

BLM Colorado Northwest Resource Advisory Council

May 10, 2012 Minutes

Attendance

Category 1: Dave Grisso, Steve Loshbaugh, Tom Latham, Wes McStay, Jim Potter

Category 2: Dona Shue, Steve Smith, Terry Sweet, Dan Davidson, Pat Kennedy

Category 3: Lanny Weddle, Barbara Vasquez, Kai Turner, Jeff Comstock

Absent: Dean Riggs, Category 3

A quorum is present.

BLM: Jim Cagney, Kent Walter, Wendy Reynolds, Steve Bennett, Dave Stout, Catherine Robertson, Dorothea Boothe, David Boyd, Chris Joyner, Jim Byers, Steve Ficklin, Matt McColm, Marcia Dechadenedes

Public:

Callie Hendrickson, Meeker, White River and Douglas Creek Conservation Districts
David Kane, Carbondale

Denny Behrens, Grand Junction, Colorado Mule Deer Association

Jim Yellico, Glenwood Springs, Garfield County Assessor

Toby Sprunk, Eagle County Open Space

Oil and Gas Presentation (see Powerpoint)

Colorado River Stakeholders Group Presentation (see Powerpoint)

Public Comment Period

Denny Behrens, Colorado Mule Deer Association

I want to talk about an issue we've been dealing with for 2 years. Governor's tags raise funds for organizations like the Colorado Mule Deer Association to put money back on the ground for wildlife habitat improvement and restoration. A Governor's tag is legal through Dec. 31, but a BLM permit for an outfitter ends at the end of the regular hunting season, typically. BLM's seasonal closures place limitations and don't allow hunters or their guides to access areas. We are asking BLM to allow exceptions for outfitter guiding people with a Governor's tag. They can't get into permitted area because permitted time is over. Want ability for outfitter to hunt thru Dec. 31 if they have Governor's tag. People have spent thousands for one tag. Also, the price of tag is dropping because there is not access past BLM closures – it's by foot or by horseback.

Wendy – clarifies that Mule Deer Association is asking that existing outfitting and guiding permits be extended to end of the year. Not an access issue, it's that the outfitter's permit for public lands is not valid thru the end of the year.

Denny – Yes, in some areas permit ends at the end of the fourth rifle season.

Wes – Are working on public or private lands for restoration?

Denny – Both. For instance at Battlement Mesa we have 12,000 acres of work on public and private.

Terry – It's a small problem, but big problem for those few clients.

Cagney – will take it up with the field managers at are meeting this week.

Dona – moves that BLM modifies SRP to allow outfitter permits to be extended through Dec. 31 as necessary.

seconded

Jeff – clarifies that the issue is that the outfitter permit expires with the regular hunting season. But they don't allow for extension to Dec. 31, where the few Governor's tags are.

Bennett – What happened for us was that it was a new outfitter seeking access to an area they were not permitted.

Cagney – We are not looking to add new outfitters to an area, just allow existing outfitters to extend permits in this case.

Kai – That's crucial. Out-of-state outfitters will try to rush permits by-passing existing local guides and outfitters.

Steve Smith – Support resolution that BLM figure out to make this work.

Wes – should be consistent across BLM offices

Cagney – this discussion has helped us. Don't need a resolution necessarily.

Dona – withdraws motion

Wild Horse Advisory Board

Callie Hendrickson is a board member of the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board and summarized the most recent meeting. We now have about 47,000 wild horses in holding. Not looking better given price of feed and economy. Looking at fertility options. Works in Little Books Cliffs, but it is hard to get it to work in larger areas. Spay-Vac is new possibility. Looking at different proportion of males, females, geldings.

Sage grouse priority habitat and wild horse herd management areas across the west overlap a lot. Need to keep horses within AML. Drought issue another big concern

Wild Horse Resolution

Dona Shue – The NW RAC did a resolution a few years ago. Went to Salazar. Wondering if we should send new resolution to WH&B advisory board. Do we want to resubmit. Next meeting in December

Kai – can we send an updated version to both Salazar and Board?

Kennedy – has everybody read, any objections?

Update date, numbers

Cagney – need a resolution to move this forward

Wes – need to revisit sterilization

Lanny – spending \$44 million to hold a bunch of horses that aren't worth anything? This is the real world. Drain on economy. How to address that? Would like to do a little more work on the resolution.

Kent – what I am hearing – what is cap on long-term holding numbers? Sterilization is in resolution, but I am hearing you want more specific info

Dona – working group will get together and draft something for next meeting (Dona, Dean Riggs, Tom Latham, Lanny Weddle)

Coal presentation

Powerpoint

Steve Smith: BLM and administration have opportunity to address climate change in RMPs, how do you juxtapose methane releases and coal burning with the jobs and the resource mined?

Matt: A lot of debate on that right now

Cagney: Steve Loshbaugh, any concerns about coal and BLM from your perspective?

Loshbaugh: From the federal side, sage-grouse. Especially need a more specific habitat map

Steve Smith: Any national guidance on the methane issue we should be watching for?

Matt: Nothing from BLM leasing program. EPA has coal bed methane group.

Steve Smith: What concerns about the coal leasing process are you hearing from other companies?

Jim: Peabody coal is concerned about the timeframe for permitting -- they are considering bypassing federal coal.

REA Resolution

Barbara distributes draft resolution

Dona moves to accept

Kai seconds

Passes unanimously.

Media and the NW RAC

Pat: OK for members to express their opinions in this room and outside this room.

Jeff: If looking for board positions, Dave Boyd or Chair most appropriate

Wes: may need to go spokesperson for specific issues.

