



Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes:

Attendees: In attendance both days, unless otherwise noted.

Resource Advisory Council Members [Table]:

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
Bill Brake (Chair)	Sharma Torrens	Robert Broscheid (virtual day 1; in person day 2)
Steve Trussell (virtual)	Eileen Baden	Paul David (in person day 1; virtual day 2)
Allison Ellingson (virtual)	Jill Bunnell	Patrice Horstman
Paul Baumgardt		
John Sanders		
Commercial/Commodity Interests	Environmental, Dispersed Recreation, Archaeological/Historic, Wild Horse & Burro Interests	Elected Officials, Native American, Public-at-Large, Academia, State and Local Government Officials
Governor's Representative: Clay Crowder, AZGFD	Designated Federal Official: Gera Ashton, Arizona BLM Associate State Director	BLM Arizona's RAC Coordinator: Dolores Garcia

BLM Staff: In attendance both days unless otherwise noted.

Raymond Suazo (day 2)	Wayne Monger
Gera Ashton	Leon Thomas
Amber Cargile	William Mack
Mark Morberg	Scott Feldhausen
Gerald T. Davis	Dolores Garcia
Art Goldberg	Michelle Ailport
Mike Spilde (vice Kelly Castillo)	Derek Eysenbach

Public/Other: No public signed in-person on either day.

Visitor:	Representing:	City:
[Zoom Registration]		

Day 1 - Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes:
April 24, 2024

08:05 **General Logistics and Introductions**

08:10 [Called to order by Chairman Bill Brake] **Opening Remarks and Introductions**

Bill Brake:

- Primary focus of this edition of the RAC will be recreation business plans

Gera Ashton [delegated DFO for this meeting – delegation on file]:

- Gera thanks the members for coming and the State Office team for their logistics and efforts in coordinating the RAC. Gera discusses her career with BLM and various experiences and positions she has held that led her to becoming the ASD of BLM Arizona. Recreation business fee proposals will be discussed in this meeting, and we are excited to hear from our RAC members. The numbers of increase in visitation over the last few years is discussed. Gera thanks the volunteers, BLM employees, and RAC members again for efforts towards ongoing success.

Q: Paul Baumgardt: Have there been any major changes since last RAC meeting from the BLM regarding major changes in land management strategy?

A: No major changes, but we will discuss the Public Lands Rule. We have a new renewable rule as well regarding oil leasing, but this does not affect Arizona. We did receive our annual workplan as well with a small reduction in resource allocation which we will be addressing.

Q: Can you let us know what proposals BLM Arizona has earlier in advance, are you able to share those with us in the RAC?

- Amber Cargile discusses legal appropriateness for the DFO to answer specific questions earlier for the RAC. As federal employees we are subject to robust ethics guidance and are held to very stringent guidelines on what and when we are allowed to make statements regarding certain issues.
- Dolores Garcia and Bill Brake reiterate that every meeting has a public comment period built in. During that period, the public provides input, but the RAC/BLM do not give responses like in a question and answer session. The comment period is there for the BLM and the RAC members to listen to public input for consideration.

08:45 **Renewable Energy Updates (Mark Morberg, Derek Eysenbach)**

- See attached PowerPoint slides.

- There is a two-tiered RMP policy in the state. Western Solar Plan (2012) and Restoration Design Energy Project (2013)
- RMP Implementation – Executing solar variance, Solar Energy Zones
- Our first RDEP NEPA analysis was published in April 2024
- BLM is implementing studies and management plans in all proposed developments.
- Working through administrative processes with IM's (Instructions)
- Partnerships are critical to outcomes, such as those with AZGFD, AZ State Land, ADWR, Counties, etc.
- Wind development in Kingman area and AZ Strip area being discussed, including right-of way applications, weather/wind test areas, and potential for future applications.

Q: Patrice Horstman: Are there turbines proposed in any areas within the new Monument?

A: Not inside the Monument or along its borders

Q: Paul David: Are landscape views and aesthetics included in concerns when planning projects?

A: View impacts are a large obstruction we face. We do manage a visual resource impact here at BLM. Traditional Tribal landscape views are also a factor.

Q: Sharma Torrens: You talk about wind development and uses, were these lands around wind projects leased to ranchers, how does the land come into play?

A: There would be small reduction in AUMs, but it is minimal. Total acreage disturbed would be minimal.

Q: Sharma Torrens: And the same for solar projects?

