



# United States Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management  
3028 East Main Street  
Canon City, Colorado 81212



## FRONT RANGE RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC) MINUTES April 27, 2016

### Category 1

Ed Neilsen  
Ashley Cocciolone  
Diana Leiker  
Kathryn Wadsworth

### Category 2

Julie Mach  
Scott Braden  
Kristin Ann Salamack  
Jason Anderson

### Category 3

Dean Sandoval  
Brett Ackerman  
Arthur Koepsell

### ATTENDEES

Tom Heinlein, Front Range District Manager); Melissa Garcia, Front Range Associate District Manager; Keith Berger, Manager - Royal Gorge Field Office; and Andrew Archuleta, Manager - San Luis Valley Field Office.

### GUESTS

Stuart Coles and Julie Slivka

### Resource Advisory Committee Meeting- Front Range District Meeting Breakout

Glenwood Springs, CO 4/26/2016

### RAC NOMINATIONS -- Thomas Heinlein

Nominations are due May 2<sup>nd</sup> for new RAC members as well as RAC members whose terms are expiring, alternates will be submitted. Please help by outreaching to others and talking to constituents who may be interested. Our goal is to get nominations complete the first time around, Federal Register Notice takes time to get approved and published.

Expectations of RAC members and roles of staff-

- Review RAC binder (now on the RAC website).
  - We are working to revamp all materials and automate it all
- Timing issues include BLM web-redesign (Drupal), Dept. of Interior webpages (August/September)
- Important to do your homework, understand your role, and engage with others, and be present for meetings

- Communication is critical—getting proactive in our BLM communications to keep a pulse on the community and bring it to BLM as you can
- RAC refresh—revamping of meetings, RAC functions, and how we do things
- Recreation Fee process- Guffey Gorge and Cache Creek
  - District Fire Organization- structural change for fire organization and new focus: District Fire Management Officer (FMO) is Ty Webb who is overseeing the Fire Program in SLVFO and RGFO
  - SLVFO is Interagency BLM/Forest Service/Fish & Wildlife Service/National Park Service – SLV has maintained the integration of the interagency fire group
  - RGFO is Interagency BLM/FS – it has changed- BLM FMO also handled San Carlos Ranger District (FS) in the past. Now the Pike-San Isabel National Forests and Commanche Cimarron Grasslands (PSICC) and Front Range District Fire are still working together but FS will hire its own FMO in Canon City to work with the BLM FMO. There will be the same prescribed fire and suppression responses as before.

## **STATEWIDE RAC MEETING REVIEW**

Discussion on Communications between BLM and RAC members and Usefulness of State-wide RAC meetings.

- Brett Ackerman- Discussed monthly conference call vs. a newsletter and suggested a work document update every 6 weeks or 2 months (1 page update from each Field Office). Or keep up the RAC website and link to any new issues, concerns, as things change we can update the RAC with an email as well as a press release.
  - Homework- read ahead packets, what we will discuss and what topics or issues we will be making suggestions on.
  - Suggest (State-wide) new member orientation yearly so that new members can interface with one another and understand the differences between the RACs.
- Kristen Salamack suggested online or in person orientation, introductory information in one forum so that other RAC meetings can focus on the issues.
- Many agreed that they would like an annual state-wide RAC meeting instead of every 2 years and Dianna Leiker suggested that the annual meeting could focus on three major issues of state-wide significance and then have the individual break-out workshops to discuss the issues and give recommendations. This would lead to more interaction across the RACs during the State-wide meetings.
- Dean Sandoval liked the format of the Statewide meeting and thought that it was the most effective that he had been to so far. He also suggested that Sage-grouse is not very relevant to the Front Range District- while interesting, is not a concern for our RAC.
- Jason Anderson suggested that Regionalism is an issue and that it helps keep us honest and keep the bigger picture in mind.

- Scott Braden said we can learn from lessons of agencies that work with the issues that don't respect jurisdictional boundaries. Having an annual State-wide RAC would identify best practices, common issues, build relationships, and is very participatory for one of its size. Materials should be given ahead of time so that they can discuss regional issues and how they apply. Sage-grouse can be more of an issues based on budget and resources as well as it will be followed by the next species or issue in public lands management. Sage-grouse is a driver for funding, huge sums of money, fuels management (thinning), dollars allocated based on a threat matrix. FRD rates low in number of fires and fire severity, formula doesn't help us.

### **BROWNS CANYON NATIONAL MONUMENT UPDATE**

Melissa Garcia, Associate District Manager and BCNM Manager

- Management Plan – pre-plan work with FS and CPW
- Joe Vieira was selected as the Project Planner to lead the Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement
- We are focusing on early public and stakeholder engagement, data gathering and collection, inventory, and MOUs between agencies and cooperators, planning Schedule, Dates, and funding requests for each agency.

