

Summary Minutes
Farmington District Resource Advisory Council Meeting
November 16, 2011
Farmington, New Mexico

RAC Members Present:

Keith Ashmore (Category 3)
Anthony Benson(Category 3)
Kellie Campbell (Category 1)
Betty Haagenstad (Category 2)
Barbara Kiipper (Category 2)
Myke Lane (Category 1)
Kathy McKim (Category 3)
Everett Oldham (Category 2)
Mario Ulibarri (Category 1)

RAC Members Absent:

Steve Baker (Category 1)

BLM Staff Present:

Sam DesGeorges, TFO
Ashley Dye, FFO
Dave Evans, FD
Joel Farrell, FFO
Brad Higdon, TFO
Maureen Joe, FFO
Dave Mankiewicz, FFO
Pat Pacheco, TFO
Bill Papich, FFO
Evelyn Rodriguez, TFO
Jeff Tafoya, FFO
Gary Torres, FFO
Ester Wiletto, FFO
Dale Wirth, FFO

Visitors Present:

Martha Brown
Emma Deyo
Harvey Haagenstad
Paul Nazaryk (afternoon only)

Morning Session (10:00-11:35)

Welcome and Introductions

Bill Papich of the BLM-FFO called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., with nine members of the Resource Advisory Council (RAC) present. Dave Evans, Farmington District Manager, gave a short welcome, which was followed by introductions; each attendee introduced him/herself and indicated their affiliation, which included RAC Category 1, 2, and 3 members, employees of the Farmington Field Office (FFO) and Taos Field Office (TFO) of the BLM, and visitors.

Following introductions, Dave Evans thanked the RAC members for their involvement, and addressed one purpose of the RAC, specifically to increase transparency. He encouraged members to ask questions as they came to mind and presented an overview of the Farmington District. He discussed the District's vision statement and management philosophy and talked about the Farmington and Taos Field Offices. FFO is heavily involved in energy (oil, gas, and coal), while TFO focuses on recreation and wilderness. He summarized the district's current and ongoing projects, including two major amendments to the FFO RMP (Glade Recreation Management Plan and Visual Resource Management Plan) and two major environmental impact statements (EISs) one that is associated with the TFO draft RMP and one for the Rio Grande Corridor.

Gary Torres, Farmington Field Office Manager, and Sam DesGeorges, Taos Field Office Manager, provided short bios on themselves. Gary comes from an engineering background, worked in government positions and then in private industry and now is back with the BLM. His approach to land management decisions is influenced by his belief in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) principles of multiple use and sustained yield and by the National Environmental

Policy Act (NEPA) principles of productive lands in harmony with the environment. He supports partnerships and collaborations. The RAC provides an opportunity for input from the outside and provides a mechanism by which the BLM can be held accountable to the community. Sam DesGeorges has been with the TFO since 1983 and held most every office there. He recognizes the importance of hands-on experience. TFO has an extreme focus on recreation, boating, and fishing, and is constantly moving forward with a fire thinning program. While there is not much energy exploration or development, TFO does provide sand and gravel for construction projects in the surrounding counties. He sees the RAC as a group that can help focus effort and help the BLM to visibly move forward.

Bill Papich, FFO, welcomed the group, spoke briefly about the FLPMA, and then provided contact information and housekeeping details. He is the BLM contact for the RAC members, who can call him for anything they need. Bill went over the day's agenda and provided some information on the structure of previous RAC meetings, which generally run for two days; one day for a meeting and the other day for a field trip.

The remainder of the morning session was devoted to presentations designed to give the RAC members an overview of both the FFO and TFO.

Farmington Field Office Overview

Gary Torres presented the FFO overview. He summarized major projects and initiatives including:

- San Juan Energy Connect: a 30-40 mile long power line.
- Middle Mesa Plan: a complicated plan involving Mancos Shale development that needs public input.
- Navajo-Gallup Pipeline: a 20-40 inch water pipeline. The BLM recently became involved in their portion of the Navajo Inter Se.
- RMP Amendment to Glade Run Recreation Area management plan: a BLM plan amendment based on the identified need to coordinate a variety of recreational uses and oil and gas development.
- Visual Resources Inventory: a long-term project that requires significant time.
- Vegetation Management Plan: not for small projects, but a big-picture plan for the FFO
- Walk-in Work: consists of applications for permits to drill (APDs), rights-of-way (ROWs), and special use permits (SUPs). SUPs require increasingly more work to process and deal with health and safety.
- Basic Responsibilities: quarterly leasing, inspection and enforcement (I&E), grazing, and vegetation treatments.
- On-shore Oil and Gas Order #1: work with industry.
- Undesirable Event Policy: work with industry. Public and BLM need to know how and where cleanups happen.
- Interim Reclamation: work with industry.

