

Summary Minutes

Farmington District Resource Advisory Council Meeting

January 30 and 31, 2018

Farmington, New Mexico

January 30th attendees

RAC Members:

Wendy Hageman (Category 3)
Theresa Pasqual (Category 3)
Mick O’Neill (Category 2)
Carmen Johnson (Category 3)
Cory Styron (Category 1)
Frederick Verner (Category 1)
Leonard Martinez (Category 3)

BLM Staff /Support:

Victoria Barr, FDO
Richard Fields, FFO
Dave Mankiewicz, FFO
Jeff Tafoya, FFO
John Bailey, TFO
Zach Stone, FDO
Doug Mckim, FFO
Pat Pacheco, FDO
Tami Torres, TFO

Visitors:

Cody Hooks, Taos News

January 30th Morning Session (9:00-11:15)

Call to Order, Introductions

Victoria Barr called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M. RAC, BLM staff, and visitors introduced themselves. Mick O’Neill mentioned that RAC members Theresa Pasqual (arrived late) and Leonard Martinez (arrived late) were not present.

Appointment of Chairperson

After introductions, Victoria Barr stated this meeting did not meet the full component requirements due to one of the RAC members moving. Victoria asked to appoint an acting interim RAC Chairperson for this meeting. Victoria stated that her role is as a Federal liaison designated by the Sec. of the Interior to the RAC, so she can’t be Chair, so she nominated Mick.

She indicated that his term would end at the end of this RAC meeting. She asked if Mick would be willing to serve for this meeting and nominated him for the position. Wendy also approved of the nomination and provided the 2nd for it.

Discussion: Mick stated he would take the position if everyone was in favor. Motion presented by Victoria Barr and voted on. RAC members voted a unanimous yes to approve the nomination.

Victoria said that if at the next meeting there was a full component RAC, there would be an opportunity to appoint a Chair for 2 years. She stated that she hoped this administration will approve the RAC nominations from last summer.

Victoria stated that for her and the agency, the value of RAC is to get formal advice on issues that we are facing and so sometimes the RAC will write a letter to the state director with an opinion or sometimes the Secretary for formal advice

Introductory Remarks

Carmen asked if we had enough members to meet the requirements of a quorum.

Zach stated that the requirement is to have 2 RAC members from Category 1, 2 RAC members from Category 2, and 3 RAC members from Category 3. Since the RAC members present do not meet the regulations for specific categories to be represented it was not considered a quorum. Due to that they could not have an official vote on any topics brought up for discussion at the meeting.

Victoria went over the agenda and discussed the RMPA newsletter that was sent to the members for review.

Mick then asked members to review the minutes from the last RAC meeting for a few moments.

Mick suggested they wait until people sign in for public comment in order to determine how many people want to speak and that will set the boundaries of how long each person can talk

Wendy asked about the discussion at the last meeting regarding the recreation fee increase. She asked if they had determined a fee structure or if there was a handout with any updates.

Victoria said that they had not determined that yet and in order for BLM to increase fees at a recreational site it has to go through RAC.

Victoria asked Tammy the status of the FLREA 2004 update. Tammy said they are on the 3rd draft and the formatting of the documents still needs a few changes. It will then be sent to Washington office for review

Wendy then asked if any RAC members received the DOI proposed exchange acreage for Federal lands

Carmen requested a copy of the letter that Wendy received regarding the land exchange.

Farmington Field Office RMPA Update – Rick Fields

Rick Fields apologized for not having a beautiful PowerPoint slideshow to go along with his presentation. He said that Jill Aragon was the program manager on the Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and was originally going to do the presentation, but she was sick today. He said that he would send the PowerPoint presentation Jill created to the RAC members.

Rick discussed the RMPA and why there was an amendment being worked on. The original RMP was looked at in 2003 when things were booming in the area and based on the projections from the Mancos Gallup area, industry predicted an additional 20,000 wells needed to be drilled. Due to the record of decision from that EIS it limited the number of wells they could permit under that decision to about 3,500. A new EIS was needed to evaluate if BLM could permit that many additional wells. The 2003 EIS was completed, but the current amendment is undergoing.

