

**Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
Lewistown, Montana
February 5-6, 2008**

The meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. on February 5 at the Yogo Inn. RAC members in attendance were Lisa Huestis, Bob Schoonover, Barb Cole, Dan Teigen, Dan Clark, Pat Gunderson, Troy Blunt, Vicky Marquis, Larry Epstein, Terry Selph, Ron Moody, Clay Vincent, Mike Bryant, Bob Valach, and Francis Jacobs.

Attending for the BLM were Scott Haight (Designated Federal Official), Gary Slagel, Willy Frank, Craig Flentie, Kaylene Patten and Kay Haight.

Public Comment Period

One member of the public offered comments, which are attached to these minutes.

Meeting Notes/Welcome

The notes from the July 18-19, 2007 meeting were signed as approved. Lisa Huestis, Vice-Chairperson, welcomed everyone. RAC members and BLM staff introduced themselves.

Charter Review

Scott Haight reviewed the Charter for the Central Montana RAC and the Bylaws and Standard Operating Procedures for all Montana/Dakotas RACs.

Facilitator Overview

Kaylene reviewed the process followed for agenda items, meeting notices, meeting notes, a list of “Do’s” for Council members, and the facilitator’s role.

The RAC uses a consensus/collaboration process rather than a voting process. Consensus means each party can live with a group decision, both in the meeting and outside. Consensus does not mean compromise. When the chairperson calls for the question, a thumb turned up means “I agree with the motion, I can live with it, I will support it in and outside the RAC.” A thumb turned sideways means “I will agree with the concept, and I will support the decision of the RAC.” A thumb turned down means “I cannot agree with the motion, have questions, or need more information.” If any thumbs are turned down, more discussion may be held, the motion may be withdrawn, or a fallback vote may take place in which all up, sideways or down votes are recorded. All three categories must have a majority of up or sideways votes in order for a fallback vote to pass.

Collaboration is a process of building trust and respect through consensus to achieve a common objective from uncommon perspectives. Parties seek a win-win solution incorporating multiple

perspectives to find the collective good. Concerns are heard and addressed, information is provided, technical knowledge is sought, and action plans are developed.

A suggestion was made that presentations and discussion could take place on the first day of a RAC meeting, and any needed decision would be made the second day of the meeting. This would allow for discussion in smaller groups and time to think about an issue.

Kaylene reviewed the procedure for completing travel vouchers. Reimbursable expenses include motel fees (plus taxes) and mileage. A per diem rate is paid for meals so it is not necessary to save meal receipts. A RAC member must travel more than 50 miles to the meeting location in order to be reimbursed for travel expenses.

Phone cards are available for RAC members to use when working on RAC issues.

Under the Privacy Act, the BLM will not provide the public with the address or phone number of a RAC member unless the member specifically agrees the information can be released. As an alternative, a RAC member may choose to have all correspondence routed through the Lewistown Field Office and forwarded by Kaylene. Social security numbers are used only for travel reimbursement, and are never revealed to the public. Travel reimbursement is made through direct deposit (preferred and much faster) or by a U.S. Treasury check mailed to the RAC member.

Public comments are scheduled for the first 30 minutes of each day's meeting. The chairperson determines the time allotted for each speaker.

The public is welcome at all RAC meetings; however, while the meeting is in progress discussions must stay between RAC members, without involvement of the public. A RAC member should request a break if a need arises to talk with someone in the audience.

BLM personnel often use acronyms in discussions and written material, and RAC members are encouraged to ask what an acronym means if they are unfamiliar with a term. A four-page list of BLM acronyms is included in each member's notebook and a suggestion was made to add the list to the RAC's web page.

2008 RAC Work Plan

Craig Flentie gave an overview of the 2008 RAC Work Plan. Five action items are to be addressed by the RAC in 2008:

- Recreation Fees;
- Travel Management Plan – Judith and Moccasin Mountains;
- Resource Management Planning (RMPs);
- Watershed Planning, Grazing Management and Grazing Permit Renewals; and
- Judith Moccasin Landscape Projects.

Informational items to be included in 2008 RAC meetings will include:

- Field Manager Updates;
- Noxious Weed Management; and
- Zortman/Landusky Mine Reclamation.

Discussion of Action Items

Resource Management Plans

Pat Gunderson noted that the Malta and Lewistown RMPs will be the most important issues covered by the RAC for the next several years. He suggested that the RAC discuss, on a broad level, the areas where they could provide advice to the BLM (e.g. oil and gas, wildlife, etc.).

