



Northwest and Southwest Colorado Combined Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes

March 30, 2023

Location: Glenwood Springs, CO

RAC Members:

Name	Location	RAC	Cat.	Interest Represented
Shannon Chollet	Rifle	NW	I	Energy and Minerals
Jeff Comstock	Craig	NW	I	Rights-of-Way Interests
Scott Robertson	Rangely	NW	I	Federal Grazing
Kirk Daehling	Battlement Mesa	NW	I	Energy and Minerals
Carl Conner	Grand Junction	NW	II	Archaeological and Historical Interests
Roy Karo	Grand Junction	NW	II	Dispersed Recreation
Anthony Vagneur	Woody Creek	NW	II	Federal Grazing
Scott Braden	Grand Junction	NW	III	Public-at-Large
Tom Jankovsky	Glenwood Springs	NW	III	Elected Official
John Justman	Fruita	NW	III	Public-at-Large
Katie Steele	Grand Junction	NW	III	Public-at-Large
Mark Roeber	Paonia	SW	I	Federal Grazing and Ranching
Kathy Welt	Hotchkiss	SW	I	(SW Co-Chair) Energy and Minerals
Jim Haugsness	Montrose	SW	II	Dispersed Recreation
Jon Holst	Durango	SW	II	Environmental Organizations
Tif Rodriguez	Dolores	SW	II	(SW Co-Chair) Wild Horses and Burros
Starr Jamison	Telluride	SW	III	Public-at-Large
Wendell Koontz	Hotchkiss	SW	III	Elected Official
Matt Thorpe	Durango	SW	III	State Agency Representative
Absent: Ben Katz	Paonia	SW	II	Environmental Organizations

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Staff:

Name	Title	Office
Doug Vilsack	State Director	Colorado State Office
Gordon Toevs	Associate State Director	Colorado State Office
Kirby Shedlowski	Public Affairs	Colorado State Office
Brittany Sprout	Public Affairs	Colorado State Office
Elijah Waters	District Manager	Northwest District
Bill Mills	Field Manager	White River Field Office
Steve Leonard	Field Manager (Acting)	Kremmling Field Office
Bruce Sillitoe	Field Manager	Little Snake Field Office
Erin Jones	Associate District Manager	Upper Colorado River District
Stacey Colón	NEPA Coordinator	Upper Colorado River District
Ryan Snyder	Assistant Field Manager	Colorado River Valley Field Office

Greg Wolfgang	Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Amy Carmichael	Assistant Field Manager	Grand Junction Field Office
Amber Koski	Monument Manager	McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Areas
Stephanie Connolly	District Manager	Southwest District
Maggie Magee	Public Affairs Officer	Southwest District
Suzanne Copping	Field Manager	Uncompahgre Field Office
Jon Kaminsky	Field Manager	Gunnison Field Office
Derek Padilla	Field Manager (Acting)	Tres Rios Field Office
Ray O’Neil	Monument Manager	Canyons of the Ancients NM
Judy Kittson	Project Manager, Reduction in Illegal Dumping Campaign	Southwest/Upper Colorado River District Experienced Worker Program

Congressional Staff Attendees:

Name	Office
Matt Kireker	Senator Bennet
Naomi Dobbs	Representative Boebert
McKenna Farley	Representative Boebert
Raven Finnegan	Representative Boebert
Janeth Stancle	Senator Hickenlooper

Public Attendees:

Name	Office
Roger Cesario	Crested Butte Land Trust
Michael Gamba	Glenwood Springs Citizens’ Alliance
Adam Ortega	Colorado Department of Agriculture
Dennis Webb	Grand Junction Sentinel

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item: Housekeeping, Introductions, and Opening Remarks

Presenters: Stephanie Connolly, Southwest District Manager; Doug Vilsack, Colorado State Director; RAC members; BLM staff; interested publics.

Stephanie Connolly welcomed attendees, facilitated introductions, provided an overview of the agenda and discussed logistics and “housekeeping” items for the hybrid Northwest/Southwest (NW/SW) Colorado combined RAC. State Director Doug Vilsack welcomed the RAC members, BLM staff and interested publics. As part of the opening remarks, NW RAC Member Jeff Comstock invited members of both RACs to sign a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, encouraging the Department of the Interior to complete all pending RAC appointments and requesting that future appointments be “batched” to facilitate a continuous quorum.

Agenda Item: Fees and Permits on the Gunnison River

Presenter: Greg Wolfgang, Grand Junction Field Office Manager; RAC members; BLM staff.

