

**Western Montana Resource Advisory Council Minutes**  
**June 1, 2011**  
**Butte Field Office**

**BLM Western District Staff Present:** David Abrams, Tim Bozorth, Scott Haight, Rick Hotaling, Rich Torquemada, Lindsey Babcock (Acting Assistant Field Manager – Missoula), Brad Rixford (Outdoor Recreation Planner – Butte)

**BLM State Office:** Kate Kitchell, Associate State Director; Diane Friesz, Deputy State Director for Support Services; Mel Lloyd, Chief of External Affairs

**Forest Service:** Margaret Gorski, Recreation Program Lead, USFS Region One

**RAC Members Present:** Ted Antonioli, Francis Auld, Wayne Farley, Nate Finch, Steve Flynn, Michael Gibson, Russell Kipp, Katherine Looney, Mitzi Rossillon, Sam Samson, David Schulz, Mark Sweeney, Bob Walker

**RAC Member Absent:** O. Alan Weltzien and one position vacant

David Abrams, RAC coordinator, opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with a review of safety items, travel reimbursement, and meeting ground rules. He also handed out flyers for a BLM wild horse and burro adoption to be held in Bozeman at the Gallatin County Fairgrounds on June 24 and 25.

David reviewed the action items from the last meeting in 2010. The only item was suggested guidelines from Mr. Hooks. David has received some feedback from other RAC members and said to send him an email if anyone else has comments.

**Opening Remarks:** Rick Hotaling, Western Zone District Manager, encouraged the RAC members to let BLM know what they are interested in so that BLM can make their updates more meaningful – they will strive for fewer topics with more detail. Other projects or issues can be raised at any time and an agenda item will be included at each meeting for BLM to hear what RAC issues are. Today there is an agenda item entitled “RAC Feedback to BLM.” He asked members to be thinking about what members would like BLM to focus on.

Rick introduced other BLM staff including Lindsey Babcock, Diane Friesz, Mel Lloyd, and Kate Kitchell. Associate State Director Kate Kitchell stated that she was here to listen and she had worked with advisory councils in Idaho, Colorado and Utah. Kate said RACs play an important role individually and collectively in helping BLM identify critical issues, sort through resolutions, and advise BLM of the direction the agency needs to head in the future. She encouraged members to engage in discussions on issues such as off-highway travel, transmission lines, recreation fees, oil & gas exploration and mineral development. Kate stated that on behalf of State Director Jamie Connell, she thanked the RAC for their time and efforts and encouraged the RAC to stay involved.

Question from Ted: *What did you do at USGS?* Kate said she was Center Director in Flagstaff and had also served in Corvallis, Oregon but her heart lies with BLM and their mission.

Mel Lloyd emphasized the importance of communication in all areas of land management. She has worked with the RAC in Colorado. RAC serves as a bridge to the active public interests and as a conduit for information flow.

**Outgoing Member Recognition:** Rick awarded service plaques to Francis Auld and Mitzi Rossillon, outgoing RAC members. He said BLM appreciated their time, input and advice over the last six years. Other managers echoed those sentiments.

**Election of Officers:** David Abrams explained the process for election of RAC chair and vice-chair. Elected individuals will serve through the remainder of 2011. The chair is the main conduit for BLM with the rest of the RAC. The vice-chair is there to fill in when the chair is unavailable. He opened the floor to nominations:

Nate Finch was nominated by Steve Flynn and seconded by Mitzi Rossillon. Sam Samson moved to close nominations with a second by Dave Schulz and Nate was unanimously elected as chair for 2011.

Bob Walker was nominated by Mark Sweeney as vice-chair. It was seconded. Another RAC member moved to close nominations; it was seconded and Bob was elected as vice-chair.

**Items of Interest:**

- **Butte Field Office, Scott Haight, Field Manager:** Based on input at the last meeting, BFO was asked to pick one topic that the RAC would be interested in and they could sink their teeth into. Butte chose to have the RAC take a comprehensive look at the fee structure for developed recreation sites. Scott would like the RAC to review what is currently in place and make a recommendation of whether BLM is charging too much or too little and if there are sites that are currently free that should be fee sites and vice versa. In the current federal budget climate, BLM is also concerned about appropriated funds available for site management. (See attachment "Proposed RAC Planning Project")

Scott mentioned that PPL-Montana is an important partner for operations and maintenance and any campground improvements. Butte's recreation business plan needs to be updated in the next few years and now would be the time to review and evaluate the current fee structure.

Sam asked how many of BLM's developed sites were currently non-fee. He mentioned specifically the Galena Gulch campground near Boulder. Brad Rixford responded that Butte has 10-12 sites where fees could be considered, however he cautioned that with fees come more commitments. Maintenance for Galena Gulch is easier than other sites because BLM drives by there almost daily on their way to the campgrounds at Holter and Hauser Lakes.

Bob Walker asked Margaret Gorski from the Forest Service if they still used the “iron rangers” or fee tubes. Margaret responded that the FS uses the fee tubes which have been redesigned to discourage vandalism. Brad Rixford stated that BLM uses the fee tubes at all the fee sites.

Bob asked about the range of prices at facilities – they range from free to \$10/night at the Holter Lake Campgrounds. Brad gave an update on the boat dock improvements at the Holter campgrounds and the types of amenities available there. Bob also asked about a comparison to other similar campgrounds in the area—whether they are public or private. Brad said Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks tends to charge a little more and Bureau of Reclamation charges a bit less so BLM is in the middle price-wise.

Steve asked about the process BLM uses for fee increases. Brad explained that BLM goes through a public-involvement process with concurrence from the RAC and when that is complete, BLM publishes a notice in the Federal Register. Scott would like the RAC to come up with the proposal – that would carry a lot of weight with the public and BLM.

Kathleen asked Margaret about the range of camping fees in the Forest Service. Margaret responded that prices range from free to \$15/night in the more developed concessionaire campgrounds. Cabin rentals are more and are based on size, location, and amenities.

Sam suggested a one-page information sheet that compares amenities and costs at various sites. Brad said that information is readily available from the current business plan.

Ted brought up that camping is more expensive this year because of the increase in fuel prices and he encouraged BLM to go slow with any price increase.

