

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

RAC Members

Category 1

Mark Austin (Developed Recreation), John Reams (Chair, Energy and Minerals), Mark Roeber (Grazing)

Category 2

Tif Rodriguez (Wild Horse & Burros), Katie Steele (Dispersed Recreation), Joe Neuhof (Dispersed Recreation)

Category 3

Renzo DelPiccolo (State Agency Rep), William Gleason (Public-at-Large), John Justman (Elected Official), Ernie Williams (Cat 3: Public-at-Large)

Not in Attendance

Christi Zeller (Public-at-Large), Kathy Welt (Energy and Minerals – called in)

BLM

Stephanie Connolly (SWD), Morgan Rubanow (GJFO), Lisa Dawson (SWD), Eric Coulter (SWD), Connie Clementson (TRFO- on the phone), Greg Larson (UFO), Wayne Werkmeister (GJFO), Collin Ewing (DENCA/MCNCA/GJFO), Kate Miyamoto (COSO)

Public

Mike Lane (Delta County), Brendan Banner (Congressman Tipton's Office), Alyssa Logan (Senator Bennet's Office), Betsy Bair (Senator Gardner's Office), Michale Melnicle (Congressman Tipton's Office), Janette Champman (Great Old Broads), Craig Grother (Backcountry Hunters and Anglers) Soren Jespersen (TWS.org), Ken Dolezal (Great Old Broads), Judith Lopez (Great Old Broads), Joanna Deegan, Patrick Dooling (Western Slope Conservation Center), Natasha Leger (CHC), Ben Katz (Western Slope Conservation Center), Patti Barr, Wayne Quity (retired forest service).

Welcome, Introductions & Approval of Minutes

Chair John Reams called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. Katie Steele made a motion to approve the minutes from the Sept 25, 2019 meeting. It was seconded by Tif Rodriguez and approved unanimously.

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

The meeting began with Stephanie Connolly, Southwest District Manager, updating the RAC on the BLM Colorado district boundary changes that may occur. State Director, Jamie Connell, will make this decision over the next few weeks. The RAC had a phone conference regarding this recently to provide input.

At this point in time, 2018 RAC nominations have not been approved and the 2019 nominations are still in the queue. The RAC cannot have additional meetings from this point further until the BLM finds out about these nominations; the March meeting will be put on hold for now.

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

The RAC wanted to write a letter to encourage the Department to make decisions on the RAC nominations from 2018 and 2019. Katie Steele said that there has been success in the past with similar issues through formal letters. In the meantime, the BLM can share information to the members of the RAC and these members may share it with the community, but the BLM cannot seek advice without a quorum due to FACA.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Visitor Center and Museum Fee Proposal Presentation/Review – Connie Clementson, Tres Rios Field Office Manager

In September, the RAC received CANM's draft business plan and today the RAC is being asked to make a decision regarding CANM's fee increase for the Visitor Center and Museum. RAC members received copies of final business plan.

Since 1988, the Visitor Center and Museum (VC and Museum) fee has been stagnant at \$3 per person and the fee is charged March 1- Oct 31 every year, with no fees during winter. The fee has not increased in 30 years and is comparatively low based on fees for similar facilities in the region.

Proposal: The BLM is asking the RAC to approve (1) increasing the fee for the VC and Museum from the \$3 to \$6 and (2) charging the fee year-round rather than only from March 1 through Oct 31.

Commercial enterprises would be charged separately and anyone under 16 years would be free. Fees would not be charged on fee-free days and the proposed fee is sensitive to local economic conditions. The fee increase would increase revenue by an estimated \$25,800 (FY2019 revenue was \$15,500). All fee monies will stay within CANM and would go towards special projects and hiring seasonal employees since CANM currently relies heavily on volunteerism. National Park Passes would still be recognized.

The fee is only for VC and Museum, not the public lands associated with CANM and there is no proposal to institute fees at those locations at this time. Once approved, State Director will approve and will start fee in March (90 days after approval).

Public comments: CANM received 12 written comments from four volunteers, five members from general public, and three comments from local organizations. Most comments supported the fee increase. There were suggestions to have the fee at \$5 instead of \$6 to avoid the hassle of making change; to keep the fee at \$3 but charge year-round; to only increase fees to \$4. The BLM responded to these comments stating that if the fee was only increased to \$5, CANM would lose about \$7,000 per annum; keeping the fee at \$3 or adjusting to \$4 would not be ideal based on research conducted by CANM staff the \$6 fee was based on. There was one comment against the increase. Additionally, Tribe members asked for fee free for 26 affiliated tribes and this will occur to post a sign stating to make staff aware.