District and Field Manager Updates

NW District, Jim Cagney

Sage Grouse EIS: The Northwest District is developing an EIS to potentially amend Resource Management Plans in each of the five Field Offices in the District as well as the Routt National Forest as part of a national effort to conserve Greater Sage-grouse and its habitat. We received 637 scoping comments in Colorado during the scoping period for this EIS. The scoping report should be available by the end of the month. Our kickoff Cooperating Agency meeting will be held in Craig on May 18. A Draft EIS is anticipated to be released for public comment in early 2013.

Here's the breakdown by county of preliminary priority habitat and preliminary general habitat for Greater Sage-grouse as mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (across all land ownership):

County	Acres of Preliminary Priority Habitat	Acres of Preliminary General Habitat
Eagle	36,626.4	34,248.7
Garfield	148,856.9	72,111.1
Grand	203,584.2	55,709.2
Jackson	384,222.1	36,726.3
Larimer	0	16,364.5
Mesa	0	14,195.4

Moffat	1,297,624.1	971,771.5
Rio Blanco	94,253.4	194,412
Routt	195,713.1	91,632.7
Summit	5,356.4	0
TOTAL	2,366,236.6	1,487,171.4

Steve L: Who is managing wildlife to benefit sage grouse? Feds are managing habitat.

Jim: Nat'l technical team doesn't address predators because it is not within BLM's purview. We will have to work on hiding cover and habitat

Wes: Not all sagebrush is created equal. Study from Montana shows they select new growth sagebrush.

Jeff: CPW and USFWS are all making habitat recommendations. BLM needs to make wildlife management recommendations to them. What kind of habitat should BLM grow to reduce predation, for instance.

Kai: CPW is throwing BLM under the bus right now. They say this is all your fault.

Cagney: Will try to get as much factual information out as possible.

Comstock: Are you deferring oil and gas leasing in high priority habitat?

Reynolds and Walter: yes.

White River Field Office, Kent E. Walter

White River Oil and Gas RMP Amendment

The BLM White River Field Office (WRFO) continues work to develop an Oil and Gas Resource Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Impact Statement (Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS). The four Alternatives look at a range of development from 550 multi-well pads up to 2,550 multi-well pads, with an average of 8 wells per pad. The WRFO is finalizing the Draft RMPA/EIS and has recently completed its Cooperating Agencies review as well as the internal review by the Colorado State Office, Solicitors Office, and Washington Office. A revised schedule is being developed and a Notice of Availability for the Draft Oil and Gas RMPA/EIS is to be published in the Federal Register in summer 2012. This notice initiates a required 90-day public and agency review/comment period for the Draft RMPA/EIS, as well as dates, times, and locations of public meetings/hearings that will be held during the same time period.

Phase I of the Resource Management & Monitoring Protocol (RMMP) has been completed and has been published as a BLM Technical Note #439. The RMMP is designed to serve as a cost-effective and publicly accepted approach for landscape-change monitoring and assessment. The Surface Reclamation Protocol has been finalized and will be evaluated with the RMP Amendment. In addition, the WRFO will be working with the USGS to develop a Data

Monitoring System which will provide aspects of oil and gas development which will feed into the RMMP to monitor change across the landscape as future developments occur.

Cultural Resources

The cultural program is working on providing clearances for grazing-permit renewals, currently entailing planning fieldwork for all the allotments that will have renewals done on them in 2012 and 2013. During 2011, the cultural program completed approximately 115 acres of inventory in the Canyon Pintado National Historic District area continuing several years' efforts to further the knowledge of the historical resources in this region.

WRFO archaeologists are also in the stages of making some rock art sites along the Dragon Trail, southwest of Rangely, interpreted for the public similar to our recreation sites in Canyon Pintado. Currently project work has been completed at two sites, with two more to be completed in the early spring of 2012. WRFO archaeologists will also be working to record several Fremont Granaries located within the Skull Creek Wilderness Study Area.

Energy Program

Oil Shale RD&D

WRFO approved American Shale Oil, LLC's (AMSO) Plan of Development (POD) on Sept. 3, 2009. Construction of the facilities at the site location began in spring 2010 and is complete. Heater installation occurred in January 2012 with heater failure within one week of power-up. The heater has been removed and sent for repairs/modifications with expectations for re-installation of the heater in May 2012 and initiation of the shale oil recovery process.

Shell Frontier submitted a POD for COC 69166 (East Lease) on Jan. 3, 2011. This is a two-step process where sodium minerals are extracted prior to recovery of the shale oil. BLM approved Shell's East Lease POD in August 2011 and dirt work for the facility site was completed in late 2011. Construction of operating facilities and drilling of the production, heater, and observation wells will began in May 2012. Drilling is estimated to last six to seven months and commencement of sodium leaching operations late 2012 or early 2013. Previous construction on the lease consisted of an access road, two pads (one hydrology pad and one core-hole pad) and drilling of five hydrologic monitoring wells and one core hole in late 2009 and early 2010 on Shell's East Lease. An additional appraisal well was drilled April 2011.

Chevron has announced they are not proceeding with their RD&D project and there has been no determination of the future status of their RD&D lease.

WRFO BLM has recently received nominations for two additional RD&D tracts: ExxonMobil Exploration Corp. and Natural Soda Holdings Inc. An environmental assessment (EA) to determine the projects impacts is required prior to determination of issuance of the research tracts. Public open houses were held in Rifle and Meeker, Colorado on April 27 and 28, 2011, respectively. The EA is expected to be available for public comment in May 2012.

