

**Northwest Resource Advisory Council**  
**December 7, 2017**  
**Clarion Inn, Craig, Colorado**

**Attendance**

Category 1

Scott Robertson, Wes McStay

Category 2

Carl Conner, Connor Coleman, Barbara Vasquez (phone), Mike Pritchard

Category 3

Tom Jankovsky

BLM

Andrew Archuleta, Alicia Austin Johnson, David Boyd, Kent Walter, Gloria Tibbetts, Bruce Sillitoe, Stephanie Odell (phone), Colt Mortenson, Isaac Pittman

Public

Brian Meinhart, Congressman Tipton's office; Shannon Wadas, Senator Bennet's Office; Betsy Bair, Senator Gardner's office; Cindy Wright, Wild Horse Warriors; Callie Hendrickson, White River and Douglas Creek conservation districts; Soren Jespersen, The Wilderness Society; Todd Wheeler, Moffat County Sheriff's Office; Jeff Comstock, Moffat County

Meeting called to order at 8:05 a.m. Andrew thanked the RAC members for attending and pointed out that while we do not have a quorum, BLM thought it important to meet in 2017 to help set the course for 2018 meetings.

Andrew acknowledged departing RAC members:

- Lanny Weddle, who served two terms on the RAC representing Jackson County and one term as public at large. He provided key representation from Jackson County and a unique perspective as a large animal veterinarian
- Jim Mattern, who served one term as a Category One representative of coal mining. His perspective from the coal industry was an important voice on the NW RAC
- Luke Schafer and Dean Riggs' terms also have expired. They are hoping to be re-appointed for another term, and we have not yet heard about 2017 appointments.

Andrew acknowledged Bruce Sillitoe and staff for an excellent field trip to the Sarvis Creek cabin, and thanked the RAC members who were able to attend. Sarvis Creek Cabin may be a fee proposal brought to the NW RAC in 2018. Andrew briefly reviewed the steps BLM follows before bringing a proposal to the RAC to consider for formal approval, based on earlier presentations to the NW RAC:

1. Field Office develops proposal including a detailed business plan
2. Field Office seeks public input (Field Office may share specifically with the RAC at this step just for initial feedback)
3. Field Office presents to State Director
4. Washington reviews
5. BLM forwards to RAC
6. RAC Coordinator Posts Notice in FRN and Local Paper at least one week prior to meeting
7. RAC reviews and makes a recommendation
8. BLM implements, modifies, or withdraws

If a new fee is approved, BLM needs to post in the FR and have a waiting period for at least 180 days

For a change to an existing fee, no Federal Register Notice is required

Chair Barbara Vasquez, who had the flu and was not able to make the meeting, told the group she was glad the RACs were meeting again and welcomed everybody back. She asked that disagreements among be aired in a civil manner, as the RAC has been doing for many years.

Vice Chair Mike Pritchard, who will lead the meeting, echoed Barbara's sentiments.