Dan Clark added that if there is an opportunity to be proactive in framing issues, rather than serving in a reactive role to developed information, it would be a better use of the RAC.

Scott Haight stated there is an opportunity to involve the RAC in developing the Lewistown RMP Preparation Plan, which details the interdisciplinary team members to be involved, how the RMP will be developed, and a preliminary schedule.

The Work Plan will be revised to include the Lewistown RMP Preparation Plan as an Action Item.

Recreation Fees

If recreation fees are part of an approved RMP, a public process will be used to develop such fees. It is unknown at this time how legislation proposed by Senator Baucus would affect such fee development.

Watershed Planning

An action item for watershed grazing may be added following tomorrow's presentation by Willy Frank.

Discussion of Informational Items

The sale or exchange of BLM lands should be added as an informational item so the RAC learns about it before the sale or exchange has taken place.

The informational side should not outweigh the decisionmaking side of the RAC's work.

Undaunted Stewardship should be added as an informational item.

Orientation

Scott Haight stated that the BLM values the RAC's input, and even if a recommendation is not made, the discussion is very helpful. If the issues were easy, they would not need to be discussed by the RAC.

Lisa Huestis stated that specific requests by the BLM would help focus the RAC's discussions.

Ron Moody suggested getting more information to RAC members prior to meetings so that meeting time can be used for discussion. For example, an informational page on a new watershed plan could replace 10 minutes of valuable discussion time at a meeting.

Dan Clark reiterated the desire to be involved at the front end of a process, rather than react to something already developed. Also, has the RAC ever assisted the BLM with landscape goals and objectives? Response: They were involved in developing goals and objectives for the Monument RMP and the Judith Moccasin Travel Plan.

Ron Moody noted it is hard to keep continuity, stay focused and build trust when there is a gap of several months between meetings. People don't do business with strangers, and to work through issues effectively, the RAC members need to know each other as a group.

Mike Bryant agreed that meetings should be held more frequently. It would be helpful to not have the charter expire around the same time as new members are being appointed. The 2008 term ends September 20, 2008, so a September meeting should be scheduled prior to that date.

RAC's Expectations

Lisa Huestis discussed the expectations of the chairperson and vice-chairperson. The chairperson assists Kaylene with running the meeting and making sure all RAC members are heard from. The chairperson needs to be open to everyone's discussion and input. Formal recommendations are drafted by the chairperson and sent to Kaylene for finalization, who then returns it to the chairperson for signature. It is a one-year term, elected at the first meeting of each year. The vice-chairperson serves in the absence of the chairperson.

Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

A motion was made by Francis Jacobs and seconded by Troy Blunt to nominate Lisa Huestis as chairperson. Nominations closed. Lisa was elected.

A motion was made by Bob Valach and seconded by Bob Schoonover to nominate Ron Moody as vice-chairperson. Nominations closed. Ron was elected.

Question-and-Answer Session

Do we ever have any interaction with Canadian policies and management plans?

BLM is not aware of any coordination with Canadian officials.

Will this be an aspect of corridor development?

No. Our interest stops at the Canadian line.

Is BLM starting to get comments on the Monument RMP?

We are in a 30-day protest period that is handled by the Washington Office. The Lewistown Field Office could be involved in resolving protests after the protest period ends.

Is the Governor's Consistency Review concurrent with the protest period?

It is concurrent, but lasts for 60 days. The consistency review could look at state plans, local plans, or tribal plans.

Is there an energy leasing process planned in the Bear Paw area before the Malta RMP is completed?

Consideration of the South Blaine Oil and Gas Development Plan has been put on hold pending completion of the Malta RMP.

It would be helpful to receive a written update from Mark Albers on Malta Field Office issues that would have been covered in a presentation to the RAC.

Scott will follow up with Mark, who was unable to attend this meeting.

How are the Russian olives on the river?

The BLM has funding for at least two years, and will focus efforts on the PN area and keeping Russian olives out of the lower area of the river.

Is there anything new regarding wildlife?

Work on sage grouse has focused on the Teigen Ranch area. A challenge cost share project involves counting birds on historic leks. Numbers in the last three-year period have not varied from the 10-15 year average. A total of about 150 historic leks were monitored in Fergus and Petroleum Counties.

Every prairie dog town is mapped as they are found. Plague was found in the northern end of Petroleum County.