Taos Resource Management Plan

Brad Higdon, TFO Environmental Coordinator, used a PowerPoint presentation to describe the proposed Taos Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Statement. A RMP guides day-to-day work in the TFO. Site-specific or area-specific plans are developed from this RMP. The RMP draft was released in June 2010. Much of the following year was used to deal with responses from the public.

The planning area includes all or portions of Taos, Rio Arriba, Sandoval and Santa Fe counties, and the Sabinoso Wilderness in San Miguel County. Planning issues include

1. Land use authorization
2. Renewable energy
3. Mineral resources
4. Recreation
5. Transportation and access
6. Visual resources
7. Lands with wilderness characteristics
8. Special designations

From these issues four management alternatives were developed and evaluated. The chosen alternative balances resource use and protection. It ensures the protection, restoration, and enhancement of natural or cultural values, largely within special designations, while providing for resource use and development. The remainder of the presentation detailed how the proposed RMP addresses each of the eight planning issues listed above.

Questions and comments

- Keith Ashmore requested and received a clarification on the map showing TFO surface ownership.
- Betty Haagenstad requested information on the increase in size of Ojo Calliente Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Brad answered that the ACEC boundary had not changed from the draft to the proposed RMP.
- Myke Lane asked if it was correct that approximately 2/3 of TFO-managed lands were within ACECs. Brad said that was correct. Myke questioned how it was possible balance multiple use and sustainable yield in this way.
- Betty Haagenstad noted that rock art with potential world-class values has been recently identified on Taos Mesa.
- Keith Ashmore asked if the RAC will be able to contribute to what will be motorized and what kind of recreation will be permitted in the newly added ACECs. Brad answered that the RAC could participate in site-specific or area-specific plans for the ACECs. The RMP does not designate specific routes. Sam DesGeorges added that the specific plans would be good places for RAC input.
- Anthony Benson questioned the status of funding for wild lands inventory. The withdrawal of funding does not change the recognition that wild lands can be inventoried and managed.
- Anthony Benson asked if the proposed Taos Plateau Conservation Area (as designated by Congress) is also a TFO ACEC, does that change the management? Is there local control? Sam DesGeorges noted that the ACEC and Conservation Area are two different animals. The ACEC designation is part of the RMP.
- Myke Lane asked what data was used to demonstrate that lands in TFO don't have a lot of mineral leasing potential. Dave Mankiewicz replied that there the mineral potential report that serves as the basis is a technical document under the RMP. He noted that one of the challenges is that there isn't much base information on mineral deposits in TFO and that shale wasn't being considered when the draft RMP was prepared.

Lunch 11:35-12:50

Afternoon Session (12:50-4:35)

Farmington Field Office Minerals Program

Dave Mankiewicz used a PowerPoint presentation to provide the overview of Minerals Program operations, which are guided by the Bureau's multiple use mandate. This program oversees oil and gas and coal resources. Most of the statistics used in the presentation apply to the San Juan Basin as a whole, not just FFO.

- In 2010 over 16,000 active wells produced some 843 billion cubic ft of gas; almost half of this from coal seams.
- Oil production was less than 1 million barrels.
- Royalty revenues on Federal and Indian land in the basin typically exceed \$500 million each year.
- Last year the number of wells plugged outnumbered the number drilled.
- Moving forward into production from the Mancos Shale, there may be as many as 14 wells on a single pad.
- The coal component of the Minerals Program consists of two active mines, one open pit (Navajo) and one underground (San Juan). Each mine produces approximately half of the 13 million tons of coal mined annually.
- The Federal Indian Minerals Office consists of the BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and Offices of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR), formerly the Minerals Management Service (MMS). This office services individual Indian allottee oil and gas lease owners.
- The FFO inspection and enforcement strategy ensures inspection within three years of all operating wells on FFO.
- Regulations for full disclosure of frac fluids and design are in the works.
- Industry self-monitoring and reporting are important parts of the strategy.