RAC Questions/Comments:

- Will there still be a discount for students/schools and will non-local schools be charged? Educational institutes will not pay a fee for students, whether local or not. Friends groups will also not be charged a fee for education programs.

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

- Are there any plans for closures of trailheads or roads? No, there are no planned closures except for what has been identified in the Resource Management Plan.
- There were comments about the fee being too low even after the proposed increase but the RAC was in support of the increase to \$6 and the RAC believed there was enough outreach to the community to ask for comments. The RAC recommended reviewing the fee every 1-5 years based on Cost of Living and to suggest that prices can increase as necessary. Colorado Parks and Wildlife uses Consumer Price Index for their analyses and evaluates every year.
 - The BLM noted that if we want to look at every 3 years, it'll take about 5 years to get the increase to occur since this process started in 2016 and we're deciding in 2019.
- Are there a lot of non-local users? The BLM stated that about 60% of users were local users in years past. This year, it seemed like users were 50/50 or 60/40 with visitors from outside the area.

Decision: The SWD RAC supports the fee increase from \$3 to \$6 and for the fee to be year round. The RAC wants the BLM to review fees every 3 year by comparing to the Cost of Living and authorizes the BLM to increase the fee as needed to stay in alignment with analyses. A motion was set by Ernie, Mark R seconded it. All approved. Motion carried to support resolution.

Dumping on Public Lands Presentation – Eric Coulter, Southwest District Public Affairs and Morgan Rubanow, Grand Junction Field Office Volunteer Coordinator

Illegal dumping is a major issue within the Southwest District as well as nationally on public lands. Dumping incorporates hard to dispose of items or items that have fees associated with them such as mattresses, electronics, tires, old RVs/cars and fees for certain items may be increasing in the near future, creating more issues on public lands. Western Colorado has a challenge where it produces a lot of trash but not enough for the scale of Front Range recycling/trash programs.

The Southwest District would like to build upon five foundations to create a cultural change locally on how people view their public lands based on education, partnerships, marketing, local waste management, and enforcement. Photographs and stories were shared by BLM staff to illustrate the issues locally. The BLM noted that taxpayers are taking the costs on and it is costing a lot for BLM to keep public lands clean, which removes funding for other opportunities such as recreation improvements. Currently, our law enforcement is strung thin with health and safety is a priority over millions of acres of public lands managed by the BLM. The BLM wants to be strategic about their approach and to have this be a community-wide effort with assistance from partners, including a slogan and mascot. Once this is solidified, the BLM can see what funding is possible in future years to assist.

- Education—Recycle CO is a collaborative group on the western slope that the BLM is now part of the council. Ideas have included boost recycling locally and teaching people where to dispose of their waste appropriately. Vouchers may be possible to

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Dec 12, 2019

help cover costs for the public since fees must be charged by disposal facilities to cover operating costs. The BLM wants to incorporate schools and youth more and the Boy Scouts may be a good option as well as other youth groups.

- Marketing—Advertising resource damage may be somewhat impactful and groups like Backcountry Hunters and Anglers want to help set up tip lines and bounty for successful reports from the public who witness illegal dumping on public lands. The BLM wants to work with partners to create memorable key messages that all groups can replicate. BLM social media posts on dumping are the #1 most-engaged posts on the social media platform. Partners can put logos on signage and help with the messaging.
- Enforcement— People will get citations if caught in the act or leave traces of who they are but this is rare. Tres Rios has a tip line that could be mimicked within other field offices.
- Costs— Illegal dumping costs a large amount of money in terms of labor and disposal costs. Volunteers have been a great asset with assisting as much as they can but the issue is too large.

Overall, the RAC agreed that there may not be a long term solution for these and it might take time to turn this issue around that has been developing for years. A big issue is that there are not proper places to dispose of items or it is too costly if you have large amounts. Additionally, the BLM should work with businesses to see if there are ways to help with extended hours and to make it cheaper and more convenient; i.e. free disposal weeks. The problem will get worse as more people come to live and play on the Western Slope and the BLM needs to work with cities and counties.

It was agreed that education and partnerships are key, with a focus on partnerships. Ideas included apps with information on where to go, vouchers to cover costs, fee-free weeks every now and then, transfer stations, working with counties and the State for funding pathways. Big companies needed to be involved in the conversation. Law enforcement funds and still fines would help. Maybe look local, state, nationally, and internationally for ideas.

