

Jack Morrow Hills Work Group Meeting
July 30, 2009 10:00 AM
BLM, Rock Springs Field Office, Rock Springs, WY
307-362-2665

Attendees:

Lance Porter, BLM	Trisha Cartmell, BLM
Carrie Nelson, BLM	Robert Price, BLM
Patrick Burke, WYGFD	Ken Peacock, BLMWYSA
Katie Ellis, BLM	Steve Furtney, Governor Freundenthal office
Bernie Weynand, BLM	Mary Flanderka, WGFD
Penny Daniels, WGFD	Mary Thoman, SWCCD
Karen Pecheny, SWCCD	Chris Wichmann, WDA

Introductions were made.

Lance Porter provided an overview of the agenda items and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review a summary of the data that BLM currently has for the JMH CAP area.

Divide Basin HMA 2003-09 estimated Wild Horse population (Handout #1)

- Took the numbers from the census data
- *Does the CAP outline the target? Herd range/population?* - Range is 415-600
- Census information is not available on horses that have been turned out due to economic downturns
- AML definition = Appropriate Management Level. RSGA would support 1500 horses on their land. 69-100 numbers for herd management numbers.
- *Any census for next year?* Yes
- Next round up will be October 2010

Penny Daniels reviewed the JMH Cultural Data Information (Handout #2)

- General hard data information/real numbers
- Tables are what has been identified as far as cultural resources, historic sites, prehistoric details, eligible sites and non-eligible
- South Pass is on the national register.

- Inventory that has occurred ‘block inventory’ **linear inventories not included*
- Recording inventories
- *What is the importance of the date 2006?* This is the date of the decision. Start date of implementation
- *Does BLM work with the State historic preservation office? (SHIPO)*
Yes. BLM works closely on the cultural aspect. BLM sends inventoried reports to the SHIPO, BLM Operates under a protocol. BLM is in consultation with the SHPP
- Suggestion to use Table A2 out of the Plan (indicators BLM will use)
- Next meeting we will use the indicator table right out of the main plan (indicator table-so we can log and follow off of one table)
- *Today’s task* - Summarize the information for these key indicators so the Group could see where we were and where we need to go. The ID team were given these instructions/tasks
- *How are you documenting JMH?* This information is a summary and can go into any document.

JMH Monitoring Summary Range 2009 discussion - Robert Price (Handout #3)

- Rangeland standards – listing all the allotments that are in JMH. If the standard was not met it is an ‘N’ if unknown it is a ‘U’
- Actual use data, trend monitoring data and annual precip. data
- Each allotment has their own monitoring sites each one is sectioned off Broke down allotment
- Next year allotments – go in a cycle time frame basis up until 2014
- Standards & guides are reevaluating every 10 years
- New data Rangeland Standards re-evaluation in 2009 – not met (N) or unknown (U)

Rangeland standards not met or unknown are:

1. Soil erosion health
2. Riparian
3. Upland vegetation
4. Wildlife
5. Water quality
6. Air quality

Monitoring work?

Cooperators work group leverage resources with the Wyoming Department of Ag & Conservation Districts. BLM works with permittees to gather monitoring data.

Is there a faster better way to start addressing concerns that cooperators are not involved the last few years? This office has been pro-active in contacting permittees and the Conservation District. If there are cooperators that could offer anything, please tell them to contact the BLM. (Cooperator involvement)

Continental Peak Allotment - clarification on RS Allotment – Bob Price will double check which allotment that should be standard #2 was met. Make a note to the fact and get the correct information out to the group. Any questions we need to pull that data and look at the proper function study (PFS). These standards are not only for livestock standards. Suggestions were to go to the data sheets and take a look at contribution factors. Rangeland evaluations are team resource specialists. Public and other agencies are invited to come along. Notifications have been great, invitations through Cheyenne. Continental Peak allotment before the CAP (Coordinated Activity Plan) was signed shows stand #2 was met and in 1999 was not met.

Funding issues hinder monitoring on allotments. Any cooperating agency could contact and let the BLM which allotment they would like them to do. BLM Prioritizes.

