



MONTANA/DAKOTAS BLM

Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES: **Miles City, Montana: April 4, 2012** ***Hampton Inn, Billings, MT***

Attending RAC Members: Lance Kalfell, Bernard Rose, Robert Lubbers, Jerry Kaiser, Harold Guse, Ernest Strum, Cal Cumin, Doug Kary, John Sterchi, Tim Lechner, Thomas Hohn, Tim Lehman, Howard Boggess

Attending BLM staff: Mark Jacobsen, Jim Sparks, Dave Breisch, Elaine Raper, Donna Bradley

Attending Public: JT Korkow

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

Lance moved to accept the minutes from the August 2011 RAC meeting, Harold seconded and the minutes were accepted at the end of the meeting.

RAC Member Briefings

Tim Lechner represents the MT Board of Oil and Gas and the oil and gas industry and they requested that BLM not approve the proposed fracking rules. They prefer that the state should be responsible for developing the stipulations; Montana and North Dakota already have procedures in place for monitoring the process. Secretary Salazar identifies the need for water management, this is important because large quantities of water are used in the process, disposal must be done responsibly. Approved disposal in ND is 6000 ft. below the surface in sands and the water is usually brackish, non-drinkable water.

About 50% of the water pumped into a well is absorbed into the fissures and shale. The remaining water picks up natural salts and may be desalinated for use or disposed of. Tim predicts that the water will go to recycling in the future because of the need for fresh water; the industry will respond. Fracking is not a new process; a variety of products are used to accomplish fracking and he has never known the ground water to

be affected. Vendors are concerned about the proprietary nature of fluids used in fracking. He provided a handout that defined fracking and listed websites to search for additional information. Fracfocus.org lists what was pumped into the well and what was in the fluid.

John asked if there was an effect on earthquake activity associated with fracking. Tim has measured the seismic responses at two mile intervals and a microphone needed to be 50 ft. in the ground to even detect the sound. The measurement would be similar to an M-80 firecracker.

Tim and Thomas explained that if BLM issues fracking rules the process will become cumbersome. The states currently require a permit to drill and disposal of the brines are comprehensive and processed through EPA, the states monitor this information. If the states maintain control of issuing permits they can write stipulations and adjust to individual wells, the BLM may result in one size fits all, similar to the APD process.

John Sterchi reviewed his report from the last meeting that Mark Jacobsen presented in his absence. John offered to answer any questions that members might have from the last report.

A point he wanted to emphasize was that through his interviews, the people were happy with the BLM. Complaints regarding BLM were that staff has not been attending the monthly Cooperative Grazing District meeting and have little physical presence with permittees; new staff presented themselves as being more knowledgeable and failed to coordinate and communicate well with ranchers. There is a concern that blocks of land would be blocked up and set aside with little regard of multiple uses, regardless of the needs and wishes of the community. Elaine stated that if there was an issue, staff would attend the grazing meetings.

John asked about BLM spraying grasshoppers. Jim explained that BLM funding for spraying is given to APHIS to administer the program. BLM to identify areas that are of concern; the money must be used on BLM lands.

There seems to be a lot of misinformation and confusion regarding fence, two track road maintenance and erosion, hay leasing and fencing riparian areas. He suggested public information meetings to educate the permittees and public.

Jim suggested state cooperative grazing districts and BLM grazing boards be discussed in the future.

Mark noted his appreciation to Mike for making the individual contacts as this emphasizes Mike's relationship in representing the board to permittees; it provides a great service through two-way communication.

Tim Lehman very interested in the history of public lands. He talked to people and did some literature reviews of public lands. The word to the public has no single meaning;

and there are many different publics. The RAC represents a variety of public groups. The RAC has historically been viewed as a cosmetic entity that lacks worth. The advantage this board has is that we're not a place for legislation or litigation but a place for collaboration.

The Forest Service and National Park System have fairly 'heroic' stories defining their existence; the BLM is 'what was left over'. BLM now is a top notch agency, a competent and fair minded land manager.

Jerry Kaiser discussed environmental views in regards to oil production and its effects on soil and water versus the resources that are used and disturbed for farming and ranching.

Jim initiated a discussion regarding the perception of the RAC and the 'lack of purpose'. Stated he would like to see the RAC pick projects or areas of concern and develop a plan of action. Tim Lehman suggested that task oriented sub-committees be formed to work on projects between formal RAC meeting and bring the information to the members to make a recommendations to BLM.

Cal proposed that the RAC interface positively with Eastern Montana and help mitigate issues related to the Bakken development.

Harold Guse stated the state has been involved with energy issues i.e. wind energy, power lines and the role the department will have in wind energy development. The status of Sage Grouse listing will not be determined until 2014 or 2015. There has been a tremendous amount of effort to mitigate effects on greater sage grouse from projects.

Asked that grazing and predator impacts to be reviewed and presented at the next meeting.

Harold asked "what is an environmentalist?" He asked members if they were concerned about the environment. Robert stated that conservation is more important than environmentalism. Jerry stated that the board needs to be concerned with the environment, but if one is proposing a specific agenda; then one could be perceived as an extremist.

Howard Boggess stated that conservationist and environmentalist was the same thing to him as they do the same work.

Ernie Strum discussed dispersed recreation. There are many diverse recreation users and it's difficult to reach them. He attempted to contact various groups and reported on the comments he received.

The Pryor Mountains could use some non-motorized trails. The Stockman Trail and Bear Canyon trails are prime candidates as they were washed out last year. It was

reported that the Meeteetse Spires area would be a candidate for a Wilderness Study Area. The recommendation is to provide extreme protection of this area.

A common theme he heard was that BLM had good rules and management, but without enforcement they aren't any good. Feels that the benefit of the RAC is the ability to provide information to the BLM from the constituents they represent.

The Back Country Horseman appreciates the BLM's work building the Lily Pad Trail. Ernie led a discussion about developing another access site through the Pryor Mountains; referenced the Billings Gazette article. Harold suggested that this might be an issue that the RAC could address. Jim stated that FS and BLM have already discussed a ROW. The FS is currently writing the EIS.

Thomas Hohn stated that historically the BLM rules and regulations were reasonable to work with and they provided for good management of the public land multiple-use mission. The industry perception is changing; federal minerals used to be considered an asset, today it is almost a detriment. The permitting process takes longer and is more difficult and the fee lease may expire before a federal lease is approved. Industry is reluctant to pursue activity on federal land. He asked the RAC to consider advising the BLM on these concerns as it does affect the funds available to counties and communities. Today, many decisions are made by lawsuits.

Joy Stevens- Petroleum Engineer, Attorney; guest presenter courtesy of Thomas Hohn.

