

Summary Minutes
Farmington District Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Day 1
February 20, 2013
Farmington, New Mexico

RAC Members Present:

Keith Ashmore (Category 3)
Kellie Campbell (Category 1)
Betty Haagenstad (Category 2)
Barbara Kiipper (Category 2)
Myke Lane (Category 1)
Kathy McKim (Category 3)
Evert Oldham (Category 2)
Mario Ulibarri (Category 1)
Nickie Vigil (p.m. only)

BLM Staff Present:

Dave Evans, FD
Bill Papich, FFO
Gary Torres, FFO
Janelle Alleman, FFO
Amanda Nisula
Dale Wirth
John Hensen
Jeff Tafoya
Angela Yemma
Barney Wegener

Visitors Present:

Harvey Haagenstad
Jim Cooper
Mick O'Neill
Debra Mayeux
Grant Glover
Darryl Dunlap
Laura Harper (p.m. only)
Bob Browning (p.m. only)
Dusty Pierce (p.m. only)
Will Koehler (p.m. only)
Pete Valencia (p.m. only)
Kristin Langenfeld, Scribe

February 20 Morning Session (8:30-11:40 a.m.)

RAC Chair Kathy McKim called the meeting to order 8:43 a.m.

There being no substantive changes, RAC member Keith Ashmore motioned to accept the minutes of the previous meeting; second by RAC member Mario Ulibarri. Motion passed unanimously.

RAC, BLM, and support personnel introduced themselves to the public.

Dave Evans, FDO Manager, welcomed the attendees, noting that the agenda for this two-day meeting is full.

Gary Torres discussed safety.

Draft Management Plan for the Glade Run Recreation Area (GRRRA)—Gary Torres and Janelle Alleman

Gary Torres shared that he and Dave Evans have been involved with the GRRRA plan since the beginning, providing direction, reviewing relevant law, existing policy, and valid rights. He hopes for a collaborative solution that the community can support. He listed two major goals during development: 1. Keep the land healthy by balancing uses with possible impacts to resources in a multiple-use environment. 2. Treat people, team members, specialists, and the public with respect during the process.

In answer to a question from Myke Lane about BLM expectations on deliverables on the GRRRA plan from the RAC, Dave Evans indicated that a letter, such as the one the RAC provided on the

horse gather plan, is what BLM would like. Further, the RAC should evaluate and critique the process and hopefully support the agency-preferred alternative.

BLM noted that the Draft EA for the GRRRA would be available to the RAC following the presentation. Amanda Nisula pointed out that the document varies somewhat in appearance from a standard EA. It is a mix of planning and implementation-level document and is organized so that reviewers can call out management action by code, more easily referencing what they like and don't like.

The presentation of the draft management plan for the GRRRA consisted of two main parts: background, scoping and planning issues, and existing frameworks for recreation and transportation; management alternatives. Much of the first part of the presentation, which is summarized in outline form below, provided definitions and context necessary to understand the alternative management plans.

Chairman McKim requested that RAC members hold their questions until the end of the presentation, and reminded members of the audience that members of the public could not ask questions or request permission to speak outside of the public comment period as shown in the agenda.

1. Background (including Notice of Intent and scoping issues)
2. Planning Issues (each issue raised a number of questions. Not all issues were carried forward. The presentation included a discussion of what some of those issues were and why they didn't go forward)
 - 2.1. Areas for Motorized & Non-Motorized Recreation
 - 2.2. Recreation Management
 - 2.3. Route Designation
 - 2.4. Information, Education, and Outreach
 - 2.5. Recreation and Public Purposes Act Leases
3. Recreation Management Plans (Plans are based on the area designation. The presentation discussed three plans. The one relevant to the GRRRA alternatives is the Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), which is subdivided into Recreation Management Zones (RMZs). RMZs allow the agency to address specific audiences and manage for structured recreation.)
 - 3.1. RMZ 1: Quiet Use Area
 - 3.2. RMZ 2: Trail Use Area
 - 3.3. RMZ 3: Open Area
4. Travel Management Plans
 - 4.1. Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Designation
 - 4.1.1. Open
 - 4.1.2. Limited (open to valid users)
 - 4.1.3. Closed
 - 4.2. BLM Transportation System (most roads in the Glade are primitive roads and trails)
 - 4.2.1. Function Classes (based on number and type of roads)
 - 4.2.1.1. Collector Roads
 - 4.2.1.2. Local Roads
 - 4.2.1.3. Resource Roads
 - 4.3. Trails (distinct from BLM Transportation System)
5. Management Plan Alternatives
 - 5.1. No Action Alternative

- 5.1.1. Follows management conditions prescribed in the 1996 Glade Run Recreation Area - Recreation Area Management Plan, as amended by the 2003 Farmington RMP
- 5.2. Alternative A (Preferred)
 - 5.2.1. Seeks a balance between current recreation activities (i.e., OHV and non-motorized) and resource protection
- 5.3. Alternative B
 - 5.3.1. Emphasizes OHV recreation opportunities
- 5.4. Alternative C
 - 5.4.1. Emphasizes non-motorized recreation
- 6. Monitoring and Maintenance Plans
 - 6.1. The “adaptive management” focus of this document allows for changes to be incorporated as monitoring of trails and recreation indicate.

