regarding requesting non-use. The option is available for personal reasons, drought, or conservation concerns. Taking non-use never affects total AUMs available; must be an annual request.

Lance Kalfell discussed the Buttes and Breaks Badlands Committee; this is a landscape tourism group. Corner-crossing access is now an issue when requesting financing; the banks want documentation of legal access. Lance reported that the RAC chairpersons/State Director meeting has been postponed.

Rita Harding discussed a collaborative effort of a Bio-Blitz in the Pryor Mountains that included the Montana Wilderness Society, the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, The Pryor Coalition, Audubon Society and Rocky Mountain College among others. This was a 24 hour bird, bugs, bats, plant, counting survey of what existed at that point in time. Weeds were discovered in this during this count; a weed pulling eradication effort is being planned for June. The group will focus on Crooked Creek, Bear Canyon, Sage Creek, and burnt timber areas.

Mack Cole reported that the Yellowstone River Conservation District has reserved water rights compacts, especially on reservations. The rights were federally filed and the preliminary decree is in place for eleven basins that includes the Yellowstone, Clarks Fork, Shoshone and Big Horn. This will affect other water right reservations. The question is what affect this will have on the State's water rights. The tribes may be able to move water outside the basin, responding to requests to industries in need of water. Water Rights must have been filed before 1999 to have any value to it.

Larry Pilster has a small gas field that has been shut down. He asked what the timeframe was for when the field would be plugged. Todd stated that when the amount of gas is uneconomical to produce the gas, then it would be plugged. More information will be provided to Larry on his question.

Public Comment

No public were in attendance.

MCFO Access (Kirk Anderson)

The local MCFO access team was formed to prioritize projects and make recommendations to the Field Manager. He proposed that field trips may be arranged for RAC members interested in finding out what projects the BLM is working on. The Access group has looked at Fallon and Carter County; both counties are trying to clean up rights of ways. The federal government has quite a few on the books, but there is little benefit in keeping some of them; some are on existing two track trails or cross section lines.

Some counties have requested the Access committee to look at rights of ways that would provide access to public land and which ones the BLM would like to keep. Fallon County had three and Carter County had four sites. One in Carter County would access about 3,000 acres of state and federal lands and this was south of Ridge Road, near the Wyoming line. A land owner in the Soda Lakes area might be interested in an easement that would open access to 1,400 acres.

The FWP has worked in conjunction with the BLM to place "entering" and "leaving public land" access signs. Todd noted that some rights of ways have been issued, but the roads were never built; Carter County may abandon some roads, turning over the control to the BLM. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has expressed interest in the Missouri Breaks; they would obtain the access and then turn the right of way over to the

BLM. Kirk stated that the greatest access success project in the past few years is the increased signage that has been posted.

BLM Manager Updates:

Eastern Montana Dakota District (Diane Friez)

Diane handed out the Top 10 List that comprises the BLM MT/DK goals for the next three years. The District and Field Offices will add local projects that fit under the 10 goals. These will assist managers in determining how and what projects are funded and what emphasis will be placed on proposals. This is more important with sequestration limits and reductions. There has been a hiring freeze since Feb. 21; exceptions are being requested for some mission critical positions. Seasonal positions that weren't filled by then may remain vacant; the BLM MT/DK had filled about 60% of needed positions. Pompey's Pillar positions were not filled and will probably be covered by volunteers; hours may be restricted. The BLM is looking at a 5-8% reduction in all sub activities. Tim asked what wouldn't get done with less staff. Diane stated that contracts for dirt work and projects weren't being let; employees may be furloughed for up to 22 days by the end of the fiscal year.

Lance asked if the RAC could help with priority issues with Bureau or Congressional contact. Mark reminded members that the RAC can't lobby for BLM funding. Todd stated that the public may not notice the impacts until the future, some will have huge ramifications and others may not be felt so much. Each agency will plan separately; the U.S. Forest Service will not be hiring firefighters for the season. These cuts will affect productivity and morale. Some training and travel has been cancelled.

Diane informed members of the current Workforce Plan BLM MT/DK has in place and the efficiencies and processes used to determine staffing. All Federal agencies are meeting the criteria differently, some have implemented furloughs, the USFS will not fill all Fire Seasonal positions, but the BLM will fully staff fire. The BLM will be scaling back; productivity may be affected and personnel are concerned.

Billings Field Office (Jim Sparks)

Jim passed out reports of the Pompey's Pillar National Monument Plan, Proposed Billings Motorcycle Club exchange, and the Green Mountain Forest Health Restoration Project and Billings Field Office/Pompeys Pillar RMP. The business plan for Pompeys Pillar with proposed fee structure changes will be emailed to members.