## **District and Field Manager updates**

### **Northwest District, Andrew Archuleta**

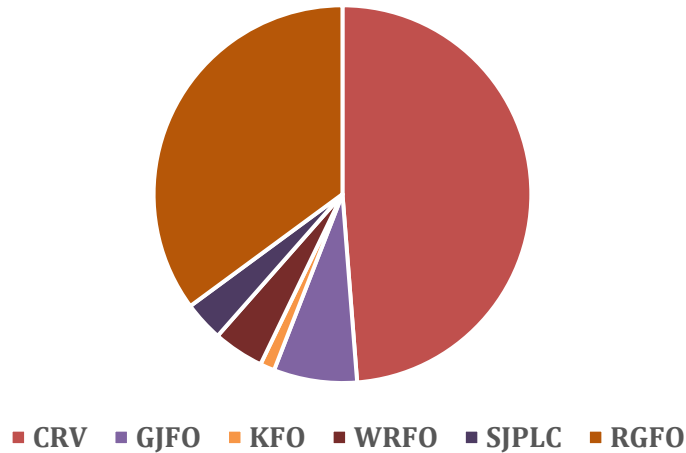
#### **Northwest Oil and Gas Updates**

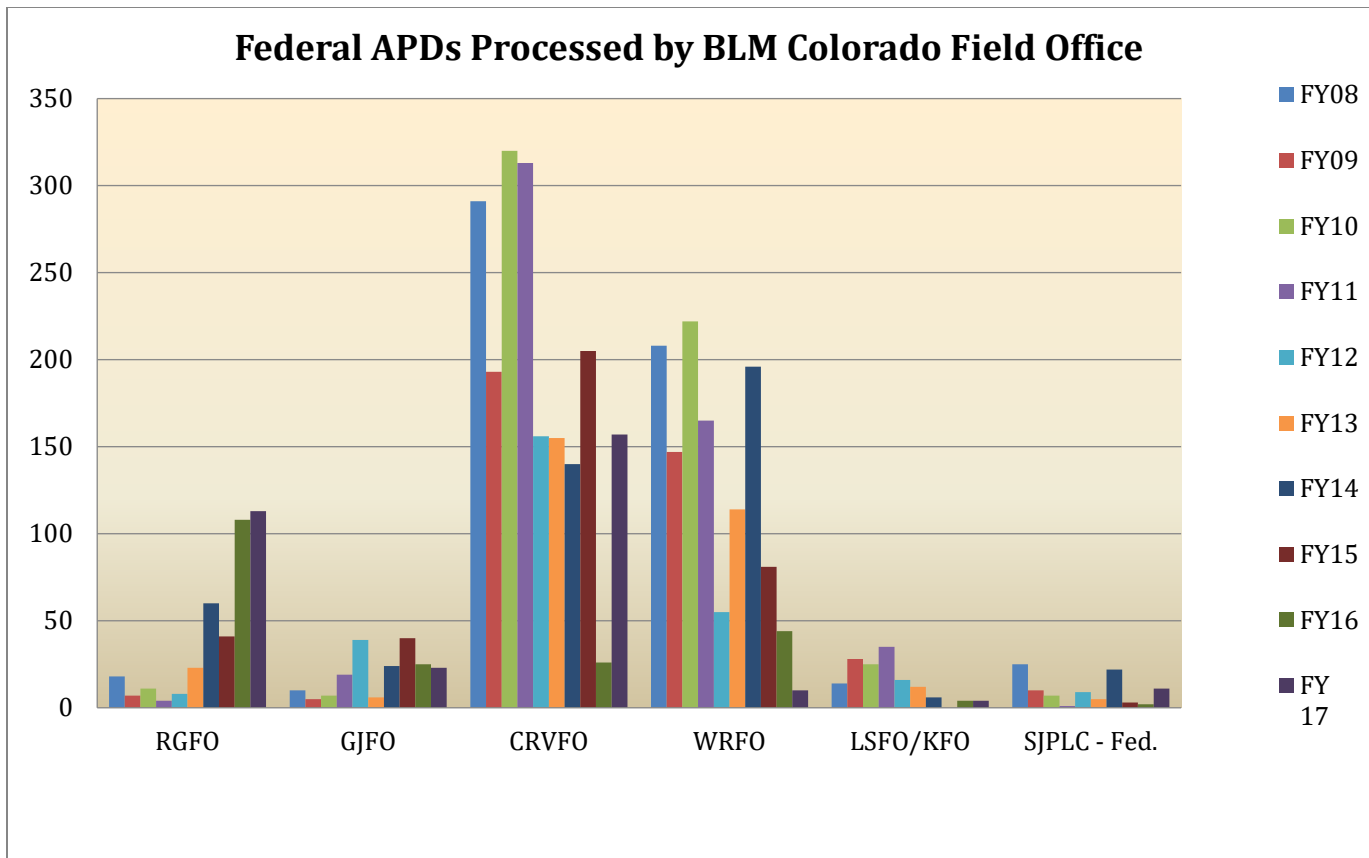
- **December 2017 Lease Sale** – BLM Colorado will offer 28 parcels totaling 27,284 acres in Garfield and Mesa counties at its Dec. 7 quarterly oil and gas lease sale.
- **June 2018 Lease Sale** – The BLM is considering offering 64 parcels totaling 58,654 acres in its June 2018 lease sale, including 8,480 acres in Jackson County, 23,152 acres in Moffat County, 25,582 acres in Rio Blanco County, and 1,440 acres in Routt County. The proposal goes out for a 30-day review period Dec. 7.
- **Recent Northwest Colorado Lease Sales** – The **Dec. 8, 2016** oil and gas lease sale generated \$1.59 million. The 24 of the 28 parcels sold were in the Northwest District, all in Mesa and Garfield counties. The Northwestern Colorado parcels totaled 18,349 acres and netted the majority of the revenue generated -- \$1.58 million. The highest per-acre price was for an 80-acre parcel in Garfield County, sold to Chevron U.S.A. for \$260 per acre. The **June 8, 2017** lease sale generated \$1.35 million. All of the parcels were in NW Colorado. Seventy leases totaling 63,268 acres sold of 85 totaling 73,247 acres offered in Jackson, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt counties. The highest per-acre price was \$102 per acre for a

1,584-acre parcel in Rio Blanco County, sold to Baseline Minerals in Lakewood. Forty-nine percent of the revenue generated from BLM Colorado oil and gas lease sales goes to the State of Colorado.

- **Drilling applications** – The BLM approved 194 applications for permit to drill in FY 17 in northwestern Colorado, almost twice the 99 approved in FY 2016. More than 300 were approved in FY 2014 and FY 2015.

### FY 2017 Federal APDs Approved by Colorado Field Office





Andrew: There are changes to the oil and gas leasing schedule coming soon. We will keep the RAC informed.

Gloria: Focus will be on getting EOIs into lease sales sooner

Carl: Will APDs increase as a result of more leasing?