	No Action Alternative	Alternative A (Preferred Alternative)	Alternative B	Alternative C
GRRRA (acres¹)				
SRMA Designation	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
GRRRA Size	21,500 ²	26,500	33,000	21,200
RMZ 1: Quiet Use Area Size	0	5,700	0	6,500
RMZ 2: Trail Use Area Size	0	17,500	28,400	14,700
RMZ 3: Open Use Area Size	0	3,300	4,500	0
Size of the City of Farmington R&PP Lease	0	300	0	980
OHV Designations (acres)				
Open to Cross-Country Motorized Vehicle Use	3,800	3,300	4,500	0
Motorized Use Limited to Designated Routes	17,700	17,500	28,400	14,700
Closed to Motorized Vehicle Use	0	5,700	0	6,500
Route Designations (miles)				
Open	196	131	195	71
Limited	0	1	1	3
Closed	0	90	86	97
Permitted Use Only	0	36	6	20
Administrative Use Only	0	2	1	2
Trail Designations (miles)				
4WD	0	15	15	0
ATV	0	46	54	33
Motorcycle	0	13	13	0
Bicycle	25	24	25	21
Equestrian	0	3	3	2

¹ Acres may not add due to rounding.

Gary Torres provided some summary statements on the GRRRA draft, noting that

- The SMRA designation allows the agency to tap into BLM funding
- There will be a 45-day comment period
- The document will be available on the internet and the RAC will receive a hard copy
- Electronic files available for download will allow reviewers to identify and assess individual routes within each alternative

Discussion

Keith Ashmore voiced his concern that as long as trails are boundaries of zones within the GRRRA, confusion on the part of users will continue and management of “boundary trails” will be difficult. He also wondered about the development of new trails over time. Janelle Alleman noted that all future trails must be approved and that adequate maps and signage would help avoid user confusion.

In response to several questions by Kellie Campbell, BLM provided the following information:

- Issues not carried forward are explained in the draft management plan
- In order to maintain flexibility, BLM has not yet decided if/how permitted and authorized roads are to be signed/gated
- There are no designated walking trails in any of the alternatives because BLM travel planning deals only with motorized travel
- Some roads will be closed

The GRRRA management plan will not change or reduce the road maintenance requirement currently in effect for oil and gas companies.

Betty Haagenstad asked how, given that there has been no comprehensive inventory, is it possible to protect cultural and paleontological resources on the GRRRA? How much inventory has been done in the open area? Will sites be protected once they are found? Janelle Alleman replied that surveys done for oil and gas development provide a baseline on resources present in the area. Block surveys cannot be done.

Betty Haagenstad asked if there has been a study on what impact the open area will have on surrounding areas, noting that TFO has found that ATV causes erosion in adjacent areas. She questioned how sustainable an open area is. In answer to her question about whether erosion will increase in the GRRRA if there is an open area, Dave Evans stated that, yes, it will increase. The question is whether we can accept the level to which it does increase. With the active and adaptive management component of the document, use can be modified as necessary when monitoring indicates problems.

What differentiates RMZ 1 (quiet zone) from RMZ 2 (trail use area)? Janelle Alleman answered that goals and objectives define the differences in the two zones. Alternative A has five or six roads and one county road open for OHVs to use as “passages” from one zone to the next.

Who addresses management of the Old Spanish Trail within the GRRRA? Janelle Alleman answered that management is at the State Office level because of a desire to manage the entire trail, which is much larger than the section within the GRRRA.

Barbara Kiipper noted that the Backcounty Horsemen could fund some equestrian trail signage if affordable. BLM noted that they are working for easements on private and state land to make an equestrian trail loop, and that equestrian trails could be considered for RMZ 2 if they meet the zone’s goals and objectives.

Evert Oldham stated that he liked the presentation and felt that the plan forms the basis for enforcement and management. He asked whether once a plan is in place, would it enable access restrictions in other areas? Dave Evans answered that yes, and the plan will also make it easier to compete for funding for staging, education, and enforcement. Everett Oldham asked if this funding would offset the likely increased maintenance that will accompany increased use of the GRRRA? BLM answered that yes, and that monitoring will provide a means by which increased use can be measured.

A question from Myke Lane regarding oil and gas maintenance of roads in the GRRA led to a larger discussion of how gating might apply to new drilling applications, how access restrictions might affect land users, whether existing oil and gas roads in RMZ 1 will be used as access, and when and how BLM decides to close roads (seasonally or otherwise) to motorized travel.