A: Solar requires a seclusion fence being constructed, and animals would not be allowed to graze in the solar field.

- **Patrice Horstman** comments on developing partnerships, discussing renewable energy law/ordinance, and mentions current ranching land is looking towards renewable energy
- **Eileen Baden:** due to solar energy areas requiring fencing, I think recreational should be incorporated in planning process for pathway or other recreating opportunities. In the future we can look at creating trails through solar project areas.
- **William Mack:** We are doing this (incorporating recreation uses) in the NEPA process when reviewing project proposals. In Yuma, companies have left whole sections out of project areas due to biking, hiking trails; and when it comes to grazing, the project proponents have worked permittees to agree to replenish or replace resources such as water. We actively work on this during the NEPA process.

- Various Solar projects and proposals actively in the NEPA process throughout the state are discussed.

Q: Paul Baumgardt: With the high number of projects coming in, is there any preference or requirements for applications regarding domestic vs foreign applicant companies? Is there any congressional push for this?

A: There is not.

A: American labor is prioritized. A parent company may be foreign, but the subsidiary doing the work will be registered in the United States.

Q: Paul Baumgardt: You mention the word “lease,” is it different than the standard application?

A: Solar energy zones are designated leasing areas. They need to be able to sell their electrons. Site control is critical. Having a lease and intending to build solar is separate from a specific ROW. The lease pays rent to the Federal Government.

Q: Bill Brake: How does the *Reclaiming the Solar Supply Chain Act of 2023* impact the Bureau?

A: We believe that bill is primarily focused on the Department of Energy and grants to support the solar energy component supply chain -- not directly on public lands.

Q: Bil Brake: Would it be possible to bring us up to date on recent legislation passed?

A: We will provide updates on any BLM-pertinent legislation.

Q: Sharma Torrens: How do you engage the public and bring other stakeholders to the table?

A: We bring in stakeholders and the public during the pre-application process, virtual public meetings/recordings, and developing a plan of development. For NEPA, we do a media announcement and invite the public to comment. During scoping we request ideas from the public. We have a draft comment period on NEPA analysis and then protest and appeals. Working with partner agencies does not stop. We engage with tribes and consult with other agencies. We also do other formal and informal outreach via elected officials and other groups.

Q: Eileen Baden: When I was with Maricopa County Parks we receive no scoping letters, can you include make sure to include them and other land management at the county level in the state during your outreach?

A: Yes. We realize not all of our outreach materials are distributed to the fullest extent of county governments. We are always looking to expand our outreach efforts and looking for contacts through the state and reach out to departments folks at various levels.

Q: Paul David: With leases, if someone comes along with a higher need and pays more, the previous tenant would be displaced. This does not seem fair to ranchers currently grazing on public lands.

- Importance of setting recreation fees appropriately which is a priority for the state
- We also work with the Utah BLM and their RAC for draft business plan as it related to recreation areas administered on the Utah-Arizona border such as for Paria Canyon, Coyote Buttes/"The Wave".

Q: Paul David: When it comes to fee increases, are you leaning towards a permissive "may" or "shall" increase policy?

A: The way we draft policy is looking for input now to help with options down the road. This is so we can implement changes in the future for the potential 20% increase, which is based on CPI. In general, we look to maintain flexibility.

Q: Eileen Baden: There is a Culture Pass program that has been implemented in coordination with several Arizona libraries and in which resident can "check-out" these passes for various sites/museums/recreation activities from libraries. This would be a good thing if BLM Arizona can join a Culture Pass to help with equitable access. Is there any way to look into a program like this?

A: We have been doing research. The America the Beautiful Pass is a pass program we already participate in and it is controlled property issued to individuals. We are exploring options for a local pass within the state.

Q: Jill Bunnell: Are all federal passes the same for accessing public lands?

A: Day use fees with standard amenity fees are waived with all available federal passes. There are discounts on other site uses with the available passes.

Q: Are you working with solar energy applicants on proposed sites to maintain access for recreation?

A: Yes, our interdisciplinary team that reviews project proposals assesses this.

Q: Eileen Baden: Disc golf has become a popular activity, can there be a fee associated for this activity, has there been talks for any proposals?

A: Maile Adler: Not aware of proposals for disc golf fee sites currently.

A: William Mack: We have worked with communities to built golf courses, the way it works through Recreations and Public Purposes lease, typically through the county, there is a potential but it needs to be negotiated with county or municipalities.