Andrew: It depends on the market. Things are picking up, for instance 23 wells have been spud this fiscal year (since Oct. 1) in CRV, but there had been just seven the past two years to this point

**Northwest Colorado Vegetation Treatment Programmatic EA** – The Northwest District completed a programmatic environmental assessment to streamline approval of projects designed to improve Greater Sage Grouse and big game habitat, as was presented at the Dec. 2016 NW RAC meeting. The Northwest District Manager signed the final decision approving the programmatic EA on September 12, 2017. The BLM held a 30-day public scoping period between December 21, 2016 and January 19, 2017. During the scoping period, the BLM received 10 comments. The Preliminary EA was released for a 30-day public comment period between June 8 and July 9, 2017. The BLM received five comments during the public comment period. The BLM anticipates implementing the

decisions in the EA in the near future to assist in planning and executing various vegetation treatments throughout the region.

Tom: Does this EA cover fire or mechanical treatments?

Andrew: It covers both

Gloria: It allows us to use DNA (Determination of NEPA Adequacy, which greatly streamlines the process

Tom: What counties does this include

Gloria: The NW District plus Grand Junction

Andrew: The plan of work being developed for this year

Tom: Will you be following up and monitoring to see if these are successful?

Andrew: Yes. We work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to do so. It's not just sage grouse that benefit. Benefits big game and other species as well

Kent: Largely focused on encroaching Pinyon Juniper

Scott: Will you be able to partner with other agencies? CPW?

Andrew: Yes, we are partnering with CPW and others

Wes: Does this include fire prevention mitigation?

Andrew: Depends on the specific area. Could be mitigation projects too. Not just sage grouse.

Kent: we already have programmatic agreements in other areas as well that we can do for mitigation

Dave Boyd will post a Synopsis of the programmatic EA including maps

**Greater Sage Grouse update** – In June Secretary Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3353 to improve sage-grouse conservation by strengthening collaboration and communication among states and the federal government. A Notice of Intent to initiate a sage-grouse planning process was published in the Federal Register in October initiating the public scoping period that ended Nov. 27. DOI/BLM held a public scoping meeting in Craig in November, which was attended by about 50 people. What next steps are taken with the Greater Sage-Grouse plan in Colorado will depend on the results of the scoping period. In the meantime, implementation continues. Projects proposed in sage grouse habitat conform with the Greater Sage-Grouse Plan. Habitat improvement projects are being

prioritized on a state, regional and national level. BLM is continuing to monitor habitat conditions through its Assessment Inventory and Monitoring (AIMs) protocol.

Tom: NW Counties have been working with CPW on new mapping of Greater Sage Grouse habitat. Department is rewriting IMs that BLM uses to implement sage grouse management

**NW Wild Horse Management Update** – A lot has happened in the Northwest Colorado wild horse program since the last NW RAC meeting in March 2017.

- **Fruita Adoption** – BLM partnered with SWAT, GEMS and Friends of the Mustangs for the wild horse adoption in Fruita April, where 18 wild horses gathered from the Sand Wash Basin Herd Management Area during 2016 were adopted.
- **Sand Wash Basin** – The NW District estimates the current population of wild horses in the Sand Wash Basin HMA and surrounding area in the Little Snake Field Office at 710 horses. The appropriate management level for Sand Wash is between 163-362. Sixteen volunteers from the Sand Wash Advocate Team volunteered 7,637 hours assisting BLM with managing the Sand Wash Basin HMA, including more than 800 hours to dart 140 mares with the fertility control PZP. SWAT also hosted a successful National Public Lands Day work day this fall to remove old fencing.
- **White River Field Office** – This fall the field office completed a successful helicopter gather of 86 wild horses from outside the Piceance-East Douglas HMA that had been impacting private land. The field office held a successful wild horse celebration day in May to generate interest in a partner group to help with management of the Piceance-East Douglas HMA. More than 40 people attended the celebration, and a group of stakeholders is completing the steps to form a 501 c3 non-profit group. Volunteers over the summer helped fix and install a boundary fence to help keep wild horses within the HMA. BLM estimates the wild horse population within the Piceance-East Douglas HMA to be 544. The appropriate management level for that HMA is between 135 and 235 wild horses. BLM also estimates 212 wild horses in the West Douglas Herd Area, which is not managed for wild horses, and another 128 wild horses outside both the HMA and West Douglas.
- **National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board** – The National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board met in Grand Junction over the fall, in part to see the successful partnerships with Friends of the Mustangs (who play a critical role helping BLM manage the Little Books Cliffs Wild Horse Range outside Grand Junction) and SWAT.

