

Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council
Aug. 21, 2014
Allington Inn
Kremmling, CO

Attendance

NW RAC

Category 1: Tom Latham, Wes McStay, John Potter, Dave Grisso

Category 2: Stacy Beaugh, Dona Shue, Barbara Vasquez, Carl Conner

Category 3: John Justman, Lanny Weddle, Dean Riggs

BLM: David Boyd, Kent Walter, Steve Bennett, Katie Stevens, Joe Meyer, Wendy Reynolds, Stephanie Odell, Chris Joyner, Greg Larson, Monte Senior, Courtney Whiteman

Public: Peter Hart, Wilderness Workshop; Stella, Thompson, Sand Wash Advocate Team; Courtney Pickus, Thompson Divide Coalition; Jeff Kirtland, WPX; Kent Hejl, WPX

A quorum is present

Dean Riggs called meeting to order 8 a.m. and thanked Stephanie Odell and the Kremmling Field Office staff for the field trip and dinner.

Terry Sweet was acknowledged for his term on the NW RAC.

David Boyd said the current five members whose terms are up this year are RAC members until their terms expire Nov. 15. An announcement of who is appointed or reappointed for the next term will probably be announced in November.

Joe Meyer, who will become the new NW District Manager and Designated Federal Officer for the NW RAC was in attendance. While he is not yet in the role, he came to observe, meet people and learn some issues. Joe gave a brief introduction. He's originally from Minnesota and is currently the Field Manager in Casper. His background is in hydrology and soils, and he has been with BLM 25 years. He noted that there are similar issues in Wyoming and NW Colorado. He is excited about his move to Grand Junction, which he sees as a great opportunity.

Wild Horse presentation, Wendy Reynolds

Wendy gave a Powerpoint presentation on Colorado wild horses.

Most wild horses in Colorado are in NW District.

Volunteer activists have been critical in application of fertility control darting.

Looking at adding horses to Spring Creek and Little Book Cliffs to increase genetic diversity.

Stacy: Explain horses outside HMA, and how that works.

Kent: We had horses when the Free Roaming Wild Horse and Burro Act was passed in specific areas. Through planning we identified the boundaries of the Herd Management Area, which was the area best area to manage wild horses. Other areas where wild horses were found were identified as Herd Areas. Wild horses are also found outside of HMAs and HAs and are in areas where there were not horses at passage of act in 1971. Don't have authority to manage those areas for wild horses. Wild horse numbers in my area are as high as they've ever been. Wild horses have been spreading out even further than they have in the past.

Tim: We get horses into the Little Snake Field Office from Wyoming. Not part of our HMA. Also, volunteers are able to see far more horses on the ground than we can from the air.

Wendy: Looking to DC for money to help support the work of the volunteers.

Wendy: Livestock permittees have taken non-use because of high wild horse numbers for several years. There are competing uses. One of the permittees is threatening to sue. He has voluntarily taken non-use, provided water for horses. He has been very patient over the years.

Kent: Similar issue in the White River Field Office. We have a permittee in a non-HMA area that is also taking voluntary non-use. Tough to run a business, impacting his livelihood.

Katie: Not an issue in Little Book Cliffs, which is a wild horse range. No grazing allotted.

Wendy: Currently not gathering horses in most areas. Haven't been able to do even small gathers in Sand Wash. And our PZP darting program depends on volunteer force.

Lanny: It's a tragedy that we can spend \$50 million to hold unwated horses, but can't come up with enough money to properly manage them on the ground.

Wendy: BLM is going to be doing a national EIS on wild horses. We are not looking at bringing horses to the appropriate management level until 2035 or 2040. We need more tools in our tool box. Chemical vasectomy would be done with PZP, for instance. The NW RAC passed resolution supporting chemical vasectomy in Sand Wash, but I'm not sure whether it will happen or not right now. The National

Academy of Science report said BLM should use chemical vasectomy and PZP together. Every horse from capture to death costs BLM \$45,000.

Barbara: Why is DC pushing back on this idea on chemical vasectomy?

Wendy: They are not sure what results of chemical vasectomy would be, and there is already a darting PZP program at Sand Wash.

