

Resource Advisory Council Meeting Notes

4/11/2024

RAC members present: RAC Chair -Ron Keil, Co-Chair Greg Hendricks, Ben Vecach, Matt Gingerich, Paul Scott, Tim Dufurrena, Shawn Collins, John Ugalde, Robert Jones, Larry Hyslop, Sherman Swanson

BLM staff present: Sam Burton, Kim Dow, Heather O'Hanlon, Lisa Ross, Jon Raby, Kim Prill, Randy Martin, Jared Bybee

- **State Senator Guests:** Abbi Hilligrass, B. Hamilton

Meeting Notes

Introductions

- Motion to approve the minutes.
- Reviewing issues to help form decisions to come from diverse backgrounds. Turned over to Jon and Kim.

Jon Raby

- Proud to be on the ground perspectives a nonfederal side of the house. There are 15 vacancies.
- Renewable Energy, Conservation work, minerals, and sage grouse work is going on and proud of the good work. Thanked the RAC for their participation of the lands we are trusted with in managing.
- **Public Lands Rulemaking** to publish in the summer (June)
- **Greater Sage Grouse** - meeting on the draft - Reno next Tuesday (6 pm - 8 pm public meeting).
- Expansion of areas to be included and outline populate trends - National Office and NVSO who has been involved.
- **Solar PEIS** - Provide additional direction on development on a broad scale in Nevada. Entire process we go through called variance. New effort - looking at 7 million acres being available 5 million acres adjacent to transmission line. Closely coordinated with Sage Grouse efforts. Good Public meeting in Las Vegas 6 weeks ago and received great feedback related to renewable energy. Want to be a leader in renewable energy for the counties and Nevada State can benefit from it.
- **Grazing regulations** - Public Lands Rule, Sage Grouse, Solar PEIS - grazing regulations needed to national prioritize it. Instruction Memorandum coming out about the regulations on how we respond to drought, more the administrative items.
- Judge ruled on herd management areas and working through the details and preparing a HMAP to comply with it.
- **Introductions of Kim Prill**, Associate State Director
- Budget - working closely with the DMS and FMs on what it means on a positive side. Projects on priority list stays at course. Budget reduce by 8% (line items and in certain programs sub-activities).
- Line Officers roles and expectations shared with RAC.

Questions from the RAC to Jon Raby and Kim Prill:

- **Grazing regulations**-wait another day on grazing regulations and do it by policy updates
- Is there a value on pulling something together using livestock to meet vegetation goals. Is there value to add value to their conversations?
- Sherman - old fences that have not been maintained very well for land health standards. Virtual fence is a better tool, and we still need boundary fences. This way we can move the herd from place to place with rebuilding the water developments for grazing management for standard objections.
- Do you see the budget as an impact to staffing? (J. RABY) No, 20% vacancy rate- cost recovery projects (labor and contracts) Labor about 10% of the overall cost and like to make the field operations are funded. Make sure we have the resources to keep it.
- Southern RAC - Are there any updates on the progress on the south? (J. RABY) Yes, to get some applicants up and moving soon. We do need to do a Statewide RAC meeting. Look at dates for this FY Fall timeframe that might work or in the next 6 - 8 months.
- Anything else excited about looking forward to that we should keep an eye out. (J. RABY) Restoration work in WDO and EDO to enhance the restoration work to provide great benefits for the Big Horn Sheep. Continue to highlight examples and on the groundwork on great management. Fire and fuels work and targeting the right areas, community protection and taking it to the next level. Critical minerals work and how we do sound extracting resource management to meet the national lead of technology carbon lead portfolio.
- Washoe County and North of Reno opening air space and some exciting advancements coming forth. How is the agency on top of it? (J. RABY) UAS program - had a set back and the tech is based on Chinese tech and proposed a risk. We could not purchase that equipment. BLM was second to DOD in the nation and have to get back to it. Goal for each district to have one UAS backup and two pilots. Great for land surveys and cultural resource work. Want to see us grow the program. We can manage the launches and landings occurs and be mindful of our emergency partners are at.
- Walker Lake rise - BLM role to pursue the water rights to continue the trend? (J. RABY) We don't really have a role, PWRs for use stock water for appropriate areas like wildlife. Provide beneficial use where we can contribute to downstream. Public water reserves for public benefits.

