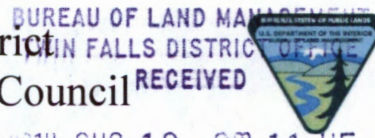




**Twin Falls District  
Resource Advisory Council**



MEETING MINUTES  
6/24/2014

2014 AUG 13 AM 11 45

**Resource Advisory Council (RAC) members present:**

***Category One – Commodity Interest***

- Gerald Orthel
- Mike Henslee
- Daniel Butler (*Arrived 10:00*)
- Jeffrey Williams
- James Wills

***Category Two – Non-Commodity Interest***

- Dayna Gross (*Arrived 10:00*)
- Shauna Robinson (*Did not attend the tour*)
- Denise Alexander
- Peggy Stanley
- LaMar Orton

***Category Three – Public Interest***

- Tom Courtney
- Todd Wadsworth
- Charles Howell (*Arrived 9:10*)
- Katie Shewmaker
- Hunter Osborne (*Arrived 9:30*)

**Quorum Present:**  Yes     No

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives present:**

June Shoemaker, Acting District Manager  
 Michael Courtney, Acting Associate District Manager  
 Codie Martin, Acting Jarbidge Field Office Manager  
 Jim Tharp, Acting Burley Field Office Manager  
 Holly Crawford, Craters of the Moon Monument Manager  
 Christine Vance, Contact Representative

**Public Attendees:**

Linda Culver, Staff, Congressman Simpson  
 Samantha Hobdey, Staff, Senator Crapo  
 Kari Emond, Staff, Senator Risch  
 Mike Matthews, Staff, Senator Risch  
 David Emery, Staff, Senator Risch

*Note to readers: A copy of each handout listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Twin Falls District. Persons desiring to view handouts should contact Christine Vance at (208) 736-2350, or by email at [cvance@blm.gov](mailto:cvance@blm.gov).*

*Copies of certified minutes are posted on the Idaho BLM website at:  
[http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/res/resource\\_advisory/twin\\_falls\\_district/meeting\\_minutes.html](http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/res/resource_advisory/twin_falls_district/meeting_minutes.html)*

*Meeting called to order at 8:30.*

### **Item I: Welcome and Introductions**

*Public comment period opened at 8:45. No members of the public present. Public comment period closed at 09:15 without comment.*

June Shoemaker was introduced at the Acting District Manager for the Twin Falls District (TFD). She will be acting until August.

### **Item II: Planning 2.0 Strategy Presentation (Handout 1)**

Effective planning is key to determining appropriate multiple use activities on public lands. The planning process is important for the public to provide their viewpoints and ideas throughout the entire process. The document that determines and identifies uses on public land is the Resource Management Plan (RMP). The goal of Planning 2.0 is to create a more efficient planning process and reduce the time it takes to complete documents like an RMP.

With Planning 2.0, the BLM is proposing targeted changes to the current planning processes. The goal of the initiative is to take input from the public and use that feedback to create a more effective and efficient process. The strategy will be implemented in two years but the changes will not affect any plans that are in place prior to that implementation.

The RAC expressed concerns about whether this new strategy would weaken the voice and opinion of groups, like the RAC, that provide advice to the BLM on multiple use proposals and other decisions. Under the new strategy, groups will have the ability to provide feedback and guidance into the process to ensure that their voices will be heard. The goal is to make RMP planning a more useful and less onerous process.

### **Item III: Burley Field Office Update (Handout 2)**

Recreation: The Burley Field Office is currently in the process of drafting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for recreational climbing in the Cedar Fields area. Other recreational issues that are being addressed are the Castle Rocks closure to traditional climbing, sport climbing, bouldering, staging, trail building and camping and the Jackpot 200 race.

Grazing: The Burley Field office is entering phase 2 of the Battle Creek Litigation with Western Watersheds Project (WWP). They are being challenged on their ability to renew grazing permits “as is” under the grazing rider as well as a challenge to 20 grazing permits that had been “fully processed” under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

They are making progress on the Shoshone Basin Grazing EIS, which involves 23 permits, 30 allotments, and 125,800 acres. They expect to have a draft EIS ready for the public by early next year. The Berger permits which involve 20 allotments, and 18 permits in 50,833 acres is on track to be renewed by this fall.

There is a targeted grazing project taking place in the Minidoka Allotment. This will involve a band of dry ewes grazing within 100 yards of the Minidoka Fuel Breaks where they will be allowed to graze up to 60% of the current forage. The goal of this project is to use grazing to reduce the fire risk to that area.