Lewistown Field Office Update

Scott Haight, Willy Frank and Resources staff members discussed the following items:

- The Monument Proposed RMP/Final EIS is out.
- Four or five FOIA requests have been received recently, almost all on grazing or riparian issues. Considerable time and research will be required to comply with the requests.
- The Lewistown RMP will begin with development of a Preparation Plan by September 2008. The RMP process will begin in the fall. The three biggest components of the Preparation Plan are schedule, cost, and who will be involved in development of the plan. If workloads allow, the scoping meetings could be held sometime between fall and late winter. This will be added as an agenda item for the May meeting. Ron Moody suggested that general information would be helpful on the geographic area to be covered, etc.
- The new BLM ranger in Fort Benton is Tracy Awberry. He will report in March.
- A new Lewistown Field Manager, Stan Benes, has been selected and will report in April. June Bailey, the previous Field Manager, retired in January.
- The Petrolia Watershed Plan EA has been completed. Fencing is taking place on riparian pastures to implement deferred or rest-rotation grazing.
- Reservoir cleanout work is being planned in south Blaine County.
- The Limekiln Trail loop was completed this last year. Work will continue in partnership with the Backcountry Horsemen and others to maintain the trail.
- Riparian areas adjacent the Dry Blood and South Fork of Dry Blood Reservoirs will be fenced out for fisheries enhancement.
- The BLM is looking at constructing a road to Payola Reservoir across BLM land. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is in progress.
- Buffaloberry seed was collected last year and sent to a nursery in Columbus that will grow plants to re-establish in several allotments in the Dry Blood Reservoir area.
- A channel in Collar Gulch with the easternmost population of westslope cutthroat trout was rerouted this past year. The channel was moved because a historic mining structure in the previous channel had potential to blow out and cause loss of the trout population.
- Several reservoir projects are planned zonewise as part of the range improvement program.
- All water development projects (e.g. wells, pipelines to water tanks, reservoirs) must go through the NEPA process, either through a watershed plan or on a site-specific basis. The RAC requested a report on the impacts of water developments: who pays for them and the current status.

Other Items

The Bitter Creek wind farm project is on hold, maybe indefinitely.

RAC members should excuse themselves from discussion of specific issues if they have a vested interest in a discussion item (e.g., discussion of a specific allotment leased by a RAC member).

The meeting adjourned for the day at 4:05 p.m. and reconvened at 8:00 a.m. on February 6.

Public Comments

One member of the public offered comments, which are attached to these minutes.

Agenda Items

A list of agenda items from the previous four RAC meetings was reviewed to determine if any items should be brought forward to the action plan or placed on the next meeting's agenda.

- Commercial Use of the Marias River – move to agenda item.
- Coal Bed Methane – should be considered in the Lewistown RMP, including impacts to sage grouse.
- Missouri Breaks Interpretive Center Tour – move to agenda item.
- Zortman/Landusky Mine Reclamation – move to agenda item.
- Malta RMP – action item.
- Road Classifications–What is a Road – save for discussion in the context of an RMP.
- Undaunted Stewardship – move to agenda item.
- Public Access to Public Lands – save for discussion in the context of other discussions.
- Bowdoin Draft EA – move to agenda item.
- Weed Management – move to agenda item.

Energy Transportation Corridor EIS

Scott Haight briefed the RAC on a draft national programmatic EIS related to energy development which would designate corridors for oil, gas and hydrogen pipelines and electricity transmission and distribution. A total of 102 miles of the proposed corridor would cross federal land in Montana, none of which is in the central Montana area.

Judith Moccasin Travel Plan

Terry Selph led a discussion of RAC Subgroup recommendations on the Judith Moccasin Travel Plan. Specific recommendations include:

- North Moccasins
 - Should be left as a motorized vehicle access area.
 - Closing spiderweb trails over 30 degrees would impact motorcycle riders, but BLM regulations call for such closures to control erosion.
 - Motorcycle group would like two access loops added in the North Moccasins.
 - Trails closed to motorized access should be labeled on the map for hiking/biking.
- Limekiln Canyon
 - Horse loop alternative route will avoid using horses in highly erosive areas.
 - Access should remain closed above the Ludeman property.
 - Access to Crystal Cave and considerable BLM land to the east is needed.
 - A new overlook should be created.
- Judith Peak
 - Access may be granted from mining claim owners.

Although the report is labeled as “Final” the subgroup would like the process to remain fluid, so that access could be gained in other areas as opportunities arise. The current version of the

summary does not include the motorcycle folks' recommendations from their last meeting (the two trails they want added). Terry will follow up with this group on the two new proposed trails.

Willy Frank stated that at least part, if not all, of the RAC's recommendations today will be used for the preferred alternative in the EA. As other issues come forward, they will also be considered in the analysis process. The EA will be prepared by an interdisciplinary team and the process will include a 30-day public comment period.

