

BLM Colorado Northwest Resource Advisory Council
December 6, 2018
Minutes

Attendance

Category 1

Jeff Comstock, Kirk Daehling, David Ludlam, Wes McStay, Scott Robertson

Category 2

Carl Conner, Connor Coleman, Joe Newhart, Mike Pritchard

Category 3

Don Cook, Callie Hendrickson, Tom Jankovsky

BLM

Andrew Archuleta, Gloria Tibbetts, Lauren Brown, Bruce Sillitoe, Bill Mills, Bridget Clayton, Diane Mastin, David Boyd, Ben Smith, Jessica Lopez Pearce, Monte Senor

Public

Barbara Vasquez; Soren Jespersen, The Wilderness Society; Holy McClain, Roaring Fork Horse Council; Hogan Peterson, Senator Gardner's office; Mary Steinbrecher, Glenwood Springs Citizen's Alliance; Shawn Brennan, Terra Energy Partners

A quorum is present. Meeting called to order at 8 a.m. Mike Pritchard is chair following the resignation of former chair Barbara Vasquez.

RAC 101

Northwest District Public Affairs Specialist David Boyd presented Powerpoint going over basics of Resource Advisory Councils. Answers to follow-up questions:

The public needs to know they are addressing the RAC not BLM when they give comments. They can ask questions during the comment period. RAC members should need engage in debate or challenge the public, but it is ok to ask clarifying questions. New language was added to the charter by the Secretary regarding areas where advice from the RACs would be particularly helpful, but that it doesn't limit what topics the RAC can discuss (except personnel issues and specific budget discussions)

RAC members discussed statewide RAC meetings and felt they were helpful if they agenda items were meaningful and things that BLM really wanted advice.

Wild horses – Northwest District Wild Horse Specialist Ben Smith gave a Powerpoint about current status of wild horses nationally and in Colorado. David Boyd went over a hand-out listing past actions taken by the NW RAC about wild horses.

After discussion the NW RAC members agreed to work on a resolution about wild horse management to bring to the next meeting for consideration.

Public comments

Soren Jespersen, The Wilderness Society – I want to talk about RAC protocols. I have been coming to meetings for years now. I like that there are all different groups involved and to hear comments. Zinke is going backwards. His NEPA streamlining has cut the public out. The RAC should look for opportunities to be there for the public.

Holly McClain, Roaring Fork Horse Council – I don't know much about wild horse issue. Interesting ideas. Horses that are in holding, perhaps they can be used for people? They are healing and maybe can be used for youth or prisons. People that are in jeopardy of going the wrong way. Some of the mustangs have genetics that go to the Spanish and native Americans. I would like to see that they be protected. Feel bad that thoroughbred horses are ending up in a can and not for what their purpose is. We need to find some benefit for those horses that are in holding.

Barbra Vasquez former NW RAC chair – I resigned from the RAC out of frustration that the meetings were shut down. Congratulates that the meetings have begun again. Opportunity to comment on things like oil and gas leases has been shortened and I am interested in having the public and RAC learn if the 30 day comment period will stay. Gov Hickenlooper comment that the game habitat. RAC is this going to be formalized for the industry and wildlife mitigation.

Mary Steinbrecker, Glenwood Springs Citizen's Alliance – Glad to see in the field manager report for the Colorado River Valley Field Office this update on the quarry expansion near Glenwood Springs. We formed the group to educate and empower the public in regard to issues about our health and economic health. RMR, the company that wants to expand the mine, bought old midcontinent quarry in 2016. Previously the permit was for 15.7 acres and the proposal is for 800 acres and to increase truck traffic to 350 trucks from the current 20 trucks per day. The trucks would drive down county access road and highways, around lots of tourist areas to the rail corridor. Proposal to load rail cars 24-7. There is a lot of concern from the citizens and community. We have found out that RMR is not in compliance with current permit. Under their 1870 mining law permit they can mine limestone. But they are mining rock, boulders and materials other than limestone. They should be making reimbursements to BLM and community. That is one issue that needs to be addressed. Permitted for 15.7 acres and appears they are on 17 to 20 acres. Our hope is this RAC group can take into consideration and look into this. Hope there is good oversight to ensure they are compliant. Purpose of being here is to make the NW RAC aware of this. Glenwood Springs does not need to be stamped as a mining community.

David Ludlam – This is my last meeting. I am glad to see Jeff back. When I look at the process the RAC has for voting and making decisions, it's quite the process and I am a little dismayed at how long it takes to make decisions for changes. Powerful members need to look at taking action for quicker decision making. RAC should take more action and have less protocol.