Tim: To evaluate chemical vasectomy we should really do a study comparing a similar area with no darting, one with chemical vasectomy but without PZP, and one that is just chemical vasectomy.

Barbara: But how will you learn what will happen if you don't try it?

Dean: BLM is currently behind the 8-ball because wild horse numbers are already so high. Now they are unable to gather or other take other drastic measures. Trying to apply limited techniques to a population that is already over-populated, and you are without all the tools you need to have.

Lanny: Don't see problem going away. Applaud efforts of people here. Will continue until Washington stops bowing to emotion and politics.

Carl: Problem is funding. If Washington wants horses to be out here, need provide adequate funding.

Dean: The majority of funding going to feed horses in holding; horses that can't be adopted. Ultimately it's just not sustainable.

Justman: Don't need to study anymore. You can't keep doing the same thing over and over and expect different results.

Wendy: The resolution the NW RAC passed has been acknowledged by state office, which is encouraging Washington to offer a grant to look at this. Need Dr. Shiner to submit a proposal. He is still doing trials.

Katie: RAC deserves credit for encouraging this approach, whether this occurs in Colorado or elsewhere.

Wendy: I have received letter from permittee threatening to sue if we don't manage numbers at Sand Wash. When this goes to a judge, I need to be able to show that we are trying to do something to address the problem. This is a keystone moment. May push us back to gathering if we can't do something else.

Wes: I wish the activists would love the land and vegetation as much as the horses. If that range is converted to cheat grass and halogeton from overgrazing, horses and wildlife will starve.

Kent: We have seen that in West Douglas. Overgrazing due to horses has completely altered the vegetation, won't return without human intervention. That results in impacts to big game and sage grouse. BLM wants to see horses out there, but want to manage them at the appropriate level.

Katie: We've had our range cons out with Friends of the Mustangs to see range conditions before we start to see horses starting to starve.

Lanny: What is timeframe for chemical castration? Not everybody in field agrees this technique would be effective, at least one case where stallion was not sterile.

Wendy: This spring at the earliest, but there are lots of unknowns. We don't know if Sand Wash would be pilot area if it goes forward.

Wendy: Key message is we are looking at all possibilities for a solution.

Stacy: How does sage grouse affect this?

Wendy: Addressing wild horses in the Sage Grouse EIS. The two resources do compete, although it hasn't been high on radar screen so far.

Katie: Primarily as issue with cover, based on what horses eat. USFWS has said grazing is ok as long as meeting land health standards. Some areas may not be meeting land health standards due to wild horses.

Carl: Some horses on Piceance are on private land. Are they still wild horses. On lands owned by Shell, would they contribute to funding?

Kent: Have agreements with landowners in HMAs to provide water. At the right level, there is lot of support for horses. We need to maintain our end of the bargain and manage wild horse numbers if we want partners to work with us.

TIM: The Sage Grouse EIS we are working on now puts disturbance caps for energy companies. If horses cause high levels of disturbance, it could affect the company's disturbance cap. Those areas would need to be fenced out.

Stacy: Are there other opportunities for the RAC to be involved and engaged in this issue?

Wendy: Take this story and network it. The RAC has diverse representation. Appreciate support from this group in the past.

Dona: One thing we might be able to do is a resolution to National WHB advisory board, which is split on what to do.

Lanny: Keeping apprised of what is going on is key. Callie Hendrickson is on that board. We need to stay in contact with her.

Barbara: Will the Powerpoint be on-line?

Wendy: Yes.

John Justman: Predators have not been considered on sage grouse issue either, just like wild horses.

Dona: Moves that NW RAC write a letter to the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board with some of our ideas, as well as to other RACs across the country. Tell them about with these new ideas.

Tom: Don't discount Lanny's idea of working with Callie on National Board.

Katie: Should reach out to Friends of the Mustangs, who haven't been involved in the RAC.

Wendy: Don't lose sight of volunteers. Need funding support.

Dave Grisso: Letters need to include all resolutions and letters we've passed in the past.

Dean: Everyone ok with Dona drafting these letters – one to national board and one to other RACs? (Group affirms)

Justman: I would like historic numbers on Sand Wash. When you have done past gathers, what the populations have been.