State level additional funding and federal level – get resources on the ground and mitigate those resources as actively as we can. Thinking how we leverage this if we are short of funding. Governor Freundenthal is not opposed to development but we want to do it right. Identify whether the Working Group thinks there is a data gap. Talk and recognizes those issues.

Would be helpful to identify and have additional information.

Instead of yes or no, put in an asterisk - is getting better and moving in the right direction – helps with public perception. A graph to help the allotments is getting better. Lance is cautious for putting in a plus or minus - the best data we have is the hard core sheets. This information is a summary, and if someone has a question we have the data available. Either it met or it did not meet. Break down which allotments met standards in one graph and allotments that did not meet in another. Graphs were keeping in similar terms of the EIS.

First table – a lot of these had standards assessed before the JMH was conducted.

Spring 2009 – also included Sands Allotment but the data was in raw form. These will be done this year.

Actual Use = the actual number of AUM's used.

Custodial grazing allotments actual use summary – how many AUM’s were used that particular year. Split into two. Definition of custodial is a portion of public land intertwined with private group. BLM management definitions – there are isolated public and private lands intertwined. Page 41 of the JMH shows custodial allotments.

BLM took a look at every allotment there are three classes:

1. (I)- Improve 2. (M)-Maintain 3. (C)-Custodial – private, small allotment

Permit Renewals: Actual use tables - animal unit months (AUM) an AUM is the amount of forage that it takes for a cow and a calf to consume in one month.

RS allotment is a checkerboard allotment. Two million acres in size but no complete section in JMH, in the million acres BLM may have 2 sections. It is not in the project area.

The group reviewed the trend data and graphs.

- Bar X – Trend data
- Some allotments have current data and some don’t
- Graphs provide what is currently going on. The trend data. Raw data sheets into graphic form.
- Vegetation trend page 42
- Depends on precipitation
- Forecast analysis – trend read trend every 3 years.
- Allotment standards assessment – suggestions
- Lay out a schedule
- Time frames could include the last years reviewed.

Carrie Nelson reviewed the JMH Data Showing Herd Health (Handout #4)

- Involves Game & Fish participation for data, Elk herd study – gathering and sharing information with the Game and fish.
- The JMH CAP identifies what data they want to determine herd health and they determined for Elk, pronghorn, mule deer, measure number of juveniles per 100 females Data pulled from the Wyoming Game & Fish Job completion reports and compiled from 2003-2008
- 2004 data for elk herd was missing
- Pronghorn is holding steady.
- WY G&F analysis Elk herd indicated the herd is in good health.
- Fawn survival rate = condition of the doe’s coming out of winter.

- The group discussed kernel analysis of elk summer use in relation to oil and gas development in the JMH- 2004.
- GPS – collared elk, BLM has baseline information. Disturbances and balance their habitat

The group reviewed the JMH oil and gas leases in Area 1, 2, and 3 Kernel Analysis Elk – Parturition areas summer 2004

- Road strips restrictions and appropriate strips at the pre-lease meeting
- Invite the G&F to the parcels pre-onsite and send to the state office – pre leasing
- Make sure all cooperators are invited to the meetings
- Data collected from 33 collared elk from 5580 locations
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department parturition area maps
- Keep in balance
- JMH is an environmentally rich area
- Maps are based on documented use

Trisha Cartmell reviewed the Oil and Gas Activities in JMH (Handout #5)

- Background on JMH - suspensions terminated on July 19th, 2009
- Units & participating area in JMH – 4 designated units – 26 active wells in the 4 units
- No seismic activity going on in the JMH and no drilling activity.
- *Lease suspensions were terminated.*
 - On July 19, 2009 - the lease suspensions were terminated. Letters went out and the clock starts to go again on the lease term.
 - The dates were wide range, some leases were close to their expiration dates
 - 174 leases were suspended for JMH document to be completed
- *Any plans for expired leases going forward?*
 - Record of decision (ROD) if a lease expires in Area 3 it's off will not be leased again. Area 3 there is no leasing. Area 2 can be leased on a case by case basis, based on the data. New leasing in Area 1 will be considered with stipulations, restrictions and modifications to proposals to mitigate impacts.
- Sweetwater County is expecting a 50% reduction in revenues.

