



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 June 4-5, 2014

Category 1

Ed Neilsen
Mike Barningham
Bill Dvorak
Steve Oswald
Carlos Garcia

Category 2

Jason Anderson
Jara Johnson

Category 3

Christopher "Kit" Shy
Dean Sandoval

ATTENDEES

Brian Davis, Designated Federal Officer (Acting Front Range District Manager); Kyle Sullivan, Front Range RAC Coordinator; Keith Berger, Royal Gorge Field Office Manager; and Andrew Archuleta, San Luis Valley Field Office Manager.

GUESTS

Ron McFarland, Peggy Roberts

INTRODUCTIONS AND OLD BUSINESS

All RAC members and attendees introduced themselves. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by the group. A motion to pass the last meeting's minutes was made, however not enough RAC members were in attendance to obtain quorum. The meeting minutes will be passed at the next meeting.

ROUND ROBIN

Ed Nielsen provided a ranching update. This year has been wet enough that Nielsen is considering using BLM lands for grazing operations. Jason Anderson provided an update on his work with Colorado Counties Incorporated, which is part of the National Association of Counties. Anderson went to Alaska and Washington D.C. with other county commissioners from Colorado where they discussed how to finance fighting wildfires, the local economic impact of listing decisions under the Endangered Species Act and how to fund Payment in Lieu of Taxes. In Saguache County, PILT payments make up 1/5 of the general fund. Keith Berger updated the staff on a visit by Congressman Lamborn's staff visit the morning of the RAC meeting, who were interested in fire readiness, capacity to fight fires and funding. Keith brought up that prescribed fire can be difficult due to having short burn windows between being too wet or too dry to safely conduct prescribed burns.

Jara Johnson introduced herself to the RAC. Johnson is serving the remainder of Mark Hesse's term, whom passed away while rock climbing. Johnson discussed the work of the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP), who are actively engaged in wildfire mitigation, both before and after fires occur. CUSP actively works in the Hyman Fire burn area to restore habitat. CUSP works with local communities to ensure that Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) to identify high risk areas. CUSP has a red carded crew with 30 members on staff who work on fuels reduction and rehab. CUSP maintains a slash site on BLM lands and provides biomass to heat a local school.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Ron McFarland asked how federal agencies (or other landowners) can remove fuel without burning. Keith Berger answered that the Department of Interior (BLM) and Department of Agriculture (USFS) have programs to assist private landowners with properties that border BLM lands. Jara Johnson suggested that CUSP help organize a fieldtrip for RAC members and the public to tour fuels reduction projects.

MANAGERS UPDATE

Brian Davis, *Acting Front Range District Manager (Designated Federal Officer)*

Brian Davis introduced himself to the RAC. Davis is filling in for Tom Heinlein, who is on a detail to the Washington Office in the planning department. Davis is currently the field manager in Jarbidge, Idaho. Davis informed the RAC that the BLM has selected Ruth Welch to be the new BLM Colorado State Director. He stated that the BLM has an attrition rate of approximately 10 people per month.

Andrew Archuleta, *Field Office Manager, San Luis Valley Field Office*

Andrew Archuleta mentioned that the San Luis Valley Field Office is going to be hiring a geologist, biologist, range specialist and recreation technician position in the near future. In some cases, these positions have been vacant for a long time, while other positions were recently vacated. Archuleta discussed that effective travel management has limited the impact of the listing of Gunnison Sage Grouse on the SLVFO. The range program did not have a big impact due to strong collaborative partnerships with ranchers. Zapata Falls and the Zapata campground is the heavily visited BLM site in the SLV. BLM is working with the county to mitigate visitation impacts on the road, which could include redesigning the road or paving it. Recreation planners are also designing mountain bike trails in the area. Archuleta mentioned that the Rio Grande Natural Area Committee is reviewing a draft of the Natural Area Plan.

Keith Berger, *Field Office Manager, Royal Gorge Field Office*

Keith Berger updated the RAC on the status of Cache Creek planning efforts. The BLM is addressing some of the management issues at Cache Creek through the development of an Environmental Analysis. BLM launched scoping on Cache Creek and received five comments. Berger reiterated that the Browns Canyon mineral withdrawal is a separate process from Senator Udall's proposed National Monument and Wilderness. Berger encouraged the RAC to start thinking about the Resource Management Plan revision and public scoping process. The BLM

has identified Fairplay, Greeley, Cañon City, Salida and Denver as possible locations for public meetings. Dill Dvorak encouraged the BLM to have opportunities for public speaking.

GUFFEY GORGE DISCUSSION

Linda Skinner, *Recreation Planner, Royal Gorge Field Office*

Linda Skinner presented on the ongoing problems and safety concerns at Guffey Gorge resulting from high recreational use. The Committee discussed management options largely centered on substance bans and a fee/permit system. Keith Berger expressed concern regarding whether or not it is within the purview of the federal government to prevent people from pursuing dangerous activities, particularly when there are alternative examples of dangerous activities occurring on BLM land, that the BLM does not interfere with (rafting, OHV use, rock climbing). Staff from the BLM expressed the need for ongoing communication and coordination with local communities and law enforcement. The committee discussed the option of disposing of the property through sale, though an interested potential buyer could not be identified. Kalem Lenard discussed the outreach efforts BLM has conducted in order to better understand the concerns and desires of the public. Keith Berger suggested the decision (whatever it may be) be elevated in visibility, so that the final decision does not rest on BLM alone.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Joe Vieira, *Renewable Energy Project Manager, San Luis Valley Field Office*

Joe Vieira discussed the ongoing San Luis Valley/Taos Plateau Study in the San Luis Valley aimed at establishing a Department-wide mitigation strategy for Solar Energy Zones (SEZ). The strategy incorporates a multi-scalar, landscape-level approach to identify and facilitate investment in key conservation priorities in a region, and includes efforts aimed at early integration of mitigation considerations in project planning, and ensuring the durability of mitigation measures over time. Joe Vieira illustrated the key questions guiding the development of the mitigation strategy and solicited future input from the RAC.

PLANNING 2.0

Martin Weimer, *NEPA Coordinator, Front Range District Office*

Martin discussed the need for the BLM to pursue a more dynamic, durable, and efficient planning process. Currently, management plan updates are very cumbersome and time-consuming. BLM proposes targeted changes to planning regulations necessary for planning across boundaries and at multiple scales. Martin offered the RAC the opportunity for future involvement in the planning revision process.

PIKE TRAIL

Kit Shy, *Front Range RAC Chair*

Kit Shy brought to the RAC's attention the feasibility study currently in legislation aimed at recognizing the national significance of the 1806/1807 Zebulon Pike Expedition through a National Historic Trail designation. The bill is sponsored by Colorado Senators Bennett and Udall. Kit proposed, and the RAC agreed to send a letter of support on behalf of the RAC.

CLOSEOUT

Meeting minutes from the November RAC meeting were not approved because a quorum of RAC members was not present. Meeting minutes will be approved at the August Meeting. The next RAC meeting will be August 20-21 in Crestone, Colorado.

NEXT MEETING DATES

The next meeting dates are as follows:

August 20-21, Crestone Co

November 19, Salida

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

Christopher "Kit" Shy, Chair
Front Range Resource Advisory Council