Oil Shale PEIS

In 2008, the BLM published a Final Oil Shale and Tar Sands PEIS that amended the White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan (WRFO RMP) lands available for oil shale leasing

from approximately 295,000 acres to approximately 341,000 acres. In 2011 BLM agreed to take a fresh look at commercial oil shale and tar sands leasing in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming as part of a legal settlement. A new PEIS was initiated. The new Draft PEIS was released for a 90-day public comment period, which ended May 4, 2012. A final PEIS is expected by the end of the year.

Coal

Blue Mountain Energy's (BME) Deserado underground coal mine produces approximately 2 million tons of coal annually. Deserado is a captive mine where all coal production is shipped, via electric train, and utilized by the Bonanza Power Plant in Bonanza, Utah. BME has seven federal coal leases that are contained in a logical mining unit (LMU). In early 2011 BME applied for an exploration license and a 3,154 acre federal coal lease (COC 74813). WRFO is in the process of writing the Environmental Analysis for the coal lease.

Oil and Gas

So far in FY 2012, WRFO has approved 73 out of a target of 200 applications for permit to drill (APDs). An SDR remand of 20 APDs dropped this number from 93 to 73 completed APDs. We have completed 123 out of a target 616 inspections, and processed 3,973 out of a target of 4,500 sundries. High priority drilling inspections are complete. There are 4 of 9 high priority idle well status checks complete, and 16 out of 340 high priority environmental inspections complete.

Non-Energy Minerals Program (sodium)

Natural Soda Inc. produced more than 130,000 tons of sodium bicarbonate from their existing in-situ solution mining operations in 2011. Upgrades to the facility including a higher capacity, more efficient boiler and an increase in production capabilities have begun. Completion of the construction is scheduled for late 2012.

American Soda well field is expected to remain idle in 2012. No production from the well field has occurred since 2004.

Fire and Fuels Program

In 2011 the BLM, Rio Blanco County Sheriff's Department and local landowners south of Rangely completed a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the BLM to efficiently manage natural ignition fires for ecological benefits where this option exists.

The Field Office has attempted one prescribed burn this spring and the conditions were not favorable for the prescribed to achieve the desired results. The Dragon Trail Compressor Station project is 75 percent complete but due to the warm winter conditions we were unable to complete it. The current plan is to finish work on pile burning during the winter months of 2012/2013.

Geographic Information Systems Program

Priorities for the GIS Program include developing data and processes to support the RMMP, the travel management plan, and Threatened, Endangered, and BLM Sensitive (TES) plant management. Specific data layers include: (1) well pads, right-of-ways, and other surface disturbances, (2) updated road centerlines (to match 2009 aerial photography); and, (3) TES plants including the addition of all 2009 field surveys. In addition to data development, the FO

will be working with the USGS on the Data Management System, which is a web-based GIS/Disturbance Tracking tool that will allow BLM staff, oil & gas operators, and the public to access near real-time updates of surface disturbance and reclamation activities in the WRFO.

Range Program

The FO is working to complete permit renewal for 15 grazing permits this year, as well as to complete the necessary field work for the 2013 grazing permit renewals. Plans are to finish all necessary field work and issue permits by January of 2013.

Weed Management

WRFO anticipates completing several weed spraying projects in 2012, including continued funding of the Nine Mile leafy spurge aerial spraying project. In addition, the WRFO anticipates that weed crews will treat an additional 300 acres of weeds within the resource area.

We are also looking at working to develop a collaborative process with oil and gas companies to improve the treatment of weeds on disturbed areas where multiple companies currently operate.

Riparian Program

Thirty-eight miles of riparian PFC assessments were completed during FY11 in association with the 2012 grazing permit renewals. Weed treatment evaluation, initial treatment, and inventory will continue in riparian areas with specific treatment targets established at the Olive Garden and Divide Creek Reservoir sites. One new enclosure will be installed on Taylor Creek. Several existing riparian projects will be maintained throughout the field season.

Wildlife Program

The WRFO continues to work collaboratively with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife to address the overall impacts of oil and gas in the Piceance Basin. The staff works with CPW in an effort to improve the wildlife mitigation plans within the Piceance Basin. The staff has recently completed laying out phase two of a CPW P/J encroachment project meant to mitigate some of the impacts of development on Magnolia Bench. This will be monitored as part of several study projects being completed by CPW.

The WRFO biologist will be working in coordination with the District in the development of the District Sage Grouse EIS.

The WRFO will also be completing a multi-year habitat modeling project to model potential habitats within the FO for midget-faded rattlesnakes, a BLM sensitive species.

In 2012, the FO will be installing several enclosure fences for the improvement of wildlife and fisheries habitats within the FO.

Recreation Program

The Recreation Program has a multitude of activities underway and planned for 2012. Over the summer of 2011, we updated all 14 kiosks around the field office with new maps, emergency information and informational materials, as well as constructed one new kiosk at the new Willow Creek Trailhead. We are continuing with road signing, as well as planning to add new signs

along the boundaries of our Wilderness Study Areas. We are continuing ongoing work with the Rangely Rock Crawlers to install carsonites to delineate the boundaries of the rock park.

WRFO is collaborating with the Eastern Rio Blanco Metropolitan Recreation and Park District (ERBM) in the development of a non-motorized trail from Dorcas Jensen Park, through adjacent BLM lands, to Ute Park. ERBM applied for, and is reasonably certain they will be awarded, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) team to complete construction of this project in 2012.