Hotaling asked how RAC would like to proceed – should we hear about the other office’s proposals before the RAC takes any action.

**RAC decided it made sense to hear all the proposals from the managers and capture as action items, then prioritize and decide which and how many issues they could realistically tackle.**

Scott continued with Butte’s second proposal – the Final Legislative EIS for the Limestone Hills Withdrawal for the National Guard Training Area is due out any day. Does the RAC want to review the document and preferred alternative and make recommendations back to BLM?

Scott gave a brief summary of the Limestone Hills issue including the Graymont Mine. Once the EIS is released the response period will be about 60 days and the RAC won’t meet during that time frame.

- **Missoula Field Office – Rich Torquemada, Field Manager:** Rich said Missoula doesn’t have an immediate need for RAC involvement, but there are a few projects that need to be on the radar screen.

1. Prep plan for Resource Management Plan (RMP) revision is complete but due to no 2012 funding, the rewrite won't begin until 2013.
2. Scoping for the Chamberlain Basin (Blackfoot) watershed assessment will begin this fall. Rich would like input from the RAC on projects that BLM can take to the NEPA stage. Can include a wide spectrum of activities from range, recreation, and minerals. Will update RAC at the next meeting.
3. Northern Continental Divide Conservation Strategy for Grizzly Bear Recovery – Missoula FO is part of subgroup to work on a strategy to consider delisting bears in certain areas (Bob Marshall, Glacier). Strategy needs to insure viability of bear populations over time. Goal of having a draft by the end of 2011 when it will be open for public review and comment. Rich would like to invite Chris Servheen from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to talk about the Conservation Strategy and allow the RAC to provide input up front. Criteria that will be included in the draft plan include habitat standards for vegetation, roads open/closed, backcountry food storage, livestock grazing leases, and oil & gas development on the Rocky Mountain Front.

Steve mentioned that background information on discussion topics prior to the meeting is helpful to RAC members to enable them to become informed before feedback or a decision is necessary.

Nate asked for a status update on the Ram Mountain Allotment (upper Rock Creek), a grazing allotment in the Missoula FO where the decision was appealed by Western Watersheds on the basis that the range would not improve fast enough with grazing management proposals. Went through protest and appeal process and BLM attempted to settle but could not come to an agreement. Rich decided to remand the decision to address all the items under appeal and create a new NEPA document. BLM is working with the lessee (Clarks) and they are now about half way through the NEPA process and expect to have a new decision by the end of the summer. Nate mentioned the collaborative effort to develop a new plan for that allotment over the last 3 years; Western Watersheds didn't participate and then appealed the decision – will WW collaborate this time? Rich said BLM is always open to working with stakeholders. In this case, there were parts of the NEPA decision that needed to be strengthened.

Nate asked if there is anything the RAC can do? Rich said the RAC can review the NEPA document and weigh in with comments or criticisms.

Ted asked where Western Watersheds is headquartered. Rich said they were located in Idaho but have branch offices in a number of communities including Missoula and Dillon.

Katherine asked if fee sites from Missoula and Dillon should be included in the fee site discussion. Rich said Missoula doesn't have many fee sites, but they could be included if the RAC wanted to address fee sites in the entire Western Zone. Tim Bozorth said Dillon's sites are at the low end of the spectrum (both in price and demand). He suggested getting through Butte's sites, and then Dillon and Missoula's would be easy after Butte's effort.

- **Dillon Field Office – Tim Bozorth, Field Manager:** There is an on-going project in Dillon that has a RAC subgroup – the Mountain States Transmission Intertie or MSTI. The subgroup has met twice and shared information via email. Background – the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) appealed to the MT Supreme Court regarding the lack of coordination with Jefferson County. Sometime this fall the Supreme Court will issue a decision. In the meantime, work is being conducted on the cultural portion of the EIS. Class I & II surveys should be completed this summer (records search of available information and sampling of on-the-ground sites). Class III surveys are intensive on-the-ground surveys of the proposed line. Need a preferred alternative to complete Class III surveys. The preferred alternative that was developed more than a year ago has been withdrawn. Since then, new information received has been shared with affected county commissions and members of the public who attended the meetings in Idaho and Butte. The planning group intends to schedule 12 face-to-face meetings with the affected counties and gather input on alternatives and opinions on routes.

Madison County contracted a siting study with Western Environmental Law Center in Bozeman. Representatives met with Madison Co. Commissioners and provided some good information. Headwaters Economics has done more detailed economic analysis along with tax implications of this project. These are topics the RAC subgroup will be addressing in the future.

The Draft EIS will not be completed before the Supreme Court decision is made or without the cultural survey information – looking at late fall or early 2012 before a draft is issued.

Other major projects for Dillon include East Grasshopper and Medicine Lodge watershed assessments. This summer, the interdisciplinary teams will be spending six weeks in the field to do the assessments for completion this fall. Dillon incorporates prescribed fire, fuels, and timber sales into assessments and they will be looking for opportunities to address forest health issues as well as conifer encroachment issues along with grazing, recreation and travel management issues.

Big Hole watershed assessment appeal by Western Watersheds: this involves several small allotments (8,000 acres) along the Big Hole from Jackson to Wise River. A hearing is scheduled for November but BLM will file a request for summary judgment as soon as the solicitor allows.

When weather permits, Dillon will have three active timber sales: Shale Creek (Grasshoppers), Stone Creek (head of Stone Creek), and Price of Beans (Centennials). Dillon is looking at two other sales for offer this summer: the Black Mountain sale west of Dillon and a sale in the Tobacco Roots.

RAC members will have an opportunity for involvement with the watershed assessments. Tim will send out a schedule for RAC members to attend field surveys if they choose. Once assessments are complete, a summary of findings will also be sent out for review.

Kathleen asked for an update on the white bark pine issue. As background information, Tim explained that white bark pine has been affected by blister rust and mountain pine beetle due to mild winters and are now active above the 8,500-foot level. At that elevation, limber pine transitions to white bark pine and the mountain pine beetle are devastating to the white bark pine. The Dillon FO has more white bark pine acres than any other BLM office because of the higher elevation. DFO is working with the Forest Service and Park Service to collect white bark pine cones to use for reseeded. It is an intensive project to get viable seeds; first the cones are exposed to blister rust, then grafting of older branches on younger trees. A higher elevation nursery is being proposed for the Gallatin NF. Climbers are coming from the Park Service this summer to cage the cones to protect from squirrels and birds, then cages are removed and cones are sent to the nursery.

