



Bears Ears National Monument

Monument Advisory Committee Field Tour Notes

Thurs., June 22, 2023, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Field Tour

In Attendance:

Monument Advisory Committee Members: Dallin Tate, Brooks Britt, Denyce White, Eve Tallman, Angelo Baca, Mark Boshell, Lee Bennett, Davina Smith, Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk and Shawn Ivans attended the meeting.

BLM/USFS: Nicollee Gaddis-Wyatt (BLM), Jared Lundell (BLM), Michael Engelhart (USDA FS), Jake Palma (BLM), Emilee Helton (BLM), Orlando Cortez (USDA FS) and Rachel Wootton (BLM), Christie Judd (BLM), Brian Murdock (USDA FS), Kylie Meacum (USDA FS) Allison Aakre (USDA FS) and Tina Marian (BLM).

Public/Media: Approximately 10 members of the public attended.

Some of the new committee members had not had time to complete the ethics training, so no recommendations or official committee work was completed.

Agenda:

TIME	TOPIC	PRESENTER
7:30 a.m.	Meet at the USDA Forest Service Ranger Station at 397 N. Main in Monticello, UT 84535	N/A
9:00 a.m.	Butler Wash Developed Site Discussion items will include permitting, interpretative projects/partnerships, and other management topics. Depart: 10:30 a.m.	BLM and USFS Staff
12:00 p.m.	Kigalia Guard Station and lunch break Discussion items will include recreation, forest service projects, fuels treatments, and other management topics. Discuss woodcutting with researcher. Depart: 2 p.m.	BLM and USFS Staff

2:30 p.m.	<p>Arrive at Bears Ears Buttes</p> <p>Discussion items will include forest service projects, dispersed recreation, and other management topics. Adjourn.</p> <p>Depart at 3:30 p.m.</p>	BLM and USFS Staff
4:30 p.m.	Return to Monticello	All

7:30 am – Meeting Logistics

Rachel Wootton – Passed out agendas and maps to everyone there. Gave some safety notes and reminded everyone that we would be out all day.

Jake Palma – Thank you to the new MAC members. For this meeting, new MAC members have not been able to take the ethics training, so there will be no formal recommendations provided today. Will plan to take care of more business like Chairperson and vice chairperson at the November meeting. Quick introductions of MAC members, agency staff and the public that are present.

Begin the drive to the Butler Wash developed site.

9:00 am – Butler Wash Developed Site

Jared Lundell gave an introduction to the site. Construction here was done in the 70s as a mitigation for the highway. The hike is about half a mile. There is a restroom here. The site itself was also partially restored in the 70s. This is an example of a typical site where visitors like to go. It is also a model site for places people can visit but not go inside. We currently have old signage here now, but we have talked about making this a portal with education and interpretation. Have also talked about making this a remote permit site.

Is the permitting system on Rec.gov? Yes, \$5/person/day.

Did congress pass something for veterans in 2019? This is a BLM special lands area, so it is separate from those federal lands passes.

The group hiked to Butler wash developed site. Once the group arrived at the developed site, Jared gave an overview. CyArk is a partner that is working on interpretation. Eve Tallman asked if you can go in the site and Jared said you could even though it's guiding people to stop at the overlook. Agency staff indicated that keeping people on trails would be very difficult to enforce.

Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk thinks it's worth noting the stabilization that was done at the site in the interpretation for the public and to highlight how it is different from more sensitive sites. She also thinks we need to define and agree on what is sacred.

Angelo Baca thinks that we should discourage people from going inside the sites. Jared says so far we have done that at this site by encouraging people to come to this overlook, but that there could be places we also want to legally close.

A member of the public talked about how he has been exploring ruins all his life and appreciates them. He thinks that these areas should remain open for the public. He also encourages more education for the visitors. Jared agrees that a lot of people have been coming here for a long time and discussed that this pattern of visitation is sort of atypical for public lands. There is an expectation for visitors to go into sites here. Now that this is a national monument and our visitation is changing, we will get more inexperienced visitors. There are so many places here that we couldn't manage them all and we will have to consider how visitation changes in some areas will affect other places.

Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk thinks that their conversation today is not contradictory. She thinks they could work together and shift to education. Regina says they can be good neighbors and that natural law will deal with some folks.

Ravis Henry asks what the agencies roles are in management. Michael and Jared discuss management on the monument.

How bound are managers to recommendations from the Mac?

Jared said the MAC can make formal recommendations and informal recommendations. He said that they have to take formal recommendations into consideration. The MAC is set up via FACA so everything is public. The BEC is set up from the proclamation. We also receive input from cooperating agencies, consulting parties, and the public.

Tim Peterson says there are 12 rangers on BLM, the Forest has three rangers, and there are four LEOs. Jared says they are moving money within the agency, but haven't had a base funding increase.

If the proposed rule on conservation leases goes through, would that be in BENM? Jared says it could, but those rules usually take a few years.

Dallin Tate says he thinks that education of the public is very important. He says if we have five or six sites like this, 90% of people will go to them.

Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk says that the story is pivotal. It will reflect on us and who our children will be. This could be a story of how BENM brought people together.