A motion was made by Terry Selph and seconded by Larry Epstein that the BLM consider the subgroup's summary of recommendations as the Judith Moccasin Travel Plan goes forward from this point, with special consideration given to include the two extra motorcycle loop trails in the North Moccasin Mountains.

RAC Discussion

- The motorcycle loop recommendations were brought up at a meeting last Saturday that was not attended by the full subgroup, so not everyone in the subgroup has had a chance to consider those recommendations.
- The word "special" should be dropped.
- The entire clause should be deleted after "point."
- The clause shows that it was informally brought up and not fully vetted by the subgroup.
- A bullet point should be inserted in the report that would capture in writing that the two loop trails were not fully vetted by the subgroup. BLM could bring that information into the NEPA process.
- The loop trails should be added to the maps.

The motion above was retracted.

A motion was then made by Terry Selph and seconded by Larry Epstein that the BLM consider the subgroup's summary of recommendations as the Judith Moccasin Travel Plan goes forward from this point. Consensus was reached.

U.S. Forest Service Fee Proposal

Joni Packard and Jane Weber made a presentation on fee proposals for the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The Forest Service has gone through a strategic planning process and placed all USFS facilities in a long-term plan. Public meetings were held and feedback received on changing or adding facilities. Three action plan items that tiered from the strategic look are proposals to add two cabins for public use (fee sites) and to raise fees at the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center.

Proposal 1: Monument Peak Lookout. \$45.00 expanded amenity cabin rental program, as a new cabin rental opportunity.

Proposal 2: Kenck Cabin. \$45.00 expanded amenity cabin rental program, as a new cabin rental opportunity.

Proposal 3: Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Interpretive Center. Current fee: \$5.00. Proposed Fee: \$8.00. The existing \$5.00 fee has been in place since the facility opened in May 1998.

RAC Discussion

The RAC members asked to be on the mailing list for notices of public meetings of this type and that notices are placed in the Lewistown newspaper. It was also suggested that people who currently rent cabins be placed on the mailing list for proposed fee increases.

The proposals for consideration today were previously presented to the RAC in April 2007.

A motion was made by Larry Epstein and seconded by Barb Cole to approve all three fee proposals presented. Consensus was reached.

Visitor Use Statistics

Wade Brown presented the RAC with visitor use information for the Upper Missouri River through 2007.

- Total use during 2007 was 4201, compared to 5484 in 2006.
- Watercraft use included 393 motorized (20%) and 1573 nonmotorized (80%).
- Visitor use by segment was 23% in the upper segment (Fort Benton to Coal Banks Landing), 63% in the White Cliffs segment (Coal Banks Landing to Judith Landing), and 23% in the lower segment (Judith Landing to the James Kipp Recreation Area).
- Use by group type included 23% commercial, 10% organized, and 5% administrative.

U.S. Forest Service Fee Template

Ron Moody requested discussion on the fee template, whether this is a good tool to use when recommending fee changes, and the differentiation between fee proposals for highly developed services as opposed to a campground in a national forest. Does the template fairly present public opinion? Does the RAC have a role in developing the template? Is it within our scope?

Joni Packard and Jane Weber stated that the template was developed for use nationwide by the Forest Service and the BLM, although modifications can be made for specific regions. It is also a checklist to make sure all requirements under the law are being met. The template is used by all other RACs. It is up to this RAC whether to use the template or not.

RAC Discussion

- This subject should be added to the agenda of the joint RAC meeting in Billings.

- This template is a good starting point from which future changes could be made as needed on a site-specific basis (e.g., changes in local economy which could drive a need to lower rental rates).
- The RAC does not need to see fee proposals at the beginning stage, before they are completed at the district level and sent to the regional forester.
- The RAC prefers to have such information included in pre-meeting packets in the future, as far in advance of a meeting as possible (over one month), so the information can be presented to their constituencies.

Oil and Gas

Don Judice from the Great Falls Oil and Gas Field Station gave a PowerPoint presentation to provide a basic understanding of oil and gas permitting and development.

As stated earlier in the question-and-answer session, the South Blaine EIS process has been tabled until after the Malta RMP is completed. No new field development will occur before then.

The Bowdoin EA is still being revised prior to undergoing internal review.

Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument RMP

Jerry Majerus provided an update on the Monument RMP. About 1300 companies, organizations and individuals received a hard copy of the Proposed RMP/Final EIS and over 200 CD versions were mailed out. The RMP/EIS is also available on the BLM web site. The public has an opportunity to protest during a 30-day period which began when EPA published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on February 1, 2008. The ending date of the protest period is March 4, 2008.

