

Coeur d'Alene Resource Advisory Council Meeting Minutes March 7, 2013

*Coeur d'Alene District Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, ID*

RAC Members in Attendance:

Category 1:

Jann Higdem, Linda Rider, David Brummer, Alan Harper, Kim Friend

Category 2:

Douglas Boggan, David Uberuaga, Jerry Shriner, Cliff Swanson

Category 3:

Chris Goetz, Patty Perry, Keegan Schmidt, Dan Dinning, Tommy Stroschein

BLM Staff in Attendance:

Gary Cooper - Designated Federal Officer and Coeur d'Alene District Manager

Suzanne Endsley - RAC Coordinator and Public Affairs Specialist

Will Runnoe - Cottonwood Field Manager

Zach Peterson - Forester

Kurt Pavlat - Coeur d'Alene Field Manager

In attendance via video conference for Sheep Fire Salvage presentation

Robbin Boyce - Cottonwood Assistant Field Manager

Kristen Sanders - Fire Ecologist

Connie Curtis - Administrative Assistant and note taker

Other Attendees:

Karen Roetter - Senator Crapo's Office

Mike Hanna - Senator Risch's Office

Sid Smith - Senator Risch's Office

Aaron Calkins - Congressman Labrador's Office

Scott Carlton - Congressman Labrador's Office

Diana Jones - Clearwater-Nez Perce National Forest

Gary McFarland - Friends of the Clearwater

Randy Doman - via video conference at Cottonwood Field Office

Note to readers: A copy of each attachment listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, is on file with the official copy of minutes in the BLM Coeur d'Alene Office. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Suzanne Endsley at (208) 769-5004.

Orientation for New RAC Members

Suzanne presented a PowerPoint providing an overview of the CDA District. RAC member roles, the current RAC charter and mission were discussed.

Formal Business Meeting

Linda Rider, RAC Chairperson, called the business meeting to order at 9:57 a.m. DFO Gary Cooper welcomed and information on the Natural Resource Trustee Council. Gary asked if everyone got a copy of the Agenda. (Handout 1)

Agenda Topic: Old Business

Minutes of the May 31, 2012 meeting were discussed. Jann Higdem offered several typographical corrections. Cliff Swanson made a motion to accept minutes with typos corrected; Kim Friend seconded. All were in favor of accepting the May meeting minutes with the corrections.

Agenda Topic: Proposed Final Draft Recreation Facility Analysis

Diana Jones of the Clearwater-Nez Perce National Forest recreation program presented follow-up information on the forests' Recreation Facility Analysis that began last summer. The RAC was briefed on the process at the May 2012 meeting. The plan develops a sustainable recreation program with budget restraints (Handout 2). The forest presented three scenarios to the public for comment: 1) reduce services; 2) pursue concessionaires at sites; or 3) increase fees. A lot of negative comments were received on concessionaires and they have since dropped this option. The forest has reviewed each recreation area and has looked at operation efficiencies for each. The forest is now developing a final program of work which would likely increase fees at some sites and reduce amenities at some sites that are remote, expensive to maintain and not frequently used. A final plan out for public review is expected later this spring. The RAC will be engaged at later time regarding fee increases once the plan has been approved from the Forest Service National Office.

Miscellaneous comments:

- *Dan Dinning asked what other sites they used to conduct your comparison. Diana Jones said they looked at other FS sites, such as those on the Payette and Panhandle National Forests. They found that with the increase they will be equitable with other sites.*
- *Cliff Swanson asked if they'd considered donations only at the remote sites since some of the sites on the upper St. Joe are donation. Diana Jones said they will consider this.*
- *David Uberuaga asked what the cost is for a double vault toilet. Diana Jones said approximately \$13,000 for a single and \$25,000 for a double.*
- *Jerry Shriner asked in regards to decommissioning sites, have they done an analysis considering the cost of a dispersed rec site verses a developed site? Diana Jones said that was considered. Dispersed sites provide facilities for resource protection only. Developed facilities are for user convenience. If a facility is decommissioned, it will still be available to the public. Toilets and fire rings are considered resource protection.*
- *Tommy Stroschein asked when a facility is on a highway, who provides maintenance? Diana Jones said they work with IDT to contribute to maintenance of sites.*
- *Kim Brown (through written comments) does not support Forest Service privatization of campgrounds.*
- *Linda Rider stated this presentation was for information only and no decision was needed.*