She provided a pipeline slideshow presentation and discussed the benefits of transporting material by pipeline and engineering of a pipeline. There are four types and classes of pipelines. Pipelines are highly regulated and those regulations are incorporated into the engineering process. (A partial list includes the State Department, OSHA, DNRC, DEQ, Tribal Councils and local regulations etc.) She discussed the choice of pipe, testing processes, corrosion prevention, repairs and protection of the pipe. RAC members participated in a question, answer and comment session.

Public Comment period

JT Korkow opened and asked the RAC members to ask questions that would be brought forward to Dennis Rehberg. JT responded to questions and participated in discussion, representing Congressman Rehberg's position. Congressman Rehberg will be participating in listening sessions across NE Montana the week of April 9. Discussion of road maintenance and the use of federal gravel and scoria, subsidies and energy issues ensued.

(After lunch)RAC Member Briefings; continued

Doug Kary stated that OHV users have a hard time finding trails and some familiar areas with memories aren't available anymore. Riders see numerous publications encouraging the public to recreate on the public land, but OHV use is not included; most

traffic limited to foot traffic, non-motorized activities. He encourages users to participate in the process and make sure concerns are heard. He asked what the BLM vision is for Eastern MT regarding the greater sage grouse and OHV users and the impacts management will have on access. Members and BLM staff discussed initiatives and decisions and planning for the greater sage grouse planning/management development effort.

BLM Updates

EMDD report (Elaine Raper) The State Director has ten priorities and some of them are concerns that have been discussed by members this morning.

1. Conserve and protect Sage Grouse habitat, build collaboration to address this issue. 50% of habitat is under BLM management so our efforts are directly tied to preclude listing of Sage Grouse;
2. RMP completion for Miles City and Billings;
3. Contributing to conventional and renewable energy sources by cooperating with stake holders and developing partnerships;
4. Engaging the youth in public land use and stewardship, she asked members to communicate and educate the public groups that members represent;
5. The BLM should be a role model to other agencies, this goes along with the perception the public has about BLM and was discussed earlier this morning;
6. To improve public access by identifying primary areas and maintaining or enhancing the sites;
7. Minimize impact on the environmental footprint;

The RAC and BLM have similar priorities.

Acting Miles City Field Office Manager (Dave Breisch)

The draft EIS is scheduled to be submitted to WO in early May, then the FO will make suggested adjustments, and then the document will be available to the public for comments. He encouraged everyone to review and comment on the draft; it's a large document so focus on the areas of interest.

The RMP and Sage Grouse plan are scheduled to be done December 2014. This RMP could manage the MCFO area for 20 years, the plan could be amended as change occurs.

Efforts are being made to partner for the repair of the Howrey Island Recreation site for the damage caused by the flooding.

Spring Creek and Decker coal mines have submitted applications to expand; the BLM plan is to review them under one EIS. American Colloid has submitted an application to expand its bentonite mining with part of the proposed expansion in Sage Grouse

habitat; this will be assessed through an EA. There aren't any applications for wind or solar energy production. BLM has received an application for Carbon Dioxide sequestration exploration project northwest of Forsyth. The exploration project can be authorized under the realty regulations; however, the WO hasn't decided if sequestration projects would be managed under O&G, or a ROW.

Billings Field Office Manager (Jim Sparks)

Jim provided briefing papers for detailed information on their RMP, Signal Peaks, Wild Horse gather and the list for public access sites that BiFO wants to ensure legal access to.

The preliminary draft RMP will be sent to WO Friday, April 6. The formal draft should be available for a 90-day public comment period in early fall. The final document should be released winter of 2014. The document must be complete by 2015 because the Fish and Wildlife Service will be considering the listing of the greater sage grouse then.

Signal Peak Coal just received their BLM permit; now MT DEQ will analyze the state application for the mine expansion. BLM receives royalties and a bonus bid.

BLM will be conducting a non-helicopter wild horse gather. It will be a bait-trap gather to decrease the herd size to appropriate management level.

BiFO is working to improve access to Young's Point and obtain additional land surrounding Pompey's Pillar. These are the only two remaining locations from the 1984 list. The office needs to have additional sites identified. Suggestions were made, next meeting the goal is to identify and prioritize sites that have public interest.

Open Discussion, Other and Tabled Items:

Electing a chairperson for the RAC was discussed.

The RAC application time has been extended, some members will be eligible to term out if they desire.

The Bureau of Land Management is under travel ceiling and funding restrictions. Subcommittees may continue to meet on their own time, should they choose to.

Robert commented that the news briefings Mark sends out are very helpful, informative and appreciated.

Two IMs that direct BLM current management of greater sage grouse will be emailed to members. We (BLM) don't manage the birds; BLM controls the effects of project placement and uses of the habitat.

BiFO has travel ceiling available and there may be funding if RAC needs to schedule another meeting.

Pryor Mountain road repair.

Doug made a motion that the RAC would support Powerline road access in the Pryor's, Harold seconded. 10 supported, one member declined until more information was available; all categories were represented and a quorum was present; consensus was reached by majority in each categories.

The Forest Service is currently conducting scoping meetings for an easement. Mark suggested that drafting a letter and circulating the letter through membership would allow more time for RAC members to conduct personal research and then buy into the letter to be sent to the FS.

Harold noted that this is not a new road, but is an established road that needs repair and improvement. The Sage Creek road access is questionable. There is a 50-year easement with the tribe, but some private landowners haven't been supportive of granting the easement through their portion.

Doug Kary volunteered to write the draft, all members will comment and then members will sign, then send to FS to include in the comments for the public record.

The next meeting, RAC will decide what access project they would like to take on. Desire was expressed to determine what the RAC's role in county and landowner relations is.

The RAC was tasked to develop an access priority list for the field offices. Ernie will bring list of sites he is familiar with. Robert will get an access list from John Gibson.

The RAC considered discussing their role in county and landowner relations associated with O&G, but this was withdrawn as the RAC doesn't have any jurisdiction in the outcome.

Tim will keep everyone informed of the WO-BLM decisions regarding fracking processes.

Next Meeting:

September 19, 2012 in Miles City

Future Agenda items:

Grazing regulations and processes.



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Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES: **Miles City, Montana: September 19, 2012** ***BLM Miles City District/Field Office***

Attending RAC Members: Lance Kalfell, Bernard Rose, Robert Lubbers, Harold Guse, Cal Cumin, Doug Kary, John Sterchi, Tim Lechner

Attending BLM staff: Mark Jacobsen, Jim Sparks, Diane Friez, Todd Yeager, Donna Bradley, Reyer Rens, Shane Findlay, Pam Wall, Kirk Anderson

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

Outgoing RAC members were recognized and appreciation for their service and support was expressed. Robert Lubbers stated he has served a total of nine years and that he has really enjoyed working with the members and the BLM management and appreciates the coordination and cooperation with the different groups represented by the RAC. Tim Lechner stated that he enjoyed all he has learned from being on the RAC; Sage Grouse, grazing, weeds, Terry Scenic Road, Lilly Pad Trail and so forth. He appreciated the views of all the members. Jerry Kaiser, Wayne Sanders and Bill Kennedy (not present) RAC terms have expired and will depart the council.