The WRFO recently issued its annual Special Recreation Permit (SRP) package to existing permittees. We are also planning on holding our annual SRP holder meeting on May 3, 2012, to address questions or comments regarding the SRP program. The WRFO actively manages 49 guide and outfitting permittees, 1 wilderness therapy permittee, 1 higher education permittee, and the Rangely Rock Crawlers. Three new SRPs were issued for big game hunting this fall and three additional SRP applications are in the queue, including one for guided overnight trips on the White River.

We continue to move forward with initial planning steps towards completing a travel management inventory and plan for the WRFO. The WRFO Outdoor Recreation Planner, Chad Schneckenburger, led a panel session on OHV use at the Nation Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP) conference in Breckenridge during the last week of May. WRFO continues on-going coordination with the Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) and other partners to accomplish this goal.

Related to travel management, the WRFO is participating on a newly formed committee, the Rio Blanco County Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Committee, intended to promote OHV tourism in the county primarily using public lands.

The WRFO will be completing so updated Wilderness Character Inventory of the Skull Creek WSA in 2012.

The WRFO attended the September 24 Rangely Rock Crawlers 5th Annual Competition to monitor the event and provide a BLM presence. The WRFO is preparing for the Rangely Rock Crawlers Mother's Day Competition in early May. We also continue to attend their monthly club meetings. The Rangely Rock Crawlers are applying for additional Colorado State Park OHV grants to continue with improvement to the area via their MOU and EA.

The WRFO received funding to bring the South Entrance and the Four Mile Canyon picnic areas up to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards in 2012. In addition, several other ongoing maintenance and repair projects will be completed throughout the WRFO during 2012.

The WRFO completed the initial construction of the Willow Creek OHV trail that in 2011 which currently provides foot and horseback access to approximately 21,000 acres of BLM lands. WRFO is working to secure a SWECO to finish cutting the trail which would open the trail for OHV access to a small parking area. In 2011, WRFO applied for, and was awarded, a one week work session by the USFS Colorado Statewide OHV Trail Crew for assistance with construction

of this project in August of 2011. The trail was realigned, flagged, gates were installed and an informational kiosk installed. WRFO applied for another work session by the USFS Colorado Statewide OHV Trail Crew to complete construction of the trail in 2012.

The WRFO also had a strong intern and volunteer program for 2011, with one full time archeological intern in collaboration with Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. WRFO also has a number of other volunteers donating their time after their summer seasonal work was complete. We anticipate to continue to expand upon this program in 2012 through work with the 4H, Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, and other volunteer groups.

Soil, Water, and Air Program

The BLM will continue to fund its Financial Assistance Agreement with the USGS for continued work on groundwater and surface water monitoring projects. The FO has identified that due to funding reductions one USGS gauging stations along the White River will be dropped from the surface water system. We will continue with sampling of the 15 well ground water monitoring system. The first sampling of the full fifteen well networks was in August 2011. The Piceance Basin Data Repository group continues to move forward with plans to coordinate with the Colorado Data Sharing Network for future data storage.

The BLM continues to support the air quality data collection at the Rangely and Meeker which are Federal Reference monitoring sites. In addition, in 2011 the BLM was able to add a new climate station, and we continue to add to the existing precipitation network.

Wild Horses

In February 2011, the Bureau withdrew its West Douglas Herd Area Gather Environmental Assessment which called for the removal of all excess wild horses from the West Douglas Herd Area.

On June 24, 2011, Judge Collier denied BLM's request to dismiss in whole the West Douglas Herd Area Wild Horse Gather of 2010 – Colorado Wild Horse and Burro Coalition, Inc. et al vs. Salazar et al. Case #1:10-CV-01645-RMC. This case is currently active.

The BLM completed the Piceance-East Douglas Wild horse gather on Oct. 30, 2011. The BLM completed a post gather inventory of the Piceance-East Douglas HMA and the West Douglas HA on February 16 and 17th, 2012. During the inventory, a direct count was completed resulting in:

- Inside PEDHMA = 183 horses
- Outside PEDHMA = 34 horses
- West Douglas = 154 horses
- Outside West Douglas boundaries = 36
- North Piceance = 11
- Total horses counted = 418

Lands and Realty

WRFO's lands group is currently working on three interstate electric transmission line projects: The Trans West Express, which will transport renewable energy based power from central Wyoming to Nevada, the Energy Gateway South transmission project which will transport electricity from central Wyoming to Utah, and the newly proposed Zepher line.

The permits have been issued for the first phase of the Rio Blanco County Road 5 improvement projects and the development of a parcel of public land for Rangely District Hospital is proceeding. The FO is will be working on two additional county projects this year including the County Road 5 bridge replacement and the Marvine Communication tower, which is a joint effort with the US Forest Service.

Enterprise is completing construction on the Meeker Plant to Greasewood 36-inch pipeline and the expansion of the Meeker 1 Gas processing facility is nearing final NEPA analysis. Proposals for construction of oil and gas infrastructure have been approved or are pending to multiple companies for construction.

