

## Farmington District Resource Advisory Council Meeting

February 11-12 2014—Farmington, New Mexico

### Minutes

#### February 11 Attendees:

##### RAC Members (Category):

Barbara Kiipper (2)  
Myke Lane (1)  
Kathy McKim (3)  
Norman Norvelle (3)  
Evert Oldham (2)  
Jerry Sims (2)  
Steven Wamel (1)

##### BLM Staff:

Dave Evans, FDM  
Gary Torres, FFO  
Christine Horton, FFO  
Leslie-lynn Sinkey, FFO  
Jeff Tafoya, FFO  
Janelle Alleman, FFO  
Dale Wirth, FFO

##### Visitors:

James McDaniel (AM)  
Jim Ramakka (AM)

RAC Chair Kathy McKim called the meeting to order at 9:08 am.

RAC members, BLM personnel and visitors introduced themselves.

##### Kathy McKim:

Agenda approval. Due to the absence of necessary members for a quorum, it is not possible to carry out election of a new committee chair. Myke Lane moved that the election be postponed until Wednesday, seconded by Norman Norvelle. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of previous meetings minutes. Noted that minutes are to be sent to the RAC members for approval within 30 days. Previous note-taker was not aware of this deadline. Approval of minutes will still be left on agenda for next meeting.

##### Dave Evans—Welcome and General Update:

Welcome. The RACS's assistance and advice is appreciated, especially as regards issues like wild horses and the Glade.

Updates: some are issues that they may be familiar with from the media. Tuesday the House votes on the debt ceiling. These have been tumultuous times and the BLM has seen many impacts, including hiring limitations and the October government shutdown. The FFO currently has 14 vacancies, which inhibits BLM's ability to handle actions coming in. There is some potential for increased revenue from the oil and gas industry to directly support staffing, but it is currently off about 30% over the past three years--yet the interest from industry in new development has increased. Industry's emphasis is on processing time...they have five rigs working in the area now--they would like to have 10 by the end of the year, and double that again in 2015. Every position the BLM hires has to have State Office and Washington Office approval. Direct support from industry to hire positions to speed processing is possible. Many of the new developments are off-lease, and need ROWs for pipelines, roads, etc. We can process the APDs without problems, but the ROWs take more time, and the issues are much more complex. Many of the new areas have not been unitized—they are looking at the creation of super-communitization agreements. FFO expressed concerns two years ago to the BIA that if these are not leased, they cannot address drainage. Many Indian allotted leases (about 100 at

approximately 160 acres each) have been issued, resulting in excess of \$50 million into allottees' hands. These allottees are unique—they own their mineral leases, and the royalties will provide long-term returns.

Due to budget constraints, the BLM cannot provide relocation expenses to employees, which impedes hiring/recruiting. They have recently hired four new people—two Realty Specialists, a Civil Engineer, and a Safety Specialist. They are reaching critical mass—the Federal Register Notice for the Mancos-Gallup EIS will be coming out at the beginning of March and is currently waiting for Washington Office approval.

They are attempting to address reasonable foreseeable development—that involves some proprietary information. That should be done by the end of the year. The transverse wells have a higher recovery rate and reduce the environmental footprint, a consideration that is especially important in the Crow Mesa area, etc.

The Eastern Agency Navajo Council has passed a resolution seeking a moratorium on oil and gas development through horizontal drilling and stimulation—they will be meeting with them in about two weeks. This is a strongly-worded resolution, which has been passed on to the Navajo Nation council. He will send out a copy to the RAC members.

Their concerns are understandable—there has never been development of this scale before, and they have concerns regarding road impacts, water resources, etc. BLM has tried to do outreach, and industry has done well in meeting with the chapters, including providing computers and scholarships. Industry has an interest in getting signatories to the consent decrees. The wood from the sites also goes to the local chapters and residents for fuel.

Other Community Relations events are upcoming—next week a delegation of Ugandan parliamentarians are coming to learn how the BLM addresses development in sensitive areas. Farmington is uniquely positioned for upcoming development—San Juan College School of Energy is providing training to meet industry's needs, and Dr. Pendergrass and Randy Pacheco will be addressing the Ugandan delegation as well. The FFO's focus is on industry-agency cooperation. The College is currently planning a \$15 million complex, with two-thirds of the money coming from private sources. This will be a state-of-the-art facility for technical and professional training.

There will be other updates at this meeting, so he will not address those right now—they have hired a contractor for the plan amendment and have begun workshops to prepare the staff. This will be an intense period, and will be in addition to the staff's usual workload, but will influence how well they manage the field office for the next 15-20 years, and will provide the "big picture."

The EIS for the RMP is a BLM-funded initiative, to address how they can make the transition from exploration to full field development.

#### Discussion:

Jerry Sims inquired whether the number of rigs will double in 2014, and again in 2015. Dave responded that will. Industry is trying to minimize the footprint and maximize the recovery—That will probably take the rest of this year. Even the smaller independent operators have funding. The spud time on these wells averages about 12-14 days. The operators want to have a pantry full of permits. Economically, each rig provides about 100 jobs, and is worth about \$100 million for the local community, county and state.

Myke Lane observed that traditionally, every location hosted one well. Now they can put multiple wells on one pad, and horizontal drilling allows them to exploit at a considerable distance, and keep the footprint smaller. Dave responded that currently 65-67% of wells are twinned or multiple; some plans of development have 8-20 wells on one location, and this is especially important in sensitive wildlife and cultural areas. One problem is the lack of infrastructure. They are also attempting to reduce flaring off. Myke explained that the use of nitrogen to frack makes some of the gas unsellable, and therefore it is flared off—some of it is ¼ nitrogen. It's a trade-off—use less water, but have to flare off some of it. Dave noted that they are exploring the use of produced water, which he felt may be a win-win situation.

Kathy inquired how much larger are these pads are. Myke responded that if you put three to four wells on a pad, it roughly doubles the size of the pad, but it also reduces the other off-pad disturbances. Dave noted that if they can get 8-20 wells per pad, they calculate that the overall area of disturbance will be one tenth of what it was traditionally. Myke remarked that the ratio of acreage disturbed per well, he expects, is close to 1/10 of what it used to be related to the amount of acreage drained.

Norman Norvelle asked how far behind the BLM is on processing applications. Dave said that ROWs are taking 120 to 160 days behind. These are not little spurs—some of the ROWs are as much as nine miles long. Some cross jurisdictional boundaries. The BLM is working with the BIA to help process some of those that cross tribal trust land. The BIA has a contract with the Navajo Nation for archaeology, biology, wildlife, etc. The BLM will encourage them to take on additional staff to review them in a more timely manner. All leases were done under a categorical exclusion—therefore these areas lack environmental review. We are looking at 16,000 acres that were leased under the categorical exclusion. The BLM tried to lease approximately 12,000 acres, but none was actually leased due to issues, including the 1.2 million acre ACEC proposal for the greater Chaco landscape.

Gary Torres noted that there has been a lot of discussion of development vs. protection—the Eastern Agency represents 31 chapters, but allottees are eager to lease. This discussion will probably result in more protests from NGO groups. The BLM has already received a notice of intent to sue regarding wild horses. A lot of the work that the BLM does is reactive, in response to such factors. It makes for interesting times.

#### Jeff Tafoya—Update on Wild Horse Gathering:

This is primarily a short update, with some repetition from Angela Yemma's presentation to the RAC in November.

The combined BLM/USFS herd is over the appropriate management level (AML). The USFS AML is 50-105 head, and the BLM's is 23, with a joint level of 730-128 head. The current estimated population is 326 head. After the 2014 foal crop it is anticipated to be 396 head.

The USFS conducted removals in FY 2013 (66 head) and FY 2014 (39 head), and in FY 2013 the BLM removed 44 head from outside the herd area. The USFS has been the lead agency, trapping an average of 60 horses per year.

The BLM is working on completion of a NEPA analysis prior to implementing management. Wild horse management is very controversial, and they received over 3,800 comment letters on the preliminary EA. Currently, they are analyzing the comments and working on the EA. The latest word from the Washington Office is that there is not enough room in either short- or long-term

holding areas to remove any more horses. There likely will not be any removals or gathers planned for the next three years.

Steps to address the problem: the first is to finish the EA. The second is to complete a gather to reach or get close to target AML. Then implement a PZP injection program and monitor the herd to maintain a healthy population whilst maintaining ecological balance.

Current status: the EA has to be completed before any management tools can be implemented. The chances of a large gather or removals in the next year or so are low. Once the EA is complete, the PZP program needs to be implemented immediately. They will work with the USFS to assist them with their PZP program, as well.

Efforts need to be made to foster local adoption interest (statewide and in neighboring states), and to continue to work with local trainers on horse adoptions. If there is enough interest in adoption, it may allow for some removals. Also, range improvement projects need to be continued.

Latest news: of the 44 horses captured last summer and fall, a storefront contractor has adopted 26 head. The contractor has moved from Largo Canyon to Lemitar, NM (near Socorro) to make their facility more accessible. There has been some "buyer's remorse," with a 10-15% return rate, but the trainer is optimistic that they are getting more interest, and adopting horses out faster than from their Largo Canyon location.

The BLM has received a notice of intent to sue from the grazing permittee on the Rosa grazing allotment. He has retained the services of a lawyer from Albuquerque.

The good news is that our NEPA planner, Amanda Nisula, will be staying with us after all...the bad news is that Angela Yemma has just been sequestered for jury duty in Durango, and will probably be gone for a month. Jeff will work with Amanda to try to complete the EA by April, 2014.

The budget includes a \$2 million increase for the Secretary's Wild Horse and Burro Management Strategy to implement recommendations from the forthcoming National Academy of Sciences study of the WH&B program. This will maintain the 2013 Operating Plan level, which was a \$2 million increase over 2012 funding, and which the BLM used for research and development of population control techniques. The long-term goal for effective fertility control is to slow annual population growth, while decreasing or eliminating the need to remove excess animals. Reducing gathers will decrease holding costs, which is the largest single expense in the program.

#### Discussion:

Norman Norvelle inquired how much the program costs, and Steve Wamel wondered what proportion of that went to feed. Jeff replied that the total program cost \$76.8 million, of which \$46 million is spent on holding costs—both short- and long-term. Removals cost about \$4.8 million, and adoption is \$7.5 million.

Steve asked who the storefront contractor's target audience is for adoptions. Jeff replied that the best response is from radio station promotion. They also place ads in the "Thrifty Nickel," classifieds, etc.

Steve inquired what the average age is of the horses adopted, and the ratio of geldings to mares. Jeff said that most horses are 10 years old and younger, but they still have good luck with older adoptees, and that the ratio is about equal.