Dona, Barbara and Stacy will work with Dave Boyd in drafting a resolution supporting additional support for the volunteer efforts in drafting, along with letters to other RACs and the WHB Advisory Board. The group will get a draft via e-mail and will decide via e-mail whether to vote over e-mail, vote at the next meeting, or defer to the February meeting.

Lanny suggests a briefing packet for new RAC members specific to issues they may be asked to vote on their first meeting

Sutey Ranch Land Exchange – Monte and Bennett

Steve -- Signed notice of decision. Been keeping NW RAC apprised of this issue.

Powerpoint

Barbara: Will there be more interest from BLM in doing land exchanges to acquire sage grouse habitat?

Katie: Sage Grouse planning helps us identify lands we would acquire if given the opportunity, and we have also have dropped small isolated parcels with habitat from the disposal list.

Wes: What are plans with lands you have acquired?

Bennett: That needs to be determined. Competing interests with recreation and wildlife habitat potentially. Opportunity for NW RAC to be involved in management

Wes: What about grazing on lands to be acquired?

Monte: Would look at that through planning process.

Tim: What was mineral disposition?

Monte: Extremely low, had to do mineral potential report.

Justman: Water rights with parcels leaving public?

Monte: No

Justman: Conservation easements held by AVTL, so the County will lose some tax revenue

Bennett: County's primary concern was loss of federal land in the county.

Justman: You should say "limited public access" if you are not allowing motorized access to the new parcel.

Benentt: That hasn't been determined. It will be determined in management plan

Dean: Parks and Wildlife position is that this is critical big game habitat, which is pretty limited.

Bennett: May be difficult to accommodate recreation and wildlife values.

Bennett: Endowment of \$1 million in unprecedented in BLM. Working with AVLT to hold the money to invest it and protect principal. BLM can't invest and would take 30 percent in administrative fees. AVLT will give us distribution of a certain percent each year for management.

Public Comment:

Stella Trueblood, Sand Wash Advocate Team:

The Sand Wash Advocate Team (SWAT) is a program of the Great Escape Mustang Sanctuary (GEMS).

GEMS is a non profit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving the mustang as a revered icon and encouraging the value of the equine-human relationship. Its mission is three-fold: to offer education and promote awareness about mustangs and burros; to collaborate in supporting wild horses on the range; and to provide training, adoptions and sanctuary to those in need.

SWAT is an organized alliance of individuals and groups working to support the land and horses of Sand Wash Basin (SWB). SWAT's mission is to, as citizen stewards, support the land and horses of SWB in collaboration with the BLM.

GEMS/SWAT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the BLM's Little Snake Field Office on June 18, 2014. This MOU established a working relationship specifically to facilitate cooperation between the two groups with clearly stated objectives and benefits.

GEMS/SWAT does not nor has never endorsed chemical vasectomy or castration. GEMS/SWAT does not know and has never had communication with Kirk Shiner or his project proposals.

GEMS/SWAT was only made aware of the proposed concept for a chemical vasectomy pilot project during a Feb 28, 2014 meeting with BLM Little Snake Field Office management for which the sole purpose of the meeting was to establish a PZP vaccine program for SWB to facilitate population management. The proposed concept of chemical vasectomy was briefly made in passing with no detailed discussion. However, at that time, GEMS/SWAT did state clearly that they, in no way, support any such pilot project or intervention. In addition, GEMS/SWAT offered to provide detailed, scientific information to the BLM as to why such a pilot project and/or intervention would not be practical or that it would not facilitate population management in Sand Wash Basin.

Gunnison Sage Grouse – Leigh Espy

Powerpoint

Barbara: What kind of cross-talks with the Greater EIS planning effort?

Leigh: I am familiar with Greater Sage Grouse EIS. Washington office contacts are familiar with both.

Barbara: You said “consistent plans” for adjacent landowners, how will that happen?

Leigh: BLM does not have authority over private land. The 11 county coalition is involved. If there is regulation on private, it would come from the counties, not BLM. Consistency among landowners is a goal.

Wes: How involved is USFWS?