Russell Kipp asked about the rotenone poisoning proposal for Dyce Creek by MT FWP to poison introduced trout and reintroduce native westslope cutthroat. Tim said there was a chemical to neutralize the rotenone in the downstream reaches. Does that affect cattle grazing? Tim stated BLM was already doing that where watershed assessments are complete; we would want grazing management to be supportive of fisheries.

Sam asked why BLM used limber pine for their studies. Tim responded that limber pine is a 5-needle pine related to white bark pine.

**Break**

David reviewed the list of possible action items as follows:

- | <b>Butte</b>   | <b>Action</b>               |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of recreation fee structure</li> <li>• Final Legislative EIS for Limestone Hills withdrawal (Due in next few months, Graymont Mine within area)</li> </ul> | <p>Subgroup Established</p> |
| <b>Missoula</b>  |                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (comes out in Dec.)</li> <li>• Review Ram Mtn. NEPA document (resolution from RAC?)</li> </ul>                                 |                             |
| <b>Dillon</b>  |                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grasshopper &amp; Medicine Lodge Watershed Assessments</li> </ul>   |                             |

David led a facilitated discussion of the list of action items. Nate suggested deciding how many topics the RAC would want to address, especially since there is already a MSTI subgroup. Mark didn't know if the recreation fee structure was a pressing issue that needs action. Scott said that may be the finding of the subgroup – that no action is needed right now.

Dave Schulz stated that if the RAC chooses to review the fee structure, that they limit the time frame and not belabor the discussion for several meetings. Kathleen supports Sam's suggestion of listing amenities for each site for comparison purposes.

Margaret Gorski, USFS, said BLM was in the same boat as the FS, facing reduced budgets and increased operations and maintenance costs. She said that the FS will be coming to the RAC with a fee structure review in the coming year.

Nate reminded the RAC of their commitment to the FS to review their recreation fees. Mitzi mentioned that she felt the RAC should make the BLM recreation fee review a priority and that if someone could afford a boat or other recreational toys, camping fees should not be prohibitive.

**Bob moved that the RAC set up a subgroup to review, evaluate, and make recommendations on the Butte FO recreation program in relation to fees and bring findings back to the RAC.** Seconded by Russ Kipp. Steve wondered if a subgroup was needed and thought the RAC may be able to address the issue at a single meeting. Scott thought it might take up an entire meeting and thought a subgroup may save the entire RAC some time.

Rick explained the process BLM needs to follow before fees are changed. Once the RAC subgroup makes their recommendations to the RAC at large, and, if they are approved, then BLM starts the NEPA process with public involvement.

**Vote: Motion passed**

Subgroups are set up in the same categories and proportions to the RAC at large. Only one RAC member is needed on the subgroup to serve as a liaison with the RAC at large. Nate asked for volunteers: **Russ Kipp, Category I, Michael Gibson, Category II, and Mark Sweeney, Category III.** Other members can come from the public as long as they represent the three broad interests as the RAC at large. Mark stated that he would serve until another member was found that resides closer to the major recreation sites, possibly in Lewis & Clark County.

Kathleen asked about time commitment for the Limestone Hills EIS. Scott said if the EIS comes out fairly soon, the RAC would want to review and compare the preferred alternative to the recommendations made earlier by the RAC and provide feedback to BLM. Ted mentioned the EIS would affect the Graymont Mine and said he wasn't up to speed on the issue. He volunteered to gather information and share with the RAC on what the stakeholders were saying.

Nate mentioned that the RAC needs to be open to adding topics to the action list based on emerging issues such as the watershed assessments being completed and the Limestone Hills EIS.

Steve stated that with all the NEPA documents that come out it would be beneficial to have a way for the RAC to address the issues and provide comments to BLM. Sometimes it is overwhelming for the RAC – can RAC members individually submit comments? Rick said the RAC could keep an open agenda item for RAC comments or, when BLM solicits for agenda items – suggest a particular issue as a discussion topic.

Bob said MSTI is a statewide issue, recreation fees are primarily for the Butte FO and he asked if subgroups should be formed to deal with broader issues rather than local issues. What has been done in the past? Ted said it makes sense for RAC members most interested in an issue to float a

resolution for RAC consideration. Nate wondered about voting protocol on resolutions. Can we vote by email? Mark said they might be circumventing public comment in that instance. Rick stated that individuals can offer personal opinions via email but before a resolution could be voted on, it would need to be discussed in a public forum (e.g. RAC meeting). In the past, the only votes taken via email were on resolutions previously discussed at a meeting where there wasn't a quorum.

Rick encouraged members interested in a particular issue to send an email to other members asking that it be an agenda item at the next meeting so it can be discussed in a public forum.

Nate said it may not be timely for the RAC to weigh in on Ram Mountain with a resolution, but they can offer comments individually. Nate related his experience with a subgroup on a potentially contentious grazing permit renewal. The subgroup recommended a grazing strategy back to the RAC that dealt with sage grouse and other issues. The RAC's recommendation became the preferred alternative for the environmental assessment (EA) which has been successfully implemented.

Sam also said the subgroups worked well for travel management issues.

**11:30 David opened the floor to public comments. There were no public comments.**

Rich said the Ram Mountain process is different because one party won't collaborate. Individual members could weigh in with support for the decision.

Bob summarized some of the action items with a recommendation of having a speaker come in for the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. On the Ram Mountain and Limestone Hills EIS issues – if we had someone on the RAC that wanted to address that specific topic at a future meeting, they could take it on. When is information needed for agenda so it can be published? Rick said they will be looking for agenda items in July for decision topics that need to be listed in the Federal Register. Discussion topics that are informational only can be added to the agenda right up to the day of the meeting.

Mitzi made the comment that the Limestone Hills withdrawal has implications for other resources including archaeology and biological resources. The Department of Defense and the National Guard have not been the stewards of historic and archaeological resources and need to have strict guidelines on how resources are managed. Ted will be sharing information and gathering comments from the RAC. Scott will coordinate with Ted. BLM can decide if it needs to be an agenda topic. He will be the RAC point of contact and needs background information from BLM.