Kathy asked what they were doing about range improvements. Jeff said that they are looking at some candidate areas up by Eul Canyon in the transition zone—they are seeing a good return of vegetation on an area up there that burned a few years ago. They are looking at an area of about 160 acres. Dale Wirth noted that there was another small plot of an acre or two to pilot in an area that had good potential. Kathy observed that John Hansen's mosaics in Crow Canyon are gorgeous—they were done with Dixie harrows...can they go that route? Jeff responded that these areas are much further gone—there isn't much remaining grass to come back. Steve asked what seed mix was being used. It is a mixture that depends on the area—they use Western wheat grass, Indian rice grass, galleta, gramas... tailored to the soils.

Norman commented that the current program just isn't sustainable—it takes a lot of money and labor—how can this be continued in the face of fire and drought? Jeff responded that there is just limited capacity to manage it, and to a certain extent it self-regulates. Norman observed that it also self-regulates everything else, and other animals cannot compete. PZP has to be done twice in the first year, and then every year thereafter. Jeff noted that they had had good results elsewhere—but that was also on an island and with good water supplies. It might work here if they could get closer to the target AML. Norman explained that he understands that they are concerned about genetic diversity, but what if each animal were limited to one offspring? Jeff said that their focus was keeping up the PZP until they were down to AML, and then they could begin keeping records. Norman commented that they need a saturation adoption campaign, but Jeff said that adoptions are down by about 70% due to the economy, the drought, the increased price of hay, and there just being a lot of horses on the market.

Norman warned that they are going to see a lot of bones out there. Gary remarked that they already have some photos that are just awful. Jeff said that they have a terrible feral horse problem out on the Checkerboard, and last summer they kept getting calls about dying horses. Norman observed that permanent sterilization is really what is necessary. Jeff told them of a pilot program in Oklahoma, spaying and then releasing mares after they had healed. Field castration was proposed a couple of years ago in Nevada, but it was appealed based on the impact on the social structure of herds. Norman pointed out that hunters contribute to wildlife management but no one is doing something similar with horses—could drones be used? Jeff said that he might be on to something—that he recently saw an article in the Washington Post that the Bureau had offered \$1.5 million dollars for someone who can come up with a better idea—he hasn't seen the announcement made by the Bureau. Norman thought that drones could be used to either dart or to drive using noise, etc. Dave noted that drones are smaller than helicopters, and may not have the same herding effect, but Evert Oldham pointed out that they could be equipped with lights or sound to make them more intimidating. Jeff noted that they would be helpful for survey. Dave said that the San Juan County Economic Development Committee was looking for pilot projects for uses for drone technology.

Norman said that Jeff had touched on a key term in his presentation, "sustainable." So, assuming expected growth, what would the population look like? Jeff said that it is expected to be close to 600 by 2017 unless measures are taken. Myke observed that at the current economic and drought conditions, and the adoption rate, there will be a glut of already-trained horses for adoption, and more horses dumped on the range. How can the process be made more sustainable? What needs to change? Is it something that it will take a change in the Wild Horse and Burro Act to address? We've traded wildlife for wild horses, and they are destroying the habitat for wildlife. We have tools for managing elk and deer populations, but we have no tools for managing wild horse populations. What can the RAC do to support

efforts, both locally and nationally? Write a letter to the Secretary? Dave said that he had articulated the issues...the options that are available to the agency are limited. It is something that the Secretary will have to address—there have been limited sales, and the problem will continue to escalate. It is evident from the lawsuits that the BLM is facing—the only way to get action. It's a terrible thing to have to tell people—that they have to sue you to make you take action, but the options at the local level are very limited.

Barbara said that, speaking as a wild horse advocate, there has been a lot of controversy amongst the large non-profit advocate groups—they oppose spay-neuter programs, they oppose slaughter, but no one has come forward with an ultimate solution. Dave responded that there probably wasn't any one "ultimate" solution, that it will be a suite of solutions. Myke pointed out that sustainability is needed...range and wildlife are some of the values that are lost. We sacrifice wildlife and range for wild horses and burros—as a society, we have chosen to do that...but is that what we want? Kathy observed that it has not been a conscious choice, but that the decision has been driven by emotion.

Myke emphasized that they need a sustainable, humane approach—they are spending \$78.1 million for one program. Kathy pointed out that the definition of "humane" varies. Myke responded that in three years the herd size will double, so the management budget will have to double—does anyone think that will happen? Jeff observed that it might, because of the protests. Dave noted that the budget won't grow, but the money will come at the cost of other programs.

Myke stated that the FDO has asked the RAC to produce deliverables—what can the RAC do to increase awareness, including the input from people like Barbara and Steve. Dave said that they are trying to get the EA finished, and they hope that the RAC can come out in support of the EA. That way when opportunities open up, they will be able to move on them. Gary noted that interest groups are writing in, and the RAC provides a broader perspective. Myke noted that they might be able to offer a less-biased perspective. Barbara pointed out that they have the same mix of interests on the RAC that are in the broader public. Evert said he refused to accept that the RAC could not have an impact—we are continuing to do what has been done forever. This comes down to a dispute over values—the solution has to come from those who place a high value on wild horses. He personally has spent 20 years providing water and resources for wildlife, and now he is seeing the wildlife in decline. The wild horse constituency needs to move. The science is there, we know what must be done, and soon. It is necessary to get the opposing viewpoints together. The BLM is charged with respecting all points of view—multiple use. Instead of lawsuits, the wild horse advocates need to partner in the solutions. As a taxpayer, he wants money to be spent across the board—he'd rather it were spent on planning than on crisis management. The hunters did it to reduce wildlife numbers—we say that slaughtering horses isn't tenable, so what do the wild horse and burro advocates suggest?

Norman said that he would like to see a copy of the National Academy of Sciences report, and Jeff said that he would provide it.

--Break--

#### Janelle Alleman—Glade Run Recreation Area Plan Update:

Provided a quick overview of the alternatives and response to previous comments from the RAC.

The Glade has been divided into three Recreation Management Zones (RMZ). There were some requests for new RMZs, but they retained the existing ones.

RMZ1 will allow non-motorized recreation on designated trails, including those used for the Road Apple Rally. The management objective is to provide opportunities for visitors to engage in non-motorized trail-based and dispersed recreation in a quiet, rural setting. This includes equestrian use.

RMZ2 is set aside for motorized recreation on designated trails. This zone will be managed to provide sustainable urban access for community residents and visitors, primarily for day-use activities. These will allow them to gain appreciation of GRRRA's natural setting through self-discovery, dispersed camping, and OHV touring on designated routes.

RMZ3 will allow immediate access for local communities to open, unconfined space, and will be managed to provide opportunities for cross-country (including motorized) recreation with few management constraints.

The No Action Alternative would follow the management conditions prescribed in the 1996 Glade Run Recreation Area Management Plan, as amended in the 2003 Farmington RMP. To all intents and purposes, then, it would continue the 1996 document, though BLM would incorporate current BLM policy into management practices. No facilities would be constructed and no changes or designations would be made. All means of motorized travel would be allowed on existing roads and trails, with no specific route designations.

Alternative A is the BLM's preferred alternative. It would provide for a balance between current recreation activities (e.g. OHV and non-motorized) and resource protection. About 46% of the routes identified as authorized or existing on the inventory map would be designated as "open," or limited to specific types of OHVs. Motorized travel would be allowed only on the designated roads and trails, as specified for the individual RMZs. It identifies certain boundary changes for the GRRRA as a whole, and for the current "Open Area," which was expanded to address some trail systems identified by user groups. It utilizes the RMZs to set management goals and objectives.

Alternative B emphasizes OHV recreation opportunities over other resources within the planning area, and provides for more extensive OHV-based recreation opportunities. Under this alternative, approximately 69% of the routes identified as authorized or existing on the inventory map would be designated as open or limited. A small percentage of routes would be designated as limited to protect identified resources (e.g. 'sensitive status' species). It would include substantial changes to the GRRRA boundary as a whole, as well as to the open area, which would be close to the 1996 boundaries, adding roughly 20,000 acres. It utilizes RMZs to set management goals and objectives.

Alternative C emphasizes non-motorized recreation. About 39% of routes identified as authorized or existing on the inventory map would be designated as limited to OHV travel. There would be no RMZ3 or open OHV area, and OHVs would be allowed only on designated roads and trails. The current "Open Area" would be re-designated as RMZ1 and RMZ2, and the northeast portion of the planning area would be closed to OHVs. No boundary adjustments would be made to the GRRRA as a whole.

Reviewing the RAC's previous comments: there was concern that certain factors were not addressed in Chapter 3—Affected Environment. Janelle spent a significant amount of time addressing and expanding in response to the RAC's comments. Some are covered in Chapter 3, others are in Section 1.7.2—Issues Analyzed but Not Carried Forward. Those factors that fall

outside of the scope of this document are included in 1.7.2, which includes oil and gas development and production, air quality, noise, “wetlands” (the GRRRA has no true wetlands, therefore it was presumed that riparian areas were referred to) and visual resource management. The reasons why these were not carried forward are specified in the document. Also in response to RAC feedback, the section on grazing in Chapter 3 was revised, as were wildlife considerations.

Another concern raised by the RAC was public roads and OHV access. County Road 3536 would enable safe access through RMZ1 to the other areas. The RAC expressed concerns that further examination should be given to using 3536 as the sole access route across RMZ1, and that options that would keep RMZ1 completely non-motorized should be explored. The BLM has a requirement to allow for valid and existing rights (such as for oil and gas development), and does not have any authority to affect CR 3536 because it is a county road, so that was not analyzed. OHV user groups have expressed concerns about using the CR as an access route. The RAC suggested using parallel routes, but the feedback from OHV users is that parallel routes are neither safe nor fun. For this reason, it would be difficult to ensure that users remained on them. Additionally, pipeline ROWs often run parallel to the road, which raises safety issues. The OHV access only crosses RMZ1 in two locations, with as little impact as possible.

The RAC also expressed concerns that the acreage presented for RMZ1 is a misrepresentation and that the proposed management would merely make it another limited OHV use area; that illegal routes will continue to be used; and that RMZ1 needs better-defined boundaries and more law enforcement. The BLM did their best to minimize OHV use—all illegal routes are considered closed, and provisions have been made to rehabilitate them. There is also a plan for signage, both for the RMZ1 boundary and for the Glade boundaries as a whole. No additional OHV trails would be permitted in that area.

The RAC also expressed concerns that law enforcement issues were not analyzed more extensively. Although the BLM is cognizant of law enforcement needs for the GRRRA, law enforcement falls outside the scope of this document. Due to the nature of law enforcement, it must be nimble, and can't be codified administratively. Management assigns priorities as it deems appropriate, and they do already do saturation patrols in the Glade. The first priority is to focus on education, then on enforcement.

The RAC commented that under Alternative A, 3,300 acres would continue to be managed as an open area, and that no prior permission or screening (e.g. for cultural resources, T&E, etc.) would be required for new cross-country routes. They felt that the EA did not effectively evaluate the environmental effects of RMZ3. This open area was established in the 1996 recreation plan, and the majority of these analyses were carried out at that time, and the information carried forward to the 2003 RMP.

The RAC also questioned whether all routes have been evaluated according to management prescription GRRRA-CAA-MA-2. These routes have been exhaustively reviewed.