Leigh: We have a full-time USFWS biologist on our team.

Tim: Have you identified conflicts in GJFO plan for management among Gunny and Greater?

Leigh: They are similar.

Katie: Currently they are identical for gunny and greater.

Wendy: Did NTT report cover Gunny?

Leigh: No, just greater. Scientists are currently looking at something similar for Gunnison Grouse.

Dean: That's a really good working group in Gunnison basin. Good model for Greater – keep eye on the ball and do what's best for the bird. Not there yet on Greater grouse.

Kent: Will you be looking at predators?

Leigh: We don't have jurisdiction over predators, but we have identified it as an issue. Some things we can do in habitat management to address.

Fee Program – Stephanie Odell

Review of Upper Colorado fee program

From 1998-2006 it was a fee demo pilot program, one of three in Colorado. In 2002, total fee collections exceeded \$106,000, with 47,600 coming from the fee demo and 58,900 from camping and Special Recreation Permit fees). In 2005 Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act passed, making this a fee area under FLREA. In 2012 user fees were approved by the NW RAC to be raised from \$3 per vehicle to \$5 per vehicle, and \$1 per commercial client to \$1.25. In 2013, total fee collections were \$183, 671.

Fee revenue has been used for a number of improvements and to fund seasonals, whose work out there is critical. Improvements include a public drinking water system, cement boat launches, ADA improvements, a weed raft to spray noxious weeds, wildlife habitat improvement.

In general, users support the fees because of the improvements they see. We are considering a fee proposal for the North Sand Hills.

We are working on an agreement with state land board to be able to manage North Sand Hills as more as a single unit. Once those documents are signed, next step will probably be to pursue a fee program. This year we did not get grant from the state from the OHV fund and we didn't have seasonals. Fee program revenues would stay at NSHs. Outdoor planner is pretty swamped. Fees fund the seasonals.

Carl: Public is willing to support small fees to improve area

Lanny: A study was done by the North Sand Hills working group 10 years ago. Users then said they didn't want fees or development, they wanted dispersed camping. Demographics of the people using the area have changed. We are seeing the impact of greater numbers. In the past Jackson County has opposed fees up there. I'm not saying that opposition has gone away, but attitude toward fees has changed. Support from Jackson County on a fee proposal will depend on whether that revenue goes back into the North Sand Hills, and what are we going to get from our dollar.

Stepahnie—There would be a plan developed. By regulation fees would have to go back into that area.

Lanny: Communication with county is key. County had toes stepped on once before. Communication will be key to keeping county support.

Potter: Is there a proposal? Will you be coming to the RAC?

Stephanie: Looking at this point for general support for KFO to move forward with the idea.

Wendy: This is not unprecedented. Managed similar property in Idaho. Fees gave us shade structures, search and rescue, law enforcement

Kent: This issue has been issuing for a long, long time. BLM missed an opportunity to communicate. Need to do an MOU with Jackson County as well to ensure communication is formalized.

Dona: Been involved since the beginning. Pleased with how things have progressed with Jackson County. Looks like the best opportunity.

Dave Grisso: Agree. Complement all the players in this.

Lanny: Need to see what it would entail before we ask RAC for support.

Barbara: I am a Jackson County resident and am pleased opinion is shifting. Change in demographics is in part because people don't feel safe and area is trashed. Could you look at a reduced fee for local residents? Is there a way for fees to flow back to the county?

Carl: Lots of ski areas have local passes, good idea.

Wes: I would support an opportunity for dispersed camping with no fee, like North Fruita desert.

Katie: A lot of the problems NSH is seeing are similar to what we were seeing at North Fruita and Ruby Horse-Thief before we implemented fees there. Public involvement early was key. Get public involvement early.

Justman: If we head down this fee road, how long before we have a fee to go ride your ATV on BLM or go elk hunting?

Katie: There are sideboards in the authorizing legislation. We can't just charge for access. Have to be providing services or amenities that benefit the public.

Dona: We need to schedule a meeting next year in Walden and tour the NSHs.

Dean: You have a general thumbs up that we support your pursuing this. Will be point at which RAC needs to formally vote.