This past year BLM has been analyzing data and working on an alternate matrix to come up with alternative methods and should have a finalized draft around February 15th.

Cooperating agencies were provided a copy of the draft alternatives, and had 20 days to review and provide feedback on Chapter 2 only (not the entire draft).

BLM is working with a contractor and is trying to have a RMPA draft for public review by June 2018. The original schedule for the RMPA had allowed more time, but due to the Secretary's request, BLM is trying to have the entire process finalized by December 2019.

In 2014 BLM looked at a reasonable foreseeable development plan and hired a contractor to look at the mineral resources of the Mancos shale as the primary area for oil and gas development. The study tried to forecast out for the next 20 years how many wells would be drilled, how much oil and gas would be produced and to forecast prices during that time to anticipate the environmental impact, economic impact and the impact to surface development. State office reviewed the study and did not think it studied far enough South. (Geographically south and farther than the Chaco region down to I-40)

From the original forecasting done in 2014, technology changed and it was determined there was plenty of room left and decision space for wells. Rick explained that with a vertical well you have one line going straight down and have a smaller area of mineralization you are getting. With horizontal drilling you have one well with one line going down, but you are pulling from a larger pool so you need fewer wells.

Victoria provided further explanation by stating in the past for a 2 mile lateral you would need 4 individual well heads to access that mineral so for 4 wells there were 4 APDs needed.

Technology has since improved and now you can get the same amount as before, but only need to have 1 well and 1 APD to do so. On 1 well head with a directional line going out 2 miles, there's just one area of surface disturbance, so BLM is permitting that surface disturbance to access that mineral.

This new technology is more efficient at gathering that mineral so fewer APDs are needed, which also results in fewer jobs because you do not need as many hands on the ground to support the ancillary facility needed to drill those wells.

Rick stated that because of less surface disturbance this results in fewer roads, because instead of having to put several holes in the ground, you are putting fewer holes and fewer facilities on the surface.

Victoria indicated the ability to have multiple wells on 1 pad so they can essentially develop an array of lateral lines, but instead of having 11 well pads or more because those were also horizontal wells, you only have 1 well pad. The value of the RMPA is there so BLM can better analyze the landscape management component of it for habitat fragmentation, cultural resources, and a whole wide array of resource impacts.

Mick asked for clarification on the multiple well heads. Victoria explained that you can have 1 pad with multiple wells and multiple laterals, but only 1 well head to 1 line.

Rick stated that BLM was still adding cooperating agencies to the RMPA. Mick asked for clarification of the how the word agencies was referenced. Rick stated it was a BLM term and to be considered as a cooperating agency, it has to be a government agency, which is one of the requirements under BLM regulations.

Cooperating agencies get 60 days to review the draft EIS before we make it available to the public. The value added of a cooperating agency is their ability to review the draft alternatives and provide comments that BLM can incorporate or make enhancements to the range of alternatives they will provide.

There was a No Action Alternative that is a BLM record of decision from the 2003 RMP, and in addition to that we have developed four alternatives that give us flexibility in making decisions regarding our realty actions, lands and wilderness characteristics, leasing stipulations and conditions of approval, and the fourth one is developing resources.

This RMPA project has paved the way for better working relationships with the tribe chapters and other areas and helped us establish trust and better relationships going forward.

Rick then read through the RMP alternatives. This is the only BLM project that produced the information bilingually in English and Navajo.

BLM processes all APDs regardless of who owns the land. Currently we have a backlog of APDs, but no backlog of leases. The average process takes about 72 days. There is always a backlog due to one coming in and one going out, this is

Victoria stated that the Farmington Field Office was able to contribute over \$3 Million dollars to the US Treasury through our leasing fees, and then congress decides how the money is spent.

Taos Field Office Land Use Planning Updates – John Bailey

John introduced himself and the Taos Field Office. He said that the TFO occupied nine counties and managed over 600,000 surface acres. He also explained there are 10 ACECs, 42 miles of National Historic Trail, 104 miles of wild and scenic rivers, one Wilderness Area, two Wilderness Study Areas, one National Monument, and five Scenic Byways were located in the TFO. Forty-five staff members help manage these locations and of these forty-five individuals, twenty-seven were permanent. He stated that their main job was ensuring the conservation of these lands, managing realty actions, aiding in habitat restoration, partnering with other land managers, and encouraging public involvement.