Mark reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the RAC, member appointment procedures, terms and eligibility. Members are expected to attend meetings and field trips. Diane is the BLM Designated Official for the RAC and can be contacted between meetings regarding any issues or concerns. This and more information is available on the BLM website.

Bernie moved to accept the minutes from the April 2012 RAC meeting; the minutes were accepted.

Diane provided her biography and members introduced themselves.

RAC Member Discussion

Doug initiated discussion of topics that have been brought up in previous meetings: BLM vs State O&G regulations-fracking rules, Coal leases at Otter Creek and Signal Peak mines, Sage Grouse, Access and Grazing. Todd asked what the RAC proposes BLM managers do with these issues and what members expectations of BLM is. Diane asked that members bring issues forward with recommendations of the action they want BLM to take. Mark recommended that the topics be narrowed and more specific; this list is very broad and it may be difficult to take action at the local level. The RAC, as a group represents the MCFO and BiFO geographic area. Individually, members may comment through proper channels on concerns in another RAC jurisdiction; as a group, recommendation and actions should be specific to Eastern Montana.

Doug wants the RAC to start weighing in on issues and is concerned that the RAC is not a working group and meetings are information sharing without results. Lance supported looking at smaller issues, those that are national issues would be difficult to obtain consensus from the group; he suggested land exchanges.

Bernie noted that fracking rules are more an issue for ND and there wouldn't be much influence on that. He recommended working on local land use issues like Pumpkin Creek; issues should be something that the RAC can influence and act on. John felt that a chairman would direct what the group should work on and that is why there hasn't been a specific issue addressed.

Jim stated that there would be little influence on national issues, but Sage Grouse management in a specific county, the Terry Badlands Road, Pumpkin Creek and help implementing grazing regulations in Miles City could benefit the BLM.

Harold supported breaking down the issues; briefings and the resulting discussions are interesting and beneficial to his job, but there isn't any action or benefit to the BLM. One idea would be to look at grazing plans in Central MT and look for funding to implement the new management on grazing leases that would benefit Sage Grouse.

Cal appreciated Jim's comments to look at local issues to be an effective group. Bernie stated that the BiFO RMP is a different document than it would've been if he hadn't been part of the team.

Mark reminded members that they can select a project or concern that was identified through a briefing statement, form sub-committees and bring forward proposals to the BLM.

Robert stated that fracking will be a local issue because of water concerns and ponds. Harold responded that commenting at the national level, the RAC comment would be one of 60000, the ND comments that were sent in were approximately 10 of the total received. He suggests the RAC consider land consolidations in Eastern MT, this would be a direct impact.

Mark summarized that the RAC has recognized the benefit from working locally; projects discussed could lead to BLM managers deciding which one they would ask the RAC to take on.

RAC Member Briefings

Tim Lechner

Tim shared a response to the BLM from the Montana Petroleum Association with guest speaker Dave Galt presenting. Members received a copy of the response. The letter stated that the state had adopted rules for fracking that were established with the EPA and DEQ. It encouraged DOI to leave the rules with the state. Drilling permits on BLM have decreased from 200 in 2003 to 26 in 2011.

Dave attributes that to unnecessary and burdensome regulations. Tim stated that there has also been a shift to drill in ND that has caused part of the decline. The tax structure in MT is advantages to industry, so the decline is not limited to this cause. Tim noted that he had received a response to an APD that had the proposed fracking rules stipulated as terms and conditions; these national rules haven't been approved yet.

Tim supports water management plans with fracking, but that ideas will blossom and recycling and waste management will become the norm. Industry is already responding, he said. Tim answered member questions and shared a history of oil and gas development.

Harold Guse

Discussed Sage Creek Road and the maintenance needed; users are driving off the road because of the condition. FW&P Region 5 just completed a certification class to be authorized to trap wolves. Regulations impact where foot hold traps can be located, number of open roads, and trailheads that are accessible to vehicles. There are limited numbers of wolves in this region so trapping won't be a big issue. Grizzly bears have also moved east off the Absarokee and Beartooth front and are on BLM ground east of Red Lodge. A grizzly sow and cub were trapped due to livestock depredation. The grizzly bear density is low, future bear activity will affect grazing and other permitted uses.

Grazing: Permitting and Process (Reyer Rens)

Ryer presented a PowerPoint that addressed grazing administration in the Miles City Field Office. He reviewed the number of allotments, range improvement projects, allotments transfers, compliance and monitoring of allotments that make up the Range program's workload.

According the Ryer, the Mizpah/Pumkin Creek Grazing District was recognized by Congress in 1928, the by-laws from that organization set the foundation for the Taylor Grazing Act.

The Standards for Rangeland Health were incorporated into the grazing regulations in 1997. These five standards (Air, Upland, Riparian, Water Quality and Habitat for Native Species) are what guides allotment evaluations to determine if the allotment is in proper functioning condition. When a standard is not met and livestock is a *contributing factor* to the cause, management must be changed by the next grazing season. Ryer reviewed the allotment categories (I, M & C) and the qualifications required to hold a grazing permit. A permit authorizes the base property owner to utilize the active use associated with the public land. Range Improvement Cooperative Agreements are approved for fixed structures, (weed treatment, wells etc.) Range Project Permits are for temporary projects, (corrals, electric fence etc.).

NEPA analysis is completed for any action taken on an allotment, (permit expiration, change in management, kind of livestock, or range improvement projects etc.) to ensure that Rangeland Health Standards will be or will continue to be met. Air quality is not a range concern; BLM works with MT DEQ when conducting prescribed burn projects. The DEQ in cooperation with BLM have air monitoring stations throughout Eastern MT. BLM and the State monitors for air quality thresholds, MSO reviews the reports. The BLM implements mitigation actions before the maximum level is met.

John Sterchi

Discussed his briefing topic: poor grazing conditions this year, supplemental feeding and weeds. Some calf/cattle deaths this year, feels that the weed species and drought may be a factor in these deaths.

John asked Ryer--what will ranchers do if allotment isn't usable next year? Reyer stated that permittees can request non-use, and it will be approved and not affect their permit. If an allotment is overgrazed, BLM can issue decisions to protect the public land. Preference is to work cooperatively with permittees towards agreement on the allotment management. Lance and John discussed the patchwork land pattern, water and other improvements may be in locations that make using private land difficult. John asked what rights the permittee has for private sponsored hunting. The grazing permit authorizes grazing only. Permittees need to apply for an outfitter permit and this would be issued through the NEPA process. Any commercial interest must have a permit. BLM manages habitat, not species. Threatened and endangered species are managed by the FWS and the state manages all other species.