In answer to Mario Ulibarri's question about shooting in the GRRA, Amanda Nisula said that the area will be closed to recreational shooting (target practice) but open to shotgun hunting of game birds in season.

Kathy McKim recommended writing boundary descriptions into maps for the benefit of the public and for the sake of enforcement.

Visual Resource Management (VRM) Update—Barney Wegener

FFO is in the process of developing a Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment (RMPA/EA) to review and update, as needed, the VRM classes. VRM class objectives determine how much change to the existing visual character of the landscape is acceptable. The planning area encompasses about 1.4 million acres of BLM-managed lands in San Juan, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties. Gary Torres noted that the document currently exists as tabular and GIS data, and because there is no text it is for internal use only. It is likely to be posted by March 30 for external review and a 30-day comment period. It is anticipated that the FONSI decision of record will go out in May.

This update for the RAC included a discussion of the VRM classes and a handout on the contrast rating system, a process used by BLM to analyze potential visual impact of proposed projects and activities.

Myke Lane: When the VRM plan is established, will it be applied to all users of public land?

BLM: Yes, all uses must be in conformance with the land use plan. Barney Wegener added that the completed visual resources inventory will factor in RMP's valid existing rights (e.g., oil and gas leasing, communications facilities) and allocations (grazing). In existing oil and gas fields, most VRM classes will be 3 or 4. New projects seeking permits could be required to mitigate visual impacts.

Betty Haagenstad: What about solar project and VRM? BLM: Such a project could only be sited in a VRM Class 3 or, more likely, VRM Class 4 area. There followed a discussion of the impacts of solar projects, where such projects are allowed, and constitutes compatible uses. The group continued the discussion until the lunch break.

February 20 Afternoon Session (12:45-4:01 p.m.)

Wild Horse Update—Jeff Tafoya and Angela Yemma

The BLM has proposed to gather and implement population growth control on the Jicarilla wild horse herd. The herd resides on the Jicarilla Joint Management Area, which consists of the BLM Carracas Mesa Herd Management Area and the U.S. Forest Service Jicarilla Wild Horse Territory. On October 23, 2012, BLM-FFO released a preliminary EA on proposed Jicarilla wild horse management, including a proposal to gather wild horses. The 30-day public comment period on the preliminary EA ended on November 21, 2012.

The purpose of this update was to inform the RAC on the comments that were received, update the project status, and present a video of a wild horse gather in Utah.

In his summary of comments to the preliminary EA, which was accompanied by a handout, Jeff Tafoya noted that comments were received from groups and individuals throughout the U.S. Many were form letters. Comments not backed up by studies or not part of the scope of the EA were not helpful to the consideration of alternatives. Some unique comments to the draft have standing.

At about the time the preliminary EA was released, the FFO gather project was bumped from the BLM schedule because of emergency drought status declared by other states. The outlook for the project is uncertain at this time. With regard to process, it is anticipated that the final EA will be issued at the end of March.

Angela Yemma presented the video and discussed the Milford (Cedar City, Utah area) gather that she attended. This gather combined helicopter and on-the-ground resources. Seven domestic horses were with the wild herd that was gathered.

Discussion

Mario Ulibarri: Is there any reason to change course based on comments received? Dave Evans: It is too soon to say. Being bumped from the schedule allows BLM to give more in-depth consideration to the comments.

Barbara Kiipper: What is the condition of the horses? Jeff Tafoya: It is good to fair. March and April are the times when things begin to look bad.

Mario Ulibarri: What is the health of habitat and wildlife in the herd area? Jeff Tafoya: Some years there are problems with young deer. Range conditions are probably the biggest indicator. Native grasses are declining in Eul Canyon. Kathy McKim: wildlife and stock numbers are decreasing with unfavorable environmental conditions.

Myke Lane: Has BLM considered tracking wild horses in the Rosa area? Jeff Tafoya: There have been discussions with a student interested in telemetry studies. BLM is collecting data on use of the Rosa area by elk and deer. It would be good to collect the same data for horses.

The RAC discussed alternative to gathering that had been presented in comments, including control using predators and administering birth control drugs. They also discussed the condition of the range, and the implications of no action at this time.

In answer to a question from Evert Oldham concerning the effects of colder, wetter winters on migratory herds, Jeff Tafoya referenced a survey by Paul Sayers that showed that all deer fitted with transmitters returned to the Rosa area.

Vegetation Management Update—John Hansen

The evolution toward a landscape management approach by the BLM has resulted in initiatives including the rapid ecoregional assessment; like other landscape approaches, there is a focus on flora and fauna and the change agents that impact them. Department of Fish and Game studies have also tied flora and fauna together in a landscape approach.