Kathleen mentioned that it is frustrating not to have background information on topics ahead of time, and members need more than 4 or 5 days to read. David Abrams said BLM is cognizant of the need and will try to get specific information out well in advance of the meeting.

Kathleen also asked for a schedule of watershed assessments in the Dillon FO. Tim said the team will spend three weeks in each watershed and he will share information with the RAC if

they are interested in attending and observing the process. If Kathleen is interested in a certain area, they can try to narrow that down.

**U.S. Forest Service – Margaret Gorski, Recreation Program Lead for the Northern**

**Region:** Margaret said the Recreation Enhancement Act stipulates that the FS works with established RACs. They want to package the FS fee proposals in a way to minimize the impact on RACs' time. All recreation program areas compete for the same pot of money that developed rec sites are managed with, including wilderness and heritage resources.

Challenge to inventory sites, provide for safety concerns, identify maintenance needs, and look for partnership opportunities on a budget that is staying the same or declining over the years. Region One has about 1600 developed sites (400 fee). They have looked at reducing costs through shorter seasons, closing some sites, and changing the fee structure.

Changing fees is a sensitive issue politically but all federal agencies are looking at budget reductions and there may be a proposal for fee changes before the RAC sometime in the next year. There is a commonality with all federal sites; the discussion and information gathering through the subgroup established today will help with the discussion on FS fee sites.

Sam asked if special use permits were standard nation-wide. Margaret said rules and regulations were the same, but the number of days for a stay limit is set locally and used as a management tool.

Bob Walker was state trails coordinator for FWP for 17 years and he expressed a need for consistency from agency to agency. He recommended adding other agencies (FS) to subgroup formed today to look at recreation program fee structure.

RAC took a lunch break at noon and reconvened at 1:20 p.m.

**RAC Feedback to BLM:**

Wayne Farley represents Rock and Mineral Clubs and recreational rock hounding. Their group heard rumors of restrictions imposed by BLM for rock hounds – if more than 2 people went out on BLM land, they need to submit a plan to BLM and they need a \$100 permit and there are more restrictions on digging; any holes in the ground need to be reclaimed and inspected by BLM. There is another category for recreational mining and he referenced a claim near Salmon Idaho to dig opals where they dig a trench 10 feet deep with an excavator and then fill it in after a few years. Wayne understands that situation is different and why they need to have a bond.

Scott responded that for areas open to mining activity such as casual recreational use with hand tools or shovels, BLM has no permit requirements but you cannot cause undue degradation. There are requirements for special management areas such as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), National Monuments, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. Rick said BLM staff would verify rules and regulations and let the RAC know. A question was asked about picking up artifacts, fossils, or petrified wood on BLM land. Picking up artifacts and vertebrate fossils is not allowed. Collecting fossilized non-vertebrates or petrified wood for personal use is allowed, but not commercial use.

Bob Walker asked if it was appropriate to have a subgroup report on the agenda for each meeting. David has it captured for the next meeting.

Bob also asked for a status report on the “Wildlands Order” passed down by the Secretary of Interior. Congress said not to expend any money on the Wildlands Order. Rick responded that the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) was also referenced in the Wildlands Order. BLM’s direction is not to implement the Wildlands Order but FLPMA is still in effect. Washington Office will issue guidance on how to proceed. Information will be forwarded to the RAC as it is received. An update will be provided at the September meeting and how it affects local decision making.

### **Mountain Pine Beetle Proposal – Steve Flynn**

Following is the handout provided by Steve Flynn for RAC consideration

The Western Montana RAC would like to request that the BLM develop an action plan to address the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation on BLM land within the western region of MT.

The plan should include:

1. Total acres infested by Field Office
2. Acres available for treatment (net of WSAs, etc)
3. Staffing and logistical support necessary to accomplish treatments within the next three years.
4. Report this information to the RAC at the next scheduled meeting.

A number of un-prioritized reasons for this request are listed below:

- There is a large amount of forested acres within the western region on BLM land that is impacted by the mountain pine beetle.
- For various reasons, the BLM has the capacity to address only a fraction of these infested acres.
- There is a shelf life for MPB-killed timber; its value as saw timber declines over time.
- According to the experiences of Canadian Forest Managers, the fire danger does not moderate after the red needles fall from the tree. They have experienced extremely hot, unpredictable fire behavior in stands of older dead LPP with spotting up to 3 miles ahead of the fire. The impacts to soil and water have been extreme.
- As the economy recovers, the demand for wood products will increase. The limiting factor for the continued survival of the timber industry in MT is the availability of raw material.
- Treating these infested timber stands will establish a new forest much more quickly; one that is protected from catastrophic wildfire.
- Treatment will result in significant hazard reduction and the reduction in risk to adjacent landowners.

**Discussion:** Steve said the MPB issue was raised earlier with the RAC and he wanted to raise the issue programmatically rather than by project. He proposes that BLM develop a plan and needs list to address the MPB problem over the Western District and to do that, BLM needs more

resources, keeping in mind that the timber has a shelf life of up to nine years. He would like BLM to find out what it would need as an agency to implement treatment over three years.

As the economy recovers, Steve expects the demand for lumber to go up and they will need more raw material. They can use MPB timber for their stud production in Deer Lodge.

Steve referenced a fire/fuel reduction symposium he attended in Helena where Canadians reported that fire danger goes up in MPB trees and trees burn extremely hot (trees consumed) with spotting up to three miles.

Sam asked how long it takes before MPB trees start to fall – estimate of 10 years.

Bob asked if a report at the next meeting is doable. There are some basic statistics already available from Missoula FO.

Steve asked for the RAC to make a formal proposal to BLM with the idea that it would be forwarded up the ladder to the State Office and Washington Office.

Ted wondered if BLM sold timber through a “green slip” program or if it used categorical exclusions for projects. Lindsey Babcock said BLM uses green slips (limited to 250 MBF), stewardship contracts and traditional timber sales. The amount of sales under a stewardship contract varies by Field Office from year to year.

A member asked if BLM sales were appealed. Tim Bozorth said they can be appealed but BLM doesn't have a viability standard or a soil compaction standard in their management plans that can't be met.

Mark Sweeney said he supports proactive management for timber.

Rick said by the next meeting, BLM could put together an information sheet on number of acres infested by field office, number of acres available for treatment minus WSA's, etc. The hard part will be determining the resources needed (staffing) since it is not a matter of having more foresters. It takes time to work through the decision process of deciding how many acres to treat and where. Where will the emphasis be on the ground?

Steve agreed and supports getting started on the process. He thought the WO should fund increased planning at least in the short term (contracting or enterprise teams) to accelerate the planning process. Would like to see action taken since the RAC only meets 4 times/year.

Rick said any numbers developed would be a guess and that the capacity for analysis would need to be based on current staffing. Typically NEPA looks at a large area for planning purposes while the project area (acres treated) is much smaller.

Kate Kitchell stated that the MPB was a timely and relevant issue that needs to be assessed. She suggested that BLM take the proposal and come back to the RAC with considerations on how to proceed. Cautioned the RAC about asking for funding changes – we need to find a balance and

not taking funding from one program to a specific topic. Red trees should be addressed in a systematic way – all actions need to have public involvement and we need to be mindful that there are many opinions that need to be considered.

Ted asked about the trend for timber sales – more or less? Rick responded that there is a slightly upward trend.

Mitzi asked if BLM had shelf projects and if that would be a starting point? Each FO has a number of projects, some small, some large.

Rick reiterated BLM's concern about specifying a number of acres and a time frame that would be unrealistic to meet. BLM can provide a starting point with the staff we have and work with the RAC to see if there are other opportunities to increase treatment areas.

Tim Bozorth said all sales in Dillon over the last 10 years have been Forest Health Treatments that include red trees.

**Sam moved to support the proposal by Steve Flynn; Dave seconded.** Motion passed.

**Mark moved to form a timber sub-group, seconded by Steve.** Motion passed. Members who volunteered are:

**Steve Flynn, Category I**

**Kathleen Looney, Category II**

**Dave Schulz, Category III**

Steve said the sub-group would get together and clarify information required from BLM.

**Montana Legislative Report – David Abrams:**

David summarized some of the key bills from the 2011 Legislative Session on a wide spectrum of issues (see attached power point presentation).

David volunteered to send the RAC a link to the legislative site so they can read the language of any particular bill they are interested in.

**Next Meeting:**

**Date:** September 28, Wednesday

**Location:** Dillon (suggestion made to make arrangement for a working lunch with everyone chipping in). David will make arrangements.

**Agenda Items:**

Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy (Chris Servheen)

White Bark Pine Project (Dillon)

Ram Mountain NEPA status report

Limestone Hills Legislative EIS

Wildlands Policy Update and local impacts

Subgroup Updates (MSTI, Recreation Fee Structure, Mtn Pine Beetle)

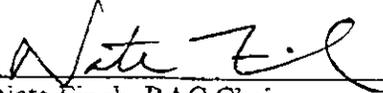
Western MT RAC Mtg Notes/13

**Action Items:** Watershed Assessment Field Trips (Dillon FO will let RAC know)  
 Clarification of rock hounding regulations (David will let RAC know)  
 Update on Wildlands Policy  
 Timber subgroup (Mtn Pine Beetle) The subgroup will work with BLM to present info from BLM (four items from Steve's proposal). Steve will be point of contact.

Steve offered a tour of Sun Mountain Lumber in Deer Lodge. Rick suggested the MPB subgroup tour the facility and send the invitation to any other RAC members that are interested.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Approved by:

  
 Nate Finch, RAC Chair

Date: 7/7/11

# Western Montana Resource Advisory Council Minutes

## September 15, 2011

### Dillon Field Office

**BLM Western Zone Staff Present:** David Abrams, Tim Bozorth, Scott Haight, Rick Hotaling, Rich Torquemada

**RAC Members Present:** Ted Antonioli, Wayne Farley, Nate Finch, Michael Gibson, Russell Kipp, Katherine Looney, Sam Samson, David Schulz, Mark Sweeney, Bob Walker, and Alan Weltzien

**RAC Members Absent:** Francis Auld, Steve Flynn, Mitzi Rossillon and one position vacant

David Abrams, RAC coordinator, opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with a review of safety items, travel reimbursement, and meeting ground rules.

David reviewed the action items from the June 1, 2011 meeting:

- Subgroup report for Butte Field Office recreation fee structure;
- Review Limestone Hills Withdrawal EIS;
- Watershed assessment field trip;
- Timber issue subgroup update.

David also asked the group to be thinking of a date for the next meeting, usually held in late fall or early winter (November-January).

Rick Hotaling explained travel forms and end of fiscal year requirements. Myra from the Butte FO will be down later this morning to expedite submittal of travel reimbursement.

David and Rick recognized outgoing RAC members for their years of service: Wayne Farley, Russell Kipp, and David Schulz. All three members expressed their gratitude to BLM for the opportunity to offer advice to BLM and the experience of hearing about projects and issues that the general public may not be aware of.

Nate opened the floor for RAC subgroup reports. Mark Sweeney said that he, Russell Kipp, and Michael Gibson had met with Brad Rixford, Scott Haight, and Sherry Lionberger from the Butte FO on August 23. On September 14, they had the opportunity to visit BLM recreation sites near Helena. The group looked at amenities offered and the fee structure. Mark complimented BLM on the condition of the sites and felt the public was getting a good value for their recreation dollar, especially the sites with on-site caretakers and volunteers. Overall he felt the fees were too low and should be increased. Fees are \$10/night at the Holter Lake sites and \$6/night at the Holter Dam site on the Missouri River.

The subgroup felt the \$2/day-use fee per vehicle was a real bargain. The subgroup would like to see fees standardized.

Concerning the Holter Dam site on the river, the group wondered how BLM captured fees from outfitters using the parking area, restrooms, and boat launch site. Russell Kipp said that Montana FWP adds a \$100 annual surcharge for outfitters to use all FWP fishing access sites and thought BLM could consider something similar. He cautioned BLM about not getting too “crazy” with fees because outfitters still needed to make money.

The subgroup commended BLM for their professional relationship with PPL Montana and their partnership for providing a quality recreation experience for visitors.

Russ related that the BLM recreation sites on the Big Hole River were not as nice as the ones on Holter Lake. The sites are smaller but right on the river and camping is only \$6/night. He stated that \$10-12/night would not be out of line.

Tim Bozorth explained that BLM has a joint program with MT FWP to manage use on the Madison River. Commercial use outfitters are charged 3% of gross receipts (by regulation) and shuttle drivers are managed under a separate special recreation permit. Revenue from the program is used by FWP to administer the program and pay the personnel involved.

Russ said the Beaverhead and Big Hole Rivers are “permit rivers” from MT FWP because outfitters are charged \$5/day for a user day whether they use the river for that day or not.

Nate cautioned about excessive use of fees because outfitters (or grazers) have other out of pocket expenses that enable the outfitter to operate.

Scott clarified that the subgroup’s task was not to make recommendations on outfitter fees but to look at public amenities and sites. Mark thought fees could be doubled and not be out of line although a 100% increase would not be feasible. The final subgroup report will be offered at the next RAC meeting in a worksheet format for consideration by the entire RAC.

Michael commented the public is getting a great deal at the recreation sites and that a 20% fee increase would not be out of line to offset operation and maintenance costs. He also stated the subgroup needs a replacement for Russ Kipp.

Nate asked if the group compared costs of private recreation facilities to BLM sites. Mark responded that they checked private sites in the Holter area and BLM sites were priced less than either private or MT FWP sites. At the FWP White Sandy site, camping spots are \$20/night with electrical hook-ups. Scott explained that any fee change would be coordinated with FWP and the public would be given an opportunity to comment.

Mark said the fee that stood out as being low was the \$2/day per vehicle at day-use sites. He felt that could easily be raised to \$5.

Bob Walker provided information on current fees for FWP sites and asked if BLM has received any complaints from private campground operators related to unfair competition. Scott said to

his knowledge no commercial entities have complained but the amenities are different (private operations usually offer electrical and sewer hookups).

Nate asked if BLM can produce operating costs for each site. Mark said that information has been provided by BLM staff; it factors in PPL contributions, user fees, and appropriated funds. The sites would be operating at a loss if not for PPL funding which provides about 50% of costs.

The PPL funding is set up in one account so money can be shifted to areas such as the Big Hole sites if the need arises. Scott said the intent of the government recreation sites is not to make money, but in the world of tight budgets, we need to plan ahead and make the most of what we get. The current fee structure has been in place for several years.

There was a short discussion on the Federal Land Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) that allows sites to keep user fees on-site for operation and improvements. Rick said fee compliance increased when agencies were allowed to keep the fees to aid site maintenance.

Nate asked if grazing or timber fees stay with the program. Tim responded that agencies get some of the money back but that grazing fees are so low, there isn't much to return in "8100 funding".

Bob Walker asked if the RAC could lobby? Rick said they could because they fell under the Federal Advisory Committee Act and not the Hatch Act. The RAC have sent letters of support to the Secretary of Interior in the past.

Bob also volunteered to replace Russell Kipp on the Recreation Fee Subgroup.

## **Field Manager Reports**

### **Butte FO Scott Haight:**

- BFO land base is expanding effective October 1, 2011 due to the addition of BLM managed lands in northern Lewis & Clark County. Previously those lands were managed by the Lewistown FO. It amounts to about 11K surface acres and about 45K of subsurface mineral acres.
- BFO is divided into 16 planning areas. The area defined as Upper Big Hole East (about 23K acres) is undergoing a planning process. A scoping letter was sent to more than 300 addresses (including the RAC) to combine projects by geographic area. The project includes habitat and vegetation improvement, wildland urban interface, range improvement, and abandoned mine lands. Scoping comments are needed by October 15, and then a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment should be available in February, 2012. A public meeting may be held depending on the level of interest. Scott said this EA would be a good opportunity for RAC involvement possibly in the area of travel planning and public comment review.

Kathy asked about the MT Dakotas standards for land health. Tim explained the five standards for land health – upland health, riparian, water quality, air quality, and biodiversity, but each of those has several components. They were originally developed as part of the Rangeland Health Initiative of 1995. BLM made the offer to review the standards and their various components at a future RAC meeting.

Kathy asked how the projects are funded. Scott said that several of the projects are part of the base funding or special project funding requests. Funding will come from a variety of programs. BLM is trying to package the projects for a geographical area rather than trying to piecemeal the projects.

Kathy volunteered to be part of a subgroup if one were established. Discussion followed on the number of current subgroups and how many the RAC can effectively handle. Nate suggested waiting until the next meeting (after scoping) to decide whether to form a subgroup.

#### **Missoula FO Rich Torquemada:**

- Missoula FO has 21 grazing lease renewals this year under one EA; the protest period ends this week but no protests have been received to date. If no protests are received, BLM will issue the lease renewals at the end of the appeal period.
- At the last meeting Rich reported on the Ram Mountain Grazing Lease Renewal EA in upper Rock Creek. With the other lease renewals, this one was put on hold, but a draft EA should be out in a few weeks. May be interest from the RAC for review and/or comment. Will email to RAC members.
- Chamberlain Watershed Assessment was a big project for the Missoula FO this year, about 20K acres intermingled with State owned land and private lands. From the assessment, MFO will develop a list of projects and the associated EA will be written. Chamberlain drainage is south of Highway 200, near the middle of the Blackfoot Range. MFO anticipates several timber related projects due to beetle-killed trees.
- Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem Conservation Strategy – being developed for potential management of grizzly bears. The coordinator is Chris Servheen with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The strategy is a precursor to pursuing delisting of grizzly bears in the Northern Continental Divide area in the next few years. Rich had asked Servheen about releasing a draft of the strategy for RAC review but that is not possible. The draft is expected to be out by the end of this year followed by a public comment period and public meetings, probably in northwest Montana. BLM related issues from the strategy include access, food storage orders, habitat conditions, sheep grazing, and recreation development. Other agencies involved include the Forest Service, National Park Service, MT FWP, MT DNRC and northwest Montana Indian Tribes.
- South Hoodoos timber sale of 7 million board feet (MMBF) will have a bid opening on September 23. The sale consists of a variety of material including pulp, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir. The North Hoodoos timber sale was last year and they are currently putting in roads to access the sale.