Kent: If you add this up you'll see we have 1,594 horses in LSFO/WRFO, but the top end of AML (appropriate management level) is 607. This demonstrates that we have a lot of work to do, and why partner groups are so important

Connor: I would suggest a field trip to one of the horse areas in 2018

Scott: Impact to grazing world due to these high wild horse numbers is becoming severe. We are reducing our herd by 30 percent. We are not alone. this inability to manage the excess horses is affecting many people greatly

Mike: I commend you for voluntarily taking steps to manage the land

Scott: It's more than the revenue, we need to take care of the land. Hope people in DC can grasp this issue to understand we need to make hard decisions. It is getting close to imploding on itself. We would like to see wild horses managed in a healthy way. Certain areas in western US are close to the threshold. Some areas ecosystem has been changed and won't come back as a result of large wild horse numbers. We need to make a decision soon

Andrew: It is huge issue with a lot of different viewpoints. We have to manage what is on the land as well as what is in captivity. We did bait trap last year in Sand Wash and are evaluating how that went. It took a lot of manpower and time. Trying to look at different methods.

### **Colorado River Valley Field Office, Gloria Tibbetts**

**CRVFO beginning business plan for recreation fee proposals** – In early February the BLM completed its purchase of the Dotsero Landing Recreation Site in the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area. The BLM, in cooperation with The Conservation Fund, used \$526,000 from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire the property from Eagle County Open Space. Eagle County Open Space originally purchased the area in 2011 with the intention of the BLM eventually acquiring it. The BLM is also planning to purchase the Two Bridges (in CRVFO) and State Bridge (in KFO) access points from Eagle County. All three provide key access to the Colorado River. The BLM has been working closely with Eagle County to manage these areas. Eagle County has been charging access fees matching the fees BLM charges in the Upper Colorado River SRMA in the Kremmling Field Office. The BLM will work with the NW RAC in the coming months as it pursues the continuation of the fee program on the newly acquired parcels. The CRVFO proposal will include recreation fee proposals for Dotsero Landing and Two Bridges, as well as developed campgrounds within the field office. NW RAC approval is required for BLM to charge recreation use fees.

**CRV set to start Sutey Ranch Management Plan** – The Colorado River Valley Field Office is expecting to begin the management plan this spring for the parcels acquired in the Sutey Ranch Land Exchange, which was completed in March 2017. The BLM acquired the 557-acre Sutey Ranch north of Carbondale and 112-acre Haines Parcel along

Prince Creek south of Carbondale in exchange for several parcels with little to no public access after a high-profile, multi-year land exchange process. The planning process will involve several opportunities for public involvement.

**CRV and partners improving on wildlife habitat near Rifle** – The Colorado River Valley Field Office and the local Colorado Parks and Wildlife office have been working together for several years to design a project to increase winter range on Cedar Mountain, which is just northwest of Rifle Gap Reservoir. In August, the BLM partnered with the Mule Deer Foundation to complete 141 acres of “lop-and-scatter” thinning to remove pinyon and juniper encroaching into open areas. Late this winter or early this spring, BLM will partner with the CPW Habitat Partnership Program, CPW Special Tag Fund, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Muley Fanatic Foundation to complete two mechanical mastication units on Cedar Mountain totaling 233 acres, where encroaching PJ and large brush will be cleared. This work on Cedar Mountain will help increase browse and access for wintering big game as well as reduce the risk of large wildfires.

**New trail system designated outside New Castle** – CRVFO partnered with the Town of New Castle and the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association to designate a 9.5-mile authorized trail system north of New Castle. The April 2017 decision designated current and future non-motorized trails in the New Castle Extensive Recreation Management Area. The decision included building 3.5 miles of new trails and improving or re-routing the six miles of existing trails. With the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps spending six weeks on the trail work and volunteers from Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers and Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association donating more than 700 volunteer hours to the trails, the majority of work was completed this summer. The BLM’s decision also closes more than three miles of trails that encroached onto private property or left outside the ERMA into priority wildlife habitat. With this new trail system in place, the Town of New Castle hosted its first annual trails celebration day in 2017.

Gloria recognizes Mike Pritchard for RFMBA help with New Castle

Mike: New Castle trails committee under RFMBA are super volunteers. Things have happened more quickly than expected. It’s all because of the volunteers, town council, BLM’s willingness to work with local community. Great to see the community forming around the benefits of having trails on public land outside community.

Carl: Wildlife habitat improvement happening quickly and well because of partnerships

Connor: Is there a decrease in bandit trails after designating a system of trails?

Mike: When you engage people in process they see bigger picture. It has been my experience that it does reduce them. Quality trail system versus ad hoc.

Connor: Do you see backyard personal trails since the trails literally go past backyards in some cases?



Gloria: Ample spots to jump on system already, so we shouldn't see that.

Scott: I commend everybody that was involved, I understand that it takes a tremendous amount of expertise to build a trail system and protect resources

Mike: We did lose a few trails in a priority wildlife area. That was a hard pill for many to swallow, but so far people are following the closures.

