

Record of Northern New Mexico Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting

August 19, 2021

Held via Zoom

Agency attendees:

Al Elser BLM Farmington District Manager
Mark Matthews, BLM Albuquerque District Manager (Acting)
Melanie Barnes, BLM New Mexico State Director (Acting)
Elaine Lopez, BLM Rio Puerco Assistant Field Manager
Jeff Tafoya, BLM Farmington Field Multi-Resources Supervisor
Kymm Gresset, BLM Rio Puerco Field Manager
Pamela Mathis, BLM Taos Field Manager
Josh Freeman, BLM Rio Puerco Field Office Wildlife Biologist
Jamie Garcia, BLM Rio Puerco Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner
Jennifer Merino, BLM Rio Puerco Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner
Josh Freeman, BLM Rio Puerco Field Office Wildlife Biologist
Allison Sandoval, BLM New Mexico State Office Public Affairs Specialist
Sarah Scott, BLM Farmington Field Office Project Manager
Jillian Aragon, BLM Northern New Mexico RAC Coordinator

Northern NM RAC Members (* indicates present):

Name	Category
McWilliams, Peggy*	1, Energy/Minerals
Castiglia, Peter J.*	1, Energy/Minerals
Hersman, Larry*	2, Dispersed Recreation
O'Neill, Michael K.*	2, Dispersed Recreation
Sertich, Richard A.*	2, Dispersed Recreation
Duran, Frank*	3, Academician
Arrington, John*	3, Elected Official
Martinez, Cameron L. (Vice-Chair)*	3, Native American Tribe
Price, Charles P. III (Chair)*	3, Public-at-large

Public attendees: Seven

Meeting start time 9:06 am, **no quorum**. Jill and Charles will try to contact additional RAC members before afternoon votes.

I. Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions

Elser: opening remarks, introduction and welcome

Price: welcome [noted which RAC members present/missing] will proceed with agenda unless other comments.

Elser: introductions?

Price: yes. [Present RAC members gave brief intro] Now will proceed with agenda

Sandoval: available if any questions. Boretsky will not be joining

II. Administration and Secretarial Priorities Update

Barnes: Presentation will be distributed and will be available on the web. Admin priorities - looking at how BLM NM can implement in our state. Support employees by fulfilling vacancies. Making quite a bit of progress. Recently a 25% vacancy rate. Fire Workforce Transformation – bolster workforce to be year-round vs. seasonal. This would provide add'l support for fuels treatment projects in winter months. Not relevant to NNM RAC: Helium plant in Amarillo. Next priority is strengthening relationships w/Tribal nations. Continually striving to make consultation more meaningful. Also have fiduciary trust responsibilities.

Duran: what kind of money are we looking at in terms of fiduciary responsibility? Millions?

Barnes: don't have figures on hand, BIA and NN are our partners on this. We can follow up.

Duran: not necessary

McWilliams: FIMO office is crucial in Indian mineral development

Barnes: agree, we will continue to support FIMO office. Next priority - recreation access. Ongoing focus. Continuing this priority as "Great American Outdoors Act" currently. Recent land donation for Sabinoso Wilderness. LWC fund is now permanent, will continue to work on projects.

Price: question on LWC fund, how does that work?

Barnes: How a project gets nominated and goes through process?

Price: Yes

Barnes: Basically a years-long process. Someone who is willing seller. Identified and nominated through competitive process at BLM level then Department [of Interior] level. Once approved (takes years), proceed with purchase and associated transactions. Sometimes they don't go all the way. Have had circumstances where appraisal was lower than what seller wanted and it stopped.

Price: Sounds like an alternative for private landowner to get their land protected versus a conservation easement?

Barnes: Yes, it's an alternative. Certain criteria must be met, such as being adjacent to or have special resources, or have recreation access. Another priority - NEPA and Planning. Continue to advance plans in the works. Includes Farmington RMP Amendment as well as Rio Puerco RMP. Also includes Rio Grande del Norte monument plan, as well as solar projects.

Duran: How is this committee involved in NEPA?

Barnes: Defer to Allison or Jill

Sandoval: These meetings are an extra opportunity to discuss these plans, above and beyond general public involvement

Duran: RAC feedback is considered same as general public?

Sandoval: RAC can provide feedback, which may not necessarily be something the public can do. We aim to have more of a conversation/receive input from RAC

Matthews: Depends on the RAC and schedule. Some RACs in the past have come up with alternatives. It all depends on timing when projects come up.

Duran: so we wouldn't be involved with ID Team meetings. If we wanted to be?

Matthews: cooperating agencies could participate at that level. Would have to check

Aragon: the earlier the RAC is able to engage the better. The scoping process is where we would engage the RAC. Both offices' plans are online if RAC would like to review.

Sandoval: have seen in other states, RACs will make subcommittees to focus on a plan. RAC could make suggestions for subcommittees. Meetings would just be focused on one topic

Duran: makes sense. Would be interested in helping with forest products.

Barnes: would be great to have RAC involvement where we can. Another priority - Dingell Act. Another priority - Landscape and habitat resilience. Support admin goal of conserving 30% by 2030

Duran: how did they come up with 30%?