Little Snake Field Office, Wendy Reynolds

Sage-grouse EIS: #1 Priority. Staff is working with the NW District Manager Jim Cagney on amending the LSFO Resource Management Plan for sage-grouse habitat protection affecting all the resource areas. The Sage-grouse Cooperating Agency Meeting Kickoff will be Friday, May 18 in the Little Snake Field Office from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

America's Great Outdoors Initiative: America's Great Outdoors Initiative has been, and will continue to be, one of our priorities this year and the coming years, specifically focusing on the Yampa River Basin in Northwest Colorado. The BLM has been working with the Yampa River Legacy Project (a multi-partner organization), which has identified a suite of projects to implement the initiative. The organization and initiative are strongly supported by Interior Secretary Salazar and BLM Director Bob Abbey. The initiative is based in conservation and focuses on reconnecting the public, specifically youth, with the great outdoors in America's backyard. The projects include:

- Duffy Mountain Recreation Area – development of trails, campgrounds and interpretive education opportunities within 30 miles of Craig, Colorado to offer an “urban” connection to local residents from both Moffat and Routt Counties to enjoy the outdoor experience closer to communities. We will be using youth corps and veteran's green folks to work on the project. Engineering and design occurring now for trail system and campground layouts.
- Potential land acquisition at Cross Mountain Canyon to provide hunting and fishing opportunities on the Yampa River and acquire and conserve 2.8 miles of the Yampa River adjacent to the Cross Mountain Wilderness Study Area.
- \$20,000 in funding to Yampatika Outdoor Environmental Education Group
- \$150,000 in funding to City of Steamboat Springs for river riparian improvements and trail access improvements along the Yampa River.
- Working with Yampa Valley Land Trust to find matching funding to secure conservation easement on the headwaters of the Yampa River. GOCO grant has been applied for and results should be known by July.

Emerald Mountain: Emerald Mountain, the backdrop to Steamboat Springs (and the result of a successful BLM and State Land Board land exchange and community partnership) is continuing to be a wonderful recreational opportunity, well used by mountain bikers, hikers, wildlife and skiers. The recent addition of 600 adjacent acres, acquired by the City of Steamboat Springs, has complemented the 5,000 acre parcel of BLM public lands to the benefit of wildlife and recreation activities. New trail signs and educational kiosk to be installed this summer. Local youth corps will also be doing cleanup and trail work.

Field and Fire Season: Field and fire season is coming and the Little Snake Field Office interdisciplinary team is gearing up on grazing permit renewal efforts, including new analysis for livestock trailing permits. The new Craig Hotshot Facility is complete and the Craig Hotshots are on board for the 2012 fire season, as are our seasonal fire fighters. We are expecting a fairly rigorous fire season this year and have already seen fire activity such as escaped agricultural burns and a bit of arson.

Transmission EISs: Gateway South and TransWest transmission line projects are also keeping many of the staff occupied with data requests and meetings. Both of these projects are being coordinated out of Wyoming and the final decision on the rights-of-ways will be made by the Wyoming BLM State Director.

Wild Horses: The Sandwash Basin wild horse herd has experienced a mild winter and has come through the winter season in pretty good shape. We are seeing some foaling but the mare birth control efforts seemed to be making a little bit of difference. There is a lot of interest in the herd from a local horse group. This National Public Lands Day will include a wire and fence cleanup in the Sandwash Basin in August.

Oil and Gas Activity: Applications for Permit to Drill (APDs) for gas drilling are slowing due to the low natural gas prices. Currently, we are processing 11 APDs in the Little Snake Field Office and 1 in Kremmling. Operators are being very cooperative in siting well pads to avoid impacts to sage grouse leks and habitat.

Travel Management: Staff of the LSFO is being trained on ATVs to begin inventorying our existing roads for travel management consideration. We are advertising a position that will help us with our travel management planning and inventory.

Grand Junction Field Office, Catherine Robertson

Resource Management Planning

The Field Office, Cooperating Agencies, District Office, and BLM CO State Office have reviewed the DRMP. We have adjusted our range of alternatives, affected environment, and effects analysis based on those reviews. The Washington Office review is scheduled for June. We plan to make any edits required after that review, post a notice in the federal register, and make the DRMP/DEIS available for public review in the fall for a 90 day comment period (exact dates TBD). We will be conducting extensive public outreach leading up to the release of the DRMP/DEIS to help people prepare for the comment period. We would like to meet with all

interested user groups and help them understand the format of the document, to facilitate their efficient review. We welcome your suggestions on how to best conduct this outreach.

Natural Resources

Grazing—Likely the biggest change to the RMP alternatives as a result of the BLM CO state office and Regional Solicitor review is a broadening of the range of alternatives for livestock grazing. As a result of recent litigation, the BLM is now including a significantly reduced grazing alternative in upcoming RMPs. This alternative is necessary to help inform the decision maker on the effects of reduced grazing, including economic impacts to livestock producers.

Biological Restoration—The Dolores River Restoration Partnership will continue wide-scale restoration efforts along the 175 mile stretch of the Dolores below McPhee dam to the confluence with the Colorado. The Partnership has committed to approximately \$800,000 worth of work this calendar year. In areas within Mesa County, the planned work for 2012 includes:

- Mechanical and manual treatments of tamarisk on BLM lands north of Gateway to the state line.
- Noxious weed treatments on BLM and private lands in the riparian corridor.
- Follow-up treatments on tamarisk stands previously cut (BLM and private).
- Willow and cottonwood planting on select sites (BLM and private).
- Re-seeding of grasses, forbs and shrubs, where needed (BLM and private).
- Implementation planning with willing landowners for 2013 projects.

Recreation

Spring Madness – Several large events occur on BLM or centered on outdoor recreation on public lands in the spring bringing tourism dollars to the Valley. One consistently large event is the Bookcliffs Rattlers – Snakebite motorcycle race. This year the event was well attended with an average of 500 people a day. Other events include LRT Mountain Bike Races, Gateway’s Dynamite Shoot and Outdoor Heritage Days.