### **White River Field Office, Kent Walter**

Kent: First I want to point out that we have 12 miles of new trails through partnering with Rio Blanco County, Town of Meeker, and the Eastern Rio Blanco County recreation District. I just signed the EA. Community is seeing economic benefit. Partnering with local conservation district for coordinated resource plans for some allotments. Gets more people involved.

Scott mentioned the recent rally car race out of Rangely

Kent: great example of benefits of these routes on public land, working with county and other partners. There's a lot to it. Diversifying economy. It's about protecting the resource, but it's also about the benefits of public land and being a good neighbor and partner

**Buffalo Horn Land Exchange** – The White River Field Office anticipates releasing the Environmental Assessment of the proposed Buffalo Horn Land Exchange for public review in early 2018. The proposed exchange of surface estates only would convey 16 parcels of Federal lands totaling approximately 3,806 acres in Rio Blanco and Moffat Counties for two non-Federal parcels in Rio Blanco County and one parcel in Moffat County totaling 4,036 acres.

During the scoping period last year, the WRFO received about 50 comments and about 25 people attended a public open house in Meeker. Comments included concerns about the exchange being in the public interest, concerns about management of split estate that could result, and some specific concerns about fence lines.

**OHV proposal available for public comment:** The White River Field Office released an environmental assessment of a community-based proposal for an off-highway vehicle trail system on Nov. 27. Rio Blanco County submitted the Wagon Wheel West OHV Trail proposal to BLM to increase trail-system based recreation throughout the county and Northwestern Colorado. The county proposes to develop a 384-mile off-highway vehicle route system incorporating mostly existing BLM and county roads. Recreation on BLM Colorado-managed lands generated \$543 million and supported 4,625 jobs in FY 15. The public comment period ends Dec. 31, 2017.

**Travel Management process continues** – The WRFO has completed its three-year effort to inventory all the routes within the field office, which included public open house

meetings to review the inventory. The inventory is available on-line, including geo-referenced pdf maps, KML Google Earth files, and a geodatabase for ArcGIS users. The field office will be re-engaging the NW RAC Subgroup for WRFO Travel Management in fall 2018, when the draft environmental assessment analyzing broad travel designations is expected to be available for public review. Once that EA is complete, the Field Office will begin route-by-route designations.

### **Little Snake Field Office, Bruce Sillitoe**

**Travel Management effort continues to progress** -- The field office is undertaking a comprehensive, multi-year look at the roads and trails that it manages. The Field Office has broken the 1.3 million surface acres it manages into three travel management zones to make the review more manageable. Planning for Travel Management Area 1, which includes Hiawatha, Vermillion Basin, Sand Wash and Bears Ears near Craig, is well underway and LSFO expects to have a final decision in summer 2018. The field office received about 150 comments and had 90 people attend public meetings related to TMA1. In July LSFO released preliminary alternatives for Travel Management Inventory Area 2, which includes parts of the Powder Wash, Big Gulch, Seven Mile and Great Divide areas. The EA for TMA2 should be available for public review this summer, with a final decision expected in late 2018. Planning for TMA3, which includes the remaining lands within the Field Office, should begin in 2018.

**Lease-by-application proposal being evaluated** – This summer the Little Snake Field Office released a proposal for a lease-by-application at Twenty Mile Foidel Creek coal mine near Hayden. The LBA, submitted by Peabody Energy, is for 640 acres of federal coal underneath private surface adjacent to the existing coal mine and lease. The coal would be mined by underground methods with no surface disturbance. Peabody estimates it could recover 4.1 million tons of coal, generating approximately \$13 million in royalties, half of which would go to the State of Colorado. The lease would help the mine to continue at its current employment level of 365 people. BLM received scoping comments from one state agency (Colorado Parks and Wildlife), eight businesses, and three environmental groups. The businesses were generally supportive of the project. The environmental groups include Clean Energy Action, WildEarth Guardians, and Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity as a joint letter. Comments from environmental groups centered on air quality and climate. Comments were received from 27 individuals (9 generally supporting the project and 18 generally opposing the project). There were also several form comments – mostly from environmental groups sent by email opposing the project including Sierra Club (1,194 comments) and WildEarth Guardians (4,850 comments). Form comments supporting the project were received from mine employees (133 comments) and Mill Man Steel (4 comments). The preliminary environmental assessment should be available for public review and comment by summer 2018.

**LSFO developing business plan for Sarvis Creek Cabin** – The Little Snake Field Office is developing a business plan to rent the cabin on the recent Sarvis Creek acquisition. BLM and the US Forest Service acquired the 45-acre property from Western Rivers Conservancy in December 2014 because of its high recreation and

wildlife values. The BLM acquired five of the 45 acres along with the Sarvis Creek Cabin, built in 1956. Consistent with the Sarvis Creek Area Plan, the BLM would rent the cabin for recreational use. Cabin rental would provide a unique recreational experience for the area enjoyed by fishing, hiking, skiing and snowmobiling enthusiasts. The NW RAC would need to approve the fee proposal for renting the cabin. LSFO will present the business plan to the NW RAC in early 2018, with the goal of having the cabin ready to rent in fall 2018.