Sage Grouse: Burley is currently engaged in two studies involving sage grouse telemetry efforts, involving tracking the seasonal movements of the birds in the Minidoka Desert and the Jim Sage Mountains area and preliminary assessments of the Jim Sage Mountain leks indicates an upward attendance of males. Concurrently, there is a cooperative research effort with multiple agencies and interest groups to determine how spring grazing affects sage grouse.

#### **Item VI: Jarbidge Field Office Update (Handout 3)**

Grazing: The Jarbidge Field Office staff is still writing the Draft Rangeland Health Assessments for group one allotments and is in the process of completing the fieldwork for group two. Fieldwork is expected to be completed by the third week of July. Additional staff identified as the NEPA Permit Renewal Team (NPRT) based out of the State Office has transitioned to helping JFO staff with renewing all livestock grazing permits. Special funding was provided for this effort through 2017 so BLM is taking advantage of the additional help. An effort has been made to incorporate the NPRT with the JFO staff in order to provide more on the ground knowledge of conditions as well as continue the good relationships that already exist with permittees. Permittee participation and communication will continue to be an important emphasis in the permit renewal process. The JFO/NPRT expects there will be 6-8 meetings between the permittees and the BLM throughout the permit renewal effort.

RMP: The RMP team is working to schedule a briefing with the BLM Director, Neil Kornze. Expect a Governors review in late summer/fall.

Rangeland Fire Protection Association (RFPA): An RFPA is a group of livestock permittees and local farmers that have an interest in public land and are willing to help with wildfire suppression. The Twin Falls District has two RFPAs: Saylor Creek and Three Creek. Individual members of these organizations take part in annual fire training and are equipped with radios and the proper personal protection equipment to allow them to assist in Initial Attack (IA) on fires in their respective jurisdictions. They are often able to be on site before the BLM, which could mean a significant reduction in fire damage. The RFPA members use their own equipment to create a fire line to suppress fire.

This year, the two Twin Falls District RFPAs received the coveted Pulaski award for their outstanding contribution to the national wild fire effort, which gives them national recognition and possession of the traveling trophy. RFPAs allows BLM to put out fires faster and there is a much better relationship and communication between the BLM and local landowners.

There was considerable discussion about the policy to allow BLM permittees, who are not fire qualified or affiliated with an RFPA, remove their livestock when they are threatened by a wildfire. The Field Managers recognized this as a common practice and let the RAC know that as long as there is no imminent threat to human safety, the Resource Advisor assigned to the fire would work with the permittee to safely remove livestock or cut the fences in the way of livestock egress.

**Item V: Shoshone Field Office/Craters of the Moon National Monument Update (Handout 4)**

Lands and Realty: As part of the Dry Creek trespass, which is an Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) violation, an individual was assessed with a \$100,000 fee for damages to an historical site where minerals were illegally removed to maintain a road. This trespass action was administratively challenged by the violator and the BLM case was successful.

In addition, the BLM has requested that the illegal structure be removed and the area rehabilitated. Gerald Orthell asked about the economics of a home removal and asked why BLM simply does not conduct a land swap. Holly Crawford let Gerald know that land swaps must be approved in numerous stages through the Washington Office, take many years, are often controversial, and ultimately frequently cost more than removal. A typical land exchange takes 6-10 years, and goes through multiple assessments, and studies before it can take place. The trespass is still in litigation and more information will be forthcoming.

Recreation: Beaver Creek fire closures are in place as of July 9, 2014. The goal of the temporary closure is to protect fragile soils from further impacts and erosion caused by recreational and other authorized activities. The unburned areas in Beaver Creek are critical winter range for elk and mule deer and they have also been temporarily closed to livestock grazing. The Beaver Creek Road is washed out and will remain closed until at least May of 2015. Currently, there is no funding available to repair the road.

At this time the BLM has not received any Special Recreation Permit applications for the jump over the Snake River Canyon. Unofficial information BLM has received about the jumps are that they would not take place public lands and may be a part of a sporting event with a major television network. Depending on where the jump may actually take place; there may be concerns for potential fire starts. The possible landing zone appears to be Idaho Department of Lands (DOL) jurisdiction but BLM has fire response responsibilities through an existing support agreement with DOL.