12:45 **Public Comment Period**

RAC Coordinator stated that any member of the public who identifies that they wish to speak will be given an opportunity to do so. If no one identifies, we will continue with the agenda and monitor for anyone from the public wishing to speak within the allotted time on the agenda.

13:00 **Opened Public Comment Period**

13:00 **District Updates**

13:00 **District Updates (Arizona Strip, Wayne Monger)**

- Wayne gave a brief overview of updates on the Strip.

Q: Bill Brake: Does the new National Monument affect current BLM management plans in the area?

A: At this time, we do not have a Monument-specific management plan. There is potential to use previous management plan and overlay the Monument borders over it. On the BLM portion of the Monument, we will still have management and it will be part of NLCS. Another advisory committee will be developed for this area.

Q: JC Sanders: I have seen reports of archaeological sites continuing to be identified in the Arizona strip district, is this accurate?

A: With each project we must do surveys and we continue to identify sites.

13:00-13:30 BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning stopped by to greet RAC members as part of her visit to Phoenix

Q: Bill Brake: We take the RAC seriously; our job is to help the State Director and his team make decisions. When we leave here, we go to our industries and communities, who often heavily criticize the BLM. What is a main disconnect that leads the BLM to being criticized so much from the public?

A: We are not great at telling our story. We focus so much on our work, and we do not fully tell the public what is going on. However, we are getting more intentional on delivering messages. We have developed a Foundation for Americas Public Lands. We want people to know the BLM.

Q: Paul David: With final lands rule being published, some press articles are saying six governors in the West are threatening litigation, in the event of filing litigation does the final rule move forward regardless of any injunction?

A: We feel fairly good about the rule being tied to existing laws and court decisions. Conservation has been stated as a use, and we feel we will be fine in court.

Q: Jill Bunnell: We need a tool to determine what types of mitigation are needed, is there a tool to spell out mitigation for energy projects across the board?

A: This rule is in the works and the mechanics behind the tools are currently being developed

Q: Steve Trussell: How can you balance for responsible mining in the state?

A: BLM has done a fine job for years of using the laws we have to be responsible as we can. The President has asked us to develop a critical mineral working group. We are using tools at our disposal to balance land use, which includes mining.

Q: As you do vegetation management with mastication, do you have chipping machines, or do you leave it where it is? If burned, is there an exemption or disclosure for burned materials?

A: Masticator changes the fuel type from a tree to a mulch. We also have lopping options and change the fuel type to environmentally receptive materials.

13:30 **District Updates (Gila District, Scott Feldhausen)**

- Working through an EA with copper project
- Fort Huachuca finalized a video story
- IRA/BIL projects, we are more focused on partnerships regarding water and Threatened and Endangered Species
- Addressing acreage with funds from fuels program
- Surveys for invasive species, cultural heritage sites and mechanical treatment areas

13:40 **District Updates (Colorado River District, William Mack)**

- Renewable energy workload
- Ideas for business plans for the LTVA
- Managing burro population

13:45 **Fire Program Update (Mike Spilde)**

- Currently we are at preparedness level 1
- Fuels measuring is ongoing.
- State preparedness review scheduled for month of May

Q: Eileen Baden: One benefit of trails is providing access, from a firefighting aspect is there a size of trails with firebreaks that could be implemented on project sites?

A: We base a lot of responses based on trails. Accessibility is incredibly important in what can we utilize in our response.

Q: What additionally be done to make sure our firefighters are safe?

A: In Arizona we have implemented a tracking system for our equipment fleet with GPS locators, which gives better operational picture. We are working with partners at a national level to test and move to the next step being individual firefighter tracking.

13:55 **Business Admin Services Update (Art Goldberg)**

- Maintenance work in engineering department received a 24% cut
- Ongoing work from GOAO projects

Q: Sharma Torrens: Was the 24% cut was it across the board with western states?

A: Not all of the states. This was an Arizona-specific amount, but there were cuts across the board. There are also restrictions based on hiring with BIL/IRA funding.

Q: Bil Brake: The BLM will provide a list of fees soon, but we need to build some more facilities on sites at the same time. Do we have money now or should we be waiting for revenue from fee increases?

A: We are discussing funding for ongoing facility maintenance, and the desired fee increases address this. Future rec fees we receive get directly addressed towards the sites they were collected at. Appropriated dollars are used for maintenance. Small projects also can be addressed with regular funding. We cannot implement a fee for a site until we build that site. We are thinking long term with our business plans.