Bruce: Moffat County big partner with travel management

Bruce: did prescribed burn in trophy bull elk area during hunting season notified hunting

### **Kremmling Field Office, Stephanie Odell**

**Blue Valley Land Exchange** – The draft EIS for the Blue Valley Land Exchange is currently anticipated to be released for public review in early 2018. 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. 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.

**Timber work continues in KFO** – In FY 2017, the KFO had harvest operations occurring on six active sales – four in Grand County and two in Jackson County. A total of about 400 acres was cut and harvested, primarily in the Smith Mesa and Mule Creek Timber sales in Grand County; and the Owl Mountain and Kings Canyon Timber sales in Jackson County. BLM Crews and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps completed about 200 acres of hazard tree removal and timber stand improvement in Grand County, primarily in the Smith Mesa area. In FY 18 we're expecting that about another 400 acres of timber will be harvested through commercial timber sales.

**Beaver Creek Fire rehab update** – Rehabilitation work is on-going for the area burned by the Beaver Creek Fire in 2016. In FY 17 crews on BLM completed 30-acres of hazard tree removal, 300 acres of reseeding suppression lines, ½ mile of fence repair, six miles of road repair and 2,200 acres of weed treatments. Eighteen monitoring (AIMs) sites were established. In FY 18 the field office plans to complete an additional 3,000 acres of aerial seeding, reconstruct six miles of fencing and remove 73 acres of hazardous trees. Weed inventory and treatment will continue. The Beaver Creek Fire started June 19, 2016 about 24 miles northwest of Walden and burned a total of 38,380 acres in Jackson

County and Carbon County (Wyoming). It was declared 100% contained on October 13, 2016.

**Colorado River Recreation Area Management Plan** – Stephanie Odell gave an update by phone of the KFO's process to update the Colorado River RAMP (see presentation)

Carl: We worked with BLM when they did something similar for the Ruby Horsethief area. That has made a huge difference for that area. Better experience for recreation and more resource protection.

### **Public comment period**

Jeff Comstock, Moffat County Natural Resource Supervisor: I served on NW RAC for 12 years. Some of most difficult times was when I felt like I was being asked to just agree or rubber stamp what the BLM was presenting. The best times were when BLM asked us for meaningful input. I encourage RAC members to demand your input makes a difference. These OHV efforts are a big deal. The County is working hard with a number of partners to finalize a proposal that has been underway for a number of years. A lot of partners will be working on it. Partners were also important for the repairs to the Browns Park swinging bridge, BLM and USFWS partnered with us. Construction has started, which will up weight limit from 3 tons to 14 tons. You should Google it if you don't know about this bridge.

Soren Jespersen, The Wilderness Society – Thanks for reconvening RAC after having the delay. These meetings are really important. I have been coming to these for 10 years. I have comments about the KFO river plan as a private boater. We have seen massive impacts of unregulated use. Down below Catamount in CRVFO, where there are no permits below Pinball rapids. The tubing element is becoming massive. I have seen 500 people, it's on a massive scale. CRV needs to consider that when KFO implements permits you will have more use. Need to get ahead of it now.

Callie Hendrickson, Douglas Creek and White River conservation districts – Thank you for reconvening RAC meetings. A recurring theme in these updates is that BLM is purchasing or acquiring more public land. The Conservation Districts' policy is no net gain of public lands. In a lot of cases we would be supportive, but we still support no net gain. We need to know what would be given back to private to balance the gain in public land?

Cindy Wright, Wild Horse Warriors for Sand Wash Basin. Healthy Range for Healthy Horses – We are trying to educate public on need to protect sage grouse, and the right for sheep to be out there. Looking at working with the BLM on an MOU. We are trying to get a fence on Highway 318 to keep horses off the road. Every winter we lose horses, and we don't want to lose a human life. Already had almost 50 horses right on the road this year. As soon as there is snow they move down. We are working to fix ponds, working with sheep herders. We are getting slack from other wild horse advocates since we have posted pictures showing there are too many horses. There are some horses they may not

make it thru the winter because there isn't enough vegetation. We don't want to see a round up, but the area needs it. Darting will help, but we need to do more, and we need to do it at a different time. Trying to educate people on all those things. Need to be out there right when foals hit the ground. Tough to dart that many horses. Should have 10 darters next year. We are trying to figure out how can we work with everybody? There is definitely an increase in traffic out there coming to see the horses. Want to work with Moffat County on the roads. What started as the fence has become a bigger thing with us trying to work with everybody and educate public about bigger things. We are starting a fundraiser to fund the 318 fence.

Potential 2018 Projects–

Wes: Would RAC be interested in weighing in on highway 318 fencing? Maybe we could write a letter encouraging BLM or CDOT to devote resources to a fence?