Example places to look at:

- White Pine County in Nevada- the county secured grant funds to increase hours and more staff for dumps and found grants to offset costs to properly dispose of tires, TVs, and other items.
- The idea of reusing items of trash into art was mentioned, The Carr Fire had an art show of trash/burned items transformed to art as a fundraiser to raise money to help with fire-fighting efforts, maybe we can do something similar.
- Utah has a business that creates playgrounds, feed buckets and more from old tires but this is costly, including transportation costs to get recycled materials there. Once tires are cleaned, it can be \$250 a ton and the rate increases with size of tires.
- Backcountry Horsemen is working to recycle twine with assistance from the local

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

landfill in the Dolores area where the landfill stores twine until a semi-truck can haul the load to Denver/Phoenix. The Dolores area is looking to see if landfills can collect it and then take care of transporting.

- Montezuma county got \$ from the state for the tire clean up and went for a week, brought in a tire grinder.
- Maybe one county can take on one thing and another county can take on another one.
- Garfield County had a very successful hazardous trash removal 2x a year.
- Mascot-Johnny Horizon (an old BLM mascot), Dump the Fridge and Roll the Tire
- Nebraska—anywhere that sells a tire has to take a tire and ground up and become part of interstate 80. In Oregon you cannot have plastic bags, paper bag costs .15 so taking own bags is a big deal. You cannot own trash truck if don't own a recycle truck and it's on a schedule.
- Walmart goes through 3 billion plastic bags a day—maybe a bigger question on how to get companies to take part.
- It was noted that the BLM does not track yearly dumping well and funds are not directly allocated to deal with dumping from fines being paid by those who were caught dumping-- it goes into general funds.
- Look into the Keep America Beautiful campaign in the 40s.

UFO Resource Management Plan Update – Greg Larson, Uncompahgre Field Office Manager

The RAC was updated on a general overview of the Proposed RMP decisions, remaining steps in the process, and previews of the implementation that would occur once the RMP is finalized. Currently, the UFO is responding to the Governor's Consistency Review and the Washington Office and Colorado State Director are going through the 150 protests received. Once this process is complete, the RMP will go to a Record of Decision and then will be a finalized RMP.

The RMP planning area involved 6 counties, over 3 million surface acres, and nearly 1 million subsurface mineral estate. The RMP involves BLM objectives, planning actions, and leasing stipulations (fluid leasable minerals). It looks at a variety of BLM-managed public lands including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), lands with Wilderness characteristics, recreation management, Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs), Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), and Wild and Scenic Rivers within the field office. The BLM detailed how the draft RMP will affect Uranium and other non-energy leasable minerals, livestock grazing, recreation designations, and other types of land managed by the UFO.

Fluid leasable minerals had the most public comments towards this regarding oil and gas,

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

especially with the North Fork Valley. Coal did not have a lot of comments and those who did comment included methane capture. The main comments regarding fish and wildlife located within BLM public lands revolved around the Gunnison Sage Grouse, including comments from the Governor's Consistency Review.

The Governor's Consistency Review discussed how the RMP does or does not align with Colorado State regulations on wildlife, SB181, the CO state bill on greenhouse gasses, Gunnison sage-grouse plans, and the Secretarial Order for migration corridors. The State asked to limit route density to 1 mile of route per 1 square mile, which the BLM did not originally analyze in this draft.

Questions/comments: Does this include TMP? Travel Management is a separate process for this plan, the only decision this RMP makes it to adopt the TM that this office has already completed in this office. Did we get resources to help with the RMP (staff capacity)? UFO had some additional staff to help but that will change during implementation. Why was TMP taken out of RMP? It was nationally directed by BLM or DOI. Some TMPs were already created prior to RMP drafting as well. RMP planning started in 2009.

Field Manager Reports

Uncompahgre Field Office- Greg Larson, Field Manager

Planning

Stock ponds: Last year a stock pond flooded due to extreme rain events. To prevent future issues, the UFO is having their engineers check other stock ponds.

Coffee Dam: This dam is located southeast of Montrose. It is not functional, and it is not owned by a private entity. The State of CO signed a breach order and the UFO has put in a request for funding to help remove the dam since it is on public lands before health and safety issues occur. AML is partnering to inventory and close old mines, but AML program is really small funding wise for BLM UFO and partners can help with costs. Also putting on paper areas that have nothing there that the BLM agrees with company that there isn't anything to close. AML usually have bats so working with CPW to make sure they're not affected.

