

**Bureau of Land Management – Wyoming
Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting**

**Aug. 19, 2015
8 a.m.
Conference Call**

RAC Coordinator/Meeting Recorder: Christian Venhuizen

RAC Members:

Name	City	Interest Represented	Term Expires	Present
John Corra	Cheyenne	Energy/Minerals	2016	Y
Penny Bellah	Buffalo	Energy/Minerals	2018	Y
Don Hartley	Rock Springs	Archaeological/Historical	2016	Y
Christi Haswell	Sheridan	Environmental	2018	Y
Doug Thompson	Lander	Elected Official	2016	Y
Brenda Schladweiler	Gillette	Academician	2018	N
Marilyn Mackey	Gillette	Grazing permits/leases	2017	Y
Truman Julian	Kemmerer	Public-at-large	2017	Y
Julia Stuble	Lander	Environmental Organizations	2017	Y
Lyle Konkol	Casper	Public-at-large	2016	Y

Name	Title	Office	Present
Mary Jo Rugwell	Acting State Director	Wyoming State Office	Y
Larry Claypool	Acting Associate State Director	Wyoming State Office	Y
Buddy Green	Deputy State Director – Resources	Wyoming State Office	Y
Michael Madrid	Acting Deputy State Director – Minerals	Wyoming State Office	N
Mark Storzer	District Manager	High Desert District	Y
Stephanie Connolly	District Manager	High Plains District	Y
Duane Spencer	Acting District Manager	Wind River/Big Horn District	Y

Agenda Item: Welcome/Roll Call

Presenters: Mary Jo Rugwell, Acting State Director, BLM Wyoming and Don Hartley, RAC Chairman

Opening Remarks:

Welcome new and reappointed members Penny Bellah, Brenda Schladweiler, Christi Haswell and Lyle Konkol. RAC member Doug Thompson will join the call late. Update on BLM Wyoming leadership changes, including: no decision (as of Aug. 19) on the selection of a state director, the retirement of High Desert District Manager Steve Dondero (Duane Spencer serving as acting), High Plains District Manager Mark Storzer leaving for a position in Alaska (Dennis Carpenter serving as acting), updates on vacant field manager positions (Casper, Pinedale and Worland) and the retirement of Beverly Gorny from the Wyoming State Office's communications office.

Agenda Item: Deputy State Director Reports

Presenter: Larry Claypool, on behalf of Michael Madrid

- Coal listening session in Gillette, Aug. 13, included:
 - 374 participants at the Campbell County Library, including the Wyoming Congressional Delegation, Gov. Matt Mead, Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Janice Schneider, and BLM Deputy Director for Programs and Policy Linda Lance.
- BLM Wyoming was provided an additional \$1 million to hire inspection and enforcement staff (seven inspectors and three environmental staff).
- Hydraulic fracturing rule is still on hiatus due to litigation.
- DISCUSSION:
 - Common comment from the Gillette meeting is the coal program is not broken.
 - Listening sessions do not ensure changes in policy.
 - Media and the public do not understand split estate issues for coal mines.
 - The Buffalo RMP includes coal.

Action Items	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Add coal discussion to the next agenda	Christian Venhuizen	Prior to next meeting

Presenter: Buddy Green

- Provided a Greater Sage-Grouse brief to a Congressional tour in a fact finding tour in the Powder River Basin, with the Northeast Wyoming Municipalities Group.
 - National wild horse and burro program: 100,000 animals, half are on the range. Agreements are being worked on with universities for a contraceptive program. The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board scheduled a two-day meeting in Oklahoma City in September.
 - BLM Wyoming wild horse and update: no gathers for the remainder of fiscal year 2015.
 - BLM Wyoming’s forestry program suffered a loss with the death of Bob Means. His workload included 800,000 acres of commercial timber and part of the Governor’s Task Force for Forests for Wyoming.
 - New staff include Peter Godfrey (soil, water, air) and Noelle Glines-Bovio (National Conservation Lands)
 - DISCUSSION:
 - The data trespass bill has not affected BLM Wyoming operations and serves as a reminder to do the required due diligence with landowners.
 - BLM Wyoming is adhering to the commitments made in the Consent Decree with the Rock Springs Grazing Association and completing the National Environmental Policy Act actions required by the federal court ruling.
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Agenda Item: District Manager Reports