District Managers' Reports with Q&As

Elko District - Zachary Reichold (Elko DM) - HANDOUTS PROVIDED

- **Grazing allotments** (Elizabeth Puentes) Presentation in folder to RAC- pulled a working group together and worked on the action plan. Started with developing the definition and which allotments would be included or excluded (slide 2 criteria). Presentation in folder to RAC
- **Memorial Trails:** Presentation in folder to RAC - working with local group. ID Team and NEPA contractor and preparing for public scoping.
- **Construction projects:** Duncan - Presentation in folder to RAC. Replacing admin building.
- **Great American Outdoors Act** - USFS to allow their co-location to BLM's Elko Campus

- **Orange Bridge Replacement** - Bridge is closed and NEPA analysis completed Jan.2022, construction to occur Sept.- Oct. 2024. Will have a detour.
- **California Trails Interpt Center HVAC and Electrical system upgrades** - Original HVAC not functioning, Upgrades to be funding through GAOA.
- **Fire update** - (Matt) 2023 historic low. Anticipating an increase. Helicopter from Ely to Elko and 12 new additional personnel (help the state). Programmatic Elko EIS waiting to be final and incorporate into Elko's program.
- **Horses (Jeff)** - Presentation in folder to RAC. 8 herd management areas. HMAs -top 4 on the map on page 10. One gather last year. 1971 horses removed last summer. One gather planned for Sept this year. Planned to gather 2,355 horses.

Questions to Elko from RAC:

- What does a Roger mean? - (E. Puentes) Land Federal agencies in the area to address grazing issues
- Sherman - Roger is rancher lead steering committee - 200 people on email list.
- Trails multi-use? Yes, but not for motorized vehicles.
- Non-motorized, does that include e-bikes? Considering the classes of the e-bikes
- Fire and Fuels - anticipate more fires this year. Concentrate the livestock this year? - Robust fuels treatment throughout the fall and offer targeting grazing permits and restoration activities. Do not have the numbers.
- Need for bigger water developments for grazing virtual fence. Developing bigger waters for fires water drops. Need for discussion for the combined activity in connection for both? Work well with landowners and will work with the district. IRA Funds available to be prepared for on the ground.
- AML - past treatment whole for 30 days and the planning? Need to find this information.
- Improve in the recreation fees for campgrounds? Generating and increase the revenues? This season was not a good season to estimate that and made a call to stop collecting fees. Working on to figure out cashless fee collection option.
- When you suspend fee collection would you collect more for voluntary fee collections?

Winnemucca District- Sam Burton (Winnemucca DM)- HANDOUTS PROVIDED

- Fire operations - 127.5 acres burned, Staffing - planning for 8-9 wildland engines, 2 water tenders, 3 dozer modules, 5 chief officers, hiring remains a challenge for engine captain positions. RFR program to support fire program (newer equipment). Doing some prescribed burns to protect the lands and reduce the heat. Drought monitoring and not in the danger zone for Nevada. The big engineering projects: Fire Station Construction, Watery System Upgrade with GID, and Black Rock Telecom Shelter and Tower

Humboldt Field Office - Handouts provided to RAC.

- **Critical minerals:** Spring Valley Gold Mine - explored in the past and people did not think anything was there. Brand new mine for gold. Greenfield, they call it. Two meetings for public scoping, Tribal representation coming in and very excited on the activities from beginning. Should have some low risk and not being pre-decisional with clean water.
- **Wild Horse and Burro-** report out shows the gather results. BLM trying to manage the AMLs in the area.

Black Rock Field Office - Handouts provided to RAC.

- **Admin updates-** TMPLMA - may create a new NCA and impact how we manage those areas.
- Staff is reviewing geothermal lease sale.
- **Minerals** - State engineering brought up concerns and working on bonding issue.
- **Mountain View** - Still working on preplanning for NEPA.
- **Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) \$6M per district total \$12M (WDO and EDO)** - landscape infrastructure to improve habitat- capacity hiring expenses to spend the funds right. 11 projects. Did not have NEPA ready projects and did have the fire restoration project and it is for the Holloway fire (\$250k obligated). Going to take the next year to obligate the funds and contracting 2025.
- Trying to get as much obligated across Humboldt River and we will meet the target area for what asked to do get the money to the lands.
- **Burning Man** is moving forward for 2024 planning process - less than 153 days away.

