

WYOMING RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL
January 19 -20, 2012
National Historic Trails Interpretive Center
Casper, Wyoming

Thursday, January 19, 2012

Mike Abel – Trail Center Director

- Welcome

John Ruhs – DM HDD and Facilitator

- Rules and schedule for the day.

8:00 a.m. - Don Simpson, BLM State Director:

- Distributed pictures to everyone from the field trip in Pinedale last October.
- Presented letter of appreciation to Paul Ulrich, Freddie Botur and Marshall Dominick for their one year term of service.
- Summarized the plans for today and tomorrow and look for any recommendations to take to our executive leadership team.

Attendees:

RAC Members: Paul Ulrich, Gary Cukjati, Tom Clayson, Doug Thompson, Chris Aimone, Marilyn Mackey, Walt Gasson, Freddie Botur, Don Hartley, Marshall Dominick

BLM: John Ruhs, DM HDD and facilitator; Don Simpson, BLM State Director; Ruth Welch, BLM Assoc. State Director; Mary Wilson, Chief, BLM Office of Communications; Larry Claypool, BLM DSD Minerals and Lands; Steve Dondero, DM BHB; Stephanie Connolly, DM, HPD; Robin Morrison, HPD Secretary and note taker.

Speakers: Chris Carlton, BLM ; Caleb Hiner, BLM; Mike Stewart, BLM; Joe Meyer, BLM; Kathleen Lacko, BLM; Walt George, BLM; Jerimiah Rieman, Governor's Office, Temple Stevenson, Wyoming County Commissioners Association

8:15 a.m. – Panel 1 – Overview of the planning process, to include a status overview of current RMPs including the sage-grouse amendments

Presenters: Chris Carlton, Caleb Hiner, and Mike Stewart.

- Summary of the planning process:
In preparation for this meeting, BLM sent RAC members a *Cooperating Agency Desk Guide*, instruction memorandum and Summary of the Planning Process. Our process is dictated by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA); Resource Management Plans (RMPs) guide public land uses for oil and gas, recreation, grazing for which activities for 15 to 20 years.

We look for comments on what we should be addressing on our planning process for revisions.

There is a 90-day public comment period on draft environmental impact statements (EISs) prior to processing a final document. During the scoping period we go out to the public and we work to engage them to identify issues relevant to this planning document. We try to keep a project on schedule and within budget. We use a contractor to prepare the document and BLM employees serve on the interdisciplinary team (ID team). We look for substantive comments, and specific recommendations for change.

- **Issues for the planning process are:**
 - Partnerships
 - Contractors
 - Stay on task
 - Meet deadlines
 - Workload stressful for staff/cooperators
 - Issues are different for every field office
 - Public perceptions are different

- **Issues for the scoping process for the public are:**
 - People want to more time to comment
 - Documents are too large and need to be more easily indexed or cross referenced
 - Complication of the process
 - Spreadsheets for the EIS are too long
 - To talk with a project lead is a difficult process

- **Some suggestions are to:**
 - Set a baseline document and make changes or additions to that document
 - Concentrate on items that don't work, don't pitch everything out
 - Improve the process by going through the process
 - Reduce litigation [no suggestions provided on how to accomplish this]
 - Create user-friendly, smaller documents
 - Host reader-guide sessions
 - External and internal partners take ownership of product and support the draft/final product
 - Establish range alternatives well in advance of the EISs and make more consistent within the State
 - Remain engaged with RMP amendments
 - Use media to help get information to the public to get them more involved
 - Create indexes for each resource or use
 - Use technology to make it easier and more effective for people to read on-line.
 - Support more resources to the BLM

9:45 a.m. – Break

10:00 a.m. – Panel 2 – Casper Resource Management Plan process and implementation – Joe Meyer, Kathleen Lacko

- Joe addressed the Casper RMP which covers most of Natrona County and some Converse, Goshen and Platte Counties. From start to finish our RMP took around 4 ½

years to complete. Implementation is where the management work starts. The record of decision (ROD) is updated and on the webpage.

- Steve Dondero added the adaptive management and project level implementation components. We need to ask what projects we want to get done this year and adapt to that project scale.
- Kathleen addressed the matrix accomplishments year to year; amendments update the plan.
 - **Things to look at:**
 - Amount of web use
 - What we want to accomplish on the ground
 - Split estate issues
 - Land status for private, BLM, state
 - Show complete picture to the public
 - Implementation in all offices

11:45 a.m. – Working Lunch – Panel 3 – EIS Projects – Walt George, and Paul Ulrich

- Walt George handed out *The Environmental Impact Statement Process* sheet to everyone. Gave a presentation on the EIS process steps and went over some of the issues.
 - **Some issues to address:**
 - Size of the documents
 - Important to address all the issues
 - Identify prospective land use plan amendments
 - Work on issues between draft & final
 - Take public comments on final EIS
 - Respond to comments and prepare the ROD
- Paul Ulrich discussed why it takes so long to get to the ROD and suggestions for what may be done about speeding the process.
 - **Some causes for increased processing timelines in project approvals are:**
 - BLM priorities and regulations changes
 - NGO litigation and protests
 - Increased interest and participation by cooperating agencies
 - Tribal consultations
 - Sage-grouse management
 - BLM budget and reductions in staffing
 - EPA ratings of draft EISs
 - **Some recommendations to reduce processing timelines:**
 - Educate the public about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process; manage expectations
 - Agency develop memoranda of understanding, clearly articulate expectations and priorities
 - Early in the process, operator presents recommended innovative mitigation; BLM provide best management practices (BMPs) for proponents

- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy and have continuing dialogue with all segments of the affected communities; involve them in the entire process
- Hire industry funded agency staff to augment BLM and cooperating agencies
- Encourage the use of objective and experienced BLM project managers and third party consultants in leading project level EIS efforts.