The Dear Reader Letter in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS explains procedures to be followed in filing a protest, which must be sent to the Washington Office.

The Governor's Consistency Review is currently underway. The purpose of the review is to make sure the RMP is consistent with state laws, policies and programs. The 60-day time period began at the same time as the protest period and will end in April.

After the protest period ends, the Lewistown Office will be notified of any protests. The Washington Office will determine the level of involvement needed by the state and field offices to respond to the protests. There are no regulatory timeframes on resolving protests. A 90-day turnaround time is preferred, but that depends on the number of protests, the issues involved, and the complexity of the issues. All protests must be resolved before a Record of Decision is issued, with the exception of a protest dealing with a specific part of the plan that may take an extended period of time to resolve. In that case, a partial Record of Decision may be issued.

Implementation of the plan occurs after the Record of Decision is completed. A Resource Management Plan has no specific expiration date.

Grazing Permit Renewal Planning

Willy Frank updated the RAC on grazing permit renewal planning for the Lewistown Field Office. The order of completion of watershed plans in Fiscal Year 2008 is proposed as follows:

- Upper Arrow Creek Watershed Area
- NE Fergus Watershed Area
- Snowies/Little Belts Watershed Area
- Great Falls Land Unit Area (Fiscal Year 2009)

The key parts of the watershed planning process are:

- Assess rangeland health following Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management
- Identify management actions necessary to meet Standards
- Coordination/cooperation with permittees and other interested publics
- Environmental assessment and public involvement
- Approval and implementation
- Monitoring and reassessment

Existing watershed plans are scheduled to be reassessed on a staggered schedule, beginning with the Woodhawk Watershed Plan in Fiscal Year 2008 and ending with the Arrow Creek/Upper Missouri River/Whiskey Ridge Watershed Plan in Fiscal Year 2014.

Public meetings will be held on February 28, March 11 and March 14 to begin this year's planning process. Notices of the meetings will be published in the newspaper. The meeting format will include a presentation on rangeland health, data collection efforts and findings to date. The public will then be asked for comments and concerns. The rest of the meeting will be an open house to allow one-on-one discussions with permittees and interested publics.

Actions will then be developed to manage vegetation in order to sustain a healthy ecosystem. After a watershed plan is completed, grazing permits are issued for 10-year periods that incorporate the management actions that were developed.

RAC Meeting Dates/Agenda

May 19-21, 2008	Billings (Joint Montana/Dakotas RAC meeting)
May 19 from 1-5	Central Montana RAC (at Montana State Office)
May 20 from 8-12	Central Montana RAC (at Montana State Office)
May 20 from 1-5	Joint Meeting (at Hampton Inn)
May 21 from 8-12	Joint Meeting (at Hampton Inn)

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hampton Inn. RAC members should call 248-4949 and ask for a room in the BLM/RAC block.

Proposed agenda items for the Central Montana RAC portion of the meeting include:

- Lewistown RMP (discussion of the Preparation Plan, the issues that should be included and RAC member involvement on the team)
- Forest Service Fee Proposals
- Range Monitoring/Coordination
- Undaunted Stewardship Program Presentation
- Judith Moccasin Travel Plan Update (submitted in advance for RAC review)
- Monument RMP Update
- Malta RMP Discussion

Updates and briefings should occur the afternoon of the 19th.

Proposed agenda item for the joint meeting: Forest Service fee proposal template.
OHV
BLM fee proposal templates

Sept. 2-3, 2008 Fort Benton and Great Falls

- 1:00 – ? Tour Fort Benton Interpretive Center and meet in their conference room; then adjourn for travel to Great Falls and evening work session if needed at Hampton Inn in Great Falls.
- 8:00 – 5:00 Meet in Great Falls

Wrap-Up

Travel vouchers were completed and the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
Public Comments
February 5-6, 2008

Dyrck Van Hyning

My name is Dyrck Van Hyning. I live in Great Falls. I am going to talk about oil and gas this morning and kind of a 101 presentation, but then kind of put that into perspective on the oil and gas. What I am handing out here is basically what I'm going to say this morning. I have a map that comes out of this final proposed RMP on oil and gas that we'll talk about at the end. I printed this off the web but it's the same map that you have in your hard copy book.

The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument and the proclamation by President Clinton, I just want to read a couple parts out of there. The Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument consists of spectacular array of biological, geological, and historical objects of interest. Objects of interest. Then going further down there it says the Secretary of Interior shall manage development on existing oil and gas leases within the monument, subject to valid existing rights, so as not to create any new impact that would interfere with the proper care and management of the object protected by the monument.