The loss of habitat connectivity (as a result of change agents) equals low to very low landscape intactness. Coarse and fine filter elements can be used to measure habitat health. If one considers the ecological systems as the coarse filter, as their health goes, so goes the health of the Colorado Plateau. A variety of wildlife species are identified as conservation elements important to the Colorado Plateau and also to the coarse filter ecological systems.

Integrated vegetation management provides an interdisciplinary approach to identifying objectives and planning for their attainment through a variety of habitat improvements. For example, in the Rosa area of FFO, a listing of desired plant communities developed by New Mexico Highlands University provides primary data and complements the BLM's assessment, inventory, and monitoring (AIM) strategy. The AIM strategy seeks to develop vegetation management plans using modeling with data collected via remote sensing techniques. The project is ongoing; Highlands' classification of over 250,000 acres in the Carrizo and upper Largo drainages will likely be available in December 2013.

Restoration Projects and the Sikes Act—John Hensen

Sikes Act funding is another way in which the BLM conducts restoration projects and builds and maintains habitat improvement projects. The presentation, accompanied by a PowerPoint, detailed where funding comes from, how it is used, how federal and other funds are leveraged to increase the effectiveness of programs, and what kinds of programs and funding FFO anticipates for the near future.

Sikes funds are generated by the Habitat Stamp Program (HSP). One-third of all HSP funds are set aside for statewide competition of landscape-derived proposals; the remaining two-thirds goes to regional and maintenance projects. Beginning in 2014, funding will be based on administrated acres; because FFO administers 88.3 percent of the northwest area, funding will be 88.3 percent of the northwest area's base. A citizens advisory committee reviews project proposals. The agency has one year to complete an approved project using their own funding, for which it is reimbursed.

FFO currently maintains 174 projects, mostly wildlife waterers. Maintenance of existing structures is a major effort and costs run to about \$190,000 per year. Over a dozen projects are proposed for FY 14-15, including wells, guzzlers, and burning and harrowing projects.

FFO Bare Soil Reclamation Procedure—Barney Wegener

This procedure was developed as a collaboration between FFO and industry representatives through a series of meetings/workshops/sessions between July 2011 and February 2013. It resulted from a desire to develop a process that would not only revegetate bare soil, but also is not arbitrary and is reproducible. The procedure applies to all programs, all project proponents, and all permit applications. It establishes performance-based minimum requirements for vegetation reclamation success, procedures to revegetate bare mineral soil, monitoring requirements, and data storage and sharing requirements. The procedure went into effect on February 5, 2013. The following bullet points, taken from the PowerPoint presentation, summarize the procedure:

- Applies to all programs and all actions authorized by FFO
- Applies to all actions authorized on surface lands managed by FFO
- Does not apply to private, state, or tribal lands
- Establishes revegetation standards that fulfill the productivity objective of FFO and contribute to the stability of the site
- Establishes 3 revegetation procedures:
 - A. Bare soil from 0.1 to <1 acre (new authorization)
 - B. Bare soil \geq 1 acre (new authorization)
 - C. Bare soil > 0.1 acre (new authorization on existing

permit)

- Requires a site-specific revegetation plan for actions resulting in more than 0.1 acre of bare soil.
- Establishes monitoring and documentation requirements for all actions resulting in > 1 acre of bare soil.
- Requires attainment of percent foliar vegetation standards before final abandonment or relinquishment of permits that resulted in > than 0.1 acre of bare soil.

Appendix A applies to oil and gas activities. It is the surface use plan of operation (SUPO) procedure that defines the FFO and the operator's monitoring responsibilities as established by CFR and other regulation regarding the authorization of oil and gas exploration and production.

Appendix B is the rights-of-way plan of development (ROW POD) procedure that defines field office-specific expectations for a complete ROW application including requirements for a complete POD. ROW differs in that BLM is assigned a number of responsibilities under CFR.

Discussion

Kathy McKim: Under the SUPO portion of the procedure, if a well is overcome with noxious weeds, what happens? Barney Wegener: Past authorizations are not covered by this procedure; existing facilities are covered by other processes in CFR.

The RAC discussed how the procedure might apply to some activities in the GRRRA, specifically trails, the open area, and wells and access roads. The discussion also touched on disturbances over and under 1 acre in size and what requirements apply.

Evert Oldham noted that since discussion had returned to the GRRRA, it should be noted that the Glade Run will alleviate pressure on other land. He further noted that motorized recreational use constitutes a level of use equal to industrial impact, yet it doesn't seem to be considered that way. He suggested that idea that motorized use is "recreational" perhaps ought to change. Those who create the impact ought to pay for reclamation.