The RAC also felt that other management prescriptions were not applicable to cross-country travel, and that management prescription GRRRA-A-A-2 cannot be achieved if OHVs are permitted to cross RMZ1. The wording of the provisions allows for management alternatives, and is common across all the action alternatives. Open areas are specifically excluded by the wording. It is not possible to turn back the clock—the BLM's goal at this time is to limit OHV incursions and the use of larger roads.



The RAC also expressed concerns that under Alternative A the recreation activity in RMZ3 would not be restricted to designated roads and trails, with resultant impacts to cultural resources. The language in this section was clarified.

The RAC made a number of proposals regarding the GRRRA. They suggested that they implement a “pay to play” user permit, in addition to the SRPs, based on potential impact. That is not possible at this time, but is not ruled out in the future. Funds from such a permit would be used to improve structures and develop a business plan.

The RAC proposed that motorized access across RMZ1 be limited to roads currently in the area, that a staging area be provided at the terminus of CR 3536 so that OHVs could be trailered across RMZ1, and that a frontage trail for OHVs be developed within the ROW for CR 3536. The BLM does not have the authority to designate a county road, and the proposed staging areas are not practicable, as they are adjacent to private property. There are also safety concerns about utilizing the ROWs.

The RAC suggested that all oil and gas roads that are not designated “open” be gated and/or locked. This would be expensive. The management plan allows for a range of options, but the BLM prefers to begin with a ‘minimum tool’ approach, such as signage. As noted previously, the RAC suggested that a complete resource survey be conducted for RMZ3. The decision was analyzed in the EIS for the 1996 management plan, and carried forward to the 2003 RMP. It has been incorporated by reference into the GRRRA management plan.

The RAC felt that monitoring should be done for erosion and stormwater impacts from RMZ3, and practices be established to mitigate potential impacts. This has been addressed in the “Soils” section in Chapter 3. It also references the BLM’s Bare Soils Reclamation Protocol. Bare soils would fall under that protocol for monitoring and reclamation. Should the trail evaluations reveal areas that have erosion, those areas would be addressed and monitoring established.

The RAC expressed concerns that there were no areas within the Glade that provided for equestrian needs, as RMZ1 is not a “quiet area.” The BLM has tried to minimize OHV impacts—ultimately, it won’t be possible to know if additional prescriptions are required until it is implemented. The BLM is also working with the Sheriff’s Posse and the City of Farmington to develop more equestrian facilities in the vicinity of Farmington Lake, where there is more water available for horses, etc.

The RAC felt that Piñon Mesa should be considered for equestrian use. The BLM always welcomes public feedback, but because this document focuses on the GRRRA, it falls outside the scope of this management plan. The RAC also felt that law enforcement should be included as a management action common to all alternatives. Law enforcement falls outside the scope of this document, but nothing precludes law enforcement actions as provided for in BLM policy.

The RAC also suggested that the BLM consider geo-fencing. The BLM would support geo-fencing, but because OHVs are regulated by the state, not the BLM, it falls outside its jurisdiction.

The primary changes to the document as a result of feedback from a variety of groups are that a motorcycle group requested additional consideration for a loop trail on the west side. This was incorporated across the alternatives. Section 1.7.2: Issues Analyzed but Not Carried Forward was revised and expanded. All of Chapter 3: Affected Environment has been revised, and incorporates sections on soil resources, water resources, vegetation, noxious and invasive species, wildlife, special management species, cultural resources, paleontological sources, lands

and realty, transportation and travel, recreation, livestock grazing, social and economic features and social justice.

The GRRRA Management Plan comment period started February 6<sup>th</sup> and ends February 20<sup>th</sup>. The BLM will review comments, respond and revise the document as needed. The final document will be issued with the unsigned FONSI for a 30-day protest period. These protests are limited to those on RMP-level amendments, as spelled out in Chapter 1. It will then be subject to the 60-day Governor's Consistency Review. If it is protested, there is a 90-day resolution period, after which the FONSI will be signed, and the 30-day appeal time will begin.

#### Discussion:

Kathy asked if all closed roads will be rehabilitated or signed? Janelle responded that they will use the minimum tool possible, and projects will be prioritized based on location and type. The ATV trail would cross the RMZ1 at two locations, more than 90% of those trails will be on existing disturbance.

Steve asked what experience Janelle had had in the Glade—he lives on Hammond and he has concerns about oil and gas safety, and will there be anything encouraging people to good stewardship and/or holding them responsible? Janelle said that the BLM works closely with San Juan County and the city, and there is a good reporting system. The BLM relies on citizens and groups to help. The county cleans up what we are unable to release for citizens to help pick up. Regarding safety—all routes went through the route evaluation forms for factors such as ROWs, well pads, etc. Steve asked if there will be markers *off* the beaten path to protect oil and gas and environmental areas. Janelle responded that the signage plan will not just include designated trails, but other boundaries. There is some onus on the users, but the BLM needs to develop better maps, etc. Steve asked if there will be distribution stations for these maps. Gary replied that there will be kiosks, and they will be working with the user groups, outfitters, etc. Most people want to know where they *can* go.

With reference to trash, Gary explained that enforcement has been turned over to the county, which is issuing tickets upwards of \$1000. BLM citations are about \$300. BLM is also working with the county on a means whereby the public can report dumping by taking a photo and including their coordinates. Until then, they can be reported to Janelle. It is necessary to clear the sites to ensure that volunteers are not exposed to hazardous materials. First, law enforcement responds to determine if the dump can be traced, then our resource specialists evaluate it for hazardous materials, and finally it can be cleaned up. Norman commented that that makes a good Boy Scout Eagle Scout project. Janelle said that they are always excited to work with citizens, Eagle Scouts, students looking for Senior Projects, etc.

Norman asked about the policy regarding shooting and hunting in the GRRRA. Gary responded that it is closed. Norman also suggested that the map indicate which points are cattleguards vs. locked gates, to help with map reading. Janelle said that that is possible. They are discussing using GPS and/or QR codes on signage to help users pinpoint their location. Norman indicated that he would like to see more equestrian trails outside of the Glade, perhaps north of 574. Janelle said that she is always open to suggestions.

Myke inquired what level of improvements would be necessary before a “pay to play” program could be instituted. Janelle said that the criteria are things such as toilets, designated camping areas, picnic shelters, ADA compliance, etc. It requires a high level of facility development. The assessment would have to go through the State Engineer's office.

Myke expressed concern that the Glade will continue to fall apart under the proposed management plan. People will drive up CR 3535 and go wherever they want to without some other driving mechanism. The BLM needs to continue to make improvements until it is at the “pay-to-play” threshold, since now there is no accountability. If law enforcement could be used to ensure compliance—he understands not having it now, but this is a planning document, and it should be planned for. Dave pointed out that even now the public can contact law enforcement—our law enforcement officers are highly responsive. Myke emphasized that “pay-to-play” is the direction in which it needs to go, and the BLM has excluded the possibility. It needs to be planned for and included in the document. Gary responded that once you establish a designated camping area, you have to close other areas to camping to force compliance. It provides more of a “Park Service feeling.” If fees are charged, the BLM has to deliver an enhanced product. Janelle indicated that they have planned for developments at a minimal level, but are working toward that goal. This document does not exclude additional facilities if they are warranted or desired. Dave pointed out that this is an incremental process driven by the public, and as they go forward additional planning documents can be tiered off of this one. Norman stated that this was a starting point, but that it will have to be revised every two to three years. Dave felt that if a discussion of facilities were included in the document, it would create expectations, but that they can plan looking forward.

Norman indicated that OHVs need to be regulated in some fashion. Janelle pointed out that they are licensed, and Dave added that they do receive some grants from the state, including for law enforcement.

Barbara asked if there are any newly-discovered archaeological sites in the Glade. Dave responded that the inventory is continually updated on a project-specific basis. They did recently receive a report of damage to an archaeological site, and sent their archaeologists out to assess it. Janelle pointed out that there are specific provisions for adaptive management for cultural and paleontological resources and T&E.

Myke asked about the Four Corners Bowhunters’ range. Janelle indicated that the boundary had been expanded to include it, and they will continue to use it. They get a special recreation permit every year.

### RAC Work Session:

Meeting re-convened for work session at 1:21 by Kathy McKim. The work session was open to whatever RAC members wanted to address. Barbara indicated that the previous year’s RAC had written letters regarding wild horses and the Glade. Were those letters now obsolete? Kathy indicated that the concerns that the RAC expressed in their letter concerning the Glade had been addressed, and they should write a new one. The previous wild horse letter had been written to the Farmington Field Office. They were now discussing writing a letter to the Secretary, which would be a different audience and would have different verbiage.

Myke asked if the RAC wanted to go further with the wild horse question—does the RAC want to pursue this, or participate? Barbara pointed out that they haven’t finished the EA, and don’t know what the results will be based on the 3,600 comments. Myke said that from what the BLM had explained, and what the RAC has studied, even if they did send a letter it wouldn’t drive anything on the EA. He has a sense that the BLM is shackled by the Wild Horse and Burro Act. Is there

anything that the RAC can do to address that—send a letter to the Secretary or federal representatives, to have them take another look at the legislation?

Barbara said that as a RAC member, because the RAC also has differing viewpoints on the problem, they would be like the rest of the nation, they wouldn't agree. They need to get the PZP going double-time. Myke agreed that PZP is the most realistic solution in the short term. Gary said that the FFO has spent tens of thousands of dollars, they sent three people to Montana for PZP training, they bought the PZP, but they can't do anything until the EA is completed, and they've already been told that interest groups will appeal it. Superman isn't coming, and if it isn't fixed here, locally, it won't get fixed. If it's appealed, the decision would be made by a judge without any resource background. The local BLM and RAC have the best background, the diversity within the RAC is effective, and whatever the RAC does is up to the members.

Barbara observed that even if the EA is approved, it will be like a chess game—they will be blocked in all directions. Gary agreed that there are some groups that will appeal no matter what the decision is. They tried to put all of the options in the EA. Even if the EA goes through, it doesn't ensure the funding to do it, and the adoption market is saturated. Norman remarked that the biggest problem is financial, and all of the money will go to put out fires. Gary agreed that the money would just be taken from another program. Not all solutions are possible at the field office or district level, but there are *some* decisions they can make.

Kathy asked what the ETA was on the EA. Gary responded that they were expecting to be finished in April. They are taking all of the comments very seriously, as they will all come up in appeal. Myke asked if the staff time was charged against the \$78.1 million for the wild horse program. Gary responded no, that is just for the horses.

Norman asked what the RAC could do to help—perhaps approach the interest groups? Gary said that once the RAC speaks with a consensus, even just to highlight issues, it carries credibility.