### **MEETING LOGISTICS**

Discussion on the RAC meeting logistics -- Bill Dvorak

- RAC members have input on the agenda, get your ideas to Kyle and Kit.
- Encourages folks to attend the field trips.
- Follow up on issues between meetings with staff, newsletter or webpage updates.
- Alternates - make sure that we have a quorum and use them as an ex-officio member, Steve Hall checking on this idea.
- At least three RAC members from each subcategory to make quorum.
- Options open for a discussion at meetings- grazing, Resources Management Plan, Guffey Gorge, Historic Western trails designated across public lands, etc...
- Scott Braden suggested getting involved on County Road issues – RS2477 roads could again become an issue. Historic Pioneer trails (Rep. Wilson) –design has nothing to do with ownership. RMP scoping comment, to describe the specific road of interest as a Historic Pioneer Trail and how it relates to Travel Management.
- Suggest field trips first when organizing RAC meetings so that folks will be engaged.

### **MANAGERS UPDATE – SAN LUIS VALLEY FIELD OFFICE**

Andrew Archuleta, Field Manager

- New Mexico/Colorado working across State Line, Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument Planning – SLVFO is on the Interdisciplinary Team
- One Application Permit to Drill (APD), Oil and Gas is minimal in SLVFO
- 20 Employees, doubles in size with interns, volunteers, and seasonal employees, thus they really depend on partners (other agencies and Counties), rely on grants- are very active on going after and submitting grant applications. Focus on one-time funding (project funding) and bringing grant dollars in, leveraging funds, and working across boundaries with partners.
- Appropriate things to engage the RAC in? What are these and how do we engage?
- Sent the Congressional Briefings documents to the RAC (look at your booklets)
- Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars related to Blanca Wetlands Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) - wet and dry acres within the ACEC \$6.3 Million to pick up parcels from The Nature Conservancy. Rule-making process for water rights changed this year- the Rio Grande Conservancy District. Sub-District #1 in competition for Medano Ranch. Would like to get together some talking points for the RAC about this issue to be able to help talk to TNC.
- Recreation-related community engagement includes:
  - SLVGO.com – counties and local communities and agencies plan for recreation, tourism, and travel – grants received helping communities get trails on the ground.
  - DelNorteTrails.org – Del Norte trails organization feature trails on BLM managed lands
  - Look for right places to develop recreation and manage it smartly and focus on where we want them based on community interest.
  - Pronghorn property- helped work on trails system and avoiding areas with significant cultural resources.
  - VOC - Limekiln Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado Project – the VOC coordinator is housed in the Saguache Ranger District and is able to attract Front Range volunteers to come to the SLVFO to complete projects.
- Gunnison Sage-grouse population in the Poncha Pass area (northern San Luis Valley) no critical habitat designated but a high count of 8 birds on the lek this spring.
  - Grazing permits- working on renewing that permit and completing a riparian habitat improvement project related to livestock grazing and brood rearing habitat.
  - Powerline upgrade through Poncha Pass- Excel Energy, proposal for an Environmental Assessment went through, was analyzed, and signed.
- Rio Grande Natural Area- 2006 designation of ¼ mile each side of the Rio Grande. Cultural, scenic, historic, and wildlife values. Trade-off for wild and scenic river designation.

- A Natural Area Commission worked on a management plan for the private lands (East side of the Rio Grande is a Mexican Land Grant 99% private , West side of the Rio Grande is 70% public lands). The private plan is entirely voluntary and was accepted by the BLM State Director. BLM now needs to do the Public Lands management plan for the RGNA.
- Impact of Feral Horses is the biggest issue, 2 populations the Brownie Hills, abandoned by locals. Department of Natural Resources and the State Department of Agriculture have been working with BLM on how to deal with feral horses- State Astry laws (Memorandum of Understanding needed to work out roles, responsibilities and commitments).
- BLM putting an impound plan together.
- Solar Regional Mitigation Strategy & Landscape Assessment are both out for public comment.
- Cultural Resources Landscape Assessment is in the works across the SLVFO and the Taos Plateau
- Wind Erosion Study- erosion, pollutants, and deposition.
- Analysis Inventory Monitoring program- standardizes the monitoring system, BLM Taos Field Office and SLVFO working across boundaries taking a landscape look at conditions of Public Lands. Will help with the planning process and the future Resource Management Plan.
- Shorebirds wetland management at Blanca ACEC projects ongoing.
- Sportsmen and Recreational Access – Del Norte and Rio Grande Access, Land and Water Conservation Funds dollars to purchase connecting land and working with the Town of Del Norte.
- Withdrawal of the Fourmile East Solar Energy Zone as an amendment to the Resource Management Plan to remove the SEZ based on a commitment to tribes.
- Expansion of the Rio Grande Del Norte National Monument boundary in to Colorado – BLM is neutral, includes a current Wilderness Study Area, Special Recreation Management Area, and an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