Barnes: not sure, made a goal and went for it

Duran: seems low

Barnes: may be more opportunity for RAC to provide additional input

O'Neill: question about 30% in Farmington area. With 90% of lands tied up with oil and gas, how do you get to 30%?

Barnes: the 30% is nationwide, also definitions are still being developed. Will they include Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns? No Surface Occupancy? All these still to be fleshed out. My understanding is that there will be a public involvement process to work out those details. Another priority is energy. Namely renewable energy. Also emphasize inspection and enforcement, surface reclamation of fluid mineral development

O'Neill: any work being done to help promote greater methane recapture? Flaring reduction?

Barnes: Yes, waste prevention rule underway, as well as emphasis for us to work on it outside of rulemaking. Particularly detection and follow up with enforcement actions

McWilliams: operators don't want to flare. Operators want ROWs approved in conjunction with permits.

Barnes: good point, infrastructure needs to be in place. Big challenge in Permian basin but fortunately good infrastructure in Farmington. Another priority is climate change and Environmental Justice. Work with industry on opportunities to reduce GHG. Collaborate with communities, proactively work with communities. Other questions?

Castiglia: You mentioned an uptick in numbers on renewable projects. How big?

Barnes: at least a doubling. FFO seen uptick, other offices also seeing uptick

Castiglia: Are these prospective or will they actually build?

Barnes: mix of both, solar and wind

III. Overview of Charter and RAC Status

Aragon: Some members did not reapply. This is last time this RAC will meet. 4 seats will be vacated

Price: plenty of applications? Expect to fill vacancies?

Aragon: applications have been sent up and are working through process. Will keep RAC posted. It is BLM's 75th anniversary. New charter with new RAC

Price: charter by its own terms is effective until June 2022. New charter with new RAC?

Aragon: new charter is already in review. Secretary signs charters

Sandoval: Secretary signs off. New administration has rescinded certain items so charters will be updated. Expect them relatively soon.

Price: can we see charter in draft form?

Sandoval: they are very cookie cutter, drafted by Office of Executive Secretariat. We don't have input on them.

Sertich: still receiving nominations?

Aragon: no, nominations are closed, unless White House liaison wishes for additional nomination period. RAC members who didn't expire this year will expire in May 2022. Will be another round of nominations. Please consider reapplying

Price: How to deal with existing Secretarial Orders (SOs)? In process of being rescinded, so presume we can forget about those? There is a directive for RAC to review SO's. Haven't been presented any for discussion. Anything going on there that weren't in the charter?

Barnes: might need to refer to higher up. Generally we aren't advised so we would have to find out how to work in RAC feedback

Sandoval: we like RAC input on meeting agendas. Please reach out and let Jill know to add items to agenda, SO's or others.

Elser: SO's come from highest level of DOI. Generally speaking, when a SO is issued that affects management of public lands, it impacts all lands managed by BLM. Usually see BLM HQ office develop implementation plans rather than each individual office. HQ develops Instructional Memoranda (IM) to give direction. Don't have a lot of input at FO/SO level. IM's are things we could share with RAC as a way to discuss how we manage at local level.

Duran: Do those SO have to be posted in Federal Register?

Elser: not sure. SO and Executive Orders (EOs) are posted on DOI and White House website. Not sure if there is a Federal Register requirement

Price: was able to access through BLM website.

Aragon (Via chat): <https://www.doi.gov/foia/os/executive-andor-secretarial-orders>

Price: Just want to make sure RAC is complying with charter. Another charter related question: persons on RAC, per CFR there is a provision for required training.

Aragon: CFR is old, directed at different RACs focused on grazing. Allison may be able to add more when she returns.

IV. Introduction of new BLM Field Managers

Gresset: New FM for RPFO. Am hearing impaired which presents unique challenges with virtual platform, closed captions are helpful, but also use chat for questions. Came to RPFO in March. From S Dakota. Started in USGS in HR. Came to BLM 8 years ago in National Office. Worked with NM and opportunities to learn about resources. Worked in CO and MT.

McWilliams: planning on coming to RPFO, would like to make appt to meet

Gresset: office is open, open for meeting

Mathis: New FM for Taos. BLM is third career. Investigative journalist on west coast and in Las Vegas. Governor's press secretary overseas. Worked with UN Development Energy Council. Joined BLM in Phoenix, Tucson. Been Monument Manager and Communications. Associate DM in Tucson. I have a desire for transparent management.

Price: On the Manby Hot Springs call a few months ago and impressed with how that was handled.

Mathis: thank you

V. RPFO Major Actions Overview

Gresset: Joined by Elaine Lopez and Josh Freeman, AFM's

Freeman: Acting for Adam Lujan. North Sandoval Fuel project. Developing program for fuelwood to id and rotate areas in Cuba area. 2 public meetings so far. Primary concerns came from permittees. Do recognize use would be focused, but feedback is good and recognize short term focus will be benefitting by long term rest. Contract phase with RMP document. Waiting for feedback from HQ on preferred alternative (Alt C). Anticipated end date of Oct 2022.

Price: Questions on forest products – commercial harvesting vs noncommercial. Ability of private parties to go cut trees on BLM or is it just BLM permittees on their property?

Freeman: no, BLM recognizes fuel wood resources in Cuba area. Trying to develop plan so community can harvest for their personal use.

Price: how is that administered?

Freeman: permit can be purchased in a few ways. Working with FS office in Cuba to sell, also working on selling digitally. IDing Juniper and Pinon Pine, as well as Christmas Trees. Working on amending alternative to focus up from on dead removal first, then move into other material types (green).

Price: would FS and BLM be checking for permits? Citations issued if no permits?

Freeman: correct, this would make enforcement easier. Focused use/area. Signage posted

Price: fee?

Freeman: yes, based on usage. Homeowners vs. commercial. Four cords seems to be historical usage, so keeping it at that.

Price: when expect to be done?

Freeman: this time next year

Duran: commercial permits are issued how?

Freeman: we recognize there will be an unmet need with the amount of historical needs, but this is the route to maintain sustainable yield. Limiting harvest period to three mo/year.

Duran: commercial process though?

Freeman: not trying to go commercial, trying to preserve for community needs.

Duran: what about tribes, is there a commitment to tribes to provide? Any tribal programs?

Freeman: Working with Tri Chapter community

Gresset: aren't any treaty rights, however developed a fuelwood working group to include Tri-Chapters. Objective of that group is to bridge gap of supply/demand. Forest Service may have other mechanisms and possibly doing direct deliveries. It is positive that everyone leverages resources to communities who need them.

Duran: So tribes are treated like general public, until an MOU is in place?

Gresset: not really, we do listen to cultural concerns/administration of program. Listening to concerns about how program is administered. Public education is going to be important. Would anticipate RAC being able to give excellent feedback on how to implement the program.

Duran: other questions: Do tribes get charged? Minor forest products don't bring in money but does that money stay local?

Gresset: forestry goes back to main fund but passed back to Field Office so can be used at field level.

Duran: are you considering free use for tribes?

Gresset: they are charged like permit holders.

Duran: thank you, curious how that works.

O'Neill: with small scale fuelwood harvesting, are they clear cut or selective in nature? How is selection made? By individual harvester or by BLM identifying?

Freeman: initial cutting will be done by permit holder though they must follow stipulations on the permit. Diameter of trees, no off-road driving.

O'Neil: someone is overseeing from BLM?

Freeman: correct, forester responsibility to monitor but also office wide

Duran: do you have to be US citizen to purchase wood permit?

Freeman: no, name and address and means of payment required.

Hersman: does BLM take into consideration the EPA guidance on effect of wood smoke?

Freeman: have not considered that into effects of these sales. Could get to that level if there are higher numbers sold, to look at what sales are contributing

Hersman: get inversions in Taos. Woodsmoke is bad, long list of carcinogens

Freeman: Once product leaves public lands, can't tell where/when the burning will occur

Gresset: fuelwood heat is often only heat source for many communities.

Duran: In Pacific northwest it was requested for sales to stop if air quality got bad. Other products sold?

Freeman: dead/down, green, Christmas Trees, berries (juniper), pinyon pine nuts

Gresset: feel free to use chat with other questions. Update on Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks. Still closed in cooperation with Pueblo of Cochiti. Discussing reopening plan. BLM does not currently have public access to monument. Started working on updates to Slot Canyon. Working with Pueblo on safety measures. Internal scoping for moving to Recreation.gov for better compliance with RMP of around 50k visitors. Don't have a hard number capacity limit. Burst of visitation has impacts to resources and experiences and Pueblo. Supplemental rules to include feedback from Pueblo regarding drones and dogs. That was only area that was closed during pandemic.

Price: we'll have questions on those this afternoon. Moving on to oil and gas

Lopez: 1st lease sale in Dec 2018, 30 parcels, parcels issued Nov 2019. Lease sale is under litigation but was denied. EOG Resources has submitted APDs, 125's APD's issued. One pad has been developed, one well spud but not drilled yet. ROW's for road access. March and June 2019 lease sale were pulled for further consultation. Nov 2019 sale included 4 parcels. Lease issuance is pending. Feb. 2020 lease sale included 7 parcels. Nov. 2019 and Feb 2020 are pending, nothing issued yet. Also hosting 2 NPLD events on Sept 24.

Gresset: that is all from RPFO

Price: Break now, return at 11am.

-----Break-----

Mathis: Update on Sabinoso, did recently accept the largest donation ever since the Wilderness Act to this wilderness. There is a second component, which is an easement just outside the easement for parking/staging as well as a path or trail to new wilderness donation. The easement donation is a separate Realty action that hasn't been completed yet. Complicated because ranch was sold with grazing rights. Negotiating best entry and avoidance of cultural items. Attention focused on northern access of Sabinoso, road repairs.

Regarding scenic easement above Manby Hot Springs. Happy to report BLM has completed an EA for the restoration of that easement, purchased under Wild [and Scenic] River Act. To protect scenery and erosion. Similar to Sabinoso, new landowner under scenic easement. Negotiating a road and adjacent gate. Successfully put up signs. Legal access from John Dunn bridge. Sign posted for educating public on difficulties of route.

Price: Does sign say 2 miles one way?

Mathis: yes. 4.1 mil total. Have received positive feedback from county and residents. Minimal feedback from folks who were used to accessing hot springs. Have done a diligent job of updating social media sites. Seeing good traction, river folks are reporting less visitation/cars on that scenic easement. Plan for future NPLD events for re-seeding.

O'Neill: thank you for update. Regarding signage, would it be appropriate to put it in Spanish?

Mathis: great feedback, we'll take that to the Outdoor Recreation Planner

Hersman: Was there ever attempt to acquire easement on road to Manby Hot Springs?

Mathis: the subject had been taken to county, but county did not accept proposition.

Hersman: trail is not for faint of heart, is there plan to improve trail and if so what is timeframe?

Mathis: easement includes monitoring trail, very interested in protecting natural springs. Concerns of expanding trail but under consideration. Monument plan may help gather feedback from community regarding themes in that area.

Price: regarding trail, existing trail or trail from John Dunn bridge?

Hersman: John Dunn trail

Mathis: correct. In the course of this action, have met with Pueblo, sheriff, homeowners, HOAs, a lot of behind the scenes to keep this effort successful. Recognize trail is a precarious route, assessing what else could be possible.

Price: anything you can share about hot springs on west side of river next to John Dunn bridge?

Mathis: the county has closed part of road access. Did an excellent job in coordination with BLM for parking and turnaround. They foresee main switchback road will be closed for over a year while feasibility study occurs. Walking access now. A lot of seasonal use. As the river has more water, the tubs disappear so we expect use to vary. Have noticed area is highly contingent on weather conditions, mud/rockslides. Constant maintenance battle.

O'Neill: do you have a map of John Dunn area and trails leading to springs?

Mathis: have a hard copy, will get that to Jill

O'Neill: that will be great to visualize the area

Mathis: Rio Grande del Norte National Monument plan. A Plan was in the early stages but was halted. Draft alternatives being formulated. Contracts being issued to realign plan. Goal is Jan or Feb, will have a lot of public participation. Envision a rework of the alternatives. Make sure we have a forward-thinking lens on the monument, including acquisitions. Stay tuned for future involvement, RAC could have subcommittee on this.

Heard questions on LWC funding. TFO has 4 acquisitions, with 2 different partners: Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Trust for Public Land. Willing sellers within monument. Will keep monument whole. Total of acquisitions is \$1million. 5th acquisition in the works, much larger. Lots of congressional interest to secure funding through LWCF. Additionally a 20 year acquisition to bring to your attention with Ohkay Owingeh. Tribe purchased land in monument for exchange with BLM. Time has been spent getting word out to OHV and other user groups. Tribe is on 2-year deadline to make exchange happen or make other considerations.

Price: questions?

VI. Farmington Field Office Major Actions Overview

Tafoya: RMPA/EIS is currently in Draft Proposed Final form while waiting for PA [Programmatic Agreement] with 106 consulting parties. PA will line out [National Historic Preservation Act Section] 106 processes for future actions. Progress slowed due to pandemic. This past February Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals approved pause of EIS for work on PA to catch up. Been conducting outreach with consulting parties to reconvene. Once PA is completed, draft RMPA will be presented to DOI Review team. Would then be sent to NM Governor and Navajo Nation President for consistency reviews.

Price: how long does that process take?

Tafoya: Uncertainty on how long it will take to get folks back to table, once things get caught up processes are on timelines.

Price: years and years?

Scott: barring no other surprises, hopefully within the next year

O'Neill: During recent public hearings there were three or four alternatives, was one selected?

Tafoya: Alternative C was identified as preferred. 4 action alternatives with sub-alternatives specifically for leasing around Chaco Park.

Scott: 8 sub-alternatives with varying ranges of closures and NSO's. DOI Review Team would need to concur with the FO's recommended alternative of Alt C.

O'Neill; What were the alts, alt C?

Scott: Each alt focused on a theme. A is bio focused, B focuses on cultural aspects, C is balance of culture and energy development, D focuses on energy production. Will post description in chat.

Elser: The preferred Alt C balances community needs and development while enhancing land health.

Aragon [via chat]: The BLM identified Alternative C as the preferred alternative in the draft EIS. The theme for alternative C is to balance community needs and development while enhancing land health

Tafoya: Renewable projects. Shiprock solar [overview]. San Juan solar gen tie [overview]

O'Neill: With current energy production of coal, significant amount of money is contributed to schools, with change over will there be that same level of money contributed?

Tafoya: unsure

Price: renewable energy projects need approvals, is there a sense of other gov't arrangements that would be necessary. Such as San Juan County or State of NM, what other projects are these projects contingent on?

Tafoya: We are working with Western Area Power Administration on MOU for Shiprock Solar. Will need approval through them as well.

Westmoreland Coal will be shutting down operations in anticipation of San Juan generating station shut down. Enchant and City of Farmington (COF) interested in potential carbon capture project. Have applied for a right-of-way on existing 'haul road' for pipeline.

FFO is working on NPLD with COF, SJC, Doug McKim is contact

Aragon [via chat]: For more information about NPLD contact BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Doug McKim dmckim@blm.gov

Price: Question on FMG RMPA, anything involving road improvements to Chaco Park?

Tafoya: no, that is not a planning level issue, would be addressed in site specific right-of-way for road.

Castiglia: on San Juan mine and Enchant potential. Assume a lot going on with closure costs/financial assurance. Tell us about that process? What does BLM require for financial assurance?

Elser: Operator has a bond in place to cover reclamation. At closure, BLM mining engineers will conduct inspections to ensure requirements, per Mineral Leasing Act and their lease, are being met. Other places in the country are seeing companies going out of business and not large enough bonds in place. Not necessarily a concern here.

Castiglia: so bond is updated?

Elser: yes, bonds are current, at least in last five years or so.

Castiglia: if Enchant does move forward, do you update the plan?

Elser: yes

McWilliams: how many employees would lose their jobs if Enchant moves forward?

Tafoya: not sure, assuming that is why COF is involved.

McWilliams: SJC recognizes loss of employment in that area

O'Neill: concerned about funding going through with Enchant. No reason to be mining coal to produce CO2.

Castiglia: what are the BLM decisions with the potential transaction? Seems like a big topic

Tafoya: much like any application, all regulatory processes. Environmental review will look at on the ground impacts, air quality. Anticipate a robust analysis.

Castiglia: new plan with new owner?

Elser: mine would transfer to new owner, no new application

O'Neill: Env impact study would be needed to ensure the transfer would be part of Enchant/COF agreement

Castiglia: what triggers NEPA?

Tafoya: My understanding is that if the carbon capture project is approved, then Enchant would move ahead with transferring the generating station.

Lunch break at 11:55am; meeting reconvened at 1:00pm

VII. El Malpais, National Conservation Area (NCA) Virtual Walkthrough

Garcia: [video presentation]

Price: Thanks for the video, really captures the feel. Can you tell us more about other sites?

Merino: there are countless numbers of arch/cultural sites. The business plan includes photos and will cover those in a moment.

Price: Noticed Mr. Arrington is on, have we lost him

Aragon: He is on as attendee on the phone. **We do have a quorum now.**

Price: Welcome to the meeting Mr. Arrington. Go ahead with Joe Skeen presentation.

VIII. El Malpais, Joe Skeen Campground Fee Discussion

Merino: El Malpais NCA draft business plan highlights. Describes info to determine appropriate fee rates. Considerations to local community and economy. Comprised of federal, private and tribal lands. Unique geologic history. Extensive cultural history. Dittert site is Puebloan site. Has 35 rooms and a kiva. Homestead Act brought homesteaders to area. Inspiring natural resources, wildlife and veg. Two designated wilderness areas in NCA. Very different ecosystem. Three Wilderness Study Areas. Several designated trails.

Price: plans to improve signage or trails at Dittert?

Merino: it is within RMP that we can promote to the public, but no plans for more signage or trail improvement. Would like to keep it primitive. Pamphlet includes GPS coordinates.

Plan considers what kind of visitation to the area. Yearly avg estimates, 264,764. Open year round. Ranger station is closed seasonally. Every area in NCA is currently fee free. The only fee site in RPFO is Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks. Very few Special Recreation Permits issued in El Malpais. Mostly outfitters/guides. Some educational permits.

Four of the sites can qualify for amenity fee increase. Standard amenity fee sites must have: developed parking, permanent toilet facility, permanent trash receptacle, interpretive signing, picnic table, security. La Ventana, El Malpais and Ranger Station picnic areas have these. Expanded amenity fee site must have 5 out of 9. Joe Skeen campground has tent/trailer camping, picnic table, access road, visitor protection, permanent toilet, permanent trash, fire, no drinking water, no fee collections.

Price: is reasonable visitor protection the same on this as security on the last slide? And what qualifies?

Merino: yes, we have two Law Enforcement Officers for the area

Only want to pursue Joe Skeen amenity site. Do not have concrete visitation data; no visitation readers for pedestrians or vehicles. Park rangers observe steady use throughout the year. Visitation decreases in Jan/Feb. Appropriated funds/expenses - Avg yearly expense of \$398,600, receiving \$232,800. Allocated funds are from wilderness, recreation and National Conservation Lands funding. These numbers are avg of 5-yr period. Majority of costs are spent on labor. Three park rangers, one outdoor recreation planner, splitting a manager with Tent Rocks. Projected expenditures for Joe Skeen for next 5 years. Campground host is preferred to prevent vandalism and to direct usage.

Price: is there a plan to have host only if fee is approved, or host in any event?

Gresset: a reimbursement is contingent on fee approval so yes it is only if fee is approved.

Merino: Supplies are another cost, also vault toilet pumping services, unexpected expenses. Proposing expanded amenity fee at Joe Skeen at \$5/night per site plus 2 vehicles. Would remain first come/first served. Want to leave other rec sites fee free. Projected annual increased revenue ~\$10-15k (conservative estimates)

Price: does that account for national pass?

O'Neill: senior golden pass has age limit and is generally 50% of normal fee.

Merino: No, will not be accepting pass to reduce costs. Impacts from implementing fee vs not implementing. Implementing: Bringing in more money, additional revenue to pay for operational costs, increased BLM presence to reduce resource damage. Improved campground facilities, quality of visitor experience. Negative impact may be visitors offput by fee. Visitor demographics could be collected. Not implementing: no extra funds, more resource damage, degradation in recreation experience. Increased costs at faster rates, favorable to EJ communities since no fee increase. Improvements, short term and long term, not an exhaustive list. Barricades/boulders around camping areas to delineate camping areas. Existing concrete pads are eroding underneath. Pads may be less stable/crack. Repainting of shelters, vault toilet flooring (completed). Replace fire rings. ADA upgrades. Revamp campground host area. Reclaim areas used for camping outside designated camping area. New potable water and electrical system.

Sertich: tell us more about campground host? What makes up a host area?

Merino: sewage system for RV, other sites may have electrical system, but we do not. Used to have solar facilities but it is broken, no funding to fix. Would like to have place to plugin for a/c or heat. Bigger area, shed for storage. More visible for visitors. Questions?

Price: Fee question. Discuss how you got to \$5, versus say \$10.

Merino: looked at surrounding areas with similar amenities and what they were offering. Most comparable areas were NPS or FS that were charging \$5-10/night. Private areas are charging \$20 but not comparable because they have wi-fi. Sites that were charging \$10 had potable water, we do not.

O'Neill: wonderful job. Thorough analysis. Love the campground. Named after Sen. Joe Skeen who did a lot for NMSU and in recognition, main ag building is Joe Skeen Hall. Given fact that there is so much oil and gas in northern NM on BLM, have you considered approaching industry to see if they are willing to contribute?

Gresset: hadn't considered that. Just received approval to implement donation capacity. Accounts are just getting set up. Don't believe we can request donations, but private citizens could donate.

McWilliams: love what you've done. During pandemic folks have recognized the opportunities. Fees that are being discussed are very reasonable. I support the fees.

Castiglia: Thanks Jamie and production video team for video. Thank you for hours spent. Looks like financial analysis has \$200k offset between spending and incoming. You have my support. More investments, fees are likely to come.

Hersman: impressed, haven't been there and will schedule a trip

Merino: great, give me a call for recommendations

Castiglia: there is dispersed camping available as well

Merino: yes, large NCA, Joe Skeen is a small area within

Price: Any other questions?

IX. Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks Fee Discussion

Jill: Note that we will need to cut to public comments at 2:15.

Garcia: Draft business plan and fee modification for Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks. Culturally and geologically significant area. First fee increase in 25 yrs. Slot canyon and lava loop trails and facilities (vault toilets, picnic areas, signage, overflow parking, ADA path and picnic shelter). Veterans Memorial Overlook Amenities: trail and facilities. RMP for area anticipated 50,000 visitors annually. Grown immensely in popularity and visitation is showing. Moving to reservation system would help monitor use of area. Help manage resources and produce positive visitor experience. Avg 110Kish annual visitors, during pandemic this increased to 127k. Current fees: \$2 bikes/moto, \$5 vehicle (1-8 passenger), \$25 vehicle (9-25 passengers), \$100 vehicle (26+ passengers), America the Beautiful passes also accepted, pass holder plus 3 passengers. Also sell the pass at the monument, makes up about 32% of all entries. Educational field trip program, around 2200 visitors through this program. Collections over 5 yr period: \$137,800 but spending \$154k. Other accounts are tapped as well. Labor and Ops – \$408,000. Fee increase may impact public but would benefit overall ops and provide positive visitor experience. Compelling case to increase fees.

X. Public Comment Period

Aragon: Public comment period is starting now. 30-minute session to provide comments. Not a Q&A. Can provide contact info for field offices if there are questions. Use raise hand feature by pressing *9 on your phone.

Public Comment/Mr. Mark Henderson: I would like to thank the BLM for announcing this RAC meeting on KRZA, our local radio station. I would encourage BLM to continue to make those announcements so we can listen in. It's been very informative and great to catch up with about 5 years of uneven connection. Thank you for the outreach and I request that you continue to announce these.

Aragon: Thank you for your comment. Mr. Chair no other comments at this time, are you ok with Jamie continuing the Tent Rocks presentation

Price: yes

Garcia: looking at 73% increase in inflation. Proposed fee structure modification. Propose a \$5/person fee. Must be more self-sustainable as a monument and rely on what we're collecting rather than grants or borrowing from other programs. We do realize there are impacts. Fees haven't increased in 25 yrs. Impacts of increasing: generating revenue, adequate staff to halt resource damage, improve rec opportunities, continue ops, prepared for increase of labor/supplies, public may find increase off-putting. No increase: monument would continue to rely on other funding sources, loss of potential revenue, env degradation, degradation of visitor experience, unprepared for increased costs. Overall, Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks is a gem, we are feeling the impacts of no fee increase.

Duran: May have alluded to this but what is reason for increasing fees? Because of decreasing appropriated dollars?

Garcia: it depends on area, we do receive funding for this area specifically but would like to be more self-sustainable

Duran: have you requested more appropriated dollars for this area?

Gresset: in terms of monument management, those funds have stayed relatively flat. We haven't made a request, this would be a supplement to those funds. This location is different in that the public has come to expect an "NPS" like experience with more rangers/interpretive to support

Price: Referencing ranger on site, what is standard expectation about when a ranger is on site for the public to interact with?

Gresset: about 8am-3:30pm. People have to hike up and start moving visitors down since it is day use only due to crossing Cochiti Pueblo.

Price: with respect to 50-75k visitors vs 125k avg, are you expecting to drive down the numbers by reservation system? And when would that go into place?

Garcia; would like to have Recreation.gov in place when monument re-opens.

Gresset: a lot of comment received from Cochiti Pueblo since our numbers were off. Jamie worked with Pueblo to gather more accurate numbers. Will have better abilities to manage high use times, balloon fiesta for example, and impacts to Monument and Pueblo

Price: would there be signage to discourage the public from showing up without permit?

Garcia: yes, signage to say 'reservation only' and how to access recreation.gov to purchase ticket.

Aragon: Reminder to audience that we are in 30-minute public comment period for another 12 minutes. Please raise hand to comment, otherwise we can continue discussion.

McWilliams: great presentation, love what you're doing again and making more and more camping and recreation available. State of NM charges \$10 to enter and \$45 for camping so BLM has a bargain

Garcia: took that into consideration for fee structure

Martinez: reconfirm, have consulted with Cochiti Pueblo.

Garcia: Yes, Kymm has been working very closely with Cochiti

Gresset: Gave new governor an overview, formal consultation process was started, toured the area on the ground. Their questions are, would they utilize a trespass fee on the access that crosses Cochiti? Governor couldn't be here today but wanted to pass along they had no negative comments.

Castiglia: Appreciate the overview and have read the business plan. Option selected is good. \$5 is a good choice

Price: One detail raised in mind, does that include children/infants?

Garcia: Drawing a blank on age limit, possibly 15 or 16 and under do not get charged. Reservation system will help us know the demographics better. Reservations would be through reservation site, no cash on-site.

Duran: age of majority is 18, so wouldn't want to cite someone under that age.

Price: Confirming that all reservations would be through reservation.gov and a person would not be able to pull up without.

Garcia: correct. A QR code or sign with info so public can start process of purchasing ticket.

Gresset: Rec.gov, because we're making a change to fee process, there will be a NEPA document, do plan on re-engaging public, excited to have connection to public. Enhanced safety

Price: once fee is approved, what is timeline before Rec.gov?

Gresset: previous Acting FM sent reopening plan to Cochiti. Been working with Cochiti governor on those plans. Incorporating the Pueblo's "must haves".

O'Neill: the relationship that Tent Rocks have with Cochiti seems to be strong moving forward, should be applauded. Have the people at El Malpais have similar relationship with surrounding tribes there?

Gresset: Relationships are not as day to day, but all relationships are positive. Starting to re-engage now that I am permanent FM, having more Zoom meetings with tribes and pueblos.

Garcia: To follow up, 15 and under are admitted for free.

Aragon: it is 2:45 and we are closing public comment portion of the meeting.

XI. Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks & Joe Skeen Campground Fee Vote

Price: We'll have open discussion then move to vote. Start with Tent Rocks. Very much in favor of fee increase. Seems appropriate. Have been several times, extremely popular area and would be good to manage numbers. Fee increase and Rec.gov approach are good. I support

O'Neil: Impressed with analysis, seeing numbers increase over time is impressive. Being between Albuquerque and Santa Fe is draw. Increase seems reasonable

Sertich: I agree. Propose fee are quite reasonable

Hersman: excellent presentation, would it be appropriate to project fee increase for next 25 years and make a prediction on what you may need in out years, considering lack of RAC meetings?

Price: not being asked to approve staggered increase, but what are the BLMs thought on future fee increase?

Gresset: since this is a public process, considering a fee of \$10, unless there are sideboards, might be alarming. Don't have strong correlation of data to support more of an increase at this time.

Price: prepared to proceed with vote

Aragon: confirming Mr. Arrington can participate. Audio difficulties. Can use 'hand raise' for affirmative vote.

Price: all RAC members raise hand for affirmative vote.

[All members who are able have 'hand raised' via Zoom. Castiglia confirms verbally, Duran confirms verbally, Hersman confirms verbally. Unanimous 'yes']

Price: Joe Skeen campground, fee increase is reasonable and would support higher increase. Thank you to the staff for great presentation.

O'Neill: would like to second you and congratulate the people from El Malpais and good information. Very positive about it.

Castiglia: I support increase as well, persuasive presentations. My full support.

O'Neil: suggest talking to rangers at visitors center regarding dispersed camping

Price: ready for vote. All who can raise hand, raise for yes to fee increase. All members have raised hands.

[RAC members who are able have 'hand raised' via Zoom. Duran confirms verbally, Castiglia confirms verbally, Hersman confirms verbally. Unanimous 'yes']

Price: RAC has voted yes on both fee increases.

XII. RAC Discussion

Aragon: We could look at topics for future meetings. Pugh and Boretsky have resigned from RAC

Price: do you have a sense of when we will know who 4 new RAC members are?

Aragon: nominations are with HQ who is reviewing nominees. Expect to have an update by the end of the year, but don't expect that we will be able to hold a RAC meeting by the end of the year.

Price: may be premature to discuss topics until we know when we're going to be able to meet and who the members are. Would like to discuss/hear about SO's at next meeting.

O'Neill: would like to hear about EO's as they come up, rather than waiting for another meeting.

Price: could that be distributed via email to RAC members?

Aragon: yes, will also provide website. Will also include BLM press releases.

O'Neill: appreciate sense of communication. Thank you

Sertich: could small issues be handled as subcommittee?

Price: Current issues subcommittee composed of members that will continue? Haven't looked at regs to see if subcommittee could meet/vote in absence of quorum

Hersman: thought I heard that subcommittee can be appointed but they have to focused on single issue

Sandoval: yes, they do have to have a narrow focus, the other thing to keep in mind with subcommittee, meeting notices will still have to be published in the Federal Register. Wouldn't just be informal gathering. Also open to public

Price: but we could have meetings and discuss issues, subject to those requirements, over the next six months until we have a full RAC again.

O'Neill: recognizing 2-3 month lead time.

Sandoval: could talk offline about setting up subcommittee. Don't have to decide right now.

Price: Do we need a RAC quorum to form a subcommittee?

Sandoval: administrative exception available

Price: Open to hear from RAC members about items they may want a subcommittee to discuss.

Hersman: according to John Bailey, previous Taos AFM, the high bridge over Rio Grande is the most visited bridge though there is a lack of info. Ample opportunity to put signage up to educate public about the bridge. Would suggest that Rio Grande Gorge rise to World Heritage site. Spectacular example of hydrology and geology.

Mathis: The bridge and the rest stop are controlled by the Highway dept. Interesting relationship with them, trying to hold them accountable to terms in the location. Would agree that there is opportunity to toot our horn. Will take the Word Heritage suggestion to archeology staff.

O'Neill: Wikipedia can share info too

Price: does BLM have property on bridge crossing?

Mathis: yes

Price: opportunity exists for more educational materials

McWilliams: disappointed we couldn't do on site tour to El Malpais. Appreciate the online tour, look forward to opportunities in the future

Castiglia: thank you Larry, as outgoing member. We'll work hard to make this group a useful group and thank you for your contribution. We'll see where future meetings head, best advice is advice that is needed. What are issues that BLM leadership see coming up and what are issues that you'll be focused on in the next six months?

Mathis: very large appetite for recreation. To have a large lens on different types of recreation. Some may see an explosion of recreation where others see it should be more confined. The merging of these thoughts, and how we're mindful of both, are an area where input would be welcome.

Castiglia: OHV use vs. conservation use for example?

Mathis: yes, correct. E-bikes are gaining traction as well.

Elser: Pamela hit it on the head with Taos, and it's similar for Farmington. We have a lot of opportunity in Farmington, especially following COVID, where a lot of people are coming to Farmington area. Meeting with mayor of Farmington next week to discuss recreation opportunities, expand biking opportunities. Improvements in Glade recreation area are on the horizon. A lot of focus by local govt and leadership to take advantage of recreation opportunities, One of the focal points for new Farmington Field Manager. Doesn't mean we're turning attention away from other

issues. Good path forward on that, assuming PA can get on track for the RMPA. Also brings up the questions of the original RMP. Almost 20 years old and may need to be updated as well. Maybe next 2-3 years will look at this. We're one of busiest office when it comes to oil and gas, not necessarily new development, but existing development and maintenance issues. Right of way backlog right now. Significant Inspection and Enforcement team looking at wells. Producing royalty for American public. Immediate future for RAC input would be the recreation and potential future RMP.

McWilliams: Support your efforts to increase rec on BLM lands. Like that there are fees adding to it. As a landman we deal with adjacent landowners and issues. Need an effort to keep recreation contained to BLM and off private, trespass.

Elser: appreciate that, we do have a number of vacancies. Farmington had been hurting for a long time when it comes to Realty staff. Been difficult to staff talented realty staff. Thinking outside the box as to how backlog can be handled, such as strike team. That concept could be used across the board. Personnel thing is a challenge

McWilliams: it's a big office and you deal with a lot of issues that other offices may not see. Keep in mind adjacent land ownership as you go forward

Price: to the extent that the RAC can be helpful, for fee increases, etc, increased administrative and oversight by BLM, in support of this.

O'Neill: Melanie mentioned Fire Workforce Transformation that BLM and FS are looking at. Is that specific to wildland fire fighters or can that be applied to other staff that aren't fire certified but could go to help out at camps, that could free up others that are certified?

Elser: those discussions are above my level, but I suspect pretty much anyone involved in fire, those positions would be focused on. You can't look at fire as just those who are red-carded. So many staff member have collateral duties with fire program. Those positions are at a premium and they're being spread thin.

O'Neill: conditions will get worse with climate change

Elser: not going to see a season of no fires. Fire is a natural process, we still manage for positive impacts. The ones that get away from us are the ones that cause the biggest concern.

Sandoval: News release on this. [Link in chat] <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/secretaries-haaland-and-vilsack-announce-implementation-new-pay-initiatives-wildland>

Matthews: will be able to hire staff for a year term as well as higher grades, instead of seasonal. It's a national resource now. Trying to revamp to encourage folks to stay in the program

Price: with respect to subcommittees, if BLM wants to use RAC please let us know and we could form a subcommittee. A mechanism perhaps.

Hersman: could subcommittees include non RAC members?

Sandoval: yes, one person from parent committee has to be member.

Price: looking forward to communications on new RAC members and SOs/EOs from Jill.

Duran: Is BLM HQ moving back to DC?

Aragon: believe it's still in discussion at HQ office

Price: anything else? Declare the meeting adjourned. Thank you

Meeting adjourned at 3:37pm