Grand Junction Field Office (GJFO) Manager Greg Wolfgang presented on the draft Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area (D-E NCA) business plan and the fee structure the office is proposing for existing and future campsites along the Gunnison River and elsewhere in the NCA. He facilitated a discussion on whether a fee structure would be appropriate during the upcoming transition from dispersed to designated camping within the D-E NCA, and gave a brief overview of amenities that could be offered along with new fees, using the successful fee and reservation systems in the Ruby-Horsethief section of the Colorado River, the North Fruita Desert, and Rabbit Valley campgrounds as a model. The GJFO collected about \$500,000 in fees from these areas in FY2022. Details on the proposed fee structure will be brought forward for public comment as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process later in 2023. The RACs were generally in support of a fee structure and expressed support for increases based on changes in the consumer price index to streamline future fee adjustments. The RACs also generally supported the proposal to move to a reservation system on the Gunnison River based on the Ruby-Horsethief model, which has improved the experience for the visiting public and outfitters by reducing competition, improving safety and security, and allowing for better planning.

Agenda Item: Illegal Dumping Campaign

Presenter: Judy Kittson, Experienced Worker Program/Former BLM Colorado Lead Engineer; Stephanie Connolly, Southwest District Manager; RAC Members; BLM Staff

Stephanie Connolly opened the agenda item, which the BLM is addressing in response to the RACs' unanimous recommendation to take action on illegal dumping on public lands. Former BLM Colorado Lead Engineer Judy Kittson presented on the topic. Offenders are dumping a wide range of household, electronic, and other wastes on public lands, for reasons ranging from convenience and cost to culture and a perceived lack of legal alternatives. Law enforcement can cite violators with a misdemeanor, which can result in a minor fine or jail time, but both are rare due in part to the District Attorney declining to prosecute. The BLM and Mesa County have partnered on patrolling and enforcement, and the RAC and BLM staff discussed other options to pursue, including partnering with landfills to make their hours more convenient for the working public; educating the public on legal disposal options, such as free recycling; and partnering with cities and local waste collection companies for periodic curbside pickup of other than household waste. Each affected field office spends hundreds of thousands of dollars in time, materials and disposal fees each year to collect and properly dispose of illegally dumped waste, and the RACs encouraged the BLM to pursue the "five pillars" Judy Kittson proposed to reduce illegal dumping: partnerships, education, pick-up, enforcement, and programming.

Agenda Item: Public Comment

Facilitator: Maggie Magee, Southwest District Public Affairs Officer

Speaker: Matt Kireker, Central Mountains Regional Representative for U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet (D-CO).

Matt Kireker provided the RAC with an update on Senator Bennet's priorities for Colorado: water, drought, forests, and fire. He spoke about projects that will be funded through the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and potential legislation to continue the increased pay for wildland fire fighters implemented in 2022. He discussed the recent record of decision for the Blue Valley Land Exchange, and reintroduced legislation for the Dolores River NCA in southwest CO and the identical bill Representative Lauren Boebert introduced in the House. He also said Senator Bennet's office would look for appropriation opportunities to fill the \$10 million recreation funding gap in Colorado that was discussed in the statewide RAC on March 29, 2023. RAC members asked about using permanent fixed anchors for climbing on public lands; the potential for funding to supplement current law enforcement staffing levels; and harvesting forests impacted by beetle kill.

Speaker: Michael Gamba, Board Member of the Glenwood Springs Citizens' Alliance (GSCA) and former Mayor of Glenwood Springs, CO.

Michael Gamba briefed the RACs about the Rocky Mountain Industrials (RMI) gravel mine in Glenwood Springs, which currently occupies 16 acres on public lands, and RMI's proposal to expand the mine to 447 acres over the next 20 years. He addressed RMI's intent to haul gravel by truck to the rail depot in Glenwood Springs' tourism district, and the potential impacts to recreation access, wildlife, and Glenwood Springs' economy and quality of life. He also summarized the recent headwall collapse at the mine and ongoing litigation and enforcement surrounding RMI's alleged violations of their Federal mining permit. RAC members asked several questions about short- and long-term impacts and alternatives, and about potential revenue for Glenwood Springs. Michael Gamba stated that the mine would create about 50 jobs for drivers during the life of the mine, and at this time there is not a path for revenues to go to the city.

There were no additional commenters online or in person, and Maggie Magee closed the public comment period at 11:24 am.

Agenda Item: Cross-RAC Boundary Issues for Future Discussion and Closing Remarks

Presenter: Stephanie Connolly, Southwest District Manager; RAC members; BLM staff

Stephanie Connolly asked RAC members for topics to address in a future combined NW/SW RAC. RAC members requested an update on the ongoing statewide Big Game Corridor Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment, Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments, Western Solar Programmatic RMP, and Colorado River Valley Field Office/GJFO Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; additional discussion on D-E NCA proposals; continued discussion on illegal dumping; and new topics including law enforcement on public lands, land tenure, and the potential impacts of wolf reintroduction on federal lands. Stephanie Connolly and Elijah Waters thanked the RAC members for their participation in the statewide and joint RAC meetings, and let the attendees know that the Federal Register Notices for upcoming regional RAC meetings will be published soon.

Stephanie Connolly adjourned the meeting at 11:45 am.