Myke asked if the next two steps were the EA, then the funding. Gary said that the program currently has some funds, and they are chipping away at the problem by paying for training and buying equipment. Barb asked about the pilot spaying program—what does it take to get a pilot program started? Gary indicated that the NEPA process still had to be followed. Myke asked if they could put include a pilot program in the EA. Gary felt that it was less risk and faster to finish this EA, then address a pilot separately. If they do a pilot separately, then Jeff can come in and talk about what was done with the other spaying program. Sometimes agencies feel more comfortable with the concept of a “pilot program.”

Steve asked what was working in other states. Gary responded that the only thing that bumps in priority is if the state declares an emergency, for instance due to drought. The FFO had a gather scheduled, but it got bumped. Steve said that looking at the population, it compounds the problem each year, and if they continue to stick their heads in the sand they are condemning horses to death by starvation. He would be interested to see what other states have tried. Evert replied that all herds are at 200% of AML, so the prioritization is down to who has had the most recent wildfires, etc. The only tenable solution is to press the advocates.

Kathy said that she had had this discussion with Barbara—the advocates are fighting amongst themselves, and the agencies are hemmed in. There is a trust issue between the agencies. Kathy is concerned that she may have contributed to that lack of trust by having to cut off the wild horse advocate at the last RAC comment session, but she had run overtime.

Evert said that with regard to accepting responsibility—the tools are all incremental, and the solutions are known. It has to be up to the wild horse advocates which ones are acceptable. Jerry asked if they couldn't just get the wild horse advocates together. Barbara said that Evert's point is her argument about adoption—her job is to save one horse at a time. Foundations such as Cloud have a lot of funding, but they keep the BLM in crisis mode.

Myke inquired what they could do—an open letter from the RAC to those organizations, saying that the infighting is leading to a non-sustainable situation? If they took the statistics that Jeff provided about their herd, and say, "Keep fighting the BLM in court, and you're spending money, not helping horses. They're spending money, not helping horses. Get together! All that fighting the BLM does is leave a bunch of horses on the range without any groceries. You destroy the range. You have starving horses. We strongly ask you to reconsider your position." Writing Gary's boss won't help—maybe they should write that letter and copy the secretary. That gives her the ability to say, "Get together." Barbara said that she would support that approach 100%.

Kathy observed that if you only bring in one side, you only get one side's solution. Myke said that scientific organizations have started coalitions. He suggested that they write a letter to the wild horse interests only, asking them to come to a consensus, then they can work with the scientists. He suggested that the accountability be put on the folks who form the roadblock. Evert suggested that the letter should be to the Secretary, instead, as they are Secretarial appointees. A letter wouldn't have an impact with the large advocacy groups. Barbara suggested that the letter be written to both.

Kathy asked what is happening with herds in other states. Jeff said that in 2012 Nevada, Wyoming, Utah and maybe Idaho declared drought emergencies, had fires, etc. The decision was that that had to be the priority for gathers—it was taken away from the balanced approach. Teams could be sent out to do evaluation of the range conditions in areas that claimed drought in 2012 and into 2013. Then they maxed out the holding facilities. By September there wasn't any more room—FFO set up the removals, space was reserved, and if the Iricks couldn't take them, up to 65 horses could go to Canon City. But the space was gone, so they couldn't do the gather—the space went to Wyoming's horses. In 2011 Wyoming BLM had been sued for lack of management of their wild horse herds, and therefore it was decreed that they had to reduce the herd, and so Wyoming got priority, and FFO's space went to Wyoming.

Barb had heard rumors that that herd had been wiped out...had it? Jeff said that they should be reporting the numbers soon—the goal was 600 head. They will find out soon. It was on checkerboard land, which made it harder.

Gary observed that the Wyoming strategy may have been the rationale behind the notice of intent to sue that they received here. Unfortunately, it is a poor strategy because of the BLM's time involved. Jeff said that due to the notice of intent to sue, he had just spoken with the State Lead, who said that they might get approval for a pilot for spayback (spay and release) for about 20 mares. They will still have to do the NEPA for the gather to do the spayback. In reality, the BLM and the permittee's attorney want the same thing.

Myke asked how long they had been working on this EA. Jeff said it was since October 2012. Barbara asked if that meant that the Glade EA was 2-3 years out. Gary estimated about 2 ½ years. That is a ballpark, but is pretty typical for controversial EAs. APDs can take just 60 days, but things like wild horses and recreation are delayed not because of a lack of involvement but because of a lack of consensus among groups. We have groups that say we aren't doing enough, and others that say that we are trying to do too much.

Jeff said that, with reference to inviting other groups, they are aware that the population numbers are rising. They were invited to the Mustang Festival some time back, to set up a booth, bring brochures, etc. He noticed that there were so many groups there, yet so little consensus—the infighting seemed to go on the whole time. Each had their own position, and yet there was no consensus—it made for an interesting dynamic.

Evert felt that the RAC might be able to help elevate the discussion above that—not a discussion of tools, but of the responsibility to reduce numbers down to sustainable levels. The wild horse people need to recognize that wild horses are not the sole purpose of public lands. Myke asked what amount of degradation the BLM had seen since the EA was started. Jeff replied that the last assessments were last fall, and the condition was static to a downward trend.

Myke said that he had been perusing an old RAC letter for format. They should say that the BLM has been working on the EA since October, the estimated AU, the estimated growth, the drought has resulted in a degradation from X to X. As a RAC with backgrounds in multiple disciplines, they believe this is not sustainable, that there is a lack of consensus amongst the equine interests, and they strongly recommend a consensus, because at the end of the day, everybody loses if they don't come together. They could copy the Secretary.

Kathy felt that the proposal was good, and Myke noted that it was up to the RAC whom they sent it to. Jerry noted that *they* can't bring the groups together, but maybe the Secretary can, and they have to do something. Gary said that the Secretary has the power to bring them together, either at the field office or at the national level.

Myke said that the decision needed to be made as a group. If they wanted him to, he would draft the letter. It might be necessary to wait until the next meeting to send it. Gary asked if there was anything Jeff could do to help. Jeff said that only one appeal was expected. One individual filed FOIA requests, but they don't expect additional appeals.

Kathy and Barbara agreed that it was worth a try, but Barbara added that the letter needs to go to others, besides the Secretary. Gary agreed that that could be helpful. Norman asked if they could make a list of the organizations and their specific interests (e.g. adoption). Myke pointed out that the RAC wasn't really interested in their positions, other than that if the Secretary organizes a symposium, that they all need to show up. Ostensibly, they are all interested in the welfare of wild horses.

Evert suggested that the heads of the larger wild horse groups need to go head-to-head with the Secretary through a process with an intent to develop solutions. Perhaps a complete consensus isn't possible, but 3-4 points on which they can agree—they need that level of agreement. Jerry pointed out that it won't happen if they don't send the letter, and suggested that they send a letter to the Secretary asking her to bring the wild horse groups together to reduce herds to a level the land can sustain. Barb said that a copy should be sent to the horse groups, as well. Evert suggested that they send separate letters—he is reluctant to send copies of an official letter, for the sake of professionalism. Kathy suggested that if it is going to go to the Secretary, that it also go to the congressional delegates, and the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

Kathy pointed out that they cannot meet to make decisions outside of the official RAC meetings, and that they don't have a quorum today. Myke said that he could write the letter overnight, and circulate and approve it, or they could write it over the next few months and approve it at the next meeting.

--BREAK--

Kathy pointed out that this RAC meeting was being held within the Glade comment period for a reason. Jerry suggested that they get the wild horse letter done that day. Myke said that Evert had thoughts for a letter regarding the Glade—he could draft it tonight, and bring it in the morning. They could go through it then. Jerry moved that they create a letter to the secretary and the NM congressional delegates requesting that the Secretary bring together the wild horse advocacy groups, seconded by Barbara. Motion passed unanimously.

Kathy expressed appreciation to Myke and Evert, and asked if there were questions for Janelle.

Myke referred to air quality in 1.7.2, and asked if she was confident that it would address special events. Janelle said that all Special Recreation Permits required NEPA. Myke praised the job she had done.

Evert had an open question to the RAC—were there any significant issues with this version of the Glade proposal? He applauded the effort expended in addressing the RAC's previous questions, and felt that they can accept it as an initial step in an ongoing process. Were there any dissensions, and if so, on what issues?

Jerry said that it seemed that there wasn't anything off the table, there seemed to be places for everybody, and places to go for folks without motorized vehicles. There are a lot of hard feelings amongst the non-motorized community. Kathy questioned that—she said that under RMZ1 they still have two places with motorized vehicles coming through. She asked if the non-motorized folks on the RAC felt that they have enough space. She said that after 25 years with NM Game and Fish, she believes that it will come down to gates—allowing Flora Vista and Foothills access is going to cause conflict.

Jerry pointed out that they had to start somewhere—things may improve. He would never have ridden in the Glade anyways—he prefers Farmington Lake. Barbara said that riding in the Glade is dangerous, with the traffic coming out of Foothills, but there isn't anything that can be done short of gates. She questioned whether with the three-mile section—could there be an extension later? Riding closer to the lake is safer, but there are shooting issues. Janelle indicated that it might be considered.

Jerry pointed out that 95% of motorcyclists are courteous. Cyclists are courteous—all the equestrians want them to do is talk. He has been told by an OHVer to control his horse—but the horse doesn't have a key to turn it off. Education is needed. Kathy said that Jerry had a point...they have to start somewhere. Barbara observed that when the Sheriff's Posse put in a gate, it slowed down traffic. Jerry agreed that it is going to take time, and said that the biggest problem in the Glade is dumping.

Myke said that it came down to accountability. Where in the document does it say that there is a penalty if someone is caught on a non-motorized trail on a motorized vehicle? Janelle replied that law enforcement has a separate code book—they can be cited for destruction of natural resources, riding in a closed area... Myke asked if the BLM could require rehabilitation of the damaged land, and Janelle responded that there are fines related to that.

Myke asked if on some oil and gas locations they prefer to minimize other impacts and reroute the trail. Janelle said that was a possibility. Myke indicated that his concern stemmed from an incident when someone destroyed a wellhead in the Glade—and himself. He wanted to ensure that well site security in the GRRRA could be addressed by this document...he realizes that this can be expensive, but that there would be some cooperation from industry. He strongly recommended such collaboration. Janelle responded that the BLM's goal is to use a minimum

tool—a sign or a fence or a gate as the situation requires. Safety considerations were also addressed in the route analysis. Gary said that much of this will be tied to monitoring and feedback, and adjustments might be part of the move to the “pay-to-play” scenario. The worst-case scenarios are for someone to go out and have an experience that isn’t what they expect. The key is to direct them to the areas where they can have the kind of experience they anticipate.

Evert said that one thing they should consider recommending to the Secretary is to empower the BLM with another level of “pay-to-play”...right now it is tied to facility development; but other considerations should be involved like in the Glade where there is such a high level of use, and corresponding administrative oversight and cost, etc., that it justifies a fee. Gary pointed out that once the area is designated through a Recreation Area Management Plan, they have access to funds not formerly available.

