

*Bureau of Land Management
Alaska Resource Advisory Council Meeting
Fairbanks District Office
Fairbanks, Alaska
March 10, 2016*

Thursday, March 10, 2016

Council members present: Kathryn Martin, Warren Olson, Barrett Ristroph, PJ Simon, Gary Morrison, Stan Foo, Rosie Barr, John Hopson, Jr., Brennan Cain, Mark Billingsley, Michael Wald, and David Brown. RAC Chair Suzanne Little was unable to attend and Vice Chair Kathryn Martin assumed the chair and led the meeting.

BLM representatives present: Bud Cribley (BLM Alaska State Director and Designated Federal Official (DFO)), Erika Reed, Geoff Beyersdorf, Lenore Heppler, Joe Galluzzi, Casey Burns, Molly Cobbs, Jeanie Cole, June Lowery and Tammy Werner.

Representatives of agencies other than BLM: None

Members of the public present: Frank Thompson, Tanana Chiefs Conference; Jeff Bruno, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Lindsey Hajduk (Conservation Lands Foundation).

RAC Chair **Kathryn Martin** called the meeting to order at 8:40am.

June Lowery, BLM Alaska RAC Coordinator, advised the RAC regarding meeting-related logistics.

Bud Cribley, BLM Alaska State Director, addressed the RAC, advising the group regarding its authority and purpose, and giving remarks on lands management and the political process. Cribley then gave an overview of BLM Alaska ongoing issues.

RAC members and BLM Alaska staff introduced themselves.

AGENDA APPROVAL

RAC Chair **Martin** asked for any questions regarding the agenda.

MOTION: RAC member **Cain** moved to approve the agenda. RAC member **Simon** seconded. Motion passed.

DECEMBER 2015 MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

RAC Chair **Martin** asked for any questions regarding the December 2015 meeting minutes.

RAC member **Ristroph** suggested the phrase “rather than”, in item number 12 on the last page, be struck from the minutes and replaced with “If BLM does not.”

RAC member **Morrison** asked for the names of individuals who make comments to be highlighted.

MOTION: **Cain** moved to approve the December 2015 meeting minutes. **Simon** seconded. Motion passed.

BREAK

MITIGATION AND PLANNING UPDATE

Cribley introduced **Molly Cobbs, Northeast NPR-A Regional Mitigation Strategy Lead**

Cobbs introduced **Jeanie Cole**, Eastern Interior Resource Management Plan Lead. **Cobbs** gave the RAC a brief overview of the BLM planning process to include the implementation of Planning 2.0. **Cobbs** and **Cole** provided an update on the 3 BLM Alaska planning efforts and ACEC designations. **Cobbs** finished the presentation with an update on the Northeast NPR-A Regional Mitigation Strategy and an overview of mitigation opportunities in Alaska.

RAC member **Morrison** asked who would ultimately designate the ACECs and if their designation should go through the whole process. **Cobbs** answered that if the ACEC made it through the whole planning process they would be designated in the Record of Decision.

RAC member **Morrison** asked if the ACECs and RNA meet the criteria in ANILCA that says there will be no new special areas designated in Alaska without some sort of a process. **Cole** answered that ANILCA says we cannot designate new conservation areas as defined by ANILCA and ACECs are not conservation areas as defined by ANILCA.

RAC member **Barr** stated that she reviewed some of the comments made during the planning process for the Bering Sea/Western Interior Plan and it looked like over a third of the existing lands within that district were being nominated and have met some criteria for ACECs. **Cobbs** answered that there could be 10 different unique values within that third of land and they could be nominated based on those different values.

RAC member **Barr** said she had seen the term associate withdrawal used in the comments and asked for its meaning. **Cobbs** had not heard that term before and offered to check with the BSWI planning lead on it and let RAC member Barr know.

RAC member **Morrison** asked if specific management direction would have to be developed for each ACEC. **Cole** answered that they would have to and it would be part of the RMP. RAC member Morrison then asked if the public would be able to see the direction for each ACEC. **Cole** said they would and could comment on it in the draft RMP.

RAC member **Foo** expressed concern with the nominated ACECs in the area where their proposed natural gas pipeline would cross BLM land. He reminded the group that much of the proposed line would be buried, but one of the restrictions on buried pipelines noted in one of the ACECs related to Sheefish spawning habitat due to possible permafrost. This restriction could apply to the whole area for future projects.

RAC member **Barr** made the comment that some people at the recent Federal Subsistence Advisory Board meeting were asking why the BLM stands for Bureau of Land Management when there is no management.

RAC member **Hopson Jr.** asked where the comment numbers came from. **Cobbs** explained the breakdown of the numbers.