Agenda Topic: Cottonwood Field Office Updates

Field Manager Will Runnoe provided an overview and updates:

Riggins Gun Range: no new information. Congressman Labrador's office is drafting legislation that would provide a transfer from BLM to the City of Riggins.

Lolo Creek Weir: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) took the lead on the project and has issued a draft environmental assessment (EA). The plan is for the Nez Perce Tribe to construct a permanent weir and improve recreation amenities including kayak put-in and take-out areas. They are working with National Marine Fisheries Services (NFMS). *Chris Goetz asked about kayaking facilities and Will stated improvements are part of the plan.*

Lochsa Land Exchange: The Field Office was contacted by Western Pacific Timber to potentially include BLM lands in the exchange that is underway with the USFS. The lands identified for the Idaho Forest Group/BLM exchange would be exempt. Other details are very preliminary and will keep the RAC up-to-date on what transpires.

Tommy Stroschein is concerned about who they would hire to get the values and do the work on evaluations. He feels the government should have more control over what data is collected. Gary said this is done by DOI appraisal services, but will not be paid for by the agency. It would have to be paid for by the proponent.

Construction of a new Cottonwood Field Office building: Due to an asbestos issue with the buildings that were built in the 1950's, the District will be demolishing them in 2014 and building a new facility on site. The BLM owns the land and was able to lock in funding for a building instead of expend annual lease payments.

Agenda Topic: Proposed Sheep Fire Salvage Timber Sale

Zach Peterson, forester for the Cottonwood Field Office, presented an overview of the Sheep fire which occurred in September and October and a proposal for a salvage timber sale (handout 3). The fire burned 48,000 acres including 5,000 acres of BLM lands. The field office is analyzing three alternatives – no action; an alternative that would harvest 14.2 million board feet on 916 acres with 2.48 miles of temporary roads; and an alternative that harvest 8.1 million board feet on 606 acres with no temporary roads. Temporary roads are not permanent, would be built along a ridge and away from streams and re-contoured and vegetated after use. The field office is on an aggressive timeline to try to harvest the timber, primarily ponderosa pine, before it begins to get blue stain and lose value. A draft EA should be available for review by the end of March.

Miscellaneous comments on the project:

- *Jerry Shriner asked if the appraised value is the net revenue. Zach Peterson said it is.*
- *Chris Goetz asked if the temporary roads are new roads or if they are where existing roads and trails had been? Zach said there have never been roads or trails there.*
- *Linda Rider asked if the appraised value included blue pine. Zach Peterson said that it was included.*
- *David Brummer asked what does that change if units are lost (temp road proposal alternative versus no temp roads alternative). Zach Peterson said it would affect a little of all species.*