Crater's RMP: It is anticipated that a draft RMP amendment will be available to the public by November 2014. Katie Fite of WWP has requested a meeting with the BLM to discuss the development and content of the draft alternatives. That meeting is set to happen in June.

**Item VI: Call for future Agenda Items**

On the agenda for the September meeting:

- Poster presentation by LaMar Orton
- Roles and responsibilities of BLM Law Enforcement Officers

- A day in the life of a BLM Manager

### **Item VII: Saylor Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Area (HMA)/Jarbidge Fuels Break Project**

Saylor Creek HMA: In 2011, over 200 horses from the Saylor Creek Wild Horse HMA were gathered after the Long Butte Fire and taken to a temporary holding facility in Boise. In 2012, about 30 horses were returned to Saylor Creek. Currently, there are 51 adult horses and three colts with an estimate of five colts expected this year. Wild horse herds normally double in population every four years.

In the Jarbidge Field Office, there are no natural water sources and all the water for the horses and livestock in the area must be provided by wells, pipelines, and troughs. In the proposed Jarbidge RMP, the preferred alternative is that Jarbidge create and actively manage the Bureau's first non-reproducing HMA. Horses in the HMA would be gelded and live out their lives in this HMA, eliminating the need for horse gathers and removals to meet the HMA's Appropriate Management Level (AML) numbers. The goal of this proposal is to not negatively impact the Bureau's already overcrowded and expensive long term holding.

Fuel Breaks Project: Julie Hilty, Fire Ecologist and Brandon Brown, Supervisory Fire Management Specialist for the Twin Falls District came and talked to us about fuel breaks project in JFO. The purpose for fuel breaks is to provide a natural barrier for fires that will prevent or reduce the spread of wildfires. Fuel breaks are often buffered by a roadside and are used to protect special species habitat, historical sites and structures and other important resources.

The project's proposed action is to utilize prostrate Forage kochia to create green strips along maintained roads to slow the spread of fire and allow crews safe places to anchor and flank fires. Some of the project's other alternatives include brown strips and the use of other plant materials such as Sandberg's bluegrass. There is some controversy around using Forage kochia in a fuel break because there has been some published literature that reports it may be invasive in certain soil types. The proposed action attempts to mitigate the invasive concerns by buffering the kochia area between other grass seedings and monitoring for any potential spread outside the original treatment area

### **Item VIII: Bruneau Canyon Overlook (Handout 5)**

2014 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wilderness Act. The Owyhee Wilderness is the newest designated Wilderness in BLM. One of the easier access points for the public is the Bruneau Canyon Overlook, which receives an average of only 5000 vehicles a year. The Bruneau Canyon area boasts a bighorn sheep population of about 200 and, due to the rugged terrain and limited hunting opportunities, the sheep harvested from this area are often trophy size. During a very limited window in May-June the Jarbidge and Bruneau Rivers are very popular for experienced whitewater enthusiasts, there are sections of the river that are class 5 rapids and are an exciting challenge for experienced boaters. A limited number of outfitters provide guided trips through the Bruneau Canyon.

JFO has proposed site improvements to make the overlook ADA (American Disabilities Act) accessible, improve the parking area, install restroom facilities and some low profile information panels that talk about the Wilderness, historical use of the area by local Tribes, and the area's wildlife.

The TFD is working with local elected officials, the Tribes and BLM/DOI dignitaries to schedule a ribbon cutting/celebration at the Bruneau Overlook as our celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wilderness Act.

**Handouts Provided:**

**Planning 2.0 PowerPoint (9 pp)**

**Burley Field Office update (2 pp)**

**Jarbridge Field Office update (1 pp)**

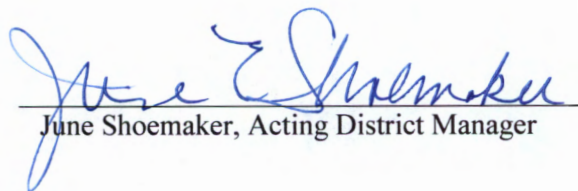
**Shoshone Field Office and Craters of the Moon National Monument update (5 pp)**

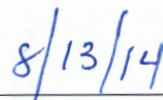
**Proposed Improvements to the Bruneau Overlook (1 pp)**

\Minutes certified by:

  
Mike Henslee, TFD RAC Chairman

  
Date

  
June Shoemaker, Acting District Manager

  
Date

Minutes recorded by:

Christine Vance, TFD Contact Representative