

**NWX-DOI BUREAU OF LAND M (US)**

**Moderator: Sherry Foot  
February 28, 2014  
9:30 am CT**

RAC Members in Attendance (Call/In Person): Frank White, Carl Albrecht, Brian Merrill, Steve Burr, Steve Slater, Porter Teegarden, Rick Ellis, JR Nelson, John Harja, Bill Hopkin

BLM Employees: Tyler Ashcroft, Sherry Foot, Shelley Smith (for State Director), Patty Klein

Members of Public (Call/In Person): Chris Barney, Evan Day, Nate Saltzgiver, Braden Cline, Wendy Reith, Julia Miller

Sherry Foot welcomed everyone and asked those individuals on the call to please announce themselves. The call is being recorded for the purpose of note taking. The meeting will be a facilitated discussion with the end result of developing written advice to provide to the State Director. This written advice provided by the RAC will not be treated the same as public comments.

The BLM will not provide a formal response to comments received by the RAC. The BLM Will take any advice provided by the RAC into consideration in development of the proposed plan. We will need a consensus vote in order to submit the written advice. Which means all members in attendance will need to be in a concur. Because the regs state the formal recommendations shall require agreement of at least the majority of each of the three categories. Having only three numbers in each of the categories, so at this time you are the majority.

One disclaimer, John Harja, represents category number three, and because of his interest working with the state and working with the Sage Grouse plan as part of the state, he is going to abstain from voting. I checked with our Washington office and the solicitor's office, and we are given the okay to allow that to happen.

So the concurrence in category three will have to be those members that are physically here or on the phone right now--which will be our majority. The time provided for the RAC discussion will be split into separate activities.

We'll have a facilitated discussion between the RAC members to decide what advice should be included to the State Director on the key issues. And then there will be 45 minutes provided for actually preparing the written advice and having a vote of support. Any questions or comments?

One other item that the Forest Service has asked us is depending on when we get our new

members on board, which I'm hoping will be soon, they would like to have a recreational RAC meeting in May. That will take place once we get our folks on board.

Shelley Smith welcomed everybody. Thanked the RAC for their service and attendance and for helping us on many issues that we face. And of course Sage Grouse is one of the consuming issues. She is also here representing Juan today because he is at a Sage Grouse meeting in Denver.

Tyler Ashcroft: Thank you very much for allowing me to come and discuss the progress of the Stage ground (EIS) at this point in time. As I mentioned I'm one of the project managers working on the endeavor.

The other project manager is Quincy Bahr who came and talked to the RAC last time. Quincy's with Juan in Denver right now. I'm going to use my time mostly to provide you an update as to where we're at in our process.

As most of you know on January 29th, our 90-day public commentaries on the draft (EIS) concluded. Since that time the BLM, as well as the FS and our contractors have been engaged in an effort to basically review, and parse those comments into issues or themes that we need to respond too. In terms of numbers just to give people an understanding of where we're at, we received about 17,000 timely comments on the EIS.

Since that time, we've received about an additional 1500 comments that aren't considered timely. The majority of those comments came from five different organizations and primarily came in the form of form letters.

The organizations that submitted those were Defenders of Wildlife, Wild Earth Guardian, Sierra Club, America Wild Horse Preservation, and America Bird Conservancy. Of the 17,000, those represented about 16,800 of the comments. So what that left us was about 200 unique or individual letters.

Of those unique or individual letters, approximately 150 came from concerned or interested citizens. Approximately 50 came from representatives in the industry, conservation organizations, or cooperating agencies. At this point in time as I mentioned, the contractor is going through the process of what we call parsing comments.

What that means is we take every individual comment letter, we read it in its entirety, and we identify comments or unique comments.

Then we pull those out and put them into a database where we have a comprehensive list of the comments that we need to address. From there, we further group those comments into issues or similar themes. And in some cases, were able to respond to multiple comments through one response. We don't have a firm number on how many unique comments we have at this point and time. But right now it appears we're going to have about 7500. It could be up to 10,000, I think would be about the maximum of unique comments that we have to respond to

out of that body of comments we received.

When we do this, we identify what are called substantive comments. The concept of substantive comments is identified through NEPA regulations through our handbook and substantive comments do a couple of things. We're looking for comments in particular that question with a reasonable basis the accuracy of information included in the document; question the methodology that we used for our analysis; or present new information relevant to the analysis.

A number of entities submitted additional sage-grouse research that has been published while we were working the draft EIS.

That would be new information relevant to the analysis. The next thing in the substantive comment is that if someone presents reasonable alternatives to those that work analyzed in the EIS. A lot of people may have made recommendations that said please consider an alternative that looks at something in addition to those alternatives that you've looked at.

Anything that could cause a change in one or more of the alternatives would be considered a substantive comment. That's what we're looking for when we parse out the comments. Once something is identified as substantive, we really only have two options in terms of a response.

We can make changes to or modify the actual text of the document or we can provide a conscience-written response that explains why no changes to the text of the document are necessary. That's the complexity of the processes that we're now entering into.

Next step. This is a project where we have a very aggressive schedule, because of that we have a couple tasks right now that we're working simultaneously that ideally you could work on sequentially.

One of those tasks is responding to these comments. The other task is the development of a proposed plan. The agency takes the comments that were received on the draft EIS. We look at our alternatives that were considered in the draft EIS and we develop or create what's called a proposed plan which will be how the agency proposes to manage sage-grouse going into the future.

In addition to responding comments, we're working on development of a proposed plan. And then the final thing we're working on is actually starting to make changes to the EIS. Especially those changes that we know are necessary.

I'll provide an example. We receive a number of comments from the public that said we did not have enough information regarding the base line amount of the disturbance on the landscape, and therefore it was difficult to be able to adequately discuss the impact of having a disturbance cap due to lack of baseline information.

So that's something we know is a change that we need to make to the EIS. It was thematic

through the comments and we're very actively involved right now in developing what's called a baseline disturbance inventory.

That will be integrate into the EIS. So there's a lot of moving parts. With the proposed plan, sometimes we prefer that we would review and respond to all of the comments and then do the proposed plan.

That being said, we feel comfortable as an agency doing tasks simultaneously. Because we've reviewed the comments. We've had, I believe, 9 to 12, I can't remember the exact number of public meetings during the public comment period.

We've had opportunities to meet individually with the majority of the cooperating agencies to discuss their concerns. We have a pretty good understanding of what the comments are and what people would like to see included in the proposed plan. So that's actually what Juan and Quincy are doing right now. They are discussing very preliminary ideas of what may be included in the proposed plan with our other sub-regional partners. People that are going through the same process in Idaho, Oregon, Colorado, Wyoming. We're talking about where it's appropriate to have consistent management approach and where individual states are going to be allowed to have autonomy to make decisions based on unique circumstances that are present in each jurisdictional area.

Juan has also made it very clear that we're going to engage in a set of discussions with our cooperating agencies, in particular Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, and the state of Utah, as we start to identify what will be the content of the proposed plan. So that's kind of where we're at right now. The reason that this meeting is important and the timing of this meeting is because those three steps that I mentioned of responding to comments, developing a proposed plan, and changing the EIS, we have less than six weeks to do that.

We have a core team, and a contractor very committed to moving full speed ahead on these tasks. We have to get the proposed plan developed because after the proposed plan, there is an intensive GIS effort to run calculations to be able to do the proper analysis on the proposed plan.

Then we move into analysis of the proposed plan at which time we'll put out an administrative proposed plan final EIS to our cooperating agencies. That will come about mid-May through the current schedule. That's kind of where we're at with the procedural aspect of the Sage Grouse EIS.

And does anybody have any specific questions?

Steve Slater: After the EIS comes out, there will be 30 days to protest will go at that point? Is that the procedure?

Tyler: That's correct. First there's an administrative document that will go out to our partners to be able to comment on.

Then we'll make changes to that prior to publishing the proposed plan final EIS in the *Federal Register*. Right now everything is somewhat of a moving target, and that appears that the proposed plan final EIS will be made available to the public probably in the August time frame. At that time, that's when there's the 30-day protest period where people can submit written protests on the proposed plan.

Bill Hopkin: Yes I have one related to what you were saying about disturbance and a disturbance inventory.

You know, not all disturbance is created equal. As it relates to Sage Grouse, will you be attempting to differentiate the impacts of various kinds of disturbance, along with the scale?

Tyler: Yes. That is one of the more complex things that needs to be addressed. There's a lot of discussions as to what will count as a disturbance and that's already covered in the range of alternatives.

For example under alternative C, which is the alternative that is based on the National Technical Team Report plus additional conservation measures that were identified by a number of organizations during the scoping process, fire would count toward the disturbance cap. In addition, heavily grazed areas, some vegetation treatments, and agriculture lands would count toward disturbance.

Under other alternatives existing agriculture would be excluded from the disturbance calculation. That's one of the things we considered a range of alternatives in EIS. There's a lot of discussion regarding exactly what should be included in that proposed plan.

There is some information or ideas of what may be included in the Baseline Environmental Report or the (BER) report it is known. The BER report was used in development of the effected environment description of effected environment that accumulated impact analysis and discusses as you were just talking about the difference in the magnitude of impact associated with different activities. We'll be relying partly on that BER report in determining what goes into the disturbance cap.

Bill Hopkin: One follow up though, are there classifications of disturbance that are considered positive Sage Grouse?

Tyler: I wouldn't say we classify them as positive. At this point, it would be more as though they do not count against the disturbance cap. Which, for example, under some alternatives, removal of encroaching juniper does not count as a

disturbing action because this has potentially positive benefit for Sage Grouse then it creates more habitat. I don't think we identify or label any specific disturbance as positive at this point in time.

Sherry Foot: We do have the designated time frame now for the public comment. We'll go ahead and continue your discussion if you'd like after that.