Land Tenure Presentation

Colorado State Office Land Tenure Lead Monte Senor gave a Powerpoint presentation RAC to discuss policy on acquisitions and following county plans at a future meeting.

Saleable and Locatable Minerals

Jessica Lopez Pearce gave a Powerpoint presentation.

Fire Mitigation Letter

Connor Coleman presented a draft letter resulting from last year's meeting. RAC members discussed and made edits to the draft.

Connor made motion to adopt
Scott 2nd motion
Motion Approved for letter regarding fire

Elections

Tom moves Mike be chairman
Carl and Wes 2nd motion to move Mike as chairman.
Motion Approved unanimously

Don motioned that Jeff be vice chair no 2nd moved
Jeff has declined and moved Callie be co-chair.
Mike 2nd for Callie to be co-chair.
Callie accepted
Motion approved unanimously

District and Field Manager Updates

Northwest District, Andrew Archuleta

Greater Sage Grouse EISs – Final Environmental Impact Statements analyzing revisions to BLM Greater Sage Grouse plans across the West will be released soon, which will initiate a 30-day protest period as well as the Governor's consistency review. The Record of Decisions will follow. The comment period for the Draft EISs closed in August. Comments on the Draft EISs are now available, subdivided by state, on the [the range-wide NOI ePlanning page](#). While the revisions of the plans continue, compliance with the existing plans continues as BLM processes applications for permits to drill (APDs), rights-of way, and other projects. Projects that benefit sage-grouse can come from various programs, so BLM evaluates them through an integrated

program of work, refining the process for prioritizing projects based on previous year's information, including monitoring.

Bridget – sage Grouse plan amendment will be published in fed register tomorrow. 30 day protest period and 60 concurrent governor review. Colorado did a narrow amendment. Had to go back to look at mitigation. Added new items per counties. Integrated program of work. Habitat restoration on a large landscape scale. Prioritize across field offices. Trying to be sure to look across field office for priorities. Try and look at each population.

Jamie Connell named new state director – Former Northwest Colorado District Manager and Designated Federal Office for the NW RAC Jamie Connell is the new Colorado State Director. Jamie most recently was the State Director in Oregon/Washington, and prior to that the Montana State Director. She served as the Glenwood Spring Field Manager during the original Roan Plateau RMP Amendment effort, and was instrumental in getting the Glenwood Springs Energy Office underway. She is a strong proponent of RACs.

Northwest District Oil and Gas Update -- Applications for permit to drill (APDs) on the Western Slope continue to be processed by the consolidated oil and gas offices in the Northwest District.. The Colorado River Valley Field Office processes its APDs, plus those of the Grand Junction and Uncompahgre field offices. The White River Field Office processes its APDs plus those of the Little Snake and Kremmling field offices.

NWD Fire FY 18 319 fires
number of acres was a higher than past.
200,000,000 gallons fire retardant put on ground.
Craig and GJ put out over 300,000 resource orders. Program evaluation end of January.

White River Field Office, Lauren Brown

Buffalo Horn Land Exchange – Public comment period on the draft environmental assessment was completed in June, and the field office posted the 84 public comments received on-line. Twenty-nine people attended a public meeting in May. The BLM anticipates a final decision in summer or fall 2019, and is currently awaiting appraisals from the Department of the Interior Office of Evaluation Services. The EA looked at three alternatives. Alternative A is the original proposal announced for the public scoping period in December 2016, where the BLM would acquire three parcels totaling 4,036 acres in exchange for 16 isolated parcels of BLM lands totaling 3,806 acres. The preferred alternative, Alternative B, would convey 14 parcels of Federal lands totaling approximately 2,815 acres in Rio Blanco and Moffat counties for one non-Federal parcel in Rio Blanco County totaling 1,835 acres. The BLM modified the proposal for this alternative to address concerns heard during public scoping about existing hunting access on public parcels and existing surface use agreements on private land. Alternative C is the no action alternative in which no lands are exchanged. The BLM only conducts land exchanges if they are determined to be in the public's interest.

Piceance Mustangs partners with BLM -- Piceance Mustangs signed an MOU with BLM in April 2018, which formalizes the partnership to help manage wild horses in the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area. Between April 2017 and October 2018, volunteers from the group have worked 2,730 volunteer hours. This summer the group scheduled a work day each month. They used funds from a \$10,000 donation from the Rifle-based Clough Family Foundation to work with livestock grazing permittees to redevelop several water well resources that wild horses, wildlife and cattle can use. The group has built and repaired boundary fencing, removal of old, unnecessary fencing (to the benefit of wild horses, livestock and wildlife), completed a spring restoration project, and staffed information and educational booths at the Range Call Celebration, Sheepdog Trials and Fall Craft Show in Meeker. The group made wreaths and barbed wire swags from some of the barbed wire they removed for display and received around \$1,000 in donations for their wares (some of the barbed wire was more than 100 years old).