Jim asked that members be ready to approve or propose an alternative for Pompeys Pillar at the next meeting. The fees collected at the site must be used for projects and costs; the fees collected are only a fraction of the funds needed to operate the program.

The BLM has had a scoping meeting regarding the Billings Motorcycle Club exchange; a few comments were received, a preliminary EA will be available for a two-week

comment period. The protest period will end mid-May. Washington has approved the exchange; an informal agreement is being negotiated to split costs.

Jim discussed the Wild Horse Sanctuary in Ennis. This is a contract with a private land owner; neighboring land owners have filed an appeal to the decision. The horses can't be on BLM range that was not previously designated a horse range; fences are being built to keep horses off of the BLM-administered public land.

The Billings RMP has been sent to print and will be out for public comment March 29. The disks are available for anyone but hard copies will be limited because of the cost. There are eight scoping meetings; five public meetings for comments are scheduled in May. The meetings will be in Roundup, Billings, Bridger, Big Timber and Lovell, Wyoming.

Red Lodge will be dropped because only one person attended the scoping meeting and interested public may attend Bridger or Billings meetings. There will be an additional meeting in Billings to discuss travel management. All comments will be addressed, and then the document will be sent to the Montana Governor's Office for review and approval. These meetings will be in an open house format with stations where the public can ask questions of the specialists on topics they are interested in.

Miles City Field Office (Todd Yeager)

Todd provided folders with an RMP Fact Sheet and an RMP cd. Access to the document is on the BLM MT/DK website and disks are available to anyone making a request. There will be a limited number printed because of the cost and historical experience with requests for hard copies which cost \$125.00. Hard copies will be available at local libraries. The RMP-interested public and cooperating agencies have been sent the RMP disks. Public meetings are scheduled for Sidney, Forsyth, Baker, Ekalaka, Miles City, Jordan, Terry and Broadus. The written comments that are received will be reviewed and considered in the decision for the final RMP.

Todd has met with all cooperators; approximately 50 groups. The MCFO will have coal activity for the next three to five years, the pipeline from North Dakota and CO2 sequestration from Wyoming are anticipated workloads; but only requests for coal mine expansions have formally been requested.

Danny Thomason and the BLM have met and discussed the land exchange he requested; and the proponent of the exchange must fund the cultural surveys, etc. The BLM is awaiting his response; currently the appraised value of the proposal is not equitable. Todd visited with Commissioner Todd Devlin of Prairie County regarding the Scenic View Road. Lon Reukauf, Todd D., Todd Y., and Diane will meet and discuss the road washout and possible action. The cost of repair is \$600,000 and funds are limited from both the BLM and the County.

The MCFO continues to support the South Dakota Field Office on drought issues, North Dakota and Billings Field Offices on Oil and Gas actions and proposed coal mines.

Open Discussion and tabled items

Future Agenda items:

Archeology presentation shown at state Archeology meeting (approx. 20 min)-Becky Law Enforcement; BiFO and MCFO issues; what BLM can/can't do; Cooperative efforts with other agencies.

The previously proposed oil patch tour: discussion centered on logistical issues and benefit to Eastern Montana RAC members; regarding actions on issues. Becky will present a slide show for non-BLM issues. Discussion about how the tour will need a commitment of numbers, a date. Group could pack coolers/lunches, leave Miles City early morning, return by 10 p.m. Route might be: Glendive to Watford City, then to Williston to see rigs, man camps, roads, etc.

Jim is to propose a Billings Field Office field trip for members before the next RAC meeting (possibly Red Lodge or Horse thief areas).

Discussion of Denbury Phase I-IV; Phase I will be complete in August.

Larry proposed a summer 2014 tour of the bentonite mining reclamation that has been done on his place.

Todd proposed a discussion regarding fire fuels treatment projects; volunteer fire department cooperation and the status of the decreasing budget for Fuels Treatment and the affect that will have on fire suppression and costs. What should the BLM emphasis be? Habitat or landscape versus housing?

Action next meeting:

Pompeys Pillar fee structure: RAC adopted or approve an alternative.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: September 4-5, 2013 in Billings.



MONTANA/DAKOTAS BLM

Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES: **Billings, Montana: Sept. 5, 2013** Hampton Inn: Lewis Conference Room

Attending RAC Members: Lance Kalfell, Harold Guse, Cal Cumin, Bernard Rose, Mack Cole, Tim Lehman, Rita Harding, Becky Kallevig, Doug Kary, Larry Pilster

Attending BLM staff: Mark Jacobsen, Jim Sparks, Diane Friez, Todd Yeager, Donna Bradley, Jeff Kitchens, Craig Drake

Attending Public: Kenneth Nemitz

Items in red are action items.