Motions to Amend Agenda

Kellie Campbell made a motion to move the informational presentation on mineral leasing to tomorrow afternoon. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Chairman McKim asked if anyone was present for the presentation of the overview of the San Juan Basin Energy Connect transmission line, which was also on the agenda for this afternoon. There being no affirmative response, a motion to move that presentation to tomorrow afternoon was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Other RAC Business

The RAC allocated time to discuss matters pertaining to budget, based on a suggestion from Evert Oldham to have an open discussion with management about being as efficient as possible given the economic realities of the time. In response to a question, BLM noted that budget money allocated for RAC travel is not in question; it will not be cut. Moreover, it is not a major expense. BLM personnel costs for each RAC meeting are of greater concern. Suggestions to reduce costs included: reduce the number of RAC meetings; stagger BLM staff into meetings so that less time is charged to RAC; have the visiting field office come for one day only; initiate "value evaluating", i.e., when the RAC requests an agenda item, BLM could talk about what the costs of that item might be.

Meeting adjourned at 4:01 p.m. on a motion made by Myke Lane.

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Day 2
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RAC Members Present:

Keith Ashmore (Category 3) (p.m. only)
Anthony Benson (Category 3)
Kellie Campbell (Category 1)
Betty Haagenstad (Category 2)
Barbara Kiipper (Category 2)
Myke Lane (Category 1)
Kathy McKim (Category 3)
Evert Oldham (Category 2)
Mario Ulibarri (Category 1)
Nickie Vigil

BLM Staff Present:

Sam DesGeorges, TFO
Gary Torres, FFO
Janelle Alleman, FFO
Pat Pacheco, TFO
Dale Wirth, FFO
Jim Copeland, FFO
Marcy Romero, FFO
Scott Hall, FFO
Maureen Joe, FFO
Brian Deaton, FFO
Geoffrey Haymes, FFO
Bill Papich, FFO

Visitors Present:

Harvey Haagenstad
Martha Brown
Allen Christy
Kristin Langenfeld, Scribe

February 21 Morning Session (8:30-noon)

RAC Chair Kathy McKim called the meeting to order 8:32 a.m.

Motion to Amend Agenda

RAC members reviewed the agenda. Barbara Kiipper moved to adjust the agenda to move the San Juan Basin Energy Connect transmission line overview to 9 a.m., to be followed by the informational presentation on mineral leasing. Motion seconded by Kellie Campbell; passed unanimously.

RAC Discussion of Public Comment Period

The public comment period for this RAC meeting is scheduled from 1:30-2:30 today. Regarding the public comment period, Chairman McKim noted that it is for members of the public to talk to the RAC, not to the BLM staff. The comment period is not for questions and answers. Bill Papich noted that three people had requested to comment by phone. The RAC discussed how long each person should be allowed to speak, how the public can get answers to questions that they have, how the public should be made aware that there are other mechanisms by which to comment than just this public period with the RAC.

Motion Regarding Public Comment Protocols

Myke Lane moved to follow the existing sign-in protocol, limit an individual speaker to 5 minutes, and to disallow questions and answers. Second by Barbara Kiipper. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Spanish Trail—Jim Copeland

This is a National Historic Trail, used between 1829-48 for commerce, with pack animals (no wagons) carrying goods between northern New Mexico with southern California. The trail has several routes: the Armijo Route is in FFO; the North Branch runs through TFO. No New Mexico portions of the trail are on the National Register. The trail itself is established and known in some areas and ambiguous in others. There are no known visible traces of the route in FFO. Attempts to identify the trail (mostly in Largo Canyon) have been unsuccessful, perhaps because it was only used by Armijo—the North Branch seems to have been preferred. Because wagons were not used on the trail, metal detector surveys are less likely to be successful in finding evidence of a trail with little or no on-the-ground traces. Intensive block survey was also unsuccessful.

There are several other trails in FFO, including the Moss Trail, which runs from Largo to Ensenada Mesa and was used to move livestock. Navajo rock art along this trail suggests that it is an older feature. Another type of trail is exemplified by the North Road, a regional Anasazi feature in the San Juan Basin that is visible in many places and which can often be identified along projected routes by intensive survey and artifact identification.

In answer to a question from Mario Ulibarri, Jim Copeland said that there was only one known trip on the Armijo Route. The route's importance comes from the fact that Armijo's journey established that the trip could be made.

Myke Lane asked how trails/routes of this type affect the evaluation of proposed projects; is there a visual impact component? Jim Copeland answered that the evaluation depends on the extent of previous development. Within a project, the trails are identified in EAs and cultural resource surveys. Local archaeologists have the GIS information on the Old Spanish Trail available to them.

San Juan Basin Energy Connect (SJBEC) Transmission Line—Scott Hall, Marcy Romero

Marcy Romero, Project Manager, provided background and history of the SJBEC, a 230-kV, 65-mile-long line from the Western Area Power Authority station in Waterflow to the Iron Horse substation in Ignacio. The customer base will be the oil and gas industry in Ignacio. The NEPA process began in 2008; construction is to begin in 2015, with a 2016 completion date. At this point in the process BLM is not scoping for new issues. Rather the interest is in public comment.

Discussion

Kellie Campbell complimented Tri-State for coming out early to get public input when they started the project.