The group reviewed the JMH sage grouse data information. (Handout #6)

- Part of JMH is in a sage grouse core area. There are 20 active sage grouse leks within the JMH
- Sharp recovery in 2006 - due to count time frame differences
- Map of the Rock Springs field office sage-grouse core areas and occupied leks
- Map of the Sage Grouse use in relation to Oil and Gas development in the JMH

- Core area is everything North of the green line (see Map) 80% = core area = no decline in the core area
- Area one is in a sage grouse core area – CAP allows adding new stips in new leasing language but not for existing leases.
- Are we looking at potential or active maps?
- Facts – sage grouse uses a 4 mile buffer – distance between core areas – high density area and population. Leks need to be protected by a two mile buffer. Actual leks and potential boundary is based on science and nesting habitat.
- Maps are based on actual not potential
- High profile elk and high density sage grouse area. Look at the numbers of birds in a lek
- 622,000 acres divided by 156 leks = 3,987 acres to each lek
- Are we comfortable with the sage grouse stips?
- BLM does an on-site on each pre-leased site.
- BLM can look at new adaptive management methods and is willing to look at new stips language
- Work on core stips language in Area one and Area two

Is there any recreational use data on Steamboat Mountain? (Handout #7)

The only site we are gathering information on is the Sand Dunes, White Mountain Petroglyphs and South Pass overlook - off of highway 28 in Area one. (High visitor sites) closed down in the spring to cover the Parturition area.

What BLM would like to get from the meeting?

Lance Porter – The objective today is:

- 1) To get the data out and make sure BLM has it all. See if there is something else the BLM needs to take a look at. (pull recreation data numbers)
- 2) Take a look at each of the areas and based on the data we have on our high areas of concern. In Area 2 if a lease comes open, then how are we going to handle that and the same with Area 1
- 3) Maps

Getting a sense of a fair amount of data, in a slow period as far as leasing goes, new leases will be expiring in 3 months. No new nominations coming.

Wind energy – the group has not talked about wind energy. There are monitoring testing locations.

Summarize

Where we are to go from here?

- Work on maps more – get one map instead of three – get them correctly labeled. Refine the maps – propose leasing – small handful of maps and look at existing data if it falls within any of these ranges.
- Talk and re-look at the stips we are applying if outside of the colored – no problem with stips that are in area one.
- Area one and two that has the sage core – applying core area stips
- Summarize these last maps that overlap the sage grouse core area, for future leasing in Area one and two. Consult with the State office on this policy before implementation.
- Core area stips in addition to our current sage grouse stips; give BLM some new language in the core areas on the new stips. Mary Flanderka will send the stips (State stips) to Lance Porter and compare what BLM has. BLM may want to wait (on policy) and see where we are at with ours. Depends on Washington National policy.
- Patrick Burke will be the contact with the pre-leasing areas.

What the group would like to see at the next meeting for discussion:

- Have small maps for the core areas.
- Like to see the management areas for area 1,2,and 3
- Come out from this meeting. – move forward with cooperators summary and filters
- Conference call suggestions
- Any additional data that is needed, or holes to fill in, pursue
- Would like to see recreation use, road density and visitor information numbers
- List of indicators road and trail – migratory
- Oil and gas production information
- Locatable mineral industry was discussed at the
- Surface disturbance and disruptive activity – look at realty data, reclaim everything but the county roads and active wells
- VRM classifications – some kind of measurement
- Steve Furtney will contact Gary with oil and gas production
- Look at the website, indicators and inform the public

A suggestion was to send out information by email and do a conference call.

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, **November 3rd** at **10:00 am** conference call.

Any plans for an open house for the public, or website to get the information out?

There is a link on the BLM website:

http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field_offices/RockSprings/jmhcap.html.

List of Handouts:

1. Divide Basin HMA Estimated Wild Horse Population (1 page)
2. Jack Morrow Hills Cultural Data Information (3 pages)
3. Jack Morrow Hills Monitoring Summary (44 pages)
4. JMH Data Showing Herd Health (w/ attached maps) (17 pages)
5. Oil & Gas Activities in Jack Morrow Hills (4 pages)
6. JMH Sage-grouse Data (w/ attached map) (5 pages)
7. Recreation Use (6 pages)