14:15

Public Comment Period Open:

Patience O'Dowd: One person spoke earlier regarding science and thinking with a narrow view. I work with a WHB organization and have worked well with USFS and other partners. I wrote the national plan for ranchers and the use of PZP. We have to make sure we do not lose our nation's biodiversity. I would like to say as local, there are 1.5 billion cattle and 60 million horses worldwide. Comparing the weight of cattle and the weight of humans, cattle outweigh humans 8 times over and we must take this into consideration. Please keep this in mind. I would like to add my name and email added to the HMA notification list.

Christina Anderson: We have concerns that livestock grazing will be considered as conservation, it has been well documented. I would like to see studies and data on removal of WHB population and improvements when cattle are allowed to graze in those areas. I would like to see on-range fertility control and budgeting towards ecosystem restoration. The budget is going toward holding and gathers. This seems to be not working.

14:30

930 Update (Gerald Davis)

- 400 burro gathered as part of a nuisance gather in the Lake Pleasant area outside the herd management area was recently completed
- Environmental Assessment ongoing to manage WHB AML
- Similar funding reductions for recreation and site maintenance

Q: Jill Bunnell: With recreation plans most fees are user fees, have you looked at NRA sponsorships assisting with funding for shooting sites, and engaging with other outside groups for SRPs?

A: SRPs (Special Recreation Permits) are managed under a separate authority and are not included in these business plans coming forward. These fees are set by the BLM Director. Before we do presentations for business plans, we plan to do an overview on funding from various sectors of recreation. Regarding shooting site funding, the tax for ammo sales goes to state wildlife funds and a good portion of funds get handed out through grants by the Arizona Game and Fish for example.

- Gera mentions we are looking to identify opportunities with partners and working on our donation policies. We are getting better with cost recovery agreements.

Q: Bill Brake: There are a lot of grants involved with proposals from USFS, I have not heard of grants being given to the BLM or seen active work towards getting grants. Why are we not doing this?

A: We have worked with AZ Parks and Trails; we do have a grant with them in support of TMPs. We have had grants before. We have not done much to this point with AZGFD, it takes a lot of time and is large workload, we prioritize the business plans and pursuing additional opportunities.

Q: JC Sanders: Is BLM Arizona look at implementing new OHV recreation in any specific areas? Would this apply to everyone visiting that area?

A: We are looking at Hot Well Dunes, we are exploring designating some permitting needed specialized use for motorized use in the area. This is an SRP, but for individuals.

- Patrice Horstman: when the BLM Foundation gets set up, we can look at other revenue sources and donation opportunities
- Gerald Davis mentions the BLM Foundation will be the connection we have needed to receive outside funding similar to National Parks foundation, we look forward to seeing how we can facilitate those possibilities.

15:00 **920 Update (Mark Morberg)**

- Working the renewable energy projects and broadband access
- Generating revenue from items such as ROWs and land leases

15:00 **Closing remarks**

- Bill Brake looks forward to hearing from USFS tomorrow and stresses importance of active listening and asking questions to presenters.
- Patrice Horstman asks clarification on fees - is there a continuity between BLM and USFS, and does it matter? Would like to see additional guidance from Forest Service. We have looked into their fees with sites and amenities and are wanting to hear answers to our questions. We have looked at their fees and are addressing our responses accordingly.

15:15 **Adjourn**

Day 2 - Arizona Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting Minutes:

April 25, 2024

08:00 **Meeting called to order by Chairman Bill Brake, Introductions**

08:10 **Forest Service Rec Fee Proposal (Ryan Means)**

Ryan Means (USFS) Presentation

- See attached PowerPoint slides.

Q: Paul David: Wondering about the possible indexing for inflation, I have questions regarding a separate proposed rate. What is the period of time we anticipate between the next rate increase? If we vote in favor on a fee for this year, does it last 10 or 15 years? Should an increase hike in be implemented to compensate for inflation in the future? Is it possible going from to 8% or 10% increment increase every year?

A: Regarding indexing, we have looked at this separate from BLM. We do not rely on this. We do not know what is going to happen in the next 10 years with inflation. Maybe there will be market changes with competition. We do not want large increases at one time. During the pandemic we had a change in labor and supply cost, they have both gone up exponentially. The value from our regular funding has gone flat. We want consistency with what we get from site fees. We do not want to make continuous increases; we want reasonable long-term proposals. The public expects consistency. I do not see these percentage increase proposals coming up. We have a slow rollout implementation plan with increases. We try to not to increase all sites at the same time, we try to spread it around.