Minerals and Abandoned Mine Lands

Mining and Minerals Administration: The UFO is partnering with the US Forest Service on number of projects. Within the UFO, the West Elk Mine is in a lawsuit with the public since the mine did not properly consider methane flaring as alternative. There may be future coal mine/methane projects.

Salt discharge: There will be public meetings held by Montrose County regarding salt discharge that has been leading to seismic activity in the Montrose County area. Possible solutions include evaporation ponds, injection wells, and desalination plants. The BLM will provide input into the preferred

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

alternative from these discussions and would like to hear public input.

Abandoned mine lands: The BLM is partnering to inventory and close old mines. One concern from Colorado Parks and Wildlife regard bats that may live in the mine, so the UFO is working with CPW to ensure bats are not affected by closures.

Vegetation

Gunnison sage-grouse: This bird is listed as threatened bird on the Endangered Species List. The UFO is collecting data on the species and asking grazing permittees that are renewing their leases to help with the recovery efforts.

Vegetation treatments: The UFO is planning to do programmatic treatments and a programmatic vegetation Environmental Assessment will be coming out soon along with a press release to announce it to the public.

CO Hookless cactus: The UFO is working on delisting this plant species within the UFO since it is no longer a sensitive plant.

Recreation

Shavano Gateway Recreation Area: The decision was signed in September by the UFO to lease/convey acreage to Montrose County who will partner with the BLM for maintenance of this area. The UFO is working on a Federal Register Notice for this.

Rim Road Staging Area: The paperwork in process to create an OHV staging area on Rim Road. The engineering planning has started. There will be gravel and fencing put in to create a staging area for events. The Dry Creek Trail reroutes are completed where the BLM armored the trail with rocks and made bypasses for difficult areas.

North Delta: The RAC went on a field trip to visit trails in this area. Delta County is taking leadership on some trails and helping the BLM prioritize.

Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area

Eagle Rock Shelter- This area has been developed for interpretation purposes and the BLM will work with the Ute Museum for interpretation events to the shelter.

Chukar Toilet- The Chukar toilet located within wilderness along the Gunnison River was burned down last year with an illegal campfire. It was determined that the toilet was necessary to protect wilderness values and a new one was created. The BLM horse-packed in all the materials. The toilet is an innovative design that other agencies might look into for future uses.

Gunnison Forks to Austin along the Gunnison River: This section has seen a lot of usage. The BLM and partners are looking at facilities for increasing trailer parking and better facilities for boats; maybe have another boat ramp for people to add a short float with short shuttle.

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019
Tres Rios Field Office- Connie Clementson, Field Manager

Wild Horses

Wild Horse Management Area plan update: The BLM is analyzing the PZP program and the bait trapping as well as comparing current levels to the appropriate management levels for the Horse Management Area, which are currently higher than the appropriate levels. The BLM met with local groups and talked through alternatives with the public. The Environmental Assessment will be out around March of 2020.

Planning

Travel Management Plan Updates: The TMPs proposed that all mountain bike trails would be open to class 1 e-bikes with sub-alternatives that added in class 2 and class 3 e-bikes. There were 55 comments as of the October 21 deadline for all travel management plans with a mix of comments for and against e-bikes being included on mountain biking trails. There will be an appendix to the Environmental Assessment with the comments. The EA is planned to be finalized in early 2020. There were two open houses on this by the TRFO, one was well attended but not the other.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Resource Management Plan Amendment

ACEC Resource Management Plan amendment- There was one protest that had several entities including environmental groups and San Miguel County asking the BLM to avoid resizing the existing ACECs. The BLM did not receive anything from the Governor's Consistency Review. The BLM is hoping to get a record of decision record signed in early 2020.

Recreation

Phil's World Trail System: 15.5 miles of the proposed 22 miles of new non-motorized trails are built. There are new trailheads at Cash Canyon and Simon Draw, including shade structures.

Gypsum Valley: This is a boating and day use area that BLM engineers have been building 6 new shade structures and are rebuilding the access road.

Minerals and Realty

Energy Right of Ways: An Executive Order pushed the renewal of 13 energy ROWs (power lines, pipelines) and the BLM will have scoping on E-planning soon. The renewals need to be reissued by April of 2020. The ROWs are existing uses and the BLM is simply reissuing expired ones.

King II Coal Mine: This was a coal lease by application by GCC Energy for 2,600 acres. The NEPA analysis has been complete. The ASLM has signed off on it, OSMRE will put out a decision in early 2020 so that the BLM is able to implement the full decision. This decision cannot be appealed without litigation.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument and Visitor Center

Heather Sauls has finished her detail as the CANM Manager and there will be a new detail to fill in as Acting Monument Manager starting in January for 120 days. The BLM is hoping to hire permanently shortly after that detail expires.

