

**BLM Idaho Falls District – Resource Advisory Council
January 26-27, 2016**

*Upper Snake Field Office
1405 Holliipark Drive
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83402*

**Meeting Minutes
Day 1
January 26, 2016**

Opening

The meeting of the BLM Idaho Falls District Resource Advisory Council (RAC) was called to order at 1:00 p.m. in the BLM Idaho Falls District Office conference room by RAC chairman Matt Woodard.

Present

Jon Goode, Jerald Raymond, Sarah Wheeler, Chad Colter, Coby Tigert, Matt Woodard, Garth Blanchard, Dave Pacioretty, Jeremy Casterson, Todd Kuck, Mary D'Aversa, , Beth Waterbury, Jesse Bender, Bret Herres, Ethan Huffman, Amy Taylor, Kathryn Hitch, Linda Price

Welcome to the Idaho Falls District/Upper Snake Field Office - Introductions

Mary D'Aversa, Idaho Falls District Manager

The RAC began with introductions and a brief discussion of the agenda. D'Aversa thanked the RAC for being flexible and explained that they would be leaving the office around 2:00 to head to North Menan Butte to hear discussions of recreational/resource conflicts.

Chairman Woodard brought up the meeting minutes. Jon Goode moved to approve the minutes from the September meeting and that motion was seconded by Jerald Raymond. The motion was approved unanimously.

Although there were some vacancies on the RAC, Jon Goode moved to nominate Matt Woodard as chairman and Kevin Poor as vice chairman. The motion was seconded by Jerald and passed unanimously. The decision for a RAC secretary was postponed until the June meeting, when newly nominated individuals may have some interest in filling in that capacity. Beth Waterbury offered to serve as interim secretary until another one was nominated but Sarah Wheeler offered to take notes for this meeting.

RAC moved to hold a meeting at the Upper Snake Field Office June 6-7 (Monday and Tuesday due to a conflict Wednesday of that week) to discuss Bighorn Sheep/Domestic sheep issue. They also moved to hold a meeting in Salmon September 20-21.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Leadership Intent- Informational

Mary D'Aversa

Mary took a few minutes to discuss the RAC and BLM's vision of the program. The RAC has an important role to play as all its members are approved by the Secretary of the Interior. Feedback and insight the RAC can provide is very important. If there is a subject or issue BLM can benefit from, or which RAC members are interested in, members are invited to bring it to a manager's attention – sometimes the best ideas don't come from within the building. Let us know about topics that interest you. Jon Goode proposed having some more discussion on BLM's role with land tenure/realty issues and how the BLM goes about consolidating lands for the general public. Dave Pacioretty brought up the Formation Springs possible land actions. Chad Colter asked if the BLM would tie in a discussion of access to public land parcels, including how increased public action is guaranteed.

Garth Blanchard asked for more discussion on how much latitude the BLM has to make decisions in its balancing act of preserving land and using the resources. D'Aversa said while the group can take time to discuss laws and regulations, the topic is so broad that it may be more efficient to discuss it with regards to a specific project. Linda Price also explained how the BLM process for public comment and discussion has morphed over the last 25 years. Garth suggested using grazing permits to discuss the BLM's decision making roll and have a field manager walk them through the process. Chad Colter suggested coming at the problem from a water quality standpoint.

RAC Recruitment Updates - Informational

Sarah Wheeler

Sarah took a moment to explain the vetting process for new members and how that has resulted in the delay to approve the 2016 nominees. She talked about recruitment opportunities and asked for input in how we can continue to solicit qualified candidates. Beth Waterbury suggested using nonprofits and partners like Salmon Valley Stewardship to get the word out. Jerald Raymond suggested contacting the Idaho Cattle Association and the Idaho Association of Counties. Sarah said she would follow up with the State Office about doing a presentation at the annual meeting of both entities to drum up interest from the State.

North Menan Butte - Informational

Jeremy Casterson

Jeremy discussed North Menan Butte and handed out a brochure and map of the area. Menan Butte is a unique geological feature because it is the only volcanic eruption that occurred in fresh water about 10,000 years ago. The Butte has several educational interpretive sites. In 2012, the Upper Snake Field Office (USFO) put in a new parking lot, which gets a lot of use, particularly from students. Approximately 17,000 individuals visited the Butte in 2012.

Currently the USFO is having issues with shooting. A high volume of hunting and sport shooting occurs on the Butte. While there are lots of responsible shooters, the 5% of irresponsible individuals create numerous problems. Some areas west of the Butte are closed to vehicles to prevent dumping. In 2008, USFO wrote an activity plan to manage the area. We typically close recreational areas to shooting in those plans but Menan was different due to its topography and recreational issues. The USFO created rules to prohibit shooting at the Butte but the rule never made it to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's (IDFG) regional office for approval. This miscommunication resulted in some concerns with IDFG who didn't want the area closed to hunting. The agencies came up with a compromise to lift closure to hunting but not recreational shooting. They drafted a proposed rule but it hasn't been through the approval process so until it is approved, we have just instructed law enforcement to proceed like the rule is in place. People can still continue to trap, which also presents some concerns for people with dogs who run/hike the Butte.