Questions and comments

- Anthony Benson asked about the price of gas. Dave noted the price is \$3.50 per mcf at the wellhead in the San Juan Basin.
- Myke Lane asked how much the federal government was making on coal. Dave answered approximately \$26 per ton.
- Kellie Campbell asked whether full disclosure on fracking will be a BLM requirement. Dave answered yes and that Onshore Order 5 will most likely take effect in April or May.
- Keith Ashmore asked if fracking was developed in the San Juan Basin. Anthony Benson answered that fracking was first done in southwestern Kansas. It has been used in the Basin for some 30 years.
- There followed a discussion of frac fluids and fracking practices, with several RAC members and BLM staff participating. During this conversation it was noted that because most wells in this area are between 2,000 and 8,000 ft, fracking occurs too deep to affect groundwater. A question regarding who sets surface casing depth was asked and the answer given was BLM on federal surface and subsurface and on fee surface with federal subsurface minerals, and the Oil Conservation Division (OCD) sets casing depth on state land.

Farmington Field Office Renewable Resources Group

Dale Wirth used a PowerPoint presentation to present overview of the operation of the Renewable Resources Program and covered the following topics:

- Cultural Resources: FFO has some 12,000 documented archaeological and historical sites. An active site steward program helps to stem looting and vandalism.

- Wildlife: Objectives include habitat improvement and maintenance, ensuring species variety, and providing food, water and cover. Gary Torres noted that individuals are using the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as a way to learn where guzzlers are located so that they can hunt the area. Everett Oldham noted that the Four Corners Bow Hunters helped set up the guzzlers and know where they are. He added that hunting is an important component of wildlife management. Myke Lane noted that industry has also contributed to wildlife management and general land health. Sam DesGeorges noted that TFO guzzlers have been used for target practice. There has been little vandalism of this type in FFO.
- Grazing Management: FFO manages 167 grazing allotments, there are some 395 permittees, and 1.4 million acres in FFO are grazed. More than 240,000 acres of sagebrush and other uplands have been treated to improve watershed function. Anthony Benson asked if the BLM program works with Restore New Mexico and the National Conservation Servicer (NCS) on sage treatment. Dale responded yes.
- Feral and Wild Horse Program: The NEPA for gathering 300 head is in preparation and anticipated to go into effect in July or August 2012. FFO maintains a horse management area adjacent to the Carson Forest and there are opportunities for adoption. There followed a discussion of the pressures that wild and feral horses put on the environment. Forage and water are main issues. Everett Oldham asked if anyone knew if the Caracas herd was feral or wild. He understood that the horses had been released in the 1930s. Regarding horse adoption, Kellie Campbell asked if the BLM tracked beyond the one-year program following an adoption to ensure that the horses are not being rereleased? Gary Torres noted that the horses are freeze branded and can always be identified. Myke Lane asked if it was the case that Oklahoma leases land to the BLM for lifetime sanctuaries for horses? The BLM does lease some 30,000 acres at a cost of more than \$30 million. In answer to Kellie Campbell's question about adopting from sanctuaries, Dave Evans stated that most of those horses are unadoptable.
- Noxious Weed Program: BLM partners with San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District (SJSWCD) and industry to prevent the introduction and spread of weeds. A midge is being tested to control knapweed, the #1 noxious weed around Farmington. There followed a discussion of biological controls for thistle and salt cedar.
- Riparian Program: FFO manages 110 miles of riparian habitat and 30 acres of wetlands. A large portion of the program involves Russian Olive and noxious weed management.
- Haz Mat Program: Illegal dumping is an ongoing problem.
- Road Management Units: BLM works in large part with industry to maintain and upgrade roads. One focus of the current work involves rehabilitating roads that were poorly constructed and maintained in the past.
- ROW Actions: Some 500 actions annually, comprising pipelines, roads, facility yards, communication sites, and power lines.
- Recreation Management Areas: Twelve separate areas including mountain biking, off-road vehicle sites, horseback-riding trails, wilderness hiking, paleontology, native plant material. Also provides opportunity for education and outreach.

Taos Field Office Recreation Program

John Bailey, TFO Assistant Manager for Recreation, used a PowerPoint to present an overview of the TFO Recreation Program that includes management of recreational activities, collection of fees, transportation and planning, and deferred maintenance.

- Most work is conducted by seasonal employees, volunteers, and interns paid by the Taos campus of the University of New Mexico.
- The proposed RMP identifies 11 recreation areas that feature hiking, biking, off-highway vehicle sites, boating, camping, etc.
- Much of the development of the recreation areas is in partnership with state and local groups.
- Deferred Maintenance: Current projects include Taos Junction Bridge river access, La Puebla Paleo Park, and Santa Cruz Lake.
- Interpretation and Information: Provided by direct contact (in the form of visitor centers, phone calls, etc.), brochures, electronic media, and special presentations.
- Transportation Planning: Nine planning areas, with designated open, closed, and limited access routes. Access designation will be controversial. TFO received \$300,000 in Recovery Act funds that were used to inventory the largest transportation planning unit, prepare infrastructure for additional inventory, and design and develop signage. Trails and trail building are a big part of transportation planning.
- Fee Collection: Goal of increasing revenue by providing more value. An analysis of fees will include price comparison and development of a business plan that will ultimately come to the RAC. To date in 2011, \$76,000 collected from commercial fees and \$111,000 in visitor use fees. Keith Ashmore asked about the \$20 annual fee and was answered that the annual fee applied to Taos fee sites only (three areas) and the fee would probably increase. Keith pointed out that users who have to pay fees are more likely to take some ownership and see more value in the sites they use. Barbara Haagenstad noted that, economically, the region is home to two disparate groups and this should be taken into consideration when considering fees. Myke Lane asked if all collected fees are spent or is anything held back for maintenance? John Bailey answered that fees were carried over as long as necessary. Some were saved for new facilities and services. Myke said his point was that new infrastructure requires ongoing maintenance and cleaning expenses. Is there any plan to save fees for this purpose? John said that partnerships (for example, with private industry) have been important for accomplishing maintenance. Kellie Campbell asked how much money carried over each year. If there is yearly carryover, what triggers fee increases? John indicated that fee reviews and increases are generally the result of the requirement for fee parity, and that RACs often help set fees because the BLM can't do so in isolation. RAC members asked what kind of information they would receive in order to make these decisions. One piece of information is a review that compares fees to other government agencies and to the private sector. Kellie Campbell noted that the state shut down parks when funding was an issue. Would the BLM consider doing this? John said that he can't imagine it happening in Taos; not the way TFO does business. Keith Ashmore asked if there is an annual report that shows how fees are used and that the public can view on the BLM website? John answered that is not the case at this time. Keith noted that most of the items that the group had been discussing were things that

could be on the website. It was pointed out that part of the business plan should consider whether the cost of fee collection exceeds the fee amount. Kellie Campbell asked about the federal fee authority. Dave Evans said he will provide the relevant act and guidance to the RAC before the next meeting.

Public Comment Period

None of the members of the public who were present at the meeting wished to make a comment.

Taos Field Office Natural Resources Programs

The presentation was made by Greg Gustina, Fishery/Hydrology, on behalf of Ernesto Hurtado. In the TFO, oil and gas resources are covered by FFO and Albuquerque covers locatable resources. The TFO averages 44 NEPA actions each year. Realty, Range, and Forestry bring in money to TFO.

- Lands and Realty: Involved in land acquisition (e.g., La Cienega ACEC), ROWs, and range (309 allotments, 222 permittees). Kellie Campbell asked why there are so many allotments in TFO. Sam DesGeorges answered that it was, in part, a function of all the numerous small communities in TFO that have had allotments for a long time. Free use has become permitted use administered by BLM. Myke Lane asked if the RMP has provisions for allotments that are not in use. Sam noted that the RMP has provisions for grass banks. Kellie asked how much illegal use of allotments occurs in TFO. Sam indicated that there is not much. TFO knows where to look. Keith Ashmore asked if trespass was most likely to take place near communities. Sam said no, that it sometimes occurs adjacent to permitted (leased) state lands and is a matter of the permittee not knowing where the lease ends. Kellie asked about the role of fence-out laws. Same indicated that those laws don't apply to federal agencies.
- Vegetation treatment projects occur in TFO but not to the extent that they do in FFO.
- Forestry: TFO sells both permits and wood. Prices vary. 518 cords sold in FY2011.
- Resources: Cultural resources and paleontology. The Mesa Prieta Petroglyph project is an example. Anthony Benson asked if the La Cienega petroglyphs will be recorded in the same way, with as much attention. Sam DesGeorges said the method will be the prerogative of the new TFO archaeologist who takes over when Paul Williams retires. The Galisteo Plan (in the works), for one of the earliest contact sites in the U.S. is another project.
- Wildlife, Threatened & Endangered, and Riparian: Very different from FFO, TFO has over 200 miles of perennial water. Projects are cooperative in nature, bringing state, national, local, and private groups together. Examples of projects include Orilla Verde Restoration, aimed at removing invasive species. There are also projects to improve deer and elk habitat.
- Soil and Water: Projects include road rehabilitation and water quality monitoring.

Questions and comments

- Myke Lane asked if land acquisition by TFO included surface and minerals. The answer was that the acquisitions include both.

RAC Travel Reimbursement Information

Ashley Dye, FFO, presented information, forms, and requirements for RAC member travel reimbursement.

Election of Chairperson

RAC members had a short discussion about the position of chairperson and duties involved. Kathy McKim was elected by a unanimous voice vote of the members.

Farmington-Taos Fire District Overview

Pat Pacheco used a PowerPoint presentation to provide an overview of the Farmington District Fire Management Program, which began in 1998. In 2007 the TFO and FFO were combined into a single fire district.

- Program objectives include keeping people safe, suppressing undesirable wildland fires, and applying fire back into the landscape in a way that emulates natural processes.
- In addition, a number of specialists from a variety of programs work together to restore forest and rangeland, control invasive species, improve wildlife habitat and watershed health.
- Fuelwood management is a large and important program component because so many people still heat with wood.
- Sage control is part of rangeland management and when done correctly, sage will not come back, but insects, birds, etc. do return in large numbers. Noxious weed control is more important in FFO than TFO.
- Future plans include a focus on hazardous fuel reduction at the wildland-urban interface, development of management plans at the landscape level (e.g., 60,000 acres at a time), and continued collaboration with agency and outside partners.

Questions and comments

- Myke Lane asked how the fire program was monitoring burns after the fact. Pat indicated that they have been tracking the results for the last 12 years and the information is available but not on the web. Dave Evans commented that telling the story of these burns could show the public a positive economic impact BLM makes. Kellie Campbell added that it is important for both government and industry to remember that transparency for positive programs and results is just as important as transparency regarding negative situations.
- Myke Lane noted that industry pays fees for NEPA evaluations and asked if those evaluations prior to prescribed burns were done with internal resources or contracted out? Pat answered that most were done internally.
- Kellie Campbell asked if FFO worked with the Forest on fire programs. Dave Evans answered that yes, FFO does, as well as working with other groups.
- Pat Pacheco noted that a community wildfire protection plan is available for the public to view.

General Discussion

- Gary Torres spoke to the topic of transparency in the preceding discussion by indicating that the BLM needed to be better at telling about the good work that the agency does.
- In answer to a question about roles for the RAC, Gary Torres noted that it was State Director Rundell's idea to increase community input and engagement. Gary referred members to the information in their notebooks, and also suggested they check out the list for future meeting topics.

- Anthony Benson asked if the RAC was oversight or a conduit to the public. He was answered that Section 2 of the material in the RAC notebook spoke to that questions. Sam DesGeorges noted that past RACs have had trouble defining roles and indicated the TFO is interested in having the RAC help in planning transportation issues, which he defined as not just recreation but how we move across the landscape.
- Interest items for upcoming meetings should be sent by email to Bill Papich.
- Keith Ashmore asked if RAC contact information will be posted on the District website. Some concerns were voiced about having names and contact information available on the web. There were some suggestions as to how to meet the goal of transparency yet retain RAC member anonymity. Myke Lane suggested that the BLM could host a blog. Keith suggested a nonspecific an email of board@blm.gov. Dave Evans said that he would put up ideas for the next meeting based on what the BLM has available for contact options.
- Kellie Campbell wondered whether the RAC could meet outside a BLM hosting. The answer was that yes, the group can meet outside a hosted session. In response to whether the entire membership of the RAC could meet, the answer was that if the BLM isn't involved in the meeting, there can be no Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) violation.
- Myke Lane noted that nothing in his reading had defined the deliverables expected of the RAC. Dave Evans said that as assignments come about, deliverables will be detailed. This information can be routed through Kathy McKim as RAC President.
- There followed a discussion of how many times the RAC should meet in the coming year, where they meetings should be held, whether they should run for one day or two, and when the next meeting should be. Considerations included weather, likely upcoming BLM projects in which RAC involvement would be needed/desired, the status of the TFO RMP, and field trips. There was consensus for four meetings a year, with the first meeting of 2012 to be a two-day session held toward the end of February in Farmington in the new BLM building. If the weather is bad the group can take a virtual field trip. BLM will finalize the dates and email participants.
- The next meeting will be more focused. This first meeting was very much an overview of field offices, operations, and programs.
- Myke Lane requested that once targets were identified, he would like a summary prior to the meeting so that the RAC can prepare. BLM was in agreement with this and added that they will also feed things to the RAC as they come down the pipe so that the members will have information in hand when something becomes public.
- With regard to possibly losing one member of the RAC, the person must first withdraw, and then there are category alternates who can be considered for the position.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Meeting minutes taken by Kristin Langenfeld, Scaleable Editing Services, Farmington, New Mexico

Note: RAC members can contact Bill Papich to request the PowerPoint presentations used at this meeting.