- Tommy Stroschein asked how long the project is expected to last. Zach Peterson said they should have it completed by end of May and it may take several months for harvest.
- Dan Dinning asked about the amount of sedimentation from spring run-off with roads? Mike Stevenson, BLM hydrologist, said the proposed roads would be located high on the slope, which would minimize sediment reaching the stream. The alternative with no temporary roads also has 300 less cable harvesting on steep slopes.
- Tommy Stroschein asked if the sediment factor with no vegetation has been taken into consideration. Zach Peterson said that it has. Mike Stevenson said that soil is more sensitive to disturbance after being burned. The proposal leaves some downed trees to provide microsites for reestablishment of trees.
- Patty Perry said of the 48,000 acres burned and 5,000 acres were BLM. What will happen to acres not being treated since this proposal is only for 900 acres? Zach stated that due to the steepness of the terrain and the lack of access, they could only treat these acres. The forest, on the remaining acres, will re-establish itself naturally over time. We would try to treat more acres, but just can't access it all.
- Tommy Stroschein asked what types of trees are being planted. Zach said approximately 250 trees per acre Ponderosa Pine, Douglas fir, and Western Larch.
- Aaron Calkins asked if they'd considered an optional unit for helicopter harvest in inaccessible areas. Zach Peterson said aren't going that route due to helicopter being so expensive. The economics did not make it a viable option.
- Doug Boggan if we will use the roads IDL had cut from their previous timber sales? Zach Peterson said we have a permanent easement and can haul logs on existing roads. We are working with landowners on other easements. Doug asked why grass seed hadn't been taken to the area. Zach said this is part of the ES&R side of project.
- Jann Higdem asked if any existing roads are being closed. Zach Peterson said no, roads are closed already will remain closed but they will not close additional ones with this project other than any temporary roads that may be built.
- Jerry Shriner asked if rehabilitating trails is part of the plan. Zach Peterson said these are non-designated trails and maintenance has not been done on these trails for a number of years. Will said these trails are not included in the RM as designated trails.
- Randy Doman asked why the temporary roads couldn't be a permanent improvement to the land. Zach Peterson said the BLM is trying to reduce road densities, not increase them. The temporary roads will be re-contoured and re-sloped after use.
- Kim Brown (through written comments) is in support of the Proposed Sheep Salvage Timber Sale as long as the temporary roads are closed when the project is completed.

Decision:

Chris Goetz motioned for the RAC to formally support the Sheep Salvage Timber Sale. Dan Dinning and Kim Friend seconded. All were in favor. Linda Rider asked if the RAC should do a letter of support. Linda will compose the letter and send it to the RAC for review before sending it to Gary Cooper.

1:00 pm Public Forum: No public was present that wished to comment.

Agenda Topic: Coeur d'Alene Field Office Updates

Field Manager Kurt Pavlat presented updates of activities on the Coeur d'Alene Field Office. (Handout 4):

Education Corridor/BNSF Right-of-Way comments: The City of Coeur d'Alene has applied for a Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) lease for the corridor. The City is developing a long-term plan and will submit to the BLM. No revenue generating entities are allowed. An R&PP lease includes a clause that once the plan of development is satisfied, the applicant can apply for a patent to the land.

Fernan Lake Parcel: the BLM has been approached by IDL and adjacent land owners to acquire a 73 acre parcel on the south east side of Fernan Lake. The BLM is not interested in this parcel alone as it does not have public access except by boat. There are a mile and a quarter of lakeshore access. There was discussion from the RAC regarding whether IDL could sell the parcel or other options that would include the Fernan parcel as part of a larger exchange.

Clark Fork Delta Restoration Project: BLM is participating on a design team and reviewing a biological assessment for ID Fish and Game on the project. The project will harden and prevent erosion from occurring. *Jann Higdem asked about the EIS. Kurt said BPA has produced a NEPA document sufficient in scope for the Pack River and Clark Fork Deltas.*

Ross Point comments: The BLM has an almost 5-acre parcel on the Spokane River that they are considering developing for public recreational use. Alternatives ranging from small day-use with picnic tables to a boat launch facility are being considered. Plans are in very early stages and would involve the public and City of Post Falls.