Field Manager update

District Manager Update

Northwest Colorado Greater Sage Grouse EIS Update: The Northwest District Sage Grouse Interdisciplinary Team has been drafting responses to public comments on the Draft EIS, developing the impact analysis for the Final EIS, and completing the remainder of the Proposed Plan. The NW District is coordinating with the State and Washington offices and expects to release the Proposed Plan/Final EIS this fall or winter. BLM received about 7,500 public comments during the public comment period on the Draft EIS. The Record of Decision is expected in Feb. 2015.

Field Manager Updates

White River Field Office, Kent Walter

Rangely Trash Clean-up project: The White River Field Office partnered with Rio Blanco County to clean up three concentrated trash sites near Rangely. BLM provided five employees/interns for two days with pick-up trucks, tools, and trash bags. The Rio Blanco County Road and Bridge crew provided six employees for three days plus three

dump trucks, a welding truck, an excavator and a back hoe. Approximately 12 large dump truck loads of trash and 10 small dump truck loads of metal cable were removed from public lands. The trash was taken to the county land fill and the metal is to be recycled. All three sites were cleaned up by the end of the project.

Meeker Trail System Master Plan: The White River Field Office has partnered with the Eastern Rio Blanco Metropolitan Recreation and Parks District in planning the expansion of the existing 6-mile non-motorized trail system on a 2,000-acre parcel of BLM lands adjacent of the Town of Meeker. The project had been introduced to the ERBM Board of Directors and WRFO staff, but no formal proposed action has been fully developed yet. The proposed action should be available for public within the next month. This project was identified as a need in the ERBM Master Plan and meets the primary goal and mission of the new BLM Recreation Strategy “Connecting with Communities.”

Route inventory work continues: The White River Field Office Travel Route Inventory project continues to bring in comprehensive data on travel routes. Six interns from the Rocky Mountain Youth Corp, comprised of a five-person trail crew and one GIS intern, are collecting and organizing this data by using off-highway vehicles with mounted GPS units and taking geo-tagged photos. This project is anticipated to inform future WRFO travel management planning efforts. This year the interns inventoried 1,100 miles of routes, adding to last year’s total of 1,400 miles.

Wilderness Act 50th Anniversary: The White River Field Office has partnered with the White River National Forest and various other local community groups and agencies to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. There are a series of events that are leading up to a celebration called Keep It Wild in Meeker on August 23. BLM WRFO has led a hike in a wilderness study area for local youth, spoke about wilderness and WSAs at a local History Camp, created a traveling story board for the public to contribute stories about wilderness and WSAs, and will be providing an educational booth at the main event.

Oil and Gas RMP Amendment: The Field Office continues to work with the State and Washington offices on the Proposed Plan Amendment/Final EIS, which is currently anticipated to be released this fall.

Oil and Gas consolidation: All oil and gas permitting will happen through the White River Field Office (WRFO, KFO, LSFO) and the Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO and GJFO) beginning Oct. 1.

Colorado River Valley Field Office, Steve Bennett

Nearly 300 family members attend 20th Anniversary of the South Canyon Fire: The 20th anniversary of the tragic South Canyon Fire on Storm King Mountain was observed July 6 with a public event in Glenwood Springs attended by more than 600 people.

During the morning of July 6, about 300 family members of the 14 firefighters killed on Storm King Mountain hiked the mountain. The oldest family member making the steep, 2-mile hike was 81 years old. The National Guard provided a helicopter to bring family members unable to make the hike to the memorial site. A number of organizations were involved in the committee that organized the commemorative event and family picnic. The primary entities directly involved were BLM, USFS, Garfield Sheriff's Office, Colorado River Fire Rescue, Colorado Division of Fire Prevention & Control, Garfield County, City of Glenwood Springs, Glenwood Springs Fire, National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, Colorado Fallen Firefighter Foundation, Storm King 14 (represents families), Prineville Hotshots, McCall Smokejumpers and Missoula Smokejumpers.