Members of the public, now is the time that you can address the resource advisory council with any concerns or questions that you might have. Let me start with the folks on the phone. Chris Barney, do you have any interest in addressing the council?

Chris Barney: No

Sherry Foot: Okay. Thank you. Any other members of the public on the phone? Hearing none. In the room, Evan Day would you like to address the council?

Evan Day: Just very briefly. I'm extremely pleased that the approach that the BLM and Forest Service are taking pro-actively so the listing of the birdie ain't going to happen. I think that's great. And carry on. It sounds like you're doing a good job.

Wendy Rieth: Nothing at this time

Sherry Foot: We have Nate Saltzgiver.

Nate: No comments.

Sherry Foot: Braden Cline? No comment. I am going to go ahead and move forward. Bill and Tyler, go ahead and finish your concerns. Then we'll move into our facilitated discussion until Carl Albrecht comes and we'll then elect our officers.

Bill Hopkin: All right. What about your disturbance on private land within an SGMA?

Tyler: Yes. Under all parts of this, including the state's conservation plan, we're looking at Sage Grouse on a landscape basis. That means that disturbance that is on state or private lands would be counted towards the allowable disturbance.

The BLM recognizes very clearly in the DEIS that we are not allowed to dictate the amount of disturbance that can occur on private or state land. What it means is that if we are in excess of our disturbance cap because of disturbance on state or private land, it may preclude authorization of action on Federal land, because we would be saying that the amount of the disturbance

on this landscape which provides habitat for Sage Grouse exceeds what would be allowed.

Does that answer the question?

Bill Hopkin: Yes, right. But - and one more. What about historical disturbance in Sage Grouse areas? Where does that fit in?

For example back in the 1960's there was - late 50's early 60's a lot of PJ work done on BLM lands and private lands. Maybe more to the point, sagebrush taken out. Crested wheat planted. Is that being on the tally sheet here as part of disturbance?

Tyler: I would say no. I say that cautiously, but I would say no. We're not looking at disturbance in historical habitat. We're looking at disturbance in current and potential habitat.

That's one of those questions that's very hard to define, especially when you're looking at existing disturbance. And that's an issue, where there was a lack of clarity in the EIS that maybe caused some confusion amongst the public.

I will give an example here. I will start with a clarifier that this is the exact type of discussion that we're doing right now and a definitive solution as to what counts as disturbance is not currently in the document.

We have not honed in on what that will be in the proposed plan. Let me give an example of that. Historical habitat for an area, I'll say a large reservoir, like Strawberry Reservoir that has been in place for a long time. It is simply that area of historical habitat, but it is not habitat now.

It is not potential habitat now; will probably not be counting as disturbance towards that cap. That's probably the best I can answer that at this point in time. As I said, exactly what it is in and what is out, is not clearly discussed in the EIS. There's still a lot of ongoing discussions regarding that at this point and time.

JR Nelson: My question is, maybe you clarified this for everyone, started talking about Sage Grouse. Are you talking specifically referring to the greater Sage Grouse?

Tyler: Yes.

JR: And to the exclusion of the Gunnison Sage Grouse?

Tyler: Yes.

JR: Are there things taking place with the Gunnison Sage Grouse similar to this? Are you aware of any?

Tyler: I'm not aware of all of the actions taking place regarding the Gunnison. But what we're discussing in the EIS is only greater Sage Grouse.

Tyler: Currently, we're at a different part in the process regarding the listing status of the Gunnison. Because of that, there's not an agency undertaking to come up with new regulatory mechanisms. But I can't tell you the details of what's going on regarding the Gunnison at this point.

Man: Is it on Central watch list?

Tyler: No the Gunnison...

JR: It's higher up the ladder, it's not.

Tyler: No.

Man: Really?

JR: It's more in danger than the greater Sage Grouse.

Tyler: Correct. I wish I had my Biologist. I'll have to refrain at this point from making comments about the Gunnison sage-Grouse or I may say something inaccurate.

JR: For the purposes now that was a side-track idea.

Tyler: Off the table.

JR: We don't need to consider that.

Tyler: Correct.

Shelley: I think part of the difference is that its range is much more narrow. I don't think the lawsuit that prompted Fish and Wildlife to have to make a listing determination on the Greater Sage-Grouse by the end of 2015 applies to the Gunnison.

I don't know if the Gunnison Sage Grouse were part of that law suit. But that's what I'll look up and let you know when I find out.

Tyler: Any other questions? I will also provide one more statement from my perspective here. I'm happy to answer questions and try to provide clarification about what's currently in the document in this meeting.

I want to be very careful that I refrain from providing direct responses to some of the questions, or may ask not to answer that question. In that, our goal is clearly not to influence the comments that come from the RAC.

At this point we don't have a proposed plan in place. It's not the appropriate time to be discussing contents of the proposed plan with the public. Based on those two things, we're happy to provide clarification as to the content of the draft EIS or why we're considering the position and not considering. Beyond that, we may not be able to answer some questions that you may have.

Steve S: Tyler, just quickly to let you know, Gunnison has been proposed by the Feds to be listed as an endangered and they're right now still and they extended a public comment period with that. So they're still taking protests on that decision. It looks like they'll be designating critical habitats. So it'll be out of the hands of BLM and other agencies at that point.

Man: I know that's a real concern of practically everyone in San Juan County.

Sherry Foot: Tyler, should we go ahead and move into the facilitated discussion?

Tyler: Yes. If there's no further question for me. I think that's where we should end.

Patti: How long is the voting going to take place?

Sherry Foot: Just a few minutes. It won't be very long. When Carl arrives, and if we can find a breaking point in our facilitated discussion, we'll go ahead and have the election of officers at that time. Is that okay with you?

Patti: All right. Well for those of you on the phone, and those of you in the back of the room, we're at the point in the meeting where we will begin the facilitated discussions and develop key points on the draft plan.

The draft plan and the EIS for the draft letter to the State Director. So we have until 12 O'clock, actually until about 11:30 for discussion.

We'll develop the key points, and then at 11:30, we'll stop the discussion. Then we'll draft the letter with the key points.

So that when we close, the outcome will be that we have a draft letter for the State Director. Any questions? We have originally planned about 15 minutes

per topic for discussion. But I'm thinking since we have a little bit more, about 31 minutes.

Tyler: Yes. I think if we go 20 minutes per topic, and then maybe that will allow for a few minutes of transitional time to introduce the next topic. If we have less time, I'm guessing that we can spend more time at least on the last one.

Patti: Here are the topics for our discussion. The first one was brief .

The first one is mineral management. And for those of you on the phone, for minerals management it will be identified in areas where minerals we think, exploration, and or development will be allowed, restricted, or prohibited. And then secondly identify specific terms and conditions needed to protect Sage Grouse and Sage Grouse habitats.

So that's topic one. Topic two is lands and realty. The purpose of this is to identify ROW, avoidance, and exclusion area.

And then secondly, to identify terms, and conditions under which authorizations may be granted. The next topic we'll be discussing is livestock grazing. First we'll identify lands available for livestock grazing.

And the amount of forage available to livestock. And then secondly, we'll identify criteria to guide future sites, specific adjustments in the livestock management. And last we will discuss Sage Grouse, vegetation, and wildlife management.

First we'll identify areas of ecological importance. And designate priority habitats special status species. And then secondly, we'll identify desired habitat conditions and opportunities for restoration to prevent avoidable loss of habitat.

Any questions? For those of you on the phone, before we get started?

Steve Burr: Yes. Patti, you just rattled off a lot of information. I just want to say that it may have been helpful for those of us who are unable to attend in person to have had those information with respect to these topics prior to this call.

Patti: I can email it. Would you like us to email that? We have that information available on hard copy.

Steve: That would be great. I'm in my office in front of my computer so I could get it.

Shelley Smith: I have your email. But I don't have Rick's.

Patti: Those of you on the phone we'll take care of that. Any questions, go ahead.

Bill Hopkin: I may be off out in the edge here. Because my impression of what we talked about, as far as our comments, were going to be related to the proposed alternatives.

JR Nelson: That is also my understanding. Yes. We had a lengthy presentation by Quincy Bahr at our last meeting.

Tyler: A couple things related to that, because it does tie into the existing alternatives. When Quincy presented to the RAC, he anticipated that there was going to be a follow up meeting prior to the close of the public comment period and the RAC would be making comments on the existing document - making comments to submit at that point in time.

As I mentioned now, the public comment period has closed. We can still comment on the existing alternative, but the more beneficial information is what type of advice would RAC like to give to the BLM. And what should be included in the proposed plan.

And going back to these topics, these are the questions that we've tried to answer in the existing alternatives. So he did an extensive presentation.

These items on this list that actually come from our BLM planning handbook. And they state regarding Mineral's management--what are the planning decisions?

A planning decision is that you're going to identify what areas are appropriate for mineral leasing exploration and development and where minerals are going to be allowed, restricted, or prohibited. That's what we contemplate in the current range of alternatives.

Where I was anticipating or hoping we would go with our discussion is, where does the RAC believe the agency should go in its proposed plan? So does that make sense? We picked these four topics but we could have just had a broad open discussion.

But through the public comments, through our state and local governments, based on comments we received on the EIS, these are typically the most significant issues that people voiced concerns about when they expressed comments on this Sage Grouse project. Now, we do have in the document decisions regarding recreation. We have decisions regarding lots of things.

We cover the spectrum of resource issues that fall under a multiple use mandate. But these four are where we're going to be making decisions that a lot of public believe we have potential to really impact public lands and public land management. That's why we honed in on these particular categories.

JR Nelson: I guess my concern is that I know that I don't fully understand the process perfectly but you just reviewed how many comments you received and I assume those comments are based on specific things within each alternative. The public, those that have commented, probably at the end of each of their comments on various aspects of the alternatives has provided BLM with okay alternative C, is our preferred alternative.

But we would like to see you cooperate (CS) from alternative two.