Evert Oldham asked about the economic impact of the project. Scott Hall answered that the impact would be primarily during the construction phase. To this point the only impact has been associated with the environmental and cultural resource studies.

In answer to a question about revenues derived from transmission lines, Scott Hall noted that there are rental fees to recoup time put in on the project. Sam DesGeorges added that there is some franchise tax.

Mineral Leasing—Dave Mankiewicz

This informational presentation began with a summary of the history of leasing from 1872 through the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and the 1987 Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act, which states that oral bid auctions are to be held in each BLM state office at least quarterly. As of 2012, some 5,000,000 acres of land in NM were under lease; this is down from 9,000,000 leased acres in 1988. Forty-three new leases were issued during the year, compared to over 900 new leases in 1988. In the San Juan Basin, leased acreage has stayed below about 250,000 acres since the 1950s. The period 1946-1950 showed a huge spike, to over 900,000 leased acres in the basin alone; this was a direct result of the El Paso Natural Gas Pipeline that was built during that time.

Much of the remainder of the presentation covered aspects of leasing onshore Federal oil and natural gas resources, which happens in primarily two phases: 1. land use planning; 2. parcel nomination and lease sales. The process applies only to hydrocarbons, not to coal leasing.

The BLM Field Office prepares comprehensive land use plans (RMPs) to provide management decisions and actions and allowable uses on BLM public lands. The RMP determines what lands are open and closed to leasing. Parcels in areas identified as “open for leasing” in an RMP may be nominated for leasing. There are a number of steps in the nominating process, which begins with an expression of interest (EOI), an informal nomination to request certain lands be included in a competitive oil and gas lease sale.

The leasing process takes about 8 months, during which time the field office reviews the parcels under consideration, consults with tribes, presents recommendations, reviews public comments, prepares draft and final EAs and FONSI. Once a parcel is leased, a rental fee is due and must be paid whether the lease is in production or not. Royalties are paid on all oil and gas produced. The federal government shares royalties with state governments.

Discussion

In answer to a comment from Anthony Benson, Dave Mankiewicz acknowledged that the process has slowed down in the past several years because the protocols are stringent and take time.

The RAC discussed prior rights as they apply to coal gas exploration and development, as well as some aspects of the EIS for the Mancos shale and horizontal drilling.

Myke Lane noted that holding acreage by production (that is, the need to drill in order to maintain a lease) discourages diligent development. He suggested that the BLM consider other mechanisms to allow companies to hold leases until sufficient infrastructure for development is in place.

In answer to a question from Barbara Kiipper, Dave Mankiewicz said that if there is no competitive bid, an individual may hold a lease for up to 10 years without development.

Update on TFO Transportation Planning—Sam DesGeorges

Transportation planning is a requirement of the Taos RMP, which was approved in May 2012. Because it is necessary to inventory before planning, a route inventory in the Onate area is

underway. This was previously an ORV open area that has been changed to designated routes only, in no small part because of identified cultural and religious sites of importance to the Okay Owingeh. The Onate area has a spider web of old, sponsored routes, and other routes come out of backyards in Chimayo. Over 410 miles with 1,800 segments have been identified to date. An interdisciplinary team will evaluate the routes and will solicit public input. The process will be complex as all options for each segment are reviewed. Moreover, route information on adjacent land statuses is still missing; that information could influence final decisions.

Proposed Monument for Northern Rio Grand Taos Plateau—Sam DesGeorges

This short presentation described the proposed Rio Grande Del Norte National Conservation Area, the name proposed for the area known as the Taos Plateau ACEC. The conservation area proposal is a congressional effort introduced by U.S. Senator Jeff Bingaman. BLM testified in favor of the conservation area. There is a move by local supporters (including chambers of commerce, county commissioners, and landowners) to have the President use his power under the Antiquities Act to designate the monument. The proposed conservation area is 225,000 acres and includes some state land but has no significant private in-holdings. The most recent proposal would allow all current uses to continue, but would preclude oil and gas and new mineral development, and no new transmission lines would be allowed. Unlike an RMP, which can be amended, a congressional designation is comparatively set in stone. Language of the act would determine who manages the conservation area after its designation.

Discussion

Mario Ulibarri: What do permittees think of this proposal? Sam DesGeorges: Many are in favor of it.

Evert Oldham: Will flexibility of adaptive management be lost with the designation? Referring to his earlier comments, Sam DesGeorges noted that it depends on the language of the act.

Additional discussion included: the oil and gas potential of TFO; cultural resources of the area, including Comanche rock art and an Archaic movement corridor through the area to the San Luis Valley in Colorado.

Cerro del A Fire—Pat Pacheco

The purpose of this presentation was to introduce the RAC to the Cerro del A Fire, describe the TFO's experience in managing fire for multiple objectives for resource benefit, and explore the benefits of managing in a proactive vs. reactive manner.