North Fruita Desert Special Recreation Management Area – BLM and partners (City of Fruita, COPMOBA, RRF and GVTA) have pooled resources to complete two new trails in the NFD SRMA just in time for Fruita’s Fat Tire Festival. This year’s Festival held on 4/26-29 will bring a few thousand cyclists to the Grand Valley with BLM personnel actively involved in the management of visitation, education, maintenance and enforcement. Overall, it is estimated that BLM staff, volunteers and cooperators will spend approximately 250 hours in preparation for the event; 50 hours during the event and 100 hours in clean-up and maintenance afterwards.

Grand Valley Trails Alliance -- David Grossman, GVTA Coordinator, has been working with several local user groups, government entities and business owners to establish a 501 (c)(3); securing office space and identifying folks that would be positive, community representatives on the GVTA Board.

Palisade Rims Trails – The first phase of the Palisade Rims trails was completed late fall 2011. The Town of Palisade hosted a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on April 7, 2012 to thank the many contributors to the trail system. Those partners include: BLM, OMID, BOR, CDOT, WCCC, Mesa County Corrections Crew, COPMOBA and others.

Lands and Minerals

Airport Transfer EA -- The Grand Junction Regional Airport and their contractor have experienced some delays on the development of the EA for this project. They are currently working on alternatives development. The number of acres proposed for transfer is being reduced from 720 acres to 190 acres based on the actual area needed for airport purposes. The transfer parcel boundary will be surveyed by a private surveyor hired by the Airport. The survey will be done in coordination with BLM cadastral surveyors to ensure it meets federal standards. We are awaiting an updated project schedule from the contractor.

Colorado Mesa University Recreation & Public Purposes Act Conveyance – Patent was issued on January 19, 2012.

Mountain Island Land Exchange – The next steps are to finalize the EA, send the draft decision package to the National Land Exchange Team and Washington Office for review and approval, and issue a notice of decision.

Dominguez-Escalante Land Acquisition (Krueger/JAK Ventures LLC Property, Gunnison River) – We are working with a third party facilitator, Western Rivers Conservancy, who purchased the 403-acre property in May 2011. Land and Water Conservation Fund money for this acquisition has been approved. A closing is scheduled for May 23, 2012. This is within the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area.

McClane Canyon Mine – Draft Environmental assessment should be ready for internal review in early May. The EA will address the lease modification for the McClane Canyon mine. The Office of Surface Mining has jurisdiction over the mine plan and associated facilities. A decision on the lease modification is expected by the end of summer 2012.

Black Hills – De Beque Exploratory Plan – A Programmatic Biological assessment is being prepared for the impacts of the development project on two federally listed plant species. The PBA will be submitted to the USFWS in early June. USFWS has 90 days to complete the consultation process. Upon receipt of the biological opinion, the EA can be completed and ready for public comment in early Fall.

Fram - Based upon comments received during the scoping process, Fram is planning to integrate a Wildlife Management Plan into their development proposal and has agreed to consider the use of an existing access route from the north to minimize seasonal impacts to wintering wildlife. Resource surveys (cultural and plant) for the FRAM development proposal will be completed in early May. Federally listed plant species requires we consult with the USFWS. BLM will submit Programmatic Biological Assessment in early June, USFWS has 90 days to complete consultation process. Draft EA expected end of September.

Transwest Express Transmission Project – The contractor is currently working on incorporating and responding to the comments generated during the internal review of the Draft EIS. Once that is complete, they will be sending the draft out the cooperating agencies for their review. The proposed alternative which generally followed HWY13, I-70 and Mt. Garfield will

NOT be carried forward for analysis. The remaining alternative which would affect Mesa County goes over Baxter Pass (not the applicant proposed alternative).

Enterprise WEP II - Pipeline to carry fluids from Dragon, near Vernal, UT through Rio Blanco, Garfield and Mesa Counties to Cisco, UT. An Environmental Assessment was reviewed internally and the comments are being addressed. The Biological Assessment has also been completed. Sensitive cultural resources are requiring minor rerouting of the line. We expect to have the preliminary EA ready for public review in late May.

Zephyr Transmission Line - The Zephyr project is another large transmission line originating in Wyoming and terminating near Las Vegas, NV. It is in the early stages (pre-scoping). A national project manager has been identified (Lorraine Salas, out of Las Cruces, NM). Alternatives cross all field offices in Colorado with the exception of Royal Gorge, San Luis Valley and Gunnison.

Fire Program

Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit -- The West Zone AFMO position is vacant and Gary Helming is currently detailed into that position. The west Zone will be fielding its normal compliment of resources for the 2012 fire season. We will have three BLM engines, one FS squad, and a contingent of Emergency Firefighters on call.

The West Zone fire management has been actively working with Mesa County and the Mesa County Fire Chiefs Association and has made some great progress with radio communications for Firefighters bridging the gap between the Mesa County Digital Trunked Radio System (800mhz) and the federal conventional Very High Frequency (VHF) system. A new Mesa County Interagency Radio Procedure is set to be approved this May and will be the norm for the 2012 fire season.

Mesa county emergency responders (local, county, State, and federal) have been vigilant in working closely together to make sure that we have good Annual Operating Plans and have the ability to share assets for incidents as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Outlook - Western Colorado is below average on annual precipitation this year and current conditions are much drier than normal. With the lack of spring moisture the “green up” period will be short lived and fuels will be conducive to fire growth earlier than last season. Fire crews are available at this time and we will be fully staffed on May 25th following the annual Firefighting training for new firefighters. The Upper Colorado Fire Management Unit will also have 2 Type 3 teams available on a rotating basis all season. These teams are an excellent management tool for fire that emerge and exceed a local unit response. These teams are interagency and have members from all cooperators and counties within the UCR.