Q: Paul David: Would fee increases accommodate increased enforcement activity?

A: Exactly, this is key. Visitor numbers have increased since the pandemic. Enforcement is a piece in in the proposed fee increases.

08:40 **Forest Service Rec Fee Proposal – Coconino – see presentation.**

Q: Eileen Baden: How much is Red Rocks Pass?

A: Annual \$20

Q: Eileen Baden: Could we make efforts in letting people know to purchase the Red Rocks pass? Is it fair for hikers to use shuttles to the trailheads? With people parking on the streets and taking the shuttle, do those people pay any amount?

A: We partner with the city of Sedona to provide public transportation to trailheads. It has been successful since 2022. People park off-site and walk to trailheads. This is a good thing. The buses are Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant to ensure equity. The ability to get on a bus this has helped residential parking issues. People do not pay for the shuttle.

Q: Bill Brake: You have \$5 fee for sites, do you know the dollar value that will be generated at each site? What is the total income projected?

A: We project \$250k based on the six new sites, which add occupancy, and increase the numbers of parking spots.

Q: Bill Brake: With that \$250k generated, what will be spent on the sites? Will the sites now get the new revenue? Where will the previous revenue that was generated go?

A: Ongoing maintenance, deferred maintenance, and money invested into parking lots/spaces. All revenue generated is reinvested to that site. Money would also go to contracting costs. We want to clarify that the money we are spending is not commensurate. Appropriated money from Congress goes to general operating costs. We have to decide how to spend appropriated funds. If we get more money from our fees, we can provide better services.

Q: Sharma Torrens: Can you clarify that 95% of revenue from fees go back to the specific site? Also, you mentioned public comment period was June 13th to August 21st in 2022, can you clarify the timeline on which emails for public comments were sent out?

A: Yes, confirm the 95% number. (Timeline of emails was clarified on slideshow)

- Sharma Torrens comments that she likes to see the fee-free days that were mentioned and the local pass being accepted.
- Pauline Horstman: Our public lands are being loved to death, and I appreciate the increased enforcement with more rangers and Officers. Safety is important. We are also in a drought, when we have law enforcement on site the public can be educated on fire prevention. We need to provide funding for the federal agencies to have more public interactions.

Q: Allison Ellingson: Can you say again the name of the survey where you received general public input?

A: Type of survey is called National Visitor Use Monitoring, we do this at the national level and across an entire Forest at locations for a year. It helps with estimates on visitors and other general activities. It is a verbal in person survey.

Q: Allison Ellingson: For your statistics with visitors numbers, is that people or vehicles?

A: This is people.

Q: Allison Ellingson: Do you have a breakdown for vehicle numbers?

A: We do not.

Q: Allison Ellingson: Are the maintenance cost numbers you provided annual?

A: Correct.

Q: Allison Ellingson: Do you need to perform a whole new drafting process after the public comments

A: Another whole process

Q: Allison Ellingson: There are 18 sites in the existing fee program, how many are left without a fee structure?

A: Currently there are 86 non-fee sites within the Red Rock District.

Q: Allison Ellingson: What percentage difference do you see for annual vs day use passes?

A: Daily passes are the highest sellers and after that weekly and annuals which capture local visitation. Daily passes represent greater than 50%.

Q: Allison Ellingson: Is the current maintenance deficit greater than the projected 250k in revenue that will be generated?

A: We will need this projected amount and more for the backlog of deferred maintenance and our operating costs.

Q: Jill Bunnell: Are additional amenities planned?

A: No new amenities planned

Q: Jill Bunnell: Is there a mechanism or tool such as BLM with Recreation and Public Purposes Act for local city/county/nonprofits to install a trail on public lands?

A: There have been examples for agreements with other agencies on building trailheads or infrastructure, but not familiar of specific agreements at this time.

- Paul David asks that in the current discussion regarding increased law enforcement and trail development, is this beyond the scope of the fees proposed being appropriate.
- Bill Brake responds that as a RAC we are charged with recommending these proposals, there comes to be a point where we do repeat our discussions and need to remain on track with fee proposals

Q: Bill Brake: Have you talked improvements with the city and county, will you put no parking sites on roads, will law enforcement ticket for improper parking?

A: The answer is both, the city has extended the barriers where public cannot park, the county has extended some work along with adding no parking signs.

Q: Paul Baumgardt: Generally speaking, in Sedona how many trail heads require a pass or day-use fee?

A: Currently 18 and proposing +3

10:00 **Forest Service Rec Fee Proposal – Coronado – see presentation**

Q: Pauline Horstman: What is the amount in revenue believed to generate from this proposal?

A: Currently Arcadia has 19 campsites and Hospital Flat has 10 campsites. We anticipate revenue from about thousand a year which will help with items such as pumping restrooms.

Q: Allison Ellingson: Currently there is no day-use fee. If a fee is added and I visit the location during the day paying \$8, however later I decide I want to camp. Am I paying \$20 for the \$8 and the \$12 or do I only pay \$12?

A: We are not looking to compound fees, we would not charge both fees.

Q: Paul David: We are paying to add more parking and picnic facilities at sites to accommodate more people so that they would not be crowding a certain campsite?

A: Correct, at this time the parking for day use is shared. We would delineate parking between both groups with the fees implemented.

Q: Do each of these sites have a camp host?

A: Arcadia has a camp host. Hospital Flat has someone based at the visitor station acting as a floater for a volunteer host.

Q: Sharma Torrens: with 6 fee-free days, how were these chosen?

A: Five are national fee-free days, the Forest chose to have Presidents' Day as the 6th one.

Q: How many sites have day-use fees in Coronado?

A: We have about 25 across the Forest.

10:30 **Forest Service Rec Fee Proposal – Tonto – see presentation**

Q: Bill Brake Can you confirm there will be no additional processing fees?

A: Yes, we do not have control over rec.gov and their fees charged. For the Forest Service, the answer is no. That online processing fee is not part of RAC consideration. The day-use fees do not have an admin fee attached to it.

Q: JC Sanders: Could they use rec.gov to pay site fee desired on Coconino?

A: There is a Forest Pass on rec.gov. There is an option to buy the pass, the end fee is \$8 per user. The admin fee taken is \$1 from that Pass. The cost is worth it for us.

Q: Assuming the \$8 fee is implemented, what do I expect to see changing on the land? Toilets? New or improved parking areas? Will any amenities be affected?

A: More law enforcement for public contact, illegal routes rehabilitated, and cleaner areas. We want to improve our staging area, invest in dust prevention, add more dumpsters to staging areas and increase our pipe railing.

Q: Bill Brake: How will more funding help law enforcement?

A: Can provide new law enforcement equipment and potentially with hiring new officers.

Q: JC Sanders: With a single route going into an area anyone going through the gate should be paying the same fee. I do not see OHV community going along with the intended plan. We are in opposition to singling out any one group. Currently there is a gate with a required code input. If a person buys the pass, what will happen when the code changes?

A: The goal is to get away from the gate system, we want to implement a new system, but at the moment it is undetermined. The purpose of this is specifically for the motorized trails.

Q: Sharma Torrens: Why was the comment period for this 2.5 years?

A: I believe we were waiting for a RAC to meet. While waiting for RAC to meet we went out again and did more outreach to kept trying to receive additional comments.

- Paul David asks a general question about Arizona Game and Fish Department's (AZGFD) concerns about the proposal.
- Clay Crowder discusses three letters that were sent from the AZGFD regarding concerns. It was their position that there was not adequate outreach. Concerns regarding additional enforcement needs falling onto AZGFD or the county. Confusion that fees may be layered on top of each other and a general confusion on public messaging. When fees are added to certain areas or higher levels of management are implemented, the public will inevitably move into new areas and use fee-free sites.
- Paul David asks if AZGFD currently sees a path towards resolution and if there is any common ground that could be found.
- Clay Crowder says that the Region 6 office is in discussion with USFS and they are working on a path moving forward, but still trying to work certain issues out. Ultimately, AZGFD are responsible for wildlife management. They continue to stress that AZGFD will not provide law enforcement support in the Forest.
- Jill Bunnell comments on strong opposition to the proposed fees due to E-bikes. One or two more law enforcement officers is inadequate for the volume of visitors Jill stresses using social media and having a social media campaign. This is an issue if AZGFD is coming to action for enforcement where they are not receiving compensation. The OHV community can build bridges for creek crossings and protect areas given for use if the privilege is expressed to them. Better messaging and communication need to be put out.
- USFS says that Tonto Forest is going to increase use in social media moving forward.
- Clay Crowder believes work needs to be done regarding gaps on staffing and public outreach.

Q: On East Verde, do those facilities have day use fees associated?

A: These are part of the Tonto pass program. They are valid with Tonto Pass.

Q: What is the annual revenue projection for day-use fees and OHV permits?

A: Annual revenue for sites on East Verde is projected to be 20k-30k annually

- Bill Brake mentions a general confusion with passes, fees, and additional costs in the Tonto. He expresses desire for one single all-encompassing pass.

11:45 **Break for Lunch**

13:00 **Return from Lunch**

- Amber Cargile clarifies rules of the public comment period

13:10 **Forest Service Rec Fee Proposal – Prescott**

Q: Bill Brake: Do these have admin fees?

A: Day use sites have no fees, campgrounds and camp sites have admin fees from rec.gov

Q: Eileen Baden: How long has Palace Station been sitting empty?

A: For 20+ years they had a volunteer tending the site, but it has been empty the last few years.

Q: Jill Bunnell: You are hosting a bike race this weekend, what fee is the event host they paying the USFS?

A: Do not have exact number, but fees charged in addition to 5% of the gross revenue

Q: Paul Baumgardt: 2 cabins were mentioned at \$100 per night. Do some cabin prices vary based on amenities and location?

A: Yes, they depend on amenities

13:40 **Forest Service Rec Fee Proposal – Tonto (Again)**

(Ericka Luna from USFS came to speak)

- JC Sanders comment about amenities: OHV community says staging area is important, but priorities #1 and #2 are restrooms along trails and picnic areas. Also on the list was trash receptacles.

Q: Eileen Baden: when would the fees discussed go into effect?

A: Implemented this fall after planning and finalized this summer.

Q: Bill Brake: I have a concern for fees collected, what percentage is actually being used for law enforcement. What are the exact numbers with staffing?

A: We intend to hire 16 Law Enforcement Officers. We also plan to add more seasonal Forest Protection Officers which are personnel with the authority to conduct some enforcement activities but are not authorized to carry a weapon.

14:00 **Public Comment Period:**

Richard Smith – from Tonto Recreation Alliance

I represent an OHV group that has worked closely with the Tonto National Forest. Riders also want to see continued trail maintenance and the addition of amenities like more restrooms and trash receptacles and picnic tables along popular routes. There is general support from area non-profits for ongoing efforts to maintain and sustain these highly used areas. After discussion with Arizona State Parks for grant funding, we saw improvements there. We would also like to see an increase in trail maintenance funding from federal government. We had reservations about the fee proposal but are generally in favor of fees increases. Our hesitation was on specific details of how it would all be implemented. We need an ongoing discussion. Please work on feeding the public current and accurate information. We would like to see it work out and happen.

General call, within the RAC Members, for action items

Qs/Thoughts on Coconino proposals?

NO comments.

Qs/Thoughts on Coronado proposals?

NO comments.

Qs/Thoughts on Prescott proposals?

NO comments.

Qs/Thoughts on Tonto proposals?

As we see in regards to the Tonto there are 2 components, the OHV and the Campgrounds part.

Campgrounds: No comments.

- JC Sanders: I am still concerned with the fees stacking on top of each other, I would like them to come back and say that the Tonto Pass will work for all uses. I would be okay with raising the cost of the pass in this case.
- JC Sanders: I would like to see a detailed plan long short term for amenities. We also need to have a resolution between Tonto and AZGFD seeing them resolve their issues.

- Paul David: I would also like to see issues between the USFS and AZGFD worked out, and see support from other agencies throughout the state

Q: Jill Bunnell: In regards to fiscal reports sent to congress regarding what is done with collected fees, is this accessible to see without a FOIA request?

A: Annual reports are available to public, we will provide a link. You can actually see this based on each National Forest.