Cal Cumin

Had the privilege to interface with the Billings FO and their outreach to the public. They partially funded and assisted in the 'bio-blitz' of completing inventories of flora and fauna in the Pryor Mountains. BLM also was instrumental in the "Get Outside, Montana" program, to encourage kids to get outside and learn. BLM organized a trip into the Pryors to view the wild horse range.

Bernie noted that the Audubon Society has also benefitted from BLM cooperation and facilities.

Public Comment

Fritz Zook

He expressed his appreciation for help fencing the Pumpkin Creek areas. Water issues have been resolved and the area should be ready for use this fall. He requested help with hunter issues; suggested using wildlife cameras. Pumpkin Creek will be available for ranchers affected by the Ash Creek fire. There will be 450 head of livestock permitted through December 1 and he applauded the BLM for efforts and cooperation in working towards this grazing opportunity. The BLM is looking at grazing Pumpkin Creek as a habitat management strategy and for fire management.

RAC Member Briefings continued

Lance Kalfell

Lance stated that land use exchanges don't seem to happen on small parcels. He asked what is required to facilitate a land exchange. Dan Thomason, a permittee was in attendance to discuss his request to exchange a parcel to allow easier management, fencing and water access for his operation.

Shane and Pam informed RAC members what a land exchange entails. This isn't a FO decision, WO approves all exchanges. BLM has a list of permittees that have expressed interest in participating in an exchange. The Carter County operators were part of the exchange for Pumpkin Creek because a complete cultural inventory had previously been accomplished. The time to complete a small exchange is about the same workload as a large exchange.

A primary concern in the decision is what the benefit to the public and will be and if the BLM will be able to give up that public land due to use issues and cultural concerns. Title insurance must be obtained and the cost to process the exchange is split 50/50 with BLM and the operator. Lance asked if there was something that could be done privately that would assist the office in an exchange; river lands have to be resurveyed. Issuing Rights of Ways are a priority workload now and work associated with court orders.

Dan Thomason provided maps and informed members of the land exchange he proposes. Diane proposed a future meeting be scheduled to discuss the issue.

Access Discussion

Jim and Robert led the discussion. BiFO has accomplished all their priorities and have asked for sites that should be pursued. The BLM has done some initial work to acquire access to Young's Point by Park City and Columbus. Bundy Island near Pompey's Pillar is also a site that requires access; a legal interpretation has determined that the

island is BLM, but the island hasn't been surveyed. The farmland that borders Pompey's Pillar is a concern if the use would be changed. The current owners plan to keep it as farmland and the BLM has visited with them about creating a conservation easement to assure their wishes are honored.

Robert provided a list of public land sites that the Public Land and Water Association is working to gain access to. He said that the MT Sportsman Alliance mission is to shut down outfitter set asides because they want the wildlife resources to be managed using the best science available, and not the benefit of special interest groups. He shared some of the laws in place regarding use and access using county roads. Some of these are out of the Eastern MT/DAK RAC area of jurisdiction and won't be considered.

Cal supports the BiFO access projects and he has not heard of any suggestions from his constituents.

Doug made a motion that the RAC lend support for Pompey's Pillar and Young's Point to be priority access sites; Bernie seconded and all members in attendance were unanimous in supporting the motion.

The RAC didn't have any additional access sites to bring forward at this time. Harold noted that agencies don't have too much say in how to get to the public land; this often falls back on the county. Robert suggested that members follow the House Bill HR1581 introduced by Rep Martin Hinedrich of New Mexico titled Wilderness and Roadless Area Act of 2011.

Doug asked what can be done to obtain a quorum at the RAC meetings. Mark stated that conference calls or email contact can be used to obtain member votes. RAC members can consider the benefit of continued membership of members that are not attending. BLM's Kirk Anderson is the chair on the MCFO Access Committee. Fallon County is abandoning a number of roads, some of these touch public land. BLM has requested that three or four of those selected not be abandoned as they were feasible to obtain public access.

MTFWP wants to develop a fishing access site on the Missouri River below Wolf Point. Showed a map with BLM lands that don't have public access; there are some large sections, but the checkerboard pattern of land makes obtaining access difficult. Bernie asked if there were any places that the public had expressed an interest into obtaining access to certain areas.

Kirk responded that Zook Creek WSA and the south side of Lodgepole Creek (in the Missouri Breaks) are being considered. The land owner has been contacted regarding possible land exchanges or easements to this area. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Mule Deer Foundation have said they would be willing to participate, but so far there aren't any willing landowners. RAC members will be provided a PDF map of the MCFO Transportation Network Access. (pending)

Bernie requested that MCFO identify their priority sites and bring that list to the RAC for support.

RAC members will be invited to the next MCFO Access Committee meeting. Todd suggested that a conference call be set up and Diane proposed that RAC members form an Access subcommittee. Todd stated that if counties received gas tax monies and a road touched a gas tax road, public access was given.

BLM District & Field Office Updates

EMDD report (Diane Friez)

She discussed the vacant Field Manager positions across the state and the current status of filling the positions. RMPs are being completed in the District, the SDFO draft will be available soon; NDFO Sage Grouse amendment will meet the timeline for FWS review. BIFO and the HiLine offices are also working on RMPs. All the plans are in different stages of completion and Todd will discuss the MCFO RMP status. She has been impressed with the coordination of the agencies to pool resources during the fire season. The Dugan fire in the Ekalaka Hills has been 100% contained. Pictures were shown that pilots had taken; they were seeing 20 foot flame lengths in the grasslands and the fire was within 1.5 miles from town.

MCFO, NDFO and SDFO have been coordinating workload to handle the backlog of work associated with the permitting of APDs especially in North Dakota. Vacancies and turnover has been a problem in the NDFO; two strike teams have been brought in to approve APDs and decrease the backlog to a point that area offices can manage the work.

Acting Miles City Field Office Manager (Todd Yeager)

Todd stated that 7-10,000 acres of BLM burned this year, there have been no serious injuries for MCFO Fire employees. Pheasants Forever, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Mule Deer Foundation are coordinating with landowners for a habitat project on the east side of Pumpkin Creek. The NEPA analysis and Record of Decision has been completed and will benefit the native grasses on the benches. Strawberry Hill and Pumpkin Creek Ranch and Recreation site were closed July 4th due to fire danger. Pumpkin Creek has been opened, but Strawberry Hill remains closed to motorized access due to the close proximity to subdivisions.

The office utilized the MT Conservation Corps to work on trails, fence rolling wires and planting projects. The MCC was here for eight weeks. We were able to hire 40 seasonals and touched 500 youth this year by offering field trips and visiting classrooms. The WO program leads will be briefed September 20 on the RMP, the comments will be addressed and the draft will be available to the public next December or January.

Archer Coal has submitted an application to MT DEQ for Otter Creek coal; BLM has surface ownership, but the minerals were turned over to the state. The application submitted excludes the BLM ownership.