Barbara asked whether, once the GRRRA management plan is official, there will be a formal introduction to the community. Gary responded that they have rollout plans, and that there are several groups that they work with. They will need the signatures on the document, and then they can begin to develop maps—those will be the first two big initiatives.

Kathy asked whether the new management boundaries would come into effect before the maps were published. Gary said that the management plan becomes effective upon signature, but practically the rangers can’t ticket people until they have a reasonable expectation that folks could be aware of the restrictions. There are user groups out there that will help with the dissemination of the information.

Norman commented that once the energy development slows down, Farmington could become a retirement destination, due to the recreation activities in the area. Gary agreed that the Glade is a gem—with urban sprawl all over the west, having an outdoor experience this close to town is unusual. Socioeconomic studies have put a premium on such non-monetary benefits as access to public lands in a community.

Myke said that once signs are up and maps are available, it would be useful for the RAC to be kept apprised of the schedule for implementation so that they might be able to help the BLM to prioritize some of their rollout plans. With reference to the responses to the RAC’s comments—the BLM did a good job answering their concerns, except carrying forward some of the assessments that were done for the 2003 RMP. He does not believe that the 2003 RMP gave enough consideration to archaeology, paleontology and T&E species, and that the BLM should consider doing some more mapping, particularly in RMZ3. He is concerned that some T&E species may have been missed, and new ones have been listed since.

Evert asked if they were ready for a final decision, but Christine pointed out that they were lacking a quorum. Evert moved that they table the question until tomorrow, seconded by Norman. Motion passed unanimously.

Kathy asked Gary if they wanted a letter with reference to the Glade, or whether the meeting minutes would be adequate. Gary indicated that a letter of support would be good—it can be simple or detailed, whatever level the RAC feels comfortable with. Myke said that Dave had told him that he was very pleased with the activity level of this RAC, and their support helps when the BLM seeks funding, and demonstrates the value of the RAC. Gary said that deliverables are always helpful—they could include that the BLM addressed the RAC’s concerns, and even copy Jesse Juen—it makes it easier for the FFO to get support.



Myke said that the agenda for the following day had information regarding the shale development plans—he is particularly interested in the challenge with regard to the ACEC near Chaco, and asked if it could be discussed in conjunction with the Mancos shale, since it isn't specifically on the agenda. Gary responded that it is relevant to the Mancos shale EIS, and could be addressed. Evert felt that that was something that the RAC should be engaged with. Myke concurred, because the ramifications, if the request is successful, has nationwide ramifications. Christine indicated that it could be included in the next agenda, if the RAC wished.

Evert moved that they adjourn, seconded by Myke. Voting was unanimous in the affirmative, and the meeting adjourned at 3:29.

## February 12 Attendees:

### RAC Members (Category):

Barbara Kiipper (2)  
Myke Lane (1)  
Kathy McKim (3)  
Norman Norvelle (3)  
Evert Oldham (2)  
Jerry Sims (2)  
Steven Wamel (1)  
Anthony Benson (3)  
Jude Gabaldon (1)

### BLM Staff:

Dave Evans, FDM  
Gary Torres, FFO  
Dave Mankiewicz, FFO  
Christine Horton, FFO  
Jeff Tafoya, FFO  
Janelle Alleman, FFO  
Dale Wirth, FFO  
Amanda Nisula, FFO  
Sam DesGeorges, TFO  
Patricio Martinez, TFO  
Brad Higdon, TFO  
Shasta Ferranto, TFO  
Leslie-lynn Sinkey, FFO

### Visitors:

James McDaniel  
Lucille Herrera  
Jim Dumont  
Olson Juan  
Brandon Velvius  
Orin Safier  
Chris Frye  
Martha Brown

RAC Chair Kathy McKim called the meeting to order at 9:07 am.

Introductions of those present.

### Kathy McKim:

Previous day's agenda was rearranged, to postpone the election of a new chair until a quorum was achieved. Quorum is present. Volunteers for RAC chair requested. None came forward.

Question arose: when do the terms of the various members expire? Per Christine Horton, as follows:

July 13, 2014: Anthony Benson, Evert Oldham, Myke Lane

July 6, 2015: Kathy McKim, Barbara Kiipper, Nickie Vigil

August 13, 2016: Jude Gabaldon, Steven Wamel, Jerry Sims, Norman Norvelle

Evert Oldham moved that Kathy McKim continue as chair for another year. Seconded by Jerry Sims. Passed unanimously.

Myke Lane suggested that the position of chair be continued for a year at a time, in order to provide continuity.

(Myke distributed draft of letter to Secretary Jewell that was discussed at previous day's meeting. This would see further crafting during work the session.)

Myke requested feedback on the draft—wants to build consensus on it before it is sent. The EA on wild horses may be issued in April, but they are concerned that even once the BLM completes the EA, it may be held up with lawsuits. They suggest that the Secretary use her office to bring interest groups to the table to develop a national strategy. He emphasized that this is just a draft. Barbara Kiipper noted that at least a state-by-state strategy was needed—a national strategy may not be feasible, as environments differ so much from state to state.

Amanda Nisula: Mancos/Gallup Shale Resource Plan Amendment:

(Presenting in lieu of Lindsey Eoff)

Amanda serves as the Planning and Environmental Specialist, and Lindsey Eoff as the Project Manager for the Mancos Shale Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement.

Improvements and innovations in horizontal drilling technology and multi-stage hydraulic fracturing have enhanced the economics of developing the Mancos Shale/Gallup Formation. This makes it economically viable, and has led to the reconsideration of decisions based on the new technology.

What is being considered is an RMP Amendment, which is limited and addresses only specific planning issues. An RMP Revision, by contrast, would be a complete reconsideration. The planning issues addressed by this amendment include mineral development, lands and realty (including land tenure and land use authorizations), vegetation management, and lands with wilderness characteristics. Although these are the primary areas in which they will be making decisions, the EIS will analyze the impacts on *all* resources. Although the project boundary takes in a large amount of “checkerboard” land ownership, the planning decisions still have an impact.

The land use planning process has a number of steps, and there are a number of points at which the public can provide input. Currently, the Notice of Intent has been sent to the Washington Office for approval.

The contract for the EIS was solicited in August 2013, and the contract was awarded to EMPSi in September. The initial meeting with EMPSi was held in November 2013. Once the Notice of Intent is published in the Federal Register, they will be holding public meetings during the 60-day scoping period.

A variety of planning criteria apply to the project. The RMPA/EIS will be in compliance with FLMPA and all other applicable laws, regulations, and policies. Lands covered in the RMP will be public land and split-estate lands managed by the BLM. No decisions will be made relative to non-BLM administered lands. Broad-based public participation will be an integral part of the planning and EIS processes. Decisions in the plan will strive to be compatible with the existing plans and policies of adjacent local, state, federal and tribal agencies, as long as the decisions are consistent with the purposes, policies, and programs of federal law and the regulations applicable to public lands. The RMP will recognize valid existing rights. The RMPA/EIS will incorporate management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents. The planning team will work cooperatively and collaboratively with cooperating agencies, tribal governments, county and municipal governments, and all other interested groups, agencies and individuals. The planning process will involve American Indian tribal governments and will provide strategies for the identification, delineation and protection of traditional uses. All proposed management actions will be based upon current scientific information, research and technology, as well as existing inventory and monitoring information. The planning process will use the BLM Mitigation Guidelines to develop management options and alternatives and analyze their impacts, and to develop alternatives and determine mitigation requirements.

As part of the project, a number of other studies are being carried out. The first is the creation of a Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario, the completion of which is anticipated in the

summer of 2014. In addition, hydrologic, air quality and vegetation studies will be carried out, and inventories made of travel routes and lands with wilderness characteristics.

The BLM will be working with a number of cooperating agencies—59 federal, tribal, state and local agencies have been invited to participate. Cooperating agencies can be any that have jurisdiction by law over, or special expertise regarding, any environmental impact. Jurisdiction by law means that an agency has the authority to approve, veto, or finance all or part of the proposal, and special expertise means it falls under their statutory responsibility, agency mission, or they have related program expertise. Cooperating agencies may assist with identifying issues, arranging for the collection and analysis of resource, environmental, social, economic, and institutional data. They may also help develop and evaluate alternatives, and help estimate the effects of the implementation of those alternatives. They may also carry out any other tasks necessary for the development and documentation of the environmental analysis. A memorandum of agreement will be developed with each agency that accepts the BLM's invitation to participate.

All existing land use plan decisions will remain in effect during the amendment process. The BLM reviews proposed actions to determine whether approval of that particular action might limit the future range of alternatives. The BLM manager may defer or modify the action, subject to valid existing rights. Those decisions would be made on a project-specific basis, and not be an area-wide moratorium.

#### Discussion:

Tony Benson asked how many of the agencies invited to cooperate were really expected to participate. Amanda replied that they expected six to twelve, at varying levels. Some may choose just to review, others may sit in on the interdisciplinary team. Barbara noted that the front page of today's paper talked about \$160 million for this project. She is trying to connect the dots. Dave Evans noted that \$160 million is the amount that WPX is expected to invest, other companies are also expecting to invest hundreds of millions. Companies are in the exploratory/developmental stage, and are looking at different drilling scenarios—drilling north-south, east-west, or horizontal transverse wells. This stage will probably take them 12-18 months. The current RMP recognized the potential for this type of development, and the new RMP will take two to three years to complete. Gary pointed out that the BLM started lining up this EIS a year ago, in anticipation of its being a three-year, multi-million-dollar process. In the interim, the oil and gas companies can do some exploration and preliminary work

Barbara remarked that it seemed to put the cart before the horse somewhat. Dave Evans said that there are several thousand wells currently in development. If the companies go to full-field development, the BLM wants to make the transition as seamless as possible. This EIS was not done based on a proposal from industry, where they would pay for it—a year ago the BLM decided to take the initiative to start the EIS. Additionally, because the BLM is funding the EIS, it will have more credibility with outside groups. This is a wide-ranging project, and there are many interested stakeholders. Gary noted that this approach isn't uncommon—industry really doesn't know what techniques and technology they will use (co-locations, etc.). Other fields were developed along this same line—when the BLM feels that industry is moving to full-field development, then they can change gears. Dave Evans observed that the new technology is really a boom environmentally, since they can locate six or ten wells to a pad, which reduces the impact over traditional vertical wells.

Tony asked how large an area will be impacted. Dave Mankiewicz responded that based on current expectations, they are looking at a 10-12 township area, based on existing depletion to

the northeast, and the increasing amount of water found to the south. Gas wells may also go in, but that won't happen until the price of gas rises. They are planning on several thousand wells. Dave Evans said that there are a number of upcoming assessments and inventories of water resources in the area—they are looking at the possibility of using produced water for stimulation—they are optimistic that that would reduce fresh water use. In conjunction with nitrogen foam fracking, they might be able to reduce water needs up to 60%.