John provided a handout that gave detailed updates on some of the following Taos Field Office projects.

John said that he provides over 70 guided hikes a year and puts out a monthly calendar where the public can email him for inquiries.

There is a proposed meeting on March 14th for recommendations to be set to have trails become part of the connection between Colorado and Texas.

John also discussed several concerns about bridge safety due to regular suicides occurring and they passed a resolution for funding to provide 24 hour security guard coverage for the area.

Taos General Recreation Plan Update - Tami Torres

Tami provided updates on a few of their recent and current projects. She discussed the major objective of the Secretarial Order in 2017 was to provide access where there are access challenges. There are several competitive events that require a special recreation permit that BLM hosts. One is called Ride the Rift that is a competitive mountain bike fundraiser for their mountain bike team. Mick asked Tami if this was a fee based event, and she said yes it is and BLM gets 3% of the gross profits and it is run by the person who has the permit.

Farmington General Recreation Plan Update – Doug Mckim

Doug provided a real quick overview of Farmington recreational areas in the field office.

There is a lot of usage from Colorado when their trails are closed. We provide a map with a QR code that is used to map and locate the trail systems. This area hosts the longest standing mountain bike race in the country and hosted the 2016 and 2017 rock crawling competition. Competitors come from all over the country to participate.

BLM has been making improvements to the Brown Springs Campground by putting up shelters/pavilions, park size grills to use for picnics and adding a toilet. Forest Service came to help and a grant was given in August of 2017 for \$700,000 dollars.

So far the improvements we have done and accomplished with the communities help has averaged about \$200,000 dollars and it would have cost BLM \$500,000 had we contracted the work out.

The goal is to make the area more enjoyable, safer, and more sustainable as well as to prohibit visitors from making their own trails. There are many ways to access, but the only way we cannot access it is West of La Plata at this time.

January 30th Afternoon Session (1:15-4:30)

Fire & Fuel Plan and Treatments – Pat Pacheco

Pat said that a part of the natural process in an ecosystem is fire, floods, and bug infestations. He said it is nature's way of resetting. FFO is planning thinning projects of non-native species such as the Russian Olive, Chinese Elm and Salt Cedar. These species need to be chemically treated in order to get rid of them.

Pat introduced Martin Visarraga and he presented a PowerPoint presentation on Fire & Fuel Plan and Treatments. It provided information on the fire history sites and plot information, it showed the seasonal patterns of fire scar positions and showed the different types of fires. It also gave the number of fires, their locations, and size of acreage burned for FY 2017.

Range and Grazing Permits District overview – Jeff Tafoya

Jeff provided a PowerPoint presentation with an outline and briefly discussed allotments.

He said there is a 10 year backlog of grazing allotments due to NEPA regulations.

Section 106, National Historic Preservation Act – Victoria Barr

Victoria said she was going to provide a high level overview of NHPA Sec 106, which is now 306108. This act was signed in 1966 to allow present and future generations to recognize the cultural heritage and look at ways to preserve or mitigate these lands.

Section 106 of the [National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 \(NHPA\)](#) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, and afford the [Advisory Council on Historic Preservation](#) a reasonable opportunity to comment. The historic preservation review process mandated by Section 106 is outlined in regulations issued by ACHP. Revised regulations, "[Protection of Historic Properties](#)" (36 CFR Part 800), became effective August 5, 2004, and are summarized below.

The responsible Federal agency first determines whether it has an undertaking that is a type of activity that could affect historic properties. Historic properties are properties that are included in the [National Register of Historic Places](#) or that meet the [criteria for the National Register](#). If so, it must identify the appropriate [State Historic Preservation Officer/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer *](#) (SHPO/THPO*) to consult with during the process. It should also plan to involve the public, and identify other potential consulting parties. If it determines that it has no undertaking, or that its undertaking is a type of activity that has no potential to affect historic properties, the agency has no further Section 106 obligations.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The criteria used to determine if sites meet these requirements are specified as any locations:

- (a) **that are associated with events** that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- (b) **that are associated with the lives of persons** significant in our past; or
- (c) **that embody distinctive characteristics** of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (d) **that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information** important in prehistory or history.