Roan Plateau Supplemental Environmental Statement: The Colorado River Valley Field Office held its first cooperating agency meeting on the Roan Plateau SEIS on Aug. 12, 2014. Cooperating agencies include the Colorado Department of Natural Resources/Colorado Parks and Wildlife, City of Rifle, Town of Parachute, Rio Blanco County, Garfield County, Mesa County, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and EPA. Among the topics at the Cooperator meeting was the recently completed scoping report, which is available on-line at www.blm.gov/co/crvfo. The Draft SEIS is expected to be released for a 90-day public comment period in 2015.

EIS on Previously Issued Leases in the White River National Forest: The Colorado River Valley Field Office held its first cooperating agency meeting on this EIS on Aug. 14, 2014. Agencies that have officially sign-on as cooperators are the Colorado Department of Natural Resources/Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Garfield County, Mesa County, Pitkin County, Town of Carbondale, Town of Silt. Agencies expected to sign-on include City of Glenwood Springs, Town of Newcastle, Town of Parachute, U.S. Forest Service, and EPA. Staff are analyzing scoping comments for a scoping report. A Draft of this EIS is due in summer 2015.

CRVFO RMP Update: The Colorado River Valley Field Office received 20 protest submissions on its Proposed RMP. The Final Record of Decision is expected this fall.

Little Snake Field Office, Tim Wilson

Route Inventory work begins – The Rocky Mountain Youth Corps provided the LSFO with three interns this summer to assist with route inventories for travel management planning. The three interns rotated two week shifts in the field with GIS work in the office. Two of the interns would utilize ATV's to perform inventory work while the third downloaded data gathered the previous day for input into the GIS. Since mid-May, the crew has inventoried over 1,200 miles with approximately 6 weeks of field time still available. This ongoing travel management effort is being performed as part of the implementation of the LSFO Resource Management Plan signed in October 2011.

Sarvis Creek/ Hubbard Summer Camp Acquisition – The BLM in partnership with the USFS is nearing completion of the acquisition of a 45-acre parcel of river-front property along the Upper Yampa River below Stagecoach Reservoir. This private

inholding lies between BLM, Forest Service, and State lands adjacent to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness. The land and historic cabin were once used by the Hubbard Family, who ranched in the valley for many years, as a summer retreat for several weeks each year. The original Hubbard Ranch now lies beneath Stagecoach Reservoir. Funding for BLM's portion of the purchase has been secured from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These funds are generated by royalties from offshore oil and gas leasing. The LSFO is currently preparing an environmental assessment and business plan for the property in anticipation of closing on the purchase by the end of this calendar year.

Fire Season - In late July, numerous thunderstorms produced thousands of lightning strikes that triggered numerous fires ranging in size from single tree starts to several hundred acres. The largest fire during this period was the 20,000 acre Alkali Fire which burned through priority sage grouse habitat. It also destroyed a historic farmstead and killed a few head of livestock. It has been determined that this fire was unintentionally human caused. The LSFO staff is currently preparing an emergency response plan to address downed fences and revegetation of the affected areas. Assessments are being made on proposed decisions to initiate temporary closures of all or portions of the nearly 8,000 acres of public lands burned.

Emerald Mountain – The LSFO has received contributed funds from the City of Steamboat Springs for improvements at the Cow Creek Trailhead and the new Wild Rose Trail on Emerald Mountain. Emerald Mountain serves as the backdrop to the City of Steamboat Springs and draws hundreds of hikers, bicyclists, and horse riders each year to the elaborate trail system there.

Work currently in the design stage at the Cow Creek Trailhead includes improved vehicular access, a formal parking area with designated areas for cars as well as trucks with horse trailers, and a handicap accessible vault toilet. Construction should be completed in the summer of 2015.

The Wild Rose Trail is being built to provide public access and multiple-use recreation opportunities of public lands within the Emerald Mountain SRMA through the construction of a 1.5 mile trail. This connector trail would provide access to the Beall and Ridge Trail systems from the adjoining City of Steamboat Springs' Stairway to Heaven Trail. In addition to providing a connecting trail from City property to BLM public lands, the Wild Rose Trail is proposed to eliminate a section of the Stairway to Heaven Trail that is too steep and is eroding. The Wild Rose trail will provide a more sustainable trail system. Construction should be completed in the summer of 2015.