Gary said that industry was originally looking at up to 16,000 wells, but that the companies are looking for “sweet spots”...they wanted to overestimate a little, but the companies are getting a better feel for the best locations. Dave Evans said that this would not become a “Bakken-like” development. Myke observed that what was unique about this is the horizontal drilling—that has become a real game-changer. The 2003 RMP anticipated directional drilling, but that is still done in a vertical plane. In this area, they would be drilling 5,000-6,000 feet down, then drilling 5,000 feet horizontally. The current RMP addressed surface holes—before, they needed 10 wells to access an area, but now they can do it with one. Other considerations are that until they reach 10,000 penetrations, the current RMP is appropriate. Also, the EIS is not the end of the NEPA process—this is a programmatic planning document—they still have to do EAs for each well, and those will be funded by the oil and gas industry.

Norman noted that the technological developments that have occurred in the last two to three years weren't originally expected for another ten to twelve years. Dave Evans replied that this kind of development was addressed in the RMP, but not at this scale. They are looking at horizontal lines up to 7,400 feet long.

Evert Oldham pointed out certain realities in this area—this expansion has confined boundaries, and this is not a long-term boom. This is occurring at a time that many homes in the checkerboard could get water for the first time, but residents can't access it because of the lack of last-mile connectivity. This is one of two areas on the Navajo Nation with development opportunities like this--the other is the 491 corridor. The construction will have impacts, and an effort should be made to identify ways and opportunities to help these communities to develop. This is a tiny window of opportunity to do the right thing. Myke remarked that right now they are only looking at oil development, but they should consider the entire basin. Gas prices are depressed, but in the longer term this infrastructure can be used for oil, for gas, and for liquids. They anticipate that once the EIS is done, it will help with relief of the Chaco leasing issues. Dave Evans indicated that they have held back on the Chaco leasing so that they can complete the wilderness characteristics inventory—there is not a current inventory. Gary pointed out that this would enable them to have a firmer basis for discussions on leasing. Myke asked if there was a guidance document for doing that kind of an inventory, and Dave Evans indicated that there was.

Evert asked what has been done to incorporate groups interested in dark skies, etc. Dave Evans said that they are in dialog with the NPS with regard to dark skies and natural sounds, as they have the expertise. Also with the San Juan Citizen's Alliance, Wild Earth Guardians, and the Chaco Alliance. He extended an invitation to the RAC to come to those meetings, and other meetings that will be held going forward. Gary indicated that they are working on an agreement with the Park. Myke asked if the NPS followed NEPA for the “dark skies” designation. Amanda replied that this was a designation made by the International Astronomical Union. Gary said that it will be made clear that this is not a federal designation, but that the BLM will take it under consideration. Dave Evans said that NMOGA has already written a strong letter to the NPS regarding the lack of NEPA process. Myke said that he was less concerned with the designation than the impact that it has on the way that they manage the park and surroundings. They are trying to impose their standards on areas outside of the

Park. Dave Evans noted that the NPS had contributed comments on the 2003 RMP regarding light pollution. Myke said that certain standards have to be adhered to, as they have already been set by the state.

Steven Wamel asked how much of the area that has been identified for development is BLM land. Dave Mankiewicz responded that about half of the area identified for oil development is—this will be a boom to the communities to the tune of \$50 million. Normally, 70-80% of the lands will be developed, including gas development. Gary noted that as you approach the Park, BLM holdings decrease. They only have about 18% of the land around it. Dave Mankiewicz said that within a ten-mile radius of the park, the BLM holds about 38%. Steve indicated that due consideration and respect for private land holders is important, especially given the cultural diversity of that particular area.

Myke said that he had a question regarding the ACEC around Chaco—will that be included in the EIS? Amanda said that the proposed ACEC was 1.2 million acres, and that they are finalizing the evaluation of the proposal, and will forward it to management. They will not be revisiting ACEC designations in the EIS.

--BREAK--

Visitors who arrived since the previous introductions were identified.

Kathy McKim indicated that Janelle Alleman was present, and asked if there were any questions for her.

Jude Gabaldon asked if it were possible to adopt the Preferred Alternative, but with the western boundaries of Alternative B. Janelle indicated that when the decision is made, it is possible to “mix and match” to a limited extent, but that it would take some additional planning. That would involve extensive expansion to the west. Jude noted that it would also expand acreages not closed to motorized use. Janelle said that there are concerns regarding T&E habitat and paleontological resources. It would not necessarily be just an “open” area, there would be route designations. Jude indicated that they would like to access all of the BLM lands in that area. Kathy asked if that area had been designated for fragile soils. Janelle said that that was also T&E habitat and that there were documented paleontological sites there. Gary suggested that a trail could be designated in that area, and not be part of the GRRRA. That would add access to that acreage, but not necessarily change the alternatives. The BLM has to be careful about picking and choosing from different alternatives due to the possibility of synergistic effects—they are more likely to have to defend an appeal. Myke asked what that area would be designated as in Alternative B? It would be RMZ2. Myke inquired if Jude saw a problem with it being designated as RMZ2, and Jude said that he did not. Janelle said that they do have management tools, but it makes it more difficult to manage an area where there were sensitive resources and OHV side-by-side.

Gary indicated that when they are planning, the BLM tries to group compatible uses together—as they have currently arranged it, they do not have OHVs out in T&E habitat, which makes it more manageable. This does not preclude putting a trail in out there. Evert said that that resonated with his knowledge of the area—it simply seemed like a recipe for conflict.

Kathy had a question—OHVs need to stay on designated routes if they are in the GRRRA, but if they are outside of the boundary and are on an existing road, are they still legal? Janelle said that until a Travel Management Plan was developed, yes. Gary said that this process will ultimately occur throughout the field office, but that the Glade is currently the priority. Myke asked Jude if he

wanted to contribute a comment to that effect from the RAC. Jude said that he might submit a comment on the Glade proposal as an individual, but not as an official RAC comment.

Myke asked how long it would be before the areas outside the GRRA had a travel management plan. Janelle said that last year they issued a contract to inventory Piñon Mesa and the area north of the Glade. Once they publish a travel management plan, then they can limit traffic to those published, and new roads that develop without authorization can be closed.

Myke asked if OHVers could come to the BLM and request specific trails. Janelle said that they could, but that it would have to go through the same Route Evaluation Form used in the GRRA document. Jude said that single track motorized routes can be hard to inventory, as they can be hard to spot. He is concerned that routes may be missed. Gary reminded them that the public has the opportunity to bring in their routes and suggestions. T& E habitat in that area is still a factor, but they would be willing to work with user groups. They will not necessarily be closing that area, but nor would it be completely open.

Jude asked if the Old Spanish Trail will truncate some of the OHV routes in the Glade. Gary said that they have just signed a memorandum of agreement with the Old Spanish Trail Association, and the BLM determines where values for trails need to be managed, but that the Old Spanish Trail doesn't trump or truncate everything. Janelle pointed out that the Old Spanish Trail does not make what's going on around it all "go away," but that it can affect new construction. Jude wanted to clarify—then it doesn't trump decision-making for the RMP? Gary said no, the BLM will identify areas that are "quality," for example in Largo Canyon. This entire field office is an industrialized area, and no segments are pristine—the Old Spanish Trail Association is on the same wavelength.

Kathy asked Jude and Tony if they agreed with Alternative A, and was told that they did. She proposed that the RAC draft a letter supporting Alternative A, and asked for further discussion. Evert moved that the RAC express support for Alternative A and appreciation to the BLM for their effort in addressing the RACs concerns as expressed in their previous letter. Seconded by Jude. The motion passed unanimously. Gary expressed appreciation to Janell for her work—the rest of the staff helped, but she was the major player. She will shortly be taking a detail as the Northern Zone Fish Biologist for the state, but will continue working with Farmington on the Glade.

--Break—

Myke brought up his proposed letter to Secretary Jewell on the projection screen. The committee worked through the letter, proposing changes to the wording, etc.

Barbara said that she had had a conversation with Dave Evans that morning, and asked him what it would take for Barbara—as a wild horse advocate--to sit down with the BLM, the USFS and wildlife advocates, grazing representatives, etc., to determine what hurdles that exist to wild horse management, and at least present a solution for New Mexico. Dave was interested in the idea, and told her that he would pursue it. Myke pointed out that they have been discussing wild horses since this RAC convened, but that perhaps the letter they were drafting would be a way for the RAC to help move the problem forward. Evert emphasized that the letter should express that it conveyed the unanimous view of the RAC. He indicated that he would work on a draft of the Glade letter over the lunch break.

--Break for Lunch—

Meeting was called to order by Kathy McKim at 12:22.

New arrivals introduced themselves.

Sam DesGeorges said that doubtless the RAC had heard that on March 25, 2013, President Obama had designated the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument. They are actively working on the development of a management plan for the monument, and wanted to present the RAC with an update.

### Shasta Ferranto –Rio Grande del Norte National Monument Management Plan

The Monument was proclaimed under the authority of the 1906 Antiquities Act, and is 242,555 acres. The presidential proclamation supercedes FLMPA. The Monument has four objectives—to preserve cultural resources, ecological diversity, geology and wildlife. It is withdrawn from any kind of mineral development. Motorized travel will be limited to designated routes. The proclamation does allow for grazing, hunting, fuelwood and piñon nut gathering, and ROWs that are consistent with management objectives. The Resource Management Plan under development is specific to the Monument, and will serve as an amendment to the 2012 Taos RMP.

The RMP for the Monument will outline the goals and objectives, the allowable uses, and management actions. There are two levels of planning for the Monument—RMP-level and activity-level plans. Currently they are working on the RMP, later they will work on activity-level plans (e.g. travel management).

The Notice of Intent for the RMP amendment was published on January 3, 2014, and public scoping runs from January 3 to March 6<sup>th</sup>. They have held four public meetings so far. They had 150 attendees in Taos, 35 in Cuesta, 20-25 in Antonito, and 20 in Santa Fe. In each case they started with an open house, and then went to an open forum. Comments will continue to be accepted until March 6. They expect that the plan will take about two years to complete. The next step is the creation of the scoping document, then the formulation of alternatives. The work is all being done in-house by the Taos BLM. They hope to have the draft EA done by next fall. This will be an EA, so only 30 days are required for review, but they will probably leave it open for 90 days instead, to allow the public more time to comment. Because this is a land use planning document, there is a protest period that is not part of the usual NEPA process. Protests would be directed to the Washington Office. The Decision Record will then serve as the Monument Plan. Scoping includes how they use the land, what opportunities or restrictions there should be, etc. Comments thus far pertain to transmission lines, ROW access to private lands, concerns that increased visitation may result in the monument being “loved to death,” access to and signage of cultural resources, education and interpretation, grazing, wood-cutting, recreation—especially hot-air balloon tours--travel management, wildlife, water quality and quantity, hunting, and airspace. Some of these do not fall under the BLM’s jurisdiction, and will not be carried forward.