Tyler: That's correct.

JR: It seems to me that if the RAC input is going to have any value, to Juan and the BLM, we ought to approach that from the same.

Tyler: I think you're right in that, if the RAC provides advice, that agency is to consider adopting the minerals management decisions from alternative X. A statement that says because... would be very helpful or providing some rationale from the RAC. I don't think it needs to be expensive because I don't really think you have the time to provide a letter that's going to have a lot of rationale between every one of those decisions and an explanation as to why the RAC believes that's appropriate to be very useful.

Patti: Any other comments on that?

Man: Yes. I think it's actually what Bill or Steve said. I think from the RAC's perspective, we had the impression as to after presentations on the alternatives, we were going to be working within that framework. Still not (unintelligible) to public comments but knowing that we would submit our own comments if we wanted to be part of that. But as the RAC's role to use the existing information to provide Juan and the State with comments on, you know, you're doing a good job. You're not doing a good job here. Maybe that's the same thing you're talking about here. But I think we were all thinking we all did our homework with the existing information.

Man: Brought things here to talk about rather than to brainstorm back through what you guys have done an extensive job on as well as the publics kind of, I don't know if that represents the people's impression as well.

Man: I'm a new comer, but I thought was our decision of last meeting.

Tyler: I don't see a problem with us going in that direction if that's the expectation that everyone had coming into the meeting. I also don't think we're that far apart. We may be talking past each other a little bit here.

I think that if you start talking about what's currently in the document and what you believe we appropriately address or what we did not address, it may lead to some recommendations or advice on what you included moving forward.

Man: I agree as well.

JR: I wouldn't try to fool you and say I've read every single word in there (Sage grouse EIS), but I've listened to a presentation on almost all of those. That book is in and of itself really comprehensive.

I'm not going to pretend to have read that one either. But there's a tremendous amount of work that's gone into this.

I came up here with my mind made up that the sensible thing to do was to support the work that had been done.

Maybe - how specific we want to get into that is another issue.

Man: So what you're saying is the RAC would be supportive with respect to the preferred alternative, which is alternative D?

Man: D is the state's alternative. (E is based on the state's alternative)

Man: Alternative D is the preferred alternative in the draft EIS.

Man: So D is the BLMs and E was the state's?

Man: Yes. D is the BLM and forest service and is E the states?

Tyler: Yes. E is based on the state of Utah's Sage Grouse Conservation plan.

Shelley: The way to start then would be to open up the discussion about the preferred alternative and gather your comments on that. I don't know if we need to take a little caucus with our facilitator, and to see if we need to pivot and do things differently.

Patti: So how about you folks take a, what 10-15 minute break. We'll consult with one another. When we come back we'll all get on the same track. How is that for you?

Sherry: Folks on the phone call I am going to place you on mute as well. And please come back to the phone call at 9:45. Thank you.

Sherry: Hi and welcome back everyone. Appreciate your time. Before we get into our facilitated discussion, we are going to elect officers. I would like to go ahead and facilitate that vote. Do we have Rick Ellis back on the call? Steve Burr?

Steve Burr: Yes. I'm here

Sherry Foot: John Harja are you on the call? Rick Ellis is on there. I know he is because we had chatted this morning.

But we will go ahead and continue with our voting. Would anyone like to begin the nominations, okay, Frank?

Frank: I'd like to nominate Carl to be the Chairman.

Bill Hopkin: I'll second that.

Sherry Foot: Great. All those in favor? Raise hands please. Okay. Those in the room have said yes. Steve Burr, Rick Ellis, and John Harja in favor of Carl Albrecht?

RAC members on phone: Yes.

Sherry Foot: Chair person, Carl, would you accept?

Carl: I would. I've only got about a year left according to you, but I'll serve diligently for a year.

Sherry Foot: Appreciate that thank you.

Sherry Foot: Nominations for Vice-Chair.

Frank: I have one. Porter Teegarden

JR Nelson: I will second that.

Sherry Foot: All those in favor, raising hands? Anyone else that would like to be considered vice-chair?

RAC member on phone: In support of Porter.

- Carl: Can I make a comment? As Chair, I think first of all thank you very much. I appreciate your support. My comment would be, Sherry, correct me if I'm wrong, but our main obligation here today was to produce a draft letter to Juan.
- Sherry Foot: That's correct.
- Carl: I don't know where you're going to take us after your caucus and pivot. Why don't you explain where you want to take us? And tell you what we thought about it.
- Patti: Okay. Good, awesome. Well here's what we thought about. We came up with two of the discussion topics initially. The first is, did the BLM consider an appropriate range of alternatives in the DEIS? Then we would discuss those generally by topic.
- Tyler: Yes. I would generally order by topic. I don't know if that's if we go with an open format or if we stick to the topics that were previously discussed.
- These have been identified as some of the critical issues and we can maybe start with those. That would be up to you guys to decide.
- Patti: Any questions from those of you on the phone? All right.
- Steve Burr: What was your second question?
- Patti: Get a comment on the first. The second is did the BLM adequately analyze the impact of proposed decision. Is there a site-based analysis?
- We could discuss generally or by topic. Did we consider appropriate range of alternatives is the first, and then second adequately analyze the impact of the proposed decision.
- Carl: Well as we caucused amongst some of us during the break, if our specific charge is to draft a letter to Juan from this group, and the BLM, and the Forest Service, the preferred alternative is D.
- Carl: The state's preferred alternative is alternative E. I guess I don't have a problem with us addressing kind of where you've gone because I think that's probably a good discussion to have. But at some point today, we need to take about an hour or so and draft a letter as a group. I think most of us feel this thing is going to end up in court regardless.
- Some judge is going to determine which way we go and how we go. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is going to have great impact as well. It would be

nice, in my opinion, and I think a lot around the table that if that's case, and I think it will be because there's going to be environmental groups that are unhappy.

There's going to be developers that are unhappy with whichever alternative is selected. Someone is going to get sued. Probably the BLM. Probably the state of Utah.

It would be nice if we could somehow come a little closer together between the BLM and the state of Utah. Because once you get into court and start filing briefs, it's good to have alignment among the parties.

It would be good if we were a little more uniformed and not so distantly separated from each other in our philosophy as to which alternative should be adopted so. Personally I would like to see the BLM and the Forest Service and the state of Utah come together and see if there's some things that we can work on between D and E. That would make this thing a little more rock solid going forward, because it's always good to have friends in court, rather than enemies. Friends come and go and enemies accumulate.

Steve Burr: That's exactly what I'm thinking. Maybe John Harja could run through alternative E which is the state's and highlight what the main sticking points or differences are between alternative D, the preferred alternative for the BLM and the Forest Service. Then the state's perspective under alternative E.

John Harja: Well I'd be happy to from my perspective. I would have to say that we appreciate what BLM has done with portions of alternative D, their alternative, but we don't think it represents a true partnership in conserving the species.

In that, I heard Tyler earlier talking about BLM's efforts on private land, not that they would do anything on private lands, but they would count private lands towards disturbance. What we're asking is that when the BLM considers what happens on Federal lands, BLM lands, and the same with the Forest Service, that be part of a balanced approach to conservation and disturbance.

That BLM wouldn't necessarily, clamp down entirely on BLM lands if something is going on in private lands. Because the state's plan also talks a lot about lift is what we call it. Lift areas are those that are added to a base by mitigation actions or reclamation actions.

The BLM, the Forest Service, the NRCS, and the state are engaged in a lot of activities that are creating more habitats. Tyler mentioned eliminating PJ

which is a great way in Utah to take habitats that's marginal and make it much better and useful for the species.

If you combine all those features, the fact that you can create more land lift at the state's plan, we don't think that the BLM's alternative D correctly does that. Or does it to the best that it could. Specifically there are a couple of places where BLM wants more lands protected under they call it Priority Habitat. We call these Sage Grouse Management Areas.

These areas are in the West Tavaputs and down in the South. These areas are scheduled for an oil and gas development. The state's view is let's band our conservation efforts elsewhere.

We have been unable to quite determine what the BLM's reason for including those is and we're still in serious discussions about that. In addition, unfortunately the BLM appears to favor a four-mile buffer and NSO and those service occupancy which that state, according to research that's been done in Utah, thinks is too much.

Would it have been three miles, and we're looking at a way to compensate if you need to go through that three miles area and do some work. Specifically, we point out an area down in southern Utah where there's a coal mine proposed and the portal is proposed to be within a four-mile buffer zone, four-mile zone about 2000 feet down off the cliff. It's clearly not habitat.

It just points out that absolute four-mile buffer simply doesn't work in Utah. Keep in mind that what we're telling them is a lot of these studies were done in the sagebrush-steppe up in Wyoming. That is a large expense. A huge expanse of unbroken sagebrush.

Utah doesn't look anything like that and the final thing is the disturbance cap and what is included. The state believes that its disturbance cap is more flexible.

As we pointed out, some of the absolute figures that BLM uses are not supported by the data Tyler mentioned. He's engaged in a process to figure out what the baseline really is. We absolutely agree with that.

In the end, there are a number of very important sticking points that the state will insist on in the negotiations and that's why I have to tell you about them. But I'll let you guys decide what you want to do.

The BLM's alternative D is not yet there. It does not, in our view, represent a balanced plan.

The Forest Service, in addition, is insisting on viability for the species within each National Forest, which doesn't make sense on a range-wide scale. Remember the species are in 11 Western states.

For each Forest, we try to insist on viability in individual forests simply doesn't make conservation sense. That appears to be what they want to do, so we have a lot of sticky issues.

That's why we believe alternative E, the state's plan, represents that balance. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Carl: What are the plans for coordination between the state? BLM, Forest Service, and state, are there meetings planned to get together and try to reconcile the alternatives?

Tyler: There are.

John Harja: Absolutely.