National Conservation Areas (NCA)

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area – The Ruby-Horsethief permit system went into effect May 1, 2012. The Notice for the associated fee has also been published in the Federal Register. The fees will go into effect at the beginning of the 2013 high-use season, on May 1, 2013.

Colorado Canyons Association, the BLM's non-profit community stewardship partner for the NCAs, is planning several educational events in the NCA in the coming months. CCA will offer a guided wildflower hike on May 5, and will support a field trip for area 3rd graders on May 21-23.

Several large events have been held in the NCA this spring, including the Desert RATS Trail Running Event and the Fruita Fat Tire Festival.

Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area -- The BLM is working on the development of the preferred alternative for the D-E NCA planning effort, in close coordination with the Dominguez-Escalante Advisory Council and Cooperating Agencies. Next steps include development of the preferred alternative and impact assessment. The Draft is anticipated to be released in late fall 2012.

Colorado River Valley Field Office, Steve Bennett

Resource Management Plan update: The public comment period ended for the Draft CRVFO RMP on Feb. 29, 2012. We received 25,000 letters that were essentially a form letter of two varieties, plus 1,581 individual letters containing 4,550 separate comments. Staff and the contractor are currently performing a detailed analysis of these comments. The Field Office will host a series of meeting with the Cooperating Agencies and NW RAC subgroup over the next several months to review public comment and develop the Proposed Alternative for the Final EIS.

Sutey Ranch Land Exchange public comment period: The Field Office recently received approval from Washington to sign an Agreement to Initiate the Sutey Ranch Land Exchange. Under the proposal, BLM would acquire the 557-acre Sutey Ranch adjacent to the popular Red Hill Special Recreation Area in Garfield County, including the historic water rights from the ranch. BLM would also receive 117 acres in Pitkin County along Prince Creek Road adjacent to The Crown area. This private parcel is a highly popular area with mountain bikers and is used to access BLM roads and trails.

The BLM would exchange three parcels totaling 1,268 acres in Pitkin County south of Carbondale that are mostly surrounded by private land and are difficult for the public to access. These parcels would be transferred to the Two Shoes Ranch. In Eagle County, BLM would exchange three parcels totaling 195 acres on Horse Mountain southwest of Eagle which have little public access. The parcels would be transferred to the Lady Belle Ranch.

Conservation easements that would prevent development from occurring on the lands that would become private would be placed simultaneously at closing by Two Shoes Ranch and Lady Belle Ranch. BLM would also receive a \$1.1 million donation from the land exchange proponents – \$100,000 to cover BLM's cost to develop a site-specific management plan for the newly acquired parcel, and \$1 million for its long-term management.

The public comment period began Monday and will continue through June 20.

Spring window for prescribed burn near Burns challenging: Fuel and weather conditions this spring alternated between too moist and too dry for prescribed burn planned in the Field Office near Burns, Colo. A possible window is opening next week, but we are closely monitoring the conditions. Last year a successful 562-acre burn was conducted in this area, and this year would have been the fifth burn since 2004 as part of the Deer Pen Project. The burns have helped increase age diversity in the vegetation and have created a nice mosaic of habitat types. The Field Office coordinated closely with Eagle County, which had some burning restrictions in place for private lands. These have been lifted. Prescribed fire continues to be an effective tool for improving wildlife habitat, reducing high fuel loads, improving ecosystem health and firefighter safety.

Proposed Lake Ridge Unit (Thompson Creek): SG Interests, LTD (SG) submitted a unit application to BLM Colorado on May 17, 2011, for the proposed Lake Ridge Oil and Gas Unit Agreement. The proposed Lake Ridge Unit is approximately 32,400 acres in size and includes approximately 27,700 acres of Forest Service surface lands. The operator plans to initially drill two obligation wells in the unit area. The BLM is currently reviewing SG's application; however, no decisions have been made.

Kremmling Field Office, Dorothea Boothe

Dorothea Boothe, Public Affairs Specialist at the BLM Arizona State Office in Phoenix, joined the Kremmling Field Office staff on April 24th as Acting Field Manager for a 60-day detail assignment. Dorothea is enrolled in the BLM's Emerging Leaders Program. The detail assignment fulfills one of the requirements for successfully completing the program.

Kremmling RMP Revision: The Kremmling Field Office (KFO) Draft RMP/EIS was made available to the public on September 16, 2011, in CD format and on the Kremmling Field Office website. Due to a delay in printing paper copies, the traditional 90-day comment period was extended to January 17, 2012, to allow those receiving paper copies a full 90 days for review and comment. We are responding to 381 substantive comments received on the Draft RMP/EIS. An additional 1,600 comments were received as form letters or emails that are non-substantive, which will be grouped according to topic and receive a single, topic-related response. Travel management, target shooting, OHV use, and Wild and Scenic River designations are common topics among the substantive comments.

Since December, we have conducted RMP briefings and consultations with the five Tribes that have affiliation with our area. The KFO staff met with the NW Colorado RAC Subgroup and Cooperating Agencies on April 25th, to present a preliminary Proposed RMP. We are planning to gain permission to print our Proposed RMP/Final EIS by the end of September 2012.

Fuels Treatments: A NEPA analysis and burn plan are being completed for fuels treatments in the Mule Creek area (near Williams Fork Reservoir). Supporting documentation has been completed for the Dry Gulch (near State Bridge) and Vils (southeast of Walden) fuels treatments. Fuels treatments at Gore Lakes and on Independence Mountain are continuing.