Most of the Monument falls in the Taos Plateau ACEC, and as a result it is possible that few changes to management prescriptions will be necessary, and the current plan for the Monument is the No Action Alternative. The Wild Rivers, Ute Mountain, and San Antonio zones are excluded from ROW development. ROWs will be considered on the Taos Plateau on a case-by-case basis. New ROWs are excluded in the Lower Gorge, except for road improvements for safety, or to provide access or utility service to non-federal land where no practicable alternative exists. Maintenance or improvements of acequias and existing ROWs that are considered to be



grandfathered uses are allowed in the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic Rivers corridor, provided that changes are consistent with protection of the outstanding values of the area. New ROWs can be co-located within the utility corridors at the High Bridge and Powerline Falls crossings. New ROWs may be considered for installation on existing structures, if they would not impact the outstanding values associated with the Wild and Scenic Rivers designation.

The Rio Grande corridor is unavailable for livestock grazing, but trailing across the corridor is allowed. Riparian areas and wetlands in the Lower Gorge are unavailable to livestock grazing. Grazing is unavailable on 120 acres in the Rio San Antonio area, on 897 acres in the Wild Rivers zone, and on 14,404 acres in the Ute Mountain zone. Grazing is limited and managed to ensure enhancement of critical elk and pronghorn winter range, no increases in the existing preferences will be permitted. Vacant allotments will be considered for management as reserve common allotments. The BLM will work cooperatively with permittees to study the impacts of grazing on playas through comparison of grazed and ungrazed playas, or areas within a playa.

The Rio Grande Gorge has a Special Recreation Management Area. The Ute Mountain, San Antonio, and Taos Plateau Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs) will manage for dispersed recreation. Boating is managed under guidelines of the 2000 Rio Grande Corridor Plan, the guidelines of which limit the group size, days or seasons; close certain segments at high flows; and allow launch or take-out only at designated areas.

Wind and solar energy development is excluded from the Monument. The San Antonio and Ute Mountain areas are closed to vehicles. Motorized and non-motorized mechanical vehicle uses are limited to designated routes, except for emergencies or authorized administrative purposes. Fuelwood sales will be intensively managed and monitored to improve habitat, and all forestry activities will be conducted in a manner to improve and expand thermal cover conditions. Fuelwood and timber sales are not allowed within the Rio Grande WSR corridor unless such an action would enhance watershed resources.

Significant cultural resources—such as those associated with playas—will be protected. Areas will be considered for introduction, augmentation, or re-establishment of fish and wildlife species consistent with NM Department of Game and Fish plans. They will plan and implement wildlife habitat improvement projects throughout the monument, and assess wildlife use of and need for playas. Playas will also be surveyed for aquatic biota. In cooperation with NM Game and Fish, the Rio Grande and adjacent tributaries will be managed to control or eliminate exotic species. They will employ mechanical removal to reduce non-native aquatic species in the Rio Grande and tributaries, and will assess aquatic habitat and develop restoration or enhancement plans to meet goals for fish and other species. They will construct cable grates on the mine entry at Black Rock Springs and all Poso Cave entrances to protect bats—the BLM will allow access only for scientific studies. Southwest willow flycatcher critical habitat will be protected through implementation of the SWWF Management Plan of 1998 and additional management strategies will be developed in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Modification of playas and adjacent uplands will be prohibited. Vegetation transects may be used in the Taos Plateau to determine total available forage. Degradation of aquatic habitat will be prevented by prohibiting soil- and vegetation-disturbing activities in the Rio Grande Corridor and the 100-year floodplain. They will actively manage the riparian areas in the Rio Grande Corridor to return them to full functioning condition, restore native plant species, and reduce the density of exotic vegetation. Riparian conditions in the Rio Grande Corridor will be improved by closing certain sites to vehicles. Noxious weeds will be suppressed by the methods deemed most effective. Herbicides will be used as a last resort.

The water rights in perennial streams will be secured to manage aquatic habitat and riparian vegetation. Playas will be surveyed for frequency of inundation and the relationship to precipitation events. They will secure the minimum water rights necessary in the Rio Grande WSR to manage for the outstandingly remarkable values designated by Congress. In-stream hydrologic processes will be managed to maximize aquatic and riparian habitat area, improve river condition, and reduce excessive deposition and erosion.

The Monument has approximately 39,800 acres of Class I visual resources (San Antonio and Ute Mountain Wilderness Study Areas). There are roughly 202,400 acres of Class II and c. 350 acres of Class III. Ute Mountain will be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics (approximately 13,190 acres). The area east of San Antonio WSA (c. 9,859 acres) will be managed to preserve its wilderness characteristics, and abandoned telephone lines and poles will be removed along the eastern boundary of the San Antonio WSA, and the land rehabilitated.

Limited fire suppression tactics will be used wherever possible, and minimum impact tactics will be used within the San Antonio WSA. Fire prescriptions and burn plans will be developed to meet vegetation management objectives. Watershed health will be improved by controlled burns in shrub grasslands. Fire suppression within the Rio Grande Corridor will be limited to those methods least disturbing to soils and vegetation, and wildland fires threatening developed recreation areas would be fully suppressed.

#### Discussion:

Tony said that he had attended the Taos public meeting, and there were a number of groups that were attempting to “catch the BLM out.” BLM specialists were there to address particular constituencies and interest areas, and it was the best public presentation he had ever attended.

Sam DesGeorges indicated that the last discussion with the RAC about the Monument touched on how the RAC can be engaged. This is an opportunity to submit comments and form a subgroup. It is up to the RAC to decide if they want to be involved. Kathy asked what form that public involvement should take— involvement at public meetings? Support? Sam replied that it would be great to have their support. Shasta said she approached nine cooperative agencies, but none of them have said if they will participate. Sam expected that they will have several cooperators. The RAC can also decide if they support the final decision.

Evert said that at the last meeting they discussed having the RAC involved in discussions of the transmission lines— personally, he is very interested. He suggested that the RAC have further discussions, and formulate an action plan. Tony said that he intends to be an integral part of the process, and will report back to the RAC. He has learned a lot by looking at the Glade Run plan. He feels that it is important that the preferred alternative for the Monument receive RAC support for final document.

Myke asked if VRM issues were considered in the scoping. Shasta said it was done only with reference to the transmission lines. Sam pointed out that they have baseline VRM data to use. Brad noted that the Monument was proclaimed under the 1906 Antiquities Act, which does not address VRM.

Myke said that he had heard about federal funds going to counties, etc., and asked if there were anything that recompensed counties for lost revenue— payments in lieu of taxes. Sam said that it was not in the proclamation, but Dave Evans said that PILT payments had been

renewed through FY 2014. Myke noted that when lands are withdrawn, it does have impacts, and that 80% of lands in New Mexico are federal, Department of Defense, or tribal. Sam said that that was part of the reason why the counties were included, and Dave added that the monument designation does not change the PILT payments.

### Brad Higdon—Cebolla Oil and Gas Lease Sale

Sixteen parcels south of Cebolla were being considered for leasing—60-70 people came to the scoping meetings, and roughly 200 comment letters were received. This lease had been deferred from a previous NEPA analysis in order to incorporate more public feedback. They decided to defer it from the October lease sale, due to groundwater considerations and lack of certainty and information regarding the extent of the impacts thereto. They wanted to take a closer look at the geology and hydrology of the area. Both the Mancos Shale and the Dakota Sandstone are very close to or at the surface in much of the Chama basin. The proposed parcels are in an area where the Mancos Shale is exposed. The mutual domestic well that supplies Cebolla is located in among those parcels. The water level is at 620' for that well, although the well itself is considerably deeper than that. The targeted portion of the Mancos Shale is at 1400', which means that there is a potential conflict from fracking. It was felt that there were still too many unknowns regarding the impacts. They have contracted with a firm in Farmington, and hope to receive additional information and peer review through them, and then combine that information with their own in-house studies. Thus far there has only been limited, wildcat development in the area—just four wells in the Chama Basin, and it looks as though they may be dry holes. Peer review can help make the EA conclusions more solid—this area also has split estate issues. The contractor is the New Mexico Institute of Mining Technology.

### Discussion:

Tony noted that the groundwater and the oil and gas are in the same formation. Myke had a question with regard to the well log for the mutual domestic well—he pointed out that the 620' level for the water was due to that being the level where the pressure from the formation is balanced by atmospheric pressure. He wanted to know where the well log had come from, and Dave Evans said that it was received from the driller. Myke asked if anyone had looked at the cuttings at the time that the water well was drilled—he felt that there was a lot of missing information. The Mancos formation is the source rock for most natural gas in the area, but is there even a reservoir? Dave Evans acknowledged that the gas may have already evaporated, due to the surface expressions. Tony said that 30-40 wells in the area had “shows,” but that few produce on a commercial basis. Myke pointed out that in order to access the coal gas wells in the Fruitland Formation, they will also have to be permitted as water wells, and that this raises potential technical and legal issues. He advised that it would be wise to look into this further. Dave Evans responded that this was why they had deferred the lease, rather than simply leasing for the sake of leasing. They decided to err on the side of caution, due to the paucity of wells and the lack of data. Sam said that they also considered buffering the domestic wells, as well—there are more individual domestic wells, but if all the domestic wells were buffered, it would eliminate almost all of the lands in the proposed lease parcels. Myke pointed out that below 2100 feet, water is not considered to be under the jurisdiction of the State. Dave Evans said that there was also some interest that had been expressed in leasing Forest Service lands to the north. He said that they had worked closely with Rio Arriba County and their planning department—it will take a lot of education, as fracking is a very emotional issue.

## Sam DesGeorges: Taos FO Fuelwood Cutting Standards

The scoping for the Monument plan generated a lot of questions regarding fuelwood gathering and so he wanted to provide a brief update to the RAC on their standards and the rationales. Most pre-2011 fuelwood collection in the field office was dispersed, but then they moved into a system of designating specific areas. That decision was spurred by a variety of management concerns—the proliferation of roads, the down-cutting and head-cutting of arroyos, and the impact on wildlife. They wanted to focus on the reduction of hazardous fuels near the urban interface, and they have done site-specific EAs and Class III archaeological surveys of all of the designated cutting areas. The BLM needs to be able to meet the steady rise in permits issued—in FY '10 they issued 450, but that rose to 850 in FY '13. Prior to 2011, law enforcement contacts with woodcutters were limited, but they increased once the fuelwood cutting was limited to designated areas. The Taos Field Office is closed to woodcutting from December 31 to May 1, a policy which was adopted in 2011 and analyzed in the 2012 RMP. They have found that the designation of specific cutting areas also seems to have reduced the incidents of poaching. Confiscated firewood is donated to low-income individuals through a variety of agencies.

There are numerous resource benefits that accrue due to this approach—improving habitat and allowing for corridor treatments on a landscape scale. The fuelwood is secondary to other resource management objectives. They have partnered with other groups on thinning projects, such as NM Department of Game and Fish, the Chimayó Conservation Corps, and the Highlands University Forest and Watershed Restoration Institute. They have seen remarkable regrowth of grass and forbs after thinning, even with the drought. There are challenges associated with the project—specifically funding needs and a data gap in some areas.