1:10 p.m. – Break

1:30 p.m. – Panel 4- Cooperating agency involvement and role – Doug Thompson, Marilyn Mackey, Jerimiah Rieman, Temple Stevenson and Chris Carlton

- Temple discussed the legal basis and regulations within the cooperating agencies and the government.
- Chris discussed how BLM incorporates the cooperating agencies and how we have seen and increasing interest. BLM Wyoming boasts some of the best cooperating agency participation in the nation. When we start a project/plan we go to the cooperating agency to see if they would like to participate. If so, we plan a one day workshop/training. The local cooperating agencies provide a lot of good information and help us make better decisions.
- Jerimiah discussed the States’ perception on cooperation and coordination should be to interact with other agencies. Our responsibility to the public and the environmental groups prior to release of the documents. At the State level maybe make staff available and make ID teams. Federal agencies could do a better job on the timelines to participate. The Governor wants to move forward with the energy projects and it is critical that we have updated plans available. The Governor is also concerned about the delay in processing EISs.
- Doug discussed how county commissioners use the *Cooperating Agency Desk Guide* to know the rules and play by them. Respect, understanding and inclusion are some things to make better relationships. We have ID teams, core teams, management teams but these are not helpful in relationship building. Be open and transparent. Joe did a good job on the posting information to the web and everyone needs to follow through, take ownership and work together to support decisions. The RAC could recommend some ideas to the state director.
- Marilyn stated the BLM helped them understand the process and they did take into consideration the cooperator comments. The length of time beginning to end and the notice of intent for scoping need more information to the public by press releases or radio.

3:05 p.m. – Discussion of Panels and Question: How can we improve the effectiveness of cooperating agency and public involvement in the planning process?

The following notes are flip chart notes from a brainstorming session aimed at finding suggestions for improving the NEPA process in BLM Wyoming

The group agreed they could use the following as components of discussing process improvements:

- **Planning Process**
- **Lead Agency**
- **Proponent**
- **Coop Agency**
- **Public** (searchable pdf's)

❖ **Process**

- More education
 - Upfront before Scoping
 - Cooperator role
- Time for document review
 - Staged reviews
- Public transparency
 - Use cooperating agency to promote and educate public
 - Cooperators serve as touch points
 - State and cooperator could play a larger role in education and outreach
- Proponent expanded role in education
 - Earlier than the proposal educate on the public on NEPA process – Cooperator, proponents, public
- Make all stages transparent – including implementation
 - BLM Wyoming address enhanced cooperating agency work
 - Pursue opportunities for improved State and local cooperator participation
- Improve opportunities with focused cooperator discussions
 - Use BLM offices for process meetings to “demystify” BLM
- Track comments thru to implementation
- Proponent/agencies/cooperators
 - Develop baseline data together - air, water etc. state lead?
 - Agree upon criteria first
 - Set goals – clear goals
- Build on success
- What's going well?
 - Casper GIS implementation
 - GIS layers and implementation matrix
 - Websites are very useable
 - NHTIC -- BLM cooperators with external organization do a good job
- Private/public partnerships
 - JIO/PAPO
- NEPA on the ground can be an avenue to get things done
 - Staffing and workload – ROI

❖ **Proponent (Schedules)**

- Input on timeline development
 - Best case/worst case
- Articulate areas where we do not have control
 - Be accountable where we do have control
 - Improve schedule mechanism

- Harm of developing schedules that can't be met – dollars (millions), project failure
- How do we improve timeline
 - Complete application
 - Good early communication
 - Public proponent

❖ **Education**

- Multimedia
- Social media
- National training center
- RAC in Wyoming is a positive
- NEPA takes too long in a culture with no attention span. Tell three times, three ways before you get their attention
- Use all the tools available to us
- Youth component – engage youth

- **4:55 p.m. - Meeting adjourned**

Friday, January 20, 2012

8:00 a.m. – Sage- grouse update by Don Simpson

- BLM has a national project leader/manager in place for the sage-grouse. We have the Rocky Mountain Regional team is working to ensure consistency between states. We should know by the end of February where the plans are and be ready to give more information then. The UW webpage has some good information on grazing.
- Chris Aimone handed out information on Sweetwater County's Resolution requesting State of Wyoming and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service coordination to enhance sage-grouse populations through raven control.

8:30 a.m. – Public comments

- Bruce Pendery read off the NEPA policy and made suggestions. The RAC invited Bruce to bring some suggestions to the next meeting. Bruce accepted.

8:50 a.m. - With no further public comment the public comment period ended.

8:50 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – Break

9:00 a.m. – Roundtable

- **Observations on meeting**
 - Productive two hours yesterday from 3- 5:00 p.m.
 - Next meeting we can work on the notes, Mary will email notes to council for the next meeting.
 - Public involvement is something we should discuss again
 - Tools are out there to make the process better
 - The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) explains the process
- **Reclamation restoration follow-up**
 - Need more information on sagebrush fertilization
 - Confirm discussion at the next meeting

- **Determine dates and location for next meeting**
 - Date- March 28th - 29th
 - Hotel – Check on Hilton Garden Inn, Laramie
 - Check on UW spring break before setting up
 - Paul Ulrich and Freddie Botur will expire on March 16th but could attend as members of the public
- **Ending comments**
 - RAC would like to thank Mike Abel for the use of the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center and to Stephanie Connolly
 - Don Simpson would like to thank everyone; it was very useful information
 - Paul will contact Don Simpson to setup a conference call before the next meeting.
 - This will be Paul Ulrich last meeting as the chair person – “Thank You”
- **9:50 a.m. – Meeting adjourned**

Approved: _____ Date: _____
RAC Chair