Questions to Winnemucca from RAC:

- Timeline on the Water System: Maybe next year - get it awarded and constructed.
- Where is the Black Rock Telecom going? Will follow up with a map.
- Timeline for prescribed burns and where? Will get a timeline. The water they have is good to do. Different areas on the WDO.
- Cost for a heavy truck run? Closer to \$300k
- Fatality control treatments - Humboldt was less aggressive than Black Rock. Black Rock- aggressive and wanted to remove the horses off the land and not place anything back. Trying to get to low AML. Anyone doing researching on the drugs. Another drug with much longer effect and still in the research stage.
- Is there a consistent correlation? There is good science to back up the BLM in the way we are managing the horses and listening to all voices. Having two days of tours of the facility and press release went out.
- Land health standards and key locations? Is the monitoring is happening? Does not know. On the public lands rule group looking at the water resources. Horses are a critical factor that has to be considered.
- Sherman's comments: AIM monitoring does not adequately discover trend along the green line where it is most needed. The old one works far better than the AIM. Need to be careful about how they write AIM into this.
- Why is the Post Gather Pop USGS included?
- How about the burro population. Updates on gathering in July. 2024 data came out the other day. Horse population is under AML.
- When is the USC rocket launch?
- Noxious Weeds, is it backpack?

Carson City District Office- Kim Dow- HANDOUTS PROVIDED

Fire - Help to get personnel there to help with fires.

Renewable Energy - challenges in Yerington area with multiple applications

Geothermal - Wubuska NEPA completed.

NDAA - Overview of the NDAA Map and legislation - Grazing and mining impacts shared about the expansions of the bombing ranges.

- B16 - Does not want the Navy to push 600 horses down on the allotment.
- B17 - Likely to be their second priority.
- Hwy 361 has to be rerouted.
- Great Basin Transmission Pipeline
- B20-Cadastral Surveys and another road to be realigned.
- Dixie Valley still open to the public
- Churchill County Land Exchanges and R&PPs Conveyances overview
- Explained the Churchill County land expansion and B20 overlap.
- 1931 Executive Order for USDA
- Meeting next week with Churchill County
- No Funding associated with it.
- Checkerboard Resolution - Consolidate private and public land and SNPLMA funding available. Working on the Implementation Strategy Plan.
- Tribal lands overview and the mechanisms
- Process of hiring a NDAA Team for the Navy expansions and SNPLMA
- New designations and the release of designations overview.
- No WSAs but do have wilderness areas.
- Co-stewardship with the Tribes overview and all 13 Tribes will be invited.

Questions to Carson City from RAC:

- What was there before the Navy Bombing Ranges
- Cadastral has to do the survey work? Do they have the resources to do it?
- What is the plan? The implementation strategy to address it.
- Hiring staff will retain the knowledge to work on these projects? Yes, and hiring a team of permanent and term positions
- Is the Navy going to gear up fire suppression? BLM Fire Response and reimbursement.

Sage Grouse Effort-Tim Bowden

- Overview of the Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat management Areas on BLM Surface Administrative Land
- What is changing in existing RMP decisions from 2015-2019
- Addressed the new science being considered - genetic connectivity, models of breeding habitats and lek persistence and others.
- Reviewed alternatives and differences along with the acreages by alternative

Questions to Tim Bowen from RAC:

- EIS regarding: When you evaluating the success of the program and how effective it was, does each EIS has a metric of each alternative?
- Finding cause and effect in the quality of the habitat?
- Robert shared his personal stance on his observation from previous experience.

Sand Mountain Recreation Area- Paul Fuselier/Mike Withrow, Paul Amar (CCD)

- Overview of the Sand Mountain Recreational Area history as a special management area
- 100,000 visitors a year major weekends (Easter and Halloween)
- Sand Canyon is now on recreation.gov and there is a fee booth - signages are posted about how to make a reservation.

- SRPs 3% of funds stays in the BLM vendor 1232 funds account.
- National Public Lands Day to connect the public to the resource.
- Facilities overview was shown on the PowerPoint and the purpose of each.
- Overview of the maintenance and construction learners' loop and how the LEO assists with ATVs.
- Introduced the Sand Mountain magnetic rake and use of it.
- Human Health impact and overview of the right equipment and staff to assist with the public needs.
- Law Enforcement overview
- Free Youth Helmets Program and collaborating with partners and explain the safety importance with Tread Lightly
- Working with the Navy on National Public Lands Day 2022 on a monument with a local group to connect them with the resource.
- Sand Mountain Blue Butterfly protection process with UNR studies and pictures.