Tyler: Next week. Coordination with the state of Utah and reconciling some of our differences is very important part of this process and the outcomes of those negotiations are going to be at this point and time with those discussions. John mentioned quite accurately that we have probably a list of 10 items. John has identified some key issues, for example, that we need to have some real heart to heart discussions on what we're going to do regarding those ten issues. Something like disturbance cap being maybe one of the biggest challenges. The lek buffers being another one.

Yes, there are plans to get going and I anticipate that it will be some long and difficult meetings. There'll be more than one.

Carl: Doesn't this all have to come together by September?

Tyler: I say that hesitantly, yes.

Carl: Isn't that when the US Fish and Wildlife Service ask for the recommendation?

Tyler: Yes. The deadline has been established for the BLM planning process that we need to have a decision by September 2014. I think that's a very challenging target to meet. We have not been instructed if we have the latitude to move that target at this point and time.

John Harja: Just let me point out that the Fish and Wildlife Service has a decision point of September 2015. BLM is attempting to complete its plan a year before. They want to show there's a year history of operations.

September 2014 is not an absolute but it is something they desire. The state of Utah believes that we need to take whatever time we need to get it right.

Carl: John, is the State and the BLM, Forest Service working closely with Fish and Wildlife?

John Harja: We have our differences. I would say that everybody is engaged fully and we're having discussions.

The state is preparing some responses to the objections that the Service, Fish and Wildlife Service made to the state's plan. We believe the local science coming out of USU and BYU is more than sufficient to deal with these issues.

Everybody's engaged. I wouldn't say we have an agreement on most of it yet, but we're going to work on it.

Carl: You talk about the Forest Service, what, I mean they're not here today. Does the BLM represent them?

Shelley: We're amending 18 of BLM's land use plans and four Forest Service plans, but it will be one document.

We'll each sign separate decisions. They (FS) will be amending its four plans. .

They're making different kinds of decisions. They manage different kinds of land, too. Their decisions are going to look different than ours.

Tyler: It's very conceivable that the BLM's proposed plans ultimately will be different than Forest Service's proposed plan decision. There's an attempt in discussions of course that we need to be consistent to the extent possible because it's the landscape level species. Having consistent management across all land jurisdictions provides for easier to implement management schemes.

With that being said, we all have our different regulations. We all have our different congressional mandates, etcetera. Because of that, it's likely that they'll be some departures between BLM and the Forest Service on ultimately what we end up including.

John Harja: If I could point out one other difference. BLM and Forest Service certainly have their own planning language and they use their own terms.

They're attempting to make sure that at least those terms describe identical conservation actions. One of the differences we're having with both agencies, the state, is that we're using the long accepted biological protection scheme of avoid, minimize, mitigate. You'll find this in all the scientific literature.

Fish and Wildlife Service uses it a ton, but that doesn't translate necessarily well into BLM planning language. We've had numerous discussions with Tyler and Quincy already about the word "avoid" and how it relates to the word "exclude". It's those kind of fine nuances that we spent a lot of time on and need to make sure that the conservation action for the birds is actually the same thing.

Man: Is the Forest's objective similar to BLM and state to keep the bird from getting listed?

Tyler: Yes it is. There's the same purpose and need amongst all the agencies.

Shelley: There's a couple other points of context. By September 30, 2015, the Fish and Wildlife Service is to render a decision on whether the bird is threatened, or endangered, or not. They don't have discretion on the date. So backing up from the time they need to make their decision, we have little discretion.

While we would all like to take more time, it's a hard wall there, September 30, 2015. The other point is that the Fish and Wildlife Service, in reviewing the candidate species, has to identify what they believe the threats are to it. One of the key threats they identified was a lack of regulatory mechanisms.

BLM can only make decisions on our jurisdiction, which is BLM land. Even though the state's plan includes a lot of very positive aspect, we've seen a lot of history and things happen that are good for the bird on private land. The Fish and Wildlife doesn't regard that as a regular - as a sure thing. A requirement. A regulatory mechanism.

That's where we're a little high centered because BLM can't consider those as strong regulatory mechanisms. Fish and Wildlife doesn't consider the state's plan to be that and so that's just some context as how we're trying to work through these differences.

John Harja: That's certainly one of the major points we have with the service. We, in fact, do think the state's plans for private lands which involve binding contracts that are voluntarily entered by private land owners. Becoming binding conservation contracts is in fact a sufficient regulatory mechanism.

It's much more nuanced than was just presented. What we have to convince the Service, and we are working on, is that the program of putting those

together is sufficient. Once the contract is entered, it certainly is an adequate yet voluntary - adequate regulatory mechanism.

Carl: If the state and BLM came together fairly close on their recommendations, the Fish and Wildlife is either going to give a thumbs up or thumbs down aren't they?

Tyler: Yes.

John Harja: Based on the range - the entire range is on the West.

Tyler: Considering all the various state's plans?

John Harja: Yes, all the BLM plans and the Forest Service plans. The Service has to look at it as a range-wide issue.

That's why all the states are combining to talk about how they all fit together along with the BLM and the Forest Service. There's lots of coordination going on at higher levels about making sure actions across state lines are adequate.

Tyler: The difficulty is coming up with the proposed plan. I think it's appropriate even in the public meetings to be quite candid on this. If you read the comments and the letter, there's quite a large gap in the professional opinion of two agencies that have special expertise as to what is going to be adequate, with the Service being on one end and the state being on another end. The BLM needs to take into consideration both Fish and Wildlife Service and the state of Utah. In conjunction with that, I would say a third leg of the triangle is something John had mentioned. There is a need to be consistent, to some extent, and this is part of the ongoing discussion across the entire Sage Grouse landscape and consistent across BLM and neighboring states. Support particularly in areas like Box Elder or Rich County or Diamond Mountain where we have crossroads of conservation. Box Elder is the southeast corner of a very large piece of Sage Grouse habitat that covers multiple states.

The challenges in that step wise not just the discussions between the BLM and state of Utah, but it's discussions between other organizations because of the information that has been submitted by each of those entities in reaching a proposed plan.

John Harja: Tyler's right. In addition, people of the states are moving to address those issues with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service appears to be favoring standardized recommendations such as those are coming out of the NTT report.

The states are coming together quite vociferously to say the goal is conservation of the species and it doesn't matter whether Idaho, Utah border matches exactly in terms of prescriptions. As long as each conserves the species.

For example, the biggest threat in the Great Basin is wildfire and invasive species. The biggest threat further east in Wyoming is energy, wind, oil and gas development. You don't need to have the same fire mechanisms in Wyoming as you do in Nevada, Utah, and Idaho.

So it is a very nuanced discussion involving all the requirements actually fitting together. Not at all a discussion only about whether everybody uses a three mile, four mile, 10-mile buffer. That's not the point.

Carl: When the BLM comes up with their final recommendation, do they have to ship it up stream to DC for approval?

Tyler: Absolutely. That being said, Juan is the person who is delegated to sign the Record of Decision for the EIS.

What Quincy and Juan are doing right now is meeting with people at various levels of the BLM, including the Washington Office, and even Interior to talk about how consistent we are going to be throughout the region. Where are we going to have autonomy to make decisions? Individual Planning Units, which John has mentioned, obviously the state believes that Conversation Plans that they've put forward adequately provide for long term preservation of the sage grouse. That's where we're at right now.

Patti: We have about 25 minutes to come up with some key points, that then you'll take an hour to develop that Draft right.

So what's going to get us to those key points? Do we want to go back to these questions or do you want to stay with just D&E?

Patti: We can talk about an appropriate range of alternatives and the DEIS and/or we can talk about Visibility and adequately analyze impacts of the preferred decisions - science base, etc.?

Steve Burr: I don't know that we want to get into specifics, because we're a lay advisory board-- that we're here to offer some common sense. All we can do is to draft letters and offer some common sense.

I have a lot of respect for Juan and he's been supportive on a lot of state efforts and so forth for - it's upstream I'm a little worried.

Man: Steve, worried with respect to what?

Steve Burr: They won't good enough, no matter what he does.

I'm just looking at these two questions. Number one, does the BLM consider an appropriate range of alternatives in the DEIS? I would say the answer to that, is "Yes," because from Alternative A to Alternative E, which is the state's, you know, all of those were considered and were presented to us at the last RAC Meeting.

The BLM adequately analyzed the proposed decision based on the best available science. It seems to me that has occurred, but I do like the conversation that John Harja has shared and BLM's staff, that the BLM and the Forest Service are actively working with the state, along with the Fish and Wildlife Service to get the best alternative here.

I would agree. I don't think we can get into the specifics of analyzing every little bit of each alternative, perhaps a letter coming from the RAC, should suggest and support continued collaborative effort to come up with the best alternative for this.

John Harja: I think that's the feeling above all, sitting around the table Steve.

Steve Burr: You're exactly right. This is a lay RAC. We're not scientists, but I do think everything that's been presented to us has been very good and very valid.

That being said, there are some differences with respect to the alternative that the state is proposing, and I think all of us would like there to be sort of a unified alternative, between the state and Fed's on this.

John Harja: I agree. When you were concerned by higher up the ladder, you're talking about the Federal Fish and Wildlife really having the ultimate say? Do you mean it had to go up stream to BLM too?

Steve Burr: Yes. It means that there's, and John's very familiar with it, a process that's been in place that is really above and beyond what's required through the NEPA Process for obtaining permission or approval to publish these documents.

Even in publication of this draft DEIS, there was process where there's a separate set of teams, a Regional Management Team, a National Policy Team and then, as well as, it's after review in Washington and by Interior to document anything.

There's a set of reviews that we go through and individuals that are part of those teams have to basically provide a vote of support for something to move forward.

John, himself, and the state of Utah's involved on some of those teams, not that the internal aspect of the BLM, but that we don't follow these teams, that National Policy Team. Some of the states do have a seat at the table on those, but the short answer is that, it has to work its way up through all levels of places like Interior prior to us have a decision.