Tara Benally asks if she was to leave here and talk to all seven Navajo chapters nearby, what is a message that she should take back to community members?

Jared says that is something we are working on - how to bring in community members. The commission is also working on ways to do outreach to community members. We want to do this together. At the BLM and USFS offices, our doors are always open. If people have questions about wood cutting etc., please ask us questions. Jake says we could also do

better visiting chapter houses. Tara says from the community perspective, this is a living, breathing space. She thinks many agencies need to realize it is utilized by Tribes.

Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk says communities don't rely on the BEC to keep them informed. The agencies could do something like a newsletter to help keep them informed.

Denyce White says we're talking about important issues and before we leave, let's take a moment to come back to ourselves and be on this landscape. She led the group through an exercise to ground ourselves where we are.

The group hiked back to the trailhead and began the drive to the Kigalia Guard Station.

12:30 pm – Kigalia Guard Station

Group lunch at the Kigalia Guard Station Area.

Michael Engelhart gave an overview of the project planned for this area that is still in its early stages. He said they had received some funds to improve USDA FS lands in this area. He points out the relatively low visitation on the forest. Michael says that Kigalia dates back to the 30's, but it burned down about 15 years ago. The Kigalia Tribal Youth Engagement Center and Guard Station is the current concept name. Currently the USDA Forest Service utilizes the Gooseberry Guard Station for housing employees while they are working out on the Monument. He would like the site here at Kigalia to house tribal youth corps and be a home base for partners and staff. He said it could also be a place for tribal youth and elders to gather and enjoy the monument. It could also be a field location for a traditional knowledge institute. Because the site is already an administrative site, that makes some of the NEPA processes easier.

Eve Tallman asked if they can hold the intertribal gathering here. Brian Murdock says yes, they have had it in the meadow and at Kigalia.

Angelo Baca asked how the station burned down. Michael says that it was an unfortunate mistake that caused it.

Judi Brower asked if the BEC was worked with on this and Michael said that they have been involved throughout the process.

Regina Lopez-Whiteskunk says thank you and a traditional knowledge institute was wanted during the first proclamation as well for all youth. She says it is a vision from long before and that the agencies did not come up with it. Regina was very pleased to be here and to hear about the project.

Orlando Cortez expressed some other things they are doing to hire local youth with internships.

Mike Popejoy asked if the administrative site designation would also affect management like vegetation management, etc. Michael says yes it does. Other parts of the forest would be much more difficult, so we would have more flexibility here.

Larry Ellertson says to remember all people who have been in this area and thinks it should be a well-rounded plan so that we can all enjoy it. Michael says there is room for conversation there.

Kate McGargle joined the meeting to share some of her firewood collection research findings at the request of Angelo Baca, a MAC member. She is a researcher at the University of Utah working on woodcutting. Her research focuses on the Navajo Nation where 90% of people need firewood. Firewood is also important for their ceremonies. Most people are coming to Cedar Mesa to harvest pinyon and juniper. Traditional ecological practices help them decide which wood to gather. The Wood for Life program matches fuel treatments and brings it to communities where there is need.

Brian Murdock asked what the research question was. Kate said it was decoupling human connections. Kate answered questions about where Kate's models came from, whether Kate's model includes current die offs of pinyon pine and whether the information she shared referred to 25% of historic or current trees and she said it's based on current. Jared said there is also some paleoecology work going on.

The group wrapped up and left for the Bears Ears Buttes.

2:30 pm – Bears Ears Buttes Meadows

Brian Murdock shared information about the intertribal gathering at the meadows. Brian says this road is typical for roads off the main roads. It can be impacted by conditions and use, and we may want to make it better.

Tim Peterson asked about the BENM RMP vs the Forest Plan revision. Michael Engelhardt says there are topics that need to be in the Forest Plan, like designated and recommended wilderness. The Forest Service's Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) and Scenery Management System (SMS) is going in the Bears Ears plan. Research Natural Areas (RNAs) and Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) are staying in the Forest Plan.

Question about how this work fits within San Juan County's plan. Jake Palma says that through Cooperating Agencies we will work together with the County to receive their input. Mark Boshell says he wants more consultation with the State and the County. Jared says there will be a meeting in a few weeks for Cooperating Agencies.

Tim Peterson asks if there will be another Section 106 meeting and Jared said probably not before the draft plan comes out.

Brian Murdock says we are getting people that want to go up on the buttes. There are now user created trails that go up both. May want to decide during travel planning whether we want to designate trails or not. Brian says that the Natural Bridges visitor center gets a lot of questions about BENM and there are dispersed camping issues in that area. Some of the issue is overflow from Natural Bridges.

Circle up activity: going around the circle, each person said how they felt about the day and the task moving forward on a scale of 1-10 and talked about their own experience with the day. Closing discussions.

4:45 pm – Optional trip: Woodcutting example site near Kane Gulch

A couple of MAC Members, two members of the public and 1 staff member each from the USDA FS and BLM stopped at a site near Kane Gulch for a further woodcutting discussion. The small group discussed woodcutting in BENM, pinyon and juniper woodland health issues, and ways to address community and nearby tribal members fuelwood needs.

5:30 pm – Adjourn for the day