- In late June MFO conducted a 200 acre stand replacement burn in the Murray-Douglas area. It was completed with helicopters and drip torches and was considered a big success.
- MFO has completed a number of projects related to the Healthy Lands Initiative – lots of projects related to thinning, fuels treatment, vegetation management, and beetle killed timber salvage.
- Opportunities for future RAC involvement include the grazing permit renewal, recreation fee sites (campground, boat launch, Garnet Ghost Town), and the Conservation Strategy. The RAC suggested an informational presentation from FWP biologist, Jamie Jonkel if Chris Servheen was unavailable.

#### **Dillon FO Tim Bozorth:**

- Dillon has a number of on-going timber sales – one in Stone Creek, one in Shale Creek in the Grasshopper area and the Price of Beans sale in the Centennials.
- Tim passed around a picture provided by Russ Kipp of cone collection nets in a white bark pine stand. Dillon has the most white bark pine of any office in the entire BLM. The cones are collected and sent to a Forest Service tree nursery by Coeur d'Alene and one near Bozeman. White bark pine has been nominated for inclusion on the threatened and endangered species list. It's a complex process, but the seedlings grown are blister-rust resistant. Alan commented that he has observed white bark pine with more than 50% mortality and Tim said there are places in Wyoming with 70-90% mortality.
- The East Grasshopper and Medicine Lodge watershed assessments are being completed this summer, about 100K acres total. EAs will be written this winter.
- There is currently an appeal of the Big Hole watershed assessment by Western Watersheds. Proceeding through administrative law judge review and BLM has requested a summary judgment. The appeal was based on cattle grazing on public lands especially in riparian areas and issues related to grayling. Most of BLM's permits in that area are small, custodial leases intermingled with private land.
- Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI) – The draft EIS may be out by May, 2012. There were a number of meetings this summer including meetings for county commissioners in the affected counties of southwest MT and ID. Tim followed up with face-to-face meetings with all the counties. The initial plan had an offset of 1500-2000' from the current BPA line. A new study indicates that can be reduced to 200' as long as a falling tower could not hit the other line.

Most entities favor using a public land route as much as possible. There is a meeting next week with Jefferson County so they can hear the commissioners' route preference and thoroughly understand the pros and cons. Jefferson County sued MT Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) over a lack of coordination. The District Court ruled in the county's favor, and it was appealed to the MT Supreme Court. On August 3, the court heard arguments and a decision should be issued soon. If the Supreme Court agrees with the district court ruling, then "proper coordination" needs to be defined.

- Ted asked about the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issuing orders in the Midwest that stated the cost of transmission lines need to be paid for by those who benefit. That may affect how and who pays for lines in the West. Tim said “benefit” is not defined and they may consider that everyone benefits and costs would be spread to all users which would lower the cost of power in California and raise the costs of power in MT and ID.

Ted asked how the socio-economic portion of the draft EIS can be accurate until a decision is made on who pays for the lines because the impacts are completely different. Alan expressed opposition from his interest groups based on environmental concerns.

Wayne asked where power is being generated that will use the MSTI line. Ted said it was part of the “smart grid” being developed to transport wind power.

- In 2012 Dillon will work on the 10-year review of the Upper Horse Prairie Watershed (100K acres) to see if the changes made are effective and identify what else needs to be done to meet standards. There are several range projects in the works related to watershed assessment findings including fence removal, spring development, riparian enclosures, and weed management.
- BLM completed rotenone treatment of Cherry Creek and Dyce Creek to remove all the fish and reintroduce west slope cutthroat trout. The reintroduction should take place next year.
- Land Exchanges for access – the Hagenbarth exchange on the Big Hole River just west of “Notch Bottom”. BLM will get 100 acres on the river bottom that is a popular access site. Still in negotiations for a 340 acre exchange on the Madison River that would increase access to more than 800 acres.
- Reviewing the Sage Grouse Interim Management Guidelines to keep the species off the endangered list where it is a candidate species. Doing some regional environmental assessments to modify land use plans. The BFO and DFO are partnered with Idaho and Nevada BLM offices to complete an EIS. Eastern MT is included with Wyoming for this effort.
- A Washington Office team evaluated the Ruby Access Road earlier this week. This road was Montana’s priority project for federal highway funds to use on BLM roads. Roads that are heavily used and can’t be adequately maintained by BLM were candidates.
- BLM will meet with a landowner who sprayed 200 acres of sagebrush with 2-4D. The acreage is in prime sage grouse habitat.
- Russ asked about the abandoned mine land reclamation work that was completed in the Maiden Rock Canyon area. Tim shared information on the hazardous sites left from phosphate mining. Tim said some holes were 1400’ deep that need to be filled and seeded. Russ also mentioned several large ponderosa pines that are dead and right next to the river that may be a problem in another high water event. Tim said verbenone had been used on the large ponderosa to keep the beetles out because they are genetically unique.
- There was further discussion on the process used on Dyce and Cherry Creek. Nate asked if the vegetative standards would change along the treated creeks. Tim said BLM has

goals and objectives and tries to manage vegetation through management of grazing systems.

Mark mentioned that sterile trout triploids can be safely used in lakes as a fishery fish. The hatchery can use pressure and heat to sterilize fish at an early development stage.

**At 11:30 David Abrams announced the public comment period would start.** No public were on hand to comment so discussion continued.

Bob Walker suggested an information session on MSTI in 2012 for newer members. Tim agreed to try and make that happen and would like to have staff involvement from the public utility commission, Headwater Economics, and the Western Environmental Law Center. Alan mentioned that the MSTI subgroup needs a replacement for David Schulz. Nate suggested waiting until new members were on board to select a replacement.

David Schulz summarized Madison County's efforts to learn about all the different impacts of MSTI in Madison County. Where on the landscape should the line be built for the least costs (not just monetary) and impacts? Madison County is close to finalizing an arrangement with six entities to get research and answers to a variety of questions that were raised. The program will be paid for by Northwestern Energy and provides an opportunity for other counties to get their questions answered. Schulz sees Madison County as a facilitator for the work project serving as a "bank" for the research entities. Their interest is making sure the line gets built in the best possible place. Schulz commented on the benefit of economic information developed by Headwaters Economics.