A current project in the MCFO that requires a large interdisciplinary team is for the Decker mine exploration expansion and second lease sale. The number of parcels is down as well as the size available. Parcels are in Richland, Garfield, McCone and Prairie County. A pipeline proposal from Baker MT to Hewlett, WY has been received. The EIS will be contracted out and the location includes some sage grouse habitat. Currently it is in the exploratory phase and the BLM is working with the applicant.

Amber Coal has requested a modification for expansion on their mine; American Colloid also has requested an expansion; this will be addressed over the next six months. Annually over 200 grazing permit renewals are processed, these are issued all at once so that staff are available for individual projects. The wildlife staff has been supporting the SDFO as the biologist there has retired and the position is open.

In January, MCFO will start working on the plan for Pumpkin Creek; some decisions are RMP oriented. The BLM will ask the RAC to lead some efforts, and to please gather information from constituents regarding interests in grazing, OHV, birds, water and wildlife uses.

MT DEQ has received requests for Spring Creek and Cloud Peak mines expansions. This will require an EIS to be completed and our request is that these be combined into one document, the location is divided by a highway. This will include air quality and global climate change; a very large workload. MCFO is supporting NDFO in issuing APDs to keep the process response timely.

Billings Field Office Manager (Jim Sparks)

The Wild Horse gather was successful; received accolades from both sides of the issue of the success of the bait and gather process. This is easier on horses, but difficult for employees. All of the horses were adopted and the herd size is the closest to target size since 1978. The Sage Grouse policy has been incorporated into the RMP. Frequent briefings are being held with WO, the draft will be printed for public comment and it should be final in about one year. Signal Butte lease has been issued. The bonus bid is for the right to mine the coal; royalties are paid in addition to that; 10% for the state and 8% for BLM. Fences have marked to prevent mortality of grouse; vinyl siding strips have been cut and placed on approximately 100 miles of fence.

The USFWS, FWP and BLM are looking at applications to expand Bentonite mining; this area is in prime Sage Grouse habitat. Large studies will begin with collaring some birds etc. The companies are proposing some of these studies. The fire season was active early, but low BLM land involvement. The counties determined which homes to protect based on which had done fuels treatment at their homes. Resources were limited and if the home was defensible, they responded.

The EA for the next O&G lease sale in Carbon County is complete, but the sale will be delayed until the RMP is complete. Core Sage Grouse and Cutthroat Trout habitat was not included in the lease. Hunting at Pompey's Pillar will be limited to shotgun and archery. Recreational shooting is receiving a lot of attention regarding opportunities so MSO and WO have been informed of the change.

Open Discussion, Other and Tabled Items:

Doug noted that people that helped with fire were frustrated with the process of releasing and being called back to another fire. There was concern of the expense of call backs after formal release; the travel process and coordination could be more efficient. Todd explained the process of requesting resources and the electronic system that is used to assign them. BLM Fire prepositions and competes nationally for funding and staffing. Work is limited to 21 days on a fire line without having mandatory break.

Lance asked about the letter received regarding documentation for showing the ownership of commensurate or base property. Todd said that this request is for updating grazing files; usually in the form of a lease or warranty deed. This is one of the qualifications for holding a BLM permit and some files are missing the documentation.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, December 6, 2012 in Billings



MONTANA/DAKOTAS BLM

Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council

RAC MEETING MINUTES: Billings, Montana: December 5 and 6, 2012

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

Attending BLM staff: Eastern Montana – Dakotas District (EMDD) Manager Diane Friez, Billings Field Office (BiFO) Manager Jim Sparks, Miles City Field Office (MCFO) Manager Todd Yeager, Staff Assistant Donna Bradley, Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM) Manager Jeff Kitchens, RAC Coordinator, Mark Jacobsen

December 5, 2012 - Field trip to Pompey's Pillar National Monument:

Members were welcomed and the meeting was brought to order, housekeeping items and ground rules for the meeting were reviewed. New members were recognized and welcomed to the Eastern Montana Resource Advisory Council (EMT RAC). All members were encouraged to participate in the discussions; these meetings are for the Council to come up with ideas and recommendations for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

December 6, 2012 – Regular meeting; Hampton Inn, Billings:

RAC members and BLM staff introduced themselves. Mark reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the RAC. The members are representatives for public land user groups. Members provide advice to the BLM; assist with the implementation of Resource Management plans and resolution of land use conflicts. Members are expected to attend meetings and field trips. Diane is the BLM "Designated Federal Official" for the EMT RAC and can be contacted between meetings regarding any issues or concerns. This and more information is available on the RAC website.

Harold made a motion to accept the minutes for the September 2012 meeting; Lance seconded it and the motion was approved.

Mark noted that the State Director will propose a RAC Chairman meeting for some time in the near future. He asked that members consider who they would like to send to this

meeting to represent the EMT RAC as it operates with no chairperson. The meeting date is to be determined as the situation develops.

Drought Update

Todd and Jim shared current drought conditions and concerns regarding public land use. Todd provided a map from Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) indicating the soil moisture content across the region. BLM offices will be sending out letters to grazing permittees informing them of the drought conditions and to encourage them to plan ahead to maintain rangeland health.

If conditions don't improve or worsen, permittees may elect to take non-use or request refunds for partial use. The BLM hopes that operators will make good decisions and communicate them to their assigned BLM Range Specialist. The BLM can direct a specific action if necessary, but prefers to coordinate and cooperate with the producers.

Pompey's Pillar Fee Assessment (Jeff Kitchens)

Jeff presented an overview of Pompeys Pillar National Monument (PPNM); budget, staffing and facility improvements. He has developed and enhanced many partnerships with groups and schools to encourage use of the facility and volunteers to assist with projects, like the Junior Ranger program, plantings, educational opportunities. Jeff has utilized many sources to obtain funding for the projects that have been completed including; grants, donations, PPNM Historical Association contributions and the fee collection program.

Jeff listed what the funding needs are and how funds can be utilized, i.e., collected fees are returned to the facility, but must be used to benefit the public. BLM, volunteers, local groups and other interested parties have worked together to come up with a proposed fee schedule. He requested the RAC to consider the proposal to adjust the fee schedule. He explained each fee proposal and reviewed the discussions that took place in determining the proposed change.

Jim stated that a function of the RAC is to approve fees for recreational sites; changes must go through the RAC. The BLM requests that at the next RAC meeting a decision be made regarding the fee schedule and the goal is to implement it in 2014. A final packet will be sent to RAC members to review prior to the next meeting.

Current fees:

All non-commercial vehicles: \$7.00

Commercial Vehicles: 1-6 people: \$25.00; 7-24 people: \$40.00; 25+:\$100.00

Proposed Fees:

Non-commercial vehicles

1-6 people: \$7.00; 7-24 people: \$12.00; 25+: \$25.00

Annual Pass: \$20.00

Commercial vehicles

1-6 people: \$25.00; 7-24 people: \$40.00; 25+: \$100.00

The area is open all year to walk-in traffic at no charge. This is a community use site, travelers are a 60-90 minute stop and fees need to reflect the users and encourage use.