Area Travel Designations anticipated to be complete in summer 2019 – In August the field office released a preliminary environmental assessment detailing four alternatives for travel area designations across the 1.5 million-acre field office. The field office is currently working with several other field offices in Colorado on a programmatic agreement for cultural consultations with SHPO and tribes. A decision on this EA covering area designations will follow completion of the agreement and is anticipated in summer of 2019. The next step will be route-by-route travel designations.

Colorado River Valley Field Office, Gloria Tibbetts

Quarry planning expansion outside Glenwood Springs -- The Colorado River Valley Field Office anticipates receiving a major plan of operation modification proposal from RMR Aggregates Inc., which operates a 22-acre limestone quarry adjacent to Glenwood Springs. RMR purchased the quarry in late 2016. The proposed expansion may include more than 300 acres of disturbance and over 250 truck trips per day (currently around 20 per day). Their current operation covers approximately 20 acres across six mining claims. RMR Aggregates holds 41 mining claims totaling approximately 820 acres in the area. Because of its visibility from Glenwood Springs, the project is highly controversial. The field office will begin a public review process and environmental review (EA or EIS) after it receives the formal proposal and deems it complete.

Sutey Ranch Management Plan nearing completion -- The Colorado River Valley Field Office recently completed a 30-day public comment period on its draft management plan environmental assessment for the Sutey and Haines parcels acquired in March 2017 through the Sutey Ranch Land Exchange. The planning effort will result in an amendment to the approved CRV Resource Management Plan. The field office received 212 public comments on the draft. The 557-acre Sutey Ranch parcel includes high wildlife value and high potential for recreation. The 112-acre Haines parcel is popular with mountain bikers in particular. The draft looked at three alternatives for the Sutey parcel: one that emphasized wildlife and hunting, one that emphasized equestrian use, and one that emphasized mountain biking. The final plan, which is expected to be released in January, can incorporate elements of multiple alternatives.

Colorado River Valley Field Office beginning campground fee proposal process – The Colorado River Valley Field Office will release a draft business plan for public review as an initial step to modifying its campground fee structure. Currently, only two of its six campgrounds charge fees for camping - \$10 per night. Under the proposal, all six campgrounds would charge \$20 per night for camping, and a new \$5 day-use fee would be charged at the popular Wolcott boat ramp on the Eagle River. The fees are needed to fund the necessary maintenance and improvements at these facilities. Following the public comment period, the field office will present the proposal to the State and Washington offices. Recreation fee increases must also be approved by the Northwest Resource Advisory Council, which will consider the proposal at a future meeting in 2019. Before implementing any new recreation fees, an additional Federal Register Notice announcing the change will be published. If approved, the field office anticipates implementing the new fees in the summer of 2020.

Kremmling Field Office, Bill Mills

Blue Valley Land Exchange evaluation nearly complete -- The final EIS for the Blue Valley Land Exchange is expected in the coming months. Under the proposed land exchange, the BLM would trade nine parcels totaling 1,489 acres in Grand County for nine parcels totaling 1,832 acres of mostly private lands in Grand and Summit counties. The BLM is conducting the EIS to determine whether the exchange is in the public's interest to complete and what the potential impacts of the exchange would be. The exchange could increase public access and increase publicly-held big game winter range, while the proponent would consolidate its holdings. Approximately 300 acres of the 1,832 acres gained by the public would be acquired by the U.S. Forest Service, with the remainder going to BLM. More than half of the BLM acreage (792 acres) that would be exchanged is surrounded by private land and has no public access. The majority of other BLM lands being considered for exchange are small, isolated parcels that receive little public use.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Summit County and Grand County have issued letters supporting the exchange.

Draft Colorado River Recreation Plan to be released -- The Kremmling Field Office will release a Draft Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) for the Colorado River between Parshall and State Bridge for a 30-day public review and comment period in the coming weeks. The RAMP addresses alternatives to better manage increasing use in the area, which sees more than 90,000 float-boaters and anglers each season. Alternatives include adding unlimited day-use permits, expanding a developed campground and designating river campsites. The NW RAC reviewed the preliminary alternatives at its December 2017 meeting.