Man: Once you come up with your alternative and Juan signs off, somebody else has to sign off up above him in the Interior?

So who is Juan's boss? Is it like a western state office or do you go into Washington? I'm curious?

Shelley: Juan works for the Director of BLM and the Director works for the Secretary of Interior. So an Interior Department has two agencies in the sage grouse analysis, that's BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Interior Department wants to be able to look across the whole range of what BLM's doing and what the Fish and Wildlife's doing over these 11 western states and bring their interest in consistency and defensibility to bear.

Man: Is the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, correct?

Shelley: That's right.

Man: Which means you really aren't even under the some umbrella?

Steve Slater: I don't think we should worry about higher up at BLM. I don't want to speak for BLM, but it from what I understand it is more about administrative process and involving the public and the partners and they've worked on that and I've never heard of a plan being overturned at the Federal level once the State has to come up with the - the Field Office or Management Plan, so I think it really is what BLM produces here is that we should stay focused on and not worry about what happens higher up.

Patti: I just want to make sure that we're on the same page. Do you want to go through and talk through each one of these?

Any questions? Is that everybody wants to do here?

Man: I think it's Patti. That would be an obvious start to a letter, to say, do you feel that you've done an adequate job considering the range of alternatives first off?

Is that we feel like you've not considered as being, and I think I feel that that sounds good, that we've got that view that they going to - that John was considering all virtualizations.

John Harja: If I could point out one thing they didn't consider, just to answer that question, they did not consider the effects of their own candidate species policy. I believe the number's 6840 in this activity.

There service has claimed that there was not an adequate Regulatory Mechanism as part of the reason to enlist. BLM has a sensitive species policy. They did not examine as part of this DEIS, so in the state's view, that's not true that they considered a proper range of alternatives.

Shelley: What do you think these alternatives that look like in your view? BLM had considered an adequate range of alternatives reflective of that Special Status Species Manual, what would that alternative look like?

John Harja: Well, what do you mean what it would like? It would have included a discussion of the effects of continuing without using that policy and seeing if that would protect the species. We don't see that mentioned in this document.

Steve Slater: It's not addressed as Alternative A, as usual?

John H: It should be perfectly addressed that BLMs required to comply with laws, regulations and policies and so I would say that that should be reflected in our discussion of the effective environment.

The current status of sage throughout the state of Utah, should be reflective of the fact that we have policies like the BLM 6840 Manual place and it would in compliance of that policy.

Well we're now getting into the details, of whether they did or didn't. I'll argue that they didn't, so it doesn't appear in the alternatives, I guess, there's not much more we can say then.

Patti: Do we want to answer this question as a group. It's due to be considered an appropriate range of alternatives. John's saying from his prospective no? Do you want to have a comment on that in this letter?

John H: Yeah, I think we do. I think we need to have a comment on them.

- Man: Write something to the effect that they have considered the alternatives, but perhaps the exception and I think the number you gave us is 6840...
- Patti: That's BLM's manual on Special Status Species Branches. This is what I have captured so far. Is fielding considered an appropriate alternative in the DEIS and so far, the discussion has entered, "Yes," but it has serious alternatives with the exception of 6840, is needed to be reviewed. Is that correct?
- John H: No, the - you need to be more specific, to say, it just - that's just what Tyler said about that.
- It should .if it isn't, and I'm not sure that it isn't. It should have been part of Alternative A, because that's the alternative of nothing change beyond these doings, which includes 6840.
- Patti: Okay. Do you want to have any discussion on this? Questions? Appropriate range of alternatives?
- Carl: Somebody elaborate on the difference in the Buffer Zones again, John
- Tyler: Sure. So you know, it really varies by the resource. Going to the resources that could most people have expressed interest in, is one mineral, and even in minerals, under Alternative B, the State's Plan, it's pretty consistent regardless of what mineral resource, there's a one-mile length protection.
- The BLM alternatives do vary by various types of resource, but there is a four-mile buffer for oil and gas.
- There are smaller buffer sizes for some other things such as mineral materials, decisions or locatable mineral discussions, and a lot of that, well, there's justification for that, however I don't want to get into providing information as to why we did what we did on the effort work.
- With lands and realty, it's also a four-mile buffer and this is to be offered as an alternative. That's on above-ground linear transmission lines would be excluded within a four mile buffer.
- Man: But this Buffer Zone, it is the radius from leks, so it would be a four mile buffer zone...
- Man: Three miles.
- Man: You're talking about an eight mile area...
- Tyler: Correct.

Man: Which that's in the area where there is Sage Grouse in every county and that's Forest Service. Eight miles the - now the topography...

Man: It's the end of the Habitat.

Man: The environment is totally different. I don't think you can find eight mile anywhere. They all have it them. If you can find it, I'm serious.

Patti: Do you want to have a key point in here directly to a Buffer Zone?

Steve Slater: Under the alternative, it does exclude non-habitat, so if there is forest, trees and outcrops or rock, where there's not Sage Grouse basically, it isn't included in the buffer.

John H: So it would be excluded? See my concern is, if you've got Habitat on top of the plateau, you come down to the ledge, you want a mine portal?

That would be exclusive because it's not Habitat. They don't lose their portals.

Tyler: Both the BLM and the State's alternative specifically discussed that there's exceptions for this to last this for development in non-impact areas.

Man: So it's not directly...

Tyler: The BLM alternative does include some criteria of descriptions for develop in non-Habitat areas, taking into consideration access through Habitat to get to non-Habitat areas, for example, taking into this decision a new direct impact have on an adjacent Habitat.

So there's discussions that you still have to meet certain criteria to be allowing development in areas of non-Habitat, mostly when you're located within those priority management areas, particularly within that four-mile lek buffer..

The state's contains similar language about not having to have the associations to the plan.

John H: Porter's correct. One of the issues is the size. The state believes many areas; the number should represent the area where most of the hens nest. In Utah, they tend to nest within three miles of the RAC, that's why we're focused on that area.

The other issue, is whether you could have exceptions or not and the state does a lot of exceptions for non-habitat, like rocky areas. It has to go into

your baseline. The BLM is considering that, unfortunately, the Forest Service finished a plan down in the Fish Lake Forest and included four miles buffers.

And they adopt a four-mile NSO zone with no exceptions. Two things wrong with that, it doesn't make sense and second, they sort of went into a pre-decisional operation here and kind of showed their hands and the Forest Service is headed toward no exceptions at all, which in Utah doesn't work.

Man: We've got real number 6840, since this species policy buffer's on. Maybe some more effort there. What else do we want to put in this letter?

Bill Hopkin: It is my perception of another different situation meaning that the BLM's preferred alternative and the state alternative was that there's some fairly significant differences in the maps and that we know there's a difference in the terminology.

Man: Versus A versus SGMA (Untelligible)?

Bill Hopkin: Yes. And is that an issue or concern?

Carl: Bill, it is from the state's prospective. The BLM's analysis on its preliminary habitat and its preliminary general habitat, from a priority is based on some older data from the state of Utah.

John H: We admit it's from the state of Utah, is but it is in our view not sufficient accuracy, of sufficient accuracy to support the analysis they engaged in.

We have, throughout our planning process, updated our data. We clearly know that it's still not completely refined and we're engaged in a further refinement process as of today.

That will go on for years. So, the map - there is a distinct difference in the accuracy of the maps and the use to which you can put it and that's an issue we're going to have to sit down with them in the next few weeks and really, really work out it's a major issue.

Bill: Based on the work that's being done on fairly large acreage within (RCJ) and SGMA's and PJ, those maps within SGMA's are going to change significant over the next ten years. Is there a way that that can be allowed for within the alternative?

Tyler: I believe so. Some of these are difficult questions to answer because we have to stay within our planning context that said, I think maps can be adjusted through our planning maintenance action. I think that the way the large

polygons have been drawn by the state and the BLM at this point, the BLM's using older state data.

One of the points is that we are choosing to manage sage-grouse within these particular areas is where we're going to focus or concentrate our efforts.

And if we say, "These particular areas are where we're going to focus or concentrate our areas, then we don't have to be making changes in the maps every time a new treatment is completed."

This the landscape where we intend to manage Sage Grouse. You don't have to adjust every time you add a few acres or you lose a few acres here.

John H: I agree with Tyler. That's exactly accurate. When you identify the areas where you focus your time, what it does affect are things like calculations of disturbance caps and use of non-habitat within those areas and the baseline.

The state currently has USU preparing our baseline based on the most accurate currently available overflight and satellite data and with the BLM worked on it too.

Tyler: I think the larger issue of where there's separation of distance between the BLM and Utah right now is, I'll start by saying there's about 95 percent agreement in the maps on those areas where we think we should prioritize or emphasize Sage Grouse management.

Within those areas, the state has been more specific in identifying those habitat areas and opportunity areas. The BLM is stuck with larger geographic's polygon, but this I is an area where there's going to be Sage Grouse habitat and we're going to choose to manage that habitat conservation.

A few distinct areas and, John mentioned, the most prominent one being the area of West Tavaputs area in Carbon County and to the Anthro Mountain area, located on the Ashley south unit, would actually be the National Forest, which is in southern Duchesne County where there is difference is the state has identified those areas as areas that are not necessary for conservation of Sage Grouse.

It's not within their SGMAs. The BLM has retained those as priority management areas and that's also something that the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service has expressed desire that those areas also be managed as priority management areas.

So that's where there's probably the largest disagreement. Other than that, I would say our disputes over actual areas that should be managed for Sage Grouse conversation are very minimal, if any at all.

Man: Okay, so one more question that can be made to that, is what's the difference between B&E as related to mitigation?

John H: Well mitigation...

Tyler: From your state...

John H: No, I mean, the state's plan uses mitigation a lot, in fact, State considers it a net gain, if you disturb activities, if you disturb habitat, you have to starting from acre one, you have to mitigate at a four to one ratio, although in some areas, it's one to one.

So mitigation is part of it. A lot of that mitigation is in PJ country and that's how we gain lift and that's how a species is conserved.

BLM is underway with a region-wide and an off-site mitigation plan that isn't yet complete. When it is completed, that will help a ton in the issues, and so I think both parties are looking strongly towards mitigation as the way to proceed.

Carl: John, they may not have the same language included in our alternatives, but I see consistency is seen between what we're considering regarding mitigation.

The BLM for example, does not identify a mitigation to show like the state does. It is something specifically included in the language that has been included in the language path, but it's not common.

Our alternative currently rather states that mitigation should be determined depending on the quality and the location of the habitat, where you are impacting. For example, if you're impacting high quality winter habitat that's meeting Sage Grouse habitat objectives, then a higher level of mitigation would be required, than if you're impacting an area that's identified as transitional habitat and may not be meeting habitat objectives.

That's where the BLM, rather than establishing a ratio has tried to say, it would be determined on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the action and the location of the action.

Steve Burr: You had a really interesting concept there. You said the whole area needs to make that determination. The interesting concept that people closely associated with it, establish the principal buffer zone, i.e., the concept the...

- Man: ...the habitat areas. People who know it and were on site there make the decision. I think that's very wise to do that.
- Tyler: I don't want to influence your comments too much, but what I would say, is that the BLM can't defer making planning decisions in its planning process.
- We have to identify or make our allocation decisions here now. That being said, a potential option is that it's not a one size fits all solution, that you should take into consideration.
- Man: Specific habitat conditions are local variations when identifying the appropriate regulatory mechanisms or buffers or, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but what I'm saying, is it's not very helpful to say, "You should decide down the road how this is going to be done, because we have to do it here and now."
- Steve Slater: With raptors, they do a similar thing; BLM provides a half-mile buffer around an active nests, but they often have a condition on there, where the field office manager has the ability to waive that or modify it based on local knowledge or the situations using that.
- I've seen where if there's something screening the nest from the oil rig, they can make those buffers smaller. I would say we keep the buffer as is, but just have it modifiable based on local information as a possibility.
- Man: That's one of the things John already brought up is that there's some alternatives that contemplate whether we would grant exceptions or waivers to situations, other alternatives to use as an example, is the Forest Service just recently they typically appear to be going with a no-exception waiver or modification rule.
- Man: Which is concerning to me. In other words, it's - you said not one size fits all, but that sounds to me like what the Forest Service is looking at one size fits all. I don't think I can live with it.
- Bill: However, from the map standpoint, I would love to see the RAC recommend that the BLM use the more up-to-date Utah maps, rather than the older version, but that's just me.
- Man: Are these called local working groups and they have maps of their area and each local working group kind of handles - isn't that way the state of Utah did that? Right. Wrong?

Bill: Yes, to a large degree. The local working groups helped establish...

Man: ...established those maps and I have to chime in here, I've seen a couple of maps that are round circles and you know that - that means, yeah that's exactly...

Man: The Utah maps that are part of the highly refined maps would probably be most highly refined maps of old habitat.

Steve Slater: I would share an environmental prospective of different alternatives, because I think it's relevant if we're going actually try to have a consensus letter before we start just pushing towards E.

I don't know how familiar everybody is with the details of the different alternatives. I know they're huge documents, but to me there's really see a range of perspectives on how management can be done from most business as usual to what the environmental community proposes under Alternative C, which I don't fully agree with, but which I do have to represent here.

No I think it's too restrictive. 100% percent of the occupied habitat is closed. This is what would happen under a listing -I know that that's the worst case scenario of everything's off limits. I don't think that's logical for striking a balance and considering BLM's multiple use mandate.

I think after that you have B, which is the National Technical Team, which Fish and Wildlife is more aligned with, since they are the ones that are going to review this, you don't want to get too far away from that.

If you do, you're more likely that they're going say that protection is not adequate here in the state, resulting in a listing. Then you have D, which is BLM's and less and they're trying to move a little bit away from that and give them a little wiggle room.

For example, they've reduced from 70 percent of occupied habitat, which is with the Fish and Wildlife Service and NTT down to 50 percent. They've gone from 3 percent cap on the servings, up to 5 percent, so they've tried to provide some wiggle room.

Then you've got the state's plan, which I think opens things up a little bit more by shrinking buffers, so it's less restrictive in that sense.

The more yourself towards the state's plan, in substance you're moving itself further away from what the Fish and Wildlife Service is saying they feel if it should be, whether or not that's correct, and John could argue that the state

has better data for Utah. In my mind, if I look at E and D, they're actually more similar overall than any other alternative.

There's not really that much difference between them, 95 percent or so agreement to maps, that's not a whole lot to really, in my mind, to be concerned about it.

There's a lot of agreement in mitigation measures, how we treat different things and so moving further away from that and further away from the NTT, in my mind is a little bit scary and is more likely to have the plan not be considered adequate by the Fish and Wildlife Service, and that's who we have please here at the end of the day.

I think the buffer zones, mentioning that half mile is not hard and fast. Perhaps it is implied here. We have local information and we need to consider that more is fine, but making recommendations of exact buffer size changes, I think it's going too far. Perhaps suggesting some discretion error by the field office, the person providing the actual lease or the final - to start to push toward this element and using these maps to me, it's getting too much in the specifics.

I don't think you want the plan to become just the State's plan. I think the state has its own plan for good reasons and they have their own interests to look out for and I think that interest is already being served. BLM is meeting with them regularly and they have submitted their comments and they'll continue to work with them to reach more of an agreement.

That's my prospective on it. If the concern is, if the ultimate goal was to avoid listing and you're concerned moving too far toward the state plan which we've already heard the Fish and Wildlife Service has some issues with.

Man: I'm comfortable that we have continued to work with the state to try to come agreement on that, rather than to saying, adopting the state maps. That's acceptable to others.

Carl: Are there any other issues that we feel strongly about that we would encourage collaboration on between the state and BLM Plan? Because I think Steve makes a good point. We need to somehow include in the letter that here's a delicate balance there.

Steve: I think what I'm hearing is that the final recommendation from the BLM is going to be competing elements from E, maybe come a little bit closer there.

Retaining some things of D that they feel they have to, to say more in line with the NTT what the Fish and Wildlife was looking for, but not being

restricted to that. I think we continue to look at the range of all. I'm obviously going to do that, but I would like to have that recommendation that they don't just restrict themselves to those options, but consider other places where they can...

To the other side of it, yes. You do have all of the environmental list that are more restrictive, that if they're completely unhappy with the plan. I'm not saying that - actually I don't agree with setting aside protection, complete protections, don't look at good ideas that are not too painful that you can adopt, you know, in general.

Man: If I could comment on that slightly. The Fish and Wildlife Service in the comments on the Draft EIS, not only mentioned that (unintelligible), that the state plan, that they're familiar with, but they mentioned a lot of inadequacies, with the deal (unintelligible), alternative as well.

As we've discussed multiple times, the delicate balance of trying to come up with the proposed plan when there's multiple parties that truly do all house special expertise regarding this particular resource and how - about this agreement on what's needed for conservation.

Man: What I was trying to say, is that there is it's clear they're going to work closely with the state to try to come closer together there, but I think there's aspects of B, which is a kind of more efficient Fish and Wildlife Service' prospective that it makes sense for BLM to pay attention to that and see where they can also satisfy some of their issues and get closer there.

Rather than moving the needle, why don't we ever had your bending the needle and making everyone happy. The Fish and Wildlife wants to see, as well as, the corporate and what the state wants to see, and we're not too far one or the other.

I personally feel like the deal under is exactly where they need to be, because of that. The state's not happy and the environmental groups aren't happy, they're probably doing a fairly good job. Some things could be approved and perhaps tweaked to accommodate both interests hopefully, but I think they did a really good job of looking at all the complexities. They can't fault you in something that's not the case by the interests of BLM Utah plan as represents there, curbing in what their legal ability to control is..

"We don't have population objectives. Well the BLM doesn't manage the wildlife, they can only manage the habitat."

If they are in charge - there are going to be some differences in the plan, just forget about it.

Bill: One of my huge frustrations with this whole thing, this is still nothing. Somehow we have to recognize that 50 percent of this habitat is outside the plan.

In my mind, the state plan addressed that issue better than anyone else can. The other thing, there may be no hope that Fish and Wildlife would consider or think about is, that success depends on people's investment in making them work.

Their track record with the club has not been very good. There really should be some considerations with the Fish and Wildlife and we can't do that, I know.

Our ability to be able to plan what BLM and the state do seems like it is the greatest opportunity to save the cockeyed bird and that's what's the most important, because I can tell you that it will be disastrous if there are too many implications put on public land that impacts private land. We will end up with unintended consequences.

This should not be good for the birds. I don't know how you ever put that in something that has any impact in what we're recommending to Juan. I don't know.

Porter: Could there be a place in this letter that we write to Juan where we submit those things that we actually went out and did based on what we were told to do the last meeting?

I think that might alleviate some of these diminutive that we're kind of debating right now, where I think the majority of us sit on conversations I've had.

Agree, all agencies need to work together and that's really the primary recommendation. The alternatives offered that we would choose--some of them for the most part, very good--but could be again, other language inserted, things like the 6840 addressed. Those might be better highlighted with our own individual submissions of what we found when we went over our category pool. Would that be possible to write?

Carl: I don't see a problem with that. I'm trying to draft a letter as we go along that I'm going to read to you when we get to the end, but I think that's a good comment and I think we just put a paragraph in there that brings closure against the RAC Committee members based on the assignment we were given in our last meeting.

I don't have any problem with that being attached. I mean, that was our assignment previously. I do think we do need to come to consensus on main points and that need to be in the general structure of the letter.

Man: I think that letter is clearly delineated, that this is unanimous and this is something else, I think, otherwise you'll probably get a lot of business people interpret that it was a represents the different people on those (unintelligible).

Tyler: This is because I don't know the nuances of what's required by the RAC, but advice to the State Director is supposed to be from the body.

If the body concurs with the information gathered by individuals, then individual information could be included within, but if there's disagreement on individual recommendations submitted amongst the RAC members, then we probably shouldn't include it in the body of the letter.

Man: We have been instructed to do exactly what Porter said and then our instructions at this meeting were to come up with a body letter.

Sherry: That's correct. The focus was for individuals to come up with their own responses and we chose to lead it in a different direction at this point, but based on what you have said, if the individual comments are not all agreed upon and made as a group, then they cannot be forwarded as part of the letter.

Man: I also have another concern. You talked about future collaboration drafts not being on solid footing, but this is what we wanted to have happen now. It sounds to me like we're suggesting continued collaboration. Is that going to be an issue in the letter or are we supposed to have a final position, is that question not answerable?

Tyler: I'm a little confused by the question. Could you rephrase it for me?

Man: I don't know how to do this. So our letter is we support this alternative and we're leaning towards a combination of (unintelligible), but then we're adding into that, but we encourage future collaboration. Is that not going to be specific enough direction to Juan for what we'd like to see done? Is there still room for future collaboration?

Tyler: Absolutely.

Man: So our letter can say, "We encourage you to keep working together and come up with viable alternative maps, surface occupations, things like that?"

Tyler: Yes.

Man: When we started talking these new items, I wanted to step back and talk about approaching prospectives. If we're going to have a consensus letter writing (unintelligible).

Sending alternatives. We've got 6840. We feel like you need to work with the states to come to consensus on that, rather than saying adopt the face masks, consider you know, adding all that as a caveat for maps, consider adding room in the buffers that allows them more discretion, encourage them to work with local working groups and other things, those types of 30,000-foot recommendations that are included.

We can see some stipulations we want to put down in those. There's a lot of signs out there already and a lot of hardness about that.

Porter: I think we're getting somewhere on the consensus part of the letter. I think that one of the unique attributes of the RAC is our own individual prospectives.

I would like to push again, that we've sort of reached an agreement on the consensus part of the letter which is what you said we needed to have in order for them to be submitted, that there also be a space for some individual comments.

Man: Do you have a section we can unanimously disagree about these items? These are the things that the RAC considered but did not agree upon, that needs to be in the letter.

Porter: In the recreation areas, but I just felt there are some considerations that, based on language that could be inserted.

I don't have a scientific basis of - or background, so these are my comments and recommendations then, that's me personally. I think that everybody on the RAC is qualified to make commentary on things that affect them in some way or that they see might help.

Tyler: If I can maybe propose a solution to that, and I do it somewhat hesitantly. I think ideally it was mentioned in the previous meetings that individuals on the RAC will please provide comments, as the members of the public during the public commentary.

There are these legal timeframes where we obligated to involve the public, but the public is not excluded from participating or wanting to obtain information about what's going on at any point.

What I would say is that you have individual comments that did not get submitted during the public comment period, then provide them to us at this point in time.

They probably will be treated differently than RAC comments and they will probably be treated a little bit differently than the public comments, but we will review those comments and take them into consideration, then we'll make changes to the document accordingly.

What you probably won't see, is direct responses to individual comments included in the final EIS. I just want to mention that effort we're going through categorizing and parsing comments, that actually ends up being something we include in the document.

Your comments might not end up in the BLM comment response report, but there's still something that we would take into consideration as we move forward.

Carl: I was just going to ask that question, whether we even could submit them post deadline, but you're saying they would be read, considered on some level?

Tyler: We take into consideration pretty much any and all information that comes from the public. As I said, our legal obligations regarding those comments changes outside of our formal timeframes that are established, but that's just one of the things that we're supposed to do, is be responsive to public.

So any input at any time is never excluded and prohibited.

Carl: Folks on the phone, do you have final comments before I read my suggested letter and then we can pick it apart?

Steve: I have no comments.

Carl: John? I have no comments.

Man: What's the deadline on the letter to Juan?

Porter: There's no deadline, but we have stated that we would submit a letter to him.

Man: Well within the next 30 days?

Porter: That wasn't given.

Bill: So when I think about that, I recognize that I could putting my own attitude into this, so feel free to disagree. It seems to me like there is fairly general

consensus among the RAC members that are here and those have talked, around Alternative E.

Steve has brought up some concerns about that and it makes me wonder if we ought to just say how do we feel is that true?

If every individual RAC person said, “of all of the Alternatives here which more closely fits your prospective of where the BLM should go,” which alternative would that be? Then see if we could take that one alternative and say, “Okay, what are the issues with this alternative that would recommend BLM look further at or whatever. I don’t know.

Carl: Any thoughts on that as far as just picking one alternative or go to what Tyler said and what John said, I mean, you’re going to have more meetings and you’ve assured us as a group that there will be more collaboration and more discussion and hopefully, somewhere you can meet in the middle.

Steve Slater: I prefer that myself. But I’m open to the letter and I can just continue on saying, not picking an alternative but saying, you should continue to work for ways to bring the two alternatives closer together, as well as, continue to work as the National Technical pieces to see that they can incorporated where appropriate. That’s who they’ve got to work with. They have to work with the state obviously once the plan goes into place, whatever it is, that’s going to help determine whether it’s a success or failure of the plan. But on the other side of it, they’ve got to satisfy Fish and Wildlife.

I don’t know that I could really support saying we support Alternative E.

I don’t know if I could really believe and have the support Alternative E, because I think that’s important one.

Bill: Could you bring out the two or three most important points with E that you think are not correct as to the group, more or less, around E?

Steve Slater: I think the state’s plan puts too much of a premium on P-J removal for one thing. I think it’s a tool to be used, but I think it puts too much of an emphasis there.

Man: I don’t necessarily agree, that’s another situation that’s more or less, active that they want to have functional data. Out of Utah, it shows that they’ve got most of them are concentrated around bluffs and I’m waiting until we get to that to these other areas of Utah, if not all, populations are A’s in Utah, but just this (lamby) way to get the Utah data that we don’t (unintelligible), RAC delivered data.

My view toward one buffer or another can - see that's why I don't want to say, one alternative or the other. I continue to work toward consensus is more of between half, but I think it's going to be much easier to do and keep it generic data.

But beyond what folks want and (Quincy) doesn't work and then he indicates, none of us get it all the way they want, so I think I will take a part in the usual items this morning. I'm with Steve, I'll just tick off the state, I mean, the state takes months and months with a diverse group of people, and I think the team should work together.

I'm hoping that they continue to work toward consensus. I just don't - (unintelligible), is kind of background here and don't move farther from that, at the risk of using your buy into the plan.

I guess I just don't see that that's any value at all, continue to work for consensus.

Man: That's where I was hoping to get to. I few could coalesce around one alternative, but identify any concerns, but we're basically comfortable with Alternative E, the state's alternative.

It seems to me like those could be brought out in the letter and say, "You know, these are concerns or impacts with Alternative E.

Man: You need a draft?

Porter: Yes. I feel that saying an alternative for anything except what I was looking at, is an overreach on my part. I can't really address that. I don't know enough information.

I feel like there is an agreement that there are two alternatives here that Steve wanted to stand out, but they're not perfect.

That's why I keep trying to hit the point of if you would choose differently we could be here all day, but it is important to put in our individual comments based on our prospective.

To overlook that, we're just going to keep running into kind of this friction of choosing which is best and trust that what's good for you may not be best for a different category. So, you've charged us with a very hard task and so, I'm trying to get around it by saying there's a consensus in general on the same and we'd also like to tell you our individual points on this.

Carl: Let me read my letter.

This is regarding the RACs Sage Grouse DEIS recommendation letter. I wanted to write to Juan.

**Letter:** The State's BLM Resource Advisory Committee met February 28, 2014, and reviewed the various alternatives in the BLM DEIS. After considerable discussion by the RAC, we are concerned that there are some serious differences in the state of Utah's plan and the BLM/Forest Service Plans.

Although there is considerable agreement, as well. BLM and Forest Service Plan Alternative D and the state's deferred Plan Alternative E has recommended represent differences that the BLM RAC would like to see a more collaborative effort in future meetings between the state and the state BLM to try and reach further consensus between Alternatives D and E.

Some of those differences include one, the BLM Rule 6840 on the BLM Species Policy, two Buffer zones and what would be a reasonable compromise, and you can beef these up, three well as two, Buffer zones and what would be a compromise excluding the fact that one size fits all.

Three Habitat Designation and Efficacy of maps, four mitigation that needs to be flushed out. The BLM RAC would like to see more of a true partnership between the State of Utah and the State BLM Office.

We wish you would save the greater Sage Grouse in the future decision on the EIS will eventually be determined by the Courts and the closer the state of Utah and the state BLM Office can align themselves, the better off both will be when the issue moves through the Court system.

We encourage the state of Utah and their planners and decision makers, along with the BLM leadership to work closely together on these issues identified to reach compromise and alignment as much as possible, realizing that at the end of the day, we all need a plan that will try and address the delicate balance between the State Plan and the BLM Plan and to try and solve U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issues and concerns and provide the most benefit for all working groups and interested parties.

Bill Hopkin: I think that's really good, but one thing that I was thinking and adding in there too, is, and Porter and I been having discussions with some of the other state groups about what's going on in these other states and I think that we encourage the BLM to be involved in what those other states do.

So we need to be unified with them too. So, does that make sense?

- Carl: I'm leaving on an airplane this afternoon. I won't be back 'til Wednesday night but, what if I put this in an email and send to all of you and then you tweak it and work it over, flush it out, put those kind of comments in it, and then we'll between the bunch of us come up with something concrete and all agree on, but maybe go as one.
- Bill: Would you be comfortable with a motion from this group that you do such a thing and consider feedback and I'm thinking it's all going to be electronically discussed with the Board, but then that we authorize him to sign it in behalf of the BLM RAC and as the Chairperson that would indicate that we were in agreement.
- Hopefully, there won't be a lot of really critical differences between your letter and what we propose, maybe some additions, like Frank is saying, but is that appropriate, I'm asking?
- Carl: That sort of says we need one more specific language in there that I just keep - and I don't know how you deal with this with Fish and Wildlife, you just keep coming back to the notion that 50% of the Sage Grouse habitat in Utah's is part of the land.
- Bill: And yet the decision that will be made by BLM and the direction they want to go has huge impact on that. I think that could be addressed in the letter as a reminder that the state plan addresses that fairly well that the BLM obviously can't.
- It isn't their stewardship to do that, but, in the blending of DNE private/public land, it seems to me it would be important in order to have BLM and Utah kind of stand up and be counted with Fish and Wildlife Service to say, "Look, we are incredibly dependent on the private land in Utah has healthy Sage Grouse habitats and vice versa."
- It needs to be something that's considered if you want to move.
- Man: There are incentive programs from the Federal level for private land holders to provide or...
- Man: There's not really something that best addressed through our planning process is how I would state it.
- Carl: I will say this, prior publication of the draft, this was an important issue to the state of Utah and something we worked on specifically with (John) and (Bill) totally recognizes the importance of the state Conservation Plan, no matter what alternative is provided. Accumulative impact is going to be systemic

inadequately or not, is up to others to decide, but we have recognized that the long-term conservation of Sage Grouse is not something today that they can undertake by themselves.

We received this information from the state that they intend to move forward implementing their Conservation Plan, regardless of what our decision is on lands that are under their jurisdiction and in working with private land owners and that's where that partnership plays in.

You're right that we just can't address the private land very well, because it's completely outside of our jurisdiction and our alternatives.

So we do recognize the importance of all the efforts that are underway, not just those by the State, but our local working groups, both by our agencies, all of it is part of a larger solution for one pieces of trouble and trying to prevent the lifting and sweeping important piece, but not...

John Harja: That's what a whole bunch of this discussion has been about—about the levels which BLM and the state can kind of come together on that with mutual effort to help Fish and Wildlife recognize that that's another situation.

Man: If I could chime in here a little bit, probably talking about incentives for private land owners and Steve mentioned the NRCS and the NRCS, I think, can only deal with private land owners. The NRCS cannot fund a program for another federal agency.

The NRCS can help and incentivize a private land owner to improve habitat and it's not just Sage Grouse.

Bill: Well there is a little bit of a caveat there, in that NRCS they primarily work with private land owners, but under the SGI, they can do some stuff on public lands.

Man: It's also the Watershed Restoration Initiative. At WRI, they do a lot of work on private and state land.

Patti: Have we come to a decision then? Are we all in agreement that Carl will draft his letter. We'll send it out through email to everyone. You'll make your comments and send it back and then you'll send it to Sherry.

Bill: I think Carl has got to come up with a final draft that he's going to then email us and we'll say...yes, I'm good with this. I have a little problem, but this is as good of a consensus we really can come up with and then authorize him as our Chairman to sign it on behalf of BLM RAC.

I was ready to make that motion, but you said some of it.

Patti: No, go ahead.

Man: Actually Sherry, that's what will happen. It doesn't have to have a motion to be made.

Man: We need the RAC Chair to sign the letter on behalf of the full RAC when it gets submitted to the State Director.

Bill: I guess one thing I'd encourage is, that when Carl sends out his draft, that as members of the RAC, make comments back to Carl, but they send it to all the members of the RAC.

Carl: Then if you have comments in the meantime, get them to me, because I probably won't get at them for a few days.

I need a little more info on some of those differences if you have comments on Rule 6840, Buffer zones, Habitat Designations and maps and mitigation. So send me your email. I think they have got my email.

Patti: So then you'll "reply to all" with comments on those topics you just mentioned, as well as, the other pieces of the concept that you drafted. Now what about the pieces for the individual comments? How do you want to address that and where do those comments go to?

Carl: I had a paragraph that said, "We were enclosing individual comments from the RAC members as we were instructed in our meeting and such and such." I can put that back in there. But we won't be enclosing them, we'll be sending them individually?

Patti: Can't they send them directly to Utah?

Carl: Yes.

Patti: ...who do they come to?

Tyler: To either Quincy or me, either way they'll get into that record. Once again, I'm not a RAC expert, so I don't know the nuances. Sherry I don't know if you or Shelley have advise on whether they could be not part of the RAC Rep letter, but come into the RAC letter, or if that should strictly be separate and send them direct to the State.

Sherry: At this point, I would rather they go directly to you and/or Quincy.

- Porter: I think it'll just alleviate any possible confusion around the resourcing and what they're saying.
- Tyler: I think you may want to put a line in, note that many RAC members submitted individual comments either through , during, or subsequent to the public comment period.
- Man: Yes, I think you put a drill on them. Somehow I've got this Web site which you click on and you send comments, which I did. I hope it is fixed.
- Man: Some of us send letters and so forth that we could put a paragraph.
- Bill: This is an endorsement, you know, and I can say that I've made comments after the comment period before and it seems inappropriate.
- Tyler: I can't think of any circumstance that I've been involved in where the BLM has shunned a public comment period. It does not because it is outside of certain timeframes.
- Man: The reality is, as we begin our work and we get closer to our decisions, the less we accommodate...
- Carl: Fine. Possibly Sherry do you want to send them to me or to me directly?
- Sherry Foot: To you.
- Tyler: Our email address is – [tashcroft@blm.gov](mailto:tashcroft@blm.gov). Quincy's email: [qfbahr@blm.gov](mailto:qfbahr@blm.gov). If you would include both of us on those, that would be - I would appreciate it.
- Sherry: And that'll be in the notes as well.
- Patti: So, the timeframe for the letter was one week. Is that possible?
- Carl: I need two. I'm going to be gone for a week, but I can send you all an email I suppose.
- Bill: Yeah, that's fine.
- Patti: So two weeks. Friday, March the 14<sup>th</sup>? So we have a letter. We have a deadline for the letter. We have addressed the public comments from individual members. Is there anything else we need to do?
- Carl: Have you had your other comments earlier?

Sherry: We did have a public comment period earlier and Evan Day made a comment. He didn't ask for any feedback. Made a comment regarding the work that the BLM is doing on this project.

No other comments were made. We did elect our officers and John, I wasn't sure if you were on the call or not, but I think you may have been, Carl has been elected as our Chair; Porter as our Vice Chair.

We also need to prepare for our next meeting and prior to that, we need to have a Council. Hopefully, the new members will be onboard soon.

We still haven't heard anything. We should wait until we have a full Council before we have our next meeting.

The state director has given Shelley some ideas of topics that he would like to have addressed.

Shelley: I think some of these are ones you've all had the discussion about before. The main suggestion is to visit our Little Sahara Recreation Area, because there's a lot of management that goes into a place like that and there's a lot of infrastructure, questions on law enforcement, camp grounds, roads, user safety, it can be really interesting for us to have the RAC be there and offer some advice to us.

For our next meeting, we would try to work in a field trip—that's what we've proposed?

Frank White: That'd be good. I go down there all the time and they're anxious just to have you come down.

Bill: Sherry have those new members been nominated and are you just awaiting the approval?

Sherry: They have been recommended and they're at the Secretary's office waiting for her to give the blessings.

Shelley: Juan suggested 2477 issues, continue Sage Grouse discussions, because we'll be further into that process.

Oil and gas and grazing, our grazing issues including our Permit Renewals.

Carl: Would you suggest that the grazing would include something about wild horse and burro issues...

Shelley: It certainly is in this drought. These are some suggestions that are on the top of Juan's mind, to elicit your feedback on, but if there's other things that seem like issues that you want to work on too, that would be welcome.

Man: Maybe I missed it, but there was a Master Leasing Plan on that list?

Shelley: It was not. Would you like to add that one?

Man: In the recreation area?

Man: Well it affects recreation. There's a lot of work going on with regard to it.

Steve Burr: I don't know if this is relevant or not, but you know, we did have the announcement from Juan that Rene Berkhoudt is retiring as Monument Manager and maybe just an update with respect to the search for a new manager. I know Sarah Schlanger is Interim Manager for now.

Shelley: Not only is Rene gone from the Monument, but two of our District Manager positions are vacated too.

Green River, Bill Stringer retired, and then Todd Christensen, the District Manager in our Color County District in Cedar City, retired at the end of the year.

So we have some key leadership positions that are vacant and we can give an update on where we are.

Sarah Schlanger is the Interim Acting Manager while they advertise this position.

Man: And I haven't heard back from Larry Crutchfield, but I think we originally had a MAC Meeting scheduled for April and I actually said that those dates were not going to work for me and he was going to get back to me and we'd try to maybe set up something in May, but I'm not sure how that's going to proceed now.

Shelley: Business should go on pretty normally.

Steve B: It's for the Monument Advisory Committee Meeting.

Shelley: Yes.

Carl: I just want to thank you all for your support today and I might announce too, that I'm retiring at Garkane Energy Cooperative at the end of April.

They've already selected my replacement.

Shelley: It gives us a real good range, so we'll put that on the list and Juan can work with Porter and Carl to refine that.

When we know we have a new Council, we can plan our dates from there.

Carl: RAC members, I'll get this letter out within the week, then you can go to work. Thanks.

Shelley: Thank you all for today's meeting and your focus.

Sherry: Thank you Patty.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_/s/ Carl Albrecht\_\_\_\_\_

Carl Albrecht, RAC Chairman

Date: April 3, 2014