Presenter: Duane Spencer

- Bighorn Basin Proposed Resource Management Plan:
 - Protests are being resolved in the BLM Washington Office, with local staff feedback.
 - Currently resolving the governor's consistency review.
 - Once the protests and the review are resolved, there will be two records of decision issued.
- Lander RMP implementation: cooperative agency meetings and adaptive management training are ongoing.
- Environmental Impact Statements:
 - The Lander Field Office is working on the Sheep Mountain Uranium Mine EIS, with a goal to present the final EIS in the spring of 2016.
 - The LFO is also working on the Moneta Divide EIS, with a draft EIS by mid-2016.
 - Worland and Cody field offices are working with the State Historic Preservation Office regarding cultural resources issues from proposed bentonite development.
 - BLM has a \$2,000 reward and the Humane Society has a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the identification, arrest and conviction of the person or people involved in the deaths of the horses.
 - Horses that are not adoptable will be moved from the Wyoming Honor farm to the DD Ranch Ecosanctuary in Fremont County as the ranch works with partners to get ready for public visitation.
 - No population increase for McCullough Peaks Herd due to fertility control.
 - A wild horse adoption at the Wyoming Honor Farm is scheduled for Sept. 12. It is the 27th year of the partnership.
 - Delissa Minnick will be sworn in as the new Cody Field Manager.

Presenter: Mark Storzer

- Personnel moves:
 - Dennis Carpenter knows the issues in the district and will serve well as the acting district manager.
 - Stephanie Anderson is the WLCI coordinator
- The Rock Springs RMP will incorporate the 9-Plan, the amendments covering Greater Sage-Grouse habitat, into the No Action alternative.
- Some horses from the Rock Springs Holding Facility will be moved to the DD Ranch.
- No wild horse gathers are scheduled, but research may take place in White Mountain.
- Work on the environmental assessment for trailing in the Kemmerer Field Office may be complete by late fall or early winter.
- The WLCI is funded at the base level, for approximately \$600,000. Funding stems from a pool of money that is increasingly competitive.
- The second environmental assessment for the Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project is in the Washington Office for review, followed by public meetings in Rawlins and Saratoga. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working on the environmental impact statement for the eagle take permit.
- TransWest Express Transmission Line Project has mitigation issues being worked through and meetings are being scheduled.

Action Items	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Add Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative discussion to an upcoming agenda	Christian Venhuizen	For the Feb. 3-5 Rock Springs agenda

Presenter: Stephanie Connolly

- Applications for Permit to Drill:
 - APDs are still high, despite lower prices, with 200 APDs processed in 2015, with a backlog of 600-700 remaining.
 - High Plains District used the RAC’s recommendations for increased public involvement in the NEPA process in the proposed oil and gas lease sale involving residents in the Cole Creek Road area. Public meetings to explain the leasing process produced positive results.
 - The Powder River Basin Restoration effort is preparing the end of year report.
 - The Converse County EIS will continue work with cooperators following the ROD for the 9-Plan, with a cooperator meeting set for October.
 - The vacancy for the Casper Field Manager just closed and will take a few months for selection.
 - The district assisted with the wild horse adoption at the Wyoming State Fair.

Action Items	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Add cheatgrass discussion to next agenda	Christian Venhuizen	Prior to the next meeting
Add review priority list to the next agenda	Christian Venhuizen	Prior to the next meeting

Agenda Item: Greater Sage-Grouse Discussion

Presenter: Buddy Green

- Introduction:
 - BLM manages 17.5 million acres of public land and 40.7 million acres of federal mineral estate in Wyoming.
 - Wyoming contains 43 million acres of sagebrush and about 37 percent of the Greater Sage-Grouse population in North America.
- National Planning Effort
 - In 2010 the USFWS found GRSG “warranted but precluded “for listing under the Endangered Species Act, with a lack of regulatory mechanisms in BLM RMPs
 - BLM has been working since December 2011 to incorporate conservation measures into 78 different resource management plans and 20 USFS units across the range of the species.
 - BLM established two planning regions, Great Basin and Rocky Mountain (Wyoming is in the Rocky Mountain Region), based upon primary threats to the sage-grouse as identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- State of Wyoming Core Area Protection Strategy Executive Order 2015-4

- Governor Freudenthal initiated work through the Governor’s Sage-grouse Implementation Team to develop and implement the Core Area Protection Strategy in 2007-08.
- There have been five executive orders, with each of the last four having implemented, clarified or updated the previous version.
- Identifying Core Areas include reviewing breeding density and Greater Sage-Grouse Population Area Map for Wyoming, which includes lek locations, attendance data and habitat overlaid with areas of valid existing.
- Core Population Areas in the state encompass 83 percent of the sage-grouse population on approximately 24 percent of the surface statewide.
- Strategy is based on avoidance of Core population areas.
- It includes minimization of new disturbance in core by limiting surface disturbance to 5 percent of the Core Area and no more than an average of one oil and gas pad/mining claim per 640 acres, as measured using a web based density disturbance calculation tool for tracking and reporting disturbance.
- It also includes no surface occupancy stipulations within .6 miles of the perimeter of an occupied lek and seasonal use restrictions outside of .6 mile buffer for breeding, nesting and early brood rearing.
- Restrictions also exist for non-core sage-grouse habitat – for example NSO within .25 miles of the perimeter of an occupied lek along with seasonal use restrictions (two mile buffer around the lek perimeter).
- The strategy lays out many more stipulations for the protection and management of core habitat.
- **DISCUSSION:**
 - Winter Concentration Areas were put on hold until the SGIT can use the best available science to establish stipulations that balance valid existing rights and bring no harm to the birds. The Normally Pressured Lance Natural Gas Development Project area is an anomaly with 2,000 birds that arrive in the winter. The NPL is outside of the Core Areas.
 - Noise issues are still up in the air due to ongoing research in how to measure it and what amount of noise is a disturbing factors.
 - Noise is covered in the governor’s executive order.

Action Items	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Update on wind power study to RAC member Truman Julian	Buddy Green	Prior to the next meeting

- **BLM Wyoming Planning Effort**
 - In RMP amendments and revisions, BLM Wyoming adopted the governor’s Core Area Protection Strategy. Revisions include Lander, Buffalo and Bighorn Basin, along with the 9-Plan amendments in six filed offices and three USFS units.
 - The approved Lander RMP/final EIS published in June 2014. The other proposed plans and final EISs were published in May 2015, which generated a 30-day protest period and a 60-day Governor’s Consistency Review that ended July 29.
 - The protest period ended June 29 and protests will be addressed by the Washington Office. It included more than 70 letters with several hundred comments covering all three plans.
 - BLM is working with the Wyoming Governor’s Office and other state agencies to maximize consistency, leaving only a few differences due to regulation and/or policy. BLM Provided a response to the governor on Aug. 6.
 - The plans were developed in partnership with more than 40 cooperating agencies, state and local government.