An attempt was made on April 10, to begin the Vils prescribed burn, but the burn was cancelled because prescriptions could not be met. The day was not a loss, however, as the 20 firefighters and four engines were diverted to the Fox Fire near Gould, which began as a ditch burn on private land.

Forestry: Sale preparation work (cruising, etc.) continues on Owl Mountain, southeast of Walden, with the expectation of a fall sale. Three large sales are active: Reed Creek, Hogback, and Parsons East. A smaller sale on Black Mountain, northeast of Kremmling, is active, as well. A poor timber market and an excess of timber from the USFS hazard tree removals continue to affect our ability to dispose of lodgepole pines killed by Mountain Pine Beetles.

Watershed: Kremmling FO staff are working with the Owl Mountain Partnership and a contractor to complete a watershed management plan for Jackson County. The Colorado Non-Point Source Program awarded Owl Mountain a grant to complete the plan, help fund three water wells for BLM permittees, and complete vegetation treatments. The plan summarizes the existing water quality in North Park streams and suggests actions to assist in the delisting of impaired streams. The plan also proposes additional projects and public outreach efforts to maintain the watershed's many values and uses. A draft plan is expected to be ready for public review by June 1st. The three wells funded by the grant should be completed this summer.

Recreation: A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Eagle County has been completed for managing a parcel at State Bridge, across the Colorado River from the State Bridge concert venue. Eagle County acquired the parcel at a cost of over a million dollars. The parcel has been used as a commercial boat launching site on the river. The MOU allows the BLM to manage the site, using half of the user fees collected. Eagle County will provide permanent infrastructure (outhouse, other improvements). The BLM's management of the site will fit well with recreation management of the Colorado River, from Confluence to State Bridge. The State Bridge site will be used as a take-out for rafting and kayaking trips beginning up river, and as a put-in for trips down river in the Colorado River Valley Field Office.

Upgrades of facilities at the Pumphouse Recreation Site on the Colorado River will be made this summer. The boat ramp at Launch 3 will be widened to allow more than one vehicle at a time to use the ramp. Shade cabanas will be added to some of the picnic/camping sites used by handicapped visitors. Planning and design continues for a second boat ramp at the Radium Recreation Site.

The summer concert season at the State Bridge venue is gearing-up. As many as 250 people attend each weekend concerts throughout the summer. Concerts for eight weekends have already been booked. Many of the visitors camp on adjacent public lands under a permit issued to the State Bridge property owner. Both the operator and the BLM had "learn as you go" experiences last summer, due to a number of unexpected situations that developed as the summer progressed. As previously reported, a developer acquired the State Bridge site several years after the lodge burned, and created a venue for music events. An amphitheater and other improvements have been installed. Adjacent public lands are used under a Special Recreation Permit for parking and camping associated with the events. Events will resume next summer.

Outdoor Education: Through the efforts of Hanna Schechter, the Kremmling Field Office hosted a meeting April 25-27, of the National Take-It-Outside team. Other outdoor education efforts continue, including a recent Earth Day celebration with the Jackson County Outdoor Education Network. Kremmling Field Office events upcoming include: the Reeder Creek Trail maintenance involving youth from Pennsylvania; the West Grand High School river trip and outdoor education event; and coordination with East Grand school teachers to expand the Grand County Outdoor Education Network. Kremmling FO staff will be representing the BLM at the West Grand Watershed Week, the Point Park outdoor education event, the Jackson County Water Carnival, and a career fair for youth. All of these events are focused on youth, outdoor education, and resource management.

Kremmling Bunkhouse: The bunkhouse, which was constructed in 2010, and was occupied for the first time last year, will be undergoing a major landscaping effort this summer. The landscaping is especially important because the bunkhouse is in a residential area, thus avoiding an unkempt appearance and complaints from neighbors. The landscaping project is a coordinated effort for design, funding and construction among a landscape architect at the National Operations Center, the State Engineer in the Colorado State Office, and the engineering staff at the Grand Junction Field Office.

Public Comment

David Kane, Carbondale. Sage grouse comments. I am wildlife biologist by training. Won't have one-size fits all solution for this. My recommendation is that there has to be some give and take. Lots of differences even within science. Thompson Divide: Concerned about allowing public to comment on an administrative decision like a unit decision. Scientific process, not about surface use.

Steve Smith: RAC has discussed unitization process in general and Lake Ridge specifically. We get good intentions of unitization concept. Some of us here think that the unitization process can still be customized for more sensitive areas. I think more engagement is a good thing.

Kane: Some balance has to be struck. Operator has intent to drill up there. Appreciate work of RAC.

Callie: If Spay Vac is moving forward, how would that interface with HSUS project at Sand Wash?

Wendy: Assume they would want to use the most effective technique

SUBRAC updates

CRVFO

New Mountain Bike member recommended. Passed unanimously

5 meetings of subgroup through the summer to work through bigger components. Will address specific geographic areas at each meeting. They will bring recommendations back to this RAC, so they should have their recommendations by our next meeting in August. Steve Smith is liaison

KFO

Barbara is liaison. Subgroup wants to stay together. Just meet, went through alternatives. Preliminary briefing. Went over comments (about 400). Socioeconomics. Errors in maps in Drafts will be corrected

WRFO

Subgroup has been helping us with how to present this complicated info to the public? No meetings scheduled right now.

Next meeting:

Wild horse resolution -- 15 minutes

White River RMPA – 2 hours

CRVFO RMP Subgroup recommendation – 1 hour

Sage grouse update 30 minutes/1 hour

Field trip start an hour early?