- *David Uberuaga asked if the days of the no fee site are over. Kurt Pavlat answered that the public is more interested in the amenities and are willing to pay.*
- *Dan Dinning asked if the BLM has the ability to sell. Kurt said it would have to be designated for sale in the RMP.*
- *Linda Rider asked if the river depth is sufficient for a boat launch. Kurt Pavlat said they would have to check into it.*
- *Alan Harper thought there is too much traffic on the river for an additional boat launch. Kurt said the Third Street Boat Launch will be closed this summer and additional boat launches may be needed in the future.*

John C. Pointner Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary Trail: A donated easement is now final connecting the The Nature Conservancy parcel to the BLM's parcel. An EA will be finalized this spring and trail construction will likely occur this year. *David Uberuaga asked if it would be a dirt trail and if it would be appropriate for bike travel? Kurt said be it would be for pedestrian travel only.*

CDA Field Office Timber Sales: The field office is planning to harvest 1.2 million board feet of timber, mostly this fiscal year however sequestration impacts and the inability to hire seasonal employees such as students, and contractors may prevent this from occurring.

- *Alan Harper asked about volunteers to help with prepping and tree marking for timber sales. Kurt stated he is interested but would have to run it through the chain of command.*
- *Chris Goetz asked how much revenue is received. Kurt said it depends on the sale, but we did put money from last year's timber sales back into the treasury, not to the District.*

Agenda Topic: Prichard Creek Potential Land Acquisition

Field Manager Kurt Pavlat presented information about a potential land acquisition in the Prichard Creek area in Shoshone County. The field office was contacted last year by a representative of Dr.

Elizabeth Gardner, owner of the 3,000 acre parcel. She and her husband bought up mining claims from the Montana/Idaho border to the town of Prichard. She is specifically interested in a conservation focused entity acquiring the land. The Western Rivers Conservancy has made an offer to Dr. Gardner and would hold the parcel until potentially the NRDAR Trustees Council would purchase the land from them, transferring it to both the BLM and Forest Service. (Handout 5)

- Linda Rider asked why Dr. Gardner collected this land. Kurt Pavlat said she is into conservation and would like to carry on a legacy. This is definitely a restoration project.
- Gary Cooper added that Natural Resources Restoration Trustee Council would potentially pay for the restoration.
- David Uberuaga: Asked if there is public access; Kurt said there is.
- Jann Higdem added that Dr. Gardner has refused selling to mining companies.
- Linda Rider said it would benefit the county to get the fisheries restored.
- David Uberuaga said this could lead to more development of recreational opportunities.
- Jann Higdem: Just for the record, tourist jobs are minimum wage.

Standard RAC adjourns; Recreation RAC convenes.

Jerry Shriner, Recreation RAC Chairman, called the Recreation RAC to order.

Agenda Topic: Forest Service Proposed River Lottery System

Trish Callaghan, Salmon-Challis NF Recreation Program Manager, shared information about the proposal to create a weighted lottery for the Salmon, Snake, Selway, and Middle Fork (Four Rivers). (Handout 6) They would use the National Reservation Service for the lottery to help people get the dates they would like and gain points. They have received 700-900 comments. Most of the positive comments for were for the Selway and Middle Fork rivers.

Miscellaneous comments:

- Alan Harper said it's a good idea.
- Dan Dinning thought there should be an exception for military if they are deployed and are unable to keep their date.
- Cliff Swanson thought more commercial people were getting permits verses private individuals. Trisha Callaghan responded that approved outfitters are able to create commercial accounts. They pay a recreation fee for a set number of launches on a set cycle of launch days.
- Cliff Swanson asked if outfitters get additional days. Trish Callahan answered no. There are 2-4 commercial outfitters on the river each day on an 8 day cycle.
- Kim Friend asked what some of the negative comments were. Trish said there is concern about initiating a wait-out period. This would require collecting additional personal information on a trip for only one trip a year. Trish said we are trying to simplify the system and should collect the least amount of personal information possible.
- Cliff Swanson asked if the outfitters dates are in the system or can they trade with other outfitters? Trish said the reservation system would not allow that. Also outfitters don't swap dates, especially on the Middle Fork.
- Dan Dinning asked if there is the ability for additional commercial operators to be added to list. Trish Callaghan said not with current Frank Church plan.
- Tommy Stroschein asked if outfitters trade launch dates if they are unable to make their date. Trish Callaghan said not with the reservation plan.
- Doug Boggan said that it appears that an individual on weighted system could draw three years in a row on this system. Trish Callaghan said that they are using a random number generator,

so they'd have to be really, really lucky to draw more than one year in a row. With the current system they would go back into the system for the following year.