- Two records of decision will be published, with Wyoming included with Montana, Colorado, North Dakota and South Dakota. The RODs conclude the planning process.
- DISCUSSION:
 - Protests will be resolved prior to the USFWS's listing decision.
 - Non sage-grouse issues are primarily based in the RMP revisions, not the RMP amendments and are included in the governor's consistency review.
 - There are two potential triggers for litigation: the signing of the ROD and the listing decision.
- RMP Implementation
 - It is normal after each planning effort to put into place an implementation plan and tracking mechanism for our management actions.
 - Consistency is critical to the USFWS in the management of the GRSG as it relates to their listing decision. BLM has committed to an enormous amount of management actions in several states.
 - To address the issue of consistency across the range of the sage-grouse, the BLM established the Sage-Grouse Implementation Group to develop an implementation plan for all of the RMP revisions/amendments including the USFS plans.
 - The national implementation framework currently being developed is modeled after the implementation framework developed in coordination with the state of Wyoming for and incorporated into the BLM Wyoming Plans; however, it is still being developed.
 - Since that time there has been considerable discussion on regional and state governance of plan implementation along with capacity. BLM is considering a Regional Coordination Committee for each planning region (Great Basin & Rocky Mountain Region). Each would have a Regional Coordination Director. A regional sage-grouse support team is being considered to implement priorities set by the Coordination Committee.
 - There is also discussion regarding an Executive Oversight Committee above the Regional Coordination Committee. A team was appointed at the Western Governor's Association Meeting in Denver to make recommendations on the establishment of this committee. The team consisted of Bob Budd, Amy Leuders, Raul Morales and others; however, they have not yet made recommendations. Again, overall governance is still a work in progress.
 - Recognizing the desire for national consistency, the national effort still needs to be mindful of existing governance in state's like Wyoming that already have local working groups, like the Governor's Sage-grouse Implementation Team, Greater Sage-Grouse Interagency Working Group and ongoing cooperating agency and stakeholder relationships.
 - The feeling by many is that even in states like Wyoming, we must have some level of consistency for certain elements of implementation such as: livestock grazing, disturbance tracking/mitigation, monitoring and data management training.
 - To address consistency of implementation across the range of the GRSG, the national office is putting together teams to prepare an implementation guide that will provide instruction for implementation regarding these and other items. This is intended to be a desk guide. While this may not be problematic for some items, it will be a challenge for others.
- DISCUSSION:
 - The plans include efforts for all states with Greater Sage-Grouse habitats.
 - BLM Wyoming, the SGIT and the governor are working together.
 - Field managers will implement any identified efforts, but regional coordination is still a work-in-progress. The Lander Field Office is in the process of implementing its RMP

- revision and coordinating with Wyoming Game and Fish Department, which has the authority to manage the bird.
 - Regional RODs are not supported by the RAC and the RAC will submit a formal recommendation on the topic.
- VOTE AFFIRMED (9 in-favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent): RAC chairman will write a letter to the designated federal official (BLM Wyoming state director) recommending the localization of sage-grouse efforts.

Action Items	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Submit draft recommendations to the chairman	Interested RAC members	Week of Aug. 24.
Submit final recommendations to the DFO	RAC Chairman	Prior to Sept. 15.

Agenda Item: New Business

Presenters:

Next meeting:

- Oct. 29-30, Casper Field Office
- Feb. 3-5, 2016, Rock Springs Field Office

Agenda Item: Public Comment

- No public comments submitted and no members of the public in attendance.
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Submit final recommendations to the DFO	RAC Chairman	Prior to Sept. 15.



Bureau of Land Management Wyoming Resource Advisory Council

Location: Wyoming State Office, Cheyenne, WY

Date: Aug. 19, 2015 Time: 8 am

MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

(PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY)

NAME	AFFILIATION	CONTACT INFORMATION (Optional) This document will be attached to the meeting minutes and posted as a public record.	
John Correa	RAC Member		
Larry Claypool	Acting Assoc. SD	775-6001	LClaypool@blm.gov
Mary Jo Ruqueff	Acting State Director	(307) 775-6001	mruqueff@blm.gov
Brian Davis	DSD SS	307 775-6238	S.Davis@blm.gov
Buddy Green	DEPUTY STATE DIRECTOR RESOURCES	307-775-6113	bwgreen@blm.gov
Kristen Venharen	RAC coordinator		
Kristen Lenhardt	BLM CC Chief	307-775-6015	klenhardt@blm.gov
Walt Lower	BLM WY		