Then I want to read another part of this proclamation that deals with basically where the BLM and where history has shown that most of the oil and gas is located. And that's in the Bullwhacker area and that's in this area right here. I can always pick out where this area is simply because this private holdings here. This is the Robinsons private holding. Here's the Robinsons. Here's Lisa right over here. That's how close she is to this area and is affected by all of this area.

The Bullwhacker area of the monument contains some of the wildest country on all of the great plains, as well as important wildlife habitat. And you can read the rest of this later. Are the existing leases in compliance with their lease terms and conditions? That's my question to you, and that's my question to the BLM.

Now I thought I would go through, and some of you are experts on oil and gas, and the rest of us this is a totally new field. So I put just some basic information on the next part here. The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 gave the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service and others the ability to lease 570 million acres of federal land. Basically during this period, a person interested in developing this land can go out and say, this land is where I want to have a lease and I want to develop this land. Then the federal onshore oil and gas reform came in 1987 and it basically changed that and it said that the BLM or the Forest Service, or whoever manages this group of land, a NEPA document needs to be conducted before any leasing activity could take place. So then in this area the agency did studies to see if all of this land could be developed for oil and gas. So then this person that wanted to lease land could come in and say, I want to lease this part right here. So that's how that law changed.

There's also a maximum amount of land each individual can lease. That number is there. Since passage of the Energy Policy Act of 1992, both competitive and noncompetitive leases are leased for a 10-year period. So these leases when you buy a lease are leased for 10 years. Both types of leases continue as long thereafter as oil and gas is producing in paying quantities. I'm known throughout my friends as the 'paying quantity guy' and I hammer this paying quantity all the time.

Lease terms and conditions. There's some information on the second page there of lease terms and conditions. Basically, a lease has to have a well producing in paying quantity at the end of this 10-year period or that lease expires. There's information on this page of how a lease expires.

Based on my findings, and this has been through the court systems, the IBLA and the federal district courts, there is 170 wells drilled in the Monument. At this time there are no producing wells in three of the four counties. None in Fergus, none in Phillips, none in Chouteau, and only in Blaine County is there any producing wells.

I have a dispute with the information that's in this final RMP and my biggest dispute is there is so little gas in the monument that to do an analysis the BLM had to take land outside of the monument to do analysis. I think this is not helpful to the public, to potential investors, well owners and well operators because I come up with a figure of a possibility of hitting gas in the monument based on these past wells and the 10 wells the BLM says is producing of a rate of 5.8 percent. Now the BLM says by taking all of these wells, the analysis says there is a 33 percent chance of hitting gas in the monument. So I would ask Ron Moody for some money. And I say, Ron, I want you to buy into my company. There is a 33 percent chance that I'm going to hit gas here. Not only that, but the chance of hitting gas, each well, is going to be 333 thousand thousand MCF. Okay, Ron says yeah, I think that's a good deal. I think I can go with that. I've got some money that my interest rate in the bank is 3 percent, I'm going to do this. But if I told Ron the chance of hitting gas is only 5 percent and if you do hit gas, it's only going to produce 220 thousand thousand MCF, you're not even going to make paying quantity. Would he still invest with me? He would have to really contemplate that. So that's one of my biggest problems.

There are two more pages here. One of them is the manual for extending the lease. The third to the last page is how many MCF there is coming from each one of these wells. You can look at this. This well is shut in. This well is shut in. This well is shut in. This well is producing. This well right here, plugged and abandoned. This well is producing. That well is only two years old, almost out of production. This one is still producing. So that's all you have going on in the monument. So if you have any questions, ask me later. Thank you for your time.

Mary Jones

My name is Mary Jones, and I'm with Friends of the Missouri Breaks Monument here in Lewistown. We were one of the groups that got that 10 pound box of information on the RMP that just came out. I know last night a presentation was given to the Farm Bureau about it, and I

wanted to come today and give you some of our feelings about that RMP. But I think I would just have to sum it up by saying that we are extremely disappointed. I know the BLM said they were going to be balanced in the results, the final results, but I think it's pretty much one-sided and I hope all of you have a chance to look through it, read it. Anyway, we're very disappointed, but we aren't finished yet. Thank you.

**Central Montana Resource Advisory Council
Billings, Montana
May 20, 2008**

The meeting convened at 8:00 a.m. in the BLM Montana State Office. This half-day meeting preceded a joint Montana/Dakotas RAC meeting.