The Cerro del A fire in the TFO started on July 17, 2012 as a result of lightning. It was a fuel bed-driven fire that ultimately involved multiple jurisdictions (state, private, and federal). The area where the fire occurred had been planned for a prescribed burn, so a number of factors had already been evaluated; these were weighed again and the decision was made to let the fire go.

A PowerPoint of the fire's movement over time, and of the conditions on the ground and in the air was accompanied by several short videos of particular situations during the course of the fire. Currently, less than 2 percent of wildfires across the U.S. are managed for multiple objectives as the Cerro del A fire was managed. It burned for 85 days and affected 675 acres. The ultimate cost of the fire was calculated at \$187.03/acre.

With regard to future, the forests in New Mexico are rapidly becoming as big a liability as they historically have been an asset. In the last ten years, \$89,000,000 in suppression costs have been

incurred in New Mexico. Wildfires in the West are fewer in number but larger in size. Fire suppression is very expensive; however, the more acres involved in the fire, the lower the cost. There is increased consideration of proactive approaches, of which prescribed burns and mastication are examples. The advantages and disadvantages of these approaches depend in part on the geographic area under consideration.

February 21 Afternoon Session (1:00-3:30 p.m.)

Motion to Amend Agenda

Given that the meeting was running behind schedule, Mario Ulibarri motioned to move the Inspection and Enforcement presentation, scheduled for 1-1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., the slot following the public comment period. Second by Myke Lane. Motion passed unanimously.

Navajo Land Exchange—Maureen Joe

This presentation was an update on a land exchange project previously presented to the RAC. The Navajo Exchange Legislative Initiative (NELI) is currently in phase 4 and being addressed at the Washington level. While this is going on, BLM has continued with their desire to work on the ground with small groups of Navajo tribal members who have been identified as being in “unauthorized occupancy.” In many cases this occupancy is the result of inaccurate legal surveys in the past. It is also partially a function of the varying land statuses in the checkerboard area of the eastern Navajo Reservation. Regardless of the source of the error, people find that their homesites are located on nonIndian lands. Navajos whose homes that are not on tribal lands cannot receive utilities through the tribe. The identification of family clusters in unauthorized occupancy has been ongoing. The most recent work has identified seven clusters north of Chaco, with the remainder north of I-40 and Prewitt.

The current BLM proposal identifies 15 family-unit clusters. Each cluster would be given 160 acres, for a total of 2,560 acres. (Tables of legal descriptions of the properties and maps showing their locations were provided.) In exchange, the BLM would acquire PLO 2198 lands on the eastern side of Chacra Mesa that contain significant cultural and visual resources.

Discussion

Gary Torres noted that this land exchange is completely independent of the NELI. It aims to assist a small group of families. It is an administrative solution proposed by BLM. The land around Chacra Mesa was selected by BLM because there has been a desire among environmental groups to protect that landscape.

Mario Ulibarri asked where the NELI came from. BLM answered that in 1909 President Theodore Roosevelt granted allotments via an executive order. Sometime later, President Taft took back these lands. This is the source of the NELI.

In answer to a question from Myke Lane, Gary Torres stated that the deliverable the BLM seeks, when the time comes, is a letter of support from the RAC.

Public Comment Period 1:30-2:30

The following is a summary of the comments received by the RAC during a public comment period. Three comments came via phone, and these were heard first. Two additional comments came from people in attendance.

1. Mary Whiteman called in from Mora County, New Mexico. She requested that she be given information on how to access the webcast (for clarification see RAC discussion below). She stated she opposes exploratory drilling and fracing above what is currently taking place. There have been many negative experiences. If any additional oil and gas development is proposed, it should be proceeded by well publicized public hearings.
2. Laura Harper called in concerning wild horses. Would like to see the implementation of strategies to do small-scale captures, where horses trickle in to the system. Does not want helicopter chase/round-up/gather every six years. She expressed thanks to the RAC and to Angela Yemma and Jeff Tafoya of the BLM.
3. Diane called in from Las Vegas, New Mexico. She said her comments would concern the environment that we create, and she spoke against any new oil and gas development, including re-drilling. She had four points to make:
 - a. We are getting lackadaisical about how we deal with oil and gas drilling.
 - b. Extraction contributes to global warming.
 - c. Fracing combines millions of gallons of fresh water with poisonous chemicals. We don't have much water. Wildlife has to use contaminated water.
 - d. Drilling poisons the air.

The Committee for Clean Water, Air, and Earth in Las Vegas recommends a moratorium on fracing and an EPA study of the process.