- *Tommy Stroschein asked how many permits are drawn. Trisha Callaghan said about 19,000 applications are received and approximately 1000 are drawn.*
- *Doug Boggan thinks a person should be pulled for at least a year, if they win just like the antlered hunt lottery.*
- *Kim Friend asked if there a way to track who goes on a trip. Trish Callaghan answered that they are only able to keep track of the trip leader; it is too difficult to track all the other individuals in the party plus it is personal information they aren't comfortable gathering and keeping.*
- *Jann Higdem asked when the release went out. Trish Callaghan said early February.*
- *Jerry Shriner asked if the Forest Service was asking the RAC to take any action. Trisha Callaghan answered that she is just sharing information. There were no additional comments at this time. Trish will keep the Recreation RAC up-to-date with how the proposal proceeds.*
- *Doug Boggan asked why the RAC did not receive the information earlier. Suzanne said she will try to send pre-reading earlier. Jerry Shriner thought the Forest Service should have been responsible to get the information to the Recreation RAC. Suzanne said the Forest Service would typically go through her to get information out to the RAC as the FS doesn't usually know who the current RAC members are.*

Recreation RAC adjourns; (Chris Goetz moved for the Recreation RAC to adjourn. David Brummer seconded. All in favor.) **Standard RAC reconvenes;** Linda Rider called the Standard RAC back to order.

Agenda Topic: Election of New Officers

Linda Rider called the floor open for Chair elections.

- David Brummer nominated Linda Rider. Alan Harper seconded. All were in favor of retaining Linda as the RAC Chair.

Linda Rider opened the floor for nominations for the vice-chair position.

- Patty Perry nominated Jerry Shriner. Cliff Swanson seconded. All were in favor of retaining Jerry as vice-chair.

Decision

Cliff motioned for the vice-chair of the standard RAC to be the chair for the Recreation RAC and the chair of the standard RAC be the vice-chair of the Recreation RAC. Chris Goetz seconded. All were in favor and the charter will be adjusted prior to submitting for renewal.

Cliff also proposed that the charter be amended to make it a standard practice for the vice-chair of the standard RAC to be the chair for the Recreation RAC and the chair of the standard RAC be the vice-chair of the Recreation RAC instead of having two elections.

RAC Nominations

Suzanne Endsley passed out 2012 nomination forms and reminded folks that there is a lot of time to get applications in. (Handout 7)

Wild Horse and Burro Program

Suzanne Endsley presented the RAC with an update on the wild horse and burros program that some of the members had requested. (Handout 8)

Miscellaneous comments:

Kim Brown said the Wild Horse program should be revised. No support of tax payer subsidized facilities for excess wild horses. We have an overpopulation that needs to be disposed of, possibly by the private sector.

Agenda Topic: Discussion

DFO Gary Cooper asked if the RAC had questions on anything they were briefed on today or any additional discussion. He also thanked them for the decision to support the Sheep Fire Salvage Timber Sale.