Kremmling working with multiple agencies on forest health -- The Kremmling Field Office is working with Colorado State Forest Service under a five-year Good Neighbor Cooperative Agreement. The agreement allows agencies to work across differing ownership and boundary jurisdictions on forest health projects to make forests more defensible from catastrophic wildfire, reduce diseased and hazardous trees, and improve public health and safety. The field office has two active sales under the agreement, and three additional joint projects will be completed this year. In addition, the BLM, Colorado State Forest, U.S. Forest Service and public landowners are

coming together to collaborate for two upcoming forest health projects where we will collaborate across multiple jurisdictional boundaries to create healthy and resilient forests. In addition to the Good neighbor projects, the field office currently has nine active salvage sales to harvest diseased trees following the Bark Beetle Strategic Plan of 2012. The field office anticipates cutting on more than 500 acres in fiscal year 2019.

Ancient crocodile fossils excavated -- In October, paleontologists from Paleo Solutions excavated prehistoric crocodile and turtle bones discovered on BLM land in the Kremmling Field Office. The fossils are approximately 50 to 60 million years old, discovered in the summer of 2017 during a 3D geophysical investigation to locate oil in the North Park Basin. Prior to any surface-disturbing activity on BLM land, a cultural resource survey is required in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. A paleontological resource survey may be required under BLM policy, depending on the potential for paleontological resources in the area. The prehistoric fossils were transported to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science where they will be researched and protected. Several media outlets, including two Denver television channels, covered the excavation.

Little Snake Field Office, Bruce Sillitoe

BLM reviewing coal lease application -- The Little Snake Field Office released a draft Environmental Assessment for Peabody Twentymile Coal LLC's Coal Lease-by-Application for public review in November and held a public hearing in Craig Nov. 28. Peabody proposes expanding its Twentymile Coal Foidel Creek Mine near Hayden in Routt County by 640 acres. If approved, the lands in the LBA would be mined by underground methods with no surface disturbance. The tract is private surface (owned by Peabody) overlying federal coal. Peabody estimates it could recover 4.7 million tons of coal from this lease, generating approximately \$13 million in royalties, half of which would go to the State of Colorado. Peabody employs 366 people. The field office expects to have a final decision in the first half of 2019, which will be followed by an appeal period.

Partnerships lead to new trails on Cedar Mountain – The field office has partnered with MOCO Trails and Routt County Trail Riders to build nearly three miles of trail on the Cedar Mountain Special Recreation Area outside of Craig. This work is creating a popular trail system that is accessible when other, higher elevation areas are not. Additional trails are planned to be completed next year.

Sarvis Creek Cabin improvements underway – The field office hosted a successful National Public Lands Day event in September, with members from Back Country Hunters and Anglers, Yampa Valley Fly Fishers and Western Rivers Conservancy teaming up to remove and repair fencing, spread gravel on the parking lot, and assist with other minor improvements. The BLM acquired the historic cabin in 2015 from Western Rivers Conservancy as part of a Land and Water Conservation Fund acquisition of a 45-acre parcel that provides key public access to the Upper Yampa River below Stagecoach Reservoir. The cabin was built in 1956 by the Hubbard Family, who ranched in the valley for many years. The field office has contracted a number of repairs and improvements to be completed in the coming year. The eventual goal is to make the cabin available for public rental.

Travel management planning continues – The field office is undertaking a comprehensive, multi-year look at the roads and trails that it manages. The planning is being conducted over three separate management zones across the 1.3 million acre field office. Little Snake is one of several field offices taking part in a programmatic agreement with SHPO and tribes regarding travel management. Upon completion of this consultation, the field office will be ready to announce a decision for Travel Management Area 1, which includes Hiawatha, Vermillion Basin, Sand Wash and Bears Ears near Craig. The preliminary environmental assessment for Travel Management Inventory Area 2, which includes parts of the Powder Wash, Big Gulch, Seven Mile and Great Divide areas, is currently available for public review. Planning for TMA3, which includes Diamond Mountain, Browns Park, Cold Springs, Cross Mountain, Axial Basin, Williams Fork, and Elk Springs, continues following a public open house in April.

Public Comment

Soren – Fire Mitigation letter – to me there are bullets that are missing. Climate change. Fuels don't cause fires, idiots do. Fire bans are painful. I want to have a fire. We all need to help out in some way. I appreciate fire bans and I appreciate the partnerships. Target shooting has started a number of fires out here. 95% of fires have been started by humans. 4% were natural causes.

Proposed dates for future meetings:

April 24th and 25th in Meeker WRFO

June 12th and 13th Kremmling KFO

August 21st and 22nd Craig LSFO

December 4th and 5th Silt CRVFO