Members were welcomed and the meeting was brought to order, housekeeping items for the meeting were reviewed. Outgoing members are Howard Boggess and Bernard Rose. Howard was unable to attend due to illness, but BLM staff thanked Bernie for his active involvement during his terms. His contribution to discussions and the Billings Resource Management Plan was recognized by the BLM Managers and he was presented with a blanket. Bernie stated that he appreciated the interdisciplinary work BLM does and the responsiveness to his ideas.

Pompey's Pillar Natl. Monument Fee Discussion & Vote (Jeff Kitchens)

Jeff opened the floor for questions and input into the new business plan. The last fee update was in 2007 and it has been determined that it does not meet today's users' and differs from the schedules at similar monument sites.

Mack asked what closing the Pillar would entail. Jeff stated that areas requested for weddings, reunions, etc. could be marked off for private use and the public would have access to rest of the site. Mack offered his interstate frontage property for a billboard sign. Members asked about efforts to reach service groups, Chamber of Commerce offices and schools. Jeff informed the RAC of his outreach programs. Becky

encouraged him to contact individual teachers to ensure the information is received; names can be obtained from Office of Public Instruction in Helena. Tim asked that Rocky Mountain College be contacted to be a cooperator.

The theme for 2014 Clark Days is Ranching/Farming/Agricultural focused. The "Friends of Pompey's Pillar" recently hired an Executive Director and a new Gift Shop Manager. Roles and responsibilities as well as goals and objectives are being established between the BLM and the friends group. Doug asked about how many visitors the facility was designed for. The facility was built to handle the Lewis & Clark signature event in 2006 so it could potentially accommodate 100,000 visitors per year or 50 to 70,000 people at one time, Jeff said.

Jeff stated that the facility budget and staffing will dictate what can be done by the Bureau. He predicts that 50,000 people a year is manageable with current levels. The revenues generated by the fees will supplement the BLM budget to support these kinds of numbers.

Doug made a motion to approve the new fee schedule as presented. Mack seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Cal, Tim and Rita complimented Jeff on his management of the facility.

MT/Dakotas Oct. RAC meeting & Subcommittees discussion **(All)**

Bernie and Lance were previously picked to represent the EMT RAC at the upcoming State Director's RAC meeting. The meeting was postponed and Bernie will no longer be on the committee since his term has expired. Mack was nominated to be Bernie's replacement and if there are conflicts for either party, Harold will attend.

Jamie Connell, the BLM MT/DKs State Director, sent a questionnaire to the representatives and requested that it be returned prior to the meeting. The representatives requested input from all the members. Bernie will consolidate a response from the RAC discussion.

The RAC requested clear objectives for projects from MCFO and BiFO. Members felt a need for training to know their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. BLM is limited by policy and laws. What limits the RAC? What do the Field Managers expect and permit the RAC to be engaged in; and to what level of accomplishment?

Todd will host a conference call for RAC members to determine if they will serve on a Pumpkin Creek Committee. The RAC has the ability to guide the BLM in its mission. Pumpkin Creek is a priority for MCFO and Todd will present a Pumpkin Creek issue paper so members will know the issues at the site.

Pumpkin Creek will have issues to be addressed in every category represented on the RAC. Todd suggested that the RAC form a Citizen Advisory group to propose management objectives and host public meetings to determine user preferences. Scientific/technical Advisory groups can also be formed to assist the process; members can be sought from BLM specialists or colleges etc. The RAC will submit the proposal to BLM for consideration.

Mack noted that the RAC could be instrumental in bringing public comments forward, especially issues like Sage Grouse and Water Rights.

National Landscape Conservation System (Lance)

Comments were requested from RAC members on the NLCS plan that is to combine management of public lands. (Land with Wilderness Characteristics, River Systems, Wilderness Study Areas etc.) Lance's letter addresses his concerns and asked members if they would like to sign off on this letter if they didn't respond individually.

Doug made a motion that the members present support Lance's letter; Cal seconded it. Unanimously approved. Larry fully supported Lance's NLCS letter so each category was represented in the vote and Lance will send in notice to David Lefevre with Eastern MT RAC support.

Public Comment

Kenneth Nemitz-Rancher South of Glendive

Kenny expressed his dissatisfaction with the Short Pines OHV area located on the grazing allotment attached to his private property; primarily silting, trespassing and harassment of livestock. He brought photographs of trail erosion, silting under a bridge, over a railroad track and a meadow that has been flooded. The photos were taken over the last several years and some are on his private land. He also provided copies of letters to BLM from Cedar Creek Grazing Association, the Dawson County Conservation District and himself. He requests that the OHV area be removed from this public land.

Kenny raises horses, cattle and sheep and has made improvements to the ranch over the years and paid the BLM grazing fee regardless if there was grass or not. He stated that cattle have been chased from watering holes and horses run through fences. There are four to four and half sections of BLM and four or five sections of his private land that has been torn up by ORV's.