There is a new memorandum out instructing the BLM on how to deal with shooting closures. The direction requires coordination with several national and local groups. It is very politically sensitive.

In 2015, Jeremy received a call from a private land owner who was seeing unlawful hunters take animals on the Butte and whose private trailer was shot by irresponsible individuals. Citizens are very concerned about the shooting occurring on the Butte and have garnered 20 signatures from landowners in the area indicating their concerns. The USFO has brainstormed several things they can do such as increasing signage, providing kiosks with land status maps, increasing BLM law enforcement, entering into an agreement with IDFG for increased patrols or closing the southern access point (even though that trail is very well used). Jon Goode – asked whether BLM could consider designating a shooting range. While this is a good idea, the BLM is trying to get out of the shooting range business due to lead accumulation. Mary mentioned that with local support there are potential options for pursuing a Recreation and Public Purpose (R&PP) lease with a revisionary component.

Jeremy stated that the BLM wants to cast a wide net for public input. Currently hunting is restricted to short range and we could look to close everything but archery. Garth asked where we can find the balance between hikers/homeowners/hunters. Jeremy Casterson said that is the difficulty because different people even have different viewpoints on what constitutes a safety concern. Pacioretty suggested reaching out to local shooting ranges to see if they want to help with the problem. Jerald Raymond said the same issues are happening at Cinder Butte, with heavy shooting and dumping. Raymond suggested reaching out to local law enforcement and work with the Dean of Student Life at Brigham Young University Idaho for educational outreach because a large number of students are part of the problem. Outreach can even trickle down to high school students.

Beth asked whether the people doing the dumping were locals. BLM believes they are. Jon Goode asked if there was a mechanism for people to report the problems if they see it happening like a neighborhood watch. This worked for some of the issues they experienced in the Soda Hills.

Group traveled to Menan Butte for the Tour

At the tour site Chad pointed out the need to recognize concerns about how much regulation is based on general population. People move into areas to appreciate the wilderness component but then want all the problems regulated. Should man's encroachment be allowed to highly impact how the lands are managed? Are there options that don't restrict access and activities? For example, ensure people are well aware of all the recreational activities and possible conflicts of interest before they decide to build their house on the borders of public lands.

Garth and Beth suggested utilizing planning and zoning to notify individuals of public land issues before they build. Jerald Raymond said unfortunately people don't come to the meetings and don't really pay attention until they don't want it in their back yard. Sometimes these houses also existed before there were any issues. Chad said that issues like this continue to rise in all areas of development with recreation and winter range issues. He doesn't know how to address it but there needs to be a different way to educate than with just public meetings that the public doesn't come to. Beth suggested part-time law enforcement funding, seasonal details or forming a partnership for patrols. Other potential solutions included starting a neighborhood watch, increase signing, using boy scouts to cleanup and creating a self-patrolling friends group.

Meeting adjourned

With no other business, Matt adjourned the meeting at 4:30 and group returned to the office after driving around the Butte.

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Rattlesnake Dump Cleanup- Informational

Bryce Anderson, Pocatello Field Office

Bryce Anderson discussed the rattlesnake dumpsite. It has a long history of dumping in the area. Terrain made cleanup difficult. The Pocatello Field Office coordinated with Bingham County Commissioners, who waived the fees for the BLM to take the trash to the dump. Cleanup time was from 09/17-11/13. The contractor was paid \$18,763 and removed 16 tons of trash. The field office fenced off the area to vehicle access to prevent future dumping. Approximately 300 acres are available to foot traffic.

Sage-grouse Updates- Informational

Jeremy Casterson

Sage-grouse Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in September of 2015. Seventeen different IM & handbooks are in progress to guide the implementation phase of the plan. Several road shows are underway to teach the field how to implement the plan. The BLM is setting up several

different support teams that will be fully committed to the sage-grouse efforts. There is a Great Basin Regional Support Team that will be set up in Boise to support Oregon and Idaho and help move projects forward (such as vegetation treatments and prioritizing grazing allotments). An expanded implementation team will also exist to provide some more field expertise. A state office core team will review every single project affecting sage-grouse habitat to ensure consistency.

Jeremy outlined some of the basics dealing with mitigation including: how the BLM will be calculating disturbance at both the project level and biologically significant unit (BSU), adaptive management approach and grazing threshold. Jerald asked whether there will be flexibility at the local level to look at decisions and possible wiggle room for areas that would not be able to meet some of the guidance such as seven inch stubble height. Jeremy responded that the BLM is hopeful some of the flexibility will flush out as we figure out implementation.