Tom: I would like to encourage CDOT. Have the references

Scott: BLM presented proposal to CDOT to fence 139. Wasn't a lot of BLM funding

Kent: BLM fenced 64 row recently

Scott: BLM could weigh in heavily if it is becoming a public safety threat

Bruce: We have taken position that we don't want to be in business of fencing CDOT rows.

Connor: What does fence look like. How does national WHB fit in to local issues?

Kent: Wildlife friendly fence

Andrew: generally board doesn't get involved in local issues

Aletha Dove (Wild Horse Warriors): We contacted CDOT two years ago as horses were hit. First response wasn't receptive, then they were more so. They asked me to spearhead the effort to fence it, but right now they are not receptive again, and said there wouldn't be a fence there. Said it was BLM's responsibility.

Scott: Are permittees affected by this fence?

Bruce: There are sheep permits on north side

Scott: Contacting state patrol might be one avenue. We have gone thru state patrol to get CDOT to fix ROW fencing when it is a safety issue

Tom: Find out which commissioner represents Moffat County on the CDOT board

Andrew: If the RAC wants to pursue this, let us know what else you need. Maps, etc. I would not be opposed to RAC writing a letter.

TOM: CCI Western region has questioned change in BLM district boundaries. San Juan County was moved to the Rocky Mountain district in canon city. Mesa wants to be back in NW district. It hasn't been clear how that change took place. Lively discussion at 2016 meeting. It's an on going discussion with counties.

Connor: Last year BLM redid website and you asked for feedback. Having had time to really try to use it now, I can tell you that it is not a very user-friendly site. It lacks a lot of information.

Dave: We have heard that from many people. (He will send website link to the NW RAC again)

Carl: A few years ago toured Cross Mountain Ranch, a property BLM acquired. Not sure where the recreation plan is. NW RAC could promote whole area as an NCA. Increased opportunity for tourism, better control on what happens in those areas. I am also involved with the Utes, and they are very interested in Cross Mountain. Could we have an opportunity to explore that idea? Maybe get on the agenda to review the area's management plan?

Mike: I fully agree with Jeff Constock's comments about being an advisory council. In two years on the RAC I haven't seen this body provide advice, just gather information. Commissioner Newman resigned in protest, maybe because of lack of recommendations.

Wes: Stephanie's presentation mentioned the Colorado Wild and Scenic River stakeholder group. What is that group?

Dave: They are not a BLM-sanctioned group but worked closely with us on the Colorado River Valley and Kremmling RMPs. It's a group representing a wide variety of water interests. They developed and recommended a consensus alternative for Wild and Scenic recommendations that we incorporated into our preferred alternative in the two RMPs. They continue to meet to discuss issues.

Andrew: The RAC could provide general advice on the Colorado River Management Plan as well as your recommendation on any fee proposal

Kent: It's not our intention to leave you out of the process. It's how do we use you most effectively? We need to use your time wisely. Maybe not developing alternatives, but reviewing draft alternatives – did we capture your concerns? What does it mean “rubber stamp” vs effective involvement? Are you getting your information timely? What other part of BLM are you involved in outside the RAC?

Andrew: What kinds of information would be most helpful to you? The presentation on the Colorado River plan today was pretty general, for instance.

Wes: Commend FM's on field trips. Great information, great dialogue.

Gloria: Hard to forecast every item. Are we logging things that were suggested to be on the agenda? Maybe a 3 to 4 month outlook?

Kent: We whittled down FM update. Maybe we can get you a bigger list that we could get to you a month out, look at the field manager updates and then suggest agenda items. We could get you a list of everything that we have going on.

Mike: Very interesting idea to see program of work listed out in advance to help us select agenda. Definitely appreciate being efficient with this group. Appreciate notion that BLM has evolved over the past decade. Let's us this council where we need to.

Andrew: Things like the comments on the field trip or during presentations are very helpful. We definitely listen.

Connor: Half of us have been here for less than 2 years. Likely to get an influx of new members. Touch base on history of projects. Maybe we need to repeat field trips, a lot of people haven't been there. We need to loop back to some of these things

Andrew: Yes, definitely remind of us that. We think of the RAC as a group but sometimes forget that many members weren't on the RAC when certain things were discussed.

Tom: Before my time RAC had presentation on planning 2.0. Been involved in webinar about local involvement at local level being brought back into BLM planning process. Local gov't should be involved at very beginning of process. Sage grouse will come around again with another SEIS. That is coming back again

Scott: List of projects from the field offices would be very helpful so we could get involved early.

Kent: I would give you a list of every project we are working on.

Connor: List would be helpful since I am familiar with the area where I live but not as much outside that area

Wes: I am really concerned about our area for fire. Topic of working with county on fire mitigation would be good

### **Schedule meetings**

Mike: I think we should visit Sand Wash Basin to see the wild horse issues.

Connor: Colorado River field trip would be helpful given the plan discussion.

The group decided on the following meeting dates and locations, with the first day being an afternoon field trip.

Feb. 27-28 in CRVFO

Aug. 22-23 in KFO (river field trip?)