This law provides a framework for establishing regulations and sets up a rigorous consultation process that BLM must follow. The NHPA Section 106 Advisory Council consists of 22 members that are appointed by the White House.

BLM Four Corners Air Quality Presentation – Dave Mankiewicz

Dave provided a PowerPoint presentation on the methane cloud/hot spots over the San Juan Basin.

There are both natural and human sources of methane emissions. The main natural sources include wetlands, termites, oceans, and enteric fermentation (cow farts). In 2014, NASA scientists published their discovery of a methane “hot spot” hovering over New Mexico’s San Juan Basin. The 2,500-square-mile methane cloud is the largest area of elevated methane concentration ever measured in the U.S., and is so big scientists can spot it from space.

San Juan Basin is one of the most productive natural gas fields in North America, and that oil and gas development is the leading industrial cause of methane emissions nationally. A giant cloud of the greenhouse gas methane hanging over the Southwestern United States comes in large part from natural seeps from underground formations and coal mining operations. Natural methane seeps from the Fruitland Coal outcrop is about 45,000 metric tons per year.

Coal Mines

- Navajo, San Juan Underground, and King Coal (CO)
 - Venting through mine ventilation

Oil and Gas Operations App. 32,000 active wells

- Pump Jacks (8,514) potential leaking seals
- Wellhead compressors (9,808) potential leaking seals
- Separators (virtually all wells) dump valves may leak
- Pneumatic controllers (vents when devices are actuated)
- Liquid unloading (plunger lifts, all gas wells without pump jacks) vents after lift
- Casing head gas venting (usually old oil wells where gas volume too small to capture)
- Tanks (thief hatches) designed to vent with over pressure

Operational Reality in San Juan Basin

- Estimated total emissions for the industry is 586,286 metric tons per annum
- The San Juan Basin is a topographic low and subject to atmospheric temperature inversions holding the methane in place.

Pneumatic Devices

- Under the new Venting and Flaring Rule, pneumatic controllers may bleed 6 standard cubic feet per hour or less (low bleed). If there is excess bleed (high bleed), the pneumatic device must be replaced within one year.

The Venting and Flaring Rule also known as the Methane Rule Requires Operators to:

- Reduce natural gas flaring, replace high venting equipment, and to find and fix natural gas leaks

Conclusion:

The Four Corners Methane Hot Spot is here to stay....at lease for a while but perhaps getting less hot over time with declining production and leak detection and repair regulations.

RAC Member Recommendations:

Theresa: Recommends having RAC meetings at different locations

Theresa: Motion to have meeting at Taos location

Theresa: Motion to have next meeting end of June 2018

Mick: Motion to have at least 2-3 RAC meetings per year

RAC members can write individual or group letter from the Chair or acting Chair to request that the Secretary of the Interior provide information on the RAC nominations that were submitted last year. If any RAC members would like to provide a letter for this, please submit these letters to Mick.

January 31st – Choke Cherry and Alien Run Site Field Tour

A field site visit was conducted on January 31, 2018 at 8:00 a.m. from the BLM Farmington District Office to the Chokecherry Canyon in the Glade Run Recreation Area. Farmington Field Office Recreation Specialist Doug Mckim gave an overview of the Brown Springs Campground improvements. Among the improvements toured were the improved campground and new pavilion, along with a new Utility Task Vehicle Training Area. The field trip ended at 12 p.m.

Attending the field trip were, RAC members: Wendy Hageman, Mick O’Neill, Cory Styron, and Carmen Johnson. BLM representatives: Victoria Barr, Richard Fields, Zach Stone, Doug Mckim, and Stan Allison.

Action Items for next meeting

- Provide FLREA handout for RAC members to review
- Provide proposed exchange of acreage of the state lands with the federal
- Provide FFO RMPA update presentation by Jill
- Provide list of cooperating agencies on the RMPA
- Provide all PowerPoint presentations given at this meeting