4. Linda Horn addressed the RAC in person concerning wild horses. The BLM is serving too many masters when it come to the care of the horses. Do we owe the wild horses more? Does the government want to manage these horses? The 1971 act says yes. The wild horses thrived for a time but their range is now valuable for other things and the horses are taking a back seat. Birth control has been introduced as a management tool, but what next? Logical Solutions to Wild Horse Problems (Facebook) has answers. She will provide a copy of those solutions. Managers need to be open to new ideas.
5. Paula King addressed the RAC in person concerning wild horses (she gave handouts to the RAC members). She thanked the BLM and RAC for the opportunity to speak and introduced herself as a wild horse advocate concerned about federally protected wild horse herds. She asked if members of the RAC were familiar with the Cloud series presented on PBS. She went on to speak about Ginger Kathrens (who she called the Jane Goodall of wild horses), the Cloud series, and the Cloud Foundation. She stated that the handout that she had provided has Ginger Kathrens comments on the following:
 - a. The EA's statement that the proposed action will not impact the herd.
 - b. BLM's out-of-hand rejection of thoughtful responses if they are not specific to the goal given in a proposed action.
 - c. The belief that helicopter gathers don't stress the horses.

(At this point in her comments, Chairman McKim informed Ms. King that her time was up).

In closing, Paula King noted that it takes courage to get outside the box. There are volunteers who would help.

(The RAC asked Ms King for a copy of her comments, which were in written form and requested that she post to the RAC website).

Discussion of Public Comment Period

(Note: this discussion took place later in the day, after the presentation on Inspection and Enforcement. It is presented here in the notes, because some of the comments deal directly with statements made during the public comment period.)

Kellie Campbell noted that the first person to comment (Mary Whiteman) appeared to be under the impression that there was a webcast that she could access. She should be told that there is no webcast. Gary Torres said he would send her an email to let her know there is nothing like that. Kellie Campbell asked that he also give her the RAC's website address.

Betty Haagenstad said that the RAC needed to review the structure of the public comment period—twice people have left angry. Her statement was followed by some suggestions on how to improve the public comment period, with the idea being that RAC members could go home and think about it. Mario Ulibarri said that people need to know coming in how much time is allowed for a public comment. Gary Torres noted that people need to understand the purpose of the RAC meeting; this meeting is an example of one where a lot of information is presented to the RAC. Evert Oldham suggested that in the future, time should be set aside on the agenda for the RAC to work on/talk about these kinds of things. He suggested that take place near the end of the first day. He stated that people who want to comment need to know the rules in advance. Barbara Kiipper agreed, saying the public needs to know the policies and procedures for the meetings up front. Nickie Vigil added that the public could preregister and be given a copy of RAC meeting rules at that time.

Inspection and Enforcement—Herman Lujan and Virgil Lucero

The BLM's inspection and enforcement programs seek to ensure protection of surface and subsurface environments; ensure that production is properly handled, accurately measured, and correctly reported; reduce the BLM's liability by ensuring that the health and safety of the public is protected; conserve resources with regard to oil and gas activities on federal lands. FFO is responsible for a total of 29 federal inspectors who are certified in six modules.

One reason for the presentation of this information to the RAC was to respond to some of the statements found in a 2013 update to a report entitled *Law and Order in the Oil and Gas Fields* published by the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). BLM wanted to present their side of the story to the RAC. The PowerPoint that guided the presentation took comments and recommendations from the 2013 WORC report and used either federal or FFO data and statistics to demonstrate the ways in which FFO currently either meets or exceeds the WORC recommendations/recommended standards. The presentation included a checklist that is used by inspectors.

Discussion

The RAC discussed what the inspections consist of. This led to a conversation about incidents of noncompliance (INCs), what constitutes a major INC, and what INCs mean to industry. BLM noted that they have a presentation geared to operators to help them avoid INCs. Myke Lane asked if BLM does a similar presentation for the San Juan College School of Energy. BLM responded that they have explored the possibility but it doesn't seem to work. With regard to INCs and notices of violation (NOVs), BLM's objective is not to fine but to change the behavior

that led to the INC. Industry representatives noted that INCs are bad for public relations and they affect a company's ability to get a permit.

Kellie Campbell asked how many wells had repeat inspections. BLM responded that each well is inspected every three years unless there is a sundry notice or if a well is INCed. INCed wells are reinspected.

Keith Ashmore asked if FFO's plan for well inspections, as discussed in the presentation, set a national standard. Dave Mankiewicz answered yes, and noted that FFO does not have the greatest number of wells.

The RAC discussed how a well goes into production.

RAC Business

The RAC had some suggestions as to how to set future agendas in order to achieve goals. These include:

- Allow 10-15 min for discussion of each presentation/program
- Build time into the agenda for question and answer periods
- Have less topics per meeting and more time per topic
- Structure presentations like executive summaries
- Include less detail in presentations
- Include bubble topics; topics that could be cut
- Make clear in advance what BLM is looking for with a topic and then tailor the time to the expected result
- List deliverables on the agenda

Next Meeting

The next meeting should be held in June. Dates will be determined via email among RAC members and BLM.

Meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m. on a motion made by Kellie Campbell.