Nov. 7-8 WRFO

### **Northwest District Grazing Presentation, Isaac Pittman**

There are 800 grazing allotments in NW District, covering 5.5 million acres

All have gone through land health assessments. Most are meeting land health standards. 87 permits will undergo renewal this year In northwest Colorado.

Mike: Are most allotments associated with one rancher?

Ike: Most. Some are common allotments that have more than one permittee.

Mike: Will the result of the renewal process be that the permits are mostly renewed? Are all under production?

Ike: Most of the time permittee seeks renewal. If the allotment is meeting land health standards, we can do a Categorical Exclusion rather than full Environmental Analysis, which can save a lot of time.

There are currently two renewals that are being challenged through protests.

Two grazing boards. One meets in Meeker and one in Grand Junction and Glenwood Springs. The boards have money from grazing fees that can be used used for projects like fencing or water, etc.

Boundary fences can be challenging. BLM's policy is that they are private fences and the private landowners are responsible for them.

Weeds program funded out of range program. Try to leverage partnerships with the counties and others.

Wes: What about BLM/Forest Service boundaries?

Ike: Boundary fences built by CCC before BLM even existed. Can be a challenge. Really case by case.



Mike: Do you have 100 percent compliance with permittees paying their fees in northwestern Colorado?

Isaac: Yes, they are all in compliance

Permits tied to Base property

Monitor through AIMS, WRFO been pilot for seven years

Tom: If a permittee has to do an EA, it can be expensive. Does BLM help, or does the permittee have to hire a consultant?

Isaac: BLM does the EAs. There is not a cost to the permittees for the EA

Tom: Do you coordinate with USFS?

Isaac: Yes. A lot of permittees graze on both at different times of the year

Tom: Stubble height can vary based on elevation, moisture. How flexible are you on all that?

Isaac: There are standard terms, but terms can be flexible

Kent: In WRFO, we don't have permittees on both as much, so we don't coordinate with the Forest Service as much. We have year-round allotments on BLM.

Wes: If you are proposing a project to benefit public land and wildlife, that's why BLM pays. It is to the public benefit

Tom: Have Western Watersheds protested your allotments?

Isaac: Some. They have focuses on Sage grouse areas. Also other groups have protested allotments

Kent: We have had conversations with those groups. Don't always challenge every allotment but they are often interested

Connor: Can you get AUM and permit information on line?

Ike: Yes

Scott: Sometimes when areas are overutilized you have to look at what else is contributing to that. In my area it is wild horses

## **Northwest Fire Update**

Colt Mortenson, BLM, and Todd Wheeler, Moffat County Sheriff

Work together in Moffat County to suppress fires.

Use local teams to manage fires to keep costs down.

Todd: local type 3 team cuts cost in half

2017 was a busy season in NW

Wes – Can we use county roads as fire breaks, keep ditches mowed down and do it strategically

Todd: Limited by resources, but we do use roads as breaks when we do have fires

Wes: A lot of people have just one road in and out

Todd: That's true. We have to approach road and bridge and the commissioners. Had that concern at the Horse Valley Fire, for instance

Connor: have been AD firefighter. A lot of issues with ADs. Are you phasing that out?

Colt: AD means "administratively determined," not working for agency. Very important program. Can use it to bring on new firefighters. Some areas don't use them as much. Slowness of payment system has been a challenge

Scott: Can you use this data to prevent all these fires? Prescribed burns or some other mean to reduce amount of wildfires?

Colt: We need to build up prescribed fire program.. NEPA issues can take time, a lot of issues. We can look at South East US, which has a very proactive program.

Connor: Could the RAC recommend local units put more effort into local education?

Colt: I would love that. It would really help

## **Second public comment period**

Moffat County Commissioner Ray Beck – Welcome on behalf of Moffat County. I served two terms on city council one term as mayor. I'm a new commissioner. Moffat County is working with Garfield County on sage grouse mapping. Made a lot of headway. Sage grouse will have a large impact on many opportunities in Moffat – recreation, energy development. We worked with the local BLM office on the swinging bridge, which helps provide access to public lands. We are trying to diversify our

economy Rules and regs have impacted us. We are energy extractive county. Working with BLM on travel management plan.

The commissioner asked if the Peekaboo Fire area has that been reseeded. Bruce Sillitoe answered that BLM had been working on a specific seed mix and will be reseeding soon.

### **Agenda items for next meeting**

- Fencing letter (CDOT sand wash horses)
- Letter endorsing supporting fire mitigation/education
- More info on NCAs, Cross Mountain current management
- Cedar Mountain SRMA? Yampa Trail proposal?
- Sarvis Creek – what to we want it to look like in five, ten years, where are we now
- Buffalo Horn? Presentation about how land exchanges come about. Maybe land tenure in general Statewide RAC agenda item
- Business plans for CRVFO
- Wild horses current situation, past RAC direction (Ben and Dave)