- Bob Broscheid: Maybe there is another option we can do, such as a “conditional approval?” Bob mentions his concerns with the OHV fees and asks about a RAC approval contingent upon USFS implementing certain required items.
- Amber Cargile wants to provide clarity that the RAC can approve all, none or some of the fee proposals presented by the USFS here today. The RAC can make a conditional approval, however, since the proposal was approved, the USFS is free to implement it and not required to come back to the RAC again . She said the RAC will be asked to provide its recommendations on the slate of fee proposals in a written letter, sent from the RAC Chairman to the Designated Federal Official. For any fee proposals that are not approved, we ask the RAC to detail what concerns the RAC would like to see addressed. Then we will have the USFS come back at a future meeting and present on just those proposals.
- Allison Ellingson comments from online- she agrees USFS have demonstrated the need for the fee increases and current revenue issue needing to be addressed. She states willing to work with nonprofits and other agencies. She would like to request a report back on progress of the fees for accountability purposes.
- JC Sanders: I do not feel we should be voting in support of the fee proposals at this RAC meeting. We need to see specific issues addressed first. I would like to hear what the USFS can do before being given cart blanche.
- Bill Brake again reiterates the differences between option 1 and option 2.

Coconino vote:

Motion to accept as presented. Horstman recommends.

JC Sanders seconds. All those in favor raise hands. **Unanimous vote.**

Coronado vote:

Motion to accept as presented. Broscheid recommends.

Jill Bunnell seconds. All those in favor raise hands. **Unanimous vote.**

Prescott vote:

Motion to accept as presented. Horstman recommends.

Eileen Baden seconds. All those in favor raise hands. **Unanimous vote.**

Day Use Site Fee Proposals:

Motion to accept as presented. Jill Bunnell recommends.

Horstman seconds. All those in favor raise hands. **Unanimous vote.**

OHV proposal on Tonto.

Before asking yay or nay, we propose hold off until we get answers.

JC Sanders makes motion to hold off until AZGFD issues come to conclusion and specific fees are addressed. Paul Baumbagrdt seconds.

7 yays and 3 nays to table vote. 3 against holding off vote and 7 support.

Tabled until next meeting is the OHV proposal to be considered.

Dolores will work with the RAC to create a memo shared with group, which the chair will sign. This memo goes to the DFO, Raymond Suazo, and he will send it to the Regional Forester. We will add this to agenda for next time. We are open to a short virtual public meeting based on availability.

- Jill Bunnell comments and thanks USFS for the work done for our underfunded National Forests.
- Bill Brake add the importance of getting OHV use controlled. This is an area we will be discussing in the future. We are here to help.
- Horstman comments: In general agreement to comments others here have made, the current Administration has put money into our Forests and it is still not enough. Public land use needs to be balanced. We need to work with the federal government on making the best decisions possible for our public lands.
- Amber Cargile mentions she would like to open floor to BLM personnel and thanks the USFS.
- Scott Feldhausen: The BLM is going to be bringing different proposals to the table and questions what the RAC does not support charging fees for.
- Bill Brake: It is hard to answer a hypothetical question. We want to talk about it, and I feel it is important part to convince the public about your intended decisions.

Talk about scheduling the next RAC and the final notices going into the federal register. There could potentially be 3 meetings before end of calendar year.

15:00 **Public Comment Period:**

Christina Anderson – Oregon Wild Horse Organization

Our organization is in support of federally protected burros and horses. During this time of drought, the burros and horses are crucial for maintaining biodiversity along with other wildlife. We would like to see a better plan to help protect and sustain the populations. As you know, we are trying to combat the current climate crisis. It will get worse before it gets better. Horses cannot migrate. We also have to adhere to the 1971 Burro Act. We need to manage the HMAs for these animals. This should have already been done. We feed cattle and raise cattle and while other wildlife can migrate our horses cannot. Only time will tell the outcome. Horses must remain here. They have been used in marketing and cars and have remained in the spotlight. Mascots are important to American public. I would like to see money going towards fertility treatment. Taxpayers are paying for long term and short-term holding. Our organization has published papers on the importance of WHB biodiversity. Federal managers need to work towards the future of managing these horses.

- Gera thanks the members for having a quorum. She says the comments were insightful and takes delight in seeing diverse membership in the RAC.
- Gera reiterates the focus on recreation and working with our budget. We take public comments seriously. Budget is challenge with rising costs and labor. We all take this on and we try to balance what we are providing to the public. Gera thanks the members again and looks forward to working with the RAC.
- Bill Brake discusses fairness in fees and costs for recreation and the potential issues in equitable access. He asks the members to keep this in mind. We need to be careful that we do not leave members of the public behind.
- Bob Broscheid commends BLM and USFS for their initiative on addressing current issues.
- Leon Thomas agrees mentions opportunities presented by hosting events. Arizona schools state championships can be on BLM lands. We can generate revenue from this.

15:45 **Public comment period ends:**

15:50 **Closing Remarks, RAC Adjourned**