The motorcycles, 4-wheelers and now pick-up trucks are destroying the land, tearing up the grazing land and creeks. BLM has placed boundary signs but they haven't done any good because they (riders) drive over them and tear them up. His efforts to place private signs and posts have been removed and thrown away. The land is too rough to fence. Cal asked what BLM response has been; Kenny stated that it was 'his problem'.

BLM has put up fiberglass stakes a couple of times but they drive over them, breaking them off.

There are maps that kind of show them, but people don't know where they are or what they are looking at. BLM made some trails initially, but within a month, users had driven everywhere. The areas that have had the crust broken cause dust storms when the wind blows.

Harold noted that this was established 20 years ago, and ten years ago there was another management plan issued. How have problems changed over the years? Is this a cumulative impact? Is it more heavily used now? Kenny stated that vehicles come from all over- ND, MN and they camp all over. Some of the hills have lost four to five feet of soil where they ride up them.

Cal asked if he was aware that BLM was going to do this before they did it. Kenny responded, 'very vaguely'. The site was originally to be north of the park in Glendive but FWP had concerns so the people in Glendive contacted BLM and it was moved. There is a target range located in the middle of the riding area.

Lance asked if riders used all the BLM available and Kenny said yes and also his private.

Todd stated that grazing is a privilege, not a right, and is a yearly authorization. Part of the Land Use Planning process is to determine what is available for grazing. The Land Use can be changed, affecting the grazing permit. The 1996 Big Dry Resource Management plan dedicated three and a half sections as an open OHV (unlimited, go anywhere) area.

The areas in red (referring to a map) were amended in the statewide Travel Management plan that states that unless there is a Travel Management plan for an area, use is limited to existing roads and trails or closed. Alternatives are being considered in the RMP that is currently under review. The alternatives range from leaving it as is, closing the site to all OHV use, shrinking it, closing it to grazing and leaving it as is etc.; public comments are being reviewed and will influence the selected alternative.

Tim asked about current users, Todd noted that there are local users and travelers from ND, SD, MN, Miles City, Canada, it is a destination site. Use is cyclical and depends on weather conditions and temperatures.

Harold commented that in the 1980's and 90's BLM had few restrictions. As restrictions were put into place, the public requested places to go and ride so these areas were established for their use. Now these sites are getting more and more use. No one wants them in their back yard, but there is a contingent of citizens that want these areas.

Lance asked Kenny that since he wants the site moved, where would they move it to? Kenny suggested hills someplace that silt wouldn't run off into private land. Kenny said that he'd offered to buy a section someplace and trade BLM for it, he's sure that in the badlands east or west of Glendive there would be a location. Tim asked if there was a Glendive OHV user's group. Kenny stated that one person from Glendive requested RAC members for a site years ago.

Todd stated that the BLM Ranger has been patrolling twice a week and Recreation Seasonal employees have been at the site twice a week and different times than the Ranger. The Ranger has no jurisdiction on the private land; the County Sheriff responds to land owner trespass calls.

Tim asked what was illegal and what authorized activity was. Todd stated that within the three sections, there are no illegal activities out there. The 1996 plan states that users can go anywhere they want with any vehicle they want.

Becky asked if the current RMP was addressing the issue. A preferred alternative hasn't been selected at this time. Becky asked about the water and silting concerns. Todd said that it hasn't been substantiated what is due to natural erosion versus OHV use or to a culvert that was placed incorrectly.

Hydrologists and Soil Scientists have looked at the erosion. The area is a highly erosive landscape, Makoshika Park has no vegetation on the hills and this backs up to Kenny's land.

Mack asked if there were any changes planned for the area. The preferred alternative in the draft RMP that went out for comments limits use to the three sections. The RMP will be final late 2014. Members and BLM staff discussed Kenny comments and decided to have **Mark organize a field trip to the area.**

Larry Pilster contact

Larry called Mark and informed him that he had faxed his responses to the SD Inquiry to MCFO. Mark will send these to Bernie to include in his response to SD. Mark briefed Larry on the morning portion of the meeting.

Field Trip Re-cap (Jim Sparks, Craig Drake)

Craig asked members if they had any questions or comments about the American Colloid Mine (bentonite mine) at Lower Bear Canyon, and the telefrac (frac sand mine) tour. **Rita requested maps of the location.**

Lance asked how deep the core samples were and Craig said they went through the 10 Sleep Sandstone thickness and varied from 150-230 feet. The area is all sandstone, some beds have more silt. Members that made the tour appreciated what they saw. The

mining won't begin until the NEPA process is completed; could be one year after the plan of operation is received.

Larry offered to host a field trip to the bentonite mine on his ranch.