Public Comment Period

RAC Chair, **Martin** asked for public comment. The following members of the public were present:
Frank Thompson-Tanana Chiefs Conference
Jeff Bruno-Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Lindsey Hajduk-Conservation Lands Foundation

There was only one public comment. Lindsey Hajduk stated in reference to a comment by made by a BLM staff during the State Director's update on BLM Alaska issues, "In talking about timing and the impact probably being less for GMT 2 than GMT 1, the whole point of doing an EIS is to assess impact. Outside the realm of NEPA, it is inappropriate to make those assumptions."

LEGACY WELLS UPDATE

Stacie McIntosh, BLM Arctic Office Manager provided the RAC with an update on the legacy wells program due to the program coordinator Nicole Hayes being on jury duty.

RAC member **Olson** asked if BLM has done any work to figure out how much it will cost to clean up and plug all the wells.

McIntosh stated to her knowledge that type of review has not been done and it would be variable since the wells are different ages and in different conditions.

RAC member **Barr** asked if it would be more affordable to do the ones that are scattered now than do the clusters and wait 10 years down the road when \$50 million isn't going to do near as much.

McIntosh said it was a management decision based on logistics and clustering made sense in the Barrow area since one of the wells had gas seeping from it.

BREAK

UPDATE ON RED DEVIL MINE

Mike McCrum, Red Devil Project Lead, was on the phone to give the group an update on the project. This update resulted from a request during the State Director's update of Alaska issues.

RAC member **Foo** asked if the lack of DEC concurrence had an effect on BLM's ability to move forward.

McCrum stated that BLM is prepared to move forward into the public comment period under the current conditions, but there is potential things could change.

RAC member **Imm** asked if there is any additional modeling that could be provided to DEC that may satisfy their concern.

McCrum said that as he understands it DEC feels like the modeling and the analysis was insufficient. We are willing to do more analysis if we can take the feasibility study forward. He further explained that the way the process works is that BLM does the proposed plan, goes through public comment, consider those comments, make a decision, move through a record of decision and then initiate design. He further said he sees it as a disagreement about timing. ADEC wants BLM to do it now and BLM feels like for a range of reasons, both process, and practical, that it would be best to follow the process and do it when we're at the design stage.

Since the meeting was ahead of schedule, RAC Chair **Martin** asked the group to discuss the sub-committees formed during the last RAC meeting to see what progress has been made.

There are four sub-committees:

- Placer Mining
- ANCSA
- Central Yukon
- Bering Sea/Western Interior

RAC Chair **Martin** asked if any of the sub-committees have had meetings. State Director **Cribley** stated the need to decide the subcommittees purposes and how they will engage this year. RAC Chair **Martin** also stated the need for a BLM representative for each subcommittee.

The group restated the membership of the Placer mining subcommittee as RAC members **Morrison, Foo, Barr, Longan**, and non RAC members **Deantha Crockett, Ray Richards**. RAC member **Jorgenson** was added to the Placer Mining subcommittee and **Imm** was added to the ANCSA sub-committee.

The group also discussed what BLM staff would be part of the subcommittees. The following was decided:

- Placer Mining-**Cribley** and **Cohn** will discuss and assign someone
- ANCSA-**Erika Reed** will assign someone
- Central Yukon-**Tim LaMarr** will assign someone
- Bering Sea/Western Interior-**Jena Barringer**

The group also discussed the schedule for the upcoming RAC meetings as follows:

- June 28-29-RAC meeting/Dalton Highway Tour
- Date to be determined-RAC subcommittee trip to JWC
- Tentative October 25-27-Mitigation Forum

A smaller planning sub-committee will be established and start planning for the Mitigation Forum. The fall RAC meeting will be held during this timeframe too.

BREAK

UPDATE ON RECLAMATION AND NEW REVEGETATION STANDARDS

Joe Galluzzi, Branch Chief for Solid Minerals and Casey Burns, Vegetation Lead, gave the RAC an update on the development of revegetation standards.

RAC member **Jorgenson** expressed the need for clear guidance communicated to the miners so they know what is expected. He also expressed the need for a system to release acres as reclamation occurs so miners can keep mining.

UPDATE ON FIRE SEASON

Kent Slaughter, Alaska Fire Service Manager, gave the RAC an overview of the upcoming fire season.

RAC member **PJ Simon** asked if it is possible to sit in on meetings when the national Interior Fire Executive come to AFS in April. **Slaughter** said he would check on that possibility and let **Simon** know.

RAC Chair **Martin** asked the group if they were ready to adjourn the meeting. RAC member **Simon** moved to adjourn and RAC Chair **Martin** adjourned the meeting at 3:42 p.m.