The RAC asked about the difference between the draft and final ROD. Jeremy explained that some parts of the plan look very different than the original draft and some of that is due to drop in language provided by the USFWS such as sagebrush focal areas and some grazing language. Some RAC members expressed their concerns with economic viability and the implications on rural communities. Jeremy suggested that there might be some benefits regarding contract work, etc. The plan is being litigated by the State of Idaho.

The group discussed the mineral withdrawal meeting and the BLM's current state in that process.

Idaho Falls District Planning- Informational

Jeremy Casterson

Jeremy touched base on the Resource Management Planning (RMP) efforts in the District. Salmon and Challis each operate under one but the USFO has 4 separate plans (3 Management Framework Plans (MFP)s and 1 RMP). The USFO was working to create one plan and was almost through the draft stage but paused the activity due to the Sage-grouse ROD and planning 2.0. Now, due to the sage-grouse alternatives, the USFO baseline has changed, which means that the revision needs to start over.

There is a lot of interest from NGO's on coordinating with agencies as Salmon Challis National Forest (SCNF) is kicking off their planning process too. BLM is working on Planning 2.0 and is hopeful that direction will come out soon. A draft rule is expected for end of February. Linda Price is sitting in on the SCNF planning efforts to try and ensure consistency and efficiency for when BLM starts its planning process.

Coby asked if Planning 2.0's envisioning process happens before the Notice of Intent (NOI). BLM thinks that it will work that way but won't know precisely until the rule is released. RAC's involvement in the RMP efforts will be critical to its success.

Pocatello's RMP was finalized in 2012.

Challis FO is starting to work on the Wilderness Plan.

The topic concluded with minor discussion on Bighorn Sheep and Contact Risk Analysis

Upper Snake Field Office Travel Management Plan- Informational

Monica Zimmerman and Shannon Bassista

USFO operates under a RMP and MFPs that essentially designate everything as open, allowing for cross country travel. Now, under the sage-grouse direction, the FO is required to designate everything as limited (closed, open or limited). Since 85% of the USFO is in sage-grouse habitat some funding was provided to begin route analysis and inventory.

Shannon explained that Travel Management Planning (TMP) is a multidisciplinary approach and that all resources are needed to discuss possible impacts. BLM is required to minimize impacts to sage-grouse.

Monica explained that TMP is a three prong process. 1) conduct route inventory to see what is actually on the ground 2) Planning process where routes are designated and public scoping begins and 3) implementation of the approved plans.

USFO is moving into the planning process and has hired a contractor to help with the advanced inventory and planning. Right now they will be meeting with the contractor once a week every month to discuss route designation and then they will develop a range of alternatives. After those are developed they will head to the public for scoping.

Jon Goode asked where to draw the line of what is considered a route? The BLM has a six page description of what defines a route (i.e. a cow trail is not considered a route and not put on the map). Dave Pacioretty said this is a wise idea because Pocatello learned the hard way. They put every linear disruption on the map to identify that they knew what was on the ground so when they came out with their alternatives that eliminated cow trails it looked like they were closing a lot of routes, which upset the public.

USFO has divided its TMP planning process into 4 planning areas (Desert, mountain Valleys, Sand Creek and Eastern Part/Teton Valley). Monica discussed the timeline of events. Teton Valley will be the first one to be completed.

Sand Dune Plans

Shannon said due to increased recreational use the USFO needs to create a stronger management plan for the St. Anthony Sand Dunes to deal with permitting/commercial uses. The field office recently conducted a survey to find out the public's interests and needs for the area. They hope to have the results of the questionnaire by the end of February. They are looking at wrapping recreational issues and travel planning into one process for this Sand Desert area.

Kevin Poor asked how there can be open travel in a WSA.

Casterson explained the judge's ruling on how a wind event wipes out all the tracks, making every visitor's experience with the sand fresh.

There will be a great opportunity for the RAC to be involved in this process

Snake River Capacity Study

This is a long term project that followed up with items identified in a 2008 management plan due to capacity. The USFO used the University of Idaho to conduct a study. The BLM and FS plan to sign a decision in spring of 2016. Not much will be changing but they will continue to monitor and if use increases then they might revisit the subject of overcrowding. Outfitter legislation cleared up the conflict between guiding licenses and federal permits in 2016. The BLM worked very closely with the Idaho Outfitter and Guide Board to ensure consistency.

Meeting adjourned

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 by Matt Woodard, BLM Idaho Falls District RAC Chairman.

Minutes submitted by: Sarah Wheeler, BLM Idaho Falls District RAC Coordinator

Approved by: