



Northwest Colorado Resource Advisory Council (NW RAC) Meeting Minutes:
 May 26, 2022

10:02 a.m. Meeting called to order by Greg Larson, Upper Colorado River District Manager and NW RAC Designated Federal Official, and Mike Pritchard, Northwest Colorado RAC Chair.

Attendees:

Resource Advisory Council Members:

Shannon Chollett, Category 1	Shawn Brennan, Category 1	
Mike Pritchard, Category 2	Roy Karo, Category 2	Carl Connor, Category 2
Anthony (Tony) Vagneur, Category 2	Katie Steele, Category 3	John Justman, Category 3
Tom Jankovsky, Category 3	Jeff Comstock, Category 1	Scott Braden, Category 3

Not present: Joe O’Malley and Scott Robertson

BLM Staff:

Chris Maestas	Hilary Boyd
Greg Larson	Patty Luby
Carrie Richardson	Bruce Sillitoe
Greg Wolfgang	Andrew McElwee
James Roberts	Brian Klein
Larry Sandoval	Elijah Waters
Collin Ewing	Kyle Hensley
Erin Jones	Eric Coulter
Steven Hall	Pete Doan
Whit Patterson	Isaac Pittman
Ben Gruber	Heather Sauls
Brittany Sprout	John Monkouski

Congressional Staff:

Sally Boccella	Senator Hickenlooper Staff
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Public/Other:

Visitor:	Representing:	City:
Adam Ortega	Colorado Dept. of Agriculture	Broomfield
Callie Hendrickson	RAC Category 3 Resubmit	Meeker
Vanessa Mazal	Department of Natural Resources	Grand Junction

10:02 a.m. Housekeeping and Introductions

New RAC appointees, Jeff Comstock, and Scott Braden were introduced by Mike Pritchard. Additional RAC members introductions followed by BLM participants by district and finally public and interested parties.

10:29 a.m. Resource Advisory Councils

(See BLM advisory Councils for more details.)

Carrie Richardson, National Resource Advisory Council Coordinator provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the RAC, FLPMA guidance on why the RAC is needed to comply with giving public a voice in shaping how the BLM manages public lands, and explanation as to why RAC's are created.

10:45 a.m. RAC Chair and Vice Chair Nomination

Tom Jankovsky – Nominated Mike Pritchard for continued chair position. Callie Hendrickson for vice chair.

Jeff Comstock – Nominated Mike Pritchard for continued chair position as well as Callie Hendrickson for vice chair.

Greg Larson – Voiced concern for the position of Callie Hendrickson as vice chair as a non-appointed RAC member.

Scott Braden – Nominated Mike Pritchard for continued chair position.

Tom Jankovsky – Nominated Carl Connor for vice chair position.

Greg Larson – Recommended interim vice chair position for Carl Connor until all RAC positions are filled.

Carl Connor – indicated that interim position would work best.

Mike Pritchard – Accepted nominations for chair position and will look for vote later in the day.

10:55 a.m. Grazing Updates

(See NW RAC Master Slides for more details.)

Elijah Waters – Provided an update on wild horse gathers and recap last year's gather and successes. Current gather scheduled for September 11, 2022. Piceance-East Douglas is overpopulated, 30% of body condition of 3 or less, which is severe. Considering all options (such as moving the gather to an earlier date) based on the condition of the horses. Wild horse and burro specialist position for the NWD has been approved. Requesting official recommendation and renewed support of prior resolution from the RAC for continued support of wild horse gathers.

Callie Hendrickson – 80 percent range consumption is horse use within the HMA. By fall of last year, the utilization was 100 percent. The prediction was that horses would be in poor shape.

Jeff Comstock – Voiced support for original resolution.

Katie Steel – Questioned where would the horses that are gathered be removed to due to the Canon City quarantine situation?

Elijah Waters – The date of September 11 would exceed the potential 30-day quarantine currently in place. Anticipating the ability to be able to take horses to Canon City. Also mentioned the role of wild horse and burro adoption program.

Mike Pritchard – Called for comments regarding 2019 NW RAC Wild Horse Resolution.

Scott Braden, Katie Steele, Carl Connor, Shawn Brennan, John Justman, Tony Vagneur, and Tom Jankovsky – indicated support the renewal of the ratification supporting wild horse gathers.

Mike Pritchard – called for motion to ratify resolution, unanimous vote of “yes” to ratify.

Greg Wolfgang – Provided drought conditions updates and outlooks. Working with permittees to reduce number of livestock and flexible grazing permits. Vegetative and soil conditions are being considered. Question posed by Greg Wolfgang on the use of sub-leasing by permittees. The emphasis is on strategies of flexibility, working with permittees, and technologies used to improve combating drought conditions.

11:54 a.m. Break

12:01 p.m. Review and Discussion of the North Sand Hills Field Trip

Elijah Waters – Recapped the field trip on Wednesday, May 25 summarizing key comments made. There was a consensus for fee usage for overnight use. Staunch support for Special Recreation Permits (SRPs) with appropriate controls. Concern of SRP’s being a burden to county support services. Voiced support of joint management but not necessarily opposed to land exchanges. RAC concern on the implementations in place to reduce sediment in water crossing areas.

Mike Pritchard – Requested information on the recreational area management plan (RAMP). Andrew McElwee provided and update on the status of the RAMP, moving forward without a group designated site.

Jeff Comstock – Addressed the trash problem that is impacting the North Sand Hills area. Commented that the “pack-it-in, pack-it-out” approach is not working singularly. In favor of increasing budget for cleanup projects and additional trash receptacles.

Tom Jankovsky – Addressed the need for fees to reduce the costs associated with accidents, helicopters use, and even the number of people using the area. Would like to see a plan in place to address the discrepancy between the state trust lands and BLM

managed lands. Local commissioners vocalize health and safety concern.

Roy Karo – Agreed with concerns voiced by Tom Jankovsky and Jeff Comstock. In addition to these concerns, he voiced his concern to the building of a campsite that would be located under a powerline. Emphasized the issue of trash in the area, placing dumpsters, trailers, and trash bags for use by the public.

John Monkouski – Identified that there is an agreement in place for BLM law enforcement to enforce on state lands. However, still a stretch on resources.

Carl Connor – Referenced the success of Canyon Pintado.

Jeff Comstock – Suggested the use of tiered incident response to the weekend vs holiday crowds and potential for use of incident management teams, specifically regarding emergency services.

Tony Vagneur – Mentioned the possibility of using a reservation structure and fee system that could decrease the overcrowding. Day use, reservation fee structures.

Kyle Hensley – Recommended working on best practices with other field offices across states.

Scott Braden – Suggested pursuing land lease or purchase of the state-owned land.

Katie Steele – Suggested potential use of large staging area to control the influx of users in and out of the area. Fee use and other control measures are needed immediately.

John Justman – Suggested the use of safety meetings and briefings. Use of signage to address the trash issues.

12:38 p.m. Lunch

1:25 p.m. Reconvene

1:26 p.m. Special Recreation Permit Management Discussion (SRP)

(See KFO SRP Brief for more information.)

Kyle Hensley – Discussion focused on the use of the Colorado River in the Kremmling Field Office area of responsibility, specifically the potential use of fees, oversight, and enforcement. Historical use of the river in the KFO, commercial boater use of nearly 30,000 visitors in 2005. In 2022 commercial use has doubled and private use is now 60,000 officially.

John Monkouski – Provided further insight - 115,000 visitors per year on the river, equivalent to 200,000 visitor days a year. The SRMA zones have been broken down into 5 areas. Wild and Scenic eligible sections have been identified, 2 segment areas,

segment 4 and segment 5 in the SMRP. There are different activity zones, distinct experience areas. Recreation Area Management Plan (RAMP) was completed in 2019, W&S Stakeholder Group monitor river flows, 2021 first year of monitoring. Government Performance and Results Act Surveys conducted in 2021. Visitor assessments show a positive impact, however human crowding was noted as a concern. Funding is currently available for a carrying capacity analysis, with the goal of defining long-term goal of management. Requesting RAC assistance on guidance on capacity, fees, stakeholder engagement, and partnering agencies.

Mike Pritchard – Mentioned fee increase for camping, potential limiting of commercial and private boat use.

John Monkouski – Outfitters are a critical partner to allow people to have the experience they seek. Potentially too many SRP's issued due to the transfer and purchase of commercial permits exchanging hands. Still awaiting supplemental rules approval, after several years, to implement requirements on packing out trash, established campsites, portable toilets, and several other topics.

Katie Steele – Questioned the number of campsites and the availability along the river as well as what the root cause of lower survey scores would be.

John Monkouski – Campsites are in high demand and scarce availability leading to frustration among users. The lower scores are tied to the crowds along the launch and takeout points.

Mike Pritchard – Requested clarification on why supplemental rules have not been established and Kyle Hensley mentioned the fact that multiple field offices are included and the process of approval for restrictions on the public are complicated.

Mike Pritchard, Scott Braden, and John Monkouski – summarized the increased popularity due to the ease of use, the improved facilities, and the accessibility to beginners. The use of a permitting system is the solution to crowding and all issues associated with the increase of use.

2:00 p.m. Public Comment Period

Adam Ortega – Colorado Department of Agriculture questioned the impacts of livestock grazing in the North Sand Hills area. Currently working with grazing groups.

John Monkouski – Provided further insight – there were historical grazing permits, 2 allotments specifically, that have been retired by the Resource Management Plan.

Mike Pritchard – Addressed the letter from Mr. Spotts, a whistleblower and former BLM employee who submitted comments for the public record. (See NW RAC Public Record Mr. Spotts 1 & 2.)

Scott Braden – Identified the white papers attached to the letter regarding grazing and impacts on public lands, states that it should require additional insight by RAC. (See NW RAC Public Record Mr. Spotts 1 & 2.)

2:09 p.m. Filed Manager Updates/Questions from the RAC

(See NW RAC Consolidated Manager Reports for more information.)

White River Field Office (WRFO)

Tom Jankovsky – Questioned the WRFO regarding the drastic drop in oil and gas permits, is it federal or state government impact related? James Roberts identifies that Applications for Permits to Drill (APDs) are still incoming, and that the discrepancy is on the well operators. Typically, the trends are based on multiple year aspect of operator permits.

Kremmling Field Office (KFO)

Kyle Hensley – Boat-shaped Bugseed, if it is removed from any protected status it could allow for an amendment for the RMP. The potential issue is the workload and time constraints of resources to pursue this project.

Tom Jankovsky and Katie Steele – Questioned whether the removal of the Area of Critical Environment Concern (ACEC) of the Boat-shaped Bugseed was worth the benefits or risks. John Monkouski and RAC understand that the work to amend the resource management plan might not be worth resources at this time.

Kyle Hensley – Updated timber program, mastication projects, fuel reductions, and fire break establishments.

Greg Larson – Highlighted need of the BLM and Forest Service to perform fuel reductions, wildfire risk, and ongoing drought conditions. This is an increasing issue within BLM.

Tom Jankovsky – Highlighted the need for timber and economic ties.

Mike Pritchard – Historically, fire has been used to renew landscapes but also needed to create fire prevention and protect communities.

Little Snake Field Office (LSFO)

Bruce Sillitoe – Updated appeal for the Travel Management Plan, the appeal reason is not known. The goal is to resolve quickly, waiting for statement of appeals to be released.

Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO)

Mike Pritchard – Kokopelli trail structure updates; specifically, the plans for expansion. Greg Wolfgang updating that the input and partnerships with other agencies is still in the infancy stages and approximately several years before BLM involvement.

2:32 p.m. Closing Comments

Greg Larson – Motioned for vote on Mike Pritchard remaining the Chair and Carl Connor as the interim vice chair.

Unanimous vote of yes for both positions from RAC.

Chris Maestas – Updated next RAC meeting (September 14-15) and agenda overview.

Tom Jankovsky – Suggested of Rocky Mountain Quarries site as a potential field trip site.

Katie Steele – Highlighted the importance of the field trips for the RAC members.

Jeff Comstock – Suggested RAC meeting in evening day of field trip and enhancing the ability to communicate. Additionally, second day could start earlier to end earlier.

Carl Connor – Suggested 9:00 a.m. start time on first day.

Greg Larson – Indicated the potential statewide RAC meeting, calling to issue the potential of cancelling September meeting and doing statewide in October. Requesting insight from RAC.

Mike Pritchard, Carl Connor, and Jeff Comstock noted the challenges to valuable information coming from state RAC.

2:53 p.m. Adjournment

Mike Pritchard adjourned the meeting.