Questions to CCDO Rec Team from RAC:

- What about working with Churchill County? They are short staff.
- Are the other areas as busy as Sand Mountain? Yes, they are, and we bring in detailers to assist.
- What are the common types of LEO that you run into? Medical.
- Do you have a problem with alcohol and drugs? Yes.
- How about firearm? Have not heard too much, but target shooting is in the Moon Rocks area.
- What happens to the overflow for the camping?
- RAC will be an ORP tomorrow in the field tour and come up with some suggestions around budget cuts.

Mining Law (Rosemont Decision)- Lacy Trapp (NSO)

- The proposed Rosemont Copper Mine overview of the area and the facility, pit, and geology make up.
- Review the Judge's direction in the Rosemont 9th Circuit Decision
- 2800 regulations for the alternatives for operators
- Waiting for BLM to submit an IM and hoping it will provide clarification on definitions and it move forward. Still pending and shift of focus for other legislation coming out. USFS is pending of direction.

Questions to Lacy Trapp from RAC:

- What is a validity exam? Extensive mineral draining of a mining claim.
- Can you put a mill site on top of a lode claim?
- Will the proof of validity have to match the lode claim?
- Are the only minerals there being lithium? There are other minerals at Thacker Pass. There are 3 or 4 different studies. Looking at other biproducts that come out of the area.
- Is Rosemont is being appealed further? No
- Roads up to the mountain would be rerouted, how are you going to manage the traffic?

Tribal Consultation Process- Madeline Van der Vort (NSO)

- Overview of the reason for the purpose on consultation. The reason why BLM consults is based on the 19 laws and 22 regulations. Overview of who BLM consults with is with Federally Recognized Tribal Governments.
- Discussion points on other ways to talk to the Tribe outside of the Government-to-Government consultation. How to mitigate the concerns on the project.
- Overview of the co-stewardship process and the implementation process to be in writing.

Questions to Madeline Van der Vort from RAC:

- Are funds available to mitigate impacts on resources?
- Shawn Collins shared concerns about the consultation process and issues that occurs when in Indian area and the processes being used. Consultation in their area is failing and know what the area means.

Solar PEIS- Greg Helseth (NSO)

- Overview of 2012 PEIS and the solar zones and update on the current plan with 11 states (plan will affect states west of the Mississippi River).
- Lands looking to exclude from habitat.

Questions to Greg Helseth from RAC:

- Solar/Transmission is in D.C.? No, AC onsite and connecting to generation ties (Gen-tie).
- Would the RMP have to be changed? Yes, it is called a RMP amendment.
- How many applications? There are 100 and only can work on 20% of the applications.

Public Comment Period (Limited to 3 minutes)

- No interest on the Zoom call
- Greg Pheasant - Motorcycle - Desert racing mostly out of WDO. Wants to be involved and how the solar projects will impact the competition routes. Does not want to lose the route. Would like to be more involved with the organization. Looking for funds and how they can be in cooperation. Permits contributes to the cost-recovery. Restoration on the group's mind by bringing back the trails and help the BLM to manage these lands. Encourage to reach out and they are wanting to be involved. Trying to form a relationship with the Southern interest groups and will pass on the information about additional help in Las Vegas.

RAC Membership/Nominations- Lisa Ross (CCD)

- 12 members of the RAC and can have up to 15. There are three nominations and 9 RAC members that expired May 2025 and 3 expires 2026. Call for nominations should go in the next couple of months. Have a quorum for a little bit over the year. Encourage others to apply and those expiring in May 2025. All RAC members have to go through HQ and White House approval. Only three times a person can miss meetings unless it's a health and safety issue. Try to get the Tribal RAC member to be here.
- Up for nominations: 2 Energy and Minerals; 1 Wild Horse & Burro

Rap-up discussion and next meeting- All

- Logistics for tomorrow - meeting at CCDO at 8 am (leave at 8:15 am) and those who want to meet at Harmon Junction (East of Fallon) at 9:45 am
- Next Meeting: Suggestion for bi-RAC meeting in September. October 3rd and 4th. Decide on the location next and maybe Elko. Decide on the agenda with Elko. Reimbursements may be delayed until November due to FBMS updates.
- Discussion about needing more water for grazing.
- Send topics to Ron or Lisa.
- Wild Horse & Burro
- Trash problem of abandon vehicles
- Jon Raby's question about range policy date (action item)
- Southern RAC - Are there any updates on the progress on the south? (J. RABY) Yes, to get some applicants up and moving soon. We do need to do a Statewide RAC meeting. Look at dates for this FY Fall timeframe that might work or in the next 6 - 8 months (action item)

Meeting Concludes