### Discussion:

Dave Evans noted that they are working on a similar plan for the Farmington Field Office, which sells more firewood permits than any other office in the BLM. Tony asked if they only sold firewood for personal use, and Sam replied that they have certain areas where they allow commercial cutting—they provide the prescriptions which the woodcutters are to follow. This is only for the cutting of piñon and juniper, not for lumber.

## Sam DesGeorges: Ohkay Owingeh Exchange Request and Other Updates

This was listed in the agenda because they may enter in to an exchange with Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, as identified in the land use plans as lands available for disposal. The BLM has some lands that are of great cultural importance to them. The exchange would be made based on fair market value, rather than an acre-for-acre basis. They would use that exchange to acquire lands within the monument, etc. Everything that the BLM does is a public process, and there is a lot of public interest in this.

The BLM has also issued a ROW for a cell tower on a hill. This decision has already been appealed by a group in Dixon to the Interior Board of Land Appeals. They did do public scoping on the project, but they felt that the impact of microwaves was not given sufficient consideration.

### Discussion:

Tony indicated that the company involved was located a long way away, and was quite distant from the situation on the ground. Sam indicated that the company had already experienced

some pilferage of equipment. Even though the project was scoped and the NEPA process followed, some people still won't be happy with a decision.

Myke asked if the BLM was looking for RAC input on any of the Taos subjects upon which RAC was briefed today, and Sam replied that these briefings were primarily for information, so that the RAC can understand the BLM's challenges and better understand what they see in the media. The Monument is the primary issue where the RAC can make an impact.

#### Discussion of General RAC Business:

Myke indicated that with reference to the letter regarding the wild horse situation, he proposed copying the following individuals: the Secretary of Agriculture, Senator Udall, Senator Heinrich, Representative Lujan and Jesse Juen. He had discussed the original proposed list with Dave Evans, who had suggested that they not include the other congressional representatives for NM, as it fell outside their districts. Barbara suggested that the director of the Wild Horse and Burro Program be included, and Myke said that he would get that individual's name.

Evert suggested that the Glade letter be addressed to Dave, with copies for Gary, Janelle, and Jesse Juen. Jude recommended that Secretary Jewell be included. Myke pointed out that the instructions for the Glade comment period were quite specific regarding to whom comments should be addressed.

Kathy indicated that there were three speakers who had signed up for the comment period, and each would have 15 minutes. She was a bit concerned about time constraints.

--Break--

#### Public Comment Period:

##### Olson Juan:

He appreciates the opportunity to attend and to comment, and the experience had been a real eye-opener. He had no idea about some of the resources involved and the impacts that they have on all of us. He felt very fortunate to have learned what was presented.

He wanted to tie in the culture aspect—he was born and raised in White Rock near Chaco Wash, but now he lives in Ojo Encino, about 100 miles to the east. He feels that it is important to consider the short- and long-term impacts on his community.

He said that all of the Native Americans have legends and cosmology, and the Navajo emergence story is very tied to the land. The Navajo believe that they came up through five stages of the world to surface in this current, Fifth World. In each stage, there were things that happened, and taboos and laws of nature that were violated. When they emerged into this world, they saw many things, and looking back at the previous worlds, they saw many of the things that have been discussed here today—water, oil, etc. The Surface World has many resources. The Holy People created prayers about all of these things that sustain life, and that includes all of this area.

He said he took a rafting trip from Bluff, Utah, to Mexican Hat—he saw many of the things that were spoken of in these stories—the stories are tied to all of the resources of the San Juan Basin. Technology has found things like subsurface water, oil, etc., but they were in the Navajo stories. We are fortunate to be part of our environment. Native Americans—especially the Navajo—have stories that tie us all to the resources that sustain life. It is up to us what we do with them.

We have to live with the historical trends, what has been left, but it's very positive to plan. He came here from Ojo Encino, a very small community of about 1000 people. Local leaders are advocating for the community to develop self-sufficiency. He is on the Community Land use Planning Committee, as is his aunt, who accompanied him. They are working on the development of facilities like a hospital. We often hear about the challenges of Native American communities—dropout rates, drugs—and the communities have to deal with these challenges.

We are fortunate, but it is complex to have all these land use jurisdictions—they will be affected by the decisions in the Farmington RMP. Evert stated this morning that impacts on the communities should be considered—he felt this was a positive comment. It is time for the Native American communities to be self-sufficient. As we communicate and collaborate, we can overcome some of these issues.

He feels fortunate to have learned what is being done and being planned—the Native community needs to learn how all of these things are likely to affect them, like horizontal drilling and the water table, so they can take what they learn to find out how they can help their people. He applauds the things that have been put on the table, and the level of planning that has gone into it.

#### Chris Fry:

He is from Las Placitas Association, based in Las Placitas, NM, a community of about 5000 people north of Albuquerque, between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. He is here to comment about a natural gas pipeline that will run through Placitas carrying liquefied natural gas. The BLM was the lead agency for the environmental studies. In 2006 a flash flood uncovered pipelines in Las Muertas Creek in the heart of Placitas. The population of Placitas doubles about every 20 years. The Association is concerned about the EA—he said that it was a good EA, in that it talked about cultural sites, etc., but it did not address safety concerns. Gary Torres was the signator on the document. He is not satisfied with the amount of safety information regarding their concerns, what he called “safety failures.” One never wants pipelines to be exposed where it can be impacted by floods, etc.

Fifteen to eighty percent of what will flow through those pipes will be liquid—they have concerns about groundwater contamination. The pipeline has been there since the '50s, and they have been good neighbors to it, and it to them. They have appealed the BLM decision to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, and the decision is still pending. Part of the appeal was based on a California BLM decision that insufficient consideration was given to safety.

He wanted to inform the RAC that the Las Placitas Association won't go away, but they don't want to go to a lawsuit. He used to work for the federal government in California, and he doesn't want to go that route. He hopes that the Board will reconsider the decision and give greater weight to safety concerns. Placitas is in a strategic location—powerlines overhead and pipelines underground.

Orin Safier:

He is also here with the Las Placitas Association, and is the director of the Las Placitas and Eastern Sandoval Citizens' Association. Two months ago he attended the RAC meeting in Albuquerque. Among the general topics was the urban interface—this is becoming more and more important to the BLM. Las Placitas is still considered rural, although there are 5000 people. They've talked to the state pipeline safety folks, and they say that it is a "high consequence area." If new pipelines go in there, they would never be built the way that the ones that are currently there.

The EA from the Farmington Field Office didn't differentiate between open space and Placitas' residential areas. When he first moved to Placitas he went to a safety meeting. Pipelines are like hot potatoes—many companies are deliberately small, so that in the event of problems, they can simply declare bankruptcy and close down. Placitas did not see sufficient risk assessment for this pipeline...what if a leakage penetrated to the groundwater, from which Placitas gets 100% of its drinking water?

They don't want to stop the project, but they want the information to ensure that they are safe. The finding for the EA was a Finding of No Significant Impact. They don't agree that there will be no significant impact. Perhaps what is needed is an EIS, not an EA. They did make a Freedom of Information Act request, and received a document dump that was useless—it included information for the Gulf of Mexico.

--Break, End of Public Comment Period--

#### RAC Work Session:

The proposed texts for the letters regarding the Wild Horses and Burros, and the Glade Recreation Area, were put up on the overhead screen. Committee members read through the letter and made changes.

Kathy said that Jeff had brought her a copy of an email exchange that he had with Paula Todd-King of the Cloud Foundation. She had wanted to be here, but couldn't. She was interested in the status of the gather. Jeff also showed her a copy of his response. Myke observed that the timing of their letter to the Secretary was propitious—he hoped that the language in it would encourage discussion.

Kathy noted that during this RAC session they had developed the Glade and wild horse letters, and that consideration of one regarding the Monument would be in the future. She said that she had been interested in the remarks made by the last two members of the public. Norman said that he had directed them to the right agency to address their concerns regarding pipeline safety. Myke pointed out that although he hadn't seen the EA in question, that the BLM probably said that they had to conform to DOT requirements, and that if they had any concerns, they should be addressed to the DOT. Norman said that was where he had directed them, and Gary said that that was consistent with the BLM's response.

Myke observed that the pipeline was there before most of Placitas was, and if there was an error, it was on the part of the county, and that there was a similar situation here in San Juan County. The developers pressure the county. San Juan is in the process of updating their planning and zoning. Oil and gas companies don't deliberately put their infrastructure next to residential areas, or they recognize that they will need to take additional remedial action. It is that the county has

permitted the development of residential areas next to that infrastructure, due to lack of proper planning. He encouraged everyone to pay attention to how development is done. In the 2003 RMP he suggested that they include “Noise SMAs” for areas around compressors, etc., but this was not included.

Kathy asked if anything else needed to be addressed, and Evert said that he would like to see blocks in the next agenda to talk about the Rio Grande Del Norte and the Chaco area. Christine said that she felt that the work sessions had been very productive. Myke pointed out that it puts the burden on the BLM to provide information in advance, so they can research what they will be addressing.

Kathy indicated that Sam wanted input from the RAC on the monument, but he didn't provide a deadline or specify the form the feedback should take. She indicated that she was aware that Tony was the only RAC member from Taos. Evert said that he would be willing to travel to meetings, and Christine pointed out that Nickie lives in Santa Fe.

Discussion was held of the date for the next meeting, and it was concluded that late April or early May would be most convenient. Barbara asked if Evert would reapply for the RAC after his term ended. He said that he would like to be involved, but that there were some things coming up, and he would see. Christine said that she understood that Tony would be reapplying.

Dave Evans referred to the comments from the Las Placitas Association, and he just found out that the agency decision was upheld by the Interior Board of Land Appeals today. Their hypothetical even was not sufficient to uphold the appeal. Actually, the company will be upgrading the existing pipeline, and reducing the operating pressures, which should reduce their safety concerns. The most important thing is that the BLM does not regulate pipeline safety. Unfortunately, safety concerns are emotional issues. When the 2006 exposure occurred there was no loss of product, no pipeline compromise, and the company was there shortly thereafter to run safety tests.

Dave said that he appreciated their participation in the RAC—today Allison Sandoval called and said that they were the most functional RAC that she had ever seen. They are cooperating with the agency, and helping them to make decisions, and supportive of that, and actually challenging the agency to come back with information to make better decisions. She was very impressed with how they operate.

Myke said that thanks were also due to Dave and the BLM staff. Dave said that he was impressed that they had had folks who came 100 miles from Ojo Encino, and are impressed at the participation. They will see that in a greater number of nominations to get people involved. The problem faced by many RACs is that they can't get enough people involved. Albuquerque could not field a RAC because they didn't have enough interested participants. Because of the RAC members commitment to the resources and the process the FDO RAC is here, and the BLM is very grateful for each of them, and they know what a commitment it is.

Barbara asked if the responses to the RAC's letters could be forwarded to the RAC. Dave said they could.

Myke moved to adjourn, seconded by Evert. Motion passed unanimously, and meeting adjourned at 3:34 pm.