RAC members asked questions and discussed costs, visitor numbers and comparison to other area fees.

Jeff is working with the Montana Department of Transportation to improve signage. Mack stated that he would offer a private land site along the interstate if BLM was interested.

Clark Days are scheduled July 29-30, 2013. The cost of this event is \$20-30000 to host. The cost versus benefit is being discussed at this time. Food and activities may be provided differently than in the past.

Jeff will have the proposal and full business plan available by February 2013. This is a six month process to be published in the Federal Register. Becky suggested that ideas regarding the proposal be sent to Mark, consolidated and forwarded to all RAC members and an electronic discussion by members be accomplished by selecting 'reply to all' with comments. Mark suggested that members create a group from the member roster and use it to communicate with members by utilizing 'reply to all'.

RAC Member Discussion

Harold informed members of comments that he received from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) game wardens regarding the hunting season. The public appreciated an access area being signed on Highway 308; landowners were unhappy that the public was made aware of this area as the amount of use increased.

There are some trespass issues on private land north of Custer; the landowners thought the area was adequately marked, but the violators had issues with the signage. The fire roads in Musselshell County have been signed and are getting a lot of use. Harold suggested that roads be signed as 'open'. This is more effective than when marked closed as often 'closed' signs are destroyed.

FWP received complaints on vehicle use on Block Management lands. Hunters are flying helicopters in to land locked public land parcels and set up a hunting camp; they have also complained of vehicles that access these areas.

Cal asked Jim about access to Young's Point. A third party has contacted the ranch owner but they have not been successful at this time. Lands with Wilderness characteristics have been identified in other offices; Miles City hasn't designated any and Cal asked why that was. Todd responded that the inventory had just been completed as the land pattern around MCFO is scattered and the effort is more time consuming. Two MCFO areas met the definition of having wilderness characteristics.

Rita represents the Montana Wilderness Association and the Yellowstone Audubon Society. The Audubon Society is gathering data along the Yellowstone corridor; they

feel that there isn't enough good information available to determine what is happening with various species and species of concern. They are conducting bird counts and are willing to share the data with any interested parties.

The Natural Heritage Program hopes to determine what the changing impacts are. Ospreys have been sampled and they found elevated levels of mercury in the birds tested. They will expand the study to include turtles to determine if there is a problem, or if these were isolated cases.

The 'Yellowstone Audubon Society' chapter represents Billings east to North Dakota; Bozeman also has a chapter and the two work cooperatively. Mark suggested that the Dakota RAC might be interested in this information; Rita will have a representative contact Mark to speak at the meeting in May.

Todd and Diane stated that the Northern Great Plains and Ducks Unlimited have conducted surveys in N. Dakota and Montana to identify important bird areas. Todd asked that the information be sent to the BLM so the wildlife biologists would be able to use it. The BLM and FWP are jointly funding a program to identify rookeries and the effects of island movements due to periodic flooding. The Rocky Mountain College and the Yellowstone River Research Center offers grants for students to do the inventories. The studies generally are around fishing access sites and extend about ¼ mile along the river.

John made general comments regarding the management and administration of public land. Base-property-owners note a shortcoming of the BLM is that there is limited interaction with BLM employees, but it's not viewed as a problem as they often prefer to be left alone.

John stated that he feels the BLM shouldn't just visit with permittees when there's an issue and that staff should reach out to see what the government can do to help the operator. John and Lance asked that there be a newspaper article or other form of communication to the community addressing the Scenic Road controversy in order to provide accurate information and closure on the issue for those that feel the BLM failed to take action. Todd stated that the road Right of Way has been issued to Prairie County.

John expressed concern that grazing has been underrepresented in the RAC committee membership and is glad to see Larry selected. He also continues to be concerned that the RAC does not have a chairman.

Larry responded that he has been involved with the RAC since its inception. The EMT RAC is the only RAC that has a facilitator instead of a chairperson. He stated that this allows for a more varied mix of topics and actions to be addressed. In the past, subcommittees worked on specific issues and the subcommittee had a chairperson. The EMT RAC as a whole was able to reach a consensus with a facilitator and information brought forward from the subcommittee.

John clarified that he thinks the chairman would be the one to establish subcommittees and schedule meetings instead of Mark. Larry agreed that the subcommittee needs to have a chairperson to facilitate this workload, but the RAC as a whole doesn't benefit from a chair leading the group.

Becky supports Larry's position; and the RAC has historically been very effective with this format; she has taken this model to other organizations.

Harold expressed that without a chair, there isn't a designated person to attend the State Director's meeting. A representative selected may not have the authority to take action resulting in more information sharing. He feels that the RAC hasn't been as active in forming subcommittees, thus limiting the action taken on issues. He would like to see the RAC be effective and act on issues.

Mack supports continuing the current format with improvement in forming subcommittees to work on issues. A chairman would still have second hand information to bring forward while Mark can brief the members all at once.

Harold asked how interest in RAC participation could be improved. Lance stated that he feels that groups will have to nominate representatives to apply for RAC.

Mark reviewed RAC categories and the nomination process and selection of members. Each category is 'refreshed' every year as five members expire every year. Members often are named to a second term to provide continuity and take advantage of the experience gained in the first term. The trend is that people often apply only once and don't reapply if not selected. Mark contacts past members and applicants, public outreach meetings and individuals that have contacted the office with concerns, encouraging them to apply for the RAC. Age demographic also is a factor, as younger people don't generally join organizations, clubs or volunteer as they did in the past and the current RAC model was set up around 20 years ago.

Jim noted that Category 1 *includes* grazers, but also includes other organizations, other groups may feel that they are under-represented if there isn't someone from their industry.

Todd will request members to step forward to help on issues, the public shares more information with representatives than they will bring to the BLM. The public land uses in Eastern Montana are changing.

Larry noted that the BLM is about multiple uses and not one issue should be given a place in the spotlight. Larry and Rita noted that BLM maps and GPS systems leave users sometimes confused with the information available.

Mark stated that during the nomination process the district manager and the field managers may move people into categories where they are qualified to represent in

order to maintain expertise on the panel. Each member represents a category, but they may speak across categories, sharing their knowledge on various topics.

Diane suggested a subcommittee for recruitment. Tim noted that in some organizations/committees, the application is valid for three years.

Lance was asked to be on a Buttes, Breaks and Badlands committee to bring tourism to eastern Montana (Chalk Buttes, Makoshika State Parks etc.). The Montana Wilderness Association, MSU-Billings, Custer National Forest, Southeastern Montana Tourism committee and private citizens are currently represented.