The Museum and Visitor Center: The BLM implemented its new schedule of operations and

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
Dec 12, 2019

there have not been any issues so far.

Sand Canyon: There is currently heavy construction on the Sand Canyon parking lot to make it more accommodating for visitors. There will be larger parking areas for trailers and trucks. During this time, the County parking lot ¼ mile away is still open so the public can access trails from there.

Painted Hand Pueblo: There are potential trailhead and parking lot upgrades in the near future such as upgrading the road, putting up interpretive panels, and enhancing the day-use area. The BLM is looking into moving the road so it is fully on BLM as well since part of it is on private land at the moment. There is potential to have an equestrian trailhead nearby.

Grand Junction Field Office- Wayne Werkmeister, Associate Field Manager

Greg Wolfgang will be acting GJFO Field Manager for 120 days. Hopefully, there will be a new FM hired by the end of that detail.

Recreation

27 ¼ Road: The Grand Junction Regional Airport had to expand and mitigated impact to recreation. \$250,000 in funding was provided by the airport in exchange for the land transfer to the airport and to create a staging area for the public and hosting events. Safety concerns with motocross track have been fixed, which involved fencing crossing old trails that are now part of airport property.

Grand Mesa Bowmen: The Bowman have raised money to help with the costs associated with getting a BLM permit for the archery range on BLM public lands outside of Glade Park. Mesa County is considering leasing the property. The BLM is working with the Bowmen and Gardner's Office to figure out a solution.

North Fruita Desert staging area: The Environmental Assessment for the staging area at end of 18 Road was signed. Project work can start out there and there is a grant that will help with improving the road.

Rabbit Valley- The Environmental Assessment is complete. Construction is starting and there will be established fire rings out there soon. The other engineering work will start soon as well. A Federal Register Notice is in the process regarding the fee implementation that RAC approved at the last meeting.

Palisade Plunge- The trail is still in its construction phase. Phase I is a bit behind due to weather. The community is excited about this trail.

Planning

GJ Resource Management Plan review: Every 5 years the BLM CO State Office reviews an RMP. COSO has to look at a completed RMP to see if decisions discussed are valid and working towards implementing them. GJFO signed RMP in Aug of 2015 and everything is looking good so no major changes.

BLM Colorado Southwest Resource Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Dec 12, 2019

Questions and Answers for RAC

The State of CO is owed lands from BLM according to the news, can you explain that?

In the late 1800s the BLM was providing tracks of lands to State. There was a debt owed to the State so the BLM has identified areas of land that can be given to them that will equal the promised 17,000 acres plus 6,000 acres of mineral estate. Dolores and Ouray Counties are the only areas impacted by this in the Southwest District. There was screening process for cultural resources or endangered species. Most tracks of land were isolated BLM. There will be a 21 day open period for the public to comment. The RAC asked the BLM to send them this information once it's available.

Public Comments Summary

- **Craig Grother, West Slope Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers:** Craig Grother of Norwood was representing Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and had previously served on the Dominguez-Escalante Advisory Council. He noted that the typical stakeholders for public lands projects are the Agency, project proponents, and wildlife agencies (Colorado Parks and Wildlife). Some voices from the community are missing, so it feels as though most projects do not represent a full community effort; i.e. Ridgway regional planning effort. Craig has observed the impacts of trails projects to wildlife and wildlife habitat and noted the negative impacts to the backcountry experience that many seek. He would like to see the BLM maximize efforts/opportunities to involve all community members in proposed recreation/trails projects.

Closing Thoughts

Recommendations: Share public notices/public scoping with RAC members to keep up on what's going on in various offices (like things on e-planning). Maybe send news releases to RAC members. An additional recommendation was suggested to hold the public comment before lunch in case the meeting runs ahead of schedule.

If the RAC meets again, it would be in Grand Junction on March 25, 2020. There are currently a number of RAC terms expiring that will result in the loss of a quorum specifically for Category 3 including:

- Category 1 Cathy and Mark
- Category 2 Joe and Tiff
- Category 3 Christy, John, and Ernie

John made a motion to adjourn at 2:38 PM. Mark seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT RAC MEETING

- Potential agenda items were not discussed due to the next RAC meeting being put on hold.

Next meeting: March 25, 2020 – Grand Junction, CO