Tim talked about other components provided by BLM to the research consortium. The GIS layers provided were wildlife and engineering.

A short discussion followed on the benefit to Montana for exporting power, different methods of transmission, and the impacts of wind generation. Job creation for MSTI would be short-lived and probably specialized.

### **Break for lunch**

**\*\*The next meeting date is scheduled for Thursday, January 19, 2012 in Butte.\*\***

**RAC Feedback to BLM** – an opportunity for RAC members to offer advice to BLM managers and get questions answered.

Ted suggested a field trip possibly to the Upper Big Hole East planning project area. Kathy suggested incorporating Land Health Standards and Guidelines. Rick Hotaling suggested talking about standards and land health assessments at one of the meetings and then taking a field trip in the summer (June or July) to see before and after project examples.

Rich Torquemada offered Missoula as a field trip site incorporating the Garnet Range and Garnet Ghost Town. Scott said there were places in Helena that could be accessed most of the year. Rick suggested having an afternoon meeting, spend the night, then have a field trip the morning of the following day. Dates for spring and summer meetings with a field trip can be determined at the January meeting.

Bob Walker suggested a training/orientation for new members. Most of the RAC members had an informal orientation but Bob was missed. Often times, the new members meet with the Field Manager of the area closest to where the RAC member resides.

Bob gave a kudos to BLM for the information released related to the Jackson Creek Road. The court decided the road to Jackson Creek Trailhead was private and consequently BLM lost public access. Helping people understand that BLM had no control over the loss of access is a challenge.

Bob also asked about the interagency (federal, state, county) meeting held at Axolotl Lakes in July. David Schulz said the group meets four times a year for to share information and look for opportunities to share resources. He encouraged other managers or county officials to try something similar in their area. The next meeting is October 6 at 1 p.m. at the Forest Service in Ennis.

Rich Torquemada said Missoula County does something similar four times annually with three meetings indoors and one in the field.

Alan suggested maps to go with field office updates so members can see geographically where projects are located. He would also like to hear about the “big picture” of BLM – how has management philosophy changed over the last 20 years at the State Office or Washington Office level. Where is the agency going?

Mark Sweeney asked Rich about the Discovery Basin proposal for easement across 180 acres of BLM land to create a road from Philipsburg to the backside of Discovery. MFO received a completed application from Ciche Pitcher / Discovery Basin last week and BLM's response is that it falls into a category that needs to be a cost share EA. If Pitchers agree, they will contract with a firm that will look at alternate routes across BLM and the impacts that arise from different routes. It does need to have public scoping and coordination with commissioners and relevant agencies. The County has removed some timber as part of a right-of-way clearing in the area.

Bob asked about a RAC recommendation to make blatant OHV violations a \$500 fine. Tim said it has been implemented when warranted; keeping in mind it's hard to catch people in the act. Bob wondered if BLM had taken advantage of the funding available through a FWP grant program for OHV trail rangers. He encouraged managers to check into the program if they are not currently using it.

## **Report on Limestone Hills Withdrawal EIS**

Ted Antonioli gave a presentation on the Limestone Hills Withdrawal EIS that will affect about 20K acres within the Butte FO. The project area is located northwest of Townsend and has operated as a military training range since the 1950's. The use is currently authorized under a right-of-way permit that will expire in 2014.

Three of the issues are: 1) loss of payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) to the counties, 2) uncertainty for the Graymont mining operation. Graymont has mined limestone with a kiln operation since 1981, and 3) unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the training range in a multiple use area.

BLM segregated the minerals pending a land status change. The segregation prevents any further mining claims from being filed. Graymont feels the segregation can put the viability of present claims in question because the company has to prove the validity of the mineral deposit at a higher level than previously required.

Limestone is heated in the kiln to produce lime. Lime is a bulk product that is sold by the ton. Consumers of lime are other mining operations and it is used to raise ph. It is also used to neutralize chemicals for pollution control. Demand is expected to continue or increase as Butte starts to treat water in the Berkeley Pit.

Graymont was pleased with the old arrangement of management (BLM) and is concerned about the EIS that was completed in April, 2008. The EIS is not released yet and is being held up by military reviewers. The socio-economic portion of the EIS has changed since 2008 – unemployment statewide has increased. Graymont is concerned about the uncertainty of the alternatives and what may be included.

Scott said the National Guard still has not published the Notice of Availability for the Final Legislative EIS in the Federal Register – he expected it by now. The Legislative Withdrawal can only be approved by Congress. After the release to the public, BLM needs to write the findings and recommendations then work with the National Guard to write legislation. It then goes to the Office of Management and Budget, and over to Congress for action. Graymont thinks the EIS needs to be supplemented and would like to be involved in helping draft the legislation. There is an opportunity for the RAC to be involved and weigh in on the issues.

Ted thinks the military may be difficult to deal with in the long term and there may be an opportunity for the RAC to find consensus with the parties involved.

Graymont is concerned that the National Guard may not be able to clear areas of UXO fast enough for Graymont's need. They are also concerned that their valid existing rights may not be honored by the National Guard.

Scott said BLM believes both entities can continue to operate successfully and the EIS should spell out the operating procedures. The area used by the National Guard needs to be under a Withdrawal under the Engel Act since it is a dedicated use. Most of the UXO dates from the Vietnam War era. When the Guard is actively training, they close the county road that runs through the training range at both ends, and then run a sweep through before it is reopened. Scott mentioned that BLM approved a 25-year mine plan for Graymont but it does depend on UXO being cleared by the National Guard.

Since there was no other discussion, David Abrams reviewed action and agenda items for future action or consideration.

#### Action Items

- Visual aids (maps) for field office reports
- New member orientation/training
- Background information to RAC members prior to meeting
- Bigger picture for BLM State-wide and Nationally

#### Agenda Items for future meetings

- Timber subgroup update
- Recreation fee subgroup report
- North Continental Divide Ecosystem Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy
- Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy
- Limestone Hills Legislative Withdrawal EIS
- Land Health Standards refresher (March meeting)
- Scoping for Upper Big Hole East

Depending on time, all agenda items may not be covered in the January meeting. Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Approved by:

Nate Finch, RAC Chairperson

Date: \_\_\_\_\_