Eastern Montana Dakota District Manager (Diane Friez)

Diane discussed the projected budget for 2014. Estimate that project dollars will be reduced; some sub activities appear to be stable. BLM will increase efforts to expand partnerships that we can enter into cost sharing and cost recovery programs for on the ground projects.

Sequestration requires another five to seven percent reduction in funding. Field Managers are trying to get work done on the ground, this is with limited staff and resources; to get the work accomplished. Work is taking longer to get processed. Under sequestration we are under a hiring freeze however we have received approval from Washington Office for the positions that we have sent forward requesting permission to fill. This delays the process of filling positions.

The MT/DKs continues with workforce planning for a ten percent reduction in staffing. Each vacant position is scrutinized and compared with statewide needs.

All three field offices are working on Resource Management Plans. Miles City and South Dakota are working on revisions and North Dakota is writing an amendment to their RMP regarding Sage Grouse management. North Dakota's proposal will be out for public comments soon. They are to be final October 2014.

The fire season was slow this year; about 20 small fires that were each less than three acres. The District office continues to share skills in support to the Field Offices and Field Offices are supporting North Dakota. North Dakota workload is BLM priority so this support will continue. Last year, employees from across the country were in Miles City helping process some to the workload for North Dakota.

She shared Justin Handley's Yellowstone River rescue story. Mark will send the story to members.

Billings Field Office Manager (Jim Sparks)

Yesterday, someone asked how much time was spent on non-discretionary work; 90-95% of the workload is non-discretionary. (permits, authorizations, applications) The remaining five percent is "nice to do" stuff and putting up signs, clearing recreation sites of trash; these are not mandatory, but they do improve the public land.

Jim will meet with Todd to develop a list of topics that BLM would like a sub-committee to address.

The Billings RMP has received public comments. A contractor condensed the comments to categories. The results were just received and a summary of the numbers of comments was provided. There are about 1000 comments that are substantive; these are comments that could cause BLM to change the plan. Form letters are treated as one document. Travel Management was site specific in the plan and resulted in a large number of comments.

An Environmental Assessment to expand the fertility program for Wild Horses in the Pryor Mountains is currently out for comment. If fertility control continues, it may lessen the need for large round-ups. The goal is to balance births with mortality rates to maintain an appropriate herd size.

A second EA that will be out for public comment soon is a Vegetation/Fuels Fire plan for the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. This project is for forest health and to maintain horse numbers and some wildlife species.

The Forest Service applied for a jurisdictional transfer right of way application to construct a new access road into the Pryor Mountains; the BLM granted the Right of Way. The USFS will complete an EA for the actual access road.

Discretionary work to be done by the end of year is in response to mountain bike ramps, ladders and berms that were created by "extreme sports" bikers at Acton. It has been removed, but the place is a good place for biking. Trails are in place for a variety of abilities so the group has brought a plan with the trails mapped, the area will be limited to current trails. The BLM will complete an EA to review their proposal.

The Four Dances area has also received requests for bike trails. A BLM volunteer has designed a bike trail system and the BLM is reviewing this proposal through an EA.

The Lily Lake Trail access project was completed by a Montana Conservation Corps crew this year. The trail is on BLM and State land and leads to USFS land.

The Billings Motorcycle Club land exchange with the BLM is proceeding. The BLM is currently getting the lands appraised; the BLM would gain 160 acres in the Shepherd Ah Nei Recreation Area and the motorcycle club would receive 200 acres in the South Hills.

The flats of the Beartooth front have public land with grazing permits. This area has a growing grizzly bear population; currently 24 bears are collared and/or are being tracked. The BLM is working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to issue a grazing permit because bears have been killed or relocated from private land in this area due to livestock mortalities. Permitting for uses in that area will be through consultations with the FWS; permits could have stipulations or schedules that would protect the species.

BLM staff will be sequestered to complete the RMP.

Miles City Field Office Manager (Todd Yeager)

The Miles City Field Office received 877 individual comments on the RMP. The ID team members will read every comment. Todd noted that some of the comments are very good and are helping the BLM to look at the management options and what can be allowed and what sideboards the BLM will apply. Chapter 2 is being reviewed based on the comments received; this determines the preferred alternative. The BLM has invited the cooperating agencies to be part of this process; employees from several counties are participating. The BLM will meet with county representatives for an all-day workshop to review for consistency with county plans compared with the draft RMP and comments received. This will provide an opportunity to address issues and show a more transparent process.

Miles City did not complete the Travel Management Planning in the RMP; as such will be completed within five years after the Record of Decision is signed. Specific sites will be analyzed at that point. The MCFO has 11,000 miles of public roads which is greater than the Montana state highway system.

The Keystone Pipeline will cross 43 miles of BLM lands in Montana. The MCFO is working with the company on a programmatic agreement with the tribes.

The Tongue River Railroad (TRR) has been shut down until January. The contractor, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and BLM have been working on wildlife management issues this summer. The TRR and Keystone Pipeline are 100 percent cost recovery projects.

The interest in coal mining is increasing. The MCFO has received three applications for mine expansions or modification within the last six months.

A MCFO seasonal employee worked on trespass gravel pits this summer; primarily in the Sidney area. The BLM has recovered approximately \$250,000 in fines. The office is working on four trespass actions for unauthorized harvesting of scoria, sand and gravel materials. The MCFO is also working on a competitive scoria sale near Culbertson where legal access needs to be obtained and a materials value needs to be determined.

The MCFO Resource staff is completing compliance checks and monitoring grazing allotments. Fuels projects have been limited to mechanical treatments as the fuels have been too green to burn. There are several permitted paleo digs occurring on MCFO BLM Lands and the Burpee Museum has coordinated a site tour for MCFO staff.

The urgency to approve the Thunderbird Pipeline for CO2 injection has stalled, but the company is replacing a pipeline that has been in place since a 1956 Right-of-Way easement. They will place new pipe in the same location.

Open Discussion:

Jim, Todd and Diane will develop a list or issue paper for field office projects for RAC subcommittee consideration prior to the next meeting.

Todd will write an issue paper regarding Pumpkin Creek Ranch Recreation Area management and will schedule a meeting or teleconference to begin work prior to the next regular RAC meeting.

Jim reminded members that the amount of vandalism this year is abnormal and is a concern. The BiFO is continuing to investigate.

Field Managers will send emails for short-term needs with projects that will be completed before the next meeting.

RAC members can contact an FM if they would like to have input into the topic or decision process. Bernie noted that members might be very receptive to being part of projects that would be completed in a short time.

Next Meeting:

December 4-5, 2013-Miles City

Future Agenda items:

Mark will coordinate a tour to Short Pines OHV area in the near future to avoid weather issues. Tour will be held when new members are on board the RAC.

Larry proposed a summer 2014 tour of the reclamation that has been done on his place

Supporting documents as per meeting discussion:

Bureau of Land Management- Montana/Dakotas State Director Inquiry

Questions for Resource Advisory Council Chair and Vice-Chair (or RAC Representative)

1. How would you characterize the state of your RAC? (Please consider: a) how engaged are all members; b) do members feel comfortable with openly expressing their perspectives; c) is the RAC involved with relevant and productive topics; d) does the RAC believe their input is valued and used by the BLM managers; e) are the meetings well planned and managed; etc.)
 - a) Members are engaged as much as they want to be. BLM has requested RAC to take on issues, RMP machine was in motion when new members selected,

so not participating as much because RMP is to guide what can be done. Members need guidance or lists from BLM for projects to address and need training to know what they can do in response to what BLM asks. Members are not clear on what the 'rules' are, what limits BLM and what is open for RAC to do.

- b) Members all felt comfortable openly expressing their perspectives.
- c) The meetings are helpful and the field trips are very informative, but there is a 'void' between meetings. The RAC could do more but needs a list and clear objectives from BLM for specific tasks and training to learn the process and procedures for taking action for BLM.
- d) Members that have been active on projects know their work is appreciated and that input has been incorporated into decisions. Members have limited experience with working with offices on projects, limited knowledge to respond, some said partially.
- e) Meetings are well planned and managed.

2. What makes your RAC effective/not effective in advising the BLM (and why)?

The RAC needs assignments from BLM staff to work on. The information received at the meetings is informative and relevant, but productivity is limited. Members request training to be able to engage in projects; unclear of what they are allowed and not allowed to do. Past members have experience with being 'given the reins' and taking projects from beginning to end, unclear if this RAC has that freedom and support. Members appreciate that the group can express opposite positions, but group comes to a decision and it is accepted. Proud of how this RAC works!

3. What is most rewarding to you in serving on a BLM RAC?

Members like the information that is received and given. Field trips are especially beneficial. Networking with members from across the region and learning issues. Seeing how policies are developed in the bureau.
One member: Ability to officially comment on policy developments.

4. Which subcommittees do you think are the most/least valuable (and why)?

No subcommittees formed at this time.

5. What is working well for your RAC? What improvements would you suggest in support of an effective RAC?

See previous responses.

One member: need to have subcommittees.

6. Understanding the cost involved in holding appropriate training for RAC members, what is your feedback on conducting a joint workshop for all four RACs of the Montana/Dakotas?

The members support a joint workshop for training all four RACs to be 'armed' and capable to take on assignments. A teleconference is acceptable, but face to face can be more effective. A webinar could be archived and available for viewing by new members.

Training topics, comments and concerns

Need the technical elements of training within own RAC; issues and landscapes may differ greatly from East to West or MT and ND or SD.

What resources are available to members-scientific, technical skills and knowledge?

No desire to have primarily information sharing meeting-expensive and no productivity.

All representatives are taught their role and how it applies to BLM and any limits that must be adhered too. (Can and can't do, capabilities of RAC versus BLM)

7. Do you communicate and coordinate with the other RACs? What does your RAC have in common (or not) with the other RACs? What are opportunities and benefits to coordinating among the RACs? How could we facilitate this?

a) No

b) Unknown

c) No current communication with other RACs. Mark or Ann Boucher could send points of interest synopsis to be aware of work groups and projects. (Lance will request this at the SD meeting) Members could visit other RAC meetings.

Question was raised if the RAC could be involved in deciding how the RAC budget was spent? RAC expenses might be part of the project cost to an office, not from RAC budget.

One member: communicated with South Dakota

8. What are your suggestions for effective RAC member recruitment?

Mark reviewed the current efforts. (Press releases, DM and FM personal and agency contacts)

Most effective are word of mouth and current members making personal contacts.

A suggestion was to publicize the accomplishments of RACs to increase interest and awareness to the public.

One member: termed out member should recruit someone to take their place.

9. We currently have 4 RACs in BLM Montana/Dakotas (Dakotas; Eastern Montana; Central/HiLine; Western). We are considering reducing the total number as we face reduced budgets and capacity. What are your thoughts and recommendations related to this consideration?

Unanimous; no support to consider this.

The criteria for offices to be grouped together shouldn't be by size or number of offices in an area, but by the similarity of issues in an area. Members felt that the Eastern MT RAC representing MCFO and BiFO worked well together.

10. Any other comments are welcome.

Lance Kalfell, RAC Member
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BLM
Montana State Office
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June 13, 2013

Re: NLCS Strategy 6100 (MT924.4)

Greetings Mr. Lefevre:

Thank you for requesting input from the Resource Advisory Council. As a RAC member, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the NLCS Strategy as presented in draft form.

I applaud BLM's attempt to combine the management of NLCS "lands." Whenever operations and land management can be simplified, I think everyone benefits. However, I would like to voice some concerns.

A. Policy

- a. Is this strategy or its policies an attempt to bypass Congress and/or erode the rights of stakeholders who are directly affected by their proximity to NLCS land(s)? For example, reference is made to the World Heritage Committee, which functions as an independent worldwide organization, how can stakeholders expect to voice their concerns and be heard regarding policies and decisions on that level?
- b. The term "NLCS values" is utilized often throughout the strategy document. While the idea of promoting collective values is solid in theory, without common sense, attentiveness, and balance "values" can quickly devolve into little more than a political agenda. BLM must take care to ensure that "NLCS values" remain the common values of stewardship, preservation, and environmental awareness, as opposed to partisan tactics.
- c. "Theme 1" states that RMPs will "provide detailed guidance...for project level planning," yet flaws in these documents and the RMP review process may prevent them from being effective and/or accepted reference documents.
- d. The Northwest Plains REA covers roughly 206,000 square miles and therefore encompasses large scale wildlife corridors. How can landowners be sure wildlife management efforts of that magnitude won't adversely affect them?
- e. There are instances within the strategy document that it appears BLM is "talking out of both sides of its mouth." At points, BLM appears to focus primarily on promoting stewardship, and in the next breath wishes to drive home a strictly science-based approach to management. By not defining a clear balance between those two concepts, BLM could very well create a double-edged sword. Not taking into account certain data measures can create emotional bias. However, relying solely on science may eliminate the heartfelt response BLM wishes to elicit from community partners and volunteers. Moreover, there are issues and intricacies that bare, data-driven science misses in its race to the finish line that, without consideration of the larger picture and sound principles of stewardship, could dramatically affect both the land and the people impacted by its use.
- f. Many environmental schemes have been hatched to change the 'historical use' of managed land(s) to suit an agenda, is this another? BLM should clearly stipulate that predecessor laws, such as the Taylor Grazing Act, will be honored for their place in past and current culture.
- g. Concerning (NLCS Strategy 2013-2016) Goal 1B #4 and Goal 1E #4, there seem to be conflicting messages regarding "ways" and "uses" as they pertain to NLCS

land(s). Please define what BLM means by “returning ways to pre-designation conditions.” Why will BLM be “prevent[ing] the establishment of new discretionary uses” within WSA areas?

- h. In reference to “citizen science,” while the practice of analyzing data collected by amateurs for scientific purposes is not a new concept, what’s unclear is who will be creating and directly the protocol needed to maintain the validity of the data collected? Any and all citizen volunteers should be properly trained, and data collection policies and information should be available to the public at large in order to maintain transparency in practice.
- B. Community Involvement
- a. BLM has named several partners. Yet, crucial resource groups, such as livestock grazing entities, and non-tribal community colleges were not included.
 - b. BLM is bringing this document to the table now, which appears to be “after the fact” since the original strategy was created in 2010.
 - c. The document refers to “[working] closely with partners to share success stories,” but wouldn’t it also be beneficial to admit and relate failures in order to prevent their reoccurrence?
 - d. BLM needs to facilitate sharing/uploading information from local partnership groups/members in order to truly “contribute to local tourism efforts by providing information for local exhibits, maps, and webpages that promote recreation opportunities in local communities.” I.e., small vibrant communities must be able to communicate information just as effectively as larger areas/entities/cities. The Big Sky Country Byway that runs from Wolf Point to Terry is advertised through BLM’s website with two sparse pictures and two short paragraphs, which relate nothing about the rich history of the area or various local activities. Whereas, sites in other nearby states often receive numerous links, articles, and vibrant images. The playing field needs to be leveled and accessible to “enhance public enjoyment of BLM lands through diverse recreation opportunities, high-quality information, and improved access....”
- C. Specific Changes
- a. (NLCS Strategy 2010-2025) “Goal 1F” 3. – All “green” technology must be *locally* sustainable. It does no good for BLM invest time and resources into a project that requires expensive/out-sourced maintenance and/or replacement parts that cannot be readily obtained.
 - b. (NLCS Strategy 2010-2025) “Goal 1F” 4. – This item should begin with the phrase “Remove **and/or reclaim** abandoned, dilapidated, or unneeded facilities and structures that do not possess cultural or historic significance, **after receiving community input**, and restore....” Community members should weigh in on these decisions and be given the option to reclaim materials or salvage facilities for use elsewhere.
 - c. (NLCS Strategy 2013-2016) “Goal 1B” 7. – The last sentence should read, “...consider innovative measures to **help effectively** manage livestock to address resource conditions....” The use of the phrase ‘more actively’ by BLM in

this instance would imply that BLM will be adding another layer of bureaucracy to livestock management, which is unnecessary.

- d. (NLCS Strategy 2013-2016) “Goal 1F” 4. – Perhaps this item should read, **“Support the development of heritage and cultural facilities**, in addition to managing the Upper Missouri River Breaks Interpretive Center....”
- e. (NLCS Strategy 2013-2016) “Goal 3A” 1. – Eighth bullet item should read, “Reaching out to **foreign and/or** non-English speaking visitors.”

Nevertheless, I wholeheartedly agree that BLM must seek and cultivate relationships with local communities and stakeholders, since personal livelihoods and quality of life will be directly affected by BLM/NLCS decisions. Any policy designed to facilitate open communication between BLM and local stakeholders is a good one. Engaging local governments and community groups as part of implementing plans is of utmost importance and is long overdue. In addition, the strategy’s emphasis on appealing to commercial users (ranchers, outfitters, guides, and oil and gas companies) to educate staff and administrators about NLCS land(s) and practices is commendable.

I was pleased to see BLM recognize farmers and ranchers for their special place in the discussion. Producers are key to protecting and preserving these lands; they have been doing so for over 80 years and should rightfully be credited for their efforts and encouraged to continue their contributions. Likewise, the strategy’s emphasis on promoting the spirit of stewardship among communities, educators, volunteers, and the public at large will be invaluable to present and future generations. Partnering and supporting local service organizations will go a long way toward achieving these goals.

Expanding outreach efforts to attract scenic, historical, and cultural tourists will also be very beneficial. Recognizing and supporting the local cultural and historical infrastructure will only enhance BLM’s endeavors. Heritage resources should include research and education groups, such as the Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory, Miles City Community College, Dawson Community College, local museums, as well as history and cultural centers. It would further benefit BLM to work in tandem with local historical societies to showcase relevant artifacts and records. It is important that BLM recognizes it must first do no harm to these treasured areas and their respective communities.

As a general rule, if land is acquired by BLM, based upon its historical/cultural and recreational value, an equal or greater amount of land must be returned to private use in order to stabilize the local economy and tax base. While I support funding infrastructure improvements to and from WSA areas and implementing active routes for administrative use on managed land(s), as well as increasing/enhancing NLCS signage, BLM must recognize that access to NLCS land(s) will only be improved by first providing sources of funding to local governments that are fair. In light of skewed PILT calculations that often leave rural counties without the means to maintain routes to public lands, BLM must either fix or create a better formula for funding improvements that would increase

public access to NLCS areas. In closing, I was glad BLM addressed the issue of dealing with non-native, invasive plants.

Thank for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lance Kalfell, RAC member
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