Currently the group is designating points of interest in the area and he asked the rest of the RAC to let him know of sites to be recommended. Mark Good from the Montana Wilderness Association stated that the goal is to provide a resource for travelers that are interested in areas with scenic and cultural values and to provide directions to these sites. Cal noted that the Montana Wilderness Association works collaboratively with local economic groups to capture the tourist dollars.

Tom echoed Larry's comment about public lands being available for multiple uses. The Oil and Gas (O&G) industry's greatest issue right now is regulations regarding the Greater Sage Grouse which is slowing development and discouraging O&G activity across the state. It is an issue that needs to be addressed and understood. The Montana Petroleum Association is pulling together a group of interested parties and producers as a committee to work on the concerns affecting exploration. The ability to develop minerals throughout Montana is a real issue for industry, he said.

Cal suggested that other members be on this committee, not just industry. Tom stated that the Montana Petroleum Association is the lead agency to organize the group and members are from a variety of interests. He will send participation information to RAC members. Cal is concerned that industry will produce an "industry report" and it may appear biased. Mack stated that the group is currently seeking members so anyone interested should join.

Public Comment Period

No Public was in attendance to comment.

State Director Jamie Connell Briefing/Working Lunch

Mark began the lunch session by asking everyone in attendance to introduce themselves. Jamie expressed her appreciation of the work that the EMT RAC does. She proposed a future meeting with RAC representatives to discuss how the RACs are working, along with any issue-driven topics. She asked if there would there be a benefit to holding a state-wide meeting and what the agenda would be. She encouraged members to individually bring messages forward, not wait until a RAC meeting to do so.

Larry thanked Jamie for coming, and stated that it's important to know the BLM staff for making contacts. He has participated in two joint meetings and he felt both were valuable.

Lance felt the meeting was valuable for communication and asked if there was anything that Jamie would like the RAC to work on, or if there were roadblocks that the RAC could assist the BLM to work to a solution. Jamie said that if there was a unanimous vote or concern on an issue, she could elevate the action to the Secretary of Interior. Topics that RAC may consider and take action on could be Keystone Pipeline, Tongue River Railroad and coal industry expansions or Wild Horse issues. Jamie will provide RAC members with her five-year "Top Ten" goals for the Montana/Dakotas. This list was reviewed and revised with the State Leadership Team and will be final after District and Field Office managers have commented.

BLM budget status and concerns were discussed. Changes are anticipated in staffing as directed by the Secretary of Interior and Director of BLM but Jamie doesn't see large changes in the BLM's initiatives with President Obama in office for a second term. The BLM can't lobby Congress but they can provide facts; supportive organizations lobby for public land issues.

Jamie has proposed a meeting with the Montana Governor to brief him on the Greater Sage Grouse issue. She would like this to include the BLM, U.S. Forest Service, FWP and NRCS so information would be presented one time and all parties would hear the same presentations.

RAC Member Briefings continued

Mack shared his biography. Currently chairman for Montana's for Responsible Energy Development. The group has recently been hosting meetings regarding the Otter Creek coal.

He said there are three different ways to move the coal through BNSF line; first, Tongue River Railroad; second, to Colstrip and use that line, that would decrease 40-50 miles of new railroad; third, west of Miles City and would follow another creek drainage further to the west and this would also decrease the amount of new line.

He said a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be completed as the old document no longer is satisfactory. Mack continued to say that the XL Pipeline could be very beneficial to North Dakota and Montana as oil can be put into the line in North Dakota and Montana, not just Canadian oil. He said wind energy sites are in Rosebud County and Treasure County and are on private land. The Federal government has made funds available for this development (approx. \$25/KW) but this funding may be cancelled and the cost for lines to the power plants (like at Colstrip) is very expensive.

Open discussion period and tabled Items

Mark initiated the discussion to revisit the RAC chairperson topic; and proposed that a member be selected to represent the RAC at the State Directors spring meeting.

Becky suggested that anyone interested in attending should make their wishes known and the members would select by consensus. Mark suggested that two be selected to be available to cover absences. Lance supported a chair/co-chair to be able to fill in as necessary or call them representatives. John stated that the person with the most RAC experience should fill the position if they have an interest in the responsibility. They would have the knowledge of how the RAC works and a feeling of what members would most likely support or to bring an issue back to the group.

Cal asked why seniority was a factor; John responded that a new person may have more ambition, but not the experience dealing with policies; and Mark could continue as facilitator; he can't make suggestions or initiate subgroups.

Tim made a motion for two co-chairs to be selected for the State Director meeting and that Mark would continue as RAC facilitator. He proposed that the Chairs would not have leadership responsibilities of the group, but would be the persons to push other members to attend meetings and act. The first responsibility would be to attend the State Director's future meeting.

Cal supported keeping Mark as the facilitator and more use of subcommittees to report back to the group as a whole. Becky agreed with Tim and Cal; stated that in the past, the subcommittees did have a chair.

Larry stated that in the past, subcommittees were made up of members interested in the topic and/or who had expertise on the subject. He supports the state-wide meeting and wants to make sure that the representative attends. Diane informed the RAC that the attendees for the State Director meeting would be the State Director, Associate State Director and the RAC representatives themselves.

Rita asked if this would be a closed meeting. Diane noted that this meeting will decide if a statewide meeting of all the RACs would be beneficial. Lance asked if the various Montana and Dakotas RACs networking would be beneficial; feels that the representatives or chairs would be able to discuss what issues are similar and propose topics that would benefit the BLM throughout the state.

Ernie recalled that Bernie had been selected as a representative in the past. Mark will look into the selection. He will email members with the information, suggested that a new representative be selected in case Bernie's selection was for a specific meeting, time or issue.

John supports utilizing subcommittees to take action and move issues forward to resolution. Harold feels that the subcommittees need a chair, the challenge is to choose someone who speaks for, but doesn't have authority, and the RAC needs to decide who and how they should support the group. Harold noted that no one stepped up for

Pumpkin Creek, if there are subcommittees for issues, they will have to take action to be effective. Cal felt that the representatives selected have been given the authority to act for the group and could vote. Lance stated that the representative should bring up issues that the RAC is working on or concerned about.

Harold requested that if a statewide RAC meeting is held, he supports an agenda that affects all categories and issues in the area they represent. He said he would be disappointed if a large amount of time was allotted to as subject such as “fracking”; and acknowledged that this subject is relevant to Becky, but not a priority to him. He sees the State Director meeting as a time to determine the agenda for a full, statewide RAC meeting and to gather information for what other RACs are doing and for the representative to report back to the EMT RAC.

Mark re-verified for the record --after all the discussion—that at that time there would not be a RAC motion to establish an EMT chair and co-chair; and the EMT RAC was unanimous in the concept that each subcommittee the EMT RAC forms will have a chair elected or designated to manage the affairs of that subcommittee.

John wanted to revisit the chair/co-chair issue if the subcommittee format failed. Tim stated that the issue would never be resolved if the RAC continued to revisit the topic.