- *Doug Boggan asked why nothing had been done with grass seeding on the Sheep Fire. Gary Cooper thought it should have been done by suppression forces when they were still there. Cottonwood did some straw and matting along the creek in the fall.*
- *Doug Boggan thinks more dollars should come to this area and not all go the BLM districts in Southern Idaho. He would like to see a letter written to the State for more funding. This area has known endangered species (bull trout, steelhead, Chinook, Spaulding's catchfly, and McFarland's 4 o'clock), instead of funding for a threatened species (sage grouse).*
- *Patty Perry asked if anything can be done to make sure this gets done in the future during suppression. Gary Cooper said it involves coordination with fire manager and the fire ecologist to get funds.*
- *Cliff Swanson thought that maybe the fire boss should have been responsible. Gary Cooper stated that during long duration fires crews/teams change.*
- *Kim Friend said she attended the fire meetings for a month and crews/bosses changed quite a bit.*
- *Chris Goetz said the BLM pays more attention to resource recovery after a fire. The RAC would like to see suppression make resources a priority.*
- *Gary Cooper said safety and private resources are paramount for fire fighters. They do have a Fire Ecologist on each fire.*
- *Chris Goetz would like the RAC to send a recommendation to the agency liaison.*

The RAC expressed interest in sending a letter with their concerns to Gary or the State Director.

Decision:

Doug Boggan made a motion for the RAC to draft a letter to get ES&R funds; Kim Friend seconded the motion. The RAC voted unanimously to draft a letter for more ES&R funds for the Sheep Fire. The subcommittee to draft the letter will be: Chris Goetz (lead), Doug Boggan, and Patty Perry. Linda Rider stated that the subcommittee will put letter together and send it to Suzanne. Suzanne can send it out to the RAC for review. It will be addressed to the State Director and cc: Gary.

Additional Discussion:

- *Chris Goetz asked why all the hazardous fuels reduction hasn't been completed? Gary Cooper explained in order to be successful we must have that opportune window, for example our planned fuels reduction burn for Mineral Ridge. That window includes wind speed/air quality, relative humidity, temperature, fuel moistures, and precipitation. We had cut a fire line last spring/summer and had met with homeowners in the area with the plan to burn last September, however, due to the lack of precip, air quality issues from other fires we were unable to do the project.*

- *Kim Brown has talked to David Sisson concerning the Mullan Road. She would like to know if there are any plans for action. (This project will likely be slowed due to budget cuts from sequestration. The District is also losing an archeologist and due to the hiring freeze we will not be able to fill until that is lifted.*
- *Gary Cooper responded to the RAC's questions about sequestration. Neal Kornze is the acting Director for BLM. Sally Jewell has been nominated as the new Secretary of the Interior. She was the CEO for REI and is currently being vetted for the position. We have to reduce our budget by 5%-8% over the next 7 months. Gary doesn't think BLM employees will be furloughed. Nationally there is a hiring freeze that includes permanent as well as temporary/seasonal employees, with the exception of fire personnel. Travel and training have been cancelled. Purchases and many contracts have been curtailed. Without the ability to hire seasonal employees, it will be tough to maintain our recreation sites. We will probably not get to remote, dispersed recreation sites.*

Keeping the RAC Updated

Suzanne Endsley said this may be the only meeting for this fiscal year. How do we keep you engaged and informed? She suggested more emails and a newsletter.

- *Dan Dinning asked if the budget prevents you from having a conference call.*
- *Patty Perry said she would prefer a conference call over a newsletter- Patty suggested calling it a conference call update and not a meeting.*
- *Cliff Swanson thought an email update would work when a conference call isn't needed.*

Gary Cooper said we will send out emails to keep everyone informed. If needed, we will set up a Doodle Poll to find a date that works for a conference call – probably mid-summer.

RAC Nominations

Suzanne reminded the RAC that the nomination period is open through April 1. We have openings for commercial timber, recreation, and education. There may also be a second call for nominations in early summer.

Meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.

Minutes recorded/prepared by: Connie Curtis

Minutes approved by: /s/Linda Rider

Date: April 9, 2013

Handouts:

1. Agenda
2. RAC Meeting Minutes from May 31, 2012
3. Sheep Fire Salvage Overview
4. CDA Field Office Handouts
5. Prichard Creek Handout
6. Salmon Challis NF Proposed Lottery
7. RAC Nomination Form
8. Wild Horse and Burro Information