**Motion of RAC members:** Motion to discuss a letter of support for the Feral Horse concerns. Want a presentation on date and impacts to the Public Lands at June RAC meeting and will draft a letter, hear from the public, and then potentially finalize the letter.

### **MANAGERS UPDATE – ROYAL GORGE FIELD OFFICE**

Keith Berger, Field Manager

- Arkansas River Recreation Management Plan
  - Working on alternatives and getting draft out to public soon
  - BLM could use help from the RAC to communicate with folks to describe what the River Plan is about.

- Plan comments go through Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) website
- Completing plan by the end of the calendar year.
- Salida East
  - Application for a Resource and Public Purposes Act Lease from CPW AHRA to include Salida East in their suites of leased sites. No fee currently, different types of camping, homeless issues, expensive Recreational Vehicles use the area – leads to conflicts and problems continually increase within the current recreational site. There is a disproportionate amount of effort to deal with trash, meth labs, residing, and homelessness.
  - Notice in the Federal Register to segregate the land (Notice of Realty Action), over 200 comments were received on the notice to segregate and begin the process.
  - Working with CPW to do a robust Environmental Analysis (EA) and public meetings to discuss the process and come up with a plan.
- Southern Shooting Sports Partnership
  - A group of interested parties that have landownership or jurisdiction in the Southern Front Range (Counties, State, Feds, Colorado Springs Utilities, Denver Water Board...)
  - Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide a framework for coordination and collaborating on recreational shooting sports strategies.
  - Identify viable locations for shooting facilities throughout the Front Range
  - Financial, technical staff response
  - Interest in seeing responsible recreational shooting sports and provide facilities, reducing conflicts
- Business Plans fee proposals for Cache Creek and Guffey Gorge.
  - Signed decisions for both EAs
  - Difficulties at Guffey Gorge include: partying, safety, special rules, implement fee/permit system in future if necessary. Special Rules such as no alcohol
  - Cache Creek- recreational mineral collection, sluicing, gold panning, hazards, sediment in Cache Creek. Led BLM to work through a successful EA process engaging local gold panning stakeholders, businesses, clubs
  - 25-26 acres of highly disturbed area are to remain open.
  - Limit sluicing and type of use
  - Diverting water, limit the time that the activity occurs
  - Develop a fee structure to manage the area and a future permit system
  - Decision signed, appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), the BLM decision for the Cache Creek EA was upheld.
- Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan (ECRMP)

- Cooperating agencies (Counties, State Agencies, other Federal Agencies, municipalities) and the RAC
- No Action alternative plus three alternatives
  - Ecosystem function – focused on resource protection
  - Market driven focus (recreation , timber, Oil and Gas, Mining) – limited additional regulation
  - Community Vision and values on local landscapes
- Existing rules, standards and guidelines underlie every alternative.
- Developing draft/preliminary alternatives, roll them out to the RAC and cooperating agencies in summer
- Draft Alternatives go to Pubic to get feedback. We will be asking the RAC for help with pubic review. Asking questions such as: Is our breadth of alternatives adequate? Did we deal with scoping comments in an alternative? Did we miss anything in the alternatives?
- Looking for a range of alternatives that are realistic and that we could potentially legally implement—no analysis, no impacts looked at yet in the process.
- Structure of next step of meetings (3-4 days of meetings)- cooperators and RAC
  - Based on resources/issues: ex. Wildlife and how it is dealt with under the 3 alternatives
  - Or based on Alternatives: ex. Each day discuss all resources and issues under one alternative (Alternative A one day, Alternative B the next day, Alternative C the third day)
  - Should we change locations or stay in the same area? What are the best ways to engage our cooperators and the RAC?

**RAC Suggestion:** Public meetings should be structured by alternatives not by resources/issue

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Thursday-Friday with a field portion on Thursday
- Doodle poll from Tom
- Topics due 2 weeks prior to get information that you need for homework
- Officer’s discussion at next meeting.

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Tom Heinlein, Designated Federal Officer  
 Front Range District Office  
 Bureau of Land Management

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Christopher “Kit” Shy, Chair  
 Front Range Resource Advisory Council