Todd recommended that the group nominate a representative for the State Director meeting and determine what the expectations were; specify roles and responsibilities and set them up for success. He said he will be asking for future subcommittee help and looks forward to having someone he can call as a sounding board to sort through issues.

Rita stated that the representative should bring the information back to the group to get consensus, realizing that timeframes sometimes may not allow for it, and the representative will have to make a decision, doing their best to represent the group.

Bernie Rose was selected to be the first choice if documents supported his selection.

Members expressed interest in being the EMT RAC representative for the State Director meeting and then voted by secret ballot to elect such. The votes were tallied and the majority results chose Lance with Mack being second.

Harold made a motion that there should be a statewide Montana – Dakotas RAC meeting; to include all RAC members and not just chairs, co-chairs and representatives. Cal seconded the motion. This was unanimously approved by the EMT RAC.

EMT RAC Suggested topics for the SD meeting:

Trainings or updates; grazing; share ideas and network; energy on public land; coal; oil and gas issues; green energy; cultural sites protection; sage grouse; access; land exchanges; blocks of public land for access versus efficiency to operators.

Mark suggested that the topics be narrowed. Tim what energy has the biggest effect on BLM lands and asked what the BLM wants the RAC's end product to be. Harold wanted the agenda: to not be specific to a geographic area; something that can result in a measured outcome; and not just be informational -and in a sense- a of waste of time.

Other thoughts posed by the RAC were: what can the RAC provide that is meaningful information to BLM; what issue is shared by all RACs; what specific information can the RAC members take away from the meeting and do something with it; and how can the information shared or gained help RAC members do their job.

Lance's sideboard from the RAC is to 'show up'. He wants the votes to come from the group and will give a presentation after the SD meeting.

EMDD District Manager (Diane Friez)

Diane suggested a joint meeting with Wyoming as the Resource Management Plans (RMP) work across the border. The Wyoming RAC had a presentation on split estate issues that was well received. She asked if there would there be an interest in having a joint meeting and if the EMT RAC would like to hear the Split Estate presentation.

She asked the RAC to let Mark know what your thoughts and recommendations are for these. The MCFO staff has been reorganized to work on North and South Dakota Field Offices issues.

The MCFO draft RMP is to be released Feb 2013 and the South Dakota Field Office-produced draft will be out the spring of 2013. She suggested that the EMT RAC establish a subcommittee to review the draft RMP and be involved with moving it to a final document. Workforce planning is continuing as the BLM strives for a 10% reduction in workforce by 2014.

Miles City Field Office Manager (Todd Yeager)

Mack asked how many BLM work positions had been reduced. The MCFO has decreased by eight overall. Todd said the BLM is telling the public that it has to do less with less now. Todd would like the RAC to let him know how best to communicate with MET RAC members and what information they would like him to provide; whether by email, mailed hard copy or monthly meetings.

Todd reviewed the current MCFO ID Team Projects that are being worked on and a summary was handed to RAC members.

Todd asked if there would be interest in a subcommittee for the Thunderbird Pipeline EIS. **Interested RAC members were Mack and Cal;** Todd will keep them informed and involved.

Wyoming and Montana BLM will be working together on the EIS and the timeline is around 16 months from the printing of the Federal Register notice of the EIS.

The Pumpkin Creek Management Plan will be kicked off in January to get public comments and start the process. RAC membership being at public meetings would be greatly appreciated. The MCFO needs the RAC involved in the ID team and be able to help make the decisions for use.

Surrounding landowners and have been contacted as grazing interest has come from Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming; other outdoor recreation user groups are showing tremendous interest, too.

If grazing is offered, applications will be accepted; authorizations issued and the BLM anticipates litigation on those decisions. The site was available to ranchers that were affected by the fires; it was not used. Rancher Fritz Zook and the Deseret Ranch provided solar pumps to provide water and the BLM helped with some fencing projects.

The site has riparian, grazing, recreation and wildlife interests and the BLM has received requests for all uses. Public land and multiple uses don't mean all uses -on all public land -at all times; decisions will be made to offer the best for all programs. The Miles City Economic Development office also wants to be involved. Todd said, what decisions are made will set the BLM up for what will be done with land exchanges in the future; success will lead to success.

Harold and Lance volunteered to attend the Pumpkin Creek meeting. Lance and Cal reinforced that the subcommittee should have equal representation across the categories.

Mark noted that the committee must be made up in multiples of three and from each category; there is a Pumpkin Creek Subcommittee, most members are no longer on the RAC.

Mark will review and see what categories still need representation. Todd wants this site management plan to be right; of the 2.8 million acres of public land in the MCFO; of which roughly 1 million acres doesn't have public access.

Todd wants the subcommittee to be re-activated and involved in the decisions for the management plan. RAC members will coordinate with Mark for attending the Pumpkin Creek scoping meeting once a date is set.

Otter Creek coal mine: the BLM has about 2,000 acres of surface and the state of Montana owns the minerals. The tracts are isolated; the BLM is researching how this could be permitted. The State of Montana has asked if the BLM would be interested in a surface exchange; the MCFO is researching that at this time.

Billings Field Office Manager (Jim Sparks)

Jim provided a folder with BiFO updates. Jim requested RAC participation in the BiFO RMP public meetings, these commence in two months. Mark will help in coordinating RAC participation.

Target shooting is a current high profile issue in the BLM, nationally, said Jim. Hunting at PPNM is limited to shotguns and bow hunting; this action required approval from the BLM Washington Office. The BiFO has 11,000 acres open to hunting, but not target shooting, as target shooting often brings in garbage from spent targets. The new BiFO RMP is proposing additional restrictions; some of these are in cultural site areas. Jim requested the RAC comment when the BiFO RMP draft is released.

The Green Mountain Forest Health Restoration Project and Billings Motorcycle Club Exchange project will have public scoping and the NEPA process started in the near future. Jim asked if the RAC would like to participate in either of these projects and the scoping meetings.

Tim will participate at the scoping meeting in McCloud.

The Motorcycle Club has had a land exchange in the works nine years, Shepherd Ah-Nei Off-Highway Vehicle Area includes 160 acres of surrounded BLM land owned by the Motorcycle Club. The BLM would retain a walk-in easement on the site to retain access if the lands are exchanged. This possible exchange will have some controversy and Jim requested that the RAC members be involved in that process as well.

Todd informed the RAC that the BLM is meeting with Prairie County landowner Danny Thomason (who made a presentation to the RAC at a previous RAC meeting held in Miles City) regarding a land exchange that he had proposed.

Next Meeting:

March 5-6, 2013 at Miles City BLM offices

Field Trip: Pumpkin Creek Ranch and Recreation Area

Future Agenda items:

WYO- Split Estate presentation

Thunderbird Pipeline

Briefing paper regarding Pumpkin Creek Ranch and Recreation Area