Funding for both of these projects is through appropriations from the City of Steamboat Springs lodging tax. In November 2013, voters in Steamboat Springs overwhelmingly supported spending lodging tax dollars on trails, which included the Wild Rose Trail. In March 2014, the 2A campaign committee unanimously voted on providing funds for the Wild Rose Trail and the Cow Creek Trailhead Improvements, ranking them as priority projects.

Grand Junction Field Office, Katie Stevens

Pine Ridge Fire burn area to reopen after 2012 Fire: The Grand Junction Field Office will lift the closure to the area burned by the 14,000-acre Pine Ridge Fire west of DeBeque. The closure was scheduled to go through January 2015, but will be lifted sooner based on improved re-vegetation. The 2012 fire burned intensely, removing soil-stabilizing plants and making the area susceptible to wind and water erosion. The area was closed to allow vegetation to be re-established. Erosion posed a serious threat to water quality on the Colorado River, and the loss of native vegetation also increased the possibility of invasive weeds. Two seeding operations took place during the fire rehabilitation, a sterile annual wheatgrass for initial stabilization followed by a perennial mix. The relatively high amount of moisture this year help has led to the better-than-expected recovery of native vegetation.

Recreation Strategy: The BLM recently issued an updated strategic plan for recreation agency-wide that covers the next 5 years. As part of this strategy, BLM offices are directed to help communities produce greater well-being and socioeconomic health and deliver outstanding recreation experiences to visitors. The BLM should do this by seeking out and developing relationships with locally based governments as well as private sector industries and businesses, including outfitters, tour operators, lodging, restaurants, nature and youth centers, Chambers of Commerce, tourism industry associations, sporting goods and retail stores, and other nongovernmental organizations. The Grand Junction Field Office could have an important role to play in this overall strategy. We've been building a lot of these concepts into our Resource Management Plan and this is generally the way we've been doing business in recent years.

Grand Junction RMP Schedule: The Proposed RMP/Final EIS for the Grand Junction Field Office is anticipated to be released late this year.

Kremmling Field Office, Stephanie Odell

Whitewater park: The Kremmling Field Office recently signed a Decision Record approving construction of the proposed Gore Canyon Whitewater Park at the Pumphouse Recreation Site on the upper Colorado River. Grand County was recently awarded historic water rights for constructing this waterpark. The County submitted a right-of-way application to build the feature across the full width of the river upstream of the Pumphouse boat launch 2. The feature consists of engineered designed boulders and block-like concrete objects placed across the stream channel that are not visible at normal flows and allow for fish passage at all flow rates. The specific right-of-way is currently being processed. Construction is scheduled to begin in November.

Bark beetle mitigation work continues in KFO: The Kremmling Field Office continues to actively address bark beetle mitigation. The Owl Mountain Sanitation Salvage Sale in Jackson County, for instance, will be advertised next week at 405 acres and 3.4 million board feet to salvage dead lodgepole pine and remove roadside hazard trees. The Grand County Hazardous Tree Removal Environmental Assessment was signed and is ready to

implement. The project area includes approximately 9,150 acres of forested lands in Grand County administered by the BLM. Under the proposal, all dead, disease-infested and other hazard trees within 125 feet of BLM roads, trails and other infrastructure would be removed. The EA also identifies potential areas available for large-scale mechanical salvage and fuel reduction, and potential areas where fire could be used to treat slash piles resulting from mechanical treatment. There are more than 289 miles of roads within the Kremmling Field Office directly affected by beetle-killed trees. With the market for lumber and wood pellets rebounding from the recession, the demand for access to beetle-killed trees is also rebounding, helping ensure these projects will continue to have interested bidders. New products using material from beetle-killed trees are also creating more opportunity, such as for bioremediation and absorption in the oil and gas industry.

Kremmling RMP update: The Kremmling Office Final Record of Decision for its Proposed Resource Management Plan is expected this fall.

Next meeting Dec. 3-4

Katie will work on field trip

Agenda – WRFO RMPA final, travel inventory and planning strategy for WRFO/LSFO, wild horse resolution, wild horse update nw district; election