RAC members present were Lisa Huestis, Ron Moody, Clay Vincent, Troy Blunt, Bob Valach, Vicky Marquis, Robert Schoonover, Barb Cole, Mike Bryant, Terry Selph, Dan Tiegen, Francis Jacobs and Pat Gunderson. Members absent were Larry Epstein and Dan Clark.

Attending for the BLM were Stan Benes, Gary Slagel, Willy Frank, Rich Adams, Claire Trent, Kaylene Patten and Kay Haight.

Public Comment Period

No public comments were offered.

Welcome/Chairperson Synopsis/Meeting Notes

The minutes of the February 5-6, 2008 meeting were approved and signed. Introductions were made between Stan Benes, Lewistown Field Manager, members of the RAC, and BLM personnel in attendance.

Field Manager Updates

Lewistown Field Office

Stan Benes has been getting acquainted with members of the public. His three main concerns are customer service, community support, and common sense. Ongoing issues in the Lewistown Field office include:

- Monument RMP
- Drought potential and threat of wildfire
- OHVs and cross-country travel
- Judith-Moccasin Travel Plan
- Weed management
- Wildland fire/resource concerns (including sage-grouse habitat)
- Grazing program
- Staffing concerns – additional personnel are needed for the ongoing workload
- Opportunities for fuels treatments to prevent catastrophic fires
- Public access concerns

Malta Field Office

Rich Adams offered the following update:

- Casey Buechler is the new Assistant Field Manager in the Glasgow BLM office.
- The Havre and Glasgow offices have moved to new quarters.
- A grazing decision was signed yesterday for the American Prairie Foundation, changing the Box Elder allotment from cattle to bison.
 - Rangeland health standards must be met, as with other permittees.
 - The Telegraph allotment decision was previously signed to allow for bison grazing.

- BLM regulations allow for bison grazing. The grazing decisions deal with stocking rates and Standards for Rangeland Health for particular allotments, not with the social/economic concerns that the public may currently wish to see addressed.
- Is there a process to follow the effect of the fencing (for bison) on the local elk population? Yes, documentation is required by the permittee. The neighbors will also be watching.
- Concerns of the RAC include:
 - Will there be more conversion proposals coming into the Malta Field Office from American Prairie Foundation?
 - How much has the public been involved in the conversion?
 - How can the RAC get involved and keep current? Members of the public (including the RAC) can call the Malta Field Office, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, County Commissioners, or American Prairie Foundation.
 - Will fences be removed on the interior of the allotment?
 - Will local wildlife populations be affected by the bison herd?
 - RAC members would like a representative of the American Prairie Foundation to talk to the RAC about their operation.
 - Is there a definition for a grazing animal? It must be privately owned, can be indigenous.
- All bison on this operation must meet state livestock health standards, including vaccinations and testing that cattle ranchers must follow.
- Havre office will complete rangeland assessments this summer.
- Bowdoin oil and gas EA has gone through internal review and revisions are being made.
- Fuels reduction has taken place in the Zortman/Landusky areas, including thinning, understory burning. Approximately 1,600 acres have been treated.
- BLM is working with local fire departments in the Zortman/Landusky area for fire management in the Little Rockies.
- The Malta RMP is ongoing. RAC members will have an opportunity to ask questions and be engaged in the process.

Malta Resource Management Plan

Claire Trent, project lead for the Malta Resource Management Plan (RMP), made a presentation on the history and current status of the Malta RMP process.

- The planning area includes 2.5 million acres of public land and 3.5 million subsurface acres.
- The goal is to have a draft plan out for public review and comment by January 2009.
- 15 cooperating agencies are involved in the planning process, including federal, state and local government and several grazing districts.
- Greater sage-grouse conservation is one of the key issues addressed in the RMP. This topic was chosen as an example to explain how alternatives and associated management actions were developed by the ID Team. However, if any RAC members have questions on other issue alternative being developed within the RMP/EIS they should call Claire in the Malta Field Office.
- The preferred alternative may be a mixture of alternatives (e.g., Alternative B for one subject, Alternative C for another).
- All alternatives must meet management objectives.
- Global climate change must be addressed in the BLM planning process, including the Malta RMP.

Questions from RAC members included the following:

How was the distance determination made for the alternatives dealing with power line construction near sage-grouse leks? The alternatives are based on an appropriate level of protection, based on science and current practices. The alternatives also tier back to the sage-grouse management plan.

Do you also look at social and economic impacts? The team economist will analyze the impacts of burying a power line versus an overhead power line for that particular range of alternatives.

Is the ID team going to look at drought, or will it be deferred to watershed plans? Once the plan is implemented, drought considerations can be addressed through adaptive management. Livestock allocations also consider drought conditions.

It will be important to address the mechanism of adaptive management – how it will work.

Were there changes to the Analysis of the Management Situation? When did the sage-grouse concern arise? BLM is mandated to revisit management plans on a periodic basis, usually every 15-20 years. New technology can also push the need for a new planning effort. The importance of Greater sage-grouse was identified during both internal and public scoping at the start of the planning effort.

Is the RMP an umbrella document that will cover specific environmental concerns? The RMP has an associated environmental impact statement. Management actions will accommodate various landscapes and habitat within the planning area. Subsequently, site-specific planning within the area covered by the RMP would be addressed in an environmental assessment or at appropriate activity level planning.

How involved are the cooperating agencies? The cooperators have been very involved in the development of alternatives.

How does the BLM see the RAC being involved in the Malta RMP process? The RAC should make sure the range of alternatives is adequate. It would seem appropriate for the RAC to follow the process and make recommendations. RAC involvement will be needed for selection of the preferred alternative. After internal review has occurred between the State Office and Washington Office, and a more finished product is ready, an entire RAC meeting could be devoted to making recommendations for the preferred alternative. This would seem to be the most efficient way to engage the RAC. The key is to balance RAC involvement with the level of detail needed to reach the point of choosing a preferred alternative.

The RMP should focus on multiple use, not just on sage-grouse. The alternatives cover a wide variety of issues, including energy development and travel planning. The agency mission is multiple-use management, and scoping identified a broad range of issues that are dealt with in the RMP. The hand-outs were a sample from the 76 pages of alternatives. We selected these alternatives so that the RAC would have an understanding of how these issues were potentially covered in the RMP and as warm-up for the joint RAC session.

The RAC should let the professionals do their job, and once the alternatives are identified, aid BLM in the selection of a preferred alternative.

Claire will provide RAC members with a copy of the entire table showing the draft alternatives. Four hard copies (Barb, Francis, Pat, Terry) and 11 CDs were requested.

Forest Service Recreation Fee Proposal

Joni Packard gave a preliminary report on the recreation fee proposals for the Lewis and Clark National Forest. A formal proposal will be made at the RAC's September meeting, including results of public involvement that will occur this summer. The proposal will be sent to RAC members prior to the September meeting.

A region-wide schedule of fee increases is being considered. A working group would develop a process, and RAC involvement is welcome. Ron Moody stated he would like to participate in the working group.

Stay limits include dispersed areas and cover hunting camps. The Forest Service would like to develop a region-wide pilot policy for extended stay permits that respond to both traditional use and opportunities for other people. Public and RAC involvement are requested.

Monument Resource Management Plan

Stan Benes gave an update on the status of the Monument RMP. The protests have involved grazing management, travel management, seaplanes, and motorized use on the river. Responses to identified issues are currently being

crafted and will be sent to the Washington Office for finalization. The goal is to have the protests resolved by late September. The Record of Decision will be signed by the State Director once the process is complete.

There will be opportunities in the future for involvement by the RAC on specific issues within the Monument. Stan would welcome any ideas from the RAC.

Gary Slagel stated that RAC involvement will be requested for future discussions on fees, which will involve a public process.

Clarification: A question was asked how those that protested the RMP would be notified about their protest. Gary stated the protests would be addressed briefly in the Record of Decision. That is correct; however, each person or group that protested the RMP will also receive a letter from the Director explaining how their protest was addressed.

Next Meeting/Agenda

The next meeting is scheduled for September 2-3, 2008, beginning at Fort Benton and then proceeding onto Great Falls. On September 2nd the meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. with a 30-minute public comment period at the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center in Fort Benton. If the agenda topics require additional meeting time the RAC will reconvene after supper in Great Falls at the Hampton Inn conference room. If not the September 3rd meeting will begin at 8:00 a.m. with a 30 minute public comment period at the Hampton Inn, Great Falls and end around 3:00 p.m.

Reservations can be made by the RAC members at the Hampton Inn, Great Falls by calling 406/453-2675, and reserving a room under "BLM RAC". More information will follow closer to the date.

Travel vouchers were handed out and only two specific agenda items were discussed: The Forest Service will have fee proposals for the RAC to make recommendations on and if recommendations are needed on the Malta RMP Preliminary Draft Preferred Alternative the RAC will hold a special meeting to discuss this; but if not it will be addressed at the September meeting.

RAC members will complete travel vouchers at the Joint RAC meeting beginning at 1